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Our Town: A Heartland Lynching, A Haunted Town, and the Hidden History of White America

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Shrine Temple White Horse Mounted Patrol, and social life centered on the stockyards district's restaurants and bars.

Unfortunately, other important elements of the stockyards' history are either obscured or glossed over. For instance, an important section on the transition from railroad to truck shipment of livestock might have been better connected to the post-World War II decline of not only Sioux City's but all other stockyards. Discussion of the stockyard's commission firms is scattered and not clearly developed. Particularly problematic is the presentation on workers and their labor unions: the crucial union-building period from 1900 to 1940 is covered in just four pages; virtually nothing is said about workers after World War II.

By the time the Sioux City stockyards had become the nation's largest in 1973, stockyards had become largely irrelevant. After the mid-twentieth century, farmers increasingly sold their livestock directly to meatpackers, and bypassed stockyards as unnecessary middlemen. Despite its faults, Marcia Poole's history conveys a great deal of interesting and important information about one of the nation's most significant stockyards.

Our Town: A Heartland Lynching, A Haunted Town, and the Hidden History of White America, by Cynthia Carr. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006. 501 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Pfeifer is associate professor of history at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. He is the author of *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (2004) and three articles in the *Annals of Iowa* on the history of lynching and vigilantism in Iowa.

In this overly lengthy book, Cynthia Carr, formerly a writer for the *Village Voice*, seeks to expose the history of racism in her family—her grandfather was in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s—and in Marion, Indiana, the town where she spent a portion of her childhood. Marion, located in the north central portion of the Hoosier State, was the site of a lynching on August 7, 1930, that claimed the lives of two African American men, Tom Shipp and Abe Smith, and nearly claimed the life of a third, James Cameron. Carr's idiosyncratic approach combines extended digressions into her family history, research in local history and archives, extensive interviews with Marion and Grant County residents and others connected to the 1930 lynching and the history of race in the locality, and some reading in secondary sources on the history of Indiana, the Ku Klux Klan, and lynching in the United States.

The book is at its best when tracing the many ways the 1930 lynching—memorialized in a widely distributed photograph that ranks among the most influential images ever made of a lynching—has haunted Marion in the more than seven decades since it occurred. Carr lived in Marion for a year in the early 1990s and was able to speak to many persons with first- or second-hand knowledge of the event, including James Cameron, the lynching survivor who established a museum in Milwaukee to memorialize the history of racial violence in the United States. (Cameron died in 2006.) Although the community, despite fitful efforts, has not yet found a way to remember the event officially, it spawned a variety of interpretations and myths. Carr charts those held by blacks and whites of particular generations and suggests that the lynching sent Marion into a decline from which it has not yet recovered. She also adds to our knowledge of the Marion lynching with detailed and sometimes contradictory accounts of the persons involved in the events surrounding the mob killings.

Less successful are attempts to chart the history of race and racism in Grant County, from antebellum abolitionism through bombings by black militants in the late 1960s through the election of a black sheriff in 1998. This at times fascinating material lacks historical contextualization and a systematic approach that might have helped readers understand the shifting contours of racial ideologies over time in a mid-western county. Especially unnecessary are long passages prolifically documenting the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana in the 1990s, including verbatim reproduction of extensive racial diatribes. Passages on the ephemeral Klan of recent years seem tangentially related to the rest of the narrative except to make the point that, while most whites today have not come to grips with their own racism or that of their ancestors, they nonetheless reject the Klan as the most overt manifestation of white racism. That point could have been made in far fewer pages. Moreover, material on Carr's search for an elusive Native American ancestor turns up little conclusive information, although it does suggest the ambiguous and repressed memory of a historical Native American presence in the Midwest. In sum, those interested in a solid analytical history of the 1930 Marion lynching and its racial legacy would best turn to James H. Madison's book, *A Lynching in the Heartland* (2001); those who seek further information or who wish to learn quite a bit more about Marion may also wish to read Carr's *Our Town*.