

J. C. Peyton, Packing Firm Founder, Dies



J. C. PEYTON

Joseph Campbell Peyton, founder of Peyton Packing Co., died in his home, 2919 Federal St., late Wednesday. He was 78.

He had been ill for some time.

Mr. Peyton was born in Lebanon, Tenn. He came to El Paso in 1910 and opened a retail meat market in a one-story structure at the corner of Stanton and Texas Streets where the El Paso Natural Gas Co. building now stands.

An efficient and aggressive merchant, Mr. Peyton soon saw his firm open a second market on Overland Street and Mesa Avenue. He entered the wholesale meat business, renting quarters in El Paso Ice Co. on Ochoa Street between Texas and Mills Streets. He also operated a sausage factory in the basement of the ice company building.

It was in 1917 that he opened the packing firm which was to bear his name. It was located on the site where it now stands near Cordova Island.

Initially the feeding pen capacity at the Peyton plant was between 2,000 and 3,000 head of cattle. But

it was expanded through the years and there have been periods when as many as 17,000 head of cattle were being fed in the pens which now cover 35 acres.

BACKED SHOW

Mr. Peyton and his firm worked constantly to improve and expand the cattle business in the Southwest.

He was always an important booster of the annual Junior Southwestern Livestock show and the firm encouraged 4-H and FFA youths to participate in the show by offering top prices for show animals.

Mr. Peyton left the firm and retired in 1934. His interests were sold to Seth Chauvet, H. B. Harris and L. F. Miles.

Although retired, he maintained an active interest in local civic and business affairs. He also frequently turned philanthropist although he carefully shielded his generosity from publicity.

Mr. Peyton was a director of the Texas and Pacific Railroad and of the Texas Industrial Conference.

He was a member of the Church of St. Clement.

Survivors include a nephew, Charles R. Pursley of Lebanon, who was with his uncle when he died, and a niece, Mrs. Paul Jones of Newbern, Tenn., and a grandniece, Mrs. Ronald Stone, Forest Hills, Long Island, N. Y.

Funeral arrangements were pending with Kaster and Maxon.

Foreclosure Started Peyton Story

Businesses are the product of methodical planning or the freak result of an unexpected turn of events.

Peyton Packing Co. Inc. falls into the latter category.



Joseph C. Peyton

leading industries.

Peyton is owned by John Morrell and Co. and is second in overall growth in the Morrell chain.

Peyton's success in the meat packing business perhaps was not completely unexpected. He had worked a few years as a bookkeeper for National Packing Co. in El Paso.

Nevertheless, the growth of Peyton Packing isn't an everyday tale.

Peyton soon purchased a second

market in partnership with H. C. Myles, a former British Consul in El Paso, whom he later bought out. This market, on Overland street between Stanton and Main, enabled Peyton to expand even further. He then entered the wholesale meat business, renting quarters in The El Paso Ice Co. and placing a sausage factory in the basement.

Seven years later, Peyton moved to a 35-acre facility at Cotton and 11th streets. There, he erected pens to hold two to three thousand head of cattle, and Peyton found himself in charge of a full-scale meat-packing business.

In April of the same year, the United States entered World War I, and the Army's meat contracts gave the new company the push it needed to grow to serve the major market for southwestern livestock.

After the war, government contracts continued to come to the company as Peyton's supplied Southwestern Civilian Conservation Corps Camps.

Peyton said that the customer was always foremost in his mind, so he produced different meat products for the different areas he served, sending "heavy beef" to Arizona and lighter beef to East Texas.

As his business grew, Peyton expanded his plant to meet production. New pens were constructed, additions were made to existing buildings and Peyton's continued to process beef, lamb, pork, bacon, sausage and cured hams.

Strict government price regulations forced the closing of the packing company in 1942. However, custom slaughtering and dressing operations continued for a local meat market and individual buyers.

The following year, Peyton retired, turning over his stock in the company to Seth N. Chauvet, H. L. "Babe" Harris and Myles, who later dissolved the corporation in favor of a partnership.

Reported purchase price of the plant was in the neighborhood of \$1,150,000.

Peyton died in 1954, at the age of 78.

In 1955, Chauvet bought the common stock holdings of Harris and Myles for an estimated \$2 million and was named president of the new corporation.

Later, in 1957, the stock yards at Peyton Packing Co. were used in the film by Columbia Pictures, "Reminiscences of a Cowboy," starring Jack

Lemmon and Glen Ford.

In the same year, the American Humane Association awarded the firm their "Seal of Approval" for humane slaughtering methods, making it the 11th firm in U.S. history to receive such an honor. Peyton's has received the honor each year since.

In 1962, the packing plant reached a settlement with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America AFL-CIO, and Peyton's was sold to John Morrell and Co. which today is headquartered in Chicago.

The contract stated that the Peyton facilities would be operated as a division of Morrell, but the Peyton name would not change and the Del Norte and other brand identifications would be retained.

Chauvet was named to the Morrell Board of Directors and named general manager of the El Paso division.

Peyton lost its property in South El Paso due to the Chamizal settlement, and the plant moved to a new site one mile east of Ysleta.

At this time, Peyton expanded its entire operation and discontinued slaughter of swine and sheep.