

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Old Stone Gate of Chicago Union Stockyards

AND/OR COMMON

Old Stone Gate of Chicago Union Stockyards

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Intersection of West Exchange Ave. & South NOT FOR PUBLICATION 5

CITY, TOWN

Peoria Street CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Chicago

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

CODE

17

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

031

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

DISTRICT  
 BUILDING(S)  
 STRUCTURE  
 SITE  
 OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC  
 PRIVATE  
 BOTH  
**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**  
 IN PROCESS  
 BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED  
 UNOCCUPIED  
 WORK IN PROGRESS  
**ACCESSIBLE**  
 YES: RESTRICTED  
 YES: UNRESTRICTED  
 NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE  MUSEUM  
 COMMERCIAL  PARK  
 EDUCATIONAL  PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
 ENTERTAINMENT  RELIGIOUS  
 GOVERNMENT  SCIENTIFIC  
 INDUSTRIAL  TRANSPORTATION  
 MILITARY  OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Chicago (Michael A. Bilandic, Mayor)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

City Hall and County Building, 118 North Clark Street

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Recorder of Deeds Office, City Hall and County Building

STREET &amp; NUMBER

118 North Clark Street

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Commission on Chicago Historical & Architectural Landmarks;  
National Register of Historic Places

DATE

1972, 1972

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Commission on Chicago Historical & Architectural Landmarks;  
National Register of Historic Places

CITY, TOWN

Chicago, Washington

STATE

Illinois, D.C.

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# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

From about 1879 to 1971, the eastward-facing, triple arched Old Stone Gate of Chicago Union Stockyards, constructed of rough faced Lemont limestone and capped with a steeply pitched roof, served as the main entrance to the famed yards. Located on Chicago's south side, they were founded in 1865 and served as a host of sorts to over a billion animals destined for the world's dining tables. Today, the stockyards as well as the neighboring packing plants, are gone, but the carefully restored gate is a fitting visual reminder of Chicago's once dominant position in the meatpacking and stockyard industries.

Chicago's first slaughter houses and stockyards were located near what is now the city's downtown area. The first recorded slaughter house was situated on the north bank of the Chicago River, while the first stock yard was located either at Madison Street and Ogden Avenue or Cottage Grove Avenue and 29th Street. After the eastern railroads reached Chicago in 1852, most stockyards were located near their terminals. The city's meatpackers, meanwhile, had concentrated their activities along the south branch of the Chicago River because of growing complaints about obnoxious odors and a wish to take advantage of improved transportation facilities offered by the Illinois and Michigan Canal.

The desire on the part of livestock dealers, meatpackers, and railroad men to consolidate Chicago's many stockyards into one large yard for greater efficiency led to the founding of the Union Stockyards in 1865. After purchasing the 320-acre site south of the city, Union Stockyards President Timothy B. Blackstone, who was also chief executive of the Chicago, Alton, and St. Louis Railroad and who represented the large financial stake in the yards of the railroads, selected his chief Engineer, Octave Chanute, to lay out the new facility. Although work was not started until June 1, 1865, Chanute had the project completed by Christmas Day that same year. At the time the yards had pens to accomodate 21,000 cattle, 75,000 hogs, 22,000 sheep, and 200 horses. In addition the yards had hotels, restaurants, and an office building. By 1900 the yards had grown to encompass 475 acres and had a capacity for 75,000 cattle, 50,000 sheep, 300,000 hogs, and 5,000 horses as well as its own bank and post office.

Because most of the early stockyard structures including its gate, were of wood construction and soon deteriorated, they were replaced by ones of stone construction in the late 1870's. Daniel H. Burnham and John W. Root designed most stockyard buildings during this period, and, although it cannot

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# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES Ca. 1879-1971 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Probably Daniel H. Burnham and John W. Root

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Stone Gate of Chicago Union Stockyards is the most important extant symbol of the American meatpacking and stockyard industries and the rise of Chicago as one of the Nation's leading cities.

From the late 1860's until well into the 1950's the Chicago Union Stockyards and the packinghouses surrounding it formed "the greatest meat packing center in the world," say culinary historians Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont. In fact, "the name of Chicago" was "synonymous with meat."<sup>1</sup> This development was made possible not only by Chicago's superior rail facilities but by entrepreneurs like Gustavus Swift, Philip Armour, and others who established plants here and revolutionized the meat packing industry by developing refrigerated railroad cars, improving meat canning techniques, extensively utilizing by-products, and increasing plant efficiency. As a result, "the stockyards of Chicago," says historian Matthew Josephson, "became the home of a gigantic and rhythmically functioning industry" which "by an ingenious arrangement of the yards, and division of the labor," rapidly disassembled livestock.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, the Union Stockyards, according to historian W. Joseph Grand, represented the "greatest livestock market in the world," and as such, its prices generally prevailed in markets elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Chicago yards influenced the development of the West because they were the final destination for much of the cattle brought to towns like Abilene and Dodge City. The Union Stockyards maintained their dominance well into the 1950's. In 1952, yard officials

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<sup>1</sup>Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont, Eating in America: A History (New York, 1976), 206, 210.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Josephson, The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901 (New York, 1962), 285.

<sup>3</sup>W. Joseph Grand, Illustrated History of the Union Stockyards: Sketch Book of Familiar Faces and Places at the Yards (Chicago, 1901), 8.

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# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>16</u>	<u>44,611,50</u>	<u>4,629,620</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See last page of description).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ralph J. Christian, Historian, Historic Landmarks Project

ORGANIZATION

DATE

American Association for State and Local History November 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1400 Eighth Avenue South

615/242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville,

Tennessee 37203

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET Union Stockyard ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

be established irrefutably, they probably drew the plans for the stone gate as well. At any rate, around 1879 the wooden gate was replaced by the present stone structure. It and the guardhouse which was once connected to its south end were among the few structures which survived the 1934 fire that almost completely destroyed the stockyards.

The eastward-facing Union Stockyards Gate is constructed of rough faced Lemont limestone and is capped with a steeply pitched roof covered with oxidized copper sheathing. The gate, which is approximately 50 feet wide, consists of a massive center section flanked by two smaller wings. The center section rises to a height of almost 32 feet and has an arched opening which reaches a height of 17 feet and is almost 16 feet wide. At one time this opening featured a heavy iron grille, housed in a slot that runs the full width of the underside of the arch, that could be used to close it. Tall limestone turrets with conical tops are located near the spring points of the central arch. At one time these turrets had finials, but these have either broken off or disintegrated over the years.

On both its east and west facades, the gate's central arch has false triangular gables, which at one time featured elaborate finials at their highest points. The front (east) gable features a projecting sculptured limestone steer head. This bull is said to be "Sherman," who won the grand sweepstakes at the first American Fat Stock Show and was supposedly named for John B. Sherman, the man so instrumental in establishing the Union Stockyards.

The two smaller wings of the gate are asymmetrical and are about half the height of the segment between them. Their roofs and decorative detail make them smaller versions of the central portion. Both feature arched openings, which are 6-foot wide on the south and 7 1/2 feet on the north. Originally both arches had hinged iron gates, but today only the southern arch has this feature.

After the Union Stockyards closed in 1971, much of its property was purchased for redevelopment as an industrial park. The developers announced plans to demolish most remaining structures at the yards, including the old stone gate, which was to make way for the widening of Exchange Avenue. The city, however, working through the Commission on Chicago Historical

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and Architectural Landmarks, eventually reached an agreement with the owners which saved the structure and led to its restoration. In November, 1971, the guardhouse which was connected to the gate at its south end was demolished, and the stone from it used to repair disintegrated blocks in the gate. At the same time, the gate's raw southern edge was refinished as a simple rusticated wall, the gatehouse was removed from the northern wing, all wiring was redone, and the sheet metal roof replaced with the present oxidized copper one. The area around the gate was landscaped, trees were planted, replicas of old street lamps were installed, and original paving bricks from stockyard pens implanted in those areas not landscaped. Today, the well-maintained and beautifully landscaped Union Stockyards Gate, surrounded by splayed Exchange Avenue, presents a sharp and pleasing contrast with the industrial area surrounding it.

Boundary Justification. The boundary of the nominated property includes both the triangular parkway containing the Union Stockyards Gate and another triangular parkway approximately 12 feet west of it which was once also part of the Union Stockyards. Presently, it is landscaped and features implanted paving bricks salvaged from the stockyard pens.

Boundary Description. As described in legal records furnished by the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks and indicated in red on the accompanying maps [(1) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Ill., Englewood Quad., 1963, photorevised 1972, and AASLH sketch map, 1977] the property consists of the two triangularly shaped parkways located in West boundaries extended South of South Peoria Street in the East quarter (1/4) of the Northeast quarter (1/4) of Section Five (5), Township Thirty-eight North, Range 14, East of the Third Principal Meridian, Cook County, Illinois.

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estimated that since 1865 some 219 million cattle, 530 million hogs, 229 million sheep, and 4 million horses--collectively valued at more than \$28 billion--had passed through its gates.

The stockyards also played a vital role in Chicago's development. According to Grand, "the stockyards have done more to make Chicago the metropolis of the West and her name a synonym for almost preternatural rapidity of growth than any other industry."<sup>4</sup> Because the yards were not affected by the 1871 fire and continued to grow, they made it easier for the city to obtain credit and rebuild, and because Chicago's economy was based so much on livestock, it withstood the depression of 1873 better than most large cities. Also the yards and packinghouses were one of the city's largest employers, utilizing nearly 33,000 people by 1900 in its daily operations.

From about 1879 to 1971, the eastward-facing, triple-arched Old Stone Gate of Chicago Union Stockyards, constructed of rough faced Lemont limestone and capped with a steeply pitched roof, served as the main entrance to Chicago's famed yards, built on the south side beginning in 1865. Over a billion animals destined for the world's dining tables passed through this portal. Recently restored and still on its original site, the gate is now surrounded by a splayed city street, but it is the only remaining historic Union Stockyards structure. None of the famous packinghouses that once stood adjacent to the yards survive.

### History

Although the Union Stockyards were not established until 1865, Chicago had for some time been developing into an important livestock marketing and meatpacking center. The city's first slaughter house was established in 1827 to supply meat to Fort Dearborn, and the first stockyard appeared in either 1837 or 1848. These early stockyards were actually little more than taverns that provided pens for dealers who brought their livestock to the city to trade. At this time the livestock trade

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 12.

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was largely a seasonal business because of the necessity of moving the animals on foot to their final destinations.

Chicago's meatpacking and livestock industries received a major boost when the city's transportation facilities were improved in the late 1840's and early 1850's. The completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1848 connected the Illinois River to Lake Michigan by way of the south branch of the Chicago River, opening a new waterway for shipping. As a result numerous packing and slaughter houses were constructed along the south branch. In 1852 the Michigan Central and Michigan Southern Railroads reached Chicago, giving the city its first direct rail connections to the east and making it possible to ship livestock the year round. Within a few years Chicago had become the focal point for nine railroad lines, and around each of these one or more stockyards sprang up complete with scales, hotels, and other facilities.

The Civil War gave additional impetus to Chicago's meatpacking and livestock enterprises. Many packers in war-threatened cities like Cincinnati, at the time the Nation's "Porkopolis," either relocated to or built additional plants in Chicago. As a result much of the meat for the Union Army was packed in Chicago, and by 1863 it had surpassed Cincinnati as the Nation's meat packing center. The needs of the packers, as well as military orders for live cattle to be shipped near the front lines where they could be slaughtered when needed, greatly increased Chicago's livestock traffic. Soon it became apparent that the city's numerous stockyards were inefficient. As a result there soon arose, says stockyards historian M. S. Parkhurst, "a general demand from all elements of the trade for a new large Union Stockyard where the supply of livestock could be concentrated and all sellers and buyers could meet in open competition."<sup>5</sup>

John B. Sherman, one of the city's leading livestock dealers and stockyard owners, took the lead in promoting the consolidated yard, but most of the financial support for its

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<sup>5</sup>M. S. Parkhurst, History of the Yards, 1865-1953  
(Chicago, 1953), 12.

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construction came from the nine railroad lines running into Chicago. The enterprise was chartered on February 13, 1865, as the Union Stock Yard and Transit Company of Chicago. Its promoters purchased 320 acres of swampy terrain south of the city for \$100,000 from former mayor John Wentworth. Construction started on the site June 1 of that year, and on Christmas Day the yards were open for business.

From the beginning, the Union Stockyards, which somewhat resembled a small city with its hotels, restaurants, office building, bank, and post office as well as livestock pens, flourished, and it soon held undisputed sway, says Grand, as the "greatest livestock market in the world."<sup>6</sup> As such, its prices generally prevailed in markets elsewhere, giving the yards much influence in the economic development of the Nation's livestock raising regions. Thus it had an impact on the development of the West because Chicago was the final destination for much of the cattle brought to towns like Abilene and Dodge City. In 1952 yard officials estimated that since 1865 some 219 million cattle, 530 million hogs, 229 million sheep, and 4 million horses--collectively valued at more than \$28 billion--had passed through its gates.

At first there were no packing plants or slaughter houses at the yards, but within a few years factories began to be constructed in the area west of the yards, and it eventually took the name, "Packingtown." As a result Chicago soon surpassed Paris, France, and became, says Root and de Rochemont, "the greatest meat packing center in the world."<sup>7</sup> By the end of the 1880's, according to historian Louise Carroll Wade, "Chicago packinghouse products were being marketed throughout the world . . . and the city's stockyard was handling nearly eight million cattle, sheep, and hogs each year."<sup>8</sup>

Chicago's rise to world dominance in the meat industry was made possible not only by its superior transportation facilities but by entrepreneurs like Gustavus Swift, Philip

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<sup>6</sup>Grand, Illustrated History of the Union Stockyards, 8.

<sup>7</sup>Root and de Rochemont, Eating in America, 206.

<sup>8</sup>Louise Carroll Wade, "Something More Than Packers," Chicago History, II (Fall-Winter, 1973), 224.

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Armour, and others who established plants here and revolutionized the industry by developing refrigerated railroad cars, improving meat canning techniques, extensively utilizing by-products, and increasing plant efficiency. Largely due to their efforts "the stockyards of Chicago," says Josephson, "became the home of a gigantic and rhythmically functioning industry" which, "by an ingenious arrangement of the yards, and division of the labor," rapidly disassembled livestock.<sup>9</sup>

The Union Stockyards and the packing plants surrounding it made a vital contribution to Chicago's development as well. The stockyards, according to Grand, "have done more to make Chicago the metropolis of the West and her name a synonym for almost preternatural rapidity of growth than any other industry."<sup>10</sup> Because the area around the yards was unaffected by the 1871 fire and continued to grow, the city found it much easier to obtain credit for rebuilding, and since Chicago's economy was based so much on livestock, it withstood the depression of 1873 better than most large cities. Also the yards and packing-houses were one of the city's largest employers, utilizing nearly 33,000 people by 1900 in its daily operations.

Although the yards and packinghouses received much adverse notice as a result of the publication of Upton Sinclair's somewhat overstated expose The Jungle in 1906, the attendant publicity soon resulted in higher sanitation standards. Between 1910 and 1925 the stockyards recorded record livestock receipts, and the packers enjoyed relative prosperity as well. The depression, however, brought a decline in meat consumption, and in 1934 the stockyards were almost entirely destroyed by fire. The yards were soon rebuilt, and the meat industry gradually began a return to prosperity.

Despite the fact that the Nation's consumption of meat continued to rise, the Chicago Union Stockyards began to show a gradual reduction in livestock receipts after 1940. Then in  
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<sup>9</sup>Josephson, The Robber Barons, 285.

<sup>10</sup>Grand, Illustrated History of the Union Stockyards, 12.

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the 1950's the large packing companies began to shut down their technologically outmoded plants at the yards in order to build new facilities nearer the livestock raising areas. As a direct result a large portion of the yards were closed in 1958. Still, the Union Stockyards continued to show a steady decline in receipts, due at least in part to an increase in the Nation's stockyards from 64 to 1929 to 2,300 by 1959, and the improved highway system coupled with the rise of the trucking industry which offset Chicago's advantage as a rail center. In 1970 the stockyards phased out its hog market and on August 1, 1971, closed down permanently. Two weeks before the Union Stockyards went out of existence, however, many of its former dealers banded together and established the Chicago-Joliet Livestock Marketing Center, Inc. This group purchased 34.5 acres in Joliet nearly 50 miles south of Chicago's Loop, and on August 2, 1971, they opened a new stockyard.

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