"A few more steps and a beautiful prairie suddenly opened to our view lying in profound repose under the warm light of an afternoon sun. Its indented and irregular outline of wood, its varied surface interspersed with clumps of oaks of centuries growth, its tall grass with seed stalks from eight to ten feet high, like tall and slender reeds waving in a gentle breeze - the whole presenting a magnificence of park scenery, complete from the hand of nature."

George Flower (1817) upon first view of a southern Illinois prairie