

The Casa and The Don: Juan Bandini's Quest for Homeland in Early San Diego

By

Victor A. Walsh

From the far side of the historic plaza, the restored, two-story Cosmopolitan Hotel with turned wooden columns and baluster railings stands like a sentinel to history in the afternoon light. Originally built in 1827-1829 as the family residence of Don Juan Bandini and forty years later converted into Old Town's principal hotel and stage stop, it is one of the most noteworthy historic buildings in the state.¹

Few buildings in California rival its scale or size (8,000 square feet) or blending of nineteenth-century Mexican adobe and American wood-framing construction techniques. It boasts a rich and storied past — one that is buried in the material fabric and written and oral accounts left behind by previous generations.

The purpose of this article is to recount the building's history during the Mexican and American Transition periods and the people and events associated with it. Like old San Diego, the imposing adobe home and the Bandini family while they lived there



Portion of Henry Miller watercolor, 1856 showing Bandini House location. Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library.

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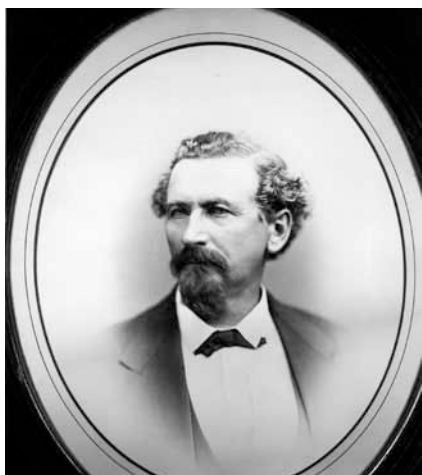
experienced profound economic and cultural changes. Those and subsequent events left their imprints on the building as well as on the cultural memories associated with it.

Over time, the *Casa* and the Don became the very embodiment of a transplanted aristocratic Spanish heritage. Bandini's life, as this article shows, was far more complex and layered in the events of California than in traditions of the Old World. It reflected the dynamics of a region in the throes of wrenching changes due to Mexico's inability to colonize and develop Alta California, the U.S.-Mexican War, and California's epic Gold Rush.

The Casa and The Don

Juan Bandini would become one of the most prominent men of his day in California. Born in Arica, Peru, on October 4, 1800, he was the son of Captain José María Bandini, a Spanish naval officer and mariner from Cádiz in Andalucía, and Ysidora Blancas, a native Peruvian of Spanish descent. Like his father, Bandini was the product of the Old and New World. His early life in Lima, where his father was stationed, was unsettling. By his third birthday, death had claimed his mother and two siblings. As the only surviving child of that marriage, he later sailed with his father to Europe, where he completed his schooling in Spain and Italy with a focus on law. José Bandini, although often away due to military service in the Napoleonic Wars, was the boy's mentor, source of support, and a living example of his Old World ancestry.²

During the second decade of the nineteenth century, much of Spain's New World territories but especially Peru and Mexico rebelled against Spanish rule. Captain Bandini, who had returned to a politically unstable Lima, spent much of his time



Cave J. Coutts. County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation History Office.

on the open sea, stopping and trading at Latin American and Mexican ports. In 1819 and 1821, he sailed up the Pacific coast from San Blas to deliver supplies and troops at the presidios of San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. His brig, *Reina de los Angeles*, was reportedly "the 1st vessel to fly (the) independent colors" of Mexico according to the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft. A year later, by then retired, a widower and loyal citizen of Mexico, he decided to resettle in San Diego, lured by the promise of a new beginning. His twenty-two-year-old son Juan, who admired his father and had no lasting ties to Lima, accompanied him.³

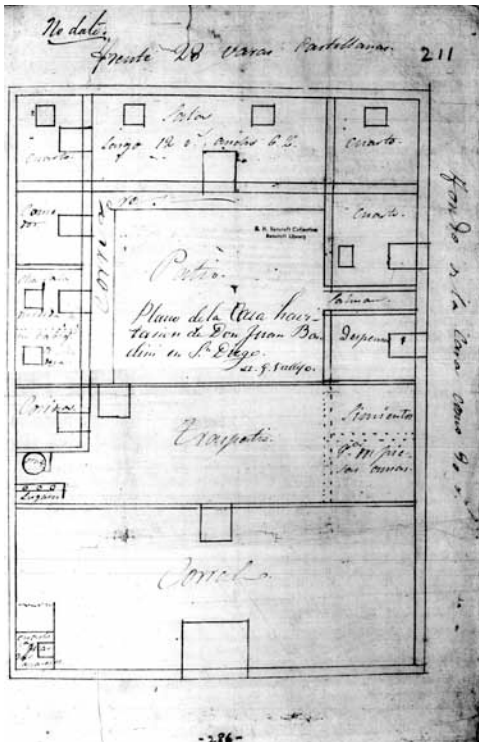
In 1827, Governor José María Echeandía

granted Juan Bandini and José Antonio Estudillo, his brother-in-law, adjoining house lots on the plaza, measuring "100 *varas* square (or 277.5 x 277.5') in common..."⁴ Through his marriage to Dolores Estudillo and, after her death in 1833, to Refugio Argüello, the daughter of another influential Spanish *Californio* family, Bandini would carve 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 Coutts, a prominent San Diego rancher, and Charles Robinson Johnson, a Los Angeles business associate.⁵



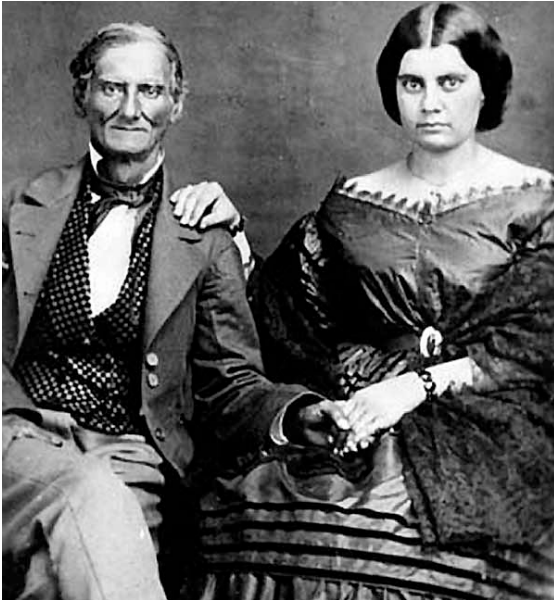
Refugio Argüello Bandini. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, Coutts Collection, Box 90 F3.

The one-story adobe home that the father and son built on the plaza was originally U-shaped with two wings extending out from the plaza parallel to present-day Juan and Calhoun Streets.⁶ It stands 45° off true north-south axis coinciding with the plaza's alignment.⁷



Vallejo sketch of Casa de Bandini. Courtesy of the Huntington Library Box 90.

According to Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's drawing from memory, the Bandini house originally had eight rooms,⁸ a *zaguán* or entranceway, a kitchen attached to the wing on Calhoun Street,⁹ two patios in the rear¹⁰ along with a corral, and a shed for rigging and harnessing horses. Water was available from two hand-dug wells: one behind the wing on Calhoun Street and the other at the northeast corner of the corral. The drawing reveals that no exterior doorways opened on to the main streets or plaza probably because the building stood on a level cobblestone foundation above the street grade, making access difficult.¹¹ At the southwest corner directly across from the plaza



Juan Bandini and daughter Margarita. Photo courtesy Los Angeles Public Library.

The home was the pride of this frontier outpost, a symbol of Bandini's elite status and love of fine things. The rooms had thick adobe walls, and deep-set windows with wooden shutters. The ceilings were heavily beamed, despite the scarcity of wood, and covered with large pieces of muslin sewn together to trap insects and dirt. The floors were packed earth, while the roof was moderately sloped, and most likely originally covered with thatch and later clay tile. 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 $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ *vara* (or 11 inches) in diameter and 4.5 to 5 *varas* (12.5 to 13.9 feet) in length, were probably used for the veranda facing the lower patio.¹⁴

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 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..."¹⁵

The household furnishings typified the family's elite social status. They were "massive and beautiful," in the words of Arcadia Bandini Brennan, Bandini's great-granddaughter. They included many ornate pieces brought to this remote outpost by José Bandini from Spain and Peru or that belonged to Dolores Estudillo, Bandini's first wife. Among the family's most prized possessions were the heavy, hand-wrought

where Mason and Calhoun Streets converge, ASM Affiliates archaeologists uncovered remnants of the original foundation. The base of the wall rises five feet above the original street grade at this corner. 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.¹²

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."¹³

silver washbowls, pitchers, goblets, and pots that decorated many of the rooms. One item of special note was a lotus-shaped bowl featuring the family's crest of two serpents coiled around a cross.¹⁶

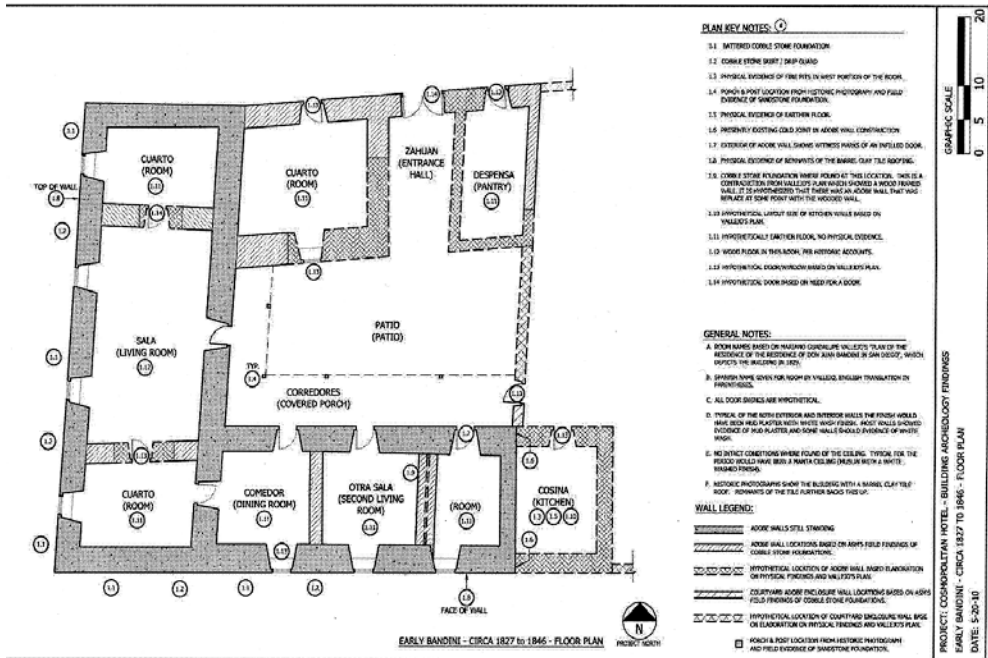
To build this *casa* was a colossal undertaking. Built at the same time as the Estudillo adobe residence, it would take nearly two years to complete. Making thousands of adobe bricks, turning them on their sides to dry in the sun, firing ground-up oyster shells in kilns for whitewash, laying cobblestone foundations, cutting and planing timbers, and making leather straps out of tanned cowhides to tie the beams required a large, specialized workforce of craftsmen and laborers. The only institution that could fill such a heavy demand for labor would be nearby Mission San Diego de Alcalá, which most likely rented out Indian workers to Bandini and Estudillo. Highly skilled artisans were probably brought in from Mexico to perform the more complex engineering and construction aspects.¹⁷

Exactly who supervised the construction remains unknown, but given the building's level of architectural sophistication it probably was not Bandini. 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 run-off. This indicates that the adobe walls facing the streets had a roof overhang rather than a veranda.¹⁸

A superb dancer, graceful and lithe as an athlete, Juan Bandini was the *tecolero* or master of ceremonies who loved to hold extravagant parties and *fiestas* in his large front *sala* or parlor room. "The parlor is a fine, large room with a white pine floor, so worn from dancing that the knots project," recalled Major Samuel P. Heintzelman in 1849. "On the walls are several fox hunting scenes and a picture of [George] Washington. On the clock case—a Yankee clock—is the American flag."¹⁹



Arcadia Bandini, nd. Photo courtesy the Huntington Library, 8537-C-4.



Early Bandini House Floor Plan. Photo courtesy of IS Architecture.

The *sala* was the hub of “social gaiety” in old San Diego, especially after 1834 when it became the sixth *pueblo* in Mexican California.²⁰ Bandini used the room to entertain family and friends, to host lavish parties, including the weddings of daughters Dolores and Ysidora, and to meet important people, such as traveling dignitaries from the Mexican Republic and the United States. Arcadia Bandini Brennan recalled a family tradition of placing “little gold dollars” in painted *cascarones* or eggshells, which were tossed to the guests by Indian servants. Among those who enjoyed Bandini’s largesse was José María Híjar, appointed leader of an expedition, supported by the México’s vice president, Valentin Gomez Farías, in 1834 to colonize the sparsely populated province. Bandini was the president of the company that sponsored the plan.²¹

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, 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.²²

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 whitewashed walls. Sometime during or after the U.S.-Mexican War, this room was wallpapered.



Portrait of Abel Stearns. Photo courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library.

The paper was green and white and had a floral pattern. In her memoir, Arcadia Bandini Brennan noted an interesting household practice that she had heard from her grand-aunt 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.”²³

The household maintained rigid hygienic standards according to Juan’s great-granddaughter. One interesting practice noted by Arcadia was the fact that Indian servants hauled the household’s ‘slops’ to the beach where they were buried in holes and braced or enclosed with logs. The logs were then

removed and the sand swept in by the waves carried the human wastes out to sea. Many of the interior walls were painted with lime or whitewash while exterior walls were whitewashed or plastered with slaked lime mixed with sand. The high PH levels in the lime washes and plasters kept the walls free of fungus and other bacteria.²⁴

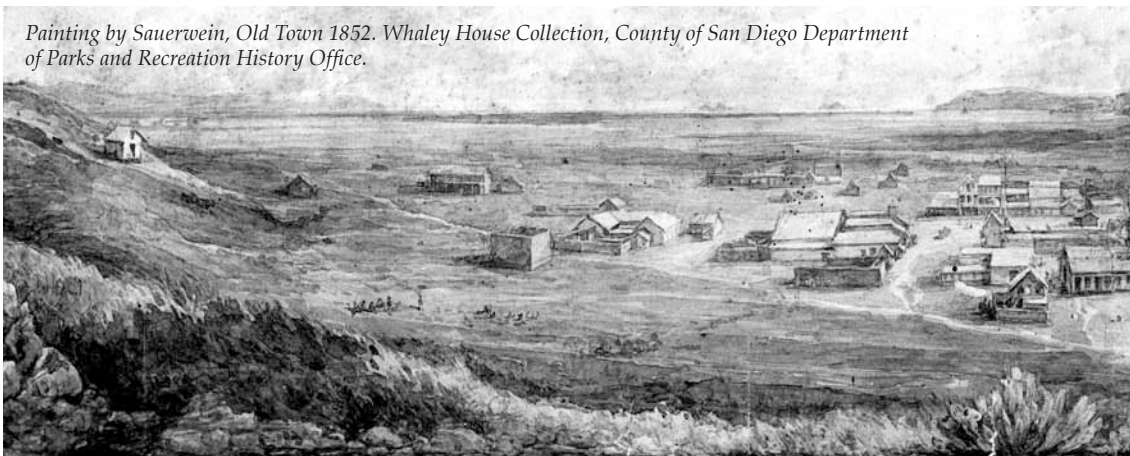
Bandini envisioned his home as a gathering place for family and friends. He was deeply fond of his daughters Arcadia and Ysidora, who had moved to Los Angeles in 1841 when fourteen-year-old Arcadia married Abel Stearns. Twelve-year old Ysidora was sent as a companion to her older sister.²⁵ By the mid-1840s, Bandini set about refurbishing the home and grounds in hopes 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, he warmly thanked Stearns for fulfilling his request.²⁶

The following year, Bandini replanted the gardens with “pretty flowers,” and remodeled the lower patio, lining it with potted plants and covering the cobblestone with clay brick. The hand-dug well was replaced with a deep brick-lined well, most likely built by a Mormon mason.²⁷ 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.²⁸ A raised doorway with steps and small porch roof were later added on the Mason Street wing facing the plaza.²⁹

Small parties were frequently held in the enclosed lower patio, complete with guitarists and violinists and on one occasion in 1849, a contortionist—a young boy with flexible bones (*soltura de huesos*)—entertained family and guests.³⁰

To Bandini, a man driven by an exacting sense of duty, caring for the home meant caring for his family. Constructing this grand house signified something greater than paying homage to the family’s patrimony and social position. It also symbolized

Painting by Sauerwein, Old Town 1852. Whaley House Collection, County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation History Office.



that this Peruvian son and Spanish father had adopted Southern California as their homeland or *patria*.³¹

Uncertainty on the Frontier

While living in San Diego, Bandini played pivotal roles in the 1831 revolt that toppled the autocratic rule of Governor Manuel Victoria and the abortive 1836-1838 uprising against Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado. Bandini's motivation for revolt stemmed in part from his desire to establish San Diego as the territorial capital, which would allow it, rather than Monterey, to control public funds and political patronage.³² Like his father, he was a federalist who saw tremendous potential in a resource-rich Alta California provided it could free itself from the yoke of political dominance by Monterey and Mexico City. The "great Mexican Federal Republic," he concluded in his *Historia de la Alta California*, had deprived *Californios* of reaping the "advantages and benefits" of their territory. It had failed to promote colonization; to protect citizens against Indian unrest; to support institutions of civil government, and to capitalize on a global hide and tallow trade by waiving import duties on foreign goods. "It is California that has suffered the most from the misfortunes that afflict us," he wrote his close friend Mariano Vallejo in 1836.³³

The most immediate and pressing concern for Bandini and other *rancheros* was protecting their lands and stock from Indian raids—a situation that was inflamed by the breakup or secularization of the missions and the refusal of Monterey, the capital, to appropriate funds to reinforce the small garrison at the San Diego presidio.³⁴ An alarmed Bandini often took extended leaves of absence from the pueblo of San Diego to check on the condition of his ranchos and to arm his *vaqueros*. In a letter, 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...³⁵

Prior to the U.S.-Mexican War, Bandini had coordinated the sale and shipment of provisions to the U.S. military by ship through the American consul Thomas Larkin of Monterey.³⁶ Ongoing business dealings with American traders, especially his ranching activities with his son-in-law and business partner Abel Stearns and his future son-in-law Cave J. Couets, had convinced him that California’s future lay with the United States, not Mexico.³⁷

A calculating, outspoken politician, and gifted speaker, Bandini was at the center of political controversy during his service in the California Assembly or *Diputación* as war with the United States loomed ever closer. He and other delegates from the southern pueblos were alarmed by Commandant General José Castro’s proclamation in March 1846 to form a junta of northern military officers to defend the province against an American invasion or uprising. Disregarding the real possibility of such a threat, Bandini condemned Castro’s action as “the fool’s errand of such a reckless man.”

He (Castro) wants to flatter the people and at the same time he manifests the intention to subjugate them; he pretends to defend freedom but emphasizes the oppressive measures that he imposes, and finally by appealing to the defense of the Californios, he wants to submerge them into the tyranny of his capricious and arbitrary will.

Bandini was convinced that Castro, whom he believed would soon march his army south to dissolve the Assembly in Los Angeles, was the most immediate threat to Alta California’s peace and security. “I am afraid of the consequences of such a brash document, and am almost certain that we will be engaged in a war that our nation has tried to avoid at all costs,” he forewarned Pío Pico.³⁸

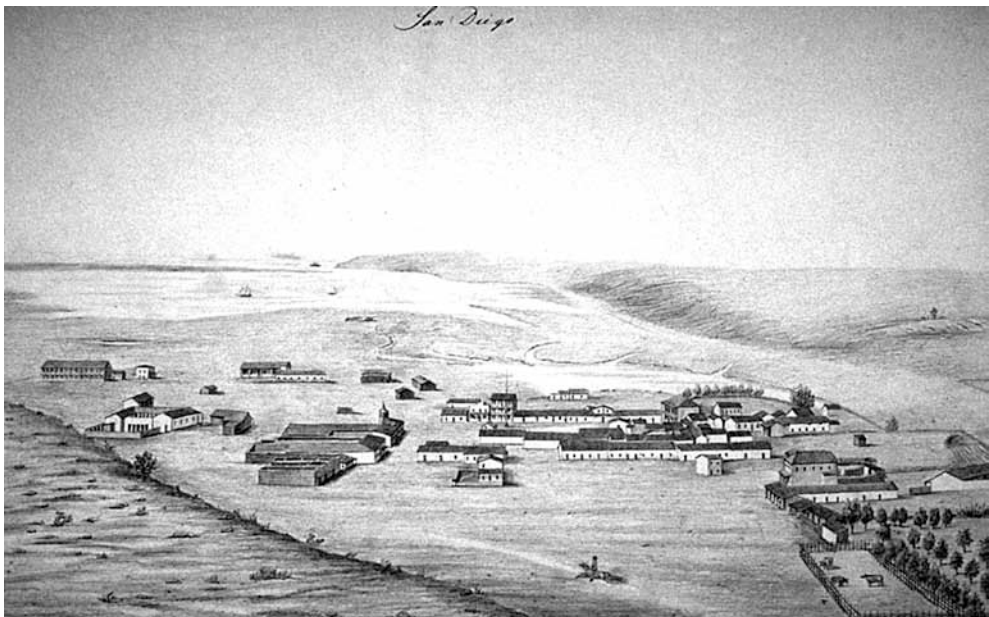


Jose Castro. Photo courtesy The Bancroft Library.

Bandini's forewarning became reality when the United States declared war against Mexico on May 13, 1846. Occupying San Diego was of strategic military importance to the U.S. because the pueblo possessed the only year-round harbor south of San Francisco. Certain that resistance was futile and that California's destiny lay with this powerful nation to the East, Bandini welcomed U.S. forces. 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 Colonel Frémont a beautiful sorrel horse. Bandini provided the small American garrison under the command of Captain Ezekiel Merritt, one of the leaders of the Bear Flag Revolt, and John Bidwell with sorely needed provisions such as saddles, horses, harnesses, and steers. Frémont later recalled that Bandini's assistance was "extremely valuable" because he and his men "were entirely ignorant of the sur-



Commodore Robert F. Stockton. Photo courtesy of The Bancroft Library.



Henry Miller watercolor, 1856. Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library .



California Soldier at San Pasqual Battlefield State Park Visitor Center. Photo by Iris Engstrand.

rounding country....” In January 1847, the colonel, 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.”³⁹

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.⁴⁰ “Don Juan Bandini and family received the Commodore elegantly at their mansion and entertained him sumptuously,” recalled attorney and historian, Benjamin Hayes. According to Hayes, the Commodore’s private band of thirty-seven musicians often played in the home at ‘Bandini’s *bailes*.’ 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 petticoats and dresses of her younger daughters Dolores and Margarita. This was reportedly the first American flag to fly over the plaza.⁴¹

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 Ban-

dini's home to inform Stockton that hostile forces had surrounded Kearny's troops in the San Pasqual Valley.⁴² Stockton sent out a large force to rescue the battered column and escort it back to San Diego. On December 12, a wounded Kearny and his exhausted men arrived on the plaza, greeted by the strains of 'Hail, Columbia' from Stockton's band.⁴³

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 "the perversity of the Indians" to go unpunished.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵

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...contrary to common happiness..."⁴⁶

After the war, San Diego, soon to be called 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 4th that I ever witnessed."⁴⁷

In 1850, Bandini opened a store in his home. Profits from the store and loans enabled him to make improvements to his home and the following year to erect a magnificent, two-story, wood-framed lodging house one block east of the plaza. Massive in size (120' by 62' deep) and boasting an unconventional zinc-plated roof and impressive

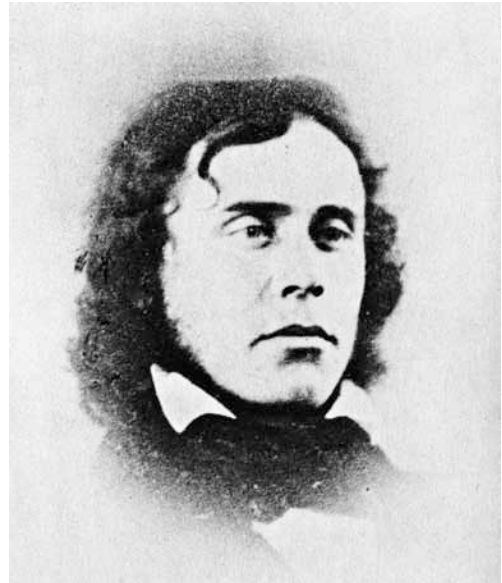
veranda on all sides, the Gila House cost Bandini an exorbitant \$25,000 to build. It reportedly had over a hundred rooms; many of them offering a panoramic view of the San Diego Bay.⁴⁸

Bandini's 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."⁴⁹

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, folded overnight. Suffering for lack of customers, Bandini never furnished the lodging house. "This bad speculation... greatly impaired his fortune," recalled Benjamin Hayes.⁵⁰

With no profits from his store, falling cattle prices, and wasteful investments, Don Juan in April 1851 mortgaged his lodging house and family home to a French gambler, Adolfo Savin, for \$12,822.90 to cover the loan plus interest that he owed this creditor. He expected to pay the loan off in several months from cattle sales that never materialized. 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 1851.⁵¹

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



Richard Henry Dana in 1840 copied from a Daguerreotype at Craigie House, Mass. Courtesy of Ward Ritchie Press.

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 voice and accent, and had throughout the bearing of a man of high birth and figure.⁵²

Bandini's letters to Mariano Vallejo and Abel Stearns during the late Mexican period reveal a far different man — a hardworking rancher, often high strung and driven, beset by chronic illnesses, periodic hardships, 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, like quinine and castor oil, unavailable to him to relieve his coughing, asthma, and headaches and to treat assorted illnesses afflicting his family and his 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.⁵³

Many of Bandini's requests for assistance were written while visiting his ranchos. Separations from family, especially his invalid father, and firsthand observations of his Indian workers' hard-pressed lives instilled in him a strong sense of duty and concern. In a letter written from San Juan del Río on March 30, 1841, he asked Stearns to send him from 8 to 10 blankets for his *cortadores de madera* or woodcutters, and two *arobas* of rice, four to six pounds of coffee, and some chocolate to his sick father. In another letter written in December 1839 from Rancho Jurupa, he pressed his son-in-law to send two barrels of honey, which he wanted to give to the Indians at the ranch on Christmas Eve. The threat of workers leaving his ranchos because they were ill-clad prompted Bandini at times to request blankets, bolts of cloth, or other supplies from Stearns.⁵⁴

On other occasions, Bandini's behavior toward Indian people was not so laudable. A case in point was his administration of former Mission San Gabriel. He made off with the best horses, and could not provide Indian residents with the barest necessities, including clothing and food. The community's dire straits reached a flashpoint in 1839-1840 when some Indians refused to work until Bandini provided them adequate clothing. An unnerved Bandini asked William Hartnell, the Visitador General of the ex-missions, for assistance, ending his letter on this note of dismay: "Please consider



Early Daguerreotype of Margarita Bandini (Center) with daughters of Isaac Williams on either side, 1855. Photo courtesy of the Seaver Center, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

the harm that would result if these Indians are not compelled to work because you are unable to cover their basic needs.”⁵⁵

Tensions escalated and on a Sunday after Mass, a group of Indians confronted Bandini and told him that they, not government-appointed administrators, should determine San Gabriel’s fate. “I reproved them severely,” he recalled, “for their secret meetings which they held at night, saying that the government would punish them.... With that they departed but they are not to be trusted.”⁵⁶

Perhaps the most egregious offense, according to the parish priest Father Tomás Esténaga, was the fact that family members and in-laws like the Estudillos and Argüellos, often accompanied by servants, stayed at the mission, consuming its meager supplies of food in a time of great need. “There is still some bread, though not every day; a little bit of meat just for the midday, some wine and *aguardiente*, but there is nothing else,” reported a saddened Father Tomás in 1840.⁵⁷ In July, Hartnell discharged Bandini as the *mayordomo* of the former mission.

Bandini faced perhaps his greatest personal struggle in April the following year when his beloved father José fell deathly ill at Rancho San Juan del Rió in Riverside. As the end approached, Bandini, apparently unaccompanied by Refugio or other family members, would not leave his father’s side. He did everything he could to alleviate his suffering, including summoning a Roman Catholic priest to give him the last rites of Extreme Unction. He made several last-minute requests to Stearns to send delicacies such as coffee, his father’s favorite drink, because “I am going to

lose my best friend soon." On April 28, 1841, "with great sorrow," he informed the family in a letter to Stearns "that today, Wednesday, about 8 o'clock in the morning, God almighty has claimed the soul of my dear father, Don José Bandini." Shortly afterwards, probably to cope with his loss, he announced that daughter Arcadia's marriage to Stearns would be postponed.⁵⁸

William H. Thomes, who met Bandini in 1843, described him as "prematurely old" with heavy-set eyes, deep wrinkles around the temples, and a decided stoop to his shoulders — an indication that hardship and worry had taken a toll on his health. "This was only five years after Mr. Dana had seen him," explained a surprised Thomes, "and the change must have been great in that short time."⁵⁹

Misgivings about the Changing Order

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, he voiced alarm about the breakdown of civil order because 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."⁶⁰ Bandini became increasingly convinced that the war and subsequent gold rush had not only transformed the structure of California society, but also had irreparably changed 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."⁶¹

His trust in the U.S. government declined further when William Walker, a quixotic Southern filibusterer, invaded Baja California by sea in early October 1853 to set up an independent republic. After briefly occupying La Paz, Walker and his force of some 45 Americans sailed up the coast to the village of Ensenada. The situation rapidly deteriorated during the next few months. The schooner *Caroline* sailed away leaving Walker's company stranded. A Mexican naval vessel then blockaded the harbor, while the sudden arrival of additional overland recruits created severe food shortages. Scores of men began to desert, breaking up into small bands and plundering ranches and leaving in their wake a terrified Mexican citizenry as they



Jose Bandini. Photo courtesy of Special Collections, USC Regional Library, Los Angeles, CA.



*Ysidora Bandini de Couto. County of San Diego
Department of Parks and Recreation History Office.*

fled northward to the border. "The condition of the people is truly lamentable," wrote a correspondent from the San Francisco *Daily Alta California*. "The greater portion of the male population have been obliged to leave their families. The 'Liberators' have taken away what provisions they had, so that if before long the filibusters do not leave that miserable country, many of the families will starve."⁶²

On December 1, 1854, members of Walker's army stopped at Bandini's Rancho Guadalupe in the interior, where they confiscated horses, saddles, ropes and other supplies and then returned to their encampment at Ensenada. Other forays into the interior by the remnants of his army and deserters followed. When news of the incident reached Bandini in San

Diego, he immediately left for his rancho, where he organized a party of thirty armed men consisting of his sons José María and Juan, his servants and volunteers, to help drive the Americans out of Baja California. At a rancho outside of San Vicente, a company of Mexican cavalry and Bandini's volunteers caught Walker napping and drove the filibusters across the border. Back in California, Walker was put on trial in San Francisco for conducting an illegal war, but was quickly acquitted of all charges of violating Mexican neutrality.⁶³

Several months afterwards, Bandini wrote a detailed account of Walker's ill-conceived invasion. He condemned it not only because of the personal losses he had suffered in stolen livestock and destroyed property, but also because it aroused bitter anti-American sentiment on the border, and in his opinion ended all hope of peacefully annexing Lower California by the United States. "Walker's conduct," he concluded, "created widespread antagonism towards the United States; brought financial loss to the invaders; caused the devastation of the invaded country; led to prolonged suffering among some of the families that were reduced to abject poverty; cost the lives of about forty men between the aggressors and their opponents; ...and lastly... brought shame and ridicule upon such an ill-conceived expedition."⁶⁴

Along with Pablo de la Guerra of Santa Barbara, Bandini became an outspoken critic of American legal jurisprudence. The source of tension was the passage of the Land Act of 1851. The law empowered Congress to appoint three commissioners who were responsible for determining the validity of land titles dating to the Spanish and Mexican eras. It also declared that all titles, whether rejected or confirmed

by the commissioners, could be appealed to the U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

In 1855, Bandini published a passionate rejoinder in the *Southern Californian*, a Spanish-English newspaper based in Los Angeles, saying that the law, if not repealed, would topple *Californio* landholders into the "deepest abyss of wretchedness." It would force them to forfeit their lands because they lacked the financial resources to defend their claims in lengthy lawsuits. Lawyers have exacted "large and scandalous sums ...in recompense for their services," he noted. It required them to present evidence in the form of surveys to support their claims rather than hand-drawn maps or *diseños* as was the custom under Mexican rule. "The modes of procedure were strange to us, every thing was foreign, even our manner of speech," he explained. Finally, the act repudiated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the war with Mexico whereby "the American Government pledged its sacred honor" to protect the property rights of Mexican citizens who remained in the conquered territories.⁶⁵

Central to Bandini's argument was his conviction that the *Californios* were "the *bona fide* landowners in the state." Some lands had been in their "possession...for forty and fifty years," he stated. "...They have planted orchards and vineyards—they have enclosed and cultivated fields—there they and their children were born—and there they lived in peace and comparative plenty. But now—'Our inheritance is turned to strangers—our houses to aliens.'"⁶⁶

In 1851, the debt-ridden and disheartened Don 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.⁶⁷



Arcadia Bandini Stearns de Baker. Photo courtesy of Special Collections, USC Regional Library, Los Angeles, CA.

Bogged down in litigation with Bandini's frustrated creditors, Abel Stearns, as his business partner, decided to lease out the *casa*. In May 1856, Jacob Elias and Hyman Mannasse opened a retail shop in Casa Bandini where they sold ready-made clothing, fancy dry goods, hats, caps, boots, and trunks.⁶⁸

Mired in debt, Bandini spent much of his time away in Baja California defending his titles to

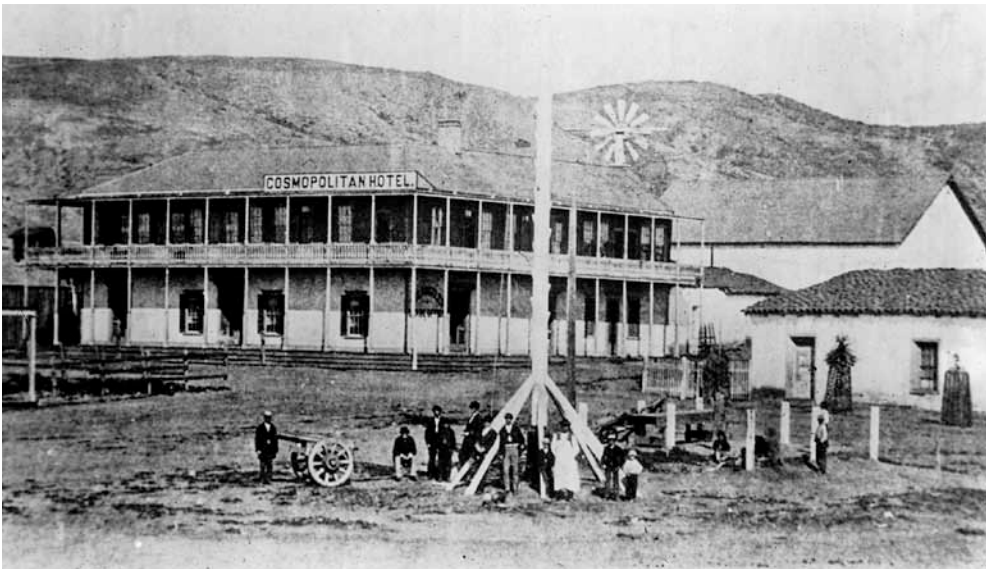
land against possible seizures due to changing laws, and along the border, attempting to make his and Stearns' ranchos more solvent and to secure them against cattle rustlers and desperados. In 1855, he attempted, perhaps half-heartedly, to sell his beloved *casa* in San Diego and ranchos in Tecate and Guadalupe. He was not successful.⁶⁹

Illnesses continued to take a dreadful toll, sometimes laying him up for weeks at a time without treatment. "My sickness was becoming worse each day and I feared being unable to travel should I remain there [Rancho Guadalupe]," he wrote Stearns in June 1856.

I would like nothing better than to be rid of all property and leave that land [Baja California] for whose development I have sacrificed so many of my years, my health and a great part of my fortune, helping out in its hours of need only to be rewarded with ingratitude and the sufferings which its tyranny has made me bear.⁷⁰

On January 12, 1859, Bandini, aware that he was dying, made out his will in San Diego. He explained that he wanted "to be buried without any pomp" and that his executors promptly pay off his creditors to ensure "the best harmony with my family" He also "implored" his children, as his heirs, to "avoid all kinds of disputes...[and] behave as gentlemen towards all..."⁷¹ On August 19, 1859, he transferred ownership of his beloved *casa* and other properties to Stearns to whom he owed over \$32,000.⁷²

After collapsing several times in Los Angeles' sweltering summer heat and expe-



Cosmopolitan Hotel ca 1868. Photo ©SDHC #3875-A.

riencing difficulty breathing, he was moved to Arcadia and Abel Stearns' elegant adobe home, *El Palacio*, where he died on Friday, November 4, 1859, at 4:25 p.m., after receiving the Catholic Church's last rites. "He died," recalled close friend Charles Brinley, "without a struggle and went off as one sighs.... The lady members of the family" were not allowed in the room, Brinley stated, because "their grief was frantic upon a knowledge that his end was approaching...."⁷³

The grand old home, now neglected and often battered by the elements, fell into disrepair. On October 2, 1858, a windstorm destroyed the kitchen roof and damaged the tile roof of the main house.⁷⁴ By 1860, it stood empty, a forgotten epitaph to Don Juan's death.⁷⁵

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.⁷⁶ Under the direction of Ephraim Morse, a local merchant and family friend, repair of the Bandini house began, including patching the roof with 124 new clay tiles.⁷⁷

On May 27, 1862, an earthquake cracked the adobe walls in several rooms, including a large vertical crack in the dining room, and collapsed the end wall parallel to Juan Street. The damage was not repaired.⁷⁸ Clearly frustrated by his inability to maintain or lease "the old house in San Diego," Stearns wrote Cave Coutts in 1864, explaining, "it would be well to nail up the doors and encharge some one there to look after it."⁷⁹

The Legacy of a Don

In the annals of Old Town's history and its folk traditions, Bandini and his home have assumed an almost legendary presence. He was a "noted *caballero*" in the words of his grandson Cave Coutts, Jr., who embodied the grace and elegance of old Spain.⁸⁰ In this remote frontier society, Bandini's proud bearing, education, flamboyant dress, and extravagant ways set him apart. He became the epitome of a Spanish Don, "the aristocracy of the country," according to Dana.⁸¹ Bandini, in short, became an American invention, a caricature of his real self, during but especially after his lifetime.

This Peruvian-born rancher and civic leader was more than just an elegantly dressed dandy who loved to dance and entertain in his home. Having served as a delegate to the Mexican Congress, a member of Alta California's assembly (*diputación*) and town council (*ayuntamiento*) often at the center of political and economic controversy, he was "one of the most prominent men of his time in California," wrote Bancroft in 1885.⁸²

Bandini's life, especially in later years, was anything but that of a "princely Don." American claimants challenged the validity of many of his Mexican grants in Southern California. Changes in Mexican law stripped him of title to his ranchos in Baja California. Chronic illness, mounting debts, Indian unrest, and the anarchy unloosed by the Gold Rush overwhelmed him.

The letters he wrote to his son-in-law Abel Stearns and close friend Mariano Vallejo often reflect a melancholic self-centeredness. Part of this can be attributed to the unrest and uncertainty of that era and his sometimes desperate concern about his place and that of his family in the new society. But part of it also stems from Bandini's identity as an 'emigrant' or outsider who was not fully accepted by his California-born peers.⁸³

This dimension of his life has been forgotten by posterity. Bandini is remembered, as one writer recently put it, as a "legendary renaissance *Californio*" who entertained "legions of notables."⁸⁴ His home in Old Town has likewise become fused with the memory of him as a Don whose life embodied the traditions of Old Spain. Remodeled in 1930, 1947-1950, and 1978-1980, the Casa de Bandini was transformed into a luxurious Spanish colonial hacienda that in no way resembled either Bandini's original single-story adobe or the later two-story Cosmopolitan Hotel.⁸⁵

In 2010, California State Parks completed a three-year restoration of this historic landmark, returning it to its appearance as the Cosmopolitan Hotel. Roughly 80 percent of the restored hotel's original fabric and features were preserved or accurately reconstructed, including much of the adobe brick, remnants of white-washed walls, most of the original cobblestone footprint, and hand-hewn lintels dating to Bandini's time. They are part of a living tradition, a forgotten way of life that deserves to be remembered rather than eulogized.

NOTES

1. 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), 11.
2. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft & Company, 1885), 2:708-709; Bandini Family-Abel Stearns Coll. 101, Box 2, Folder 7 (Historical and Biographical re: José Bandini), UCLA Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA (YOUNG); José Bandini, *A Description of California in 1828*. Translated by Doris Marion Wright (Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1951), vi-vii; Arcadia Bandini Brennan, *Arcadian Memories of California*, Box 1, Folder 5, (Bandini House), MSS C-D 5206, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA (BANC), 32. This source is also available at the San Diego History Center, San Diego, CA (SDHC). The Brennan collection at the Bancroft contains photographs and additional folders on the family, including copies of the Bandini crest and shield. The crest, entitled "Laus Dio Bandini," features two snakes coiled around a cross, while the shield, entitled "Bandini Guistiniani – Prince of Rome," features the double-headed eagle.
3. Bancroft, *History of California*, 2, 261, 440, 708 (quote); José Bandini, vii; Arcadia Bandini Brennan, *Arcadian Memories of California* (typescript, 1952), 12, San Diego History Center (SDHC). Sometime after Ysidora's death in 1801, José Bandini married Manuela Masuelos y Capaz of Arequipa, Peru by whom he fathered six children. The fifth child, Manuel Antonio, born on June 13, 1814, became the twenty-fourth archbishop of Lima.
4. Bancroft, *History of California*, 2:546-547. One *vara* is 33.3 inches.
5. Juan Bandini acquired grants to *ranchos* at Jurupa and Rincón along the Santa Ana River in Riverside in 1838 and 1839, a *ranchito* at Muscupiabe in San Bernardino in 1839, and *ranchos* at Tecate, Tijuana,

Guadalupe, Los Vallecitos, and San Rafael in northern Baja California between 1834 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 Pío Pico in 1845, deputy from Alta California to the Mexican Congress in 1833, 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 superior judge of San Diego district in 1849 and city treasurer in 1850. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: The History Co., 1886), 3 (1825-1840): 136, 189, 612, 633; Katherine L. Wagner, "Native of Arica: Requiem For A Don," *The Journal of San Diego History (JSDH)*, 17, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 3-4; H. D. Barrows, "Juan Bandini," *Historical Society of Southern California*, 4 (1899), 243-244; William E. Smythe, *History of San Diego, 1542-1908* (San Diego: The History Company, 1908), 1:164-167; Patricia Baker, "The Bandini Family," *JSDH*, 15, no. 1 (Winter 1969): 26-27; Temple, n. p.; *Daily Alta California*, August 23, 1849, col. A; *San Diego Herald*, April 22, 1854; *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1944, reprinted in Brennan, 63-64.

6. In the *Pioneer Register and Index* of his *History*, 2:708, Bancroft states that José Bandini built the house. It is more likely that it was a joint effort given the scope of construction, the fact that the older Bandini suffered from gout, and that the house lot was owned by Juan.
7. See IS Architecture, *Cosmopolitan Hotel Report*, vol. 1 (draft, 2010), introduction.
8. One of the rooms facing Calhoun Street had a *tabique* or thin partition wall that did not support the weight of the structure.
9. The kitchen may not have been constructed with ceiling high adobe walls. ASM Affiliates archaeologists uncovered a brick-lined, sandstone-block drainage system beneath the earthen floor from the upper patio. 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 may have hired a 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, open hearths were used for cooking. See IS Architecture, *Cosmopolitan Hotel Site Diagrams, Early and Late Bandini Archaeological Features* (2010 draft) and *Early Bandini Floor Plan* (2010 draft).
10. The rear patio or *traspatio* occupied higher ground above the lower patio. ASM Affiliates archaeologists uncovered the cobblestone foundation of an adobe wall dividing the two patios. Its purpose was to reduce sediment run-off onto the lower patio during rainstorms. See *Early and Late Bandini Archaeological Features*, cited in note 9.
11. 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. ASM Affiliate archaeologists (J. Schaefer, 2010 draft cited above) 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 1½ feet below the adobe base, making it feasible to build a doorway here. Interview with ASM archaeologist Stephen Van Wormer, April 25, 2008.
12. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, "Plano de la Casa Havitacion de Don Juan Bandini en San Diego," Folder 211, (n. d.), *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*. See also "Juan Bandini," typescript, (n. d.), in Bandini I Vertical File, Department of Parks and Recreation, San Diego Coast District Library, San Diego, CA (SDCDL). On foundation at the southwest corner, see ASM Affiliates photograph, unit 8 (April 3, 2010).
13. Alfred Robinson, *Life in California*, originally published 1846 (Oakland, CA: Biobooks, 1947;): 12.
14. Much to Bandini's dismay, it would take over a year-and-a-half before he received the redwood posts

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- sometime after November 1829—undoubtedly too late to complete the house's construction before the December 28 blessing as he had hoped. See Bandini to John M. Cooper, 7 de Julio de 1828, frame 253-253A, 7 de Agosto de 1829, frame 393, 7 de Octubre de 1829, frame 436, 7 de Noviembre de 1829, frame 460, 21 de Marzo de 1831, frame 197, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo Papers, MSS X-X 2 Film, BANC.
15. Ione R. Stiegler, et al, IS Architecture, *Historic Structure Report for the Casa de Bandini* (Department of Parks and Recreation, September 2004): 15, 19-20, 28; Fred A. Tinker, "Casa Bandini: Its Owner and His Days of Intrigue, Joy and Despair," (seminar paper, n.d.): 15; Merle Clayton, "The Bandinis: Grandees in an era of grandeur," *San Diego Magazine*, 21, no. 6 (April 1969): 155-156; James R. Moriarty, ed., *La Campana de Escuela...Old School House Historians* (np: Old Town San Diego, 1974): 55; William Ingraham Kip, *The Early Days of My Episcopate* (New York: T. Whittaker, 1892): 59; Brennan, 34. According to Brennan, many adobes, especially those located on *ranchos*, had shutters for protection against Indian raids.
 16. Brennan, 35-39; Clayton, 155-156.
 17. The sources consulted revealed nothing about the workers who constructed and maintained the Casa de Bandini (and later the Cosmopolitan Hotel). Catholic Church records unfortunately revealed no information. See, for example, *San Diego Mission Records, 1769-1849*, MSS-C 37, BANC; Francis J. Weber, ed., *The Proto Mission: A Documentary History of San Diego de Alcalá*, Copley Spec. Coll., University of San Diego.
 18. Bruce Coons, historical consultant of the Cosmopolitan Hotel Restoration project, February 27, 2008 and David Felton, senior state archaeologist on the restoration project, interviewed by author March 27, 2008.
 19. John L. White, *Founder of Fort Yuma; Excerpts from the Diary of Major Samuel P. Heintzelman, U. S. A., 1849-1852* (Master's thesis, University of San Diego, 1975), May 16, 1849, 14-15.
 20. 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.
 21. Smythe, 1:133; *Daily Alta California*, February 27, 1851, May 17, 1851; Stiegler, 21; Tinker, 55-57; John S. Griffin, *A Doctor Comes To California* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1943): 76; Brennan, 23; Walter Gifford Smith, *The Story of San Diego* (San Diego: City Printing Co., 1892), 50; William Heath Davis, *Seventy-five Years in California*, edited by Harold A. Small (San Francisco: John Howell Books, 1967), 215; Keld J. Reynolds, "The Reglamento for the Híjar y Padrés Colony of 1834," *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, 28, no. 4 (December 1946):143-147. 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.
 22. Robinson, 33-34; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), 412, 416.
 23. 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), 56-59; Brennan, 34-35 (quote), SDHC or BANC. On wallpaper fragments uncovered by ASM Affiliates archaeologists, see IS Architecture, *Bandini Era Finishes* (draft report, 2010), 1-2.
 24. The practice of removing human wastes and non-burnable trash to the beach explains to some degree why archaeologists were unable to locate trash sites on the property during the restoration phase. On-site inspections also revealed remnants of lime wash and plaster on the first-floor adobe walls, including an entire section of lime plaster underneath the stairway in the entrance hall leading to the second story when the building operated as the Cosmopolitan Hotel. Lime wash or paint was commonly used in 19th-century hospitals because of its hygienic properties. See Brennan, 34, SDHC or BANC; *Bandini Era Finishes*, draft report, 1-6.
 25. Bandini often mailed presents to them, and, in his correspondence to Stearns, frequently sent 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 good education as well." See Bandini to Stearns, 16 de septiembre de 1842, Bandini Family-Abel Stearns Coll. 101, Box 1, Folder 1, YOUNG. See also Bandini to Stearns, 8 de Diciembre de 1841, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #5, Huntington Library (HL).
26. Bandini to Stearns, 29 de Mayo de 1846, 23 de junio de 1846, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 6, HL.
 27. 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 from 15 to 20 wells. They were usually between 20-to-30 feet in depth. See Henry William Bigler, *Diary of a Mormon in California, Discovery of Gold, 1848*, MSS C-D 45, Film, 40-42, BANC.
 28. The bathhouse may have enclosed the well. See Ray Brandes and James R. Moriarty, *Historical and Archaeological Report, Master Plan, Old Town San Diego SHP* (Department of Parks and Recreation: typescript, 1974), 317, 230, SDCDL; Bandini to Stearns, 7 de julio 1847, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 6, HL.
 29. See Henry Miller watercolor of Old Town San Diego, 1857.
 30. Bandini to Stearns, 12 de Febrero de 1849, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 6, HL.
 31. See Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 129-132.
 32. San Diego was the territorial seat from 1825 to 1831 under Governor José María de Echeandía. The former governor played a leading role in the 1831 revolt, and succeeded the deposed Manuel Victoria as governor from 1832 to 1833. San Diego, however, did not replace Monterey as the capital. See Bancroft, 3:50-51.
 33. Juan Bandini, *Apuntes Para la Historia de la Alta California Desde el año de su fundacion en 1769 hasta año de 1845*, MSS C-D 6, 264-284, 283 (quote), BANC; Bandini to Mariano G. Vallejo, 21 de Marzo de 1836, frames 105-106, Vallejo Papers, BANC; José Bandini, 10-13, 19-24; Bancroft, *History of California*, (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), 3:181-215, 367-375, 419-420, 478-499, 515-521, 556-566; 5:282-283; H. D. Barrows, "California Revolution of 1831: A Notable Manifesto," *Historical Society of Southern California*, 6, Pt. 2 (1904): 126-131. On the broader question of ambivalent political loyalties, see David J. Weber, *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 114. According to Weber, *Californios* frequently referred to Mexico proper as "la otra banda" (the other shore).
 34. 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. The pueblo's population dropped from approximately 500 to 150 inhabitants during this decade of unrest. On the adverse impact of secularization on the so-called emancipated neophytes, see Laura Bride Powers, *Old Monterey's California's Adobe Capital* (San Francisco: San Carlos Press, 1934), 128-130. On Indian unrest and attacks on ranchos in the San Diego vicinity, including those of Bandini, see Weber, 120; Michael Gonzalez, "War and the Making of History, The Case of Mexican California, 1821-1846," *California History*, 86, no. 2 (2009): 19-21; William Heath Davis, *Glimpses of the Past*, MSS C-D 65 (n.d.), 181-190, BANC.
 35. Bandini to Vallejo, 6 de Noviembre de 1834, frames 309-309-1, Vallejo Papers, BANC. See also Bandini to Stearns, 18 de Mayo de 1842, Stearns Coll., SG Box 5, HL.
 36. See Bandini to Larkin, 28 de Junio de 1844, no. 127, *Documents For The History of California*, MSS C-B 38, pt. 1; Bandini to Larkin, 26 de Febrero de 1845, no. 41, *Documents For The History of California*, MSS C-B 39, pt. 3, BANC.

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37. See Joseph Mesmer Coll. 539, Box 5, Folder 18 (Don Juan Bandini); Carolina Lokrautz, "María Arcadia Bandini, First Century Families," typescript, (1962), in California Ephemera Coll. 200, Box #6 (Bandini Family), 4; Cave L. Coutts to Abel Stearns, February 8, 1852, Bandini Family-Abel Stearns Coll. 101, SG Box #2, Folder #3, YOUNG.
38. Bancroft, 5:30-53; Bandini to Governor Pío Pico, 23 de Junio de 1846, no. #80, 2-4 (quotes), *Colección de Don Juan Bandini*, MSS C-B-69, BANC. See also Carlos Manuel Saloman, *Pío Pico, The Last Governor of Mexican California* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).
39. See Iris H. W. Engstrand, *San Diego: California's Cornerstone* (Tulsa, OK: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), 35; John Charles Frémont, *Memoirs Of My Life* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 564 (quote); Bancroft, *History of California*, 5:326-328; *John Bidwell Ledger*, (1846), 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, 29 de Enero de 1847 (quote), frames 264a-264c, Vallejo Papers, BANC.
40. Bancroft, 5:330, 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, 98.
41. Bancroft, 5:356; Benjamin Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, MSS C-E 62, 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), 61; Charles Dwight Willard, *The Herald's History of Los Angeles City* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Kingsley, Barnes & Neuner, 1901), 221-222; Smith, 89; Baker, 24; Tinker, 58-59.
42. 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.
43. For a general discussion of San Diego during the war, see Smythe, 1:200-227; Richard Griswold del Castillo, "The U.S.-Mexican War in San Diego, 1846-1847: Loyalty and Resistance," *JSDH*, 49, no. 1 (2003): 21-41; Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, 459.
44. Bandini most likely exaggerated the degree of unrest in the hope that his influential American son-in-law could influence American policy.
45. Bandini to Stearns, 27 de Octubre de 1847, Bandini Family-Abel Stearns Coll. 101, Box 1, Folder 1, YOUNG.
46. Bandini to Stearns, 19 de Enero de 1847, Bandini Family-Abel Stearns Coll. 101, Box #1, Folder #1, YOUNG. See also Bandini to Governor Pío Pico, 23 de Junio de 1846, no. #80, *Colección 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*.
47. Robert Patterson Effinger to Brother Mike, August 1, 1849, Doc. File, SDHC. Original at the California Historical Society, San Francisco, CA.
48. Stiegler, 23-24; *Daily Alta California*, January 1, 1853; Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, 229, BANC; "Keen Memory of Angelo Smith, Who Lived in the Day of the Bandinis, Pedronenas, and Other Noted Spanish Families," *San Diego Union* news clipping, Old Town History Vertical File, Box #68, SDHC. According to "Letter from San Diego" published in the San Francisco *Daily Alta California*, March 28, 1869, Bandini built a balcony to provide seating "...for the judges who resided over those taurine tournaments" of not long ago. The balcony was accessible by either a trap door or possibly a stairway. Benjamin Hayes notes the discovery of the trap door in his *Emigrant Notes* on August 26, 1857, 319, BANC.
49. Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, 591, BANC.
50. *Ibid*, 229.
51. Stiegler, 24-25; Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 111; Charles R. Johnson to Abel Stearns, May 26, 1851, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 36, HL; Wagner, 5-7.
52. Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before The Mast* (New York: Penguin Books, Signet Classic, 1964), 222-223; see also Lokrautz, 4, YOUNG.

53. Hayes, *Emigrant Notes*, 226, BANC; Bandini to Vallejo, 21 de Agosto de 1836, frame 148, Vallejo Papers, BANC; see also Bandini to Vallejo, 21 de Marzo de 1836, frames 105-107, Vallejo Papers, BANC; Bandini, San Diego to Stearns, 23 de Junio de 1846, Box 6, HL.
54. Bandini to Stearns, 14 de Diciembre de 1839, 30 de Marzo de 1841, 3 de Mayo de 1841, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 5, HL. See also Bandini, San Gabriel, to Stearns, 23 de Septiembre de 1838, 31 de Diciembre de 1838, 5 de Abril de 1840; Bandini, San Juan del Río, to Stearns, 26 de Septiembre de 1841, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 5, HL.
55. Glenn J. Farris, ed., *The Diary and Copybook of William E. P. Hartnell, Visitador General of the Missions of Alta California in 1839 and 1840* (Santa Clara, CA: California Mission Studies Association, 2004), 123-124; Bandini, San Gabriel, to Hartnell, 15 de Junio de 1839, frame 236, *Archivos de Las Misiones*, MSS C-C-4 and C-C-5, BANC.
56. Father Zephyrin Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission and the Beginnings of Los Angeles* (San Gabriel: Mission San Gabriel, 1927), 187 (quote)-192. In another example, an overseer Hilario García was tried in 1830 for flogging a party of Indians accused of stealing cattle, "one of whom was pulled about by the hair until he died," according to Hubert Howe Bancroft. García was sentenced to ten years, but at a second trial, his sentence was reduced to five years after "Bandini defended García, pronouncing the charges only lies of Indians." See Bancroft, 2:549.
57. Father Narciso Durán, Santa Barbara, to D. S. Arnel, 17 de Enero de 1840, frame 1009, *Archivos de Las Misiones*, MSS C-C-4 and C-C-5, BANC.
58. Bandini, San Juan del Río, to Stearns, 8 de Abril de 1841; 23 de Abril de 1841, (quote); 27 de Abril de 1841; 28 de Abril de 1841; Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 5, HL; Doris Marion Wright, *A Yankee In Mexican California, Abel Stearns, 1798-1848* (Santa Barbara, CA: Wallace Hebbard, 1977), 89.
59. William H. Thomes, *On Land And Sea, California in Years 1843-1845* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, Publishers, 1892), 257.
60. Bandini to Stearns, 7 de Junio de 1847, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 6, HL as quoted in Wagner, 5.
61. Bandini, "Los títulos de los terrenos en California," *Southern Californian*, 23 de Mayo de 1855, reprinted in Hayes, *Scrapbooks, California Notes and Incidents*, 4:488-491, BANC. Original title "Para el Californio Meridional" as printed in *Southern Californian*.
62. "Important From Lower Calif.," *Daily Alta California*, March 16, 1854 (quote); "Summary of the Week," *Daily Alta California*, December 16, 1853; "Later from Lower California," *Daily Alta California*, March 1, 1854; "Late from Los Angeles," *San Francisco Evening Journal*, February 6, 1854, 4.
63. See Bandini, "La Invasión de Walker de Baja California," 25 de Mayo de 1855, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 7, HL.; for English translation, see Robert G. Cleland, "Bandini's Account of William H. Walker's Invasion of Lower California," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 7, no. 2 (February 1944): 153-154, 157-158, 163-164, Pitt, 207-208; *Daily Alta California*, March 16, 1854.
64. Cleland, 165-166 (quote).
65. Juan Bandini, *Southern Californian*, 11 de Abril de 1855, 2., cols. 5-6 (quotes).
66. Bandini, *Southern Californian*, 11 de Abril de 1855, 2, col. 7 (quote); see also Wagner, 7-8.
67. See business advertisements in the *San Diego Herald*, September 16, 1854; February 3, 1855; Brandes and Moriarty, 320; Henry Miller's 1857 watercolor of the building and Old Town San Diego.
68. "New Store! GREAT BARGAINS," *San Diego Herald*, May 7, May 24, 1856; Cave Johnson Coutts, *Account Book and Journal*, CT 2543(15), November 1856, HL; Brandes and Moriarty, 321.
69. Wagner, 7-8; Bandini to Stearns, 20 de Septiembre de 1858, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 7, HL; "Crime and disorganization on the Lower California frontier," *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 16, 1857. Sales advertisements in Spanish and English in the *San Diego Herald*, December 15, 1855 list the sale of these properties.
70. Bandini to Stearns, 17 de Junio de 1856, as quoted in Wagner, p 8. See also Bandini to Stearns, 8 de

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Junio de 1857, 6 de Noviembre de 1858, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 7, HL.

71. Juan Bandini, *Last Will and Testament*, January 12, 1859, MSS 92/47, BANC, 2-4, (quotes). Abel Stearns and sons José María and Juan Bandini were named executors. All debts were to be satisfied before remaining assets, including real estate, cattle, and lands in Mexico, were to be distributed to heirs. One-fourth of the remaining four-fifths would be distributed to his wife Refugio Argüello de Bandini; one-tenth of the remaining three-fourths to each of his ten children; remaining one-fifth to cover funeral expenses; remaining one-fifth to the Catholic Church of San Diego; and what remained, if anything, to the education of his grandchildren.
72. See Wagner, 10; Stiegler, 26. 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 Jurupa, site of the Gila House (destroyed in an 1858 windstorm), and Bandini's mark and cattle brand were mortgaged to Stearns.
73. Charles Henry Brinley to CJC (Cave J. Coutts), November 5, 1859, Coutts Coll., CT 120 Box 3, HL. See also Dr. John S. Griffin to C.J. Coutts, October 4, 1859, Coutts Coll., CT955, HL.
74. See Bandini to Stearns, 7 de Octubre de 1858, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 7, HL. In a follow-up letter, dated 6 de Noviembre de 1858, to Stearns, Bandini stated that it would cost him roughly 300 pesos to haul away the debris.
75. City of San Diego, *Population Manuscript Census Schedule*, 1860, 7, SDHC.
76. Johnson to Stearns, September 26, 1861, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box 34, HL.
77. Cave J. Coutts to Stearns, December 10, 1861, Abel Stearns Coll., SG Box #19, HL.
78. Benjamin Hayes, *Notes on California Affairs*, MSS C-E 81, Folder 9 (San Diego), 490-493, 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.
79. Stearns to Cave J. Coutts, November 16, 1864, Stearns Coll. SG Box 37, CT 2223, HL.
80. "THE CASA DE BANDINI, Social Center of Old California, Restored to Former Brilliance," *San Diego Union*, Sunday Morning, April 28, 1935, 3.
81. Dana, 222.
82. Bancroft, *History of California*, 2:709.
83. See, for example, Bancroft, 3:488, who attributes the following statement to Antonio María Osio, a member of the Los Angeles *ayuntamiento* and later author of the highly regarded *History of California, 1815-1848 (1878)*, regarding Bandini's outspoken opposition to Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado. "I have told Don Juan Bandini he had better go home and keep quiet, since in this *fandango* only Californians will be allowed to dance. This did not please him, but it is best that he keep quiet, through a friend."
84. See, for example, Vonn Marie May, "Old Town: Whose History Is It Anyway?" *Voice of San Diego*, November 28, 2005.
85. Stiegler, 56.