

# OLD TOWN CHAMBER NEWS

oldtownsandiego.org

February 2024

@VisitOldTownSD

## Celebrate the Legacy of Antonio Garra on March 16

The Pala Band of Mission Indians and the First San Diego Courthouse Museum are proud to announce the 2024 Antonio Garra Day, a commemorative event honoring the life and legacy of a true Native American patriot, Antonio Garra.

This special celebration will take place on March 16, 2024, from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm at the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, 4002 Wallace Street.

Antonio Garra was a significant figure in the fight for the rights and sovereignty of Southern California and Northern Baja tribes. Despite being illegally executed in 1852 amidst anti-Native American hysteria, Garra's legacy as a leader and advocate for his people endures.

This event seeks to celebrate his contributions and the continued resilience of the California Indian communities.

Antonio Garra Day is a family-friendly event that is free and open to the public.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with San Diego's Native American history through a day filled with music, speeches, and cultural exhibits. Let us come



together to remember a hero who fought valiantly for the rights and sovereignty of his people.

## Display Your Flyers and Brochures at the Visitors Center

We're excited to remind you that our Visitors Center at 4010 Twigg Street is at your service! As valued members, you're welcome to display your marketing materials such as flyers, cards, brochures, and coupons, absolutely free-of-charge.

This is a fantastic opportunity to increase your visibility and reach a wider audience. Don't miss out on the chance to showcase what your business has to offer to the vibrant Old Town community and its visitors.

Drop by the Visitors Center soon

or contact staff to arrange pick-up.

We're here to help you shine!



## Get Inspired: San Diego Museum Month 2024



More than 60 museums and cultural institutions will participate in the 35th Annual Museum Month from Feb. 1 to Feb. 29. The event offers half-off admission to visitors at

participating locations. Pick up your pass at more than 80 San Diego public libraries and start exploring the fun! Learn more at [sandiegomuseumcouncil.org](http://sandiegomuseumcouncil.org).

## Cheers to History: The Cosmopolitan Hotel's Happy Hour Revival

In Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, the Cosmopolitan Hotel has long been a beloved historical landmark and a symbol of San Diego's rich history.

The iconic establishment has played an integral role in preserving the city's past, and now, after a challenging hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is with great excitement that the Cosmopolitan Hotel is once again open to the public.

This time, it's offering a delightful experience for all visitors: Happy Hour at the bar and cocktail area, taking place Wednesday through Saturday from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm.

The reopening of the bar and cocktail area for Happy Hour represents more than just a return to normalcy. It signifies the resilience of the Cosmopolitan Hotel and its commitment to preserving the spirit of Old Town San Diego. As visitors once again gather to share stories, celebrate, and enjoy each other's company, they are contributing to the ongoing legacy of this historic landmark.



## Register for Emergency Alerts

The emergency notification system can make phone calls to people and businesses in San Diego County when there's an emergency or disaster happening or about to happen.

It's used by emergency workers to tell people what's going on and what they should do (like leave their homes, stay inside, or watch out for a gas leak or a missing person). The system can call both listed and unlisted landline phones using the 9-1-1 phone list from the local phone companies.

It can also send alerts to your cell phone, internet phone (VoIP), and email, but only if you register.

Register Here:  
[www.alertsandiego.org/en-us/preparedness/alertsandiego.html](http://www.alertsandiego.org/en-us/preparedness/alertsandiego.html)



## Irish J1 Summer Work and Travel Program

The J1 Summer Work and Travel program is starting up again, running from May - September. This allows Irish college students to participate in a cultural exchange, while working in a seasonal role in the US. We at the Irish Outreach Center offer assistance to them during the students summer long stay in California.

We are a non-profit organization, based in Old Town San Diego since 1999, providing support to the Irish community & diaspora in Southwestern Region of the USA all year round. We are a member of the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers (CIIC).

- Have you noticed an influx of Irish resumes to your business?
- Have you hired any J1 students so far?
- Are you planning on hiring J1 students for the upcoming summer season?

We would love to assist you in anyway we can! Do not hesitate to contact us. Information below.

Kind regards,

The Irish Outreach Center  
2725 Congress Street, 2G  
San Diego, CA 92110  
[www.irishoutreachcenter.org](http://www.irishoutreachcenter.org)  
Telephone: 619-291-1630  
[help@irishoutreachcenter.org](mailto:help@irishoutreachcenter.org)

## Safe Sidewalks Program and Fee Holiday

The Safe Sidewalks Program and Fee Holiday was approved by City Council on November 13, 2023. With the Fee Holiday, over \$2,100 in permitting fees have been removed to make it more cost effective for private property owners to fix sidewalk damages which are their responsibility.

The Transportation Department will be sending out Notice of Responsibility letters in the Old

Town Community Plan Area this month as part of the Safe Sidewalks Program.

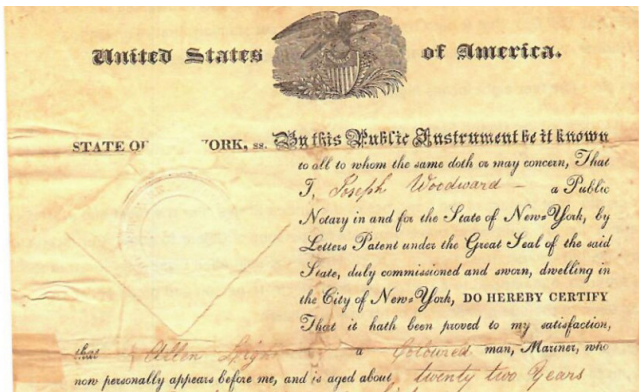
These letters will be sent to private property owners with known sidewalk damages that are their responsibility to maintain per California state law.

This Program and Fee Holiday offers private property owners the opportunity to repair the

sidewalk damage without a permit fee via an expedited permit process through June 30, 2026.

This information is also included at [www.sandiego.gov/safesidewalks](http://www.sandiego.gov/safesidewalks).

Questions? Please reach out to the Transportation Department at [safesidewalks@sandiego.gov](mailto:safesidewalks@sandiego.gov).



## Black History in California: Allen Light Sail Protection Papers

*Originally published on February 23, 2021 for the California State Parks Foundation and written by Shakaylah Leonard.*

Old Town San Diego State Historic Park is a park known for its rich history of California's first Spanish settlement, but it is also rich with Black history as well. It is at this historic park where the story of Allen Light, a free Black man with Mexican citizenship, was rediscovered.

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Allen Light came to Santa Barbara, California in 1835 as mariner and became an otter hunter at a time when otter pelts were highly valued. Light temporarily stopped otter hunting in 1836 and obtained his Mexican citizenship in 1839. Soon after, he was appointed game warden by the Governor to help prevent illegal hunting. It was not until 1942 when Light officially stopped otter hunting and settled in San Diego.

Light lived in a building next to La Casa De Machado y Silvas adobe, located on what is today Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, with another free Black man by the

name of Richard Freeman. Light and Freeman were the first Black business owners, operating a saloon and dry goods store. Freeman was also appointed the first deputy sheriff of San Diego. When Richard Freeman died in 1951, Allen Light's existence seemed to have vanished. Though there was census conducted that year, Light being a Black man, was not recorded.

In 1948, Allen Light makes his reappearance, but not in person. His name appeared on a hidden paper. A heater was being installed in the Casa de Machado y Silvas adobe, when Light's papers were found buried in the walls. The papers were known as sailor protection papers, similar to "free papers" which most states required Black people to carry at the time. In the documents, Allen was described as a 22-year-old colored man.

Allen Light's legacy was hidden for about 100 years, but it was never meant to be forgotten. Through the discovery of his sailor protection papers, his legacy was found. Light's sailor protection papers can be viewed at the San Diego Historical Society's Research Archives.

## Old Town Bids Farewell to MBHS President Brent Top

The Chamber is honored to recognize Brent Top for his outstanding service and dedication as President of the Mormon Battalion Historic Site. Over the past two years, President Top has played a pivotal role in enriching the Old Town community, enhancing the historic site's offerings, and fostering a spirit of inclusivity and learning.

Under President Top's leadership, the Mormon Battalion Historic Site has seen remarkable growth in community engagement. His efforts to create interactive and educational experiences have brought the history of the Mormon Battalion and its significant contributions to the American West to life for thousands of visitors. Through innovative exhibits and public programs, President Top has ensured that the site is not just a place of historical reflection but also a vibrant community hub.

President Top's commitment to the Old Town community extends beyond the gates of the Mormon Battalion Historic

Site. He has been a vocal advocate for the preservation of our area's rich history and cultural heritage. His efforts have not only raised the profile of the Historic Site but have also contributed to the broader economic and cultural vitality of Old Town San Diego.

As President Top prepares to depart from his role, the Old Town San Diego Chamber of Commerce extends its deepest gratitude for his hard work, vision, and leadership. His contributions have left an indelible mark on our community and set a high standard for future endeavors at the Mormon Battalion Historic Site and beyond.

As we bid farewell to President Top, the Old Town San Diego Chamber of Commerce looks forward to building upon the strong foundation he has laid. We are excited for the future of the Mormon Battalion Historic Site and its role in our vibrant community. President Top's legacy will undoubtedly inspire continued growth, learning, and unity in Old Town San Diego.



## Sign Up for Community Newsletters

Attention Chamber members! Community newsletters provide a convenient and timely way to receive updates on upcoming legislation, economic development initiatives, and community events.



Jen Campbell, City Council District 2 →



Monica Montgomery Steppe, County Supervisor District 4 →



Toni Atkins, State Senate District 39 →



Chris Ward, State Assembly District 78 →



## Upcoming Meetings

- **Parking Advisory Committee** - TBD
- **Safe & Clean Committee** - TBD
- **Marketing Committee** - Tuesday, February 13 - 10am - Café Coyote
- **Executive Committee** - Wednesday, February 14 - 11:30am - 2383 San Diego Ave
- **Board of Directors** - Wednesday, February 21 - 8:30am - Mormon Battalion Historic Site

View Meeting Agendas & Minutes →



## Advertise with the Chamber

Advertising with the Chamber can provide businesses with access to a targeted audience, enhanced credibility, networking opportunities, community support, and cost-effective advertising. All of these benefits can help businesses to attract new customers and grow their businesses.

There are several advertising opportunities available:

- Flyers, Posters, Guides, and Videos in Visitors Center
- [www.oldtownsandiego.org](http://www.oldtownsandiego.org)
- Special event sponsorships

For more information, contact [alex@oldtownsandiego.org](mailto:alex@oldtownsandiego.org).

## Download the Get It Done App & Get Results

Get It Done San Diego is the official app for reporting non-emergency problems to the City of San Diego. App users can report problems like potholes or graffiti and connect directly to the City's work tracking system.

Get It Done can be used to report problems related to City assets, making appointments for Passport services or to schedule time at the City's Household Hazardous Waste Materials drop-off facility. Do not use Get It Done for reporting emergencies or other time-sensitive issues. It can take up to 48 hours to review your report or request for appointment.

Get It Done is available on Apple and Android devices.

Scan to Visit the Official City Website →



## Get In Touch

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