I REMEMBER
THE TREES
AND THE BIRDS
OF UTAH
THE TREES OF UTAH:
THE CEDAR

There must be hundreds of miles of fences in rural Utah that are made up of cedar posts and barbed wire. The early settlers in this land were quick to recognize the cedars as an important natural resource. They were found in countless places, growing profusely along the slopes of the foothills throughout the state.

These trees are not cedars in the sense of the lordly cedars of the mountains, but are a dwarfed version of their stately cousins known as junipers. Nonetheless, the name "cedar" has stuck, and that is how I like to remember them.

While there are three different types of junipers growing in Utah, the one preferred by the settlers was the Utah Juniper. It was resistant to deterioration in the ground and could hold and retain staples better than the others. It is said that a cedar fence post can easily outlive the man who planted it. Some of them have remained in place in a fencerow for a hundred years.

The fencepost was only one of the uses to which these trees were put. They were also used for corrals, sheep sheds, small animal shelters, and even Christmas trees. Indeed, they were part of the inventory every farmer could use for various purposes around the farm.
A juniper fence post
Distinctively western in character, and widely used in Utah, the drag gate can be found on any farm or ranch. Associated with cedar and barbed wire fences, a drag gate is dragged out of the way to allow passage of vehicles or animals. It is an economical way to provide an opening in a fence without making a costly swing gate.

It consists of a section of barbed wire fence with loose posts that can be stretched tightly across an opening and is held in place by loops fashioned of baling wire that are attached to a securely anchored fence post.

To open the gate, it is necessary to draw the gate section toward the anchored post, raise the top loop of baling wire over the loose post, then raise the loose post out of the lower wire loop, dragging it to one side. To close the gate, the procedure is reversed.
THE BOX ELDER

Box elders, found growing in the canyons of northern Utah, were quickly adopted by the pioneers as domesticated trees around their homes. Though a species of the maple family, box elders differ from the maple in leaf structure. Instead of the simple maple leaf, they have several leaflets attached to a central stem.

The streets of Brigham City today are shaded by sycamore trees, while box elders have declined in use because of the pesky "Box Elder Bugs." Nonetheless, these trees gave their name to Box Elder County in which Brigham City is located.

THE CHESTNUT

Many chestnut trees can be seen in Davis County. They spread their canopy of leaves over sidewalks and streets in Bountiful and Farmington. They may be found in many other places as well. However, some of these venerable trees have grown to enormous sizes, reminiscent of the "spreading chestnut tree" under which "the village smithy stands" in Longfellow’s poem.

I would guess that most of the chestnut trees of Davis County are the kind that are known as horse chestnuts, which grow to great size with a spreading canopy to match.
THE COTTONWOOD

A member of the poplar family, the cottonwood is a true monarch of the arid west. It played an important role in the survival of the settlers by providing them with ready made shade, wood, and relief from monotony in a dreary landscape.

The cottonwood tree in Utah has lent its name to many land features. Towns, creeks, canyons, and even shopping malls bear the name of these trees.

They were here when the settlers first arrived. They persisted. They are still with us, often through natural reseeding without the aid of man.
The Lombardy Poplar

With closely massed foliage and upward growing forms, the Poplars planted by the pioneers of Grantsville stand guard along Cooley's Lane.
The willows of Wallenberg
With stark silhouette of Winter,
on lacy foliage of summer, the
willows of Wallsburg can stir the
soul with their natural beauty.
I know of no place in Utah where you can see more stately willows in greater numbers than in the Wallsberg - Heber City area. Standing in straight rows, set in green pastures or hugging the banks of meandering water courses, the willow to me embodies serenity, peace, a cause for meditation.

Early settlers in this area must have felt their influence because they planted so many of them. Then, of course, others grew from random seeds or may have had a natural beginning before the settlers came.
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Winter or summer, in stock silhouette or lace, the willows of Wallsberg can stir the soul with their natural beauty.
THE JOSHUA TREES

The Joshua tree forest of extreme southwestern Utah presents a unique view of subtropical desert plants most often identified with localities hundreds of miles to the south and west.

Driving northward on I-15 at Littlefield, Arizona, I once took the Beaver Dams Exit and followed the road to the Utah border. The road bisects the forest, affording an unobstructed view on either side. From the vicinity of the Utah border, the forest extends to the foot of the Beaver Dam Mountains, a distance of roughly ten miles.

Although the term "forest" conjures in the mind a thick growth of trees with dense foliage, the growth here gives one the feeling of openness. Few of the trees exceed 15 feet in height. While they cover a large area, they are scattered among the other desert shrubs and do not generally grow close together. Interspersed with the trees are numerous varieties of cactus, smoke trees with their dry twisted gray branches, creosote brush, sage, and greasewood.

I’ve always been fascinated by the unusual plants that grow in the arid desert regions of the Southwest. They seem to convey a message of determination to survive and even to flourish under the most harsh and forbidding circumstances.

The Joshua Tree in itself is a unique plant. Its branches are extended grotesquely with upraised arms that end with dagger-like, spine-tipped leaves. A type of Agave, its name is said to have been derived from early Mormon settlers of the Southwest who fancied the resemblance of the angular branches to the arms of Joshua leading the Children of Israel into the Promised Land.
The JOSHUA TREE
BIRDS OF UTAH:
THE SEAGULL

California Gull
THE SPARROW

The House Sparrow

English
THE SWALLOW

Barn Swallow
THE QUAIL