America's Historic Stockyards: Livestock Hotels. *By J'Nell L. Pate.* Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2005. xiv + 225 pp. Index, notes, bibliography, glossary, illustrations, photographs. Cloth, $29.95. ISBN: 0-875-65304-9.

Reviewed by Louis P. Cain

J'Nell Pate's homage to a once flourishing industry is divided into two parts. The first six chapters are devoted to a condensed history of livestock marketing over a span of roughly three-and-a-half centuries. The remaining four chapters are devoted to short individual histories of the major U.S. stockyards: "livestock hotels," in the industry's parlance. These institutions were an important part of American economic and business history for a century following the Civil War, and this is the first book of which I'm aware that examines the histories of the major stockyards in one place. It is useful for that reason alone.

It is also useful for the ten-page glossary, in which Pate has assembled the vocabulary of the industry, including the term "livestock hotel." As she notes in her preface, "Phrases from a unique language . . . need to be preserved" (p. ix). I wish she had elected to incorporate more of these phrases into her narrative. The term "governments," for example, applied to the animals rejected as a result of government inspection, would have fit neatly into her description of the industry after the passage of the Packers and Stockyards Act in 1921.

There is little analysis, and I believe the history she presents in both parts would have benefited from more. Particularly germane is the fact that meatpacking is a weight-losing industry. The sides of beef shipped between Chicago and the East ended up being about 55 percent of the weight of the live animal, and that percentage is even lower with today's technology. Basic location theory suggests that such industries (steel is another) will situate themselves as close to the source of the raw materials as possible. For meatpackers, the cost saving of a site close to the animals was a trade-off against the product's perishability. Before railcars were refrigerated, live animals were shipped east. From the start, stockyards became an integral part of the movement of live animals, and it was natural for packing plants serving a local market to locate near the yards. With

refrigeration, Chicago's packing plants began to ship more meat and fewer animals east. As the railroad network reduced transit times, the packers began to move west toward the animals.

The fact that meatpacking is a weight-losing enterprise has implications for both parts of the book, and Pate's story might have been told more effectively had the two parts been better integrated. The two dozen separate histories that comprise the first three chapters of Part Two are presented as discrete entities, with little reference to the history detailed in Part One that would have helped explain the pattern of stockyard creation.

Part Two's histories comprise a theme and variations in which the main theme, the collection of animals at a terminal market, is always recognizable. The story begins in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where a livestock market was mentioned as early as 1797, but the stockyards, built adjacent to a railroad, did not open until 1868. It ends in Joplin, Missouri, where the yards, built adjacent to the highway as well as the railroad, weren't opened until 1931. In addition to the stockyards, the other two components of the "triplets," packing plants and transportation facilities, are important elements of the main theme. Armour, Swift, and the other major packers that constituted the old "Big Five" are regularly named, often because the yards' initial proprietors offered an ownership share to induce them to locate there. Railroads also held ownership shares.

Stockyards began to disappear in the 1950s, when "new packers built modern, one-story, conveyor-belt processing plants near feedlots" and "the slower giant packers . . . took too long to decide to abandon their aging facilities in the cities. . ." (p. 41). As Pate notes, the key to understanding this turn of events is the change in the transport mode. Whereas once railroads moved animals to terminal markets, trucks now carry animals to auction markets.

Pate lists many yards in the final chapter, "Other Stockyards," before ending with two short summary paragraphs. The lack of an effective unification of the main elements in the two parts is disappointing. Many of the individual histories simply end with a statement that the yards closed; when reasons are given, they are limited to explanations of why the yards' owners were losing money. It is necessary to return to the end of Part One for answers to such questions as where did the animals go, why are some yards still

in operation, what happened to the old Big Five, and what explains the rise of a new Big Three.

Nevertheless, J'Nell Pate is to be commended for the great service of assembling this material in one place: the histories of the individual yards, the glossary, and the bibliography. Like a hotel overlooking the square of a city the Interstate has bypassed, little is left to indicate the activity that once took place at these livestock hotels.

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