

What were the Meat Packing Companies??

As the railroads grew, so did the number of people living in Chicago. To provide meat for the growing Chicago population, meat packing companies began killing some of the stockyard cows to sell as meat in Chicago stores. Over time, inventions made the meat packing work go faster.

One of the biggest changes came in 1882. That was when Gustavus Swift made the first refrigerated railroad car. The refrigerated cars made it possible to ship *meat* instead of live animals to eastern cities. This made the Chicago meat packing factories grow very big very fast.



Postcard advertisement for Armour & Co., one of Chicago's first meatpacking companies, 1891. (CHS ICHi-21349)

In 1900, more than 25,000 people worked in Chicago's meatpacking industry. Eighty-two percent of the meat in the United States was packed in Chicago. The meat packing businesses even made things from parts of the animals that could not be eaten. They made leather, soap, fertilizer, glue, gelatin, shoe polish, buttons, perfume, and violin strings.