



# 2016 Save Texas History Essay Contest

*7th Grade winning entry*

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## **Sweetness for the City of Sugar Land**

There are many historical sites in Texas, and I believe the Imperial Sugar Building in Sugar Land is one that should be recognized and preserved. Imperial Sugar's rich history began in southeast Texas in 1843. It was originally known as Oakland Plantation founded by Nathaniel F. Williams. The plantation grew cotton, corn, and sugar cane. The plantation's sugar crop began to grow rapidly so they decided to install a commercial raw sugar mill. The mill would grind the sugar cane into pure sugar, eventually establishing the future site of the Imperial Sugar building headquartered in Sugar Land, Texas. In 1852 the land was sold to Benjamin F. Terry and William J. Kyle, and they changed the name to the Sugar Land Plantation. Shortly after the Civil War began the production of sugar declined. Several mills became run down and barely worked. In 1882 the land was sold yet again to E.H. Cunningham of San Antonio. E.H. Cunningham eventually built a large sugar refinery on the property in 1879. In the year 1883, a 600 ton raw sugar mill was finished and was given the name, "Imperial Mill". It wasn't until 1896 that the construction began on a cane sugar refinery in Sugar Land to change the mill's raw sugar to 100,000 pounds of white refined sugar a day. Cunningham was in poor health and the business was handed to W.T. Eldridge. In 1906 he met with Isaac H. Kempner of Galveston and the two men became equal owners of the land. They transferred the title of the plantations to a private company they had formed known as Imperial Sugar Incorporated. The ownership changed a few more times after the death of W.T. Eldridge. It eventually ended up in the hands of W.H. Louviere. In 1980 – 1990 Imperial Sugar acquired the Holly Sugar Corporation, a company formed from eight sugar beet processing plants, to form the Imperial Holly corporation. With this merge came an increase in size and they began marketing both cane and beet sugar. In 2003, the original sugar refinery in Sugar Land, Texas was closed. The operating refinery facilities are in Savannah, Georgia, and





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Gramercy, Louisiana. They are operating under the Imperial Sugar and Dixie Crystals brands. The corporate offices still remain in Sugar Land, Texas, but I feel a little bit of history has already died with the closing of the refinery. Hopefully the corporate offices will continue to operate in Sugar Land. This is just a little history of how Imperial Sugar was founded.

I believe this historical building should live on because it brought many advantages to the city. One of the main and most obvious advantages is the town's name – Sugar Land. Many craftsmen and sugar experts also came to the city. This large business opened the doors for many jobs. Imperial Sugar also began importing raw sugar through the Port of Galveston. This business continued to flourish and they blessed the community with many resources. They provided medical care, established Imperial State Bank, the Imperial Mercantile Company and other retail stores. They opened up many opportunities for jobs. Imperial Sugar gave back by paying for graveled streets with concrete curbs, gutters, sidewalks, built hospitals, started churches and contributed to the school system. The company furnished electricity, gas, and water to the town of Sugar Land. Not only did the company provide opportunities for the community, they also provided a product you could rely on. Millions of households across Texas and the southeast valued the Imperial Sugar brand.

I feel this historical building should live on for many years more to preserve the hard work and dedication they showed to the city of Sugar Land, Texas and its citizens.

