

Figure 84: MORMON CHURCH IN COLONIA DUBLAN. The lower floor is for the grammar school, while the upper floor is used as the meeting room.



Figure 85: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN COLONIA DUBLAN.

The Mormon religion is what holds the Latter-day Saints together. In all instances, except for one or two, those descended from the Norteamericanos living in the Colonias are Mormon in religion. Within the Church, the problems concerning the town are debated and analyzed, as there is no civil government. A great deal of the social program is centered around activities in the Church, since there is very little entertainment in Nuevo Casas Grandes that is acceptable to the Mormon Church doctrine.

The Mexican branch of the Mormon Church is an entirely separate unit. All their activities are conducted in Spanish – though a great many speak English. The number of members in 1950 were 244, and in 1951 were 276.⁶⁴

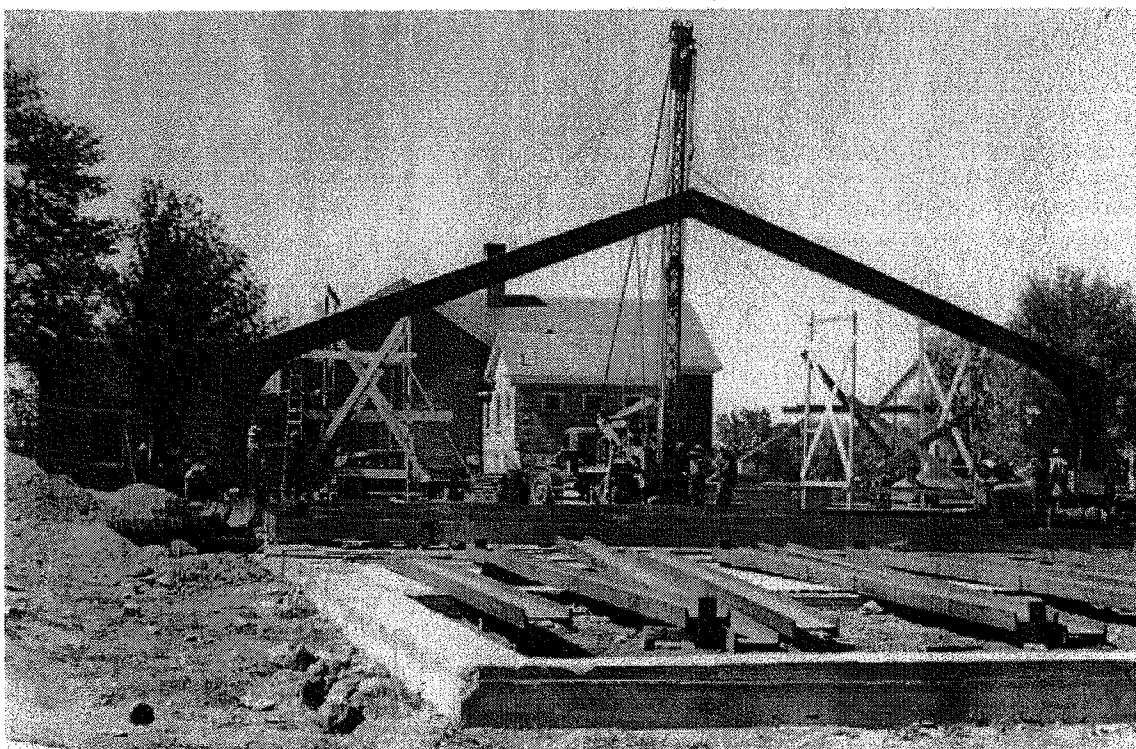


Figure 86: MORMON GYM IN COLONIA DUBLAN. The beginning of construction. The well rig is lifting up the steel.

An ever increasing problem that faces those Mormons interested in continuing to buy American goods, is the higher and higher tariff in imports, and the increasing number

⁶⁴ Walser, William, unpublished letter to the author dated December 22, 1951.

of import restrictions. Because of the gradual industrialization of Mexico, there are more and more manufactured goods that are being built or assembled in Mexico. In order to support her industries Mexico has placed a ban on importing such items as batteries, radios, bathtubs and furniture. Another list of materials that cannot be brought into the country without permits from Mexico City are such things as seed, well casing, oil and gasoline. There is a third list that requires the payment of high duty, including automobiles, refrigerators, rugs, etc. Another reason for rigid government restrictions, especially on luxury items, is so the majority of the Mexican people cannot afford to buy them. The government feels that the people are too poor to be spending their hard earned pesos on luxuries, rather than for food and clothing.

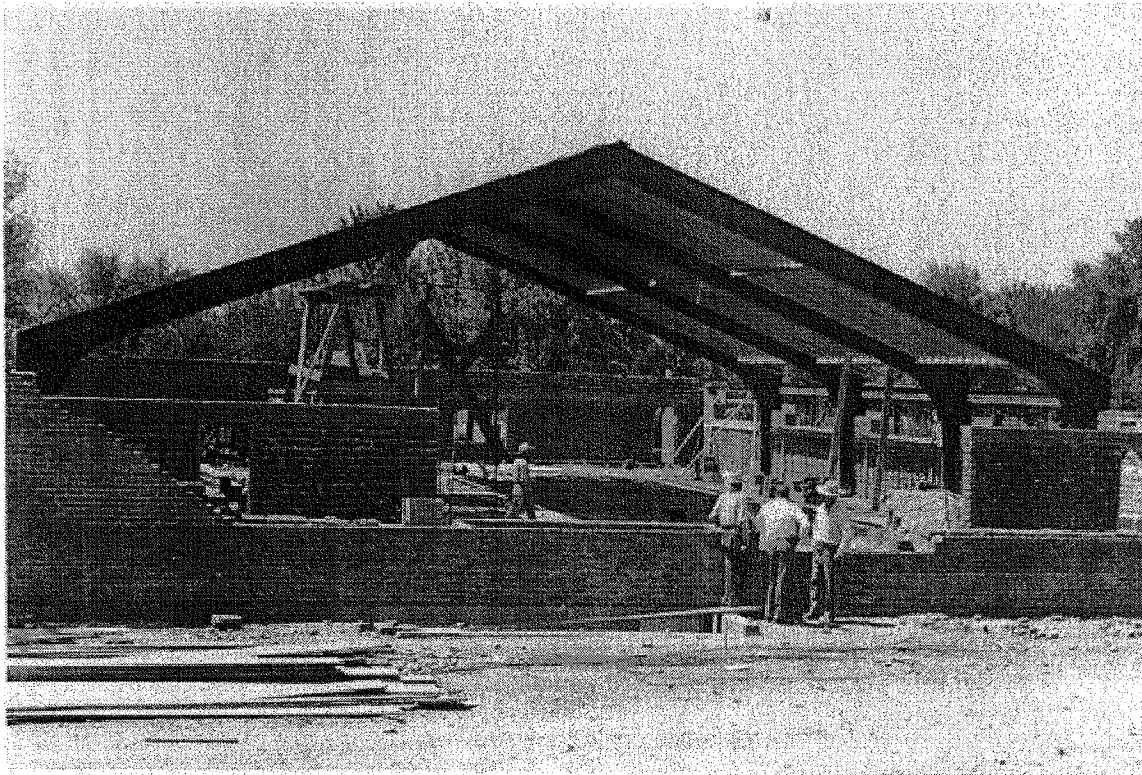


Figure 87: MORMON GYM IN COLONIA DUBLAN. Putting up the adobe and brick walls. The fired brick were made in Nuevo Casas Grandes.

In the future the Mormons will have to buy many of their household goods and luxuries in Mexico, or pay high import duty, and may also have to pay mordida⁶⁵ to the Mexican customs officials at the border. At the present time there is nothing that cannot be brought into Mexico if enough mordida is paid to the customs officials, even though the item may be on the contraband list.

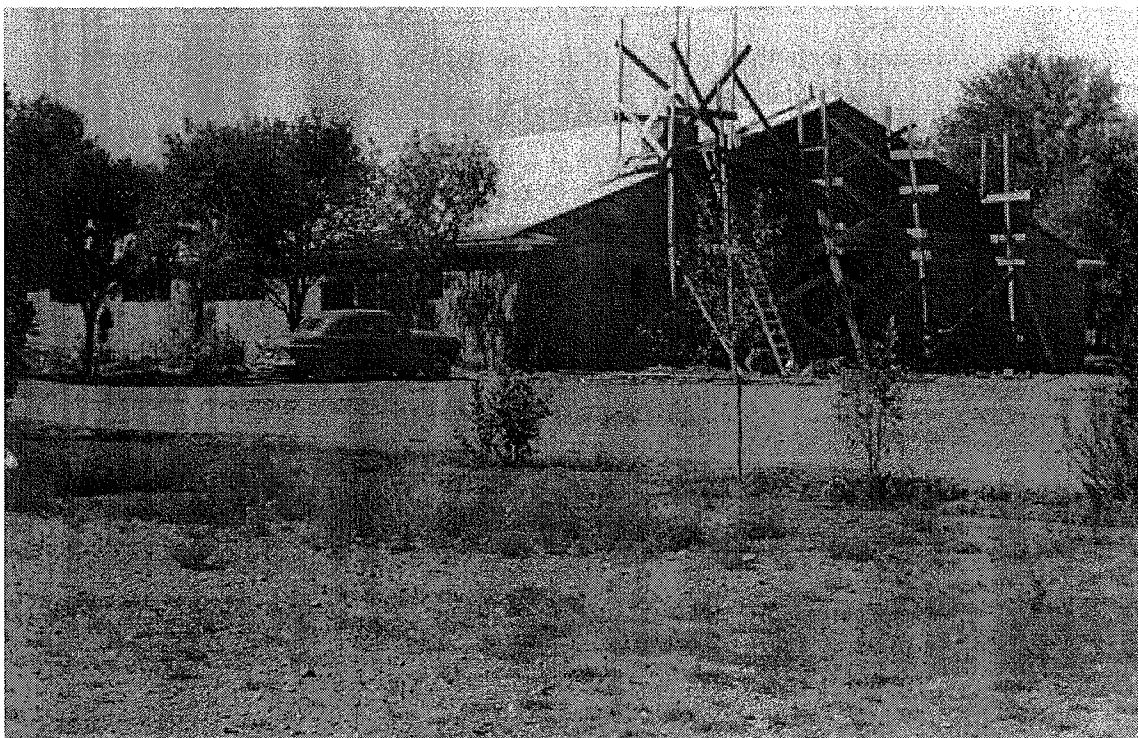


Figure 88: THE MORMON GYM IN COLONIA DUBLAN. The roof almost completed.

A problem which is affecting the farm land of Colonia Dublán, and of which few of the Mormon farmer are aware, is the continual addition of “black” alkali salts to their farm land by the irrigation water of the river and the lake. “Black” alkali, which eventually forms a soil called barreal in this area, is composed mainly of the mineral sodium carbonate. Unlike “white” alkali, this mineral cannot readily be washed out of the soil by leaching downward. It is most difficult to control or to rid the soil of its

⁶⁵ Money paid as in a bribe.

presence. Here and there among the fields of the Mormons are patches of barreal soil where little or no vegetation grows, the amount depending on the concentration of sodium carbonate in the soil. Water will not easily penetrate this soil and plants that are readily killed by alkali will be starved for nutrients by prevention of osmosis in the roots. Some plants will show a dark ring at the point of contact with the soil, which indicates a harmful amount of “black” alkali.

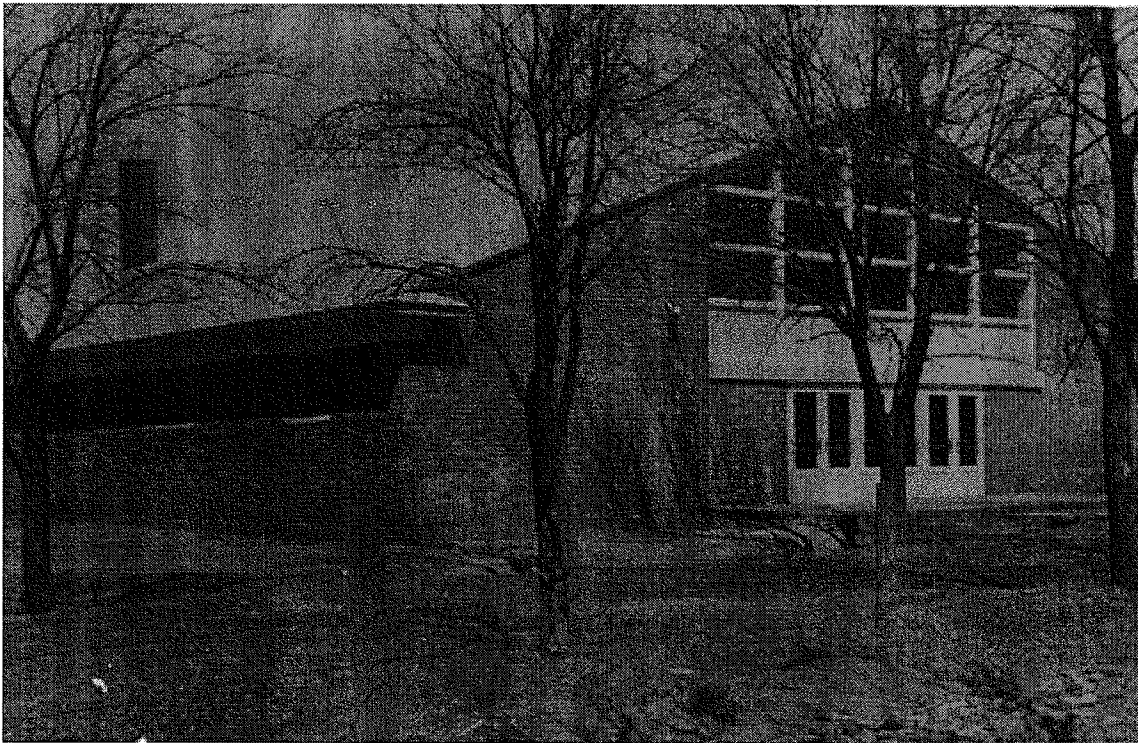


Figure 89: THE MORMON GYM IN COLONIA DUBLAN. The completed gym. A great deal of the money and labor came from the Mormons of Dublán.

Oren Robinson, from Tempe College in Arizona, examined the lake water, which is used in irrigating the fields. He told several of the farmers that they could rid the lake of this dangerous mineral by putting several sacks of gypsum in the canals leading from the lake to the fields. Gypsum (calcium sulfate), when it comes in contact with the “black” alkali (sodium carbonate), changes chemically into “white” alkali compounds, which can easily be washed from the soil.

The only other way of dealing with "black" alkali is by adding to the soil great quantities of mulch or barnyard manure, which starts bacterial action, which in turn breaks up the soil particles.

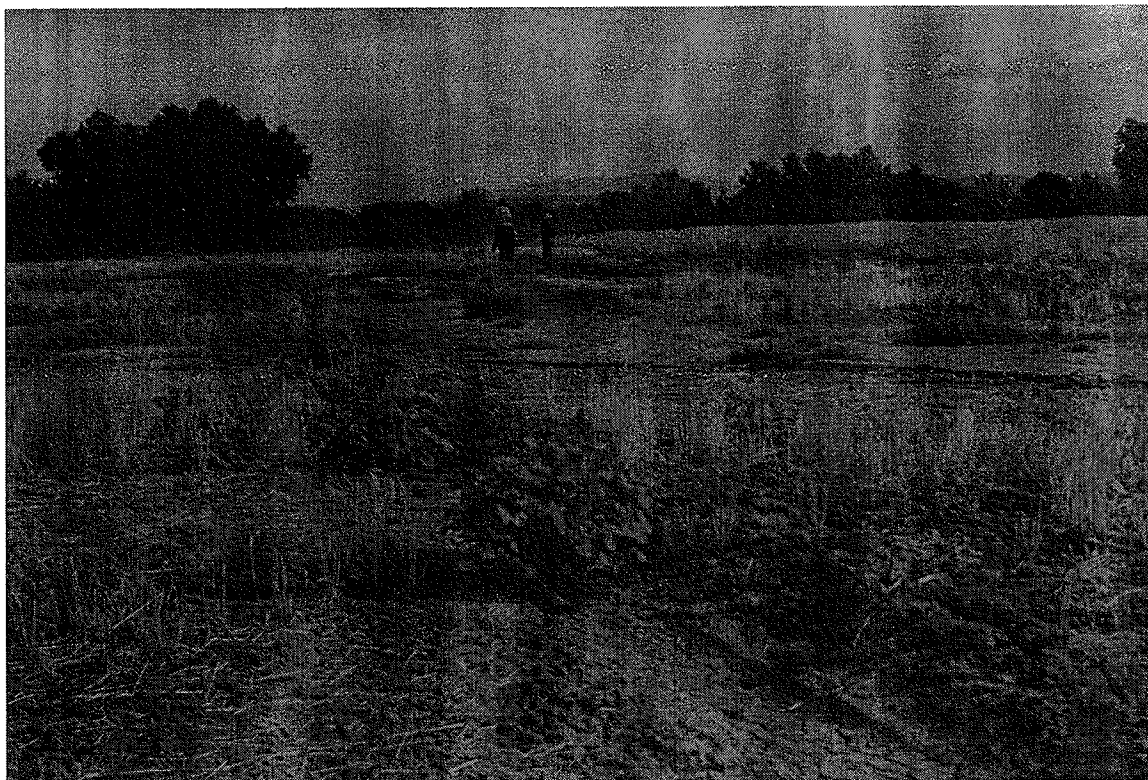


Figure 90: BARREAL. Black alkali or "barreal" ground is shown in the foreground and middle of the picture by the absence of vegetation.

Either method requires much expense in material and labor and requires several years to show improvement in the soil. How quickly the Mormon land is becoming saturated with "black" alkali is yet undetermined. Since tillage of the land began, 65 years ago, acreage production has increased, but irrigation also has increased. Until a careful study of the "black" alkali problem is made, the point at which productivity will decrease cannot be determined.



Figure 91: BARREAL. Irrigation water containing some sodium carbonate, which is harmful to the productivity of the soil. The long lake in late summer, when the water is too low to run out the headgate canal, it must be pumped up to the headgate level.

What other problems face the Colonias in their struggle for survival? In 1912 there were twelve main settlements with a total population of 4,000. Today there are less than 600 inhabitants. Today, also, there are only two Colonias that truly exist, Colonia Dublán and Juárez, since the mountain settlements with from one to eight persons, can hardly be called Mormon Colonias. The mountain Colonias will soon be entirely settled by Mexican people, as there are no young Mormons in any of these Colonias.

But what of the two surviving Colonias, Juárez and Dublán? They are composed of people of all ages, from new families, to retired folk, who had originally come to the Colonias with their parents in 1885, or came with their own families before 1900. Many of those over the age of 50 are ready to retire, sell their property, and go to the United States to be near relatives, and to be near a Mormon temple, so that a greater amount of religious work can be carried on. But they are hindered in their desire by their inability to

sell their farms for a price that will enable them to live in the United States – the rate of currency exchange is against them

In Colonia Dublán, in 1951, approximately 60 per cent of the population was under 13 years old. In the high school, which included students from both Colonias, there are about 80 students, and 50 to 60 per cent are Mexican.

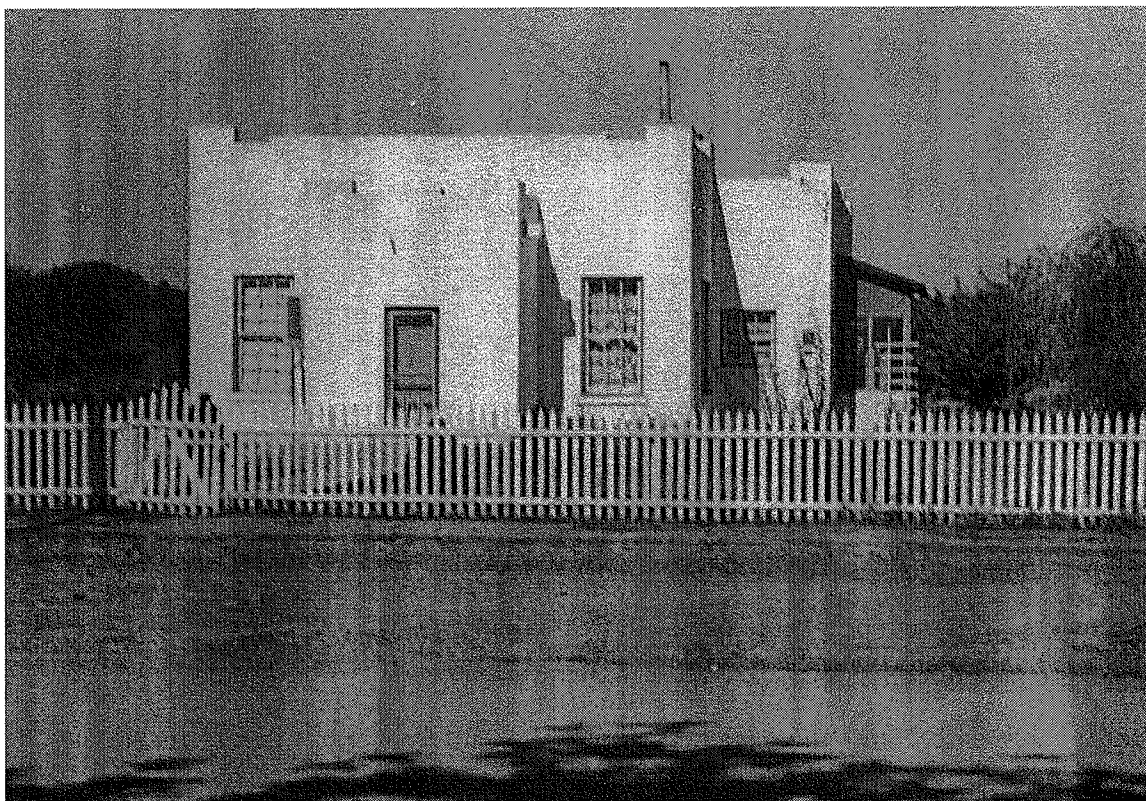


Figure 92: MORMON HOMES. A recent stucco home owned by a Mormon in Colonia Dublán

The population of Colonia Juárez and Dublán in 1951 began an upward swing. How long this trend will continue cannot be foretold, but there are two situations that may affect it. The draft laws of the United States may help keep those young men of Mexican citizenship, which is the majority, in the Colonias where they will raise their families. Yet the lack of occupations, other than farming, may send some of them away.

The future influence of the Mexicans surrounding the Mormons will most probably be negligible, as in the past, but the influence of the Mormons and the United

States, on the Mexicans in this area, will be great, as has been shown in Nuevo Casas Grandes.

At least for another decade, the two major Mormon Colonias should continue to thrive, but those in the mountains will probably have disappeared, as have the Sonora Colonias, Colonia Díaz and the other smaller Mormon settlements in Chihuahua.

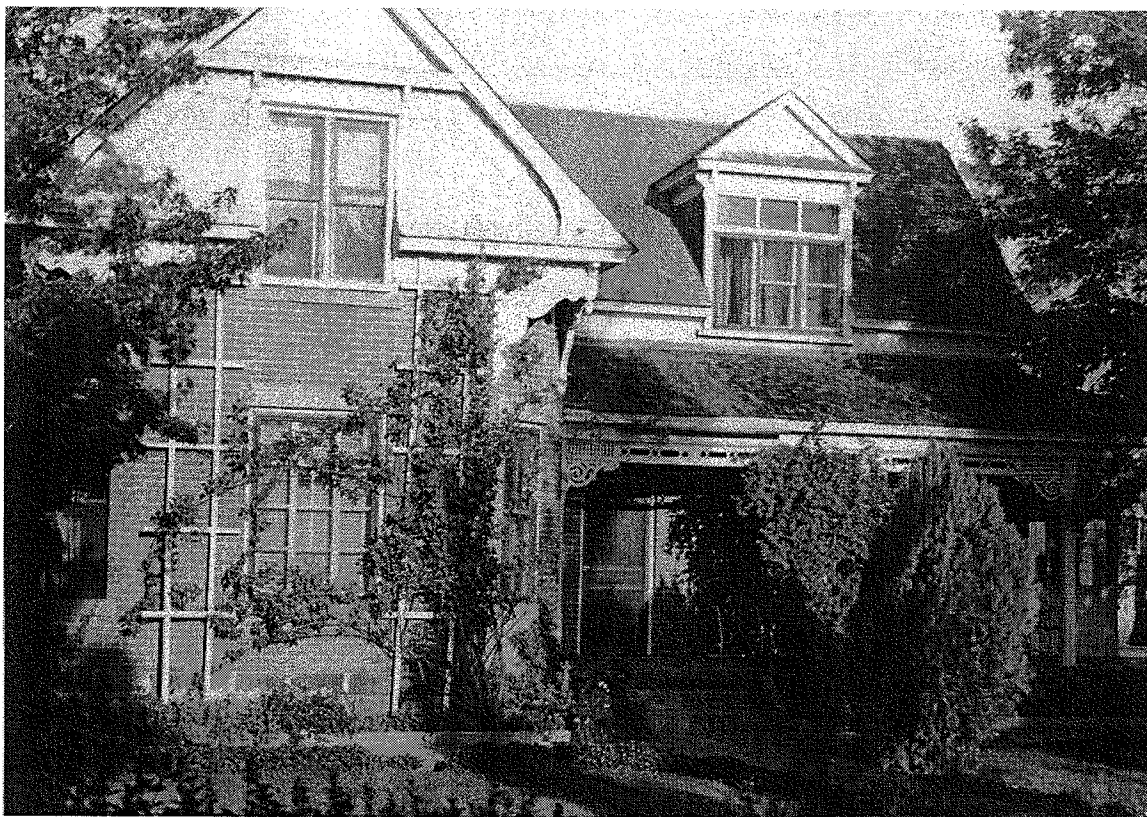


Figure 93: MORMON HOMES. Brick house built in 1907, the last brick house built in Colonia Dublan.

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