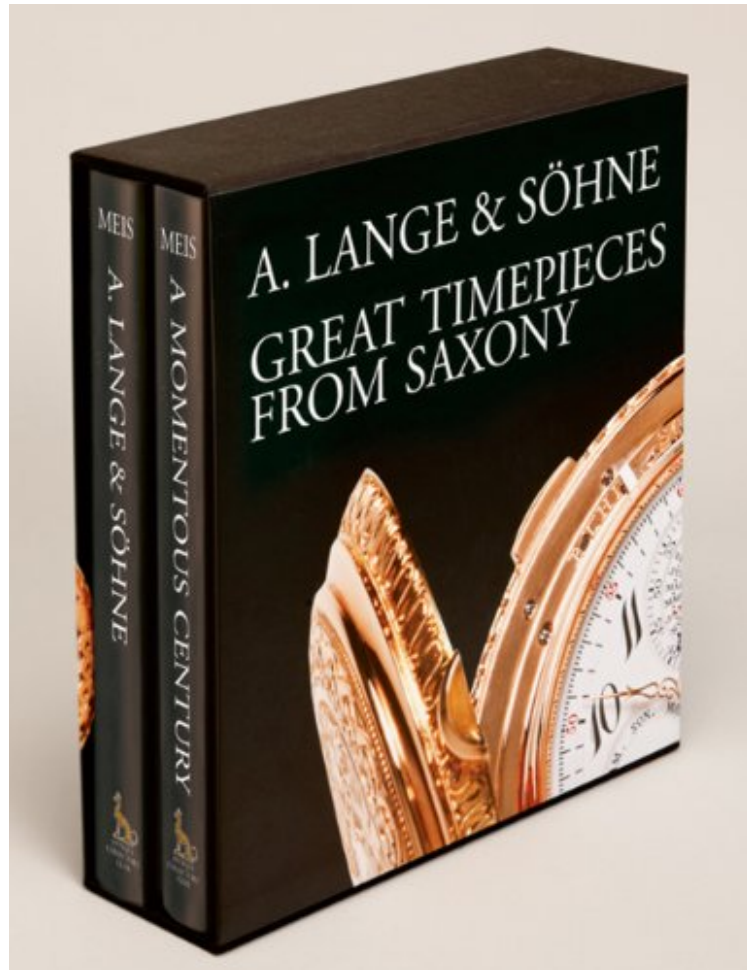


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Reinhard Meis

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Reinhard Meis : A. Lange Sohne - Great Timepieces from Saxony (Volumes I 2) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A. Lange Sohne - Great Timepieces from Saxony (Volumes I 2):

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. The definitive book on the Glash'tte (Saxony) based A. Lange Dynasty of WatchmakersBy Fortunat Mueller-maerkiBookreviewThe definitive book on the Glash'tte (Saxony) based A. Lange Dynasty of WatchmakersA.Lange Söhne - Great Timepieces from Saxony: Volume I: A Momentous century - The Glash'tte Watch Industry 1845 -1945, Volume II: A. Lange und Söhne, the Watchmakers from Dresden; by Reinhard Meis, translated into English by Allan Downing. English language edition published 2011 by Antique Collectors Club, Woodbridge Suffolk, UK (simultaneously with the original 2011 by Callwey Verlag, M'nchen, Germany). ISBN# 978-1-85149-684-6. 902 pages (Vol.1: 462, Vol.2: 446), hardbound, black cloth, dust jackets, the two volumes in one solid slipcase. Approx. 3000 illustrations, mostly color photographs. Appendix: Reproduction of

Patents. Index to subjects and names. Available from www.com and other internet sellers. List price US\$ 495, but discounted copies usually available. The German watch brand of 'A. Lange und Söhne', based in the small town of Glashütte (Saxony), is not widely known among American watch collectors, but unquestionably represents the only historic German watch brand that unequivocally stands for luxury and highest quality. Among German watch collectors historic Lange watches are cult objects. They owe their reputation primarily to the pocket watches produced from the 1870s to World War I, when Emil and Richard Lange, the second generation, i.e. the sons of Adolph Lange (1815-1875) ran the firm. The brand continued to make interesting watches during the era between the first and Second World War, but completely collapsed in the 1940s. In 1974 Kurt Herkner wrote (in German) a comprehensive history of watchmaking in the town of Glashütte, which focused on the corporate history of the Lange enterprise and its off-shoots. A second, expanded edition of Herkner's book (1988) and a companion volume covering early 20th century wristwatches, soon were out of print, causing second-hand, well-used copies to trade for \$500 and up among Lange aficionados at a time when everybody believed Lange was an extinct brand. This situation unexpectedly changed after the sudden fall of communism in Eastern Germany, after Walter Lange (* 1924), a great grandson of Adolph, and a watchmaker by training, who had fled to Western Germany in 1948, returned to Glashütte in 1990, relaunched the brand and reregistered the 'A. Lange Söhne' trademark. The Swiss based IWC brand became an early financial backer of the new enterprise, and by 2001 the brand had become part of the global Richemont conglomerate of luxury products brands. By the mid-1990s, the respected German watch historian Reinhard Meis had decided to break the stranglehold of Herkner on publications on the history of Lange, and in 1997 'A. Lange Söhne. Eine Uhrmacher-Dynastie aus Dresden', (ISBN 978 2 7667 1286 8) became the standard reference text on the brand, quickly followed by an English language edition published by Antiquorum Auctioneers: 'A. Lange Söhne, The Watchmakers of Dresden', (ISBN: 2 940019 23 1). Finally English speaking watch collectors had their own 'Bible' on the history of the Lange brand. That book (in either of the two language editions), with 383 pages and well over a thousand illustrations, was constructed more as a 'documentation' than as a narrative. It covers much of the history of the classic era of Saxony horology (including clockmaking), and goes beyond describing Lange history. It is structured into three chronological sections: I. Up to 1870 (130 pages of text (including many small, inserted images), and 10 pages of plates), II. 1870 to 1940 (60 pages of text with inserts, 80 pages of plates), Two special chapters (mainly images) on a- Marine Chronometers, and b- Pendulum Clocks, III. The rebirth of the Lange brand of the mid 1990s (5 pages of text and 15 pages of plates, plus an Appendix (40 pages) of reproduced patents. That first Glashütte book by Meis has now been out of print for several years as well. The new book under review here is a significantly expanded version (now grown to more than twice as many pages), printed in two separate volumes, that contain virtually every word and image of the earlier title, plus a lot more. The first thing this reviewer noticed is that many of the images which were black and white in the late 1990s are now reproduced in color (including many of the small, text insert images). A significant part of the added heft comes from additional pages inserted within the plate blocks of the former book. The additional pages show additional, often only recently discovered historic examples of watches and clocks. Some sections have grown much more than others: The plate section on contemporary wristwatches of the Lange brand e.g. more than doubled from 15 to 35 pages. But much of the growth is accounted for by the addition of several completely new subject areas, not covered in the 1997 version: This reviewer particularly enjoyed a significant new section on the highly specialized, divided organizational structure of the 19th century, home based horological components manufacturing practice prevalent in Saxony. The section on precision pendulum clocks made in Saxony, including Strasser Rhode and many others (previously only covered by a section of plates), now has a text section as well. The section on Marine Chronometers of the second half of the 20th century is another area now covered in more depth, as is the recent history of the various newly sprouted wrist watch makers in and around Glashütte (including Nomos, Alpina, Union, Glashütte, UROFA, URAG). Most notably, the various parts of the book have been arranged in a very different order from the predecessor publication, which was basically chronological. Now most of the material specific to Lange is found in Volume II, and all other information, i.e. sections about the other players and watchmaking history of Saxony in general are now in Volume I. There is no question that the new, expanded two-volume set on A. Lange and Saxony watchmaking is an important and valuable publication, and it is gratifying that publishers are still willing to produce such elaborate printed horological documentations. The production is great, good paper, sharp images, well printed and solidly bound. The list price - nearly US\$500 - is not insignificant, and one wonders who the targeted buyers are. For the people who routinely buy antique (or even contemporary) Lange watches, the price of buying this set is relatively benign, but for the average horological scholar, who can only dream of owning such a luxury watch, the prices of books do matter. I would imagine that only few in the latter group - particularly if they already own the 1997 edition - will rush to buy the new publication, no matter how much additional and new material has been added. I imagine that many of the new, expanded 2-volume sets will be 'side-orders' (or even give-away 'sellers premiums') for people who buy a new, high-grade Lange contemporary wrist watch. That is not a bad thing to happen, because some of them will actually read the books (or at least read in the books), and as they contain much valuable horological historical facts and thorough scholarship, they may well trigger the conversion of some buyers from people who primarily sought a high prestige/luxury item to somebody who actually knows,

understands and appreciates fine horology and its history. Fortunat F. Mueller-Maerki, Sussex NJ August 2012

Reinhard Meis' book entitled 'A. Lange Söhne - Great Timepieces from Saxony' is a standard work of encyclopaedic precision and a must for every true aficionado of mechanical watchmaking.

About the Author Reinhard Meis is an acclaimed writer on horology.