

character. Mendell also explores the ramifications of Obama's political message outlined in his second book, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006).

Traveling with the press pool during Obama's 2004 campaign for the U.S. Senate, Mendell had numerous opportunities to measure Obama's personality. Mendell observed the candidate's habit of sneaking cigarettes out of camera range and points out that he was initially unprepared for the crush of adulation that accompanied his sudden rise. The time span between the intimacy of local politics and national prominence was unusually short for Obama; Mendell speculates about whether he is ready for the rigors of a lengthy presidential campaign, especially when confronted by an opponent as seasoned as Hillary Clinton.

Mendell's portrait reinforces the impression of Obama as an inspiring speaker, thoughtful and philosophical, a conciliator whose instinct is to focus on commonalities rather than divisions. His initial attraction was based on the novelty of being the first black candidate with a reasonable chance to be nominated by a major party, and who does not indulge in hyperbole. In Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucuses, he revealed his ability to attract votes in a predominantly rural state with few minorities. Iowa voters will thus undoubtedly follow his ultimate fate in the 2008 elections and beyond with keen interest, and may thus be interested in this account of his rise to national prominence.

Dreaming the Mississippi, by Katherine Fischer. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006. vii, 208 pp. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography, questions for discussion. \$18.95 paper.

Reviewer Patrick Nunnally is Mississippi River Program Coordinator, University of Minnesota. A landscape historian who specializes in developing interpretive and educational material pertaining to rivers, scenic byways, and trails, he is also the author of "The Picturesque Mississippi," in *Grand Excursions on the Upper Mississippi River: Places, Landscapes, and Regional Identity after 1854* (2004).

Structure is a challenge for authors writing about the Mississippi River. Many stick to conventions of travel literature, carrying their narrative thread up or down the river, as their journey leads them. Others develop their ideas chronologically, recounting how their theme has emerged through time. Katherine Fischer uses her life's experience with the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Dubuque as the lens through which she examines many of the most common themes and memorable moments of everyday experience: buying a new house, making friends, learning the landscape of a new community. All in all,

hers is a successful strategy, as the 16 essays in the book, each a nicely realized set piece of its own, make vivid the texture of life for one family in place.

Given the proliferation of books on the Mississippi River, it is fair to ask why another is needed. Fischer's essays succeed most when they stick most closely to lived and felt experience, painting verbal portraits of life in riverside marinas, small bars, and floodplain communities. In those moments, readers familiar with such literary and historical gems as John Madson's *Up on the River*, Mark Neuzil's *Views on the Mississippi*, and Jonathan Raban's *Old Glory* will find an important complementary voice: that of a mother, wife, professional writer, and avocational boater and river rat at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Mississippi River is a grand and powerful subject, but Katherine Fischer reminds us that much of its power comes on ordinary summer Sundays, on spring mornings, and at other still, quiet moments that bond a human life to the landscapes that shape it.

Buffalo Nation: American Indian Efforts to Restore the Bison, by Ken Zontek. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xvi, 250 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Gregory J. Dehler is an independent scholar in Denver, Colorado. He wrote his dissertation (Lehigh University, 2002) on William Temple Hornaday and wildlife protection.

The traditional narrative of the buffalo entirely excludes American Indians from both the slaughter and the preservation of the animal. Within the past ten years, historians such as Dan Flores and Andrew Isenberg have been writing American Indians back into the story of the animal's precipitous decline. In *Buffalo Nation*, Ken Zontek sets the record straight by restoring Indians to the crucial role they played in saving the buffalo from the abyss of extinction. Zontek covers the efforts of the nineteenth-century Indians whose private herds are the ancestors of nearly all buffalo today, as a growing number of tribes manage buffalo preserves on their own reservations. As most of the book covers the years since 1973, Zontek relies heavily on interviews he conducted with leading figures in the InterTribal Bison Cooperative.

Buffalo Nation makes several important contributions. First, it restores American Indians to the story of bison preservation, a part of the story that has long needed telling. Second, Zontek stresses the role that Indian women have played in the bison preservation movement. Third, he shows that the cultural relationship between Indians and the buffalo remains a constant and is the impetus behind bison preservation