

The Yards, A Way of Life: A Story of the Sioux City Stockyards

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The Yards, A Way of Life: A Story of the Sioux City Stockyards, by Marcia Poole. Sioux City: The Sioux City Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center Association, 2006. vii, 226 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$20.00 paper.

Reviewer Wilson J. Warren is associate professor of history at Western Michigan University. He is the author of *Tied to the Great Packing Machine: The Midwest and Meatpacking* (2007).

Stockyards were central to life in the Midwest for the better part of a century. With the development of railroads, entrepreneurs established livestock holding and transfer facilities in several major midwestern cities, starting in 1865 with Chicago's Union Stockyards. Their initial purpose was to provide feeding, watering, and resting facilities for cattle that would then be resold for live shipment to retail markets in the East. During the 1870s and 1880s, however, stockyard companies attracted meatpacking companies to their facilities. By the 1890s, midwestern stockyards, especially the Big Five packers—Swift, Armour, Morris, Cudahy, and Schwarzschild and Sulzberger (later renamed Wilson)—had overtaken eastern retail butchers in the competition for sales. During their heyday from roughly 1890 through 1960, stockyards functioned both as retail and terminal markets for cattle, hogs, and sheep. However, especially after World War II, farmers' direct marketing of their livestock to packing companies made them increasingly obsolete. Most of the major stockyards had disappeared by the 1970s.

Marcia Poole's history of the Sioux City stockyards documents many interesting and colorful events and themes related to Iowa's—and one of the nation's—most important stockyards. The book is a handsome production that makes lavish use of photographs and other illustrations. Although intended as a popular account of the city's stockyards, it also conveys serious research on several important aspects of Sioux City's most important employer. Its account of the early history of the meat industry in Sioux City is especially well done. James E. Booge, the chief founder of the industry in Sioux City, started packing pork in 1858. The Sioux City Union Stock Yards Company was then organized in 1884, and its articles of incorporation were modified in 1887 so that slaughtering could take place there. The book explains the transition from local to national packers in detail, with much of this market reorientation due to the reorganization of the Union Stock Yards Company in 1894. After the 1890s, Cudahy, Armour, and Swift operated packing plants at the Sioux City stockyards. Poole also provides vignettes about interesting and unusual aspects of the stockyards' history, including sections on baseball at the Sioux City Stock Yards Ball Park, promotional efforts linked to the Abu Bekr

Shrine Temple White Horse Mounted Patrol, and social life centered on the stockyards district's restaurants and bars.

Unfortunately, other important elements of the stockyards' history are either obscured or glossed over. For instance, an important section on the transition from railroad to truck shipment of livestock might have been better connected to the post-World War II decline of not only Sioux City's but all other stockyards. Discussion of the stockyard's commission firms is scattered and not clearly developed. Particularly problematic is the presentation on workers and their labor unions: the crucial union-building period from 1900 to 1940 is covered in just four pages; virtually nothing is said about workers after World War II.

By the time the Sioux City stockyards had become the nation's largest in 1973, stockyards had become largely irrelevant. After the mid-twentieth century, farmers increasingly sold their livestock directly to meatpackers, and bypassed stockyards as unnecessary middlemen. Despite its faults, Marcia Poole's history conveys a great deal of interesting and important information about one of the nation's most significant stockyards.

Our Town: A Heartland Lynching, A Haunted Town, and the Hidden History of White America, by Cynthia Carr. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006. 501 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Pfeifer is associate professor of history at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. He is the author of *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (2004) and three articles in the *Annals of Iowa* on the history of lynching and vigilantism in Iowa.

In this overly lengthy book, Cynthia Carr, formerly a writer for the *Village Voice*, seeks to expose the history of racism in her family—her grandfather was in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s—and in Marion, Indiana, the town where she spent a portion of her childhood. Marion, located in the north central portion of the Hoosier State, was the site of a lynching on August 7, 1930, that claimed the lives of two African American men, Tom Shipp and Abe Smith, and nearly claimed the life of a third, James Cameron. Carr's idiosyncratic approach combines extended digressions into her family history, research in local history and archives, extensive interviews with Marion and Grant County residents and others connected to the 1930 lynching and the history of race in the locality, and some reading in secondary sources on the history of Indiana, the Ku Klux Klan, and lynching in the United States.