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William F. Cody's Wyoming Empire: The Buffalo Bill Nobody Knows

Robert E. Bonner

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Celebrated showman of the Old West, William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody took on another role unknown to most Americans, that of the western land developer and town promoter. In this captivating study, Robert E. Bonner demonstrates that the skills Cody acquired from decades in show business failed to prepare him for the demanding arena of business and finance.

Bonner examines Cody’s efforts as president of the Shoshone Irrigation Company to develop the Big Horn Basin through large-scale irrigation and town development. This meticulously researched account shows us a Buffalo Bill preoccupied with making a buck and not at all shy about using his fame to do it.

Cody spent huge sums, bullied partners, patronized state officials, and exercised his charm in pursuit of developing the high plains east of Yellowstone National Park. His efforts helped shape the city of Cody and the Big Horn Basin. With the famous Irma Hotel as a cornerstone, he built the first infrastructure of the Cody-Yellowstone tourist trade and connected his little Wyoming town with the wealth of the East through personal hospitality and travel.

Laced with engaging anecdotes and featuring more than twenty photographs, *William F. Cody’s Wyoming Empire* is a much needed look at an overly mythologized character. There was more to William F. Cody than the Wild West show—and we cannot construct a full picture of the man without understanding his entrepreneurial activities in Wyoming.

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