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No Public Figure

Jose Bandini, the author of "A Description of California in 1828" was in no sense a public figure in those early days in the Far West. Unlike his son, Juan, he led a quiet but observing life. Family papers and government archives have revealed but little about him. But it is believed that the elder Bandini was born in 1771 in the city of Cadiz in Andalucia, and that as a very young man, probably in 1793, he went to South America to reside in Lima, Peru.

Old church records revealed to the Bancroft Library at the University of California, state that Bandini was married twice, first to Ysidora Blancas, and then following her death in 1801, to Manuela Mazuelos. He had several children, among them one who became Bishop of Lima. Juan was the only child who came to California with his father.

Bandini had been the captain of the ship *Reina de los Angeles*, bringing supplies of war from San Blas to California's governor, Pablo de Sola, making his first voyage in 1819. Two years later, on another trip, Bandini and his entire crew took an oath of allegiance to the revolutionary leader, Iturbide. Bandini claimed that his ship was the first to fly the flag of independent Mexico.

Richard Henry Dana wrote "he built a large house with a courtyard in front, kept a great retinue of Indians, and set up for the grandee of that part of the country." In 1822 Bandini was granted military retirement with the rank of "captain de milicius," and soon after this honor he and his son arrived in San Diego, where he built the home described by Dana. He died there in 1841.

The original "Description" consisted of 19 manuscript pages, in the distinct handwriting of Bandini, according to the foreword in the Bancroft Library Publication Number Three, published by the Friends of the Bancroft Library at the University of California. The manuscript is undated and unsigned except for the initials "J.B." It seems to be an expanded version of a long letter written by Bandini in September, 1828, to Eustace Barron, British vice-consul at Tepic. History revealed that the latter official had requested, almost a year before, a description of the commerce, products, population, etc. of California, and "judging from the

rough draft of the reply, Bandini took his assignment seriously," writes Doris Marion Wright, the translator.

It is also thought that some of the material he supplied may have been used by Barron's business partner, Alexander Forbes, whose "California," published in London in 1839, was the first English book relating exclusively to the territory. Bandini's "Description" contains an additional section dealing with the sad plight of California's commerce.

Juan Bandini was a member of the California "Disputacion," or legislature, and as a deputy to the Mexican Congress, devoted much time and many speeches to the problems of trade, so it may have been for his use that the elder Bandini wrote his description of California. It has been proven that the younger Bandini used it as a basis of a report written by him for the "Comisario Principal de la Alta California" in 1830, in which he gave an account of California, often in his father's own words.

This original manuscript is now in the Archive General de la Nacion in Mexico City; a contemporary copy has recently been added to the William Robertson Coe Collection of Western Americana in the Yale University Library and now the Friends of the Library have brought it to light for the benefit of students and historians.

Four hundred copies were printed by the Westgate Press for the Friends of Bancroft Library who received them in the mail during the past week.