

*A journey into America's grasslands, rendered through pictures and words*

## Visions of the Tallgrass

*Prairie Photographs by Harvey Payne*

By James P. Ronda

Foreword by Geoffrey Standing Bear

In centuries long past, a vast swath of grassland swept down the center of North America, from Canada's Prairie Provinces to central Texas. This once-plentiful prairie has now all but disappeared. Humans have grazed, mowed, and plowed the plains, dammed the rivers, and imposed their will on the land and its creatures. Fortunately, some remnants have survived, including the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in northeastern Oklahoma. In this visually stunning volume, wildlife photographer Harvey Payne and historian James P. Ronda offer an intimate look at and into one of America's Last Great Places.

Spanning nearly 40,000 acres in Oklahoma's Osage County, the Preserve is a living witness to a world that once existed. But the Osage prairie is not a museum or theme park—and it is not frozen in time. Under the stewardship of The Nature Conservancy, which has overseen its restoration, the Preserve lives on as a fully functioning ecosystem. And for twenty-five years, Payne and Ronda have explored these lands, together and in solitude. Rendered here in brilliant color and paired with Ronda's informative yet deeply personal commentary, Payne's photographs open our eyes to the ever-changing world of the Tallgrass Preserve. In chapters focused on grass, sky, birds, bison, and fire, Ronda and Payne reveal that the "Big Empty" is, in fact, teeming with life.

Through interwoven images and words, *Visions of the Tallgrass* shows that our nation's grasslands are sacred ground, a priceless piece of our American past—and future.

**Harvey Payne** is a renowned nature photographer whose work has been published in numerous newspapers, magazines, books, and calendars. An Osage County rancher, land manager, lawyer, and judge, he played a pivotal role in the Preserve's creation in 1990, served as its Director until 2008, and now is its Community Relations Coordinator. **James P. Ronda** is retired as Professor at the University of Tulsa, where he held the H. G. Barnard Chair of Western American History. He is the author of eleven books, including *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*. **Geoffrey M. Standing Bear** is Chief of the Osage Nation.

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