

## Restoration of a San Diego Landmark

BY VICTOR A. WALSH

*Casa de Bandini*, Lot 1, Block 451, 2600 Calhoun Street, Old Town SHP

[California Historical Landmark #72, (1932); listed on National Register of Historic Places (Sept. 3, 1971) as a contributing building]

From the far side of the old plaza, the two-story, colonnaded stucco building stands in the soft morning light—a sentinel to history. Originally built 1827-1829 by Don Juan Bandini as a family residence and later converted into a hotel, boarding house, olive pickling factory, and tourist hotel and restaurant, the Casa de Bandini is one of the most significant historic buildings in the state.<sup>1</sup>

In April 2007, California State Parks and the new concessionaire, Delaware North & Co., embarked on a multi-million dollar rehabilitation and restoration of this historic landmark to return it to its appearance as the Cosmopolitan Hotel of the early 1870s.

This is an unprecedented historic restoration, perhaps the most important one currently in progress in California. Few other buildings in the state rival the building's scale or size (over 10,000 square feet) and blending of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Mexican adobe and American wood-framing construction techniques. It boasts a rich and storied history—a history that is buried in the material fabric and written and oral accounts left behind by previous generations.

### The Casa and the Don

Bandini would become one of the most prominent men of his day in California. Born and educated in Lima, Peru and the son of a Spanish master trader, he arrived in San Diego around 1822.<sup>2</sup> In 1827, Governor José María Echeandia granted him and, José Antonio Estudillo, his future father-in-law, adjoining house lots on the plaza, measuring "... 100 *varas* square (or 277.5 x 277.5') in common,...."<sup>3</sup> Through his marriage to Dolores Estudillo and, after her death in 1833, to Refugio Argüello, the daughter of another influential Spanish *Californio* family, Bandini carved out an illustrious career as a politician, civic leader, and rancher. He allied his large family with influential American immigrants and welcomed American statehood. His American sons-in-law included Abel Stearns, the wealthy Los Angeles trader and cattle baron, Colonel Cave Coats, a prominent San Diego rancher, and Charles Robinson Johnson, a Los Angeles business associate.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. P. Nasatir and Lionel U. Ridout, *Report to the Mayor and City Council and Historical Site Board on Historical Survey of Old Town Plaza* (typescript, 1967), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> José Bandini, *A Description of California in 1828*. Translated by Doris Marion Wright (Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1951), p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, (San Francisco: The History Co., 1886), vol. II (1801-1824), pp. 546-547. One *vara* is 33.3 inches.

<sup>4</sup> Juan Bandini acquired grants to *ranchos* at Jurupa and Rincón along the Santa Ana River in Riverside in 1838, a *rancho* at Muscupiabe in San Bernardino in 1839, and *ranchos* at Tecate, Tijuana, Guadalupe, Los Vallecitos, and San Rafael in northern Baja California between 1836 and 1845. Bandini raised cattle as well as invested in lumber and mining operations on his ranches. During Mexican rule in Alta California, Bandini served as secretary to Governor Pio Pico in 1845, delegate from Alta California to the Mexican Congress, member of the *diputación* or provincial assembly, member of Old Town's *ayuntamiento* or town council, customs collector, and *alcalde* or mayor in 1848. He also was appointed administrator of the San Gabriel Mission in 1837. During the American transition period, he was elected city treasurer in 1850. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: The History Co., 1886), vol. III (1825-1840), pp. 136, 189, 612, 633; Katherine L. Wagner, "Native of Arica: Requiem For A Don," *Journal of San Diego History*, XVII, #2 (Spring 1971), 3-4; H. D. Barrows, "Juan Bandini," *Historical*

The family's one-story adobe home on the plaza was originally U-shaped with two wings extending out from the plaza parallel to present-day Juan and Calhoun Streets. According to Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's drawing from memory, the house originally had seven rooms, a *zaguán* or entrance hall, a kitchen attached to the wing on Calhoun Street,<sup>5</sup> two patios in the rear along with a corral and shed for rigging and harnessing horses. The drawing reveals that no exterior doorways opened out onto the main streets or plaza probably because the building stood on a level cobblestone, lime and mud mortared foundation above the street grade, making access difficult.<sup>6</sup> At the southwest corner directly across from the plaza where Mason and Calhoun Streets meet, State Park archaeologists uncovered remnants of the original foundation. It rises four-and-a-half feet above the original street grade at this corner to the adobe block. They also uncovered sections of what appears to be a cobblestone abutment or walkway at the base of the corner wing walls. In sum, the original building literally sat on a pedestal dominating the plaza.<sup>7</sup>

Alfred Robinson, the New England shipping agent for Bryant and Sturgis, described the stately whitewashed adobe in 1829 as a "mansion,...when completed, (will) surpass any other in the country."<sup>8</sup> The rooms had thick adobe walls, ceilings of heavy muslin to trap insects and dirt, and deep-set windows with wooden shutters. Wood, a scarce local material, was used mainly for structural supports. Materials such as clay tiles, wood beams and lintels were probably salvaged from the hilltop *presidio*, already in a state of deterioration. In 1828, Bandini ordered *palos colorados* or redwood posts from the American merchant, John Cooper, in Monterey. The posts, which were planed on one side and measured 1/3<sup>rd</sup> *vara* (or 11 inches) in diameter and 4.5 to 5 *varas* (12.5 to 13.9') in length, were probably used for the veranda overlooking the lower patio.<sup>9</sup> The roof was moderately sloped, and most likely, originally covered with thatch and later clay tile. As time passed and the family grew, more rooms were added to both wings. By the late Mexican period, the house had between 12 and 14 rooms according to contemporaries. William Kip, California's first Episcopal Bishop, who stayed at the *casa* in

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*Society of Southern California*, IV (1899), pp. 243-244; William E. Smythe, *History of San Diego, 1542-1908* (San Diego: The History Company, 1908), vol. 1, pp. 164-167; Patricia Baker, "The Bandini Family," *Journal of San Diego History*, vol. XV, #1 (Winter 1969), pp. 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> The kitchen may not have been enclosed with ceiling high adobe walls. The roofing was probably thatch. Archaeologist Stephen Van Wormer uncovered a brick-lined, sandstone-block drainage system beneath the earthen floor from the rear courtyard. It cut across the room emptying onto the Calhoun Street side. It most likely dates back to the late 1840s or early 1850s since the bricks are American. Bandini probably hired a highly skilled Mormon mason in 1847 to build a brick-lined well on the patio. The drain may have been part of that job. Judging from the ash and charcoal deposits, cooking was done over open hearths.

<sup>6</sup> The absence of doorways and steps may also indicate that this socially elevated family sought privacy from the din of public activities on the plaza. Archaeologist Stephen Van Wormer recently uncovered remnants of a cobblestone foundation within the footprint of the original 1829 south wing along Calhoun Street. There is a remnant lintel embedded in the adobe above. The foundation below the lintel drops more than a foot, suggesting that a doorway may have existed here. The original street grade at this location is about 1 ½ feet below the adobe base, making it feasible to build a doorway here. Interview with Stephen Van Wormer, April 25, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, "Plano de la Casa Havitacion de Don Juan Bandini en San Diego," Folder #211, (no date), *Documentos para la historia de California, 1817-1850: Alviso Family Papers*, MSS C-B 66, (Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley). Vallejo visited the house in 1829, but the date of his drawing, apparently from memory, is unknown. The drawing shows two doorways on opposite sides of the *zaguán* or entrance hall facing the side street. Four other doorways opened out onto the inner patios. One interior doorway opened into the *sala*.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Robinson, *Life in California* (Oakland, CA: Biobooks, 1947 edition), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Much to Bandini's dismay, it would take over a year-and-a-half before he received the redwood posts sometime after November 1829—undoubtedly too late to complete the house's construction before the December 28<sup>th</sup> blessing as he had hoped. See Bandini to John M. Cooper, Julio 7 de 1828, frame 253-253A, Augusto 7 de 1829, frame 393, Octubre 7 de 1829, frame 436, Noviembre 7 de 1829, frame 460, Marzo 21 de 1831, frame 197, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo Papers, MSS X-X 2 Film, BANC

January 1854, wrote that the house was “...built in the Spanish style, around the sides of a quadrangle into which most of the windows open...”<sup>10</sup>

To build this *casa* was a colossal undertaking. Built at the same time as the adobe residence of Bandini’s brother-in-law, José Antonio Estudillo, it would take nearly two years to complete. Making thousands of adobe bricks, turning them on their sides to dry in the sun, crushing lime or shell and firing the materials in kilns for whitewash, collecting water to mix the adobe and mud plaster, hauling cobblestones for the foundations, cutting and planing timbers for the lintels, doorways, and structural beams, and making leather straps out of tanned cowhides to tie the beams required a large, specialized workforce of artisans and laborers. The only institution that could fill such a voracious demand for labor were the missions: in this case nearby Mission San Diego de Alcalá, which most likely rented out Indian workmen to Bandini and Estudillo. Highly skilled craftsmen were probably imported from Mexico to perform the more complex engineering and construction aspects.<sup>11</sup>

Exactly who supervised the construction remains unknown, but it probably was not Bandini given the building’s level of architectural sophistication. It had built-in, adobe-layered cornices and unexposed roof rafters—Spanish Colonial features usually found only in the designs of California’s missions. The cobblestone foundation on the Calhoun Street side, which archaeologists uncovered, extends outward and gradually slopes in order to catch water runoff. This indicates that the adobe had a roof overhang rather than a veranda.<sup>12</sup>

A superb dancer, Bandini frequently held parties and *fiestas* in his large front *sala* or parlor room. Measuring 33 feet long by 16 feet wide, it was the only room in the house that had a pine (white) floor, which had been well worn by years of dancing. By the late 1840s, the room had a huge Yankee clock case, several English fox hunting paintings, a picture of George Washington, and an American flag according to U.S.A. Major Samuel P. Heintzelman.<sup>13</sup>

The *sala* was the hub of “social gaiety” in old San Diego, especially after 1834 when it became the sixth *pueblo* in Mexican California.<sup>14</sup> Bandini used the large room to entertain family and friends, to host lavish parties, including the weddings of daughters Dolores and Ysidora, and to meet important people, including traveling dignitaries from the Mexican Republic and the United States. Among those who enjoyed Bandini’s largesse was José María Híjar, leader of an expedition, appointed by the Mexican government in 1834 to colonize the sparsely populated province.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ione R. Stiegler, et al, IS Architecture, *Historic Structure Report for the Casa de Bandini* (Department of Parks and Recreation, September 2004), pp. 15, 19-20, 28; Fred A. Tinker, “Casa Bandini: Its Owner and His Days of Intrigue, Joy and Despair,” Dr. James R. Moriarty, ed., *La Campana de Escuela...Old School House Historians* (np: Old Town San Diego, 1974), p. 55; William Ingraham Kip, *The Early Days of My Episcopate* (New York: T. Whittaker, 1892), p. 59; Arcadia Bandini Brennan, *Arcadian Memories of California* (typescript, 1952), pp. 34-35, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives, San Diego, CA (SDHSRA). Original manuscript, MSS C-D 5206, is at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA (BANC). According to this source, many adobes, especially those located on *ranchos*, had shutters for protection against Indian raids.

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<sup>12</sup> This information is based on inspections and analyses of the building by California State Parks, especially archaeologist Stephen Van Wormer and historical consultant Bruce Coons during March-April 2008.

<sup>13</sup> John L. White, *Founder of Fort Yuma; Excerpts from the Diary of Major Samuel P. Heintzelman, U. S. A., 1849-1852* (M.A. thesis, University of San Diego, 1975), Wednesday, May 16, 1849, pp. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> The first *pueblo* to be organized was San Jose (1777), followed by Los Angeles in 1781, Villa de Branciforte near Santa Cruz in 1797; Monterey in 1813, San Francisco in 1833, and San Diego in 1834.

<sup>15</sup> Symthe, *op. cit.*, p. 133; *Daily Alta California*, February 27, 1851, May 17, 1851; Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 55-57; John S. Griffin, *A Doctor Comes To California*, (San Francisco, CA: California Historical Society, 1943), March 17, 1847, p. 76; William Heath Davis, *Seventy-five Years in California*, edited by Harold A. Small (San

Robinson left an evocative account of the festivities surrounding the blessing of the newly constructed home on December 28, 1829. The ceremony began at noon, and was attended by the governor (then in residence in San Diego), *presidio* officers, family, and friends. A priest from the nearby mission walked from room to room, sprinkling holy water on the walls. Guests then "...sat down to an excellent dinner, consisting of all the luxuries the place afforded, provided in Don Juan's best style," remembered Robinson. "As soon as the cloth was removed, the guitar and violin were put in requisition, and a dance began. It lasted, however, but a little while, for it was necessary for them to spare their exertions for the evening fandango. So *poco a poco*, all gradually retired to their home."

That evening the footpaths leading to the grand house "...were enlivened with men, women, and children, hurrying to the dance," recalled Robinson. "On such occasions it was customary for every body to attend without waiting for the formality of an invitation." In the candle-lit *sala*, Robinson saw a graceful couple performing Mexico's national dance, *el jarabe*, amid "...shouts of approbation...."

They kept time to the music, by drumming with their feet, on the heel and toe system, with such precision,...The female dancer...cast her eyes to the floor, whilst her hands gracefully held the skirts of her dress, suspending it above the ankle so as to expose to the company the execution of her feet. Her partner,...was under the full speed of locomotion, and rattled away with his feet with wonderful dexterity. His arms were thrown carelessly behind his back, and secured, as they crossed, the points of his serape, that still held its place upon his shoulders. Neither had he doffed his 'sombbrero,' but just as he stood when gazing from the crowd, he had placed himself upon the floor.<sup>16</sup>

The other rooms had either compact earthen or clay tile floors. Some rooms, probably the *sala*, apparently had cobalt blue floral patterns painted on the finished plaster. In her memoir, Arcadia Bandini Brennan, a great granddaughter of Juan Bandini, noted an interesting household practice that she had heard from her grandaunt Tia. "She told me that...the floors were fixed by having the ground in each room well swept, then wet down by buckets of water. When dry, green grasses or soft leafy branches were put all over, evenly laid and the beautiful rugs were rolled out."<sup>17</sup>

Bandini envisioned his home as a gathering place for family and friends. He was especially fond of his daughters Arcadia and Ysidora who had moved to Los Angeles in 1841 when fourteen-year-old Arcadia married Abel Stearns. Twelve-year old Ysidora was sent as a companion to her older sister.<sup>18</sup> By the mid-1840s, he set about refurbishing the home and grounds in hopes

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Francisco, CA: John Howell Books, 1967 ed.), p. 215. Híjar's nephew, Carlos, a member of the expedition, later left a perceptive account of his impressions of early San Diego in *Recuerdos sobre California...en 1834*, MSS C-D 102, (1877), BANC.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), pp. 412, 416.

<sup>17</sup> On archaeological fragments, see Susan L. Buck, conservator, *Cross-section Paint Microscopy Report, Cosmopolitan Hotel, San Diego, CA*, draft (San Diego: IS Architecture, July 31, 2008), pp. 56-59; Brennan, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35 (quote), SDHSRA or BANC.

<sup>18</sup> He often mailed presents to them, and in his correspondence to Stearns frequently gave them unsolicited advice about how to behave. In one letter, he wrote: "I beg you to tell Ysidorita to change the clothes of her brothers, to mend them so they are not raggedy, to arise early and clean her room and the room of her sister, to make the coffee, to sweep early, and to dust, for this exercise is good for the health and is beneficial to the interest and to the

of tempting them to visit Refugio and him on a more regular basis. In the spring of 1846, he ordered 50 pieces of glass, all 8 x 10 inches, to install paned, wood-framed windows in the house. In a follow-up letter, dated June 23<sup>rd</sup>, he warmly thanked Stearns for fulfilling his request.<sup>19</sup>

The following year during the summer he replanted the gardens with “pretty flowers.” He also remodeled the lower patio, lining it with potted plants and replaced the rough cobblestone with clay brick. The hand-dug well was replaced with a deep brick-lined well, most likely built by a Mormon mason.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Bandini built a small wooden bathhouse on the lower patio for the comfort and privacy of his daughters when they visited him. “I think they are going to like it very much when they come to pay a visit,” he exclaimed to Stearns.<sup>21</sup>

While living here, Bandini helped launch a successful revolt in 1831 against Governor Manuel Victoria and an abortive uprising in 1836-1838 against Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado.<sup>22</sup> Bandini had become convinced by this time that California’s difficulties were due to mismanagement and neglect by the Mexican government. It had not effectively colonized the province, continued to impose high duties on foreign trade, and appointed governors in Monterey who were at best in his opinion self-serving. “It is California that has suffered the most from the misfortunes that afflict us,” he wrote his close friend Mariano Vallejo in 1836.<sup>23</sup>

The most immediate issue for Bandini and other *rancheros* was protecting their lands from Indian attacks—a situation that was inflamed by the breakup or secularization of the missions and the refusal of Monterey, the capitol, to appropriate funds to reinforce the small garrison at the San Diego presidio.<sup>24</sup> An alarmed Bandini often took extended leaves of absence from Old Town San Diego to check on the condition of his ranchos and to arm his *vaqueros*. In a letter,

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good education as well.” See Bandini to Stearns, Septiembre 16 de 1842, Bandini Family Coll 101, Box #1, Folder #1, U.C.L.A. Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA, YOUNG. See also Bandini to Stearns, Diciembre 8 de 1841, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #5, HUNT.

<sup>19</sup> Bandini to Stearns, Mayo 29 de 1846, Bandini to Stearns, Junio 23 de 1846, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #6, HUNT.

<sup>20</sup> Company B of the Mormon Battalion, then stationed in Old Town San Diego, had at least four skilled brick masons. By June of 1847, the company had dug some 20 wells. They were usually between 20-to-30 feet in depth.

<sup>21</sup> Most likely the bath house enclosed the well. See Dr. Ray Brandes and James R. Moriarty, *Historical and Archaeological Report, Master Plan, Old Town San Diego SHP* (Department of Parks and Recreation: typescript, 1974), pp. 317, 230, Department of Parks and Recreation, San Diego Coast District Library, San Diego CA (SDCDL); Bandini to Stearns, Julio 7 de 1847, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #6, HUNT.

<sup>22</sup> Bandini was the “leading spirit” of insurrection against Alvarado, despite the fact that he had been appointed administrator of San Gabriel Mission by the governor. On Christmas night in 1838, Alvarado sent troops to Bandini’s *casa* to arrest him. The house was packed with guests, including Pio and Andrés Pico, who were watching a performance of the traditional *Pastorela* in the *sala*. Bandini was not present and thus escaped arrest. The Picos, who supported the revolt, were taken prisoners. See Smythe, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 164-165.

<sup>23</sup> Bandini to Mariano G. Vallejo, Marzo 21 de 1836, frames 105-106, Vallejo Papers, BANC; “Abel Stearns Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1832-1868,” Bandini Family Coll. #101, Box #2, Folder #1, Charles Young Research Library, Special Collections, UCLA (YOUNG); Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: The History Co., 1886), vol. III (1825-1840), pp. 188-189, 200-210, 247, 367, 371-375, 419-420, 478-499, 515-521, 556-566, 613; *History of California*, vol. v (1846-1848), esp. pp. 282-283; Brandes and Moriarty, *op. cit.*, p. 315; Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24; Tinker, *op. cit.*, 56-57.

<sup>24</sup> On September 20, 1834, Mission San Diego de Alcalá’s 1,200 square miles came under civilian control as a result of secularization. Over the next two years, in what amounted to a vast land grab at this and other missions, *mayordomos* (government-appointed administrators) sold or gave away Indian claims to friends and cronies. Out of the 1,445 Indians living at or near the mission in the early 1830s, only two dozen families received land at the newly established Indian pueblos of San Dieguito, Las Flores, and San Pasqual. Without land and destitute, former *neophytes* either drifted to the settlements and ranches or joined up with marauding bands in the backcountry. In 1834, 1836 and 1837, Indian attacks and killings at a number of ranchos and a foiled plot to attack Old Town San Diego itself escalated tensions and reprisals.

dated November 6, 1834, he informed Vallejo that he had to return to San Diego in haste from Santa Barbara rather than continue his journey to visit him because “barbaric Indians” had pillaged one of his *ranchos*, stealing “just about anything,” including livestock, crops, horses, and tools. His letter, as evidenced below, reflected a tone of desperation.

The destruction, or better said, ruin...has put me in the most catastrophic position that I could have ever imagined, to the point of not having anything to eat; nowadays I have resorted to selling off some jewelry that I was saving, and this is why I had to leave San Diego to search for that which is indispensable to the preservation of life,....<sup>25</sup>

Prior to the U.S.-Mexican War, he coordinated the sale and shipment of provisions to the U.S. military by boat through the American consul Thomas Larkin of Monterey.<sup>26</sup> Ongoing business dealings with American traders, especially his son-in-law and business partner Abel Stearns had convinced him that California’s future lay with the United States, not Mexico.<sup>27</sup>

During the war, he formed close relations with U.S. military officers stationed in San Diego. Commander Samuel F. Dupont and Lt. Colonel John C. Frémont of the California Battalion dined frequently at his residence. On the eve of the Battalion’s departure for Los Angeles in August 1846, Bandini gave the colonel a beautiful sorrel horse. Bandini later provided the small American garrison under the command of Captain Ezekiel Merritt and John Bidwell with sorely needed provisions such as saddles, horses, harnesses, and steers. In January of 1847, Fremont, by then acting military governor of California, appointed Bandini to his seven-person legislative council. Bandini eagerly accepted the appointment, explaining in a letter to his friend Vallejo, a fellow member, that “...it is imperative...for the love of the Country in which we are living,....”<sup>28</sup>

In November 1846, Commodore Robert F. Stockton arrived in San Diego on the frigate *USS Congress*. His mission was to fortify and garrison the *pueblo* and thereby protect U.S. access to the bay, the only real harbor south of San Francisco. Bandini’s home became Stockton’s headquarters.<sup>29</sup> “Don Juan Bandini and family received the Commodore elegantly at their mansion and entertained him sumptuously,” recalled Benjamin Hayes. According to Hayes, the Commodore’s private band of thirty-seven musicians often played at ‘Bandini’s *bailes*’ in his home. Bandini and his family further assisted Stockton by escorting a detachment of his troops to his Rancho Guadalupe in Baja California to supply them with cattle, horses, and equipment. On the return trip, as the party approached San Diego, the officer-in-charge discovered that they did not have a flag to display to the sentries. Doña Refugio offered to sew a flag from the

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<sup>25</sup> Bandini to Vallejo, Noviembre 6 de 1834, frames 309-309-1, Vallejo Papers, BANC. See also Bandini to Stearns, Mayo 18 de 1842, Stearns Coll., SG Box #5, HUNT.

<sup>26</sup> See Bandini to Larkin, Junio 28 de 1844, no. #127, *Documents For The History of California*, MSS C-B 38, pt. 1; Bandini to Larkin, Febrero 26 de 1845, no. #41, *Documents For The History of California*, MSS C-B 39, pt. 3, BANC.

<sup>27</sup> Sources...

<sup>28</sup> See Iris H. W. Engstrand, *San Diego, California's Cornerstone* (Tulsa, OK: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), p. 35; Bancroft, *History of California*, vol. V ((1846-1848), pp. 326-328; *John Bidwell Ledger*, (1846), p. 74, Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park Archives, Old Town, Sacramento; Mark J. Denger, “Historic California Posts, Forts DuPont and Stockton,” <http://www.militarymuseum.org/DuPont-Stockton.html>, np; Bandini to Vallejo, Enero 29 de 1847, frames 264a-264c, Vallejo Papers, BANC.

<sup>29</sup> Bancroft, *History of California*, vol. V (1846-1848), pp. 330, 433; *Extracts from private journal-letters of Captain S. F. DuPont while in command of the Cyane, during the war with Mexico, 1846-1848* (Ferris Bros., 1885), January 24, 1847, p. 98.

petticoats and dresses of her younger daughters Dolores and Margarita. This was reportedly the first American flag to fly over the plaza.<sup>30</sup>

No longer under siege by *Californios* loyal to Mexico, the *pueblo* remained an armed camp; its residents uneasy in the wake of continued skirmishes and cattle rustling. Stockton had fortified the abandoned hilltop presidio with gun emplacements, and U.S. dragoons drilled daily on the plaza, renamed Washington Square. In early December, messengers from General Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West arrived at Bandini's home to inform Stockton that hostile forces had surrounded Kearny's troops in the San Pasqual Valley.<sup>31</sup> Stockton immediately sent out a large force to rescue the battered column and escort it back to San Diego. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, a wounded Kearny and his exhausted men arrived on the plaza, greeted by the strains of 'Hail, Columbia' from Stockton's band.<sup>32</sup>

Unrest continued throughout 1847 after the war had ended in California. Bandini fretted about the threat of Indian raids, often reprimanding the U.S. military for not allowing *rancheros*, like himself, to take the law into their own hands to defend their families and property. In a letter to Stearns, dated October 27, 1847, he complained that "the cancer of theft by the Indians...spreading down to the border" again required his presence at his *ranchos*. He reprimanded the "agents of the American government" for allowing "their (Indian) crimes" to go unpunished.<sup>33</sup>

Every day I hear heartfelt complaints, and some spill tears of pain when they see the few goods they acquired through years of working day and night, disappear from one moment to the next, and others who feel their interests threatened with ruin, lament not only the insecurity of these days, but also that they observe neither the favor nor protection promised, but the opposite conduct being followed.<sup>34</sup>

In an earlier letter to Stearns, written from San Diego, perhaps to endear himself to the new American government, Bandini described continued resistance by the "*californios*" as an act of "imprudent revolution instigated...by men of little judgment." Resistance, he argued, was futile and ill-conceived — "...the perverted view of a few men" — that ultimately will be counter-productive to society's well-being. "People and interests," he claimed, "have been sacrificed without gain...(and) contrary to common happiness..."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Bancroft, *op. cit.*, pp. 356; Benjamin Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, MSS C-E 62, p. 456, 459, BANC; Col. J.J. Warner, Judge Benjamin Hayes, Dr. J.P. Widney, *An Historical Sketch of Los Angeles County California* (O.W. Smith, Publisher: Los Angeles, CA, 1936), p. 61; Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Tinker, *op. cit.*, 58-59.

<sup>31</sup> In one of the few battles fought in California, Kearny's column suffered 31 casualties, including 19 killed, while the *Californios* under General Andrés Pico lost one soldier.

<sup>32</sup> For a general discussion of San Diego during the war, see Smythe, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 200-227; Richard Griswold del Castillo, "The U.S.-Mexican War in San Diego, 1846-1847: Loyalty and Resistance, *Journal of San Diego History*, vol. #49, no. #1 (2003), pp. 21-41; Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, p. 459.

<sup>33</sup> Bandini most likely exaggerated the degree of unrest in the hope that his influential American son-in-law could influence American policy.

<sup>34</sup> Bandini to Stearns, Octubre 27 de 1847, Bandini Family Coll. #101, Box #1, Folder #1, YOUNG.

<sup>35</sup> Bandini to Stearns, Enero 19 de 1847, Bandini Family Coll. #101, Box #1, Folder #1, YOUNG. See also Bandini to Governor Pio Pico, Junio 23 de 1846, no. #80, *Coleccion de Don Juan Bandini*, MSS C-B-69, BANC. In this letter, Bandini contends that war against the United States is not only unwinnable, but also contrary to the aspirations and interests of the *Californios*.

After the war, Old Town became a welcomed stopover for thousands of miners en route to the Sierra gold fields. A brisk commerce developed as hotels, restaurants, billiard halls, tobacco shops, hardware, dry goods and clothing stores sprang up around the plaza to cater to the throngs of male fortune-seekers. Members of the Boundary Commission, both U.S. and Mexican, also spent time in San Diego. Writing home about his experiences, one participant wrote, “In the evening we had an excellent supper and dance (*baile*) at Bandinis. I certainly think it was the most appropriate and joyous celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> that I ever witnessed.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1850, Bandini opened a store in his home. Profits from the store and loans enabled him to erect a magnificent, two-story, wood-framed lodging house one block east of his home. Massive in size (120’ by 62’ deep) and boasting an unconventional zinc-plated roof, the Gila House cost Bandini an exorbitant \$25,000 to build. The building, which was completed but never furnished, had a view out to the bay and down the coast to Baja California.<sup>37</sup>

His extravagant life style and penchant for entertaining continued. Doña Refugio, his second wife, recalled that the Gold Rush was “...the reign of prosperity and plenty.” “How often did we spend half the night at a *tertulia*—till 2 o’clock in the morning—in the most agreeable and distinguished society. Our house would be full of company; thirty or forty persons at a table; it would have to be set twice. A single fiesta might cost a thousand dollars. But, in those days, receipts at my husband’s store might pass \$18,000 a month.”<sup>38</sup>

Once the placer (or surface) gold had run out, the miners stopped coming through San Diego en route to the gold fields and many businesses, including the Gila House, went bust overnight. Suffering for lack of customers, Bandini never furnished the lodging house. “This bad speculation,...greatly impaired his fortune,” recalled Benjamin Hayes.<sup>39</sup>

With no profits from his store, falling cattle prices, and mounting debts, Don Juan in April 1851 mortgaged his lodging house and family home to Adolfo Savin for \$12,822.90 to cover the loan plus interest that he owed this creditor. Disaster was only averted when Bandini’s son-in-law Charles Johnson, who had recently married Bandini’s daughter Dolores, asked Stearns to help. “They are awfully cast down about this affair,” he wrote to Stearns the following month. Stearns interceded and repaid Savin’s loan and interest in late 1851.<sup>40</sup>

With his grand home and extravagant ways, Bandini embodied the manners and bearing of a transplanted Spanish aristocrat. In later years and after his death he was often referred to as a Don, the signature title of Old World origins and rank. The American author Richard Henry Dana, who met Bandini in 1836, described him as

...accomplished and proud, and without any office or occupation, to lead the life of most young men of the better families—dissolute and extravagant when the means were at hand.... He had a slight and elegant figure, moved gracefully, and waltzed beautifully, spoke the best of Castilian, with a pleasant and refined

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Patterson Effinger to Brother Mike, August 1, 1849, Doc. File, SDHSRA. Original at the California Historical Society, San Francisco, CA.

<sup>37</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, 23-24; Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, p. 229, BANC.

<sup>38</sup> Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, p. 591, BANC.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>40</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25; Charles R. Johnson to Abel Stearns, May 26, 1851, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 36, HUNT; Wagner, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.



voice and accent, and had throughout the bearing of a man of high birth and figure.<sup>41</sup>

Bandini's letters to Mariano Vallejo and Abel Stearns during the late Mexican period reveal a far different man—a hardworking rancher beset by chronic illness, periodic hardship, worry over his family and property, and uncertainty about the future of his 'native land'—California. He frequently asked for assistance in the form of food or medicines to relieve his coughing, asthma, and headaches and to treat assorted illnesses afflicting his family and workers. After a poor harvest in 1836, he wrote Vallejo, in the "name of friendship," confessing that he and his family were in "great need." He asked his close friend, if he could spare "...a little bit of wheat and other things whose use will be adequate to sustain life." Continuing, he further explained:

Feeding my family is all I yearn for, since misfortune has reached its utmost, I lose sleep, I work incessantly to obtain sustenance, but oh my friend, even this doesn't suffice, this is an unfortunate time...I beg you not to miss the opportunity if you can send me something to eat."<sup>42</sup>

By the summer of 1847, Don Juan's initial optimism about American rule had given way to growing disillusionment. In a letter to Abel Stearns, dated June 7<sup>th</sup>, he voiced alarm about the breakdown of civil order as a result of American military occupation. "Liberty, the one guarantee the citizen can make use of in civil affairs, has become licentiousness," he wrote. "Thus, one sees in the towns nothing but drunkenness, gaming, sloth, and public manhandling of the opposite sex."<sup>43</sup> Bandini became increasingly convinced that the war and subsequent gold rush had not only changed society's structure, but more importantly its mores for the worse. "It (the gold rush) has fomented vice, unleashed pernicious ambitions, (and) given rise to violent piecework in the mines," he wrote in 1855. "The lure of gold," he concluded, "has become its own authority."<sup>44</sup>

His trust in the U.S. government further declined when William Walker, a quixotic Southern filibuster, invaded Baja California in October of 1853. After briefly occupying La Paz, Walker and his force of some 50 Americans retreated due to lack of supplies and unexpected local resistance. Back in California, he was put on trial for conducting an illegal war, but was quickly acquitted of all charges.

The invasion unnerved and angered Bandini. While retreating north from La Paz, a contingent of Walker's force had confiscated horses and provisions from *ranchos* along the way, including Bandini's Rancho Guadalupe inland from the coastal village of Ensenada. In May 1854, Bandini wrote a stinging 18-page account of this invasion, concluding that "Walker's conduct created

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before The Mast* (New York: Penguin Books, Signet Classic, 1964 ed.), pp. 222-223; see also Carolina Lokrautz, "María Arcadia Bandini, "First Century Families," (typescript, 1962), p. 4, California Ephemeral Coll. #200, Box 6, YOUNG

<sup>42</sup> Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, p. 226, BANC; Bandini to Vallejo, Augusto 21 de 1836, frame 148, Vallejo Papers, BANC; see also Bandini to Vallejo, Marzo 21 de 1836, frames 105-107, Vallejo Papers, BANC.

<sup>43</sup> Bandini to Stearns, Junio 7 de 1847, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #6, HUNT as quoted in Wagner, *op. cit.*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Bandini, "Los títulos de los terrenos en California," *Southern Californian*, 23 Mayo de 1855, reprinted in Hayes, *Scrapbooks, California Notes and Incidents*, vol. IV (1858-1869), pp. 488-491, BANC. Original title "Para el Californio Meridonal" as printed in *Southern Californian*.

widespread antagonism towards the United States; ...and brought shame and ridicule upon such an ill-conceived expedition.”<sup>45</sup>

Along with Pablo de la Guerra of Santa Barbara, Bandini became a major critic of the U.S. legal-judicial system that set the stage for U.S. claimants to challenge in costly and lengthy court proceedings the validity of Mexican land grants. Spanish-speaking *Californios* lacked the finances to defend their claims in protracted lawsuits. The courts usually dismissed the hand-drawn maps or *diseños* they submitted as unsubstantial because they did not define the specific boundaries of their *ranchos* or holdings. “The modes of procedure were strange to us, every thing was foreign, even our manner of speech,” explained Bandini in a letter he published in the *Southern Californian*, a Spanish-English newspaper based in Los Angeles. Lawyers have exacted “large and scandalous sums ...in recompense for their services,” he noted.<sup>46</sup>

All of this Bandini claimed was a blatant violation of the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the war with Mexico whereby the U.S. government promised to protect the property rights of Mexicans and their heirs living in territories ceded to the U.S. “Our inheritance will be turned to strangers – our houses to aliens,” he concluded.<sup>47</sup>

In 1851, a debt-ridden and disheartened Bandini renounced his U.S. citizenship and returned to Baja California, where he was expelled for inciting political unrest. He returned to Old Town in 1854, and opened a “*tienda barata*” (cheap goods store) in the front *sala* of his *casa*. The effort failed and by September he had leased part of the house to Joseph Reiner who opened a hardware and dry goods store. Around this time, a front porch with a wood shingle shed roof and boardwalk floor was added to improve the building’s operation as a store.<sup>48</sup>

The following year Bandini attempted to sell his home and *ranchos* in Tecate and Guadalupe. Unable to sell his property, he transferred ownership of the *casa* and other properties on August 19, 1859, to Stearns to whom he owed \$32,000.<sup>49</sup> He died less than three months later on November 1, 1859, at his son-in-law’s home in Los Angeles.

Bogged down in litigation with Bandini's frustrated creditors, Stearns decided to lease out the *casa*. In January 1856, Jacob Elias and H. Mannassee opened a retail shop in “Casa Bandini,” where they sold ready-made clothing, fancy goods, hats, caps, boots, and trunks. Develop further – see Harrison notes.<sup>50</sup>

Over the next decade, the old mansion, reflecting the family and the town's decline, fell into disrepair. Adobe walls were removed, and part of the building was converted into a stable and feed storage complex. On October 2, 1858, a windstorm destroyed the kitchen roof and

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<sup>45</sup> See Bandini, “La Invasión de Walker de Baja California,” Mayo 25 de 1854, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #7, HUNT.

<sup>46</sup> Juan Bandini, *Southern Californian*, Abril 11 de 1855; See also Wagner, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> See business advertisements in the *San Diego Herald*, September 16, 1854; February 3, 1855; Brandes and Moriarty, *op. cit.*, p. 321; Henry Miller’s 1856 sketch of the building.

<sup>49</sup> See sales advertisements in Spanish and English in the *San Diego Herald*, December 15, 1855. Other property listed in the transfer included 2,000 head of cattle, 300 horses, and 300 sheep of “...all classes, ages, and descriptions...” in California and Lower California. Rancho Jurapa, site of the Gila House (destroyed in an 1858 windstorm), and Bandini’s mark and cattle brand were mortgaged to Stearns. See Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> “New Store! GREAT BARGAINS,” *San Diego Herald*, May 24, 1856; Cave Johnson Coutts, *Account Book and Journal*, CT 2543(15), November 1856, HUNT; Brandes and Moriarty, *op. cit.*, 321.

damaged the tile roof of the main house.<sup>51</sup> By 1860, it was unoccupied.<sup>52</sup> In September 1861, George Alonzo Johnson wrote Stearns, inquiring about renting the Bandini house, while repairs were being made to his home at Rancho Peñasquitos.<sup>53</sup> The following January, winter storms caused flooding and damage of major proportions. A. S. Ensworth, writing to Thomas Whaley, reported the devastation to Old Town in alarming detail.

It was not only a flood of waters falling from the heavens, but such a South-easter I have never known, the tide backing up the waters of the bay which was running in from the river to a height never before witnessed by Americans. Luckily the settlements are all situated that the high water could do damage to but a few. Mrs. Robinson's house (which has been so long considered a weak structure) stood it well, and is not injured in the least. Most of the walls of the corrals at the rear of the Bandini and Estudillo houses fell in, as also the walls of the General Store corral. Mannasse & Schiller Store is minus a rear wall, but the goods received no damage. Some of the high corral wall in the rear of the Franklin fell. Crissman's shop walls fell in and the whole of the wall around Bandini's large garden, below the pear garden, is one mass of mud, the water being about two feet deep around it. In fact all the old walls around town, which were not well protected, have gone to rise no more.<sup>54</sup>

On May 27, 1862, an earthquake cracked the adobe walls in several rooms of the Casa de Bandini, including a large vertical crack in the dining room, and collapsed the wing wall parallel to Juan Street. The damage was not repaired.<sup>55</sup>

### **American Transition ~ The Cosmopolitan Hotel, 1869-1888**

In 1869, Stearns sold the house, by then a ruin, for \$2,000 in gold coin to Albert L. Seeley, a stage driver from Texas followed by Los Angeles. A driver since the age of 17, the 5' 10", ruddy-faced Illinoisan had arrived with his English-born wife Emily and children to Old Town in 1867. Shortly after arriving, he was awarded a government contract to carry mail and passengers between Los Angeles and San Diego.<sup>56</sup>

The United States Mail Stage Line initially operated out of the Franklin House located on the south side of the plaza. The new operation under Seeley and his partner Charles Wright faced

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<sup>51</sup> See Bandini to Stearns, Octubre 7 de 1858, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #7, HUNT. In a follow-up letter, dated Noviembre de 6, 1858, to Stearns, Bandini stated that it would cost him roughly 300 pesos to haul away the debris.

<sup>52</sup> Brandes and Moriarty, *op. cit.*, pp. 322, 322A; City of San Diego, Population Manuscript Census Schedule, 1860, p. 7, SDHSRA. See also Schiller 1869 photograph #XXXX at the Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson to Stearns, September 26, 1861, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #34, HUNT.

<sup>54</sup> A.S. Ensworth to Thomas Whaley, January 26, 1862, Whaley House Coll., San Diego County Parks (SDCP).

<sup>55</sup> Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, pp. 490-491, BANC. The earthquake also cracked Thomas Whaley's sturdy brick home in several places. Other damaged buildings included the Pico and Wrightington adobes and the Colorado House, a three-story wood-frame hotel.

<sup>56</sup> See "Seeley Stable" brochure, p. 1, Old Town State Historic Park Vertical File, SDHSRA; Richard B. Yale, "Albert Lewis Seeley, Stage Line Operator, U.S. Mail Contractor, Innkeeper," (Sacramento: State of California Department of Beaches and Parks, January 1973), pp. 34-35; Barbara Palmer, "Albert Seeley (1822 - )," *Old Town Character Studies: Sketches and Sources* (San Diego: San Diego Coast District, Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001). np.

multiple difficulties. The mail never arrived on time (three times weekly) because of poor road conditions, especially during winter when rainstorms washed out entire sections of the coastal route to San Juan Capistrano. River crossings were particularly dangerous, and holdups, although infrequent, did occur. Appointed road master in early 1869, Seeley spent months on road improvements at his own expense, further delaying mail deliveries and triggering negative press coverage by the *San Diego Union*.<sup>57</sup>

Buying Bandini's house and adjoining lots provided Seeley with an opportunity to build the necessary facilities for his stage operation and to house his passengers in what he called a "first-class hotel." With his wife Emily's recent inheritance of \$8,000, Seeley hired Henry F. and Samuel H. Parsons to renovate the deteriorating adobe and add a wood-framed second story and balconies.<sup>58</sup> Parsons Brothers ran a one-of-a-kind steam-powered complex of shops located on Fifth Street downtown near the lumber yard of McDonald, Gale & Co. Noted for their ability to produce moldings, trims, doors, sashes, blinds, and other ornamental finished woodwork, they catered to an exclusive clientele, building commercial establishments and homes for New San Diego's upper crust. Their shop also had two brick kilns. The *San Diego Union* described Parsons Brothers' operation as "...something new and useful..."

We noticed sash-doors and blinds in all stages, from the lumber sawed into shape to be painted and finished articles ready to place in the buildings. They have several pieces of moulding of rare finish made in their shops. All milling and boring done by machinery. The whole establishment is driven by steam.

Just as steam power has advantages over blood and muscle, so have these gentlemen advantages over builders who are getting along without the aid of it. Notwithstanding their facilities of steam and machinery, these gentlemen employ not less than fifteen men weekly to push on their heavy operations.<sup>59</sup>

The siding on the second story put up by Parsons Brothers was mill sawn old growth redwood clapboard, which was originally painted pinkish tan, but after 1874, dark reddish tan. The balcony featured turned wooden columns and was enclosed with turned baluster railings. The doorways had full height pilasters and bracketed cornices over the top. Windows were framed by large wooden shutters and were capped with the same style of cornice. Doors, windows, and trim were originally painted dark cream, and repainted dark reddish tan after 1874. The roof was a moderately sloped hip roof with wood shingles and a wide, level overhang covering the balcony. A large sign on the rooftop read "COSMOPOLITAN HOTEL." Another sign painted on the first-floor adobe façade next to the entrance read "LOS ANGELES STAGE OFFICE." An exterior stairway in the back provided access to the second-story guestrooms, along with an

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<sup>57</sup> See Franklin House advertisement in the *San Diego Union*, October 10, 1868; Letter to the Editor in defense of Seeley, *San Diego Union*, April 14, 1869; "How The Mails Are Not Carried To San Diego, *San Diego Union*, March 24, 1869 and "The Mails Again," *San Diego Union*, April 7, 1869.

<sup>58</sup> Seeley's use of inheritance money to build the hotel is discussed in Daniel Cleveland, "Pioneer Tells Of Romance Of San Diego," *San Diego Union*, December 13, 1925. American businessmen often converted single-story Mexican adobes into commercial operations by adding wooden second stories. The Exchange Hotel, Franklin House, and Freeman-Light House in Old Town followed this construction pattern.

<sup>59</sup> *San Diego Union*, June 30, 1869 (quote); see also *San Diego Union*, August 4, September 8, September 29, November 11, and December 9, 1869..

interior stairway from the entrance hallway. Sometime in the early 1870s, a wood-frame second story with redwood drop-grooved siding was added to the wing facing Calhoun Street.<sup>60</sup>

The transformation of the old adobe, once the pride of the *pueblo*, into an imposing, two-story, L-shaped hotel<sup>61</sup> won praise from the editor of the *San Diego Union*. In a column entitled “Improvements,” he wrote:

Old Town has shook off her sleep of many years, and is now making wholesome strides to overtake her young and vigorous rival South (or New) San Diego. While the latter boasts her many small houses, the former puts up large commodious buildings. The Parson(s) Brothers are pushing the fine hotel building of Mr. A. L. Seeley. At the present rate it will be finished in two weeks, and when done will be one of the roomiest and most comfortable hotel buildings in Southern California.<sup>62</sup>

The Cosmopolitan Hotel or “Seeley House,” as it was locally called, opened in September 1869, and served as a post office, station and office for Seeley's stage line between San Diego and Los Angeles from 1871 until 1887. It had ~~xxxx~~ numbered rooms according to the guest register.<sup>63</sup> “The new hotel of Mr. A. L. Seeley...,” according to the *San Diego Union*, “is truly an elegant building. Its broad verandahs above and below extending on three sides of the whole building give the place a comfortable southern air.”<sup>64</sup>

Seeley billed the Cosmopolitan as a “first-class hotel.” Advertisements in the *San Diego Union* stated that the “large and commodious hotel” featured “large, well ventilated, and finely furnished” rooms and a well-stocked table and bar boasting “the choicest wines, liquors and cigars.”<sup>65</sup> The hotel, contrary to Seeley's claim, was not really a first-class hotel. It did not have gas lighting or running water or suites like the Horton House and other downtown upscale establishments. It catered to stage travelers and people from outlying rural areas with business and personal ties to Old Town, not tourists. And like many frontier institutions, it provided a multiplicity of services, including a post and telegraph office, a barbershop operated by a “gentleman of color,” and a town social center along with providing hotel accommodations and stage transportation. The second-floor guest rooms facing the street were small, about 14 feet deep x 11 feet wide, and those overlooking the rear courtyard, occupied by single boarders, were most likely even smaller. The rooms probably had window shades or possibly blinds, one or two mahogany bedsteads with straw or woolen mattresses, a wash stand, lamp, side table and/or console table with bowl, pitcher and mirror. The large corner room overlooking the plaza had a red brick fireplace and sliding pocket doors with an oak faux finish.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, 30-33; Buck, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 20, 27, 38, 53-54, esp. 142 (table). This siding is noticeably different from the redwood clapboard siding on the rest of the second floor, indicating that it was an addition.

<sup>61</sup> Seeley demolished and removed the north wing of the old mansion, already damaged in the 1862 flood and earthquake. See *Information Disclosed by Studies Made on the Machado de Silvas and Bandini Homes – Old Town San Diego*, (Sacramento, CA: UDF Database, Department of Parks and Recreation, nd), p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> William J. Gatewood, “Improvements,” *San Diego Union*, July 28, 1869.

<sup>63</sup> *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, vol. 1 (April 21, 1870-July 1, 1887), California State Library (CSL), Sacramento, CA. The register is fairly complete for the years, 1870-1873, listing the arrival date (but not departure date), name of the guest, his or her residence, and sometimes their room number, 1 through 30.

<sup>64</sup> *San Diego Union*, September 8, 1869.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, *San Diego Union*, January 6, March 3, October 20, and November 17, 1870.

<sup>66</sup> In 1930, Cave J. Coutts Jr. completely rehabilitated the hotel guest rooms, on the second floor including refinishing them with lath and lime plaster and installing bathrooms in the smaller box-size rooms overlooking the rear courtyard. On-site inspections have uncovered remnants of ceiling lath and iron-cut nails in the sole of 2 x

The bar and sitting rooms on the first floor were the public gathering places. The bar was located off the main entrance hall in the room facing Calhoun Street. It had tongue-and-groove redwood flooring. Much of the original woodwork, including the redwood beaded wainscoting, window wells, and window frames, remains intact. The wainscoting had an oak faux painted finish. The adobe walls above the wainscoting were plastered and covered with lime whitewash. They may have been wallpapered, although probably not initially. The bar itself was probably a front-back bar counter, made of either mahogany or black walnut with recessed panels. It would have had a brass foot rail and above it three wood-bordered mirror insets. There was a billiard table in the adjacent room.<sup>67</sup>

Along with wine, champagne, and assorted liquors, the bar sold imported Havana cigars for 20 and 25 cents each, fresh lager beer by the glass, bottle, or gallon, all choice brands of liquor, and the “Uncle Toby” five for 25 cents. Ice was available. No known written record exists of the bar’s furnishings or equipment, but it undoubtedly had an iron safe, a key rack, a wall clock, a ceiling medallion and hanging lamps, some arm chairs and tables, 10- and 20-gallon kegs, champagne and wine glasses, sugar bowls, absinthe, bar tumblers, spittoons, a newspaper rack, and perhaps a writing table, some cribbage boards and a fish bowl.<sup>68</sup>

Located on the opposite side of the entrance hall, the sitting room was Bandini’s former *sala*. Seeley enlarged the parlor into a “spacious sitting room” in order to serve meals and to provide a gathering place for guests, their family members, and visitors. By the early 1870s, as Albert and his wife Emily’s social standing rose, the large room had become the town’s community center. The tall multi-paned windows allowed ample light into the room on sunny afternoons. Like the bar, it had decorative redwood beaded wainscoting and window wells painted with an oak-grain faux finish. It also had a fireplace to keep visitors warm, and a tongue-and-groove redwood floor. The tightly grained old growth redwood was ideal because it could withstand heavy foot traffic. As the town social center, the room was the scene of raffles, family reunions, dances, Christmas parties, evening balls, and weddings.<sup>69</sup>

One such event, a dinner dance honoring the “ladies of San Diego” occurred on a Tuesday night in September 1872. The *San Diego Daily World* described the “scene of revelry” in loving, impressionistic detail.

The hall was decorated with tasteful festoons. The American flag depended (sic) in very direction, and flowers and symbols of nationality consecrated the event. The redwood floor of the hall glowed with more than the invitation of the traditional waxed oak;...

About nine o’clock the delightful affair was fairly under way. The beauties of San Diego were on hand *en masse*, and the dance fairly

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<sup>3</sup> studs in several rooms indicating that Seeley most likely used lath and lime plaster to cover interior walls. On room furnishings, see Inventory of Effects of Franklin House, Old Town, Tyler Curtis & CO vs. James W. Cullen and Manuel Torres, 17<sup>th</sup> District Court, Case #435, October 1870, in Box #13, File #1, SDHSRA.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Bruce Coons, historical consultant, August 29 and September 9, 2008; Buck, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-131. An advertisement in the *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, CSL, refers to a billiard room.

<sup>68</sup> *San Diego Union*, June 9, 1870, July 20, 1873, August 24, 1876; Inventory of Effects of Franklin House, *op. cit.*, SDHSRA.

<sup>69</sup> Buck, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-106; *San Diego Union*, July 27, 1873, “The Ball at Old Town, January 8, 1874, January 25, 1874, July 1, 1874, June 1, 1875; Invitation to a “Christmas Social Party, Cosmopolitan Hotel, Thursday Evening, December 24, 1874,” SDHSRA.

under way....(But) the ladies were all holding back. None of them were willing to go forward. Bonaparte solved the difficulty in a trice. He called out for the youngest ladies to enter and they all started at once.

The reporter at this point describes the ladies' attire in great detail, omitting various letters from their last names to create an aura of mystery and romance.

Mrs. S-l-y was another brunette who selected a black costume. Of this toilet, quite a favorite amongst the ladies last night, it may be remarked that Bulwer says that only *distingue* people look well in it. We rejoice in quite a number of *distingue* looking people in San Diego, for a wonderfully large number of ladies looked charming Tuesday night in this tint; amongst whom was Mrs. Estudillo, who varied the plain black with a white stripe, Mrs. C-thw-te, and Mrs. S. M-rr-n.

Mrs. J. M-rr-n, another brunette, and an exquisite dancer, was dressed in a handsome barege; while Mrs. H-n-t-n, a pleasing brunette, attracted admirers by a very charming white toilet.<sup>70</sup>

Construction of the hotel was symbolic of the fierce rivalry between Old Town and New Town San Diego, founded in 1867 when Alonzo Horton, a shrewd New England-born real-estate promoter, bought 960 acres of property along the bay at public auction. Within a year people were moving into Horton's Addition, as the new town was called, and many businesses, including some of those in Old Town, shortly followed. When Horton heard about Seeley's hotel, he offered to give him an entire block in his Addition provided Seeley would invest his wife's inheritance in New Town. Seeley declined, reportedly boasting, "Old Town is the town, the real San Diego; your mushroom town of New San Diego soon will peter out. All the people who want to travel will have to come to Old Town to take the stage."<sup>71</sup>

The stage line was the *modus operandi* for the hotel's existence. By 1871, Seeley had purchased the three adjoining lots, and built a large barn for his coaches and mud wagons, bought the Blackhawk Livery Stable, and put up corral fencing and a windmill for pumping water from a well. The windmill, which was designed by William I. Tustin of Vallejo, had wide horizontal blades, a turn-table beneath the main shaft, and featured a self-regulating, 360 degree-turning, 10 foot in diameter wood wheel. It represented mechanical technology far ahead of its time, and filled a cistern with 60 hogsheads of water for the hotel and the stable. In 1872, Seeley built another Tustin-designed windmill outside the yard, rebuilt or replaced several sheds, and planted eucalyptus trees along Juan Street as a windbreaker. As of 1873-1874, the one-time Texas stagehand owned five wagons and other vehicles valued at \$1,000; 16 horses and half-breeds at \$800, and harnesses, ropes, and bridles at \$200. The hotel lot was valued at \$2,000 in terms of improvements.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> "That Delightful Dance, Seeley's Place A Treasury of Delight Tuesday Night," *The Daily World*, September 26, 1872, in *Winifred Davidson's Notes*, Seeley Biographical File, SDHSRA;

<sup>71</sup> Cleveland, *op. cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Richard Pourade, *The Glory Years* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 46-47; Mary Helmich and Richard Clark, *Old Town San Diego State Historic Park Interpretive Program*, vol. II (Sacramento: Dept. of Parks and Recreation, 1991), Seeley Stables, GDP #18, 18A & 18B, np; *Historic Information Design Report, Historic Windmill Reconstruction Project, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park* (Rock Ridge Windmills, LLC, March 2008), esp. pp. 3-4; *San Diego Union*, June 23, 1869, June 23, 1870; County of San Diego, *Tax Assessment List*

Seeley's profit margin was based on delivering the U.S. mail, not passengers. By 1871, his Los Angeles-San Diego stage service was running everyday except Sundays to service the increasing volume of mail. With an overnight stop at San Juan Capistrano, the trip took 35 hours and cost \$10, plus meals. A year later it was cut to 23 hours. Passengers made the trek in sturdy canvas-roofed Concord coaches, while the mail was hauled in lighter mud wagons. The coaches also made daily stops between Old Town and New San Diego; the downtown office located ironically at the Horton House. In 1874, Seeley contracted with Wells Fargo to run his stagecoaches to the mines, including tri-weekly trips to Julian where gold had recently been discovered.<sup>73</sup>

In October 1870, nearly a year after the 'Seeley House' had opened, Horton unveiled his new downtown hotel, which he named 'The Horton House.' Designed and built by W. W. Bowers, the two-story brick building had a hip roof and 200-foot front. Costing \$40,000 to build, it had gas lighting, running water, and a variety of other modern amenities. Its "...large, commodious, and well lighted..." guest rooms offered "magnificent views" of the bay. It featured a well-stocked dining room and bar with "American male waiters," a reading and billiard room, ladies parlor, bridal chamber, and suites for retired and elderly guests. Promoted as "the Hotel of Southern California" by the *San Diego Union*, it catered to a clientele of wealthy "travelers in pursuit of knowledge or pleasure," many coming by steamboat from San Francisco. "It was the largest and finest hotel in California south of San Francisco," according to Bowers.<sup>74</sup>

Unlike the Horton House, the Cosmopolitan Hotel's clientele was largely local, either stage passengers traveling to and from Los Angeles or visitors from the outlying areas with business and personal ties to Old Town. The number of arriving guests who signed the register daily ranged between three and six, although on special occasions such as the coming of the circus or a family reunion the number more than doubled. Empty rooms were rented out to local boarders, usually single men without homes or families like Judge Oliver S. Witherby, xxx Frank Stone, and rancher Robert Kelly.<sup>75</sup>

Members of the Bandini extended family often stayed at the hotel when visiting relatives. These included Refugio, Bandini's second wife and widow, his sons-in-law Cave Coutts and Charles R. Johnson, daughter Arcadia and wife to Abel Stearns, and sons José María and Juan Bautista. Many Coutts-Bandini family members signed the guest register on June 12, 1874 to attend the funeral of Cave Coutts, who had passed away at the Horton House on June 10<sup>th</sup>.<sup>76</sup>

Miguel de Pedrorena, Jr. of Jamul Valley stayed at the hotel on July 11 and July 22, 1873, probably to visit his sister Isabel Pedrorena de Altamirano, who lived in the family adobe a

(1873-74), Box #6, p. 28, SDHSRA; see also 1869 Schiller photograph #XXXX and 1872 Godfrey photograph #XXXX, SDHSRA.

<sup>73</sup> *San Diego Union*, March 24, 1869, June 23, 1874, July 4, 1874; "Information Sheet Seeley Stable," pp. 3-4, Vertical File, SDCDL; Yale, *op. cit.*, p. 11; James D. Sleeper, "The Best Parts of California As Seen From A Seeley & Wright Stage," *Butterfield Express*, vol. V, no. #3 (January, 1967), p. 1; *San Diego Daily World*, December 1, 1871.

<sup>74</sup> Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, vol. II, p. 217; "The Horton House, The Hotel of Southern California," *San Diego Union*, October 6, 1870, "The Opening of the Horton house," *San Diego Union*, October 22, 1870, in *Hayes Scraps, Five Years in San Diego, 1870-1875*, vol. II; "View Of A Visitor," (signed Viajero), *Daily Union*, April 7, 1875 in *Hayes Scraps, San Diego Current History*, vol. II., BANC; W.W.Bowers, "The Building of the Horton House," *San Diego Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. II, #2 (April 1956), pp. 15, 17 (quote).

<sup>75</sup> See *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, CSL; John Lincoln Kelly, *Life On A San Diego County Ranch* (unpublished manuscript, 1925), p. 49, Carlsbad City Library (CCL); Winifred Davidson, "Tales of the Old Southwest," *San Diego Union*, September 24, 1939.

<sup>76</sup> See *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, CSL; *San Diego Union*, June 11 and June 12, 1874.



block away on San Diego Avenue. He also stopped on December 16, 1871, with several other men who signed their names in the register under “Amerecuss Stuff Club”—an apparent reference to a hunting trip by the group. William J. Gatewood and Edward “Ned” Bushyhead, his former partner at the *San Diego Union*, signed the register on April 21 and October 12, 1870 and January 5, 1871. Tomasa Pico, the elderly widow of Francisco María Alvarado and sister of Pío Pico, the last Mexican governor of California, stopped at the hotel on March 25, 1872, probably on her way home to nearby Rancho Peñasquitos.<sup>77</sup>

Two individuals, who stopped frequently, sometimes for days at a time, were Andrew Cassidy, a Soledad Valley rancher and county supervisor, and Moses Mannasse, a storekeeper and farmer from San Pasqual. Cassidy visited Old Town regularly in 1870-1871, most likely, to review records in the county courthouse at the Whaley House. Mannasee, in turn, probably came to Old Town to see his cousin Joseph.<sup>78</sup>

Military officials in transit to their frontier posts often stopped at the hotel; among them, A.P. Greene, the agent at San Pasqual Indian Reservation and General George Brown Dandy, the commander of the U.S. Army depot at Yuma in the Arizona Territory. Dr. John S. Griffin of Los Angeles, a well-known veteran of the battle at San Pasqual in 1846, registered at the hotel on March 25, 1872, probably to tend to his brother-in-law Benjamin Hayes’ invalid wife. The well-known New York journalist, Charles Nordhoff, and his wife spent an evening at the hotel while touring San Diego in April 1872, to put the finishing touches on his soon-to-be-published, best-selling guidebook, *California for Health, Pleasure, and Residence*.<sup>79</sup>

On the morning of November 17, 1871, New York City’s Mammoth Circus paraded through Old Town’s crowded streets; its caravan of lumbering wagons festooned with colorful banners and animal cages and surrounded by costumed performers and prancing horses. Circus posters and newspaper ads in both Spanish and English promoted the company as “The Great Show of 1871!” Some of the performers, including the owners William Thompson, an animal trainer, and Omar Samuel Kingsley, a Creole bareback rider, and the company’s agents, Rowe and Wenban, stayed at the Cosmopolitan.

That evening Old Towners packed the Big Tent to watch some 50 performers dazzle them with a menagerie of horseback riding stunts and animal acts. Kingsley performed his bareback riding act dressed as a woman with the stage name, Ella Zoyara. Admission cost a dollar for adults and 50 cents for children.

Three other performances were staged on Saturday afternoon and evening, November 18<sup>th</sup> and Monday evening, November 20<sup>th</sup> in New Town in front of the Horton House. The company then traveled onto Mexico on the brig *L.P. Forster*. On the return leg in March 1872, it once again performed in New Town and Old Town featuring new performers and new acts, including the “Stud of Horses,” before enthusiastic crowds. Kingsley, Thompson, and their agents stayed again at the Cosmopolitan before the company traveled on to Los Angeles and San Francisco, and then headed East by rail.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, CSL; *San Diego Union*, December 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 22, 1871.

<sup>78</sup> See *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, CSL.

<sup>79</sup> *Cosmopolitan Hotel Register*, CSL; *San Diego Union*, April 2 and June 30, 1870; Smythe, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 697; *San Diego Union*, April 21, 1872 and April 28, 1872.

<sup>80</sup> *San Diego Union*, November 12, November 17, 1871, and March 21, 1872.

In the aftermath of the great fire of 1872, Old Town's fortunes declined as New San Diego became the commercial and county seat. "Old Town is a heap of adobe ruins with a few scattering habitable dwellings," wrote the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft after stopping to visit Benjamin Hayes in early 1874. The number of guests staying at the hotel steadily dropped, paralleling the community's economic decline. By the end of that year, Seeley began scaling back his stage operation in Old Town. In December he placed ads in the *San Diego Union* to sell 20 head of good, well-broken horses and 20 sets of Concord harnesses for wagons. In January of 1876, he became superintendent of the San Geronimo and Prescott Division of the Wells California and Arizona Express Co. stage line operating from San Bernardino to the Arizona towns of Prescott, Phoenix and Tucson. By 1882, the hotel was "without a guest," noted the travel writer William Henry Bishop.<sup>81</sup>

The arrival of the railroad to Los Angeles in 1878 and New San Diego in 1885 signified the end of an era in Old Town. By 1887, Seeley had ceased running stages except for a local line between San Diego and Ocean Beach. The following year, he sold his hotel and stables to Israel Cohnreich of San Francisco for \$15,000 in gold coin.<sup>82</sup>

In 1895, Seeley, then retired, moved to San Francisco, where Emily and he lived in a large, two-story Victorian home on Winfield Avenue. Emily, who frequently visited her native England, decorated the home with beautiful antique furnishings, while Albert spent much of his time at his Sonoma ranch caring for his horses. On August 7, 1898, the "courteous commander," as Bancroft once called him, passed away in Santa Rosa. He and Emily are interned at Olivet Cemetery in Colma near San Francisco.<sup>83</sup>

### **Boarding House ~ Akerman and Tuffley, 1888-1929**

In the decade that followed the hotel became a rooming house. In 1896, Edward Akerman and Robert Tuffley converted Seeley's large barn into an olive packing plant. A few years later the two Englishmen leased the downstairs for their operation from Josephine Newman, the new owner. Many of the rooms were remodeled to process and pack olives and olive oil, including converting Bandini's beloved *sala* into an office. The Akerman and Tuffley families, along with a few of their employees and friends, lived in the guestrooms on the second floor.<sup>84</sup>

In her memoir, 'Memory Like The Ivy Clings,' Susan Davis Tiffany, a family friend of the Akerman's, recalled many of the physical details of the house in the early 1900s.

The Bandini house had neither plumbing nor electricity when I went there (in 1898), but both were installed later....There was a large fireplace in a big room downstairs which had presumably been the Bandini parlor, and two small grates were in upstairs

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<sup>81</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Personal Observations*, MSS C-E 113, pp. 19, BANC.; "Who was Albert Seeley?" California State Parks brochure (nd); *San Diego Union*, January 6, 1876; William Henry Bishop, "Southern California," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 66, #391 (December 1882), p. 62. Bancroft came to Old Town to arrange to buy Hayes' vast collection of scrapbooks, manuscripts, and papers on Southern California—"...the most valuable in the state," according to this distinguished historian, with the exception of his own.

<sup>82</sup> Winifred Davidson, "Tales of the Old Southwest," *San Diego Union*, September 24, 1939; "Who was Albert Seeley?" *op. cit.*; *San Diego Union*, May 3, 1887; *Abstract of Titles: Old Town*, ...Block #451, SDHSRA.

<sup>83</sup> Yale, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Bancroft, *Observations*, p. 34; Richard Yale, Interview with Clarence Hawkins, Redwood City, September 25, 1972, pp. 1-2. Typescript of interview in author's possession. Hawkins was a grandson-in-law of Seeley.

<sup>84</sup> Susan Davis Tiffany, "Memory Like The Ivy Clings,' Reminiscences Of One Who Lived In The Bandini House 1891-1911 (unpublished manuscript, 1973), pp. 42-43, 45, 51, SDHSRA; Stiegler, *op. cit.*, 34-35;

rooms. None of these supplied adequate warmth and we supplemented them with portable kerosene-burning heaters.<sup>85</sup>

Small kerosene hand lamps were “our only lighting.” Cooking was performed on a wood-burning iron stove. As in days past, water was kept cool in earthenware jars or *ollas*. There was no telephone, no gas and no refrigeration.<sup>86</sup>

The house and grounds, however, had been significantly altered since its heyday as the Cosmopolitan Hotel. By 1898, there were 29 rooms, and those on the second story had been divided up and rented out to boarders, including the Tiffany family. The big house was enveloped with new porches. A cyclone on February 5, 1901 had demolished the front porch built by Seeley. A lattice, wood-framed “cottage house” stood at one end of the inner patio. Eucalyptus and pepper trees shaded the house, and morning glory and honeysuckle vines grew in profusion on the porches. There were also outdoor tennis and croquet courts. Two old wells—one located at the end of a wing and the other in the horse corral—were boarded up.<sup>87</sup>

Susan Davis Tiffany’s memoir provides insight into the boarding house experience as a facet of growing-up in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century America. The household was multi-ethnic and multi-generational. Along with Mexican and Indian servants who lived nearby, the residents included the English Ackerman and Tuffley families; the Altamiranos, an old *Californio* family related to the Pedrenas and Estudillos, and Susan, her sister Elizabeth, and their great aunt, Rebecca Davis from North Carolina. The children were the household’s bonds. “We grew up together like sisters and brothers,” recalled Susan. “There were usually twelve or more regular residents in the house, and sometimes visitors for short period....So in the Historic Bandini house were several generations and a variety of national and genealogical lines.”<sup>88</sup>

As the children grew up and moved away, the bonds holding the household together began to unravel. By 1910, only seven individuals remained in the house. These included Robert Tuffley; Edward Akerman with his mother Ellen, his wife Isabel and sister Ellen E. (Nellie); and Susan and Elizabeth Davis, who were then 21 and 19 years of age. In 1920, there were only four residents: Edward Akerman, his wife and sister, and Robert Tuffley. Photographs reveal the building’s deteriorating condition. Plaster had broken off from the adobe walls, railings were missing, and the porch deck was rotting away. By 1921, the building’s assessed value had dropped to a mere \$300 from \$1,250 in 1900. By 1928, it stood vacant, abandoned by the misfortune of time.<sup>89</sup>

### **A Landmark Saved ~ Coutts’ Restoration, 1930-1945**

On July 21, 1928, Bandini’s grandson, Cave J. Coutts, Jr., bought the property from Marion and Vernetta Newman of San Mateo County for \$10 in gold coin—a striking indication of just how far the old house and premises had deteriorated.<sup>90</sup> Two years later, Coutts, Jr. remodeled the building, which he leased to various individuals for use as a hotel and restaurant called the Miramar Hotel.

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<sup>85</sup> Tiffany, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1-4; *San Diego Union*, February 6, 1901. The cyclone also removed the roof from both wings of the Casa de Estudillo.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 46-50, (quote pp. 49-50).

<sup>89</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-40; photographs NAME, 1928, #1136B; Passmore, January 4, 1930, #XXXX, SDHSRA.

<sup>90</sup> Deed of title to Cave Coutts, Jr., July 21, 1928, Coutts Coll., Box #79, Folder #10 (Casa de Bandini, 1928-1930), HUNT.

Couts took considerable liberties, remodeling the historic building in the Steamboat Revival architectural style then popular in the South. The entire building was stuccoed. The redesigned roof no longer had the wide, horizontally extended overhang that graced the Cosmopolitan Hotel. Asphalt shingle covered it. The first-floor porch was plastered and trimmed with a balustrade railing of “cast stone” (or concrete). Decorative white lath curved screens embellished the tops of the porch and balcony on all sides. The stucco walls were painted yellow; the window sashes, white; and the porch trim green and brown. Junipers, century plants, and other shrubs lined the beds along Mason and Calhoun Streets. For the first time, the building was wired for electricity and gas to accommodate modern appliances, including a three-burner gas plate range.<sup>91</sup>

Couts’ promotion of the building focused on his Hispanic heritage. The grandson of Juan Bandini, he restored the home as a memorial to his mother, Ysidora Bandini de Couts. The development of the auto-tourist industry and the public’s captivation with the state’s Spanish origins convinced him to market the “Casa de Bandini” as an upscale tourist destination that celebrated a Spanish heritage rich in pageantry and refinement as exemplified by his grandfather. John D. Spreckels, the sugar baron, had restored the Casa de Estudillo adobe across the street in 1910 and converted it into a successful tourist attraction as “Ramona’s Marriage Place” because of its association with Helen Hunt Jackson’s popular 1884 novel *Ramona*.<sup>92</sup>

The auto-tourist industry suffered, though, with the onset of the Great Depression and later World War II. Couts’ operation never prospered during these years. Few tourists visited his hotel. Rent money often went directly back into maintenance. Rooms were sometimes crowded with local transients to reduce expenses, and finding responsible or reliable lessees was an ongoing problem. Mrs. J. W. Fisher, who managed the leasing contracts and took a personal interest in the building, complained in one of her letters to Couts that “...poor old men from the county (are) sleeping two, three & four in a room, two in the cantina between the dining room & scullery and all the other rooms similarly filled. Of course that makes it (‘the *casa*’) not an apartment house, club or rooming house or hotel. It is just a rest home.”<sup>93</sup>

In March of 1935, Couts leased the building to Margaret Adams Faulconer. The lease was for three years, beginning March 1, 1935 and ending on February 28, 1938. The terms of the lease stated that the building was “...to be used only for the purpose of an apartment house, dining room and the assembling place for historical, literary and similar societies.” It also stated that “no religious services except Catholic shall be permitted” on the premises.<sup>94</sup>

Her business operated under the name, Casa de Bandini, and the timing seemed opportune since the California Pacific International Exposition had opened in the summer of 1935 at San Diego’s Balboa Park. Both Faulconer and Couts hoped to attract tourists from this world fair,

<sup>91</sup> Invoice from Ingle Manufacturing Company, June 25, 1930, Couts Coll., Box #79, Folder #10 (Casa de Bandini, 1928-1930), HUNT; Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 41; “Home of Don Juan Bandini,” Old Town San Diego, San Diego County, *California, Historic American Buildings Survey*, HABS Survey #CAL.46; Index #Cal.37-Oldto 2 - 1 (1937), Library of Congress (LOC); Photographs, **NAME, YR.** #1136 A; **NAME, YR.** #82-14230, SDHSRA.

<sup>92</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43; “Bandini Home, Old Town,” nd, Cave Couts Coll., Box #79, Folder #13, HUNT; *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1932.

<sup>93</sup> Winifred Davidson, San Diego Historical Society, to Couts, November 14, 1934, Couts Coll., Box #46, Folder #2 (Business Correspondence); Faulconer to Couts, July 18, 1935, Couts Coll., Box #79, Folder #11 (Casa de Bandini, 1931-1936); Mrs. Fisher to Couts, April 8, 1940, Couts Coll., Box #79, Folder #13 (Casa de Bandini, 1939-1943), HUNT.

<sup>94</sup> Lease between Cave J. Couts, Lesser and Margaret Adams Faulconer, Lessee,” Couts Coll., Box #79, Folder #11 (Casa de Bandini, 1931-1936), p.1, HUNT.

and the building quickly became linked with the cultural traditions of a mythical Spanish past. Faulconer ran full-page advertisements in the *San Diego Union* featuring images of gaily-dressed dancers and guitar-strumming *caballeros* posing in the courtyard garden.

In all California there is no more romantic building than the Casa de Bandini, located in Old Town San Diego. Here, where once the dashing Dons and lovely señoritas recreated the social grace of aristocratic Castille, in this one-time province of Spain, has endured for nearly a century and a quarter the tradition of a great family.

Out of the pages of the past unto the stage of the present comes a restored and brilliant Casa de Bandini. In this transition from yesterday to today, nothing of its former charm or beauty has been lost.

Much of California's history has centered in this truly magnificent specimen of real California architecture. Built in 1815 and blessed after the fashion of those days in 1829, it was the home of Don Juan Bandini, noted *caballero*. Today it is still owned by the Bandini family, in the person of Cave Coutts, grandson of Don Juan.

On May 25, a few days previous to the opening of the California Pacific International (Exposition), the Casa de Bandini once again will assume its traditional place as the center of California's social gaiety.<sup>95</sup>

Of course, the atmosphere created by Mrs. Faulconer played upon the refrain of an imagined past. The building was not a "...magnificent specimen of real California architecture..." but the Cosmopolitan Hotel remodeled in a Steamboat Revival architectural style. The historic adobe walls and other features of the *casa* were concealed beneath cement stucco façades. Balconies and porches that never existed were decorated with white vertical lath. Juan Bandini, the "noted *caballero*" who loved to dance and entertain, was not a Spaniard, but a Peruvian-born immigrant, who became one of the most influential men of his day in Alta California. "These inaccurate and commercially motivated remodels, always conducted under the claim of authentic restoration representing California's romantic Spanish past," concludes Ione Stiegler and her team in their *Historic Structure Report*, "would characterize the Casa de Bandini from the 1930s to the present day (2004)."<sup>96</sup>

Although not an authentic restoration, Coutts made an invaluable contribution to the future of historic preservation and today's restoration of the Cosmopolitan Hotel. By 1930, when he renovated the hotel, the depression had made it prohibitively costly for contractors to replace existing building materials with shipped goods. To economize, his contractor (Day) salvaged and reused a wide variety of materials from the Seeley hotel, including porch roof decking, beams, purlins, and even balcony posts. His workers boarded-up the original doorframes, windows, and other open spaces on the second story with roof decking from the veranda of the

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, "THE CASA DE BANDINI, Social Center of Old California, Restored to Former Brilliance," *San Diego Union*, Sunday Morning, April 28, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

old hotel before they applied the stucco. These sections stand out from the redwood clapboard siding, providing a perfect blueprint of the locations and dimensions of the doors and windows of the Cosmopolitan Hotel. In addition, the stucco layered over chicken wire and tarpaper protected the clapboard and square-top cut nails.

State Parks staff also removed sections of the stucco from the first floor of the Calhoun Street wing. To everyone's surprise, the adobe block, which probably dates back to the Bandini era, is in very good condition, except the kitchen area, where moisture, condensation, and rat infestation have taken a dreadful toll since the 1970s. Nobody expected this because non-porous materials like stucco trap moisture causing adobe to melt and eventually crumble.

A thick lime plaster had been applied to the chicken wire covering the adobe block. It helped insulate the adobe from the stucco, allowing it to breathe and wick away moisture. Cout's workmen had used it not to protect or preserve the adobe, but rather to apply the stucco finish to the wall.

What can we conclude from this? Economic necessity forced Cout's to salvage and reuse building materials. This provided future generations with not just remnants but entire sections of on-site historic fabric and architectural features—the single most important source of information to a fuller understanding of a building's construction history. In doing this, Bandini's grandson saved a family historic landmark.<sup>97</sup>

### **Tourism and Myth ~ The Cardwell Ownership, 1945-1968**

In 1945, James H. and Nora Cardwell bought the property from the estate of Cout's for \$25,000.<sup>98</sup>

With their financial backing, their son Frank renovated the building into an upscale motel in the image of a Spanish Colonial hacienda. The Cardwells hired local architect Lloyd Ruocco, an associate of Richard Requa, to redesign the building.<sup>99</sup>

Undertaken over 1947-1950 when the building stood vacant, the renovation was extensive. Prominent Steamboat Revival features like the lath, railing, and posts were removed. The building assumed a quasi-Spanish Colonial appearance with its stuccoed columns, decorative wrought iron trim, rustic wooden posts and railings on the balcony, and ceramic and stone tile. The courtyard was decorated with lush tropical plants like palms, banana trees, bird of paradise, and succulents bordering a large lawn. City directories listed the property as the "Casa de Bandini Hotel" under the direction of James H. Cardwell from 1950 until 1965. Cardwell claimed that the remodel, which included soundproofing the rooms and a complete overhaul of the electrical and water systems, cost him \$100,000.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For a discussion of the Cosmopolitan Hotel restoration, see David Felton, Karen Hildebrand, and Nini Minovi, *Historic Structural Investigations at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park* (Sacramento: Department of Parks and Recreation, Archaeology, History and Museum Division, May-August 2007), esp. pp. 10-16, 57; Victor A. Walsh, *Cosmopolitan Chronicle*, April 11, April 18, and May 2, 2008, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park Website, [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=24983](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=24983).

<sup>98</sup> Cout's died in July 1943.

<sup>99</sup> Requa passed away in June 1941, and thus played no role in the design.

<sup>100</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 50, "Casa de Bandini," *Old San Diego* (San Diego: San Diego County Historical Days, 1950), p. 10, SDCDL; (Photographs NAME, YR. #S-1170, NAME, YR. #80:5045, NAME, YR. #S-1170-A, SDHSRA.

The building took on the image of a luxurious Spanish colonial hacienda that in no way resembled either Juan Bandini's original home or the Cosmopolitan Hotel of Albert Seeley. Frank Cardwell, like Coutts, portrayed his establishment as the embodiment of a Spanish past that had no association with either the building or historic Old Town. Tourist brochures described the "lavish restoration" as the embodiment of "...the charm of the early Spanish atmosphere.." Images of costumed dancers and musicians with guitars and Caribbean drums graced the pages.<sup>101</sup>

The State of California acquired the Casa de Bandini and other Old Town properties from the Cardwells on December 18, 1968 for the sum of \$898,176.<sup>102</sup>

### **Myth, History, and Creation of a State Historic Park**

In 1968 the 12.5 acres surrounding the historic plaza became Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. Over the next decade, the Casa de Bandini stood empty, except for two years (1974-1976) when it operated as the park's visitor center. In 1978, it was leased to Diane Powers, the concessionaire of the park's new Bazaar del Mundo complex.

Ms. Powers opened a successful Mexican restaurant and, in the process, altered the rear courtyard and many of the first-floor rooms. Decorated with her unique and bright décor, the building's dining area took on an ambiance more South American, especially Peruvian than Spanish or Mexican. She installed new lighting and doors, timbered false beams, glass panels in wall partitions, stone and ceramic tile, and re-graded and raised the courtyard outdoor dining area around a large fountain. Kitchen facilities on the west end of the Calhoun Street wing were expanded and upgraded, including the addition of a food-preparation area and a separate freezer space outside. Much of the building's façade, especially along Mason Street, was concealed beneath a tangle of tropical shrubbery.<sup>103</sup>

The former guest rooms on the second story were converted into offices. The rehabilitation included reconfiguring walls and removing the fixtures and tile flooring of two bathrooms facing Mason Street and converting two other small rooms into mechanical equipment rooms.<sup>104</sup>

The State's long-term plan to restore the building to its appearance as the Cosmopolitan Hotel triggered internal divisions and disagreements over the State's preservation standards. Apparently, local staff had allowed Ms. Powers to remove portions of historic interior walls dating to Seeley's time in the first-floor dining area without the knowledge or approval of the Resource Preservation and Interpretation Division (RPID) of Parks and Recreation. On May 23, 1979, the issue reached a head when James P. Tryner, head of the division, sent a memo to Richard A. May, chief of the Development Division, saying that "this project must be stopped immediately" to prevent further "...destruction of historic interior walls that are composed of full-dimension timbers, square nails, and other material aspects indicating a 19<sup>th</sup>-century date." He also pointed out that the design for the courtyard and outdoor dining area was not historic.

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<sup>101</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 49; San Diego County Historical Days, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Mary Lloyd, *Saludos Amigos, The Birthplace of California* (Potrero, CA: Mary Lloyd, 1950), p. 24, SDCDL.

<sup>102</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 55; *Architectural Survey and Report*, Bandini House, (June 15, 1971), p. 4, Department of Parks and Recreation, Unit File Archives, Northern Service Center (NSC), Sacramento, CA.

<sup>103</sup> Stiegler, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56; Bandini House Development Plan, April 26, 1979, sheet #1, Department of Parks and Recreation, San Diego Coast District, Concessions drawer; **Check photos/reports on archaeology in files.**

<sup>104</sup> Wall alterations consisted of blocking up inter-connecting doorways between Coutts' bathrooms and guest rooms. Bandini House Development Plan, *op. cit.*, sheet #2.

In subsequent correspondence, Tryner and Dr. Knox Mellon, the State Historic Preservation Officer, explained that the removal of historic fabric, such as interior partition walls, should be kept to a minimum or, if that was not possible, properly documented, marked, and stored. On June 18, 1979, May wrote Tryner, saying that the rear partition wall in the proposed dining area, already altered with a door opening, "...will be completely removed." He did not explain his decision.<sup>105</sup>

Under Diane Powers' management, the Casa de Bandini Restaurant became an immediate success and extremely popular with local San Diegans. The *San Diego Union* described its opening in 1980 as the dawn of a "new era."

Every effort has been made to create the house that thrived 100 years ago. Intricacies of California's history and memorabilia are scattered throughout, as well as the tile and paint artistry of Craftsmen from Mexico and Southern California. Furnishings and statuary of rich wood and brass make every corner a source of charm; woven upholstery and wall hangings, from the looms of Mexico and Guatemala grace every room.

Outside the sunny patio surrounds a romantic fountain on the very site of Juan Bandini's original structure. Patrons dine in an environment of lush gardens, colorful umbrellas, shrubbery and trees that closely duplicate the surroundings that Juan Bandini himself enjoyed. An extensive menu incorporates the best of Spanish Mexican and Early California cuisine. A sampling; Especial de San German, Red Snapper, Taco Feast, (and) Crab Enchiladas....<sup>106</sup>

Powers, like Coutts and Cardwell before her, promoted the history of the Casa de Bandini as a fanciful recreation of a past that simply never existed in Old Town San Diego. Bandini had a cobblestone and later clay brick patio with a well. It did not feature "lush gardens" and a "romantic fountain." Like other land-rich *rancheros*, his home was furnished with hand-made Indian wares as well as expensive imports from the hide and tallow ports. He ate beef, tortillas, and beans, not Red Snapper or Crab Enchiladas.

In June of 2005, Delaware North Companies became the concessionaire of this historic landmark. It has committed \$1.9 million to rehabilitate and restore the building to its heyday of operation as the Cosmopolitan Hotel (ca. 1869-1874). In April 2006, the California Cultural and Historical Endowment awarded the San Diego Coast District of California State Parks a matching fund-grant of \$1.8 million. State Parks authorized an additional \$2 million in deferred maintenance monies to ensure a full and complete restoration and rehabilitation of the building

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<sup>105</sup> Kenneth W. McClellan, Development Division, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), to Alice A. Huffman, Deputy Director, DPR, May 29, 1980, pp. 2-3; James P. Tryner, Resource Preservation and Interpretation Division, DPR, to Richard May, Development Division, DPR, May 23, 1979, p. 1; Tryner and Dr. Knox Mellon, State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), to John H. Knight, Associate Director of Operations, DPR, June 1, 1979, p. 1; Mellon to Knight, June 5, 1979, p. 1; May to Tryner, June 18, 1979, p. 1, Department of Parks and Recreation, Unit File Archives, NSC

<sup>106</sup> *San Diego Union*, May 25, 1980, as quoted in Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 55.



The Casa de Bandini is a priceless historic resource because of its long history, distinctive architectural character, and association with significant people and events in the state's history. Used first as a home and later adapted and converted into a hotel, rooming house, olive factory, and restaurant, its history spans 179 years. With the possible exceptions of the Pacific House and Customs House in Monterey, there is no other 19<sup>th</sup>-century building in the state that rivals its scale as representative of Mexican adobe and American wood-framing construction techniques.

The building is priceless for another very important reason. Despite multiple alterations and major remodels, it has retained much of its historic 19<sup>th</sup>-century fabric and integrity, hidden beneath layers of stucco, decorative tile, and wrought iron. Its restoration as the Cosmopolitan Hotel has been well served in this regard. Cave Coutts, Jr. played an unintentional but instrumental role. His work crews provided a virtual blueprint of the hotel's configuration by salvaging and reusing its materials. In this respect the building is a veritable museum piece of historic fabric.

Preliminary investigations by California State Parks and its consultants have revealed that most of the exterior adobe walls on the first floor remain intact, except in the former kitchen facility, where moisture, condensation, and rat infestation over the decades has severely damaged the block. Other important features, dating back to the building's heyday as a hotel, include the tongue-and-groove wainscoting and flooring in the dining area on the first floor, the stairway banister in the entrance area, the window seats in the west wing on the first floor, and many of the doors, window sashes and cornices on the second-floor balcony.