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Review of *Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, the Battle to Save the Buffalo, and the Birth of the New West*. By Michael Punke.

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Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, the Battle to Save the Buffalo, and the Birth of the New West. By Michael Punke. New York: Smithsonian Books/Collins, 2007. xvi + 258 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$25.95.

Although the decline of the American bison is an often-told story, Michael Punke's meticulously researched work provides an engaging and careful delineation of George Bird Grinnell's singular role in marshaling the resources and support that led to the preservation and protection of the buffalo. It's a story with many chapters, including the hunting and near extermination of the buffalo by hide hunters after the Civil War; the experiences of Grinnell in the lands beyond the Mississippi beginning in 1870 and his evolving interest in the region's wildlife and natural history; the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and the U.S. government's failure, until 1894, to adequately fund the protection of the park and its buffalo and other resources; and Grinnell's role in building government and private support through his position as editor of *Forest and Stream* for the ultimate allocation of federal funding and game protection for Yellowstone and the few wild buffalo that could still be found there.

Punke effectively identifies the individuals and forces that shaped the commitments of Grinnell, born to position and privilege in New York, to natural history, conservation, and the preservation of the buffalo. He contends it was from Lucy Audubon, the widow of the great ornithologist, that Grinnell learned the "greatest lesson of his life"—self-denial, or self-restraint. As editor of *Forest and Stream* for more than three decades, Grinnell consistently advanced the position that sportsmen should practice self-restraint in the pursuit of game and support bag limits, seasons, and license fees to preserve and improve habitat. His commitment to the preservation of American wildlife was profound, and he recognized the important role sportsmen must play in its protection. To further his goals, he helped establish the Audubon Society, the Boone and

Crockett Club, and Glacier National Park. He also served as president of the National Parks Association.

Although much of the book focuses on Grinnell's attempt to create the congressional and public support to protect Yellowstone's flora, fauna, and geology, it also provides a useful account of the various political and economic forces of the Gilded Age that opposed restrictions on the exploitation and commercialization of the West. The roles of the railroads and their lobbyists, of poachers, and of state and local interests in the struggle for Yellowstone are told with clarity.

While not a biography of Grinnell, the volume chronicles one of the most significant dimensions of the life of this important American conservationist and provides a complement to the praise he receives as an early student of the Plains tribes.

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