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## Beyond Poplars: Trees on Utah's Cultural Landscape

Thoreau said,

Many large trees, especially elms, about a house are a surer indication of old family distinction and worth than any evidence of wealth.

Thoreau's observation holds true for communities and society as a whole. Cities with impressive, towering street trees gain our notice and respect. Some of the most memorable streetscapes in Utah include:

- The main streets of Brigham City and Santa Clara with their rows of overarching sycamores
- Torrey's cottonwood-lined Main Street, and
- The sycamore-shaded neighborhood along east Center Street in Provo.

You feel like you are in an important place, one worthy of respect, as you pass under the dense and lofty canopies of these treescapes.

Learn more about Utah's trees in the following article by Roger Roper (first printed in Beehive History 26).

[Wallace Stegner on poplars](#)  
[Settlers' first plantings](#)  
[Salt Lake's first tree ordinance](#)  
[Trees in small towns](#)  
[Bluff's Old Swing Tree](#)  
[Fruita's Mail Tree](#)  
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[Silkworms and mulberry trees](#)  
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A Civilian Conservation Corpsman plants a seedling, 1930s.

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By Roger Roper

Trees are indeed potent symbols of the cultural landscape, the built environment we have created for ourselves. They tell us much about the lives and attitudes of those who planted and used them. They symbolize both practical and passionate aspirations we have for the world we create around us. Much about Utah's history can be deciphered from the trees we find on the landscape.

When it comes to trees and the Utah landscape, one tree dominates the memory, the Lombardy poplar. Rows of these tall, columnar trees planted as windbreaks provide one of the most evocative images of Utah. Wallace Stegner observed:

Wherever you go in the Mormon country...you see the characteristic trees, long lines of them along ditches, along streets, as boundaries between fields and farms.... These are the 'Mormon trees,' Lombardy poplars.