

THE STORY.

“Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.”

From *The Village Blacksmith*
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1841.

Iron worked by the blacksmith was vital to every economic aspect of our society. Besides making horseshoes, blacksmiths made tools, such as hammers, saws, wrenches, chisels, etc. The farmer relied on blacksmiths for shovels, axes, mattocks, and plowshares, while items for the home included ladles, pots, pans, trivets, and fireplace andirons. When an object broke, the smith would repair it.

When Mexico was under Spanish rule, iron was manufactured in Spain and sent to Mexico where it was worked into tools and implements for California and the rest of New Spain. There were neighborhoods of blacksmiths in Mexico City that were engaged in this work. Tools were shipped to California for use in the Missions and *Presidios*. A blacksmith in California was most often involved in the maintenance and repair of tools rather than forging entirely new objects. The first expeditions to Alta California always had blacksmiths who taught their trade to the Indian people at the missions. With the arrival of the Americans and wagons with spoke wheels, the blacksmiths shod horses and refitted iron tires on wagons in addition to repairing tools, farming implements, cooking utensils, and weapons.

Woodworking was a much valued

occupation as well. As many iron tools have wooden handles, these two trades are natural partners. Wood was most commonly used in the construction and furniture industries. Due to a scarcity of wood in California's coastal deserts, the *Californio* homes of families of modest means did not have much wooden furniture. Many visitors to California in the early 1800s remarked that many *Californio* women would sit on blankets or rugs on the floor. Russian sailors were particularly welcome because of their woodworking skills.

In the late 1850s wood became more available in San Diego. At that time specialized woodworker (carriage maker) and the blacksmith built some stagecoaches.

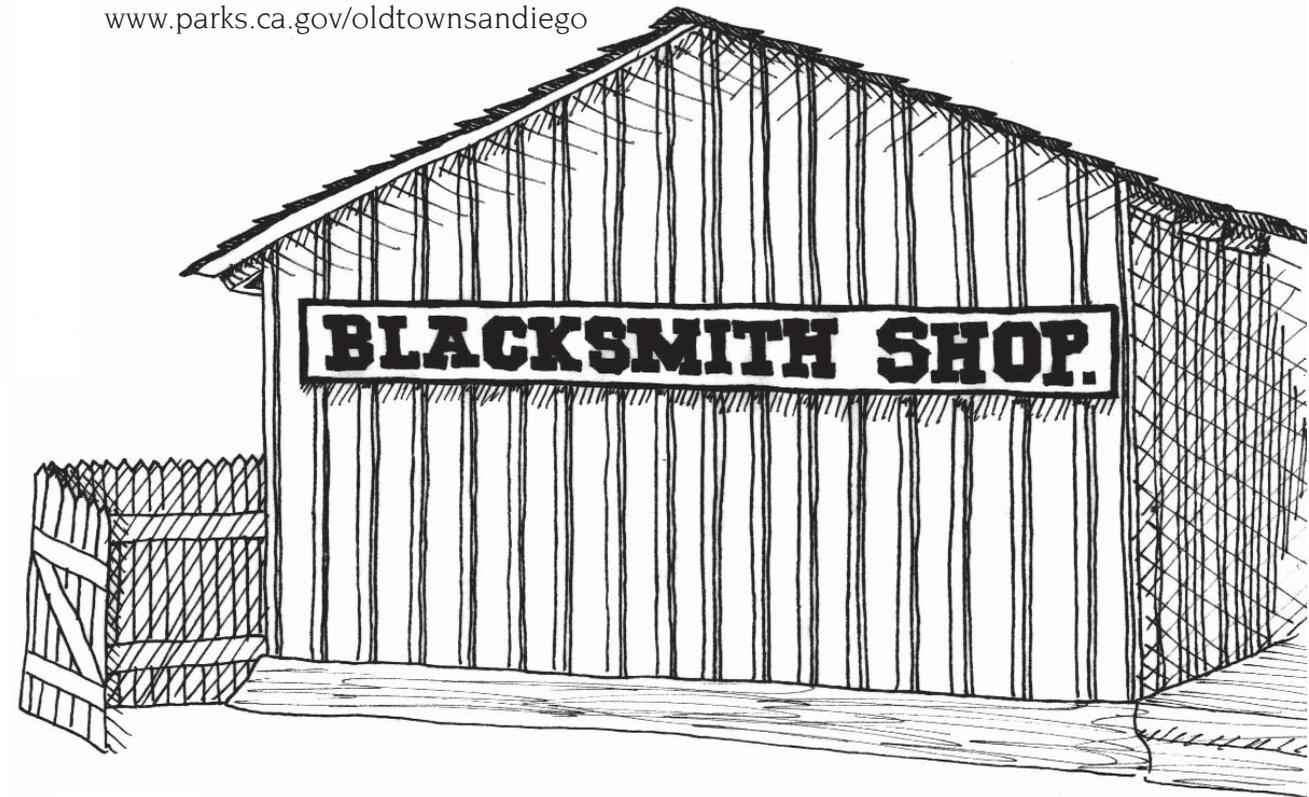
Today when we rent a car we have a choice of vehicles. The same was true when you went to a livery stable to hire a wagon and draft animals. Livery stables would board animals and would likely have a variety of animals for hire. Horses were fast, but had limitations in a coastal desert environment due to their need for water and feed. Donkeys, also called burros or jackasses, were popular in the West. They are more intelligent than horses, can live almost twice as long, and have hooves that don't require shoes under most conditions. A mule combines the traits of its horse dam and donkey sire. They are more sure-footed, endure heat better, and can be handled in large groups more easily than horses, making them well-suited for working in Southern California.



Thank you for your interest in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, part of the California State Parks system. Inquire at the Robinson-Rose Visitor Information Center or visit our website to find additional ways to experience California's history.

4002 Wallace St.
San Diego, CA 92110
619-220-5422

www.parks.ca.gov/oldtownsandiego



Date Built: **Circa 1868.**
Interpretive Period: **American.**
Rebuilt in 1974.

Illustrations by Megan Curtis.

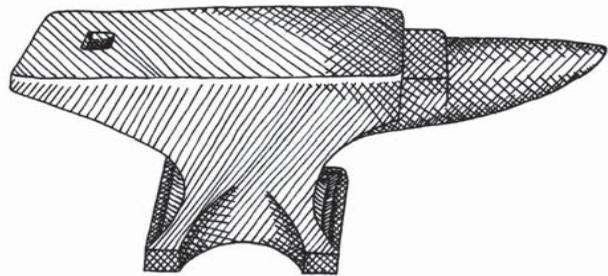
THE PEOPLE.

A blacksmith is a person who creates objects from wrought iron or steel by forging the metal -- heating it and using tools to hammer, bend, and cut. Blacksmiths played a vital role in the settling of San Diego. Records show that there were two blacksmiths at the Presidio in 1774, Felipe Romero from Guadalajara and José Manuel Arróyo. The work of the blacksmith was very diverse. Often they were repairing metal items the soldiers and settlers brought with them, traded for, or purchased. When raw metal was available, they forged tools, farm implements, hardware, cooking utensils, horseshoes, wagon wheels and other wagon parts such as springs.

An allied trade to the blacksmith was that of gunsmith. One of the first Filipinos to settle in Alta California was Antonio Miranda Rodriguez, a gunsmith born in Manila. He arrived from Mexico in 1783.

John I. Van Alst, a carriage maker and W.D. Brown, a blacksmith, were in business together in 1860 in San Diego. The blacksmith was often a part of the various trades coming together to create an industry in the 19th century.

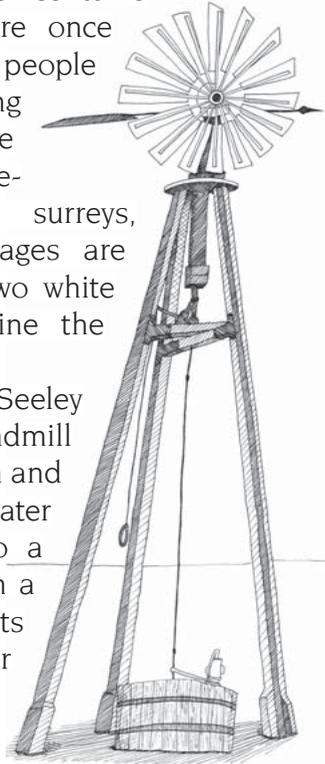
The 1870 Census listed Benjamin Payson, a blacksmith, his wife, and two children living near the Seeley Stable. Living next door was Eben Brinley, a wheelwright.



THE YARD.

The back yard contains wagons that were once used to haul people and goods long distances. A large collection of horse-drawn buggies, surreys, carts, and carriages are housed in the two white buildings that line the yard.

In 1870, Albert Seeley erected a windmill between the barn and hotel to pump water from a well into a cistern located in a covered shed. Its cistern or water storage tank held approximately 60 hogsheads of water. It was built to supply water for his livestock. As his operation grew, a second windmill was built where the reconstructed windmill now stands. Originally designed by William I. Tustin, it featured a self-regulated, 360 degree, turning wheel. This allowed the wind to strike the blades at different angles and thus control the speed of their rotation. The unique design represented a mechanical technology far ahead of its time. At the time of its reconstruction in 2009, this was the only Tustin style windmill in the world.



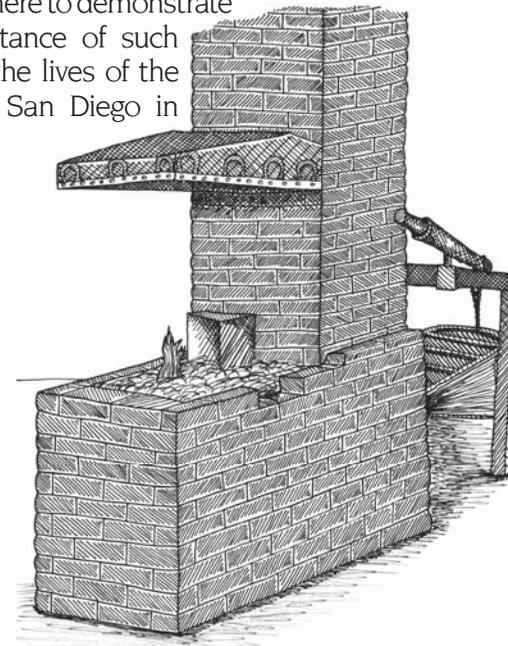
THE BUILDING.

John Hinton bought a part of the Casa de Bandini lot in 1868. The property had a livery stable, which may have once been the servant quarters for the Bandini residence. Hinton used the building as part of his Black Hawk Livery. Albert Seeley took it over by 1872 as part of his stagecoach business headquartered at the Cosmopolitan Hotel and depot.

The building was removed by the early 20th century and was reconstructed as a museum by California State Parks in 1974.

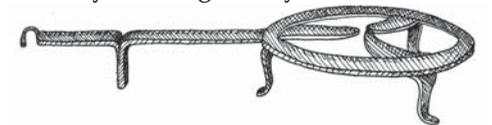
It now houses blacksmith and woodworking shops. You may see these crafts practiced as they were in the 19th century.

While it is not certain where the blacksmith shop was located in the 1870s, a livery stable and stagecoach depot would have certainly required the services of blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, farriers, and harness makers to function. The blacksmithing and woodworking displays are recreated here to demonstrate the importance of such trades to the lives of the people of San Diego in the 1800s.



DID YOU KNOW?

- A horseshoe is said to bring good luck. The smith places a horseshoe upside down so that the luck falls out on to his tools.
- Tools were very expensive in the 19th century. A branding iron might take 8-16 hours of labor to forge. What would two day's wages mean for you today?
- Fireworks have long been a part of celebrations. When communities in the 1800s wanted a noisemaker louder than a firecracker, they had "anvil firings." One anvil would be placed on top of another. A gunpowder charge would be placed between them. The BOOM from the explosion was a real attention getter.
- Blacksmiths hold hot metal with tongs and form it by hitting with a hammer. The faster a smith could work, the fewer times he needed to heat metal. This led to the phrase "Going at it hammer and tongs" meaning doing something fiercely or energetically.



CAN YOU FIND?

- Hammer and tongs.
- A swage block.
- Branding irons.
- A bellows.

Hint: Ask a blacksmith if you can't find it!