

# COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.  
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## Health and Medicines

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Another fascinating aspect of life in San Diego around the 1840s that we can see in the letters Bandini wrote to his son-in law Abel Stearns is how people dealt with health issues. At 47 years old, Bandini was both a very hard worker and a very sick man. He often complained about not being able to go visit his daughters because of health problems. He would mention coughing, having very strong headaches, feeling weak, having lung problems, suffering from back pain and sometimes not being able to get out of bed for several days. He would ask Stearns to send him various medicines to heal his family and his workers such as quinine (used to treat malaria until

the 1940s) castor oil (used as a laxative or for muscular pains) and *cabalongas* (*Thevetia peruviana*) that are beans used as purgative, but they can be very poisonous if not used with care. In one particular letter Bandini asked for some *Balsamo de Copaiba*, also known as *Aceite de Palo* which is oil that was used to treat venereal diseases and also as a diuretic.

Bandini's son Jose Maria was at some point sick with smallpox in San Diego and in one letter Bandini says that Stearn's godson was sick, his eyes were very swollen and one of them had become cloudy, and Bandini was very worried about it, but the inflammation subsided and he was getting better, with no danger of losing his sight.

We can follow the health of Refugio (Bandini's wife) along several letters. Refugio has been sick, Bandini doesn't know what it is but her skin and eyes are yellowish, she is very thin,

she has no pain, no cough, she is very weak, not hungry, with lots of thick saliva, but no phlegm. He tries to appear calm in front of her but he is very worried for her. In a subsequent letter Bandini sends Refugio to his ranch in Tijuana to see if she gets better, but says that if she is not better in 12 days, he is going to send her to L.A. to see a doctor. Bandini says "she has lost one quarter of her circumference." He would advise Stearns to take care of Arcadia's and Ysidora's health, to make them do some exercise and to take care of their diets. One letter tells us that Bandini asked Stearns to give Arcadia permission to visit him, she did so, and a couple of letters later Bandini tells Stearns that in the eight days that Arcadia spent with him she gained "about two inches in circumference" and at that rate Stearns would have to spend more on material for her clothing. As we can see some things never change.

