

NARRATIVE TEXTS

Dutch Texans

Except for a few troubled decades, the Dutch have had little reason to make Texas their home. Yet certain individuals, and one colonial effort, made huge differences to the state.

Probably the most influential was Phillip Hendrick Nering Bögel, the self-proclaimed Baron de Bastrop, who was directly responsible for Anglo-American settlement in the Mexican state. An arrival in Texas after 1795, the baron made friends easily and was soon a confidante of many Spanish, then Mexican, officials. Befriending both Moses Austin and Stephen F. Austin, Bastrop convinced the Mexican government to admit the first colony of Anglos.

Later many Dutch coming to Texas were opposed to slavery or did not sympathize with the Civil War. Few came; few stayed. But by the latter 19th century, Holland was overcrowded and in an economic depression. In 1895 the Port Arthur Land Company was formed by Dutch investors. Some 66,000 acres of land in southeastern Texas were offered for sale in Holland at \$8 an acre. Advertisements showed the land as a paradise, but most of the favorable land in the area had been taken. What was for sale was low-lying marsh. Still, the land company did build the Orange Hotel, named for Holland's royal family and painted a bright orange color.

Immigrants came, most were grateful for the hotel, and many stayed.

The first was George Rienstra, who, in 1897, chose what he thought was the best available land. Joined by his sister, Fanny, and brother, Dan, he was soon raising rice. Others followed, and the settlement was named Nederland.

The colony only enjoyed moderate progress until 1901 when the discovery of oil, then the largest known field in the western United States, gave the colony a sound economic future.

The pattern of settlement was typical. And Nederland exists today, between Port Arthur and Beaumont.



Dutch settlers in Nederland photographed after the harvest



Martin Koelemay harvesting rice, Pine Island Bayou, 1902