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Review of *Tied to the Great Packing Machine: The Midwest and Meatpacking*. By Wilson J. Warren

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Tied to the Great Packing Machine: The Midwest and Meatpacking. By Wilson J. Warren. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007. xii + 317 pp. Photographs, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. $39.95 cloth.

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* has been the standard example historians use to introduce discussions of federal regulation of the meatpacking industry during the early 20th century. Although Sinclair hoped to galvanize public support for socialism, the public cared only about his exposé of atrocious meatpacking practices that affected the family dinner table. Today the meatpacking industry no longer converges in Chicago and other peripheral major Midwestern cities, but livestock still must be slaughtered, skinned, and dismembered as well as graded and processed into a variety of cuts for grocers' meat cases and ultimately the consumer. What, one might ask, has changed since Sinclair set the public and Congress astir in 1906?

Wilson J. Warren provides important answers to that complex question. In this study, he traces the transformation of the red meat industry across the Midwest from the terminal stockyards in Chicago, Kansas City, and Omaha to plants near small towns, particularly in the Great Plains, where cattle and hogs arrive via trucks rather than railroad cars. Warren emphasizes the packers' shift from buying through commission men at terminal markets to direct buying from farmers at plants located close to feed, water, and cheap labor. He also discusses the technical and marketing innovations that substantially changed the meatpacking industry, beginning about 1960, particularly with the introduction of electric knives and the shipment of precut and boxed meat directly to retailers. In addition, Warren traces ethnic change among meatpacking workers from first and second generation East Europeans in the major cities to whites, African Americans, Southeast Asians, and Latino workers in rural areas. And he provides an informative ethical discussion about killing animals for meat and the manner in which cattle and hogs are slaughtered (or not) before reaching the butchers' knives.

This well-written, solidly researched study will be useful for historians of the Great Plains. Warren's analysis of environmental problems, such as smells, water pollution, and soil contamination, and the spread of pathogens and bacteria found in certain meats merits the attention of scholars and the public. He has given us much to consider in relation to the economic, social, and political transformation of the meatpacking industry in the Great Plains and Midwest during the 20th century.

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Agricultural and social historians of the region will find this book well worth reading. **R. Douglas Hurt**, *Department of History, Purdue University.*

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