

ORANGE CITY'S ROOTS & TULIP FESTIVAL'S HISTORY

Orange City's beginnings start well after the early history of the Dutch in North America. The first wave of Dutch immigration began in the 1600's with the settlement of New Amsterdam, later New York.

After 1820, a second surge of immigration from the Netherlands went to settlements in Michigan and Iowa. The town of Orange City, founded in 1870 by 70 families, was named after William of Orange and the House of Orange in Holland, grew as the farming community expanded. Within two years the number escalated to 1,000 persons. The people immediately started schools and churches. By 1882 the Northwestern Classical Academy was established. This first building, Zwemer Hall, now on the National Historical Register overlooks the campus and stands guard at the end of Central Avenue. Now, Northwestern College is a 4 year Christian college educating over 1,500 students each year and is affiliated with the Reformed Church of America. As the Dutch became involved in the local politics, the county seat was transferred to Orange City from the more western community of Calliope. Today, the Sioux County Courthouse majestically overlooks the business district of the community and is listed in the national Historical Registry.

Although the first years in northwest Iowa were harsh with plagues of locusts, the area grew steadily into the 20th Century. As the European homeland seemed to become further from reality, a movement started to begin a celebration, in the spring of every year, to honor the traditions and customs of the Dutch ancestors. In 1936 the Tulip Festival officially began.

The war years of 1942-46 saw a halt to the festivities, but local active citizens helped to make the young men from the Dutch East Indies training at the Army Air Technical School at Sioux Falls, SD feel at home as they spoke together in the Dutch language. Victory Days were celebrated jointly with these men in 1943 and 1944.

In 1947 the Tulip Festival was revived, and by 1950 it had been lengthened to three days in duration. The Festival of Dutch Heritage celebrated annually on the 3rd weekend in May is held dear by Orange City's inhabitants with a flower show, an evening performance of a Broadway play, an afternoon and evening parade, and street dancing by old and young alike. It is a time when the entire community joins together to work for a common goal; a weekend of fun entertainment, and celebration. This event begins on Wednesday for the locals and continues through Saturday drawing over 150,000 people.

Today a new 18 hole Golf Course, Aquatic Center, Housing Projects, the continuing growth of Northwestern College and the Hospital, along with the industrial and business expansion all highlight progress in Orange City.

One can see the Dutch Heritage is still responsible for the pride that hovers over Orange City as the skyline is silhouetted by windmills and authentic Dutch architecture of the buildings. Indeed, this community invites all who visit to enjoy a unique shopping experience topped with Dutch Hospitality. Breng ons een bezoek (pay us a visit) is Orange City's standing invitation.