

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Leon Anhaizer (Imperial Tour)**

Mr. Anhaizer worked for Imperial Sugar Company from 1961-1995 retiring as Vice President of Refinery Operations. Leon was born and raised in Sugar Land. He graduated from Louisiana State University, the only sugar engineering school in the United States.

This interview explains the processes of taking raw sugar cane and creating various products such as granulated sugar, brown sugar, powdered sugar, and liquid sugar. Leon walks the reader through the purpose of each building, from the rail yard dropping sugar cane; the sugar warehouse design and purpose; the use of dried animal bone in the Char House to eliminate sugar impurities; and the bagging and shipping. The refinery plant closed in 2003.

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Interview Summary

Events

This Oral History interview is different than most because it is not about people or places but about the processing of producing various forms of sugar at the refinery in Sugar Land.

Founded in 1843 and closed in 2003, Imperial Sugar was the primary and largest employer in the city named after it – Sugar Land.

Leon Anhaizer began his career at Imperial Sugar in 1961 after graduating from Louisiana State University with a degree in sugar engineering. The only university in the US to offer such a degree. He retired in 1995 just a few years prior to the closure of the refinery.

Leon explains the purpose of each of the 3 buildings: for receiving the raw sugar cane, processing, storing, bagging and shipping in various forms.

Leon provides details on how sugar cane was processed during his years at the refinery including using animal bones from the US, Scotland and India to remove impurities and decolorization. Also, the use of molasses to protect the raw sugar from bacteria.

During its peak production in the 1990s, Imperial Sugar produced 4 million pounds of sugar per day.

Sugar Land was Imperial Sugar's company town. The refinery supplied the water, the electricity, the fire department, the main employment, and housing.