



Alex Swan and the Swan Companies (Western Lands and Waters Series)

Lawrence M. Woods

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The Swan name is inseparable from the history of Wyoming and the West, and when Swan made his mark in Wyoming in the 1880s, ranching was king. The largest among Alex Swan's many corporate creations, The Swan Land and Cattle Company, Ltd., was one of the larger livestock companies to operate in the American West, and it survived long after its founder's financial debacle in the great winter of 1886-1887. At one time, the Swan was said to be the largest private landowner in Wyoming, and at its peak it was certainly one of the largest sheep companies in the country.

This new work for the first time relates the life of Alex Swan, and offers a complete history of the Swan companies. Lawrence M. Woods has combed the surviving corporate records and other documents held in the United States and abroad.

At the height of his financial life, Swan was said to be the richest man in Wyoming Territory, and his influence extended beyond business affairs to community service, both in Wyoming and in Iowa. Yet, after his dramatic financial collapse, there were many who ridiculed what he had done, and Swan's silence has left those criticisms on the record, without rebuttal.

Swan, a leader in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association from its founding in 1873, served as its second president. Promoting the use of Hereford cattle on the high plains, he was a force in the Wyoming ranching world, especially after his move to Cheyenne in 1874. Woods details Swan's life in the years after his separation from the Scottish-controlled Swan Land and Cattle Company, especially his activities in Ogden, Utah.

The Swan companies continued operation into the mid-twentieth century. John Clay played a major role in their operation, and he figures prominently in their story. Alex Swan and the Swan Companies is an important portrait of the inner workings of the western cattle industry and its leaders.

The book has a bibliography, index, and three appendices. It is bound in rich brown linen cloth and has a foil stamped spine and front cover. Western Lands and Waters Series, XXII

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