



garden, or pasture. Guillotine-like headgates controlled the larger channels. All were once a source of endless recreation for children. The ditches furnished the lifeblood to settlements entirely dependent on mountain snowpack for survival.

Poplar planting was so widespread in early Utah that the ubiquitous olive green trees still line irrigation ponds and canals. Along with steeples, the poplars direct the eye toward heaven, helping to form the basic horizontal/vertical composition of a Mormon landscape.

Francaviglia lists other elements of the Mormon townscape: the simple rectangular barn with pitched roof and adjoining shed on one or both sides; open hay barns, “usually the most dilapidated structure in the farmyard”—leaning at a slight angle or even propped up by hay; weathered granaries; inner-city corrals and woodpiles; the distinctive Mormon hay derrick; the protective barrier of mountains behind almost every Utah town.

Those weed-ridden road shoulders, unpainted barns, and rustic fences create a genteel shabbiness that sometimes inspires beautification committees to urge residents to mow their weeds and paint their houses and fences. Other Utahns—including many an artist—hope the villages will never change. But Utah’s rural landscape is changing, as new brick rectangles replace the adobe houses. In time it will be gone except for those buildings preserved by a few loving keepers.

Source: Richard V. Francaviglia, *The Mormon Landscape: Existence, Creation, and Perception of a Unique Image in the American West* (New York: AMS Press, 1978).



*Rural Utah*