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EARL HIGGINS, Mgr.

The Greater Omaha Stock Yards and Its Development

Few people, in whatever walk in life, appreciate the size or importance of the South Omaha stock yards. The yards are large, that they cost a lot of money and that they handle a great deal of live stock during the course of a year, is about all that the average citizen knows or thinks about what is really the largest single industry in the west, and which has done more to develop the western country than any other single industrial agency.

With an investment of more than seven millions of dollars, a million and a quarter of which has been invested in improvements in the past six years, the Union Stock Yards company of South Omaha is the largest corporation in Nebraska, aside from the railroads. It has built and equipped the most modern stock yards in the world—a statement that will be certified by any man experienced in stock yards matters—and in the short space of thirty-two years has built up the largest live stock market in the west, and the second largest live stock market in the world in total head of stock received in one year. When the company was first organized the west was thinly settled, and the promoters of the company were dubbed "dreamers."

"How can these men expect to ever build up a live stock market away out west, competing against Chicago, which has already put its cinch on the live stock and packing business?"

That was the query propounded when the promoters of the South Omaha stock yards first set to work. But those promoters had several things in their favor. They had pluck and confidence, and if they were "dreamers" at least they had large dreams and then proceeded with a determination to make their dreams come true.

Second Largest Stock Market

South Omaha is today the second largest live stock market in the world in point of total receipts and the third largest packing center. It is the great market to which men come in search of feeder cattle and sheep, and while other markets, considerably older, have remained at a standstill so far as growth is concerned, the South Omaha market has shown a steady growth from year to year.

A few weeks, or rather a few months ago, some of the large eastern markets were closed because of the prevalence of the foot and mouth disease, but during the entire period the South Omaha yards were open. There was a reason for this. The South Omaha yards have been made as sanitary as human ingenuity could devise. But the company was not content with every sanitary precaution in the equipment of the yards. It went further. It placed an embargo against live stock from certain sections, and it had a small army of government inspectors on hand. The moment a rumor came of a breaking out of the disease within its territory, the company rushed an inspector to the spot. The company went before the live stock sanitary board and secured a ruling compelling the railroads to thoroughly disinfect each car immediately after it was unloaded and during the whole of the embargo not a head of live stock was unloaded during the night. Unloading was done during the broad light of the day, and there was almost as many inspectors on the job as there were animals to be unloaded. The result of this careful precaution was that not a single infected animal reached the yards.

The company is spending money every day to further increase the capacity and efficiency of the yards. Within the last three years over \$300,000 has been spent in enlarging and improving the hog yards. These yards today are of steel and concrete, and are admittedly the finest hog yards in the world. The yard water system begun a little over two years ago and but recently completed, cost more than \$265,000 and the plant is one that would be appreciated by many a city of metropolitan size. It furnishes the finest well water at a good pressure; drawn from gravel strata, to every point in the yards, and through a gravity system and perfect sewerage fresh water is circulating through all the pens all the time.

One of the remarkable features of the yards

is the rapid growth of the horse and mule market. This growth has been so great that long since the problem of handling the business was a hard one. But the enterprising management has solved it by the erection of the largest and best built barns in the world for keeping and selling of horses and mules. These barns, built as a whole, cover a total area of 294,201 square feet. A paved try-out track in front of the barns contains 20,458 square feet. Today the South Omaha horse and mule market is the third largest market of the kind in world. Present indications are that the year 1916 will see all records broken in this respect and the South Omaha horse and mule market become nearly the largest in the world.

Same Charge for 20 Years

It is interesting to note that while the yards have been growing in size and improved in every respect, and that while the general average of prices of live stock have been steadily tending upward, the Union Stock Yards company is today exacting the same charges fixed twenty years ago. While everything that the company must buy has advanced in price, its one commodity—service—has remained at the same price although the quality of the service rendered has been vastly improved.

The influence exerted by the South Omaha stock yards upon the growth and development of the west is too great to be measured by the finite mind. Thirty years ago the west was sparsely settled and only the far-seeing believed that in good time the whole west would be settled up by the prosperous farmers and stock raisers. Then all live stock had to be shipped to Chicago, and freight rates were high, the service inadequate and the Chicago market in absolute control. The loss from delays in shipping and shrinkage were enormous. For a few years the South Omaha yards furnished only a sort of "hesitating place" for western shipments moving eastward, then the growth of the feeder market began. But the founders of the yards were not content. They wanted to make it a final market, so they set about solving the problem. It was finally solved by inducing several large packing concerns to establish branch packing houses at South Omaha, and with the establishment of the packing houses the success of the enterprises was secure. The volume of business transacted by both the stock yards and the packing houses at South Omaha exceeds a quarter of a billion dollars a year. The statistics of the Union Stock Yards company for thirty-two years are of absorbing interest. During that time 121,026,047 head of live stock were received at the yards. These receipts were divided as follows:

Cattle	25,333,695
Hogs	58,157,806
Sheep	41,757,567
Horses and mules	776,979
Total	126,026,047

It must not be understood that all of the live stock received by the Union Stock Yards company of South Omaha is sold to the packers located there. Practically one-third of the animals received are shipped out again. Feeder cattle and sheep are purchased and shipped out in enormous numbers, in fact, being the third of the receipts which are not purchased by the company. During the thirty-two years the company has handled a total of 2,987,128 cars of live stock.

Sixty per cent of the live stock receipts at South Omaha originate in Nebraska, the balance coming from Colorado, Nevada, Iowa, Oregon, Idaho, South Dakota, Montana, Utah, Missouri and Wyoming. The live stock raisers of Nebraska received upwards of \$65,000,000 for animals marketed at South Omaha during 1916. There are ten packing plants located at South Omaha because of the stock yards, and these plants, together with the stock yards, represent a total investment of \$25,000,000, employ an average of 6,000 people and pay in wages approximately \$6,000,000 a year. The packing industry represents more than half of the total manufactures of Nebraska, and exceeds the total gold production of the United States and Alaska by more than \$20,000,000.