

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1991

Review of Colorado: A Summer Trip

Kathleen A. Boardman
University of Nevada-Reno

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Boardman, Kathleen A., "Review of Colorado: A Summer Trip" (1991). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 557.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/557>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Colorado: A Summer Trip. By Bayard Taylor.
 Edited by William W. Savage and James H.
 Lazalier. 1867; rpt. Niwot, Colorado: Uni-
 versity Press of Colorado, 1989. xxvi + 185
 pp. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

When Bayard Taylor toured Colorado in 1866, he was a veteran travel writer; in the previous twenty years he had visited western Europe, central Africa, California, Egypt, Asia Minor, China, Japan, and Russia. Taylor considered himself a poet and translator, and he disliked the label "Great American Traveler." Nevertheless, he knew how to profit from his trips by publishing travel letters and scheduling lectures. Taylor's Colorado letters to the *New York Tribune*, later published in book form, describe the railroad and stagecoach trip across Kansas to Denver and into the Rockies, a horseback tour of the mountain parks, and the return journey across Nebraska.

Taylor's objective was to entertain a general audience of armchair travelers. His writing is still enjoyable, as he deftly portrays sublime mountain views, grotesque mining towns, gracious mountain hospitality, and grimy coach rides. Without whining he describes the mud, swollen steams, sore joints, plain food, and near disasters of his mountain pack trip. Taylor records each region's flora and fauna; he reports on peculiarities of dialect and custom, which he tries to adopt in order to "conform to the ways of the country." His travel experience allows him to compare Pike's Peak to the Jungfrau, plains air to the atmosphere of the African desert, and the scent of sage to the aromas of a Turkish bazaar.

The book has historical value too, for Taylor was a man of his time. His letters are promotional, announcing that the so-called Great American Desert has great potential for agriculture, that the Colorado Rockies will make a magnificent tourist area, and that the mountain areas offer good railroad routes. He is ambivalent about mining, which scars the landscape and is notoriously unstable. Yet, although his visit to Colorado coincides with a lull in mining, he assures his readers that the industry is only awaiting a "new process." To Taylor, the Coloradan is a promising new combination of gentleman and frontiersman. The emergence of this brave new breed, he says, is aided by the existence of Montana, which draws most of the riff-raff away from Colorado.

Editors Savage and Lazalier provide background and critique with the same "verve and gusto" that they rightly praise in Taylor's Colorado letters. They state bluntly that Taylor "drank like a fish" and was "a mediocre novelist and a worse poet," but they boldly and convincingly defend his travel writing. Two or three simple maps tracing Taylor's tour would have been welcome.

KATHLEEN A. BOARDMAN
Department of English
University of Nevada-Reno