

## A Degree for His Hogship

An *Ottumwa Daily Courier* reporter toured the plant in 1889. The resulting story, while verbose and flowery, is an introduction to meat packing operations—even in today's modern, efficient, and automated plants. Morrell's growth in the twelve year period becomes quite evident as the story unfolds:

Ottumwa's greatest institution is the John Morrell & Co. packing house. With financial interests up in the thousands, with an unlimited credit, with 500 employees finding steady and remunerative employment, with a migration of nearly a half million hogs annually in four thousand cars, a train over twenty-five miles in length, with a payroll of \$23,000 per month, it can claim without any effort the front rank in all of Ottumwa industries. . .

As these train loads of hogs come into the city, one wonders how they are all disposed of and when he actually ascertains that 2,500 of these porkers are assassinated and transformed within a few seconds into the food product which creates bone and sinew and muscle, it seems like a fairy tale. It is this romance in real life that we will now unfold. Let us follow briefly the various stages of the porker from the time his shrill and dying squeal rends the atmosphere till he comes forth anew in the sizzling bacon or the luscious ham without which any picnic would be a dull and prosy affair.

The shackle pen is his first appointment after he has taken his excursion into the city. The employee in the

shackle pen places a chain around the hog's hind leg and attaches the chain to a rope connected with a wheel, which revolving quickly draws the hog up by simply pressing a lever which throws the wheel in gear. The hog is then suspended from a greased inclined rail, and is carried by its own weight to the sticker who stands with knife in hand ready to do his gory work. His aim is unerring and in less than half a minute from the time the hog reaches him it has bled to death. . . After the hog is dead it is shoved further down on the inclined rail over the scalding tub, where a man loosens the shackle from the hog's foot and drops him into a tub. Around this vat are a number of men who continually watch the hogs during the process of scalding, who carefully test them, not allowing them to remain in too short, nor too long a time. Some of them require a more thorough bath than others, according to age, etc. As fast as the hogs become ready to scrape, they are raised from the vat on what is called the "hog-out," a sort of a fork, which is worked by touching a lever. . .

The bristle puller is the next to pay attention to his hogship. The bristles are very valuable for making brushes, and that in itself is a great industry. . . Then a hook is placed in the under jaw and the hog is quickly drawn into the scraping machine head first through the entire length of the scraper, very little hair remaining. The scraping bench is the next place for the pork passenger. Four men on each side of the scraping bench quickly remove what hair remains. The scraping machine, by the way, works automatically, taking the porker through and back and dropping him on the scraping bench without a touch of a hand either to hog or machine. Next he goes into the hands of the four shavers who are supplied with long knives and who shave the hog quickly, while cold water is running upon him, leaving him clean and ready to "take another degree." The gambrel is then put into his two

hind legs and he is quickly hoisted to another track upon an inclined rail. He is then gutted and thoroughly washed with hose, weighed, his head taken off, and started down the inclined rail that leads to the chill room. . . From the time the hog is shackled and hoisted to the sticker until received at the chill room is not over ten minutes. The temperature of the chill room is from 36 to 40 degrees, and it has a capacity of 6,000 hogs. On being received there the workmen proceed to split them. One man with a knife draws a line completely through the fat of the back, while others, with cleavers, cut them in two.

The pork is left hanging in the chill room forty-eight hours. It is then taken to the cutting room where a large number of men are employed. The halves of hogs are placed upon large cutting blocks, where before they are cut up, an inspector gives his orders as to the different kinds of meat the hog is to be made into. There are from twenty to twenty-five different cuts into which a hog may be made. The feet are cut off and thrown into one pile, the ham is taken out with one cut of the knife, the tenderloins are pulled, the leaf lard is taken out, and so on in less time than it takes to tell about it. The hams and sides are taken to tables, quickly and carefully trimmed. . . Then they are put into the chutes and then sent to various parts of the curing room, according to their class. . . The hams are put into their respective places and salted or cured according to their quality and the market for which they are intended. There are several kinds of hams such as Manchester, Staffords, Long Cut and the American cut in salt or pickle as the case demands.

It is a magnificent sight, that of hundreds of thousands of pounds of choice hams and the various cuts of meats piled up in long tiers covering large areas of space in the vast cellars beneath the buildings. Everything is in perfect order and works with great accuracy, neatness and dis-

patch. All the meat is weighed after being cut and sent down the chutes, and when distributed where it belongs, a card is placed upon each pile showing when the meat was placed there, how many pieces and how many pounds there are in it. The meats are kept from thirty to sixty days, when they are packed. The hams are weighed and packed in boxes. . . The boards for the covers are placed upon the boxes, the hams usually being higher than the boxes, and placed in a press that works with a screw, which presses the boards down on the box, when they are quickly nailed, the box marked with the net weight of the hams, number of pieces, etc., and it is then ready for shipment. Refrigerator cars stand at the door only a few feet from the packing department, and it takes but a short time to fill a train load. The side meats, shoulders, mess pork and other meats that are packed in boxes or barrels go through nearly a similar process. No piece of meat is allowed to leave the packing house until tested by an expert and found to be in first class order. The bulk of this vast product is sent to the British Isles and Germany. . . Considerable of the meats, however, are consumed in American or home markets. . .

The hogs are weighed four times, once when received alive, again after being dressed, but before the head is cut off. The various pieces are weighed after leaving the cutting rooms previous to being distributed to their respective places, and the fourth and last time so far as the packing house is concerned, when they are put in boxes and barrels for shipment.

Returning to the cutting rooms let us look at other parts of the hog. The tenderloins, of which of course there are thousands of pounds each day, are placed in the home market or shipped to the various parts of the country the same day they are taken out. The feet are all quickly taken to the pig foot department where a large force is

employed in cooking, cleaning and packing them for shipment. Then there is a large amount of clippings from the hams. The lean parts of the clippings are taken to the sausage room, and this is another quite important branch of the business. Several thousand pounds of sausage are made daily, including pork sausage, bologna, Frankfort, or what is by some called Vienna, and other kinds. . .

The fat parts of the clippings from hams are placed on an "elevated railroad" just outside the building from the cutting rooms, and are taken to the lard vats a number of feet distant. The lard is put up in various ways, in tierces, barrels, and smaller packages to suit the trade. This is a department in which Morrell & Co. are preeminently leaders. This is a growing feature of the business, the firm making a specialty of pure old-fashioned lard which has leaped into popular favor by its superiority in comparison with recent combinations of fats. The sediment from the lard, together with a vast amount of other parts and pieces and bones are sent to the fertilizing department, where they are made into fertilizer by being put through a hot oven process, and the fertilizer is shipped to various parts of the country. Nearly a carload of fertilizer is made each day.

Returning to the slaughter department we find that the heads, after the tongues have been taken out for pickling, are sent to the lard vats, and the sediment from them in turn finds its way to the fertilizing department. . . The blood, of which there is a vast amount each day, is also made into fertilizer. In fact everything that cannot be used for anything else is made into fertilizer, so that absolutely no part of the hog is lost. . .

About 500 men are employed at present. An office force of sixteen is required to attend to the accounting department of the business. The Western Union Telegraph lines from every direction run into the office, and an operator is

kept busily engaged in sending and receiving messages. Contracts for hogs are made by wire. We would not forget to mention the power which runs this vast concern. There are six engines of 375 horsepower. . . The cooling plant is one of the most costly pieces of mechanism, but the Morrell & Co. institution early saw that this was one of the necessities, and six years ago equipped their institution with it, leading other Iowa packing institutions in this respect. This process preserves an even temperature the year round. . .

All of Morrell & Co.'s meats are mild cured and sold on that feature. Their bacon is a world-beater anywhere, and their hams, mess pork, sausage, etc. are eagerly sought for. . .

No one has more amply deserved this success than Morrell & Co., and all Ottumwa congratulates the city on the good wheel of fortune which turned Mr. T. D. Foster hither over a decade ago.