

Postage Stamp Prairie --Caitlin McKimmy

It's a little swath of land, all but forgotten in the lee of yet another rolling hill. Tufted Asters innocently absorb sunlight, and various prairie grasses incline their stunted stalks, for the wind here is harsh and the earth is dry. You wouldn't know it just by looking, but that frost-bitten compass plant points straight into the past, toward an epoch almost entirely trampled by cattle, cultivation, and an ever-growing expanse of cement. The students jogging by in their Nikes have no idea that the soil beneath their feet is a unique chemical amalgam, the product of millennia.

Walking along a narrow trail worn into that unadulterated earth, I can't help but wonder why such an anachronism persists. Can't this stubborn postage-stamp of prairie see that the times have changed? This land has been trodden and tired, farmed and forgotten, razed and refurbished. The apparition before me belongs with the giant ground sloth in the annals of history, long lost and frozen beneath the ground. And yet it's here, unmistakable and alive. Simply because this rocky hillside is desirable for no one else—not farmers, landscapers, or even cows—history claimed it a tombstone, a monument to what lived before there were words.