

A 1910 Albuquerque Bungalow with an Alvarado Dormer Window

by Robert R. White



Julius Mandell was 15 years old in 1903 when he left his native Alsace-Lorraine and journeyed to Albuquerque, New Mexico. His immigration was sponsored by a distant relative, Sol Weiller, who gave him a job at the clothing firm of Weiller and Benjamin.

Mandell quickly rose to a position of importance in the Albuquerque business community. Besides being a good businessman, Mandell had the advantage of being related to men who were not only leaders in the Jewish community but who held positions of importance in commerce and politics. Among such relatives was his uncle, Michael Mandell, who owned a large clothing store and was mayor of Albuquerque from 1890 to 1891. Julius Mandell opened his own clothing store in 1907. It was first known as Mandell, Myer & Co.; some years later it became Mandell, Dreyfuss & Co., and when the firm finally ended business in 1971, it was known simply as Mandell's.

On July 1, 1907, Mandell married Marie Benjamin, who was the younger sister of the junior partner of the firm of Weiller and Benjamin, where he had been working. The young couple lived at 600 2nd Street at a boarding house run by Marie's mother, but with a new store and a new bride, Mandell began thinking of a more suitable place to live. In 1908 he purchased a lot on 12th Street across from the home of Michael Mandell.

In 1910, Julius Mandell built a home on

his lot at 315 12th Street, NW. The house is a substantial brick bungalow, with blue-brick accents in a mostly red-brick facade. Mandell's son, Joe, who still lives in the house, states that the contractor, Frank A. Stephens, built the house for \$4200 but underestimated the cost of the blue brick and went broke with two rooms upstairs left unfinished (they have remained unfinished).

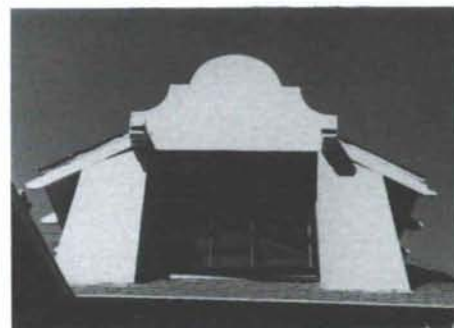
The Mandell house is in most respects similar to bungalows built elsewhere in 1910. What sets this house apart, however, is that it has a prominent dormer window that seems to have been directly inspired by Albuquerque's Mission-style Alvarado Hotel. This may have been the first domestic use of a Mission-style feature in the city. Another feature that was derived from the Alvarado is the quatrefoil vent in the gable over the front door (although this is not strictly a Mission Revival feature).

Julius Mandell did not leave any record as to why he united two such disparate styles in the construction of his house. It is possible, though, to propose a theory that might satisfactorily explain why this event is of special significance in Albuquerque's architectural history. When Mandell decided to build his house in 1910, he no doubt thought that a brick bungalow was the only proper house for a man of his standing in the community. However, he (or conceivably, his builder) probably saw the Alvarado Hotel every day and admired its architecture, and while not fully accepting

the possibility of building a home in the Mission style, decided that a minor feature or two derived from the Alvarado would be an appropriate addition to his home. The construction of this home, then, represents a transitional phase in the gradual acceptance of regional building styles in Albuquerque.

By the 1920's, the dominant domestic building styles in Albuquerque included Mission Revival, Pueblo Revival, Territorial Revival, Southwest Vernacular, and Mediterranean variations. But in 1910, Albuquerque architectural design generally took its inspiration from what was popular on the East Coast and in the Mid-West. The Alvarado Hotel was built in 1902 and Hodgin Hall at the University of New Mexico was redesigned in Pueblo Revival style in 1908, but it was not until World War I that the construction of such buildings as Carlos Vierra's house and the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe brought about a widespread acceptance of southwestern building styles. Julius Mandell's ideas about house design were thus a decade ahead of his time, and he should be given credit as one of the first proponents of southwestern building styles in the early years of this century. R.W.

Robert R. White is a hydrologist and historian living in Albuquerque. His book, "The Taos Society of Artists", was published in 1983 by the University of New Mexico Press in conjunction with Historical Society of New Mexico.



Mission-style dormer window on the Mandell house. Photo by Robert R. White, March 1987.



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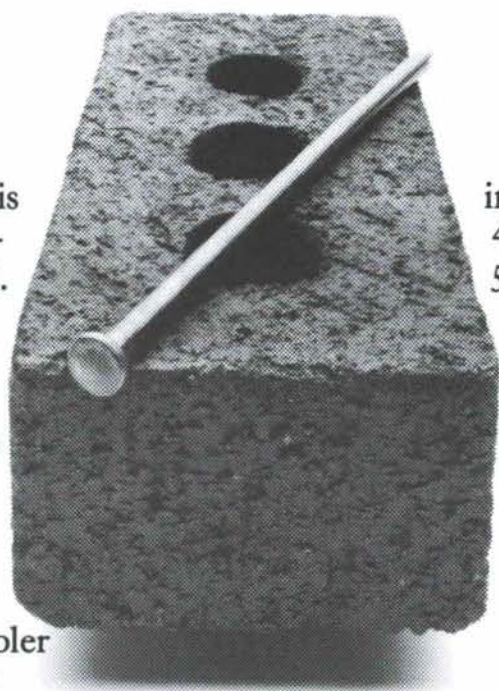
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