

The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries, edited by Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. xxii, 362 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$27.95 cloth.

Reviewer Karl Jacoby is Robert J. Carney Assistant Professor of History at Brown University. He is the author of *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (2001).

Although best known for his posthumous best-seller, *Sand County Almanac* (1949), Aldo Leopold authored hundreds of articles, reports, and essays during his lengthy career in conservation. In *The Essential Aldo Leopold*, Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight distill Leopold's prodigious output into a single volume that encompasses not only Leopold's published output but previously unpublished material from his personal papers as well. To accomplish this impressive feat, Meine and Knight have chosen brief excerpts (sometimes a sentence, occasionally a paragraph or two) of Leopold's work. Each selection offers either an unusually clear distillation of one of Leopold's ideas or an example of Leopold's often elegant phrasing. Meine and Knight have arranged these excerpts into chapters with themes such as "Ecological Restoration" and "Agriculture." Each chapter is, in turn, introduced by a present-day environmental thinker (Donald Worster, David Orr, Terry Tempest Williams, and others) who identifies the contemporary relevance of Leopold's thought.

Although the result is a book that is made up of snippets rather than a sustained narrative, *The Essential Aldo Leopold* does indeed serve an essential function: it enables readers to survey Leopold's remarkably varied output in a single volume. A system of notes directs readers to the source of each excerpt. The book's hidden message, then, would seem to be that readers should not rest after finishing *The Essential Aldo Leopold*, but should instead use the work as a starting point from which to investigate the full range of Leopold's still vital environmental writings.

Taming the Upper Mississippi: My Turn at Watch, 1935-1999, William H. Klingner, P.E., P.L.S., by Janice Petterchak. Rochester, IL: Legacy Press, 2000. 208 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. \$10.00 paper.

Reviewer Patrick Nunnally is an independent public historian who also teaches at the University of Minnesota. He has been investigating the environmental history of the Mines of Spain region along the Mississippi River.

This slim book, based largely on the oral recollections of a civil engineer based in Quincy, Illinois, is an uneven treatment of a complex

subject. On one hand, it treats an important subject, the history of human efforts to manage the upper Mississippi River, through a perspective that is important and perhaps underrepresented in public debates. On the other hand, the book's lack of analytical depth, poor contextual development, and special pleading decrease the overall value of its conclusions.

Bill Klingner's professional career as a civil engineer began in 1935, coincident with the construction of the lock and dam system that created a permanent nine-foot shipping channel on the upper Mississippi. Klingner's career in private engineering practice concentrated on the engineering and land use problems associated with systems of flood control levees that line much of the river in southern Illinois and Missouri. His insights on the perceived necessity to control the Mississippi's waters and the complexities of doing so are important; not only does he offer first-person, detailed views on what went into various construction projects, but his anecdotes also recapture some of the feelings and drama of struggling with this mighty waterway.

That said, there are substantial problems with this book, which limit its overall importance for scholars and serious students of the river. Petterchak, listed on the book's cover as "a researcher and writer of biographies and business histories," fills much of the text with long quotations from Klingner, as he tells stories, offers observations, and presents his opinions on the state of the upper Mississippi. Unfortunately, she did very little other research that would provide the analytical depth or complicated contextualization that the subject really warrants. The book speaks deliberately to the current controversy over public management of the upper Mississippi, but does not show a depth of knowledge on that subject sufficient to be fully respected. The issues, both historical and ecological, social and economic, are far more complex than this book acknowledges.

The Flatness and Other Landscapes, by Michael Martone. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000. xii, 171 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer John Price is assistant professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His research focuses on literary views of the prairies.

Michael Martone is well known among readers of midwestern literature for his essays, stories, and edited anthologies. This collection, which won the prestigious Associated Writing Programs Award for Creative Nonfiction, brings together some of his best work. Together, these essays are a mix of subjects and styles, ranging from the history of windmills to a more personal exploration of the history of his

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