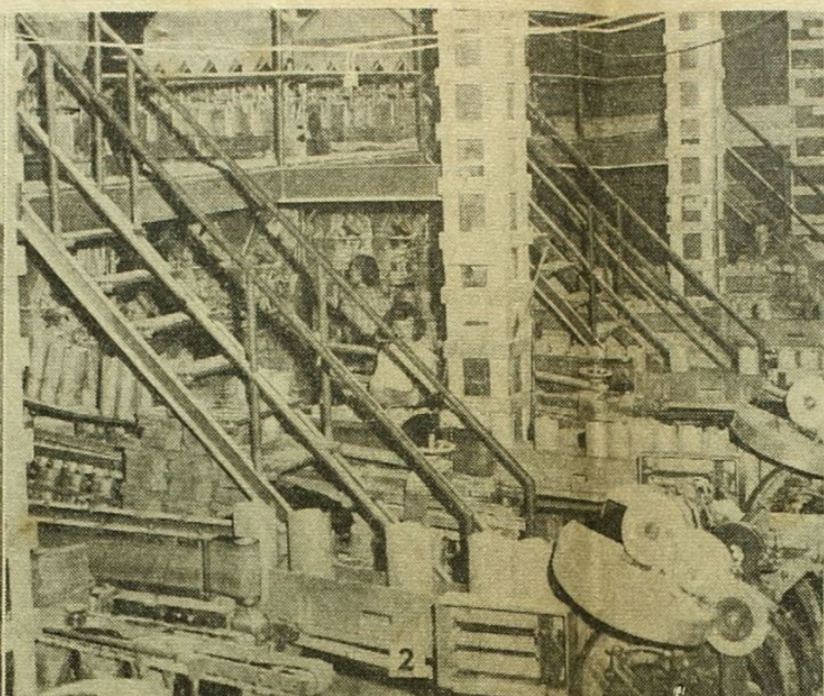
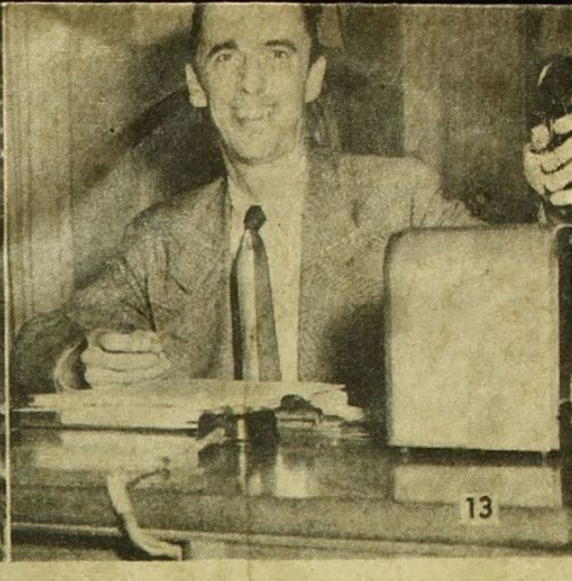


Tom/Mirian James 7/31/84

# Old Plantation Now Is Site of Only Sugar Refinery In Texas







## Company-Operated Town of 2400 Looks to Industry for Livelihood

BY EVERETT COLLIER  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Sugar Land, March 29.—The sweetest little city in Texas, that's Sugar Land.

The 2400 residents of this unincorporated community on historic Oyster Creek, 32 miles southwest of Houston, know that there is little chance of anyone challenging their title.

Here is the only sugar refinery in Texas, the Imperial Sugar Company. It is now producing 2,000,000 pounds a day!

The Imperial Sugar Company and its parent firm, Sugarland Industries, have one of the most unusual business operations in the country, raising or producing a multiplicity of items from beef cattle to spinach. Sugarland Industries operates most of the retail stores in town. It and the sugar company own most of the homes.

### Company-Operated Town

Lights, gas and water in Sugar Land are provided by the Fort Bend Utilities Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Imperial Sugar Company.

It is, in short, pretty much a company-operated town.

The two other industries in the town, Marshall Canning Company and Visco Products Company, work in harmony with the sugar companies for the betterment of the community.

About 2000 of the citizens are dependent on the Sugarland Industries or Imperial Sugar Company for their livelihood, the two companies and their subsidiaries having 800 employees.

Marshall Canning Company has about 140 employees, Visco about 15 and the Sugarland Railway, a

subsidiary of Missouri Pacific, most of the rest of the employees in Sugar Land (the name of the town is spelled as two words, but the companies bearing the name use it as one word).

There are a half dozen or so independent businesses—two cafes, a barber shop, a beauty shop, a theatre and a few others—and several persons who work in Houston, but live in Sugar Land.

### Old Plantation

The town has been a company-run operation from its beginning. Mrs. J. B. Fowler, wife of the treasurer of Sugarland Industries, is completing a two-year research project on the history of Sugar Land. She said that the community originally was a plantation owned by the Mexican government to S. M. Williams, secretary to Stephen F. Austin and later organizer of the first bank in Texas, at Galveston.

Williams built a sugar mill on the plantation in 1843, growing the cane for it, according to Mrs. Fowler. This was the second such mill in Texas, the first having been established by William Stafford, for whom the present community of Stafford is named, at Stafford's Point.

When the Mexican Army marched through on its way to San Jacinto during the Texas Revolution, it burned the mill at Stafford's Point and the mill was never rebuilt, Mrs. Fowler said.

The plant at Sugar Land, however, has been producing continuously since 1843.

### Sold to Brazoria Men

Mrs. Fowler said that the plantation, "Oakland," was sold around 1853 to Frank Terry and W. F. Kyle, two Brazoria County men

who had gone to California and became rich in the gold rush. The plantation was renamed "Sugar Land." Colonel Terry became famous during the Civil War, when he organized 100 men from the Texas gentry to fight under the name of the Texas Rangers. The group also was named "Terry's White Gloved Gentry of Texas." Colonel Terry was killed four months later. His body was returned to Sugar Land for burial and later to Glenwood Cemetery in Houston.

W. F. Kyle was an ancestor of E. J. Kyle, former dean at Texas A. and M. College and later United States minister to Nicaragua, Mrs. Fowler said.

Col. Ed Cunningham bought the plantation around 1868 and operated it until 1902, when it went into the hands of a receiver, according to Mrs. Fowler. She said that Col. W. T. Eldridge, who was working at the plant, bought the properties. Later the Kempner family of Galveston acquired an interest. In 1946, the Kempners bought out the Eldridge interest. The Kempners now operate the two main companies and their subsidiaries.

Mrs. Fowler said her research showed that the land between Oyster Creek and the Brazos River was regarded by early settlers as one of the richest terrains in the world. Each acre of the virgin land, she said, would raise 2½ bales of cotton, 100 bushels of corn and 40 hogshead of cane.

### Import Raw Sugar

For many years, the cane used in the mill was grown on the plantation. Since 1902, however, the company has been importing raw sugar from Cuba and Puerto Rico. It comes by ship to Galveston and then by rail to Sugar Land. The 15,000-acre plantation,

—Photos by Chronicle Staff Photographer Gunnar Lillequist, Jr.

1. **THESE MEN** supervise the mammoth sugar refining process at Sugar Land. Left to right are I. Herbert Kempner, Jr., president of Imperial Sugar Company; H. G. Thompson, vice-president and general manager; E. H. Wernau and W. H. Louviere, vice-presidents.

2. **THE SUGAR** is automatically weighed and packaged in this section of the big plant.

3. **THE MEDICAL CLINIC** at Sugar Land is owned and operated by Dr. E. E. Jenkins, left, and Dr. C. A. Slaughter, center. Dr. L. A. Wheeler, right, a dentist, has offices in the clinic.

4. **SINCE 1925** Mrs. Nema Sheppard has been superintendent of the Laura Eldridge Hospital at Sugar Land.

5. **D. D. WILLIAMS** is president of the Lions Club.

6. **MELVIN POMIKAL** is president of United Packing House Workers of America, local 399, C. I. O., which represents 552 workers in the sugar companies and their subsidiaries.

7. **A MOUNTAIN OF SUGAR** forms an appropriate background for this picture. Left to right are Willie Reese, who has been with Imperial Sugar Company for 50 years and started out as a shine boy; R. B. Sheppard, personnel manager; Juan Rodriguez, who has been with the company for 41 years, and Vice-President Louviere.

8. **THE BANKER** at Sugar Land is W. K. Helmcamp, vice-president and cashier of the company-owned Imperial Bank and Trust Company.

9. **E. K. BARDEN**, left, is superintendent of schools at Sugar Land and H. L. Jenkins, right, is coach.

10. **HEADS OF THE VOLUNTEER** fire department at Sugar Land are Walter S. Borowski, left, chief, and Frank G. Schultz, right, marshal.

11. **EXECUTIVES OF SUGARLAND INDUSTRIES** are Tom James, left, vice-president, and J. B. Fowler, treasurer.

12. **MARSHALL CANNING COMPANY** is one of the two industries in Sugar Land not affiliated with the sugar companies. It is run by C. E. McFadden, left, vice-president and manager, and George Fendley, right, plant manager. They are shown in the cooking room.

13. **DR. W. H. KIRKPATRICK** is manager and director of research of the Visco Products Company, the other industry at Sugar Land not affiliated with the sugar companies.

owned by Sugarland Industries, has been converted to other uses. Most of the land is cultivated by tenants on a sharecrop basis, with the company furnishing the land, the seeds and the work animals, then splitting the crop fifty-fifty with the tenant.

Spinach, mustard greens and sweet corn are raised for Marshall Canning Company.

## Sugar Land's History Dates Back To Deed by Mexican Government

years ago, the company operated a dairy of its own.

Cotton is a big crop. Sugarland Industries has its own \$100,000 cotton gin, opened in 1942, which not only gins the company's cotton, but also handles a lot of the cotton grown by independent farmers of the area.

The company raises a special variety of cotton originated by the Delta and Pine Land Company of Scott, Miss., known as D. & P. L. 15, and produces certified seed for sale to cotton planters.

### Supply Beef Cattle

Sugarland Industries is one of the big suppliers of beef cattle for the Houston market. The herd is predominantly Hereford, but in recent years the company has been doing experimental work with a cross between Brahman bulls and Hereford cows. The company said the cross produces a more vigorous calf, larger when it is born and faster growing.

The company sends the calves to market at the 400-pound level. It furnishes about 1000 calves a year to Port City stockyards. The company has a calf crop percentage of 95, about 30 per cent higher than the state average.

Sugarland Industries and Imperial Sugar Company own all but a few of the homes in the community. Imperial owns 493 and Sugarland Industries, through its wholly owned Belknap Realty Company, owns 65.

The companies are now promoting three new subdivisions, in which they sell the lots and the purchasers make their own arrangements for having their homes built.

Sugarland Industries has under consideration a \$400,000 shopping center for its retail operations.

Offices of the two companies will be on the second floor.

### \$4,000,000 Expansion

Imperial Sugar Company is nearing completion a \$4,000,000 expansion project on its sugar plant. This includes a new seven-story building for the processing units.

The expansion was rushed to meet a heavy postwar demand for sugar. On February 27 the company went on a three-shift basis and is now producing sugar on a 24-hour basis. Executives of the firm said that the area served, chiefly Texas, has the highest per capita sugar consumption in the nation.

The refining of the sugar is a fascinating process. It is almost entirely automatic. A conveyor system takes the sugar on the processing route along the packaging section, where it is automatically weighed and sacked.

The companies have taken a paternal interest in the community. Sugarland Industries and Sugarland Railway contributed the original endowment with which the fine 32-bed Laura Eldridge Hospital was built. The hospital is owned and operated by the Laura Eldridge Hospital Association.

The four churches in Sugar Land (Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Catholic) were built on land donated by Sugarland Industries, which also contributed to the construction costs.

### Aid School System

The sugar companies have played a big role, too, in the building up of a school system, of which A. S. Milikien is president of the board and E. K. Barden is school superintendent.

The school district has three

schools for whites and two for negroes. The main plant overlooks Cleveland Lake and has the appearance of a beautiful country club as the visitor drives up to it. A big, modern cafeteria has just been completed.

The district has 945 scholastics.

Although Sugar Land has a small chamber of commerce, most of the civic work is done by an active Lions Club, which has 80 members.

D. D. Williams, Fort Bend Utilities Company employe and president of the club, said its biggest project is to promote health, welfare and safety in the community, especially safety around the schools. It carries on a boy and girl recreation program in the schools, sponsoring dances, shows, skating parties and the like. The youngsters get up the events and the club pays for them.

Marshall Canning Company, a subsidiary of Consolidated Groceries Corporation of Chicago, has been canning vegetables and citrus juices at Sugar Land for the last 15 years. C. E. McFadden, vice-president and manager, said that most of the vegetables are grown locally and in the adjoining areas of Fort Bend, Harris and Brazoria counties.

Some of the popular brands of canned vegetables bought daily by Houston housewives are from the Marshall plant at Sugar Land.

The Visco Products Company has been in Sugar Land for about 16 years. Its parent company is the National Aluminate Company of Chicago.

Dr. W. H. Kirkpatrick, plant manager and director of research, said his firm manufactures oil treating chemicals, using organic chemicals as raw materials.