

Swan Land and Cattle Company, Mercantile Store  
State Route 313, 200' East of Colorado and Southern  
Railroad tracks  
Chugwater  
Platte County  
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-71d

HABS

WYO,

16-CHUGW,

ID -

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

## SWAN LAND AND CATTLE COMPANY, MERCANTILE STORE

HABS  
WYO  
16-CHUGWI  
1D-

Location: State Route 313, 200' east of Colorado and Southern Railroad tracks, Chugwater, Platte County, Wyoming. Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS Cheyenne North Quadrangle Map) 13.515060.4622460.

Present Owner: John W. Burns, Wheatland, Wyoming.

Present Use: Vacant.

Statement of Significance: The Swan Land and Cattle Company, incorporated in 1884, was an innovator in the breeding and raising of cattle in Wyoming. In 1909 the company erected this building to serve as a store for its employees. It remained in active operation until the Swan Company was liquidated in 1948.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1909 (Staats interview).
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: See chain of title filed with Swan Land and Cattle Company, Manager's House (WYO-71c).
4. Original plans and construction: There exists no data on the original plan of the building. However, it is possible to deduce the original plan from the physical evidence of the existing structure. Most likely the original building was a rectangular structure with a small piece cut out of the NW. corner. It comprised most of the central gabled portion and northern shed-roofed portion of the present building. The original dimensions were approximately 36' on the east, 51' on the south, the short sides bounding the cutout 26' on the west, 41' on the north. It probably contained five rooms: a large store, a storage room, living room, bedroom, and kitchen. The storage and bedrooms were in the northern shed-roofed portion of the structure. The change in the roof occurs above the wall which separates these rooms from the rest of the building. This gives the northern portion the appearance of a lean-to addition, but all interior and exterior structure evidence indicates that it was part of the original building.

5. Alterations and additions: In 1913 a lean-to addition was made to the south side to house a bank. The bank was removed in 1918 and the lean-to addition was remodeled as living quarters. The rest of the interior was modified, possibly at this time, since the remodeling of the addition made the old living quarters superfluous. The wall between the store, and the living room and kitchen was removed (evidence of the wall is still visible on the interior) and the bedroom became an office. In any event, these changes could not have taken place earlier than 1911 (See inventory).

After the 1918 remodeling, the central gable-roofed portion of the structure was extended to the West by the addition of a warehouse. The warehouse has a storage attic accessible by a manual lift. Later a small storage shed was attached to the south exterior wall of the warehouse, it does not have access to the interior of the warehouse.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: See information filed under Swan Land and Cattle Company, Manager's House (WYO-71c).

- C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

- a. Mothershead, Harmon Ross. The Swan Land and Cattle Company, Ltd., University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1971.
- b. Swan Land and Cattle Company, artifacts and papers located at the headquarters (Home) Ranch at Chugwater.
  - i. Aerial photograph, taken 1959.
- c. Wyoming State Museum, Research Division, several categories found under subject headings of Chugwater and Swan Land and Cattle Company.
  - i. 1959 photograph of company store. Essentially the same structure, but in better condition.

2. Bibliography: See HABS (WYO-71c), Part I., c., 2.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an early twentieth century

store building erected to serve the vast cattle industry and the citizens of the area.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 52' (seven irregular bays) x 90'-3", one story with a loft above the central portion.
2. Foundations: Concrete.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: White clapboard siding with black corner boards.
4. Structural system, framing: Light wooden frame; steel post and beam used in rear wing to support loft.
5. Porches: There is a concrete porch on the north facade outside the double doors to the warehouse and a concrete stoop on the south facade at the exterior door to the kitchen. Across the main facade on the east side is a heavy wooden plank porch which is badly decayed and partially destroyed.
6. Chimneys: Three brick chimneys, one at the rear (west) and two on the south side of the building (one of these is partially destroyed). There is an interior chimney which has been removed from the roof.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance on the east facade has two single doors, one leading to the living quarters (covered by a wooden screen door) and one to the store. An overhead door and a double door lead into the store area. Both are wooden paneled and set into wooden frames. A double door made of vertical boards on the north facade leads out from the warehouse. There is a wooden and glass paneled door with an aluminum storm door on the south facade opening from the kitchen. A wooden and glass paneled door is on the west (rear) side leading from the utility room.
  - b. Windows: Windows are wooden double-hung one-over-one light sash except along the eastern bay of the north elevation where there are two-over-two light sash with wooden-framed screens. A horizontal band of nine fixed sash windows extends across the main (east) facade at the second

floor level. Eight of the small windows and one large window on the east elevation and most of the windows on the north elevation have been covered with horizontal boards. A three light fixed sash is in the dormer on the north side of the warehouse addition.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A gable roof with a lean-to roof on each side; covered with red asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Wooden boxed eaves with fascia board and frieze.
- c. Dormers: There is a shed roof dormer on the north facade of the loft.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: A basement with a concrete floor is under the warehouse. An Otis hand-propelled hoist connects the basement with the loft. Four area-way wells are located in the basement. A flue opening is in the basement. There is a root cellar under the northeast corner of the building, this area has a dirt floor.
- b. First floor: The entrance to the main store is on the east facade. On entering the building there is a partition at the left which divides the buildings living quarters from its mercantile functions. Around the perimeter of the main store room are case work and shelving. A ladder is attached at the ceiling to a sliding track which is parallel to the shelving and encircles the entire room. At the northeast corner of the main room there is a double door which leads into the lean-to room known as the store annex (originally living quarters). The root cellar is located under this room and is accessible through a wooden door which is opposite the double door leading from the main store room. The store annex was probably converted to merchandizing functions after the living quarters were moved into the south lean-to. It has a double door on the east facade at the northeast corner. At the west end of the annex are two offices: The first is a small room, the second is considerably larger and is connected with the main store by a doorway on its south interior wall. Immediately adjacent to the office, on the west wall of the main store, a double door leads to the

warehouse. The warehouse is a large rectangular room. In the approximate center there is a hoist which passes through the warehouse from the basement to the loft. There is a double door on the north wall of this room for loading which opens directly onto the hoist. A small lean-to storage room is attached to the exterior south wall of the warehouse. There is a partially finished loft over the warehouse with a small opening from it into the attic of the main store.

A second door on the east facade, near the southeast corner, enters the living quarters. The main room is the living room which has dividers. To the right (north) and one step up is a small bedroom. To the west of the living room is a dining room with cabinets along the north wall. A bathroom is located in the southwest corner of this room. The sink has been removed, but the other fixtures remain. West of the dining room is the kitchen. This room also has cabinets along the north wall and there is a door to the outside on the south facade. A storage area and utility porch are to the west and are accessible from the kitchen.

2. Stairways: A wooden stairway with open risers, descends to the root cellar. There is a simple wooden bannister around the opening.
3. Flooring: Floors are wooden planking. Some have been covered with asphalt tile and linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted walls and ceilings are plastered wooden lath. The living and dining rooms have picture molding. The bathroom and bedroom have painted gypsum board walls. The bathroom has plastic tile wainscoting.
5. Doorways and doors: Four-paneled wooden doors have wooden trim and frames. There is an oversized sliding door between the warehouse and store area. All doors and doorways are painted white.
6. Special decorative features: There is wooden casework at the perimeter of the main store area. Kitchen and storage cabinets are beaded wooden boarding. The diagonally paneled counters from the main store are stored in the warehouse.
7. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Originally a wood or coal stove; nothing now.

- b. Lighting: Incandescent ceiling fixtures with white glass reflectors in the main store area. The living room has a wall fixture and a drop incandescent fixture. Incandescent drop fixtures are in other areas.
- c. Hoist: A counterweighted Otis elevator connects the first and second floors. Used primarily as a freight elevator, a rope moving around a large pulley located on the second floor causes two drums to rotate thus raising or lowering the freight platform by a wire rope. This is a manually driven elevator.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting: The Swan Land and Cattle Company has a complex of four main buildings and several out buildings. These are all located south of Wyoming State Highway 313 and face eastward on an unimproved road. Chugwater Creek is about 1100 feet to the southeast. The Colorado and Southern Railroad (Burlington) is 200 feet to the northwest. The Mercantile Store is the northernmost structure in the complex.
- 2. Historic landscape design: The entire Swan Land and Cattle Company is surrounded by a wire mesh fence. This fence is topped by decorative ironwork. Several large cottonwood trees, planted about 1888, are between the store and the manager's house. South of the manager's house is a sidewalk which leads to a lattice arbor. A large pile of rocks lying in front of this was once a rock garden. An early photograph shows that these rocks were placed forward of their present location and that they contained elk antlers.
- 3. Outbuildings: A small clapboarded shed with two windows and a door is located west of the store. A small one-car garage with clapboarded exterior is located to the southwest. A large two-car brick garage is located south of the office building. A small log playhouse is at the rear of the house. It has two windows and a door and a wooden floor and ceiling.

Prepared by John P. White  
Supervisor-Architect  
National Park Service  
Summer 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the State of Wyoming through the Wyoming Recreation Commission and was financed with funds provided by the Wyoming State Legislature. This project was under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and was completed during the summer of 1974 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming. Professor John P. White (Texas Tech University) was the Project Supervisor and John D. Hnedak (Cornell University) was the Project Historian. Student Assistant Architects who prepared the measured drawings were Thomas L. Amis, Jr. (University of Texas, Austin), Stephen O. Fildes (Texas Tech University), John T. Reddick (Yale University), and Paul S. Wheeler (University of Idaho). Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer provided the photographic records. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.