

The wholesale butchers of La Villette

Rise and fall of a corporation

This research examines the now extinct corporation of the La Villette wholesale butchers.

Having almost all the General Syndicate of Wholesale Meat Trade's archives at my disposal, I have attempted to describe the closed world of the abattoirs, gathering inspiration from personal experience.

The first part of the work is a brief history of the ancient Parisian abattoirs. I then move on to the heart of the matter : « The wholesale selling of meat ». I explain who the La Villette wholesale butchers were, their role in the meat sector, their mentality and their behaviour, attempting to reproduce the general atmosphere at La Villette by showing the corporation's concerns in relation to all the events shaping our country's history.

My research spans the period from the birth of wholesale butchers around 1829 to the closure of the meat complex in March 1974. I consider what would have happened had the state not decided to change the modernisation procedure at La Villette's abattoirs into a vast undertaking comprising a prototype abattoir and a huge sale-room unparalleled in the world. Didn't the authoritarian closure of the cattle market and the abattoir simply hasten the disappearance of a corporation which was already condemned by the big and sudden changes in 1970 (development of cooperative circuits, industrial slaughter and supermarket networks) which it was not ready for ?

I end the study by attempting to answer this question.