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February 1995

Review of *Colorado: The Place of Nature, The Nature of Place* by Thomas P. Huber

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Hill, A. David, "Review of *Colorado: The Place of Nature, The Nature of Place* by Thomas P. Huber" (1995).
Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences. 192.
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Colorado: The Place of Nature, The Nature of Place. Thomas P. Huber. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1993. xi+296 pp. Maps, photos, diagrams, and additional readings. \$27.50 cloth (ISBN 0-8708-1289-0), \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0-8708-1290-4).

Colorado contains profiles of twelve distinctive places, which like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, fit together to form a mosaic that helps describe and explain the state's natural and, to a lesser extent, human history. The opening chapter introduces the lay reader to the broad themes of the state's physical geography—geology, landforms, climate, and vegetation. These topics are then typically covered with specific reference to each of the place profiles that constitute the remaining twelve chapters.

The most intriguing aspect of the book is the selection of the twelve places. Huber said he chose them "to inform, tantalize, and sensitize," and because of their "peculiar" and "representative qualities of the natural environment of Colorado." And he said they "were chosen not for their popularity but for their character" (p. 1). Those are nebulous terms.

Physical geographic difference, an attempt to show the environmental diversity of Colorado, is the most obvious criterion for selection. For example, there are chapters profiling Mt. Evans at 14,264 feet in the Front Range and the Comanche National Grassland down on the southeastern prairie. In some cases, human use and modification of the environment plays the lead role in selection, e.g., in the treatments of Crested Butte (the ski industry and gigantic molybdenum mines), the Piceance Creek Basin (oil

shale industry), and Steamboat Lake (a reservoir). Finally, although Huber writes of representativeness and despite the fact that Colorado has thousands of acres of wild, virtually inaccessible land, each of the twelve places is easily accessible by motor vehicle. Huber wants his readers to go to these places and see for themselves. The remaining seven accessible places are the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Garden of the Gods, Tamarack Ranch, Silverton, Great Sand Dunes National Monument, Slumgullion Slide, and Colorado National Monument. For every place a useful, easy-to-read road map is provided. A list of additional readings ends each chapter.

Huber teaches well. He writes for the layperson. Good diagrams support descriptions of geologic cross-sections and vegetational sequences. Many black-and-white photographs, some of which unfortunately suffer from lack of exposure control in the printing, help the reader understand the landscape. The reader learns about the processes that account for Colorado's geological, climatological, and biological features.

In sum, this is a book that succeeds, through good writing and carefully-designed illustrations, in informing the lay reader about Colorado's natural history. There is also human geography to be learned, but as a minor theme. In his enthusiasm for Colorado's natural spectacles and his concern for their preservation, Huber becomes effusive. But one's overall impression is that one has spent good time learning from a fine teacher. **A. David Hill**, *Department of Geography, University of Colorado at Boulder*.