

# COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.  
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

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## The Cosmo Bar

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Without photographs or written accounts, what the interior of the Cosmopolitan Hotel looked like in the early 1870s remains largely a mystery. The bar is undoubtedly the single most important first floor historic space to restore. It sets the tone—it is the showpiece—of the interior restoration.

The bar opened in 1870 after construction of the hotel had been completed. It was located off the main entrance hall in the room facing Calhoun Street. On-site inspections of existing historic fabric reveal that the floor was tongue and groove Douglas fir. Much of the original woodwork, including the wainscoting, window wells, and window frames, remains intact. According to Susan Buck's paint analysis, the woodwork was grain painted to look like oak. The adobe walls above the wainscoting were plastered and covered with lime whitewash.

They may have been wallpapered, although probably not initially. There was most likely a ceiling medallion similar in design to the one recently found by archaeologists in the sitting room on the opposite side of the entry hall.

According to historical consultant Bruce Coons, the room would have had a front-back bar, 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.

The most likely location for the bar counter would have been along the rear wall to the right of the doorway opening out to the rear veranda. The length of this wall is 20' 4"; thus, the bar with an opening at each end could be no longer than 14' or 15'.

No written record to my knowledge exists of the barroom's furnishings or equipment. There is, however, an 1870 room-by-room inventory of the furnishings of the three-story Franklin House, which operated on the south side of the plaza from 1858 to 1872, when it was destroyed by the fire.

According to this source, the Franklin House bar had a counter, an iron safe, a writing desk, an overhead clock, a key rack, 2 round tables, 2 maps, 6 hanging lamps, 8 pictures, 8 demijohns, 11 arm chairs (no bar stools), fiddles and cases, cribbage board, fish bowl, spittoons, 10- and 20-gallon kegs, champagne and wine glasses, sugar bowls, assorted liquors, absinthe, Stoughton and Lacon's bitters, bar tumblers, sherry, port, and Chateau Leroux, Claret and Cucumungo wine.

In addition, the Cosmopolitan Hotel's bar sold imported Havana cigars for 20 and 25 cents each, fresh lager beer by the glass, bottle, or gallon, choice brands of liquor, and the "Uncle Toby" five for 25 cents. Ice was always on hand.

The bar was the premier gathering place for male guests and visitors. Here, they could shake off the dust from the stage trip, relax and socialize, smoke a cigar, down a shot of whiskey or a bottle of beer, play a hand of Monte, poker, or cribbage. It was their home away from home.

