



Hallowed Ground

Kansas City's West Bottoms — home of the American Royal and the stockyards — played a central role in the growth of Hereford cattle.

by Eric Grant

The West Bottoms, a stretch of prairie at the base of the river bluffs that now comprises downtown Kansas City, Mo., enjoys a storied history stretching back more than two centuries.

French-Indian settlers constructed a permanent settlement there in the early 1800s, trading with local tribes and farming its rich soil. Explorers Lewis and Clark came through the area in 1804, noting in their journal the region's strategic significance and potential for economic commerce. But it was the railroad — and the rise of the American cattle industry — in the latter half of the 19th century that left the most significant footprint on the Bottoms.

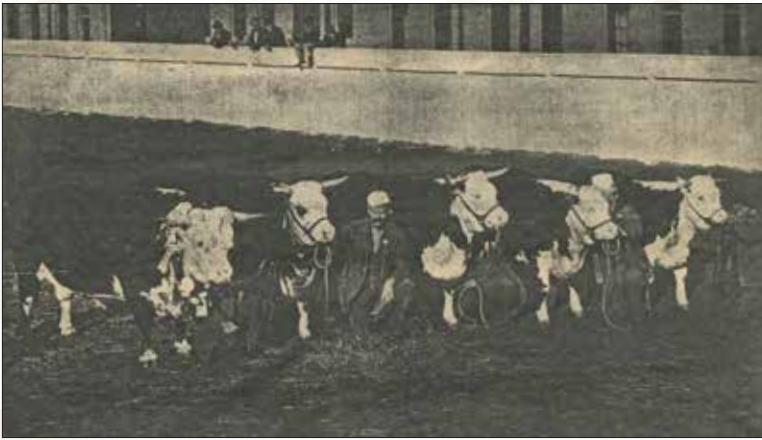
America was changing. Its cities were growing. Industrialization was reshaping the landscape. And people were hungry for beef. The trains made



Typical of the great terminal stockyards at Chicago, Omaha, Denver, Ft. Worth and Kansas City was this "birdseye view" of the Kansas City Market which was organized in 1871.



The Kansas City Stockyards had a capacity of 25,000 cattle, 35,000 hogs and 15,000 sheep. As in other yards, take the Herefords out and most pens would have been empty.



The champion herd of the National Hereford Show, headed by the famous Dale-Property of Mr. F.A. Nave, Attica, Ind.

The American Hereford Association (AHA) in 1899 was the first breed association to stage a national show. With C.R. Thomas, AHA secretary, as manager and held in tents at the Kansas City Stockyards, 541 head were shown. This was the forerunner of today's American Royal Show.

A two-day consignment sale held with the 1899 national show averaged \$317 on some 300 head.

that possible, creating ways for the vast herds of the Western Plains to be gathered and shipped to stockyards in cities like Kansas City and Chicago.

Booming epicenter

Established in 1872 on the Kansas side of the river, the Kansas City Stockyards was extended to the West Bottoms a few years later. All told, the facility comprised more than 55 acres, helping farmers and ranchers sell cattle, sheep, hogs, horses and mules. Commerce reached its peak in 1923, when 2.6 million head of cattle passed through the stockyards. About 45 percent were purchased by nearby packing houses; the remainder were shipped out for grazing or finishing.

The rise of the stockyards paralleled the expansive rise of Herefords — and central to this growth was the American Royal. The show, which debuted in 1899, enabled Hereford breeders not only to exhibit their livestock but also to market their cattle to ranchers and farmers.

The first show included 541 head of Hereford cattle, with 334 head sold for an average price of \$334. More than 55,000 people attended. In fact, there was so much interest in the event that a permanent structure was built to house it in 1908.

The American Hereford Association, recognizing the significance of the stockyards, built its first permanent headquarters in downtown Kansas City in 1920. A statue of a Hereford bull still stands watch over the historical West Bottoms, an iconic fixture on the Kansas City landscape.

Flood and fires both took their toll on the stockyards, although the facility continued to operate in one form or another until 1991. But it was the upswing of the interstate highway system in the 1950s — which enabled ranchers to truck cattle to local markets rather than to transport



March On 6th was the senior and grand champion at the second American Royal in 1902.



Hillcrest Farms, Pocahontas, Ill., exhibited the first group of three bulls at the American Royal.



Scottish Lassie 305352 was first in class and grand champion cow at the American Royal Livestock Show and the International Livestock Exposition, 1910. She was bred and owned by Dr. J.E. Logan Kansas City, Mo.

them by train — that eventually spelled doom for the terminal markets. Even the American Royal, responding to changes in consumers and the economic landscape, will be moving away from its centuries-old home to a more convenient and modern location several miles west of downtown Kansas City.

The following pages include photos of this storied past — illustrating the historical contribution of a stretch of prairie along the river and a breed of cattle established in its mecca.

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Repeater Jr. was the only bull to ever become grand champion at the American Royal Livestock Show for three consecutive years — 1918, 1919 and 1920.



Northern Pump Farms champion bull at the American Royal. Pictured (l to r) are L.P. McCann, Carlos Ruggan (the Argentine judge), Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Hawley, Brad Scott, Odell Gelvin.



Among many breeders, cattleman J.B. Gillett brought many head of Hereford cattle through the stockyards during the American Royal as a marketing opportunity.



Kenneth Sanford with American Royal champion BHR Husker Tone ET, Melvin Campbell and Bob Ernst.



Pictured with their Hereford cattle (l to r) are Perl Woodrum; H.P. Stephens, Parsons, Kan.; and Arthur Franklin.



Rupert B. — grand champion steer of the 1926 International Show with J. Gordon Davis, judge, John Clay and Professor W.L. Blizzard of Oklahoma A&M College, exhibitor of the steer.



Anderson Harris, Harris, Mo., with the champion 4-H club steer Repeat 11th at the 1929 American Royal.



Best 10 head American Royal, Kansas City, Mo., 1934, and winners of Kansas City Stockyards Co. Silver Trophy, bred and shown by Wyoming Hereford Ranch, Cheyenne.



Mrs. Ruth Banning Lewis and W.A. Braiden, La Jara, Colo., at the 1934 American Royal Show.



WHR Plus Domino 17th, by Abner Domino, by Prince Domino — Undefeated junior yearling bull 1933-34 and reserve champion bull, American Royal.



The first of the breed's "Million Dollar Sires" since more than a million dollars of his progeny were sold by the Turner Ranch, Sulfur, Okla.



HC Lady Larry 26, the 1952 American Royal champion female.



Recognized as one of the most influential men connected with the Hereford industry, Roland Jacob "R.J." Kinzer served as secretary for the AHA from 1911-44. During his secretaryship, his signature appeared on 3,713,458 registration certificates. He was connected with two of the greatest Hereford exhibitions of his times — the 1932 American Royal that marked the Association's 50th anniversary and the 1948 "R.J. Hereford Royal," staged four years before his death in recognition of his lifetime of service.



Albert — the world's largest Hereford bull erected at Audabon, Iowa, a renowned center of prime quality beef production by W.P. Adams II, Paul Swaffar.



Diamond Jubilee Banquet, Hotel Muehlebach, Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 22, 1956. Following the annual association business meeting, it was customary for many years to hold a banquet for members and guests.



Officially starting the use of AHA's first computer — the IBM 1401 System that included magnetic tape memory storage — in May 1961, was HR Silver Image 70, the champion bull of the 1961 National Western Stock Show.



Still House exhibited the first "get" at the 1966 American Royal. **HW**