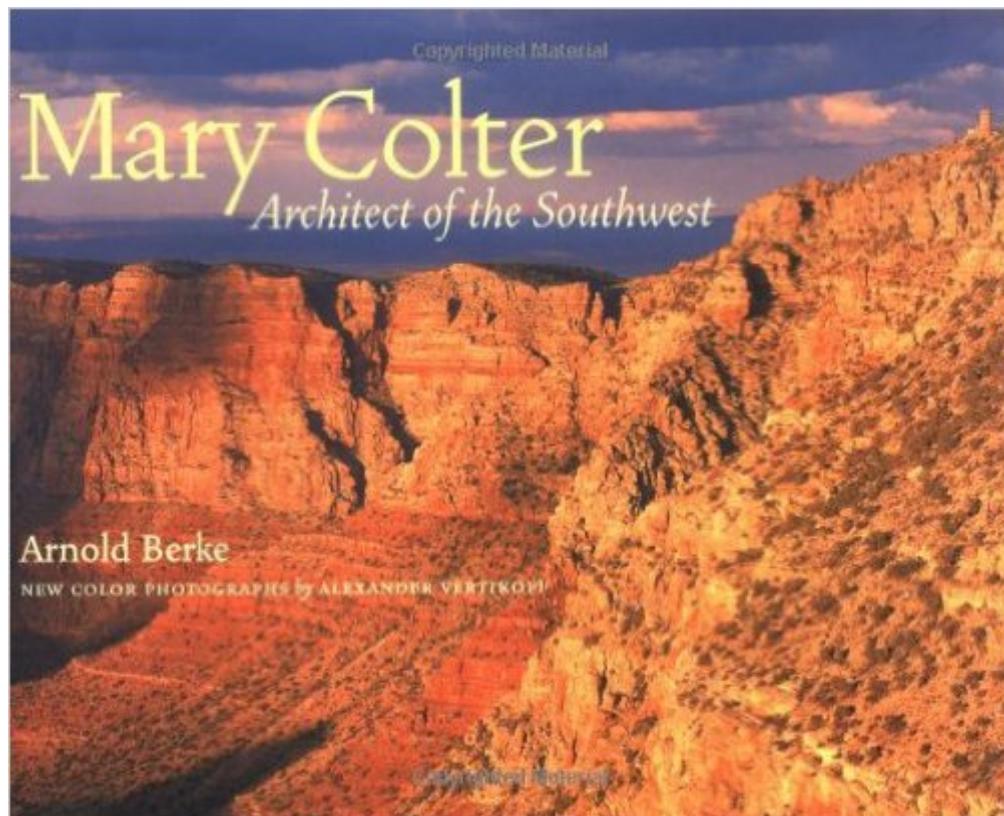


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# Mary Colter: Architect Of The Southwest



## **Synopsis**

Mary Colter may well be the best-known unknown architect in the world: her buildings at the Grand Canyon National Park-which include Lookout Tower, Hopi House, Bright Angel Lodge, and many others-are admired by almost five million visitors a year. This extraordinary book about an extraordinary woman weaves together three stories-the remarkable career of a woman in a man's profession during the late 19th century; the creation of a building and interior style drawn from regional history and landscape; and the exploitation, largely at the hands of the railroads, of the American Southwest for leisure travel.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Princeton Architectural Press; 1 edition (March 27, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 156898345X

ISBN-13: 978-1568983455

Product Dimensions: 8 x 1 x 10.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #378,560 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #283 inÂ  Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Architectural #394 inÂ  Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Individual Architects & Firms #543 inÂ  Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Visual Arts > Photography

## **Customer Reviews**

Mary Colter was a woman ahead of her time --- an architect and interior designer when few women attempted it. She interwove rustic techniques, local materials and American Indian themes into buildings and designs well before that was accepted by others in her professions. Her rustic buildings at Grand Canyon National Park still survive to the delight of many visitors. Colter was at times a perfectionist, hard to get along with, a workaholic and extremely demanding of herself and her co-workers. Yet the author shows us her life and work with sympathy as well as depth. This book is well illustrated with color and black and white photos. Well researched. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It answered all my questions!

What a wonderful, over-due publication and recognition of a remarkable artist. Certainly, Mary

Colter was a pioneer who helped define "Southwest" style. I purchased this book hardcover to enjoy photographs, which are very beautifully done and well described, but to my astonishment, found this book to be highly readable and engrossing. I didn't think it was possible to not be able to put a book about architecture down, but that is exactly what happened. This history is fascinating, the artist amazing.

[ASIN:156898345X Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest]]Arnold Berke approaches the life and works of Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter in a straightforward chronological manner, providing just the right amount of context without wavering from his focus. The treatment is detailed but never pedantic, precise and well-documented throughout. Berke refrains from editorializing and allows the subject matter to speak for itself, with spare use of explicit personal commentary. The photos, both historic and contemporary (Alexander Vertikoff, photographer), are illustrative and generous (though throughout I wished for more). The story of Colter's life and works is fascinating, inspiring, and a wonderful "hook" to retell the history of the development of tourism, especially in Arizona and New Mexico, two states where my own Midwestern family spent considerable time in from the 1950s through the early 1970s, and near and dear to me to this day. Although Berke's treatment is nearly comprehensive, one subject never broached is that of cost. As Berke notes in his postscript final chapter, "By the 1950s, architectural policy for the national parks discarded the rugged rusticity that [Colter] had promoted so successfully." He does not make the obvious connection between this regrettable trend and changing public and corporate spending priorities. If anything is clear from this story, it is that execution of Colter's work had to require exceptional investment, and it appears no budgetary restrictions were imposed on her creativity. This is a historically relevant facet of this story that should have been documented. Berke is a fine and knowledgeable writer whose subject matter is so intrinsically fascinating that his book will leave you hungry for more.

The rise of feminist studies in the late twentieth century included the resurrection of previously forgotten American architects of the female persuasion, foremost among them being Julie Morgan, doyenne of the Hearst family and its connections. The result was that she has been afford not one, but several biographies of varying qualities. Given the extremely limited number of such architects, there remained only a handful, at best, left to architectural historians. Mary Colter was chosen by Mr. Berke for this excellent biography. The book is a lovely coffee table style biography with lavish photography supported by a fine text. The niggling question, however, remains as to the exact quality of Colter's ouevre. If one were to compare her work with that of her male peers one is forced

to conclude that she, like them, was far from the cutting edge of architectural Modernism or of technical innovation. In actual fact, she is an excellent representative of the broad center of the architectural profession leading up to the middle of the century. The fact that she was a woman in a heavily male-dominated profession seems to be the single qualification for her to receive such attention. That said, the book itself is quite excellent and is recommended for those who wish to round out their understanding of Traditional architectural practice in the first half of the twentieth century.

A beautiful book, well-written, lots of photos. Living in New Mexico and Arizona, I had heard of Mary Colter but had never really known much about her. Read this lovely book and you will know (and enjoy) all about a true pioneer.

Mary Colter was ground breaker in more ways than one. This book is richly illustrated and will engage the reader as one follows Mary's life story. What remains of her efforts can be enjoyed to this day and makes for a personal adventure for those who are interested.

Mary Jane Colter is the first and most gifted woman in architecture; her work in what was considered only a MAN's profession put womanhood in place for ever!! She even designed Phantom Ranch, at the floor of the Grand Canyon NP!

This book is fascinating on many levels, not just because it's about Mary Colter. She was truly a great woman, and when seeing the buildings she created and while reading this book our appreciation of her continues to grow. But a reader of this book will get, not only information about her, but photos and information about the buildings she designed and important features of the world at that time. She drew her inspiration for her building styles from the local inhabitants and the history of the areas they were to be built in, and was pleased to pay homage to them in her works. She truly loved the styles she worked with and knew how to create atmosphere and ambiance in her works that complimented the areas in which they were built and enhanced their purpose, creating emotionally and physically enjoyable and very practical architecture. I still feel amazed that she was able to provide us with such appropriate, well engineered, long standing Indian and frontier inspired buildings for the Grand Canyon National Parks in particular, and many other enjoyable buildings that are still enhancing our world. I think it would be an especially important book for a young woman or for any architect. I think it's also very inspiring to anyone interested in learning

more about the past and the effect individuals have had on the world we live in today.

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