

Texas Stake Plains and Lakes of Early Days

J. F. Evans

The Stake Plains are today only a memory. It was well into the 1880s before Texas began to realize that the Panhandle was not an uninhabitable country for the white race, and the stake plains was not a sandy arid waste scattered over by the bleaching botes of those who had attempted to cross its wind-swept waterless spaces, though for ~~x~~ unnumbered years the country east of the cap rock watered by innumerable sparkling streams that flowed from under the great plateau known as the stake plains, had been a paradise to primitive tribes, and that the plains were capped with a mat of curly mesquite or buffalo grass. Rich grazing when green, but richer after curing on the roots from dry weather, it assumed a light golden hue, and then to green and grow when moisture fell....and cured, carrying its fattening strength through the cold and snows of winter.

And the plains, spoken of as level, were undulating circular basins, ~~one~~ or two miles across....or ~~vix~~ five miles across. Excess water ran to the center, and in those days formed lakes, not of great depth, but they carried their waters through the year, many of them for buffalo moved in immense herds and loving the water, they waded in and kneaded and packed the earth in their bottoms until it became jugged.

In the year following the destruction of the buffalo, the lakes began to disappear as though their missions of watering the great herds had ended. Unpacked when the waters shrank, the earth cracked and in time fissures opened to the ~~xxx~~ porous limestone, often rugged cavities were excavated. The rains were drained off as they fell and the plains became waterless.

The rancher when he ~~xxxxxxxx~~ occupied the plains was forced to use wells and windmills to supply water for cattle. Without these the land would be uninhabitable by man or beast.