

BAYARD TAYLOR'S COMMENTS - 1866

(Bayard Taylor, traveler and correspondent for the New York Tribune, made some rather pointed remarks about the food served in Colorado in the summer of 1866).

He comments often on his fare from day to day, but whether it is good or bad, as a rule, takes things as they come. There was one phrase, however, usually having a favorable connotation, that came to be a matter of suspicion whenever it was mentioned. His first experience was unfortunate. He had asked about the possibilities of food at Abilene and was told

"It's the last square meal you'll get on the road!"

And Taylor comments

My experience of a "square meal," therefore, is that it consists of strong black coffee, strips of pork fat fried to a sandy crispness, and half-soggy, indigestible biscuits. For these I paid the square price of one dollar."

At Monument Station

"The viands were about as 'square' as those at the preceding stations."

When he arrived at Denver he

"sat down, not to a "square meal," but to an excellent supper."

On starting out from Empire he had a square breakfast, and later in the mountains he observes that it is fortunate he did not have to cook the camp meal or, he feared, it would have been of the square order.

Before entering the mountains Taylor and his companions had their accommodating landlord put them up a lunch. Among other things there was a "kettle full" of hot biscuit.

"They might ha' been sadder," said he (the landlord), speaking of the biscuit, "they pack better when they're sad."

The follow^{ing} passages carry their own explanation.

"I have disgusted several individuals by refusing to buy, but the jargon has already infected my speech, and, after hearing a man at the table ask, "Is there a pay-streak in that bacon?" I found myself on the point of asking the waiter to put a little more sulphuret in my coffee. The same waiter afterward said to me: "Pie's played out, Sir!" If I had then requested him to "Corral the tailings," he would have brought me the fragments from the other plates."

Bibliography: Colorado Magazine, September 1935, p. 161.