

# COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

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## A Landmark Saved: Bandini-Couts Family, 1924-1930

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In 1924 a young woman, Margaret Gaffey, corresponded with her cousin Cave J. Couts, Jr. She wrote him, "All this excitement over old adobes . . . has brought back to my mind a dream I've always had is to get Bandini House--do you suppose there is the slightest chance that I could—Mama says it's an olive oil factory or something." Couts had been working on his Rancho Guajome, reconstructing the family chapel. He had over 5000 adobe bricks made and planned a September dedication in honor of his mother Ysidora Bandini's' birthday. Margaret asked her "Uncle Cave" to check on the availability of the property in Old Town.

By August 31 Couts wrote Margaret about her request. "I have learned that property in Old Town is very cheap and that the old place is practically abandoned . . . and will see what can be done . . . and I do truly hope that you will get it

and restore it as I know you would love to, but I can assure you that it will be one gigantic undertaking."

Margaret hoped that some of her mother's inheritance from Arcadia Bandini's estate could be used for the purchase. Arcadia, daughter of Juan Bandini and widow of two extremely wealthy men, died without a will in 1912. Litigation over the estate had gone on for years. Margaret's mother, named Arcadia Bandini for her aunt, was the daughter of Juan Bautista Bandini. By the following January, Margaret's father, John Gaffey, wrote Cave Couts, "I . . . am sorry to say that I cannot afford to buy it. . . I did not answer your first letter because I wanted to consider everything, as Margaret is so anxious to have the old place."

Apparently the lack of financial backing by the Gaffey family did not stop Couts. On February 17, 1925, he wrote Margaret that "I have bought the old Bandini house at Old Town, pending only on the signature of one heir holding a very small interest. I made the bargain on the 3rd of Feb'y and must be completed within

thirty days from that date. I bought the entire block, made a good bargain, only \$1000 down balance of \$11,500 to be paid in four annual payments with interest at 6%. . . . Your enthusiasm awakened mine and I am mighty glad that we have it." Margaret responded in a telegram, "You are a Darling."

In March, Couts wrote that, "The owners have all agreed to sell, but the question of giving title seems to be quite serious . . . I will undertake the responsibility of clearing title." The question of title to the property seems to have gone on for years, even into 1930, and involved at least one court case. A deed was written July 21, 1928 to Cave J. Couts for lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of block 451 in Old San Diego. Ownership of the block had been a confusing division of property among a number of owners, many of whom were from the San Francisco area when Albert L. Seeley sold the property in 1888. With the enthusiasm of a young cousin, Cave J. Couts, Jr. was able to acquire his grandfather's property and take on another reconstruction project honoring his family.

