

SWIFT & CO. TURKEY PLANT



JESSE BROTHERS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

The former Swift turkey processing plant is shown Tuesday. The city has repeatedly had to hire contractors to secure the building's doors, which is typically followed by the doors being pried open again. An open door can be seen at the lower left.

'Hate to see it go, but it is in bad shape'

One of the last major buildings of the Sioux City stockyards faces demolition

MASON DOCKTER
mdockter@siouxcityjournal.com

SIOUX CITY — Rick Stewart worked at the Swift & Co. turkey plant in Sioux City for a couple of seasons from 1976 to 1978, when he was in his early 20s. The plant, at the time about 50 years old, remained in operation for only one more season after he left.

In the 43 years since its closure, the condition of the plant — a long neglected, four-story, brick-and-concrete structure, painted a shade of beige, graffitied and with many of its windows broken — has declined quite noticeably. The city has come to see the deteriorating building, at 1804 Dace Ave., as a sort of attractive nuisance. It's red-tagged as unfit for occupation and has been ordered demolished.

"Hate to see it go, but it is in bad shape," Stewart, 68, said of the plant, where he worked mostly in the shipping department, driving truckloads of boxed turkeys to cold storage. "Probably, from a safety standpoint, it definitely needs to come down."



VIA SIOUX CITY PUBLIC MUSEUM

The then-new Swift & Company produce plant, at the intersection of Dace Avenue and Chambers Street (now Cunningham Drive) is shown circa the late 1920s. Swift originally used the plant for what the company called "produce" — poultry, eggs and some dairy products. The meatpacker later housed its turkey operations there. Today the plant is forlorn, with many of its windows broken and boarded up.

Sioux City Code Enforcement Manager Darrel Bullock told the city council recently that the deserted plant "constantly has vagrants in it" and has become "a big play hangout for kids."

Bullock told The Journal recently that the city has repeatedly had to engage contractors to "secure" the building to keep out unwanted visitors, usually by welding its doors shut and putting up yet more boards. Then people pry the doors open again, and the building needs to be secured, again.

During a Journal visit to see

the property this past Tuesday, several exterior doors were wide open.

In spite of the severe state of dilapidation, the building itself remains structurally sound, Bullock said, though parts of the interior are not sound. "Unfortunately there are many, many hazards within the building," he said.

An ignominious end now appears likely for one of the last major buildings of the Sioux City stockyards: a plant that was considered highly modern when it was new in the 1920s, but came

to be seen as antiquated and inefficient before it closed in 1980. It then went through a succession of owners and a prolonged period of dilapidation.

'An attractive addition to the stockyards'

The Chicago meatpacking firm of Swift & Company came to Sioux City in 1917. In 1924 Swift purchased the assets of the defunct Midland Packing Co. and moved its operations to Midland's state-of-the-art plant in the stockyards, just east of what is now the abandoned turkey plant.

"There was a big packing plant there, comprised of half a dozen buildings or so," said Tom Munson, archives manager at the Sioux City Public Museum.

In 1926, Swift spent \$175,000 (or \$100,000, depending on the source) to build what the company called a "produce plant," which housed poultry and egg production, and some dairy products. The building was, at

Please see **DEMOLITION**, Page B7

SEE: Photos of the stockyards from through the years. Point your smartphone camera at the QR Code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**

S.D. lawmakers seek to curb Chinese influence on farmland

AMANCAI BIRABEN
Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. — South Dakota lawmakers are advancing a number of bills that would curb Chinese influence in South Dakota's farmland amid concerns among Republican leaders after a spy balloon was spotted and shot down last week.

Republican Rep. Will Mortenson proposed Thursday investigating partnerships between landowners and foreign entities. It comes a week after other lawmakers pushed forth other propositions tackling foreign influence, like banning contracts between state land and foreign countries, and establishing a committee to oversee future foreign purchases.

"We don't know what we don't know, and we're going to start finding out so we can make the next step," Mortenson said, after his bill passed a house committee vote with a unanimous vote.

The proposals stem from Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's recent history of curbing the state's relationship with China. Last year, she banned state employees and contractors from accessing the video platform TikTok on state-owned devices, citing its ties to China. She also said late last year that the state held no direct investments in China after a review.

Noem's emphasis on her perception of threats posed by China comes as she plans for a series of three policy speeches in Washington that seem to portend the rollout of a possible 2024 bid for the Republican presidential nomination.

Next week, according to a person familiar with Noem's plans, Noem will use one of the three speeches — a Feb. 15 address at the America First Policy Institute — to highlight South Dakota's response to the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party. She'll also discuss an executive order, which Noem signed last month, barring the state from engaging in business with some telecom companies owned or controlled by "evil foreign governments," including China, according to

Please see **CHINA**, Page B7

Pilot shortage pressures airlines

DAVID KOENIG
Associated Press

GOODYEAR, Ariz. — Until last summer, Ashley Montano had never flown. Now she was preparing to land a small plane with three passengers after a previous touch-and-go that had been rough.

"The plane is a bit heavy, so give it just a little more power to make a smooth landing," flight instructor Jason Fink told her.

There was the tiniest of bounces as the plane's nose came down, then a smooth touchdown and taxi in to end Montano's training flight late last year at a United Airlines school in the Arizona desert.

On the ground, Montano was happy with her progress. "You guys were my first real passengers!" she gushed to a reporter and video journalist who had been in the rear seats.

Montano hopes that in a few years she will be flying airline jets and carrying many more passengers. If she does, she'll be helping solve a critical problem facing the industry: not enough pilots.

Airlines have complained about a shortage for several years, but they made it worse during the pandemic by encouraging pilots to take early retirement when air travel collapsed in 2020. Helene Becker, an analyst for Cowen who has tracked

Please see **SHORTAGE**, Page B7

Faulty weld, pressure on pipe led to Kansas oil spill

Cost of cleanup estimated at \$480M

JOHN HANNA AND HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH
Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — A faulty weld at a bend in an oil pipeline contributed to a spill that dumped nearly 13,000 bathtubs' worth of crude oil into a northeastern Kansas creek, the pipeline's operator said Thursday, estimating the cost of cleaning it up at \$480 million.

Canadian-based TC Energy said the flawed weld caused a crack that then grew over time because of the stress on the bend in its Keystone pipeline system in rural pastureland in Washington County, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) northwest of Kansas City. The company said the weld was for a fitting that connected two sections of pipe, and the fitting and weld came from a manufacturing plant.

The company, which is responsible for overseeing in-

spection of its pipeline system, said it still is investigating the cause of the pipeline stress and is analyzing "other areas with potentially similar conditions." The Dec. 7 rupture spilled nearly 13,000 barrels of crude oil, with each barrel containing 42 gallons, the size of a standard household bathtub.

"Our focus continues to be the safe operation of the pipeline system," the company said in a statement.

No one was evacuated following the spill, and officials said it did not affect the two larger rivers and reservoir downstream. With federal regulators' permission, the company reopened the affected segment a little more than three weeks after the spill, though at a lower pressure than before.

But Bill Caram, executive director of the advocacy group Pipeline Safety Trust, said it's "troubling" that TC Energy said the flawed weld came from a "fabrication facility." He said conditions there should have



UCGR, DRONEBASE, FILE

In this photo taken by a drone, cleanup continues in the area where the ruptured Keystone pipeline dumped oil into a creek in Washington County, Kan., on Dec. 9. A faulty weld at a bend in an oil pipeline contributed to a spill that dumped nearly 13,000 bathtubs' worth of crude oil into a northeastern Kansas creek, the pipeline's operator said this week.

been ideal for making a weld that would not fail — as opposed to welding in the field.

Caram also said pipeline companies and pipeline regulators in

the U.S. Department of Transportation struggle to deal with a combination of multiple threats

Please see **OIL**, Page B7

