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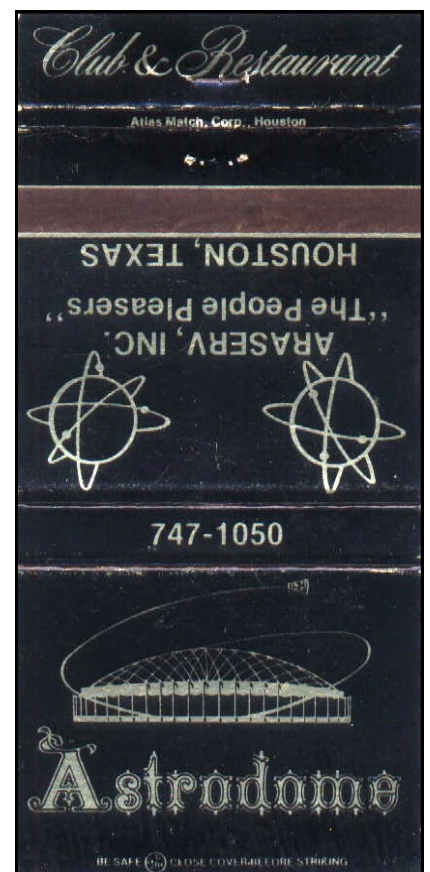
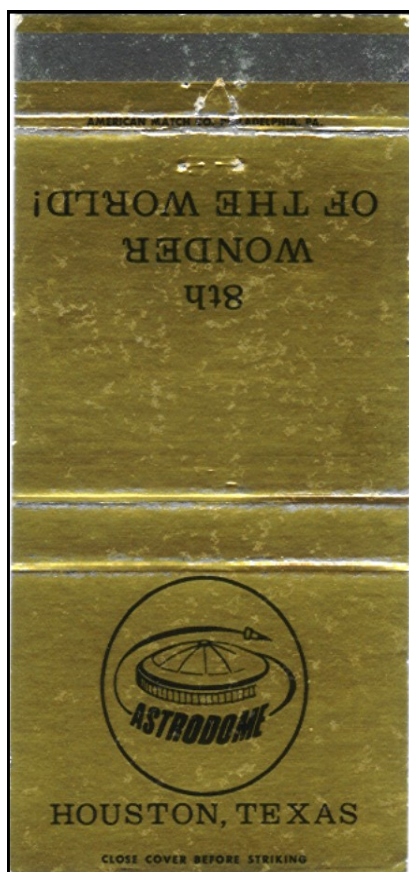
Houston Astrodome!

by
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Known as "The Eight Wonder of the World", the Astrodome was home to the Houston Astros for 35 years, and was the first dome stadium. Before a major league team was in the Houston area, a dome stadium was already being planned by Judge Roy Hofheinz. Trying to get a major league team for the

Houston area, Hofheinz built a model of a domed stadium, and presented it to National League owners. On October 17, 1960, Houston was awarded a franchise. Voters then approved a \$18 million bond to build the stadium. The plans were drawn up for the domed stadium, and construction on the dome began January 3, 1962. Meanwhile, the baseball franchise, called the Colt .45s began playing in the spring of 1962 at Colt Stadium, adjacent to where the dome stadium was constructed.

The dome stadium would be able to house baseball, football, rodeos, and many other attractions. It was initially named the Harris County Dome Stadium, but later renamed the Astrodome. The Colt .45s played three years at Colt Stadium and then changed their name to the Houston Astros when they moved into the Astrodome. The move to the Astrodome was welcomed because it was air-



conditioned. On April 9, 1965, the first baseball game was played at the Astrodome, and exhibition match between the Yankees and Astros. Opening Day came on April 12, 1965. Six levels of multicolored seats circled from the left field foul pole to homeplate, and around to the right field foul pole. The Astrodome became home of two football teams in 1965, the University of Houston, and the Houston Oilers. In order for football to be played at the Astrodome, two sets of 5,010 seats could be moved to form a football gridiron. The Astrodome was one of the first stadiums to have luxury suites with 53; and each of the 42,217 seats in the Astrodome were cushioned. Behind the pavilion seats in center field was a \$2 million, 474 foot long scoreboard, homerun spectacular, and display picture board. The Astrodome also had five different restaurants located throughout the stadium. Original dimensions at the Astrodome were 340 ft. (left and right), and 400 ft. (center). The actual dome was 18 stories above the playing field, and consisted of "Lucite" skylights, that would allow the sunlight to help grow the natural grass playing field. However, these translucent panels presented a problem. During afternoon games, outfielders were blinded by the sunlight. Thirty percent of the panels were coated with paint to reduce the problem. However, another problem arose. The natural grass playing surface began to die because enough sunlight was not reaching it. AstroTurf, a green surface of nylon grass, was introduced after the 1965 season.

The Astrodome looked the same until 1989. During the fall of that year, the stadium underwent several changes. In order to increase the capacity to 54,816, the grandstands were extended into the outfield. The original scoreboard was replaced by new video boards in the upper deck. Two manual scoreboards were added as part of the outfield walls in both left and right fields. By the mid 1990's, both the Astros and Oilers began to want new stadiums. After failing to get funds for a new stadium, the Oilers moved to Tennessee after the 1996 NFL season. However, the Astros were able to get a new stadium. They remained at the Astrodome for three more years. The last Astros game at the Astrodome was on October 9, 1999. In 2000, the team moved into Minute Maid Park in downtown Houston. Today, the Astrodome is home of a variety of events.

[<http://www.ballparksofbaseball.com/past/Astrodome.htm>]