Voices from the Past:
Historical Observations About Houston-area Coastal Prairies
QUOTES (see references below)

General Prairies
Roemer: “In the entire level plains of Texas, no rock is found”

Roemer?: “Imagine a land where there are more bird's nests than stones”

“A settler would not spend ten years cutting down and burning trees; on the very day of his arrival, he could put his plow into the ground.”

Wildlife, Wildflowers + Beauty
Visitor [from Houston’s Forgotten Heritage]: while proceeding from Anahuac to Brazoria in spring: “I had never been at all prepared for the indescribable beauty of the Texas Prairie at this season of the year...The wild flowers...spread around us in the utmost profusion, and in wonderful variety. Some of those which are most cultivated in our northern gardens were here in full bloom and perfection, intermingled with many I had never before seen, of different color and forms...these fields of flowers were...extensive almost beyond limitation...After looking on their rich and ever varying display, I thought I could almost give my mustang his liberty, throw myself on the ground, and spend the whole season among them.

Olmstead: “the beauty of the spring prairie has never been expressed. It is inexpressible.”

Sealsfield 1832: "The most variegated carpet of flowers I ever beheld lay unrolled before me – red, yellow, violet, blue, every color, every tint was there...The finest artificial garden in the world would sink into insignificance when compared with this parterre of nature's own planting." “My horse could scarcely make his way through the wilderness of flowers, and I for a time remained lost in admiration of this scene of extraordinary beauty. The prairie in the distance looked as if clothed with rainbows that waved to and fro over its surface.”

Landscape + Flatness
Anonymous: “If he will cast his eyes from Buffalo Bayou to the Sabine..., he will discover the extended plain only diversified by the sight of timbers as he crosses the San Jacinto, Trinity and the Neches.”
Anonymous: “I will take the liberty while our horses are feeding upon the plain to make a general retrospect since our departure from Houston. We had traveled about 18 miles and if we except the wood upon Bray’s Bayou, which is too inconsiderable in quantity or kind to deserve notice the whole country is timberless.

“here is a boundless landscape covered with nature’s greenest carpet, over which herds of deer, horses, buffalo and other wild animals almost beyond number, mover and bound in every direction...giving it a vital pulsation to the scene.”

“it took us three entire days to make 30 miles from the mouth of the Brazos to Brazoria, On the first day we passed through an endless meadow, on the second, we drew nearer and island, the meadow then became a park; the most magnificent clusters of trees on our right and on our left for a distance of many miles...but in this glorious park there was no trace of human beings; it was a boundless ocean of grass with islands of trees”

“what renders the danger greater still is the frequency of cane breaks or tracts of land overgrown with long reeds of which we make fishing poles in the Northern States. These canes grow in some places among the forest trees, so think as to render a passage through them inconvenient; and more often found impenetrable

Daniel Shipman: “Bewildered in the wild and trackless prairie, I was lost, lost, lost. After wandering about in every direction, myself and horse without water for thirty hours, I began to seriously think that I should at last have to lie down and die in this untraveled wilderness, far away from my family and the habitation of men, without a friend to close my eyes or dig my grave”

“just imagine an infinite plain, extending for more than one hundred miles before you overgrown with the finest and most delicate grass, without even the slightest elevation or declivity, fanned by every breeze of the sea, neither tree nor hill neither house nor farm and you will have a faint ideas of the wonderful appearance of this country.”

Attwater 1818: “a dull uniformity of prospect, spread out and immense”

Henri Joutel: “the settlement was located two leagues on the bank of a river which has been named “Aux Boeufs” (Garcitas Creek). We were on a small rise from which one could see a long distance. Toward the west and southwest there was a prairie, very level that continued beyond our view. Beautiful good grasses are here serving as pasturage to an infinite number of bison” by man and rising so high as to shut out the view of the sky as well as every other terrestrial object”
**Morgan’s Point, Roemer:** “...after passing through a forest, I had my first view of a Texas prairie...an unbroken level grassy plain extended for miles before us, on which a few islands of trees and shrubs were scattered in irregular order. The level prairie extended from the rear of the farm as far as the eye could see.”

**Wetness**

**Olmstead:** “roads bad and rains. Mr. Phipps took to the sulky and some 10 to 12 miles on the road it was broken to pieces...left the sulky in the road to be brought to Houston.”

**Roemer:** “hardly had we left the city when the flat Houston Prairie loomed up as an endless swamp... all of the low coastal region presents a similar picture during this time of year... darkness fell and still we had not reached the end of the prairie, nor did we find a dry place to lie down...where not a stick of wood could be found to kindle a fire”

**Within Houston City Limits**

**Johnston:** Looking across the flat prairie, Mrs. Palmer Hutcheson chose the lot on North Boulevard that had a single huiscahe tree growing on it. This huisache tree had always been used to tie up horses by the young men riding out from town to shoot prairie chickens.

**Muir:** [Remarking while stand at Buffalo Bayou] “The country on the north, after you cross the bayou, is prairie, of a light thin soil interspered with pine groves; that upon the south is also prairie, generally too wet and poor for cultivation, sometimes called crawfish land...

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**Galveston**

**Roemer 1849** “Tall grass covers the flat surface as far as the eye can see and there are no trees on the island except three liver oaks.”

**Muir:** The surface of Galveston Island is low, so much so that ther have been times when it has been nearly covered with water through its whole extent by the violence of the winds and tide. The soil in some place is rich alluvial, and a great part of the island is covered with a grass that is found in all the prairies of the West.
**Sealsfield 1832:** “It is called Galveston Island, but has neither hill nor valley, neither house nor farm, not even a tree, with the exception of three stunted trees on the western end, but from which through the extreme flatness of the ground are visible from a great distance.”

**Bollaert 1842:** “On approaching it shores it seems low and uninteresting, but there are landmarks such as the three trees which are a collection of small trees…”

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