

10-1975

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### Recommended Citation

Block, W. T. (1975) "Tulip Transplants to East Texas: The Dutch Migration to Nederland, Port Arthur, and Winnie, 1895-1915," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 13: Iss. 2, Article 7.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol13/iss2/7>

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**TULIP TRANSPLANTS TO EAST TEXAS:  
THE DUTCH MIGRATION TO NEDERLAND,  
PORT ARTHUR, AND WINNIE, 1895-1915**

W. T. Block<sup>1</sup>

To the East Texas of 1900, whose non-native population can be delineated as the overflow of the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant lower South, a Dutch colonization scheme must have appeared somewhat phenomenal. To the promoters, who were owners of Kansas City Southern Railway Company, it was sound business, designed to convert surplus railroad acreage into cash, and to stimulate business along those points of the line which were barren of population.

Arthur E. Stilwell, dreamer and railroad entrepreneur of the late nineteenth century, expressed no qualms about accepting credit for the plan. Financier and head of Guardian Trust Company of Kansas City, Stilwell entered railroading, seeking a sea outlet for Mid-western wheat for export, hoping to keep that product more competitive in price, and to evade the exorbitant rates charged by the East-West lines.

Stilwell is best remembered as the man who, when stymied in his efforts to build Kansas City Southern (hereafter abbreviated K. C. S.) trackage to the sea, dug an eight-mile ship canal and carried the sea to the rails, at Port Arthur. When likewise stymied for domestic capital during the depression of 1893-1895, Stilwell turned to Amsterdam bankers, and raised the \$10,000,000 needed to bring K. C. S. rails south from Siloam Springs, Arkansas—hence, the appellation "Dutch-American Railroad."<sup>2</sup>

As a result of one of his famed "hunches," Stilwell envisioned a thriving community of Dutch rice farmers on the coastal plain north of Port Arthur, of which he said:

Again my thoughts turned to Holland, and I decided that as we owed a debt of gratitude to the Dutch people for their faithful support of the Kansas City Southern, here was a chance to repay a part of it, to say nothing of the fact that the people of that country make exceptionally capable farmers. So I founded a town and called it Nederland and instructed my emissaries to make a drive on the country districts of Holland to entice a good class of citizens to the newly-organized community. We housed them in a large hotel especially erected for that purpose and gave them good accommodations at reasonable rates. As soon as they could buy their property and build their homes, we would bring over another delegation and put it through the same process.<sup>3</sup>

When the flow of domestic capital slowed to a trickle in 1893, Stilwell recalled a Dutch acquaintance, Jan de Geoijen, a coffee merchant of Amsterdam, whom Stilwell had met on a trans-Atlantic crossing. He rushed to Holland, and, upon enlisting de Geoijen (phonetically anglicized to "deQueen") as his Holland agent, managed to unload \$3,000,000 of the railroad's securities in twenty-seven minutes. Thereafter, Dutch investors and workers were granted a voice in management and operation of Stilwell's company.<sup>4</sup>

By 1897, after K. C. S. trackage had reached Port Arthur, Dutch natives were employed at all levels. H. Visscher, an Amsterdam accountant sent over to examine the railroad's books, remained in Kansas City as the company's

treasurer. At Port Arthur, the firm organized a number of subsidiaries, including Port Arthur Townsite and Land Company, with M. R. Bos, a Dutch immigrant, as its first manager; Port Arthur Canal and Dock Company; and Port Arthur Rice and Irrigation Company, which also operated the Port Arthur Experimental Farm.<sup>5</sup>

H. H. Beels, a Dutch immigrant railroad builder on the Great Plains, became resident engineer for Port Arthur's canal project. Jacques Tutein-Nolthenius<sup>6</sup> became a trustee of the townsite company and a vice president of another K. C. S. affiliate, the Missouri, Kansas, Texas Trust Company of Kansas City. W. I. Vandebosch became the railroad's emigration agent, commissioned to recruit Hollanders who had settled earlier in Iowa and Michigan. L. Zylekins was Port Arthur's depot agent.

Jan van Tyen arrived in Port Arthur as Holland's consul and de Geojien's personal emissary, became manager of Port Arthur Land Company and Holland-Texas Hypotheek Bank, amassing a fortune in the course of his lifetime. His business associate, E. J. Everwijn Lange, was another early and prominent Port Arthurian, who later returned to Holland. A. J. M. Vylsteke, Holland's first vice-consul and agent for Joseph de Poorter Steamship Line, was one of Port Arthur's first citizens, living in a tent on the townsite before it was surveyed. By 1903, Port Arthur's Dutch immigrant population was estimated at 150 persons. In November, 1897, the *Herald* stated that: "Port Arthur is a new opening, and the shrewd Hollanders are quick to take advantage of it."<sup>7</sup>

Stilwell's south Jefferson County land holding came into existence on October 15, 1895, when he purchased 41,850 acres of land from Beaumont Pasture Company at \$6.75 per acre. On December 4th of that year, the title was transferred to the newly-founded Port Arthur Land Company. Other than the railroad's right-of-way, 4,000 acres were reserved immediately and platted for the townsite of Port Arthur. This left approximately 37,000 acres, which were surplus, to be utilized for agriculture and other purposes.<sup>8</sup>

That Stilwell prudently planned to assure the success of his Dutch colonization attempt, to include a church and a school, is evident. That the project essentially failed is more attributable to the temperaments and eccentricities of particular immigrants, who were unaccustomed to American soil, climate, and folkways, and to the actions of his emigration agents.

Vandebosch made a number of trips to the Dutch colonies in Iowa and Michigan to recruit prospective settlers for the new colony. On one trip, he managed to induce eight Iowans to come to Texas and investigate conditions for resettlement. Texas Colonization Company of Iowa's advertisements in the Dutch-language newspapers of the North expounded concerning the agricultural advantages to be found in Southeast Texas' soil and climate. During 1898, Bartle J. Dijkema, an immigrant horticulturist at Port Arthur's experimental farm, painted rosy, prosaic pictographs of Nederland in Holland, Michigan's Dutch-language newspaper *De Grondwet*.<sup>9</sup>

One result of these early land promotions in the North was the arrival in May, 1897 of Gatzte Jan Rienstra, Nederland's first settler. On his initial visit, Rienstra expressed satisfaction with the site of the proposed colony, with Port Arthur's experimental farm and pleasure pier, and noted that his fellow Dutch immigrants, Port Arthur farmers J. Gautier and a Mr. Engelsman, were prospering. On his next trip, Rienstra left his kitchen stove, farm implements, and personal effects standing beside the railroad tracks at Nederland while he drove his wagon on to Port Arthur to purchase lumber.<sup>10</sup>

In Holland, Jan de Goeijen employed J. E. Kroes, the former inspector for Netherlands-American Steamship Company, to screen prospective applicants and establish their suitability for resettlement. Emphasis was placed on the sturdy Dutch farmers of the provinces of North Holland, Friesland, Groningen, and Gelderland, among whom agents of Port Arthur Land Company circulated. Again, the picture most often painted was that of a Garden of Eden in East Texas rather than that of open pasture land, which, as of 1897, had only one economic boon to warrant its habitation—the newly-laid railroad trackage. Tradesmen, clerks, shopkeepers, teachers, even pastors, were solicited as well, in order to stabilize the economic and social requirements of the planned community. When the first group of these settlers had liquidated their assets and prepared to travel, Albert Kuipers, a Dutch employee of the land company who had been recruiting in Holland, made arrangements at Antwerp to escort the first contingent of settlers to their new home in East Texas.<sup>11</sup>

In the meantime, Stilwell moved ahead with his plans for *Nederland* and its rice industry. In 1896, he began the Port Arthur experimental farm, the purpose of which was to experiment with all varieties of domestic animal and plant life, determining which strains were most suitable for growing in the soil and climate of south Jefferson County. In March, 1897, he transferred F. M. Hammon, superintendent of the railroad's experimental farm at Amoret, Missouri, to Port Arthur as the new farm's manager. At the same time, G. W. J. Kilsdonk, a well-known bulb grower and horticulturist of Holland, arrived to work on the farm and as the vanguard of the Dutch settlers slated for *Nederland*.

By July, 1897, the farm's superintendent was reporting "great success" in the growth of sea island cotton, rice, asparagus, two varieties of tobacco, and other farm products. By then, the farm's facilities included 80 acres of bearing pear trees as well as olive, fig, and orange orchards, and a large herd of imported Jersey cattle. That Stilwell overlooked no possibility is evident in the farm's adoption of the umbrella china as the ideal shade tree for the Dutch immigrant's front lawns. A thousand seedlings for transplanting at *Nederland* were awaiting the arrival of the human transplants from Europe.<sup>12</sup>

During the late summer of 1897, Port Arthur Land Company began work on the first buildings at *Nederland*. The three-story, 33-room Orange Hotel (named for the ruling house of Holland and built on the present site of *Nederland State Bank*) was begun, and, by November, was nearing completion. Its purpose was to provide room and board at reasonable rates for the new immigrants until each had completed his own home. As might be expected, the hotel soon became the center of social life in the new community, religious as well as educational. Kilsdonk was then transferred to *Nederland* as the land company's resident-overseer. He immediately began work on two store buildings, and soon afterward, became *Nederland's* first merchant.<sup>13</sup>

On December 24, 1897, Stilwell, Jacques Nolthenius, and Judge J. M. Trimble, as trustees of the land company, platted the first townsite of *Nederland*, which spanned both sides of the railroad tracks, and reserved to themselves "exclusive rights to erect . . . street car lines, railways, electric lights, . . . gas and water pipes, mains and conduits . . ." With particular intent to please the immigrants, they established two parks, *Mena*, named for the young and beautiful queen-regent of Holland, and *Koning (King's) Park*. Street names were in the Dutch language, and included such names as *Kuipers Straat* (street), *de Geojien Straat*, *Wilhelmena Straat*, and *Heeren Straat*.<sup>14</sup>

In October, 1897, Stilwell organized the Port Arthur Rice and Irrigation Company, capitalized at \$50,000, with intent to build a Neches River pumping plant and a system of rice canals sufficient to irrigate 5,000 acres. The company's headquarters was built at a point on the railroad two miles south of Nederland, and its management was assigned to Superintendent Hammon. Construction work on the canal system was begun in January, 1898 with 55 men and 27 mule teams supervised by D. Zimmerman, a railroad engineer who had been transferred from Kansas City. At Smith's Bluff, north of Nederland on the Neches River, a 100-horsepower steam pumping plant, with an outflow of 18,000 gallons per minute, was installed. Two miles of inclined, outflow flume were constructed above ground level, with the river end elevated to fifteen feet. By the end of 1898, seven miles of the canal system had been completed with three more miles of it still under construction. During 1898, the rice company planted 700 acres in rice (460 of which returned an income of \$21,000), which production reached 13,000 acres by 1904. Rice production increased so rapidly, that capacity of the pumping plant and outflow flume had to be tripled within two years, forcing the irrigation company to increase its capitalization to \$150,000. Width of the outflow flume was increased to 100 feet, and pumping capacity to 78,000 gallons per minute.<sup>15</sup>

On November 18, 1897, Port Arthur Herald splashed its front page with news of the first contingent of Dutch immigrants for Nederland, 46 men, women, and children.<sup>16</sup> They arrived at Galveston on November 14th, but, for some unexplained reason, did not arrive in Port Arthur until three days later. Galveston *Daily News* carried the following notation:

The steerage passengers, fifty in number, were undoubtedly the finest lot of people that have been brought here by any vessel recently. They all had money, the least any one of them had being \$30. The majority are bound for the new Holland colony at Nederland on the Kansas City, Pittsburg, and Gulf [former name for K. C. S.] railroad, and at least one of the steerage passengers had bought his farm before he left the old country.

All these colonists were inspired to try their fortunes in this country by Mr. Albert Kuipers, who has been over a considerable portion of the west and finally settled upon Nederland as the ideal spot . . .

After inspection, the Nederland party was placed aboard a tug and conveyed across the bay to Bolivar, and thence by Gulf and Interstate to destination. Before leaving the vessel, the passengers united in a resolution, with Mr. Kuipers as chairman, by which they extended a vote of thanks to Captain Hansen and the officers of the steamer ["Olinda"] for kind and courteous treatment received during the voyage, and that they were pleased to recommend the [Diedericksen] line to the travelling public.<sup>17</sup>

The *Herald* stated that many of the passengers spoke some English, and expressed favorable reactions toward their new country and Port Arthur. The article added that they had been met at the depot by "several of their countrymen" as well as the land company's representatives, after which the newcomers were fed at the Terminal Hotel and then taken to the Nash House for the night. Afterward, the immigrants "thronged the streets, bent upon sightseeing."<sup>18</sup>

In a letter written to Holland on the same day, Kuipers reported that he was immediately besieged by prospective employers. In greatest demand were the Dutch women and girls to work as household servants at \$10.00 per month. Kuipers reported as well that he immediately secured employment for the men as teamsters and railroad laborers at \$1.50 daily as well as carpenters and gardeners.<sup>19</sup>

After they had rested, this vanguard of settlers were taken to the Orange Hotel at Nederland, where they immediately selected their land and began preparations to build their homes. The newspaper gave the following partial list of arrivals: D. Ballast, N. Rodrigo and six children, J. H. Muller, A. Teggelaar, N. Ernsting, L. Tynkema, R. van Dalen, H. P. de la Bye, P. Koimann, M. Jorritsma and son, B. H. Lans, W. F. Lans, A. J. Ruysemann, J. G. van Tyl, K. Brontsema, Miss Waterdrink, Jan Tromp, C. van der Bout, M. Koot, A. J. Ellings, wife and four children, T. ten Dekker, and J. C. van Heiningen.<sup>20</sup>

The next known contingent to arrive, 16 persons, came to the Diedericksen line steamer "Lauenberg" to Galveston, arriving there on March 1, 1898, after a stormy voyage of three weeks. More than half of this group were comprised of the Maarten Koelemay family, including his wife, sons Pieter, Jan, Klaas, Maarten, and Laurens, and daughters Tryntje, Dieuwertje, and Klaasje, the latter at or approaching adulthood. Koelemay, a cheese maker of Hoogkarspel, near Enkhuizen on the Zuider Zee, brought his cheese molds with him, expecting to continue his former occupation, but this proved impossible in the warm and humid climate of Southeast Texas. This family, who arrived simultaneously with a blustering, cold "norther," found the "promised land" of Nederland to consist of a muddy street, "a few houses, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a [mercantile] store and a hardware store, a couple of saloons, and acres and acres of unfenced, unimproved lands."<sup>21</sup>

The third group of whom the writer has a record arrived at Galveston and Nederland on the same date, March 28, 1898, aboard the German liner "Olinda," after a stormy, 21-day crossing from Antwerp, which saw the vessel's steering gear break. Again, Galveston *Daily News* reported that the 26 passengers for Nederland, including 20 young men, were "the finest-looking company of immigrants seen at Galveston in many years." Each was reported as carrying sums averaging "about \$100," and most were reported as being clean-shaven and freshly-attired "in white linen" and black ties.<sup>22</sup> These arrivals of Dutch immigrants at Galveston continued for many months and years thereafter, with a fourth group arriving on the German liner "Curatyba" on April 16th, and still a fifth, large contingent on the following December 27th aboard the German steamer "Ellen Rickmers."<sup>23</sup>

The last party to arrive in March had been escorted from Holland by B. J. Dijkema of Port Arthur Experimental Farm, and had been met at Galveston by Kilsdonk. Upon arrival in Nederland, they too were taken to the Orange Hotel, by then, being managed by Mr. and Mrs. Ellings, who had arrived earlier. As with the first group, Kilsdonk immediately found employment for the young men with the railroad in Port Arthur. Dijkema admitted that their first impressions of Nederland were unfavorable (some immigrants returned to Holland almost immediately), but Dijkema's attitude was reversed in the course of his later writings. He did advise that no immigrant should attempt to settle at Nederland as either a farmer or orchard grower unless he had the "proper means" with which to support himself.<sup>24</sup>

By April, 1898, the population of Nederland could be reckoned at no less than 100 persons through immigrant arrivals from the Netherlands plus a handful who had resettled from the Dutch colonies in the North, as well as a few native families, who, for one reason or another, had taken up residence in the Dutch colony. In 1897, Louis A. Spencer, his wife, and six sons arrived and began operating a brick kiln. Hand-made bricks fired at this kiln were used in the construction of the Orange Hotel and in the brick buildings being erected at Port Arthur. In 1898, J. B. Cooke brought his family to Nederland and entered the lumber business.<sup>25</sup>

The same month also witnessed the beginnings of religious life in the new community and organization of a Dutch Reformed congregation (Reformed Church of America). Services led by lay leaders had been conducted each Sunday at the Orange Hotel almost from the beginning, apparently by D. Ballast, whose signature appears on existent baptismal certificates. Dr. Henry Beets, then of Sioux Center, Iowa, made a special trip to Nederland to organize the parish after which the new church (until it dissolved about 1905) was affiliated with the Classis (synod) of Iowa. A church was built at the corner of "Kuipers and Heeren Straats" (now Tenth and Boston Streets). Church records indicate that the congregation remained too small to afford a full-time pastor. As of 1898, membership included four families and 28 members, and apparently did not vary greatly from those figures throughout its existence.<sup>26</sup>

Education lagged only momentarily from Dijksma reported in the same article that plans were afoot to establish a school and engage a teacher. The first school was conducted in an outbuilding attached to the Orange Hotel, utilizing a teacher from Beaumont, with Klaas Koelemay serving as interpreter. It remained there until the small building was blown away during the hurricane of 1900. That the Dutch were dedicated to higher learning can be attested to by the 1,000-volume library that was maintained at the Orange Hotel from its beginning.<sup>27</sup>

On May 5, 1898, Kilsdonk resigned and was replaced as the colony's resident-manager by W. I. Vandenbosch, the emigration agent for the land company. Kilsdonk planned to visit his wife and son in Holland, but remained in Nederland until after the queen's coronation festivities to serve as chairman of the preparations committee (of which Pieter Koelemay was a member). He apparently never returned to America since he was still living in Holland as of 1900.<sup>28</sup>

The early Hollanders of both Nederland and Winnie found it mutually advantageous to organize for their protection. For one thing, a definite language barrier existed between the Dutch and native inhabitants, with few, if anyone, who could adequately translate in the complex legal and technical terminology which many problems required. As of July 1, 1898, Nederland's Colonists' Union had twenty Dutch farmers, plus some skilled craftsmen and laborers, as its members, with W. F. Lans serving as the organization's president and P. J. van Heiningen as its secretary.<sup>29</sup>

In an article published in Holland at that time, van Heiningen commented on the costs involved for those Dutch who chose to become rice growers. Land sold at from \$20 to \$50 an acre. A team of mules was valued at \$170, a span of horses cost \$120, while good-quality Jersey cattle sold at \$70 each. In the same article, Willem Beukers, a visitor to Nederland in January, 1898, noted both the advantages and the disadvantages incurred by Dutch emigrants who settled in

Southeast Texas. Because of the cultural habitat which Holland represented, Beukers concluded that "pretty good in the old country is better than very good in Texas."<sup>30</sup>

On May 26, 1898, a meeting was called by the Hollanders of Port Arthur and Nederland for the purpose of preparing for a giant celebration on the following September 6th, the date of the coronation of Holland's young Queen Wilhelmina. All Dutch settlers in each town were required to attend. At that moment, "when Nederland could hardly be termed even a settlement," the magnitude of the event attests to the importance accorded to it by officials of Kansas City Southern railroad and by its affiliate Port Arthur Land Company. No expense was spared, and, fortunately, Port Arthur *Herald* has left a most graphic account of the occasion, filling five full columns, more than half of its front page, for September 8, 1898.<sup>31</sup>

Between the lines, the writer interprets that Stilwell considered his Nederland experiment as being in jeopardy. Life in the colony was undoubtedly harsh and monotonous for the homesick newcomers, as evidenced by those who sought greener pastures or returned to Holland. Stilwell probably wished to placate the Hollanders who were still there while, at the same time, calling attention to the rice-growing possibilities of Nederland (whose canal system by then represented a considerable investment) to the area's farmers. At any rate, the land company sponsored a gala event long to be remembered by Beaumonters and Port Arthurs as well, and, although the Dutch continued to arrive for many years thereafter, their numbers were augmented by an increase of native shop keepers and rice farmers, who took up residence among them. The celebration demonstrated as well that the Dutch were as fun-loving as they were industrious.

Throughout the day on September 6, from 7:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. the following morning, special trains were run from Beaumont and Port Arthur to Nederland, carrying the celebration's participants, the pleasure-seekers, and spectators. At 7:45 A.M., the first train arrived from Port Arthur, carrying the first visitors and the Port Arthur band. After the latter had played a number of selections at the depot, the participants formed a line of march to the hotel. All of Nederland's buildings were festooned with bright bunting and the national colors of both Holland and the United States. The Orange Hotel was decorated in like manner, both inside and out, with large pictures of the young queen and with holly and evergreens, "among which were interspersed red, white, and blue roses." Other "accoutrements" of the hotel on that date included 750 gallons of Dutch beer, brewed by Lans en Zoon of Haarlem, Holland.<sup>32</sup>

Activities of the morning including marching with the band to meet other incoming trains at the depot. At 9:00 A.M., the crowd assembled in King's Park, where a memorial orange tree was planted and dedicated to the young queen. Kilsdonk addressed the crowd in the Dutch language, and was followed by J. E. Kroes, who read a brief history of the queen and of Nederland's founding, also in Dutch. This was followed with translations by Vandenbosch, after which all documents were signed by the festivities committee and buried in an air-tight bottle with the tree.

The day's principal activities consisted by competitive games at the race track. These included foot races over a specially-designed obstacle course, bicycle races for both men and women, followed by kite racing, greased pole-climbing, and a horse race. Betting was permitted with participants soon



learning that their favorite horse could place no better than third. Since an election was imminent, political candidates campaigned freely among the crowd.

At noon, the crowd was treated to a Dutch menu with all of the trimmings, including fish, veal cutlets, roast beef, roast chicken, and vegetables. Desserts included ice cream (the first that many Dutch had tasted), mixed fruits, and cake. Drinks included coffee, tea, and beer.<sup>33</sup>

Festivities of the evening included one of the most brilliant pyrotechnic displays witnessed in Southeast Texas up until that time, and dancing at the Orange Hotel until 2:00 A. M. The *Herald* noted that the most popular dance number was the "Rose Grip Polka," and that many dancing prizes were awarded. Vocal selections were rendered throughout the evening by members of the Koelemay family. The *Herald* also conceded that, as the Beaumont and Port Arthur visitors boarded trains after midnight, they were "all convinced that the Dutch know how to conduct an affair of the kind, so that all the people present can have a good time."<sup>34</sup>

Generally speaking, Nederland's rice farmers subsequent to 1899 were about equally divided between the colony's Dutch and non-Dutch inhabitants. Most often, the Hollanders who were able to begin rice farming immediately, as S. R. Carter had in 1899, were those who had re-settled from the Dutch colonies in the North. High operational costs required that others work as laborers until they had acquired sufficient land and means to begin. Perhaps, due to language barriers, the Dutch, almost to a man, shunned any connection with the early mercantile activities in the colony.<sup>35</sup>

By 1900, Nederland's railroad tracks were lined with large storage warehouses, for, lacking a rice mill, farmers had to sack all harvested rice in order to ship it elsewhere for milling. Elimination of the sacking system was a principal cause for the organization in 1904 of Nederland Rice Milling Company, Incorporated.<sup>36</sup>

By May, 1903, Nederland's economy was booming. Rice production increased steadily, and the Spindletop oil field boom, seven miles to the north, brought new money and settlers to the town. At that time, the Dutch colony could boast of a population of 500 persons, two-thirds of whom were Hollanders. In 1902, First National Bank and a newspaper, the *Nederland News*, were established. The town's principle retail houses, Cammack Brothers, King Mercantile Company, and Nederland Supply Company, were all described as "doing a handsome grocery, feed, and farm implement business."<sup>37</sup>

However, economic setbacks in the year 1905 were to have a disruptive effect on Nederland's growth, and to depopulate the town of a large percentage of its Dutch immigrant colony. A number of causes can be cited as being contributory. In one year, rice acreage under cultivation plummeted from a high of 13,000 to 6,000 acres. With little thought given to market demands (and this is an era when rice, like grits, was regarded as a cereal grain or dessert ingredient), unsold backlogs of the product began to appear, and delegations of Jefferson county millers began to visit Europe in search of new markets.

By 1905, the oil boom at Spindletop had ended, which eventually caused the closing of the Orange Hotel due to insufficient lodgers. Within two years time, a number of the town's leading merchants, the bank, the newspaper, and the rice milling company had folded in bankruptcy. From that year until it eventually

ceased operation, Port Arthur Rice and Irrigation Company was beset with problems due to disrepair of its facilities, and the continuous threat of salt water as the Neches River channel was deepened. And in 1907, a serious national recession arrived.<sup>38</sup>

By 1912, no more than 30 Dutch families remained in Nederland. Three-fourths of the original colony had moved away in search of better economic opportunity, a few to neighboring points in Port Arthur or Winnie, but the majority migrated to more distant points in the North and West. The Dutch who remained were those who had already acquired sizeable land holdings, and most of them turned to dairying and ranching when the rice economy vanished.<sup>39</sup>

After 1900, the Dutch colony at Port Arthur remained constant at about sixty families, but, due to that city's phenomenal growth, the Hollanders of Port Arthur were not as visible as were those at Nederland. From its beginnings, Port Arthur centered upon commerce and shipping, and, unlike Nederland, its Dutch population followed those pursuits. A number were engaged in retail trades and banking, but the majority were either seafarers or refinery and railroad employees.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, as of 1897, some Dutch farmers were prospering at Port Arthur, even before the migration to Nederland had begun. S.R. Hogaboom became a leading rice grower there. H. W. Naezer was one of a half-dozen truck growers who settled there in 1896, and one of his letters to Holland expressed the general optimism of the Dutch community regarding Port Arthur's future.

Naezer noted that only a few houses existed there when he arrived, but that Port Arthur's population had increased to about 1,200 persons during the succeeding six months. He was particularly proud of the town's broad streets and boulevards, and of the new Sabine Hotel, which he considered to be "the most beautiful in Texas." Naezer farmed 40 acres of land, and at the time of his writing, had twenty acres of pear trees and two acres of rose bushes under cultivation. He added that he sold his produce in Port Arthur three times weekly, and at such prices that the Dutch farmers of Europe would have "smacked their lips with joy."<sup>41</sup>

Jan van Tyen remained the pillar of Port Arthur's Dutch community for about thirty years. He and his Dutch associates soon controlled the Port Arthur Land and Townsite Company, and utilized their bank to finance many of that city's farm and building ventures. M. R. Bos was typical of Port Arthur's successful Dutch merchants, while Leo F. J. Wilking advanced to plant manager of Texaco, Incorporated's large gasoline refinery, serving simultaneously as Holland's consul for that port during the 1920s. Typical of the Dutch seafaring population was Captain John Kaper, who settled at Nederland after 1915, and, until his retirement, was a senior member of the Sabine Bar Pilots Association.<sup>42</sup>

The founding of the Dutch colony at Winnie, in Chambers County, resulted from the land promotions in the North of Theodore F. Koch and Company of Houston. Between 1907 and 1930, Koch engaged in a number of colonization attempts in Texas, but, except for the degree of success first attained at Winnie, the others (one included the Beaumont Fig Company of the 1920s) were on the whole unsuccessful. And following the disastrous hurricane of 1915, his colony of eighty Dutch families at Winnie vanished almost as abruptly as it appeared.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Port Arthur Land Company, Koch made no attempt to promote emigration directly from Holland. Instead, he concentrated on the thousands of Dutch families who had settled in the North during the 1890s. These colonies

were centered primarily at Pella, Nebraska; Orange City and Sioux Center, Iowa; Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Holland, Michigan; and in Wisconsin and Colorado.

By 1910, the colony at Winnie, Texas was evidently making inroads among subscribers of Orange City, Iowa's Dutch-language newspaper *De Volksvriend*. Its editor was berating those Hollanders who would permit themselves to be lured to Texas where the soil was described as being sandy and poor and the climate was hot.

In October of 1911, fifteen of the 40 Dutch farmers at Winnie wrote a letter to *De Volksvriend's* editor, inviting him to visit in Winnie and to see for himself what living conditions were like there. They praised the climate, which permitted many vegetables to be grown in the winter, followed by cotton, corn, peas, cucumbers, and melons in the spring, and Irish potatoes in the fall. Like Naezer at Port Arthur, the farmers stated that they could dispose of all of their crops for cash at the railway depot in Winnie, where they received better prices than at any point between Beaumont and Galveston. John Stob, formerly of Chicago, recorded that he had received a per acre return of \$125 for potatoes, \$300 for cucumbers, and \$150 for cabbage during the year.<sup>44</sup>

By 1909, Koch and Company was advertising that it had set aside fourteen acres of land and \$400 in cash for the purpose of constructing a Dutch Reformed church in Winnie.<sup>45</sup> In 1910, E. J. Bloemendaal of Sioux Center, Iowa, visited among his countrymen in Winnie, found them prosperous, and holding services each Sunday in their new church. Most of the farmers had paid \$40 per acre for their land, and were expecting its value to increase to \$300 per acre.<sup>46</sup> A farm cooperative with forty Dutch members had been organized to solve their respective problems, principally harvesting and marketing, and operated as well a rural telephone exchange to which most of the members subscribed.<sup>47</sup>

As of September, 1915, the Hollanders at Winnie had grown to eighty families when, suddenly, a massive hurricane roared inland from the gulf, unleashing a tidal wave and thirteen inches of rain on the prosperous farmers' unharvested crops. It carried a death sentence with it as well, for, within five months, 77 of the 80 families gave up and moved away, and Winnie's Dutch colony disappeared as rapidly as it had formed. Net losses to Koch and Company approximated \$100,000.<sup>48</sup>

The Reverend Ralph Koelmay of Plover, Wisconsin laughingly advised the writer by letter recently that, on occasion, Nederland's Dutch colonists were equally as guilty of misrepresentation in Holland as were the agents of Port Arthur Land Company. Among Nederland's permanent Dutch population who remained, it seems that some of the men arrived single, and later returned to Holland to marry their childhood sweethearts. Fearful that their fiancées might renege if they knew exactly what living conditions in Nederland were like, some of the men resorted to fantasy, and at least one bride arrived to find a squalid, one-room bachelor's abode instead of the livable quarters which she had expected. In this instance, however, the bride accepted the circumstances stoically, and "pitched in" to help her new husband carve out an acceptable and prosperous existence for themselves.<sup>49</sup>

In retrospect, the Dutch migration to Southeast Texas could hardly be expected to leave a permanent mark in view of the large number of colonists who moved away. And even if these had remained, its numbers, estimated at no more than 1,200 persons, were not sufficient to bequeath a heritage comparable to

Louisiana's Acadian regions or the German communities of Central Texas. In fact, one characteristic of the Dutch personality strongly counteracted any such possibility, for successful competition in the market place simply required that the Dutch assimilate as rapidly as possible.

Today, almost no trace, except in deed records, remains to testify of the once thriving Dutch colony at Winnie. At Port Arthur, remnants of the migration are somewhat more discernible. Its telephone directory contains a sprinkling of Dutch names throughout, and there are still many of the second generation whose parents were numbered among the early Hollanders of Port Arthur. A few street names, such as Nederland, Zwolle, and Dequeen, still remain to bear mute witness of it.

During the 1930s, the assets of the Port Arthur Land Company and Holland-Texas Hypotheek Bank were liquidated, and the principal stockholder, Jan van Tyen, returned to Holland during his old age, only to die in a German internment camp during World War II.

Henry S. Lucas, an immigration historian, concluded that "Nederland became a place which is Dutch in name only," but careful scrutiny reveals that his assessment is not entirely correct.<sup>50</sup> It is true that Nederland's 18,000 inhabitants are principally of East Texas and Louisiana familial extraction, but a goodly number remain whose parents were Dutch immigrants.

Most of the thirty Dutch families of permanent residence fared well economically and educated their children accordingly. The late C. Doornbos and his children have contributed immensely toward Nederland's growth, and the C. Doornbos Trust remains as a family-operated, diversified enterprise with land, cattle, oil, and investment interests in four states. Their most recent bequest includes 22 acres of land and much of the funding for Doornbos Park, which is slated to become Nederland's largest recreational facility. Children of the D. J. Rienstra family have contributed in like fashion, providing Nederland with two leading businessmen (the late D. X. Rienstra was board chairman of Nederland State Bank from its founding), Beaumont with two of its leading attorneys, as well as two school teachers and a retired U. S. naval commander and graduate of Annapolis.

Other Dutch immigrants, George Rienstra, Jacob Doornbos, S. R. Carter, George Vanderweg, Christian Rauwerda, John Koelemay, Gerrit Terwey, and John van Oostrom, to name a few, became economically independent as well, and, for the most part, have made similar contributions to the city's growth, for idleness and criminality are vices which are virtually unheard-of among Hollanders. Whatever the heritage left by them, Nederland is justifiably proud of its origins, and has built a towering memorial as proof of that assertion. Its broad-sailed Windmill Museum testifies in silence each day as a tribute to that little band of Hollanders who braved the unknown in search of a better way of life.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The writer, a resident of Nederland for 39 years, recently retired as assistant postmaster there. He is currently on the staff of Lamar University as supervisor of the university post office. He is also a graduate student at the college, where he was a teaching fellow during the 1970-1972 academic years. This article was written to commemorate Nederland's diamond Jubilee celebrated in March, 1973. The writer is indebted to John Vandenberg of Nederland for his translations of many Dutch language articles.

<sup>2</sup>A. E. Stilwell and James R. Crowell, *I Had A Hunch* (Port Arthur, Texas, 1972), 44-52, 75-85, as reprinted from Stilwell's memoirs published in *Saturday Evening Post* during months subsequent to December, 1927; T. W. L. Scheltema, "A Dutch-American Railroad: The Kansas City Southern," *Knickerbocker Weekly Free Netherlands* (November 23, 1942), 15-18.

<sup>3</sup>Stilwell and Crowell, *I Had A Hunch*, 77.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 50-52; Scheltema, "Dutch-American Railroad," 15.

<sup>5</sup>Port Arthur *News*, March 18, 1897; J. van Hinte, *Nederlanders in Amerika*, II (Dutch language; Groningen, Holland, 1928), 268.

<sup>6</sup>For Nolthenius' unsuccessful efforts to buy right-of-way for a terminus at Cameron, Louisiana, and later, at Sabine Pass, Texas, see his Dutch-language memoirs, *Nieuwe Wereld: Indrukken en Aanteekeningen Tijdens Eene Reis Door De Vereenigde Staten Van Noord Amerika* (Haarlem, Holland: 1902).

<sup>7</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, November 11, 1897; and January 28 and March 18, 1898; van Hinte, *Nederlanders*, II, pp. 268-272, 293; Henry Lucas, *Netherlanders in America* (Ann Arbor, 1955), 436.

<sup>8</sup>John R. Rochelle, "Port Arthur: A History Of Its Port To 1963" (unpublished Master's thesis; Beaumont: Lamar University, 1969), 45; Volumes 12, 64-74, and 22, p. 50, *Deed Records*, Jefferson County, Texas. Deed records indicate that A. E. Stilwell, E. L. Martin, C. A. Braley, and J. M. Trimble organized Port Arthur Land Company. Martin was Stilwell's closest associate and president of Kansas City Suburban Belt Railroad, the parent firm of K. C. S. Braley and Trimble were Kansas City attorneys and general counsel for the firms. See Stilwell and Crowell, *I Had A Hunch*, 23, 32-33.

<sup>9</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, January 27, 1898; Holland (Mich.) *De Grondwet*, April 12, 1897 and May 24, 1898; Orange City (Iowa) *De Volkswriend*, August 20, 1896.

<sup>10</sup>Anna A. Cooley, "From the Netherlands in Europe to Nederland, Texas, U. S. A." (Devers, Texas: unpublished 27-page manuscript, 1969), p. 4; G. J. Rienstra to Jan de Geojen, Liverpool, Texas, May 17, 1897, as reprinted in Albert Kuipers, *Waarheen? Wegwijzer Voor Den Nederlandsche Landbouwer, Veeboer, Tuinder, Bloemist, Boomkweeker, enz met Beperkte Middelen* (publ. booklet, 2nd edition: N. P., N. D., but about 1900), 60.

<sup>11</sup>Van Hinte, *Nederlanders*, 271; Galveston *Daily News*, November 15, 1897; clipping (publication unknown), Advertisement of B. J. Nauta, Port Arthur Land Company, published in Leeuwarden, Holland on March 30, 1898; (Netherlands) *Heerenveensche Courant*, December 4, 1897; letter, Kuipers to de Goeijen, November 15, 1897, as reprinted in Kuipers, *Waarheen?*, 62-63.

<sup>12</sup>Port Arthur *News*, March 18, 1897; Port Arthur *Herald*, July 22, 1897.

<sup>13</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, November 4, 1897 and March 17, 1900; Cooley, "From The Netherlands to Nederland," 2; Marie Fleming, "History of The Orange Hotel" (Nederland: unpublished manuscript, 1972), 1-3.

<sup>14</sup>Map Record No. 1, p. 38, county clerk's office, Jefferson County, Texas. Mena Park is still city-owned, but King's Park has reverted to private ownership. The original townsite was bounded by present-day Ninth and Fifteenth Streets and by Nederland and Chicago Avenues.

<sup>15</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, October 28 and December 30, 1897; January 20, July 2, 14, August 25, and September 15, 1898; March 30, 1899; and February 24, 1900; Beaumont *Journal*, December 11, 1899 and July 23, 1905; (Port Arthur) *The Evening News*: May 13, 1903; Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, 436.

<sup>16</sup>Actually, a group of seven Hollanders led by J. E. Kroes, a land company representative in Holland, had arrived via New York two weeks earlier. See Port Arthur *Herald*, November 4, 1897.

<sup>17</sup>Galveston *Daily News*, November 15, 1897.

<sup>18</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, November 18, 1897.

<sup>19</sup>Letter, Albert Kuipers to Jan de Geojien, Port Arthur, Texas, November 15, 1897, archives of Port Arthur Land Company, Amsterdam, Holland, as reprinted in the (Holland) *Heerenveensche Courant*, December 4, 1897, and in Kuipers, *Waarheen?*, 62-63.

<sup>20</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, November 18, 1897.

<sup>21</sup>Galveston *Daily News*, March 2, 1898; Cooley, "From Netherlands to Nederland," 1-2; Koelemay family exit permit, entitled "Getuigschrift van Verandering van Werkelijke Woonplaats," issued by the burgomaster of Hoogkarspel, Holland on February 2, 1898, original in the Windmill Museum, Nederland, Texas.

<sup>22</sup>Galveston *Daily News*, March 29, 1898; Port Arthur *Herald*, March 31, 1898.

<sup>23</sup>Galveston *Daily News*, April 17 and December 28, 1898; B. Westerterp family exit permit, entitled as in footnote 21, and issued by the burgomaster of Oldeboorn, Holland on November 25, 1898, original in Windmill Museum, Nederland, Texas.

<sup>24</sup>Holland (Mich.) *De Grondwet*, April 12, 1898.

<sup>25</sup>"History of The Louis A. Spencer Family," (Nederland: unpublished manuscript, 1972), p. 4; (Port Arthur) *The Evening News*, May 13, 1903; Port Arthur *Herald*, May 18, 1898.

<sup>26</sup>*Yearbook of The Christian Reformed Church-1899*, pp. 34-35, Dutch Heritage Collections, Calvin College and Seminary Library, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Scheltema, "Dutch-American Railroad," p. 18; van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, p. 271; Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, p. 437; Holland (Mich.) *De Grondwet*, May 24, 1898. Although unverified except on baptismal records, D. Ballast apparently served as lay minister throughout the church's existence.

<sup>27</sup>Holland (Mich.) *De Grondwet*, May 24, 1898; "History of Nederland Schools" (Nederland: unpublished manuscript, 1972), pp. 1-3; "Nederland: The Story of Our Town" (Nederland: Nederland Independent School District, 1971), 22, 24.

<sup>28</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, May 5, 1898; March 17, 1900; van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 273.

<sup>29</sup>P. J. van Heiningen and W. Beukers, "Vraag en Antwoord," *Neerlandia* (publication of the Algemeen Nederlandsche Verboon for Dutch emigrants overseas), July, 1898, 38-39.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, May 26 and September 1, 8, 1898; (Port Arthur) *The Evening News*, May 13, 1903.

<sup>32</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, September 8, 1898.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, September 8, 1898.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, October 14, 21, 28, 1899; (Port Arthur) *The Evening News*, May 13, 1903.

<sup>36</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, August 25, 1898; June 9, 1900; July 6, 1904; *Map Record No. 1*, plat of A. Burson addition, townsite of Nederland, 1902, archives, Jefferson County, Texas.

<sup>37</sup>(Port Arthur) *The Evening News*, May 13, 1903; Port Arthur *Herald*, August 30, October 11, 25, November 22, 1902; and March 7, 1903.

<sup>38</sup>"History of The Orange Hotel," pp. 1-3; Port Arthur *Herald*, November 21, 1903; Beaumont *Journal*, April 30 and May 7, 1905.

<sup>39</sup>Holland (Mich.) *De Grondwet*, January 18, 1910 and June 1, 1920.

<sup>40</sup>van Hinte, *Nederlanders*, 275; Port Arthur *City Directory*, 1905-1906.

<sup>41</sup>Port Arthur *Herald*, January 13, 1900; letter, H. W. Naezer to Jan de Geojien, Port Arthur, Texas, June 6, 1897, archives of Port Arthur Land Company, Amsterdam, Holland, as reprinted in Albert Kuipers (developer), "Der Hollandsche Kolonie van 'Nederland' in Jefferson County, Zuid Oost Texas, Een Spoorwegstation Tusschen Beaumont en Port Arthur" (published booklet: N. P., N. D., but about 1900), p. 60.

<sup>42</sup>van Hinte, *Nederlanders*, p. 275; "History of The John Kaper Family" (Nederland: unpublished manuscript, 1972); Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, 436; Port Arthur *Herald*, March 22, 1902; Port Arthur *City Directory*, 1925. For the history of Port Arthur's Holland-Texas Hypotheek Bank, see also J. C. J. Kempees, "De Nederlandsche Hypotheekbanken in de Vereenigde Staten," *De Economist*, October-December, 1919.

<sup>43</sup>Orange City (Iowa) *De Volksvriend*, December 30, 1909; van Hinte, *Nederlanders*, 276.

<sup>44</sup>Orange City (Iowa) *De Volksvriend*, July 4, 11 and October 5, 17, 1911, photocopies courtesy of Dutch Heritage Collections, Ramaker Library, Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa; Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, 439.

<sup>45</sup>*De Volksvriend*, December 30, 1909.

<sup>46</sup>E. J. G. Bloemendaal, *Naar Amerika* (Dutch-language; Arnhem, Holland: 1911), 231.

<sup>47</sup>*De Volksvriend*, October 5, 1911; van Hinte, *Nederlanders in Amerika*, pp. 276-277; Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, pp. 438-439; Nederlandsche Gezant to Washington, "Emigratie Naar de Vereenigde Staten," Report of August 16, 1913, Library of Congress.

<sup>48</sup>Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, p. 439. Winnie's Dutch settlers included John Stob, Lucas Holtrop, Tony Groeneweg, Gerrit Hoffman, G. J. Sprietsma, G. A. Vanderveen, John Meurs, A. Schipper, Derk Boersema, Bartel Huizinga, Ben Renkema, G. J. Kobes, Martin Tulp, and Jacob Tulp. Since "tulp" is the Dutch word for tulip, this article's title has a literal as well as a figurative meaning.

<sup>49</sup>Letter, Rev. Ralph Koelemay to W. T. Block, Plover, Wisconsin, February 18, 1973.

<sup>50</sup> Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, 440.