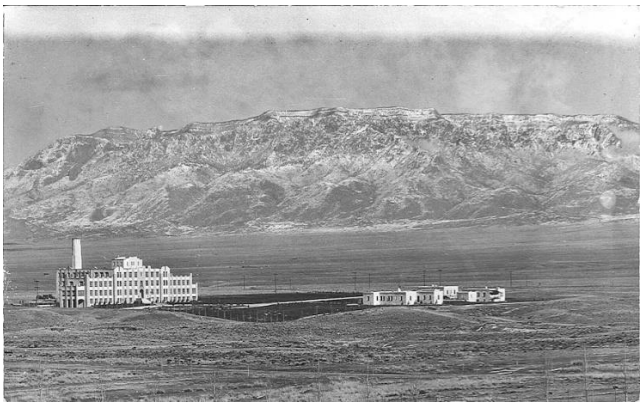
Chapter Two: 1930 – 1939

With the founding of what would eventually become GAAR in 1921, together with the expansion of the city limits in 1925, Albuquerque realtors and developers put themselves in an excellent position to take advantage of a growing population's housing needs. However, just as they began to see some progress, especially in the development of the East Mesa, otherwise known as "the Heights," the worldwide collapse of financial markets, resulting in the Great Depression, brought an abrupt halt to the nation's employment base as well as a drying up the money supply. This was particularly true of markets in the East and Midwest parts of the country, where the depression was most immediate, but was it the same for Albuquerque, a small city in the heart of the desert Southwest?

For the first two years of so of the Great Depression, Albuquerque of able fight off the worst its effects, mainly through its geographical isolation and the fact that it did not have a large industrial base. In addition, some major construction projects were already planned and ready to go. These projects included, the Veterans Administration Hospital located in the Southeast Heights that began construction in 1931; a new six-story Federal courthouse at the corner of Fifth St. and Gold Ave.; construction of the new Indian TB Sanatorium (Albuquerque Indian Hospital) at the corner of Vassar and Lomas in 1934; and the first phase of Monte Vista School in the Northeast Heights, just east of the University. These and several others kept Albuquerque afloat in the early years of the depression.



Albuquerque Indian TB Sanatorium, mid-1930s. Note: Lomas Blvd. is not yet constructed.

Federal Courthouse building at Fifth and Gold.

However, outside of these big money projects, the everyday citizen-laborer was starting to feel the pinch of business closings and job shortages even among skilled laborers such as electricians, carpenters, and plumbers. Want ads in the daily papers offered small, day jobs for the unemployed. Much of the hardship was borne by the small retail and service businesses, such as, the motor courts and cafes that supported the state's fledgling tourist ecomony. No one was visiting the Pueblos or coming to see the area's scenic landscapes.

Even the city's major employer, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company was hit by unemployment as its net income dropped thirty-three percent in 1931 resulting in a major loss of tax revenue for the city. Agricultural practices lost income as did the state's mining industry. This situation worsened on April 15, 1933, when the Albuquerque National Bank, the state's most important and influential financial institution, suddenly locked its doors, throwing the city and state into crisis.

For many people in the United States, the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 was a watershed moment. Starting in 1933, FDR's New Deal policies, with its alphabet-soup collection of federal agencies (PWA, WPA, FHA, CCC, etc.), were put in motion and within two years, the positive effects were being felt in New Mexico and across the country. Once again it was Clyde Tingley, city commissioner and ex officio mayor of the city – the man whose boosterism for the city was unwavering and was the consummate self-promoter who had handed out elm trees to beautify the city – who figured prominently in the city and state's recovery. Tingley was elected governor in 1934 and used his personal connections with FDR to bring millions of New Deal dollars to the state and city.

Through his tireless efforts, and his Washington connections, Tingley was able to secure thousands of dollars in public works funds for New Mexico to kickstart the economy, build necessary public facilities, and get Albuquerqueans (and the state) back to work. Using the work of the historian Charles Biebel, the following is a summary of major construction projects underway by the mid-1930s.

- Terrace (Roosevelt) Park. Located just south of Stamm's Terrace Addition, south of Coal Ave., the construction of Roosevelt Park was a major construction project that recontoured the scrubby sand hills to create a lush landscape with terraced ledges, flagstone walkways, and sprinkler systems (pictured left). The project concluded with the planting of hundreds of trees and bushes. The project began in November 1933 and was completed by the following May by using as many as 275 men per day working in two shifts. The major source of funding was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration

(FERA) whose funds could be used for labor costs only. Of course, the costs for moving dirt and sand was primarily labor.

- State Fair Grounds. Built on state land at what was the far east end of the city at San Pedro and Central, the new fair grounds complex was started in 1934. The complex included a racetrack, grandstand, stables, barns, and five exhibit buildings constructed in the distinctive Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. The first state fair since 1919 opened in 1936 and was a rousing success. City services were extended to the site, as well as, widening Central Ave. to as many as six lanes. Its popularity stimulated further development (motor courts, restaurants, and housing) in the area over the next few years.
- Municipal Airport. Albuquerque has always been an attractive place to fly airplanes. Its year-round weather and open spaces had attracted aviators and commercial airline companies since the late 1920s. In 1937, $705,000 in Works Progress Administration funds was acquired to build a handsome Spanish-Pueblo Revival terminal to serve the new cross-country air routes. Its large hanger and long runway could accommodate the latest in aircraft design. Local boosters began to call Albuquerque the "Air Capital of the Southwest."

- University of New Mexico. The classic look of the UNM campus was established in the 1930s using Project Works Administration monies. Designed in the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style by the noted architect John Gaw Meem, buildings such as Scholes Hall, the Old Student Union (now Anthropology Building), and Zimmerman Library were constructed.
- Albuquerque Public Schools. Land annexation by the city in the late 1920s resulted in a serious overcrowding of schools by the early 1930s. But the depression had caused major budget cuts and reductions in teacher salaries, so additional funds for school construction or remodeling were hard to find. The problem came to a head when on the evening of April 25, 1933, the antiquated Fourth Ward school burned to the ground causing Superintendent John Milne to seek federal assistance for new construction. He quickly secured PWA funding and within three months Lew Wallace Elementary School at Sixth and Roma was underway. For the next several years, APS used PWA funding to build several new schools plus major additions to existing ones. These projects

included: Coronado Elementary (Third Ward), Bandelier Elementary, and Jefferson Junior High (pictured left, ca. 1940), and additions to John Marshall Elementary, Monte Vista Elementary, Washington Junior High, and Albuquerque High School.

- Other Civic Improvements. New Deal monies also contributed to the construction of civic projects that enhanced the quality of life for Albuquerque residents. These included: the city zoo (now Biopark), the Albuquerque Little Theater (designed by John Gaw Meem), the Monte Vista Fire Station (pictured left) that protected the new homes being built in the Heights, and the Tingley Beach recreation area.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on infrastructure projects, such as, water and sewer extensions, curb and gutter installations, street paving, and storm sewers, most the result of federal highway and work relief funds. This work brought these simple, but much appreciated, conveniences to all parts of the city including the new subdivisions in the Heights – a boom to both residents and developers alike.

Highway construction using federal monies was also on the increase. The Central Ave. Bridge over the Rio Grande was completed in 1931. This helped set the stage for the realignment of U.S. Highway 66 through Tijeras Canyon and incorporating Central Ave. as its main thoroughfare. To avoid delays through downtown caused by increases in the nation's freight and passenger rail traffic, "subways" under the tracks were constructed at Central (pictured right) and at Tijeras and the Coal Ave. viaduct over the tracks was rebuilt using PWA funds. The realignment of Route 66 moved the city's primary traffic corridor from a north-south alignment along Fourth St. to an east-west orientation that would forever change how

Albuquerqueans conceptualized their city. New automobile-oriented businesses began to line Central all the way to the canyon and set the stage for post-war commercial development.

Finally, with political events in Europe heating up in the late 1930s, the U.S. Army Air Corps began to make plans for a training base in Albuquerque. Improvements were made to old runways and new facilities were built for the Albuquerque Army Air Field (later renamed Kirtland Field, and eventually Kirtland Air Force Base). Soon, it would accommodate not only flight training, but also bombing ranges on the city's West Mesa, and weapons testing in the canyons of the Manzano Mountains. Again, this facility would have lasting effects upon the city's future growth and development.

Housing Development in the 1930s

In addition to federal funding for highways, schools, and civic improvements, Congress enacted major legislation that would have a huge impact on housing in the United States. On June 27, 1934, the National Housing Act was signed into law. Its objective was to make funds available for home repair and construction while at the same time providing jobs and improving the nation's economy during the Great Depression. A secondary objective, according to the Act, was "to reform home mortgage lending practices, to broaden opportunities for home ownership, and to raise housing standards." The effects of this legislation would have far-reaching effects on the American lifestyle for decades to come.

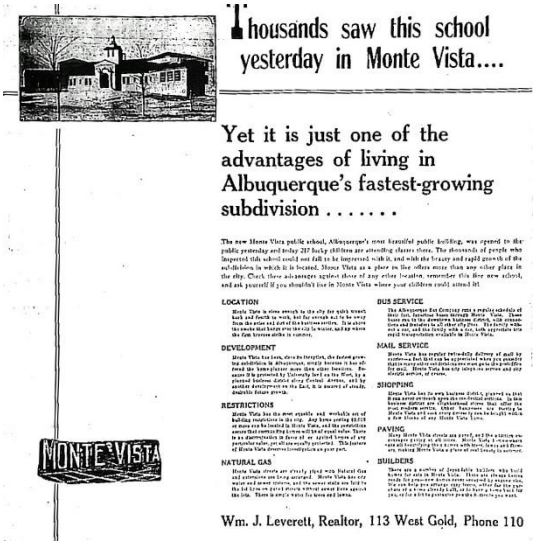
Previously, home mortgage loans were short-term (5-10 years), and required a large down payment (at least 30 percent) which resulted in a significant balloon payment at the end of the loan term or an agreement to refinance. As a result of these tight lending conditions, only forty-four percent of Americans owned their own homes in the early 1930s; and the economic conditions of the time was forcing this percentage downward. The Act authorized the Federal Housing Administration to insure long-term loans on private homes, thus encouraging lenders to invest in residential mortgages.

And this residential mortgage assistance came in the nick of time for Albuquerque's housing market. From 1924 to 1931, an average of 461 new homes had been built in the city per year. This number fell dramatically to a total of 42 in 1932, rebounded to 159 the following year, but fell again to 61 in 1934. Following passage of the National Housing Act, the Home Owners Loan Corporation was established in Albuquerque, and by January of 1935 it had already made 800 home loans to Bernalillo County residents, amounting to more than $1.8 million. The following table, compiled by Charles Biebel, shows the dramatic results of this program through 1939.

Year	No. of New Houses	Total Construction Costs
1935	150	$ 500,000
1936	164	633,000
1937	182	715,000
1938	238	837,000
1939	353	1,270,000

Local builder and former GAAR president (1929) Charles McDuffie took advantage not only of the monetary opportunities, but also began streamlining how a house was built. It was the start of mass production in home building, which would culminate in the iconic "mega-suburbs," such as Levittown in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Working in the College View Addition, just to the east of the Monte Vista subdivision, McDuffie used standardized plans, prefabricated materials, and followed a strict construction schedule to build sixty homes in a sixteen-month period (1935-36) – one-third of the city's total home construction during that period! The *Albuquerque Journal* called him, the "house-a-week man."

The neighboring Monte Vista Addition continued to lead the way in home construction in the 1930s. Over fifty new homes had been built during the late 1920s, many of them concentrated along Monte Vista Dr. In the early 1930s, development concentrated along Amherst and Carlisle Blvd., but by mid-decade construction moved west towards the university. By the end of the decade, over 140 additional homes had been built in a multiple of styles, including, Southwest Vernacular, Mediterranean, Spanish-Pueblo Revival, and Territorial Revival. This rapid growth caused overcrowding problems for local schools, which was alleviated when the developer William J. Leveritt, Sr. donated land at the corner of Monte Vista Dr. and Girard Blvd. to build Monte Vista School.


Thousands saw this school yesterday in Monte Vista....

Yet it is just one of the advantages of living in Albuquerque's fastest-growing subdivision . . . . . .

LOCATION

BUS SERVICE

DEVELOPMENT

MAIL SERVICE

SHOPPING

RESTRICTIONS

PAVING

NATURAL GAS

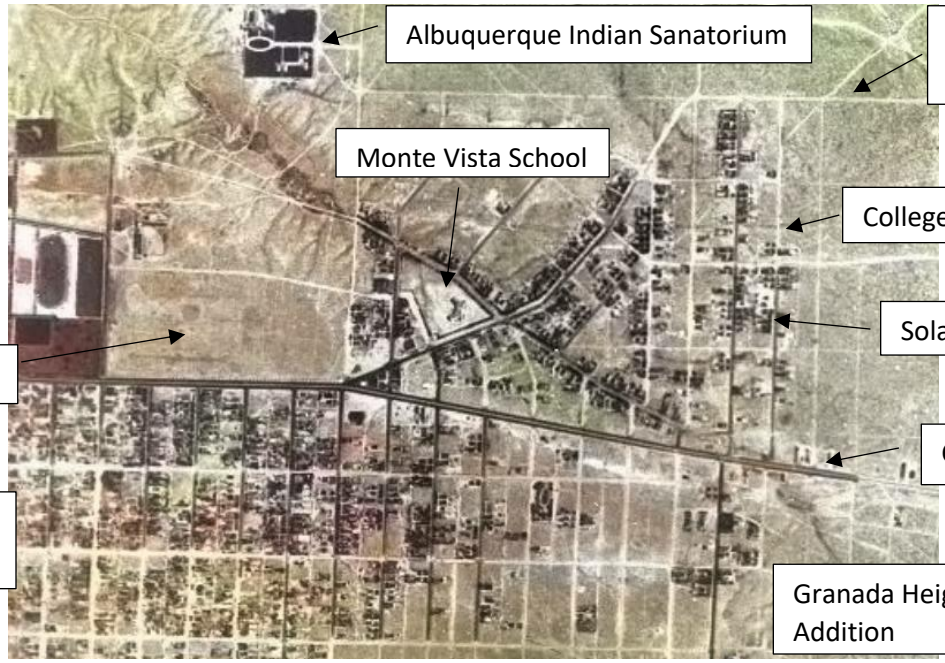
BUILDERS

MONTE VISTA

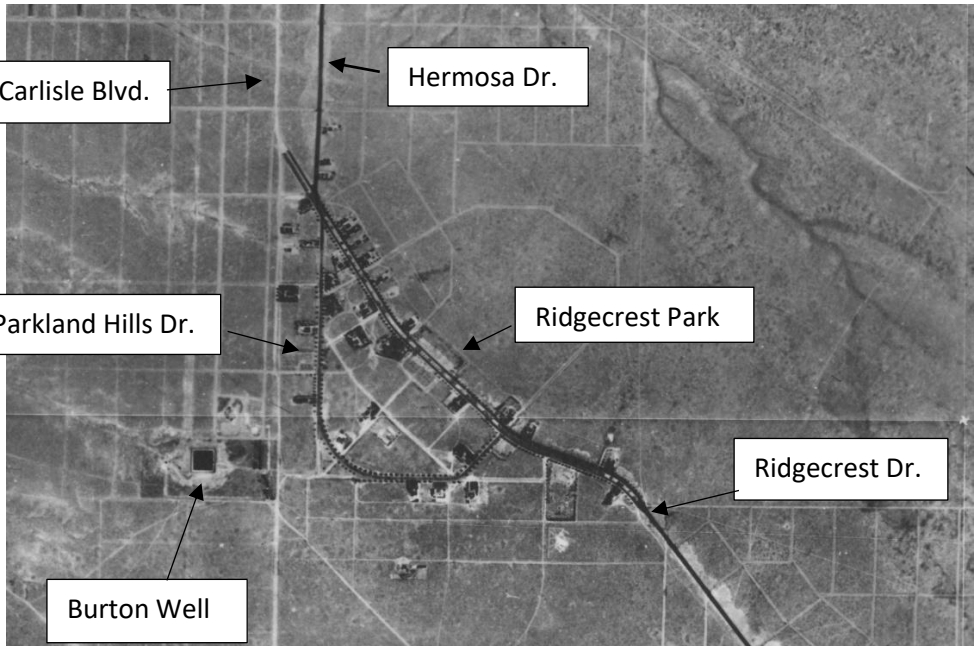
Wm. J. Leverett, Realtor, 113 West Gold, Phone 110

A full-page advertisement in the *Albuquerque Journal* for the Monte Vista subdivision. This ad is thought to be the first full page real estate ad in the city's history.

A mile or so south, in the Parkland Hills Addition, the construction of the VA Hospital at the south end of Ridgecrest Dr. stimulated home building along that tree-lined thoroughfare. By the end of the decade, approximately 50 homes were built. As seen in the aerial photograph, development in Parkland Hills was confined to its southwest half of the subdivision. Most of the streets were not even graded in the northeast half. In fact, no other construction had even been started in the general area outside of Parkland Hills save for an isolated house just south of the Parkland Hills Addition boundary and the Burton well and water tank located west of Carlisle Blvd. just outside the southwest corner of the subdivision.



Monte Vista Addition - mid-1930s. The noted landscape architect S. R. DeBoer configured the street plan to minimize flooding. He also laid out the street plan for Parkland Hills (below).



Parkland Hills Addition – 1935. Note clustered development of homes while other areas are not platted yet.

The development of the Granada Heights Addition located between Parkland Hills and Central Ave. was typical of a small, mid-1930s development project. Platted in the mid-1920s, the subdivision contained less than ten houses by the end of the decade. However, by the mid-1930s, much of the development had been built out with a mix of modestly priced, Mediterranean-styled houses with some architect-designed homes. One house, in particular the Kelvinator House (Raabe House) at 324 Hermosa Dr. SE stands out in both modern conveniences and style for its time. Designed by William E. Burke, Jr. in 1937, its Streamline Moderne styling looked very sleek and "modern" when compared to its Revivalist neighbors. Its name, Kelvinator House, was derived from the fact that it was all-electric house, stocked with Kelvinator appliances.

Kelvinator House (Raabe House), 1938

During the late 1920s era of land annexation, the largest block in the downtown area was the acquisition of the Huning Castle Addition in 1928 – a total of 156 acres situated south of Central, between 15th St. and the Rio Grande. This area of former swamp land was the late nineteenth century site of Franz Huning's extensive farm with pastures, orchards, his flour mill, *La Molina de Glorieta*, and his home, the long-time city landmark "Castle Huning" (demolished 1957).

Just prior to the stock market crash, two prominent Albuquerque citizens, A.R. Hebenstreit and William Keleher acquired the property from the Huning family and began development of the subdivision. The centerpiece of the planned development was the new site of the Albuquerque Country Club. Its clubhouse, a fine example of Mediterranean styling, set the tone for the neighborhood's architecture. The subdivision was designed with wide, tree-lined curvilinear streets with upscale houses in the Eclectic and Modern Movement styles, including Mediterranean and Mission styles, the International style, and some early examples of the Ranch House. Two of the finer examples of these styles are the two and one-half story Hebenstreit House (200 Laguna SW – below left) designed by the noted architect T. Charles Gaastra, built in 1929, and the Lembke House (312 Laguna SW – below right), built in 1937-38.

Suburban expansion was also beginning to move up the North Valley, where traditional pasture lands were far from downtown shopping conveniences but appealed those homebuyers who were looking for a rural-urban interface.

Ad for the Gentry Addition located "way out" on North Fourth, a ¼ of a mile north of the city limits.

An interesting example of this type of subdivision is the Los Alamos Addition, originally platted in 1926 but not built upon until 1937. The addition is located on North Fourth St., just north of Montano Rd. It consists of four parallel cul-de-sac streets that run east of Fourth and dead end at the Gallegos Lateral, which parallels Second St.

In 1926, local real estate agent and insurance broker, Ross Merritt, headed a group of investors who purchased 127 acres of unirrigated pasture land ("Gutierrez's pasture"). Merritt saw many benefits to the property that would appeal to homebuyers, such as access to Fourth St., which was U.S. Highway 85, stretching from Mexico to Canada. In addition, the formation of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District in 1925 had meant that the problem of heavy, seasonal flooding would soon be controlled.

Interestingly, as the development broke ground in 1937, a ten-hole golf course, the Sandia Golf Course, was being built on the corner of Fourth and Montano, with holes stretching from Fourth eastward to the railroad tracks. Unfortunately, this amenity never attained full development and by 1940 there was no mention of the course in city directories. Instead, 109 half-acre lots were subdivided with the replat filed in 1938. Although the addition was outside the city limits (it was annexed in 1948), and did not offer city water or sewer, Merritt and his group established building guidelines and restrictions that would appeal to buyers. The minimal construction cost per home was $2,500.00 with a minimum 700 square foot footprint. Front setbacks were set at 40-60 feet and the homeowner had access to irrigation ditches.

New Housing Styles of the 1930s

Many of the housing styles popular in the 1930s were a continuation of the 1920s and earlier, especially the Mediterranean/Mission Revival style. This style constituted the majority of homes in pre-war Parkland Hills, Monte Vista, and the New Country Club Addition. The following styles first appeared in the 1930s.

Territorial Revival (1930-Present) The works of architects John Gaw Meem and Gordon Street adapted this revival style based on the antebellum Greek Revival or Territorial Style of the mid-nineteenth century. The Territorial Revival style is highlighted by a flat roof with distinctive red-brick, dentil coping at the parapet line. Wood trim pediments are common over windows and doors, and square columns support flat-roof *portals*. Exterior colors are usually white or off-white. The style became extremely popular for commercial and institutional buildings in the state.

Territorial Revival house. Note pedimented windows. New Country Club Addition.

Minimal Traditional (1935-1950) This style came into vogue with the passage of the Federal Housing Act and the surge in homebuilding that had architects and builders looking for a simple, inexpensive, easy-to-build house style. The hallmark of this style is simplicity and a lack of decorative elements. It features a one-story, low- to intermediate- pitched roof usually with a gable end (the "Cape Cod" house) but can also use a gable-and-wing or a hipped roof design. The eaves have little overhang. Decorative elements are missing except for the occasional use of scalloped or shingle siding on the gable ends. This house type is gradually replaced after the war by the Ranch House. The Minimal Traditional styled home is also referred to as the **American Small House** by some architectural historians.

Examples of Minimal Traditional houses in Parkland Hills. (left) Wing-and-gable style. (right) Simple rectangular form with Territorial styling.

Modernism (1900-Present) The concept of Modernism in architecture begins in the first decade of the twentieth century with the formation of the Prairie School in Chicago under the direction of the iconic architect Frank Lloyd Wright. As we have seen, Albuquerque has several examples in the Fourth Ward neighborhood of one of the first styles in the Modernist Movement, the distinctive Prairie/Craftsman style. However, new Modernist styles begin to appear in the suburbs in the 1930s and continue in popularity until the present day. The following are Modernist styles found in the 1930s. Interestingly, the FHA warned applicants for federal mortgage loans not to employ too many extreme features of this "foreign" style because they did fit well into federal government's idea of its vague and ill-defined "American house style."

International (1930-Present) This style began in Germany and Eastern Europe around the First World War and was particularly embraced by the art community. It is typified by a one-story, rectangular form with a flat roof; using severe cubic shapes; and smooth, unbroken surfaces without molding or ornamentation. Large expanses of steel-framed glass, often organized in horizontal bands, and the use of glass block is common. In modestly priced, tract houses, the style can be limited to flat roofs, corner windows and a general lack of decoration.

Simplified form of the International style. Vista Larga Addition.

Streamline Moderne/Art Moderne (1930-1950) A derivative of the International style and employing many of the same themes, it was influenced by the sleek industrial designs of the 1930s and 40s that influenced everything from houses to housewares, automobiles to locomotive engines. The style features aerodynamic design, whose lines suggests cleanliness and modernity. It is typified by horizontality, curved forms, rounded corners, thin deep canopies, use of glass block, long strips of windows that often follow the curved elements of the building and sometimes horizontal bands or accents. Buildings often had ship motif accents, metal pipe railings and porthole or half-round windows. Houses have an irregular plan of round and square smoothly finished massing that emphasizes horizontality with steel window sash sometimes set into deep "picture frame" moldings and with horizontal ornamental bands at the parapet.

Streamline Moderne house on Ridgecrest Dr. in the Parkland Hills Addition.

Early Ranch House (1935-1950) An early form of the Ranch House infrequently appears in Albuquerque suburbs in the mid-1930s, but by the 1950s and early 1960s, it becomes the most ubiquitous house type in the city. We will discuss this house type in more detail in Chapter Four; however, its earliest variant in the city at this time is notable. The modern Ranch House originated in California in the 1930s by the architect Cliff May; however, the style is derived

Early Ranch House design on Carlisle Blvd. in Parkland Hills. (top) 1940. (right) 2019.

from the California hacienda of the Spanish Colonial period, and other forms of vernacular frontier architecture in the American Southwest. In general, the Early Ranch is one-story, rectangular in form, and a low-pitched roof often decorated by red clay roof tiles and features a moderate to wide roof overhang. A long, low front porch frequently spans the building's façade. When first introduced, the Ranch House was thought of as another small house type, like the Minimal Traditional in form and for its lack of decorative elements. But, as we will see, within twenty years, the Ranch House form becomes detailed and elaborative.

The Effects of the New Deal on Albuquerque Real Estate

Notable civic leaders were active in coordinating New Deal funding agencies with expanded suburban and downtown housing developments. D. K. B. Sellers, developer of University Heights and Nob Hill, was a member of the New Mexico PWA advisory board and the city used his knowledge of the New Deal system help get complex projects funded. Future U.S. Senator, Clinton P. Anderson, got his start in public service while serving as a city administrator for New Deal relief funds. And, of course, we have already noted the important role that Clyde Tingley played as both ex officio mayor and as governor.

Housing developers such as past GAAR presidents, Charles McDuffie (1929), R. J. McCanna (1925-26), Kenneth Balcomb (1928), and Percival Glasebrook (1937) received an obvious boost in buyer interest as a result of New Deal projects that extended water and sewer lines, paved new and existing streets, and installed curbs and gutters. Street paving was particularly important for those new homeowners in the Heights since most services, such as, grocery stores, pharmacies, city, and professional offices were still located several miles away in the city's thriving downtown. And millions of dollars in building projects at the university, and for

Albuquerque Public Schools, again spotlighted the East Mesa and provided new facilities for suburban residents and their families.

On the other hand, major real estate developers in the city also assisted the city with keeping New Deal projects moving. One interesting example happened in March of 1937 when a three-quarters of a million-dollars sanitary sewer project ran out of funding before completion. A new bond issue was not due until the following summer, but to keep the project moving a group of real estate developers lent money to the city without interest with the understanding that they would be reimbursed the following year. Among others, the lenders included: D. K. B. Sellers (University Heights), Katherine Patterson (Granada Heights), Percival Glasebrook (Parkland Hills), and Charles McDuffie (College View), as well as groups representing the Huning Castle Addition, the Raynolds Addition, and the Country Club Addition (Spruce Park and Sigma Chi neighborhoods). The total amount raised was over $10,500 and they were all paid back in full in July 1938.

This type of personal financial commitment underscores the belief that these developers and construction companies had in the future of Albuquerque and, particularly, housing on the East Mesa. But with war clouds hanging over Europe and East Asia in the late 1930s, the question would be: What will happen to this growth and development should the United States enter the war in the coming years?