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Flint Hills Gamble: Weather

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FLINT HILLS GAMBLE: WEATHER

Wagering livelihoods on weather might seem a risky bet in the temperamental tallgrass. But ranchers, naturalists and even today's plein air painters will take the winnings they reap any day!

Sure, there's no escaping the wind on the prairie, but heed advice from a native Kansan who's "trying to learn how to stay calm when the wind gusts ruffle my equilibrium." And when lightning, the original grasslands manager, strikes, think of it as a partnership between earth and sky. As for thunder, the Pawnee Nation considered a certain kind of thunder the voice of Heaven, signaling it was time for the spring creation ritual to begin.

You see, the gambles and payoffs all make sense to the lovers of this hilly land, sacred to so many. Simply put, today's alfresco painter, her easel propped in the prairie, sums up the stakes: "My plein air paintings are hit or miss — many fail, but the ones that work resonate with the energy of my direct experience with nature."

OPPOSITE PAGE

In the Frozen Marsh West of Matfield Station
Midafternoon of a New Year's Day Blizzard — 1 January 2022
Philip Heying

“A change in the weather is sufficient to recreate the world and ourselves.”

Marcel Proust, French novelist



Running With the Storm
Dave Leiker