

Did You Know?

If you lived in Louisville in the late 1960's – 70's, you may remember Joe's Palm Room. It was the hottest club in town, the premiere place in this region to hear live blues, soul, R&B, and jazz. The entrance was elegant as the above photo shows, and the inside, even more so. The decor was plush with a wrap-around, sunken bar (sunken to not have the bar blocking the stage view), and the best musicians always played at Joe's.

The club was owned by Mr. Joe B. Hammond, a well-known and powerful figure in Louisville. Politicians, doctors, judges, and lawyers frequented Joe's Palm Room. It was the place to see and be seen. As the journalist and artist Marvin Aubespain noted, "If you got a new suit, you showed it off at Joe's." You might see Richard Pryor, Red Foxx, Muhammad Ali, or the Harlem Globe Trotters there as they passed through town. As the ex-mayor of Louisville Harvey Sloane once noted, "Joe was a monumental figure for the community." If you wanted the Black vote, you needed to have Joe Hammond on your side.

But Joe's Palm Room was popular with white people as well as Black. "Joe's Palm Room {was} a place where your color didn't matter," recalled Dave Armstrong, then Jefferson County Judge-Executive. College students and young professionals went to discuss politics, civil rights, and business.

Mr. Hammond sold the business in 1979 and it eventually closed. Recently, however, it's been brought to life again as The Palm Room at the same location. Again, it is elegant and offers great music, food, and atmosphere. Check it out:
<https://www.thepalmroomlounge.com/>

The new owner is Marcus Withers, who has also produced a short documentary honoring Mr. Hammond. It includes an interview with Hammond and footage from his (very eventful) life. One standout action he took was during his time in the Navy. In Trinidad, he and other Black sailors protested the officers' racist mistreatment of Black servicemen by leaving the base. They were dishonorably discharged. In response, the NAACP sent their chief attorney, **Thurgood Marshall**, to argue on the Black men's behalf and the charges were dropped. They received honorable discharges. From then on, Mr. Hammond was involved in civil rights and worked tirelessly all his life to help others in the Black community to thrive—for the betterment of the entire city.

View the documentary here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZ2MUWFd0>