End of an Era: Trading Pits Close

PRESENTER: Even if you've never been to the famed trading pits, chances are, you know what they look like and sound like.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[CROWD ROARING]

- Sell 30 April at 142!

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

PRESENTER: Featured in films like Trading Places and Ferris Bueller's Day Off, the trading pits at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange were loud and hectic.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[CROWD ROARING]

[END PLAYBACK]

PRESENTER: On July 6th, the futures pit in Chicago and New York, where buying and selling sets the prices for commodities like gold, wheat, and corn, roars one last time. The 167-year-old tradition of open outcry futures operations ends after the closing bell on Monday.

VIRGINIA MCGATHEY: For example, if I'm trying to buy 25 at 4 and a quarter, I would be saying that and also doing the hand signals at the same time. And then the opposite person would be saying, OK, I'm selling you 25 at 4 and quarter. And so then we'd understand that I was buying and they were selling.

PRESENTER: Virginia McGathey, a grain trader on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange floor, just finished her last shift in the pit. In short, blame the computers. CME Group, which operates the trading pits in New York and Chicago, is shifting to electronic dealing. And CME Group held off on going all digital, even as rivals in New York and London embraced electronic trading.

VIRGINIA MCGATHEY: It's really heartbreaking on a particular level that it's ending this way. And I think, in talking with some of the other traders, the fact that we can't leave a legacy to children and grandchildren, that this is the end of the road-- it's just definitely not the same on a computer, not at all.

PRESENTER: And not all the pits are closing. One exception is the S&P 500 futures market, which remains open on the Chicago trading floor. In another sign of changing times, fans of CME Group can track the company on several social media sites, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.