

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 Casa & the Bishop

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In 1841 the Bandinis did not spend much time in San Diego because Juan had responsibilities in Los Angeles and San Gabriel. In April, Juan Bandini's beloved father, José, died at their Rancho San Juan del Río. A month later, Juan's daughter Arcadia married Abel Stearns at Mission San Gabriel in a wedding that had been delayed due to José Bandini's declining health. And by August, Bandini's daughter Josefa married Pedro Carrillo.

In San Diego, all was excitement due to the anticipated arrival of the first Bishop of the Californias. Pope Gregory XVI had designated San Diego as the official home of the bishop, who was supposed to build his residence and a cathedral there. As early as September 1841 the people of San Diego started making preparations. An earlier decree that prohibited the roaming of cattle within the pueblo was to be enforced because of the bishop's expected arrival. At his ranch near San Gabriel, Juan Bandini wrote Stearns that he was expecting the bishop to arrive with orders for the missions. He put his plans

on hold, writing his father-in-law Santiago Argüello in San Diego for information.

Setting sail from San Blas in November 1841 with his entourage of twelve, Bishop Francisco García Diego arrived in San Diego waters on the evening of December 10. A friar was sent ashore to notify the presidio commander, who immediately announced the arrival with a two-cannon salute. The next morning, the whole population went down to the beach. On the orders of Argüello, the men carried the bishop in his sedan chair half way to town and then the women took over. The bishop and his party were given lodgings at the Casa de Bandini on Argüello's instructions.

A week after the bishop's arrival, he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation for 125 people. None of the Bandini family members took part in the service as they were still out of town. Some of the godfathers were Francisco María Alvarado, Pío Pico, José Antonio Estudillo, José Antonio Aguirre, and Santiago Argüello. Godmothers included María Antonia Estudillo, María Ygnacia Alvarado, Apolinaria Lorenzana, and Victoria Domínguez.

But Bishop García Diego was disappointed in San Diego, saying that it was too small and insignificant ("pequeñísima ciudad") for his residence. At the suggestion of wealthy merchant and ship owner José Antonio Aguirre, who had recently married the Estudillo's daughter Francisca, the bishop

sailed for Santa Barbara leaving his belongings in San Diego, including rich ornaments that were intended for his new headquarters.

After much fanfare in Santa Barbara, Bishop García Diego decided to make that location his home. He sent the captain of the *Tasso* to San Diego with an order to retrieve his goods. But the women of San Diego were so incensed about this treatment that they refused to give up the articles, except for the bishop's clothing. Some had hoped that he would restore Mission San Luis Rey as the cathedral.

When William Dane Phelps visited San Diego as master of the *Alert* in May 1842, he found the women discussing their "revolution." Many felt that they and their leader, Tomasa Pico de Alvarado, had gone too far and feared excommunication. They finally decided to send a peace offering to the bishop by Mr. Phelps. When the ship sailed, it carried "a large quantity of cakes, cabbages, onions, and lettuce . . . to take to the Bishop, which he will get (if they keep)."

Biographies written about Juan Bandini describe him as fomenting political plots. But in 1841-1842 he missed a revolution outside his own Casa de Bandini—one led by the women of San Diego. The bishop never again went south of Los Angeles.

(See William Dane Phelps' *Alta California, 1840-1842* and Fr. Zephyrin Engelhardt's *Missions and Missionaries of California, vol.4*)

