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 For El Defensor Chieftain

### The Early Days

Part 1 of this article looked at some of Socorro's Territorial saloons. At one time, there seemed to be a saloon in Socorro on nearly every corner — like the Palace, Grand Central and Biavaschi Saloons.

In Part 2 we shift our focus to the Capitol Bar, and for good reason. Through a long line of ownership, the Biavaschi Saloon is today's Capitol Bar. It is Socorro's only surviving Territorial bar.

Italian immigrant Giovanni Biavaschi built a substantial two-story brick building on the southeast corner of the Plaza in 1896. This was the Biavaschi Saloon, built to "last the ages." Unfortunately, the authors were unable to locate a photo of Giovanni Biavaschi.

Biavaschi lost his saloon, in 1909, through a series a business misfortunes. Henry May became owner of the building. It was re-opened as The Club Bar by Judge Amos Green and, for a time, leased to former mayor Jose E. Torres and Pete Gallegos and operated under the name Torres and Gallegos Bar.

Prohibition brought an end to



Courtesy of Sarah Green Padilla  
**A wedding ceremony conducted by Judge Amos Green, sitting on the right. The Judge, in whole or in part, owned the bars and pool halls of today's Capitol Bar from 1909 until his death in 1925.**



Courtesy Earl Jr. and Joanna Debrine

**A photo of the Biavaschi Saloon — the Capitol Bar as it appeared a century ago. The man in the center is thought to be Judge Amos Green, owner of the bar from 1909–1925. Date of the photo is probably about 1909.**

Socorro's saloons. Judge Green's bar survived Prohibition by being converted into Green's Pool Hall.

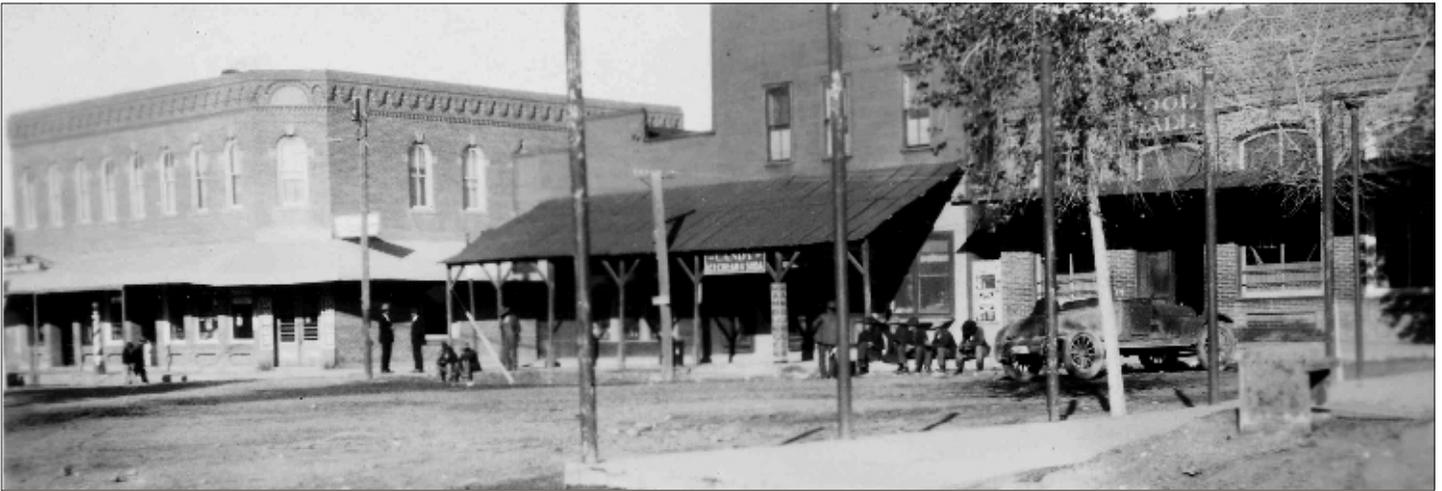
### The Emillio 'Dynasty'

Fred Emillio migrated from Lincoln County and arrived in Socorro with his family, in early 1923, to team up with Damian Padilla to operate a pool hall. The Emillio family had long been established in Lincoln County. A portrait of Fred's grandfather once hung in the Lincoln County courthouse. According to the family, it now hangs in the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe.

Fred's son, Willie, recalled riding into town "perched atop the family belongings in the back of his father's Model T Ford pickup."

Tragically, Padilla's and Emillio's pool hall was a short-lived venture due to the bane of many such establishments — fire — which broke out early one Monday morning in March 1923.

The fire took out the entire block "extending south from the Plaza to the Sedillo store in the middle of the block facing Court Street on the



Courtesy of Socorro County Historical Society

**A view of the east side of the Socorro Plaza during the 1920s Prohibition years. The Masonic Building and the Hilton Drug Store is on the left; Grimes Grocery Store is in the center; Green's Pool Hall is the building on the right.**

east.” Only the superhuman efforts of the local hose company succeed in saving Sedillo’s two-story building. The Socorro Chieftain described the ruined block as “one of the old landmarks, being among the first buildings erected in Socorro.” About this same time, Amos Green was seeking another manager for his business and Padilla and Emillio, suddenly available due to the extenuating circumstances, moved across the Plaza. The furniture and fixtures in their pool hall were insured for \$1,500 and this no doubt eased the pain of the transition.

Judge Green died on Jan. 13, 1925. Fred Emillio remained at Green’s Pool Hall throughout Prohibition and after. It seems that the Green family either continued to sub-let the business as before, or Padilla and Emillio may have purchased their interest after Green’s death.



Courtesy of Socorro County Historical Society

**The pool hall of Fred Emillio and Damian Padilla was destroyed by fire in 1923. It was located on the south side of the plaza on Court Street.**

Willie Emillio recalled several anecdotal stories from those Prohibition days of polishing and sweeping. Yes, Fred did keep a well-secluded stock of Kentucky’s finest on hand to soothe the parched throats of his more trusted clientele.

Magdalena was often the source of the contraband hooch as several wily old operators had the foresight to lay in copious quantities of J.W. Dant Bonded whiskey and other prime elixirs of the distiller’s art before Prohibition took effect.

On March 22, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Cullen-Harrison Act, which amended the Volstead Act to once again allow for the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. The official repeal of Prohibition came with the ratification of the 21st Amendment on Dec. 5, 1933.

### **The Green Front Days**

Fred Emillio kept a close eye on the Prohibition situation and when the repeal was imminent, he applied for and received Socorro’s first liquor license in 1933. He immediately changed the name to “Green Front Saloon” in memory of the late Judge Green, and is said to have painted the brick facade green - traces of which are still visible today. A new sign was painted on the northeast corner of the building that stated “Wines-Liquors-Next Door” and an arrow pointing to the front door of the saloon. The sign is still there today.

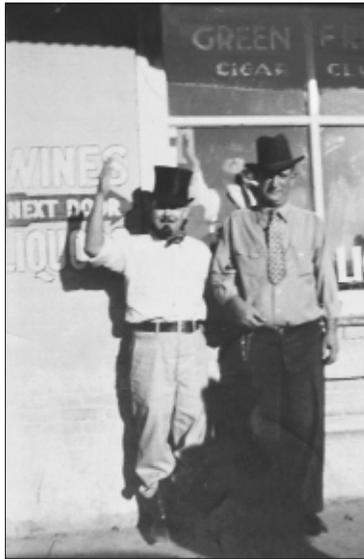
Fred would not permit his sons to work behind the bar prior to their coming of age. He did, however, allow them to do custodial work, clean glasses, and more, but no bar work. The boys “helped out around the place, listening with

y o u t h f u l imagination to the many great tales emanating from the Green Front's historical past as (they) swept and polished."

"Dad always sought out the very finest of whiskeys and refused to handle the cheap stuff... he bought old stocks of the highest quality 'bottled-in-bond' bourbon whenever he could," he recounted.

Willie Emillio remembered his dad sterilizing bottles and affixing labels. One label, we'll call it the "green," was for the lower priced product and the other, the "black" label, for the "premium." But the same high-quality spirit went into each! The working class fellows went for the more affordable green, while the upper echelon went for the black "and none of them ever knew the difference."

This little switch-up was a reflection of Fred Emillio's compassion for his fellow man — he firmly believed that all should be treated equally and offered a quality product.



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth  
**Fred Emillio (right) stands in front of the Green Front Saloon around 1936. The "Wines - Next Door" sign is still visible on today's Capitol Bar brick facade.**



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth  
**Fred Emillio behind the bar at the Green Front Saloon circa. 1936. A sign above Fred's hat is indicative of another facet of his philosophy: "If your money is needed at home DON'T spend it here"**

## The Capitol Bar

During 1938, Fred Emillio became seriously ill and, for a time, it was thought he might not recover. In 1939, sons Willie and Frankie Emillio pooled their resources, bought out their father's partner (possibly still Damian Padilla) and went into the bar business for themselves.

"We were young," recalled Willie Emillio, "and we'd become friends with most of the students at the New Mexico School of Mines. With the campus located right here in town it didn't take long for the place to become a student hangout."

The name changed to the Capitol Bar when the Emillios moved to the Plaza Café building on the corner (where today's Spoken N Word bicycle shop is located).

Willie Emillio explained, somewhat cryptically, "We changed the name because the Green Front had changed."

Why did they make the move? We should keep in mind that the Green family may have still "owned" the business, but not the building. Fred Emillio and his partner, as lessees, either worked for them or paid a monthly fee, in addition to paying rent, to Henry G. May.

Obviously, the Emillios now desired to have their own business. By renting the recently closed Plaza Café, adjacent to the Green Front on the north, and renovating it into the first Capitol Bar, they accomplished this goal. Fred Emillio owned

## The first Capitol Bar



**Willie and Frankie Emillio purchased the building on the southeast corner of the plaza on Manazares Ave., the former Plaza Café, and remodeled it into a bar. The grand opening was December 1, 1939. This Capitol Bar was short lived – being destroyed by fire on June 16, 1940. The Emillio's moved their Capitol Bar back to the Green Front Saloon, the old Biavaschi building, where it remains today.**



An ad in the Socorro Chieftain announcing the opening of the first Capitol Bar on December 1, 1939. Remodeled from the old Plaza Café, this bar was located in a building north of the present day location.

the liquor license and when they moved to the Plaza Café building, the license went with him. The fate of the Green Front during this period is unknown and it's quite possible the establishment remained open as a pool hall.

Along with the extensive remodeling and the name change to the Capitol Bar, Willie Emillio decided to make the operation even more of a class act by enrolling in the "Modern School of Bartending and Bar Management." He was awarded his diploma on Aug. 14, 1939. The professional schooling is readily apparent in the boys' spiffy dress of white shirts and bow ties, plus the bar aprons, towels, and serving trays. Willie passed his newly acquired bartending talents to Frankie Emillio. The boys took great pride in their ability to mix any drink "in the book."



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth  
Willie Emillio's 1939 diploma from the "Modern School of Bartending and Bar Management," in possession of author Robert Eveleth.

## Fire Destroys the Capitol Bar

On Sunday evening, June 16, 1940, a small rubbish fire, fanned by a stiff wind, quickly engulfed the new Capitol Bar. The Socorro Chieftain reported the short-lived Capitol Bar, in business only seven months, with the headline: "Fire Razes Capitol Bar, Adjoining Building."

"One of the most unfortunate features of the affair was the loss suffered by Mr. and Mrs. Frankie Emillio, who had but recently completed the furnishing of their apartment, which was on the second floor of the building," the Chieftain reported.

Perhaps just as unfortunate was much of the family was out of town that Sunday night visiting relatives and learned of the fire upon their return to Socorro. Willie was in Detroit, Mich.

In those days, the Ford Motor Company permitted purchasers of new vehicles to visit the

Michigan factory and observe the assembly of their car from start to finish, and then they were handed their keys as it rolled off the assembly line. Local attorney Carrie Enloe decided to take advantage of this. Willie Emillio went along for the ride and to help Enloe with the driving. Upon their return to Socorro, they stopped at the Wynoka Club on the north side of town for a little refreshment.



The June 20, 1940 Socorro Chieftain reported the loss of the Capitol Bar to fire.

When the proprietor of the Wynoka Club saw Willie, he exclaimed, "Where have you been? The whole town has been trying to contact you. Your new bar burned down and it was a total loss."

It was hard news, indeed. Even decades after the fact, Willie Emillio rarely talked about it. The Emillios' loss far exceeded the amount of insurance they carried.

## Rebuilding the Capitol Bar

After the tragic fire there was only one place for the boys to go — back to the Green Front Saloon, which, thanks to the foresight of Giovanni Biavaschi, survived the flames.

About this same time, a more positive event took place when Fred Emillio, once so gravely ill, recovered to the point where he rejoined his sons, at least on a part-time basis, in running the business.

The Emillios once again tackled the remodeling and immediately undertook extensive renovations. Some of their new ideas doubtless came with them from the previous remodeling of the corner building. These included beautiful knotty pine paneling on walls and ceiling, a spacious dance floor, newly designed booths, modern bathrooms, and — “one of the Emillio boy’s pet innovations” — bar-mounted remote control jukebox selectors.

Much of the woodwork and carpentry in the new Capitol Bar was performed by local rancher Earl F. “Smokey” Pound.

The Emillios also introduced “Schlitz direct draw from Keg.” It was said, at the time, to be the



Socorro Chieftain articles of rebuilding the Capitol Bar.



A 1940 ad in the Socorro Chieftain announced the grand reopening of the new Capitol Bar “on the plaza.” Opened by Willie and Frankie Emillio, this is the Capitol Bar we know today — the old Biavaschi Saloon building.



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth

Frankie Emillio (left) and brother Willie behind the bar at the new Capitol. The bar is freshly decorated for their first St. Patrick’s Day, in 1941, in conjunction with the NM School of Mines event. Note the remote juke-box selectors on the bar.

only such facility between Albuquerque and Las Cruces to offer the brew. Willie and Frankie Emillio decided the outer appearance of the structure needed modernization as well, and covered Biavaschi’s rock-and-brick work with off-white or beige-colored stucco.

A major milestone in the history of the Biavaschi—Green Front—Capitol Bar occurred on Nov. 14, 1943 — when Henry G. May, now well up in years, relinquished ownership of the venerable old structure to Fred Emillio, who by this time had recovered from his illness. This included the lot to the south where the beer garden is located today. From this point until the business was sold to the DeBrine family, the Emillios retained full ownership.

With the outbreak of World War II, Willie and Frankie Emillio enlisted in military service in 1941. Upon their discharge, they returned to Socorro to resume their bartending careers. During the boys’ absence, Fred Emillio operated the business with hired help — mostly School of Mines students. Willie and Frankie Emillio continued that practice into the 1950s, as have the DeBrine family into the present.

Upon their return from the war, father and sons entered into a three-way partnership, effective April 1, 1946, with each owning a one-third interest in stock and real estate. This arrangement lasted a little more than year, when Fred Emillio again decided he wanted to retire from full-time work behind the bar. Frankie Emillio developed



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth  
**The one-time stucco finish is shown in this 1946 photo of the Capitol Bar and Café during the 49ers celebration.**

health problems and decided to pursue other endeavors. Willie Emillio became the sole owner on Sept. 6, 1947. However, Frankie Emillio continued to work at least part-time through the mid-1950s and even Fred Emillio made occasional appearances when he felt up to it.

School of Mines student Bob Lane recalled Fred Emillio's kindness and generosity upon his graduation. During his final shift, the day before he was to leave for Carlsbad, to begin a new career in the potash industry, Fred Emillio took him aside and pressed a \$20 dollar bill into his hand, saying, "Here's a little something to help you get started." Lane was clearly overwhelmed by the gesture and to the day he died he recalled Fred Emillio as a man with a heart of gold.

The post-World War II years are fondly remembered as the "golden years" by many old-timers — a time when a night out at the Capitol with Willie, Frankie, and sometimes Freddie, was the epitome of Socorro's night life. But Willie and Frankie Emillio didn't operate in a vacuum. To the contrary, they had their share of notable competitors over the years and each was known for their own specialties and style of hospitality.

On the north side of town was the previously mentioned Wynoka Club, famous for its extensive dance area and "dancing every night." Fence Acres was another popular club.

On California Street was the Sunset Bar, the predecessor of Sunset Liquors. Operating since 1933, the Sunset has the distinction of being the longest surviving liquor establishment under one family's ownership — the Torres family.

On the northeast corner of Manzanares and California streets was the Coronado Tavern. Being located "just around the corner" from each other, the proprietors of the Coronado and the Capitol for years engaged in friendly rivalry. When the Emillios introduced keg beer on tap in 1940, Mike Piccinini and Pete Fellis (owners of the Coronado Bar) quickly followed suit. Likewise for the bar-mounted jukebox selectors.

The Coronado was locally famous for its hot buttered rum and Tom and Jerry recipes. However, Willie and Frankie Emillio's closely held recipe for the latter was considered near legendary.

The success and popularity of the dance floors at the Wynoka Club and the Coronado encouraged the Emillios to provide a similar feature at the renovated Capitol. For a time both establishments featured cafés, in conjunction with the bars, and both had their specialties. For example, the Coronado was the local home of Chicken in the Rough, billed as "The Most Famous Chicken in the World." Nestor Gonzales, who tended bar at the Capitol well into the 1970s, began his career with Willie and Frankie Emillio in 1954, by starting in



Courtesy of Max Torres  
**The oldest continuously operated bar in Socorro under the same ownership, the Torres family, is Sunset Liquors. The first Sunset Bar is shown here, circa. 1933.**



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth

**A very young Frankie Emillio behind the newly renovated Capitol Bar, soon after re-opening in 1940. Relics remaining mostly untouched from the Green Front days included the back bar, which was simply cleaned up and re-varnished. The nattily-dressed Frankie proudly shows off the tap to draw “Schlitz direct from keg.”**

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the café located in the south half of the building.

Live entertainment was regularly featured and the practice continues into the present. During the big-band era, Willie and Frankie Emillio booked a wide variety of performers and instrumental combos. Posters and broadsides (or flyers) from this period are exceedingly rare.

### **Growing Friendships**

Much has been said of the close relationship the Emillios enjoyed with the School of Mines students. However, the authors would be remiss not to mention their long-standing friendship with the ranching community as well. They acknowledged that friendship by decorating the knotty pine interior with exact facsimiles of as many of the local and regional cattle brands as could be “rounded up.”

This included cleverly configured and humorous “brands” over both the women’s and the men’s room doors. Other artistic touches

included the famous and near-legendary series of eight oil paintings, rendered by Willie’s friend Fred Magher, which graced the upper walls around the bar area from 1949 until the building passed to the DeBrines. Fred Magher was an accomplished artist and his renderings of Indian leaders Victorio and Sitting Bull were nothing short of remarkable considering that Magher painted strictly from memory.

Totally forgotten today are the three highway billboard signs that Fred created for the Capitol Bar. These were positioned just outside of town where U.S. 60 and 85 approached Socorro from the north, south and west. The signs were very colorful and depicted a thirsty sombrero-topped traveler riding a burro. Willie Emillio recalled that Magher bought the materials, built the framework, did the artwork and installed the signs — all for a mere \$100 each.



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth

**Fred Magher’s artistically designed billboards just outside of Socorro on the three major highways informed the weary traveler that the Capitol Bar and Café was just ahead “on the Plaza in old Socorro.”**

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### **Passing of the Torch**

By the late 1950s, major changes loomed on the horizon for both the Coronado Tavern and the Capitol Bar. All the proprietors had been in the bar business for 20–30 years and either wanted to retire or at least move on to other things. In 1958–1959, the Coronado was leased to Kippie Olguin, who operated the business until the Piccininis decided to liquidate. That is also the approximate time Willie Emillio decided to venture into the manganese mining business.

When the Coronado closed its doors, Kippie simply moved around the corner and leased the Capitol. Willie Emillio did not do well in the manganese business. He ultimately found

renewed and lasting success with Socorro's Pepsi-Cola distributorship.

Willie Emillio never forgot his many years in the bar business, however, and often recalled the many very special friendships that developed during those years, both with Socorro's citizens, and especially with the School of Mines engineering and geology students. The latter held him in such high esteem that they made Willie an honorary member of the New Mexico School of Mines Alumni Association — an accolade bestowed on perhaps less than two dozen people.

Upon his death, in January 1998, Willie left a bequest to the school to establish the William M. Emillio Scholarship fund.

Kippie Olguin maintained his lease at the Capitol until late 1963, at which time he relinquished it to Earl DeBrine and Raymond Gallegos.

On July 14, 1964, one of the authors, Robert Eveleth, went to work for DeBrine and Gallegos and spent an enjoyable four years practicing the ancient and honorable art of mixology. During this time, the proprietors decided that Giovanni Biavaschi's vast and essentially unused basement constituted an undeveloped "gold mine." The place was given a good scrubbing, the stone walls varnished, attractive light fixtures installed and comfortable custom-made cushions placed on the stone piers around the walls. A storage area on the south side was framed off from the rest of the basement by a gypsum dry wall and the north face of that wall presented an artistic opportunity: the services of a Santa Fe artist were acquired and he spent the better part of a month laying out and painting an attractive mural. The final improvement occurred when the proprietors installed a "dumb-waiter" hoist facility at the east end of the bar. This enabled trays of drinks to be raised and lowered without having to negotiate the steep basement stairs.

The remodeled basement now needed a name



Courtesy of Earl Jr. and Joanna DeBrine  
**Newly weds Earl DeBrine and Emerlinda "Mernie" Gallegos DeBrine about 1955 enjoying a night out at the Coronado Tavern. Earl leased and ran the Capitol Bar for many years. In 1980, Earl and Mernie DeBrine bought the Capitol Bar.**

so the proprietors held a contest. The prize was to be a rare and valuable demijohn (gallon size) of spirits selected from the upper echelon of the distiller's art. Rolls of tickets were rounded up and one could submit as many suggestions as he or she pleased. A large pickle jar sat on the back bar and was soon filled, almost to overflowing, when the great judgment day arrived.

It should be pointed out that DeBrine and Gallegos were very much into the political scene at the time, and the winning name, "The Caucus Room," submitted by Ila Mae and George Hildebrand, reflected that interest. When Gallegos dropped

out of the partnership, in 1965, DeBrine went it alone for the duration.

### **The DeBrine Years, A Continuing Legacy**

For years, Willie Emillio was reluctant to give up ownership of his beloved Capitol Bar. He finally relented on June 30, 1980, at which time Emerlinda "Mernie" and Earl DeBrine became the new owners.



Courtesy of Robert Eveleth  
**Earl DeBrine in a rare quiet moment behind the bar.**

With deed in hand, Earl DeBrine decided to remove and replace the old stucco facing, which due to its age, was cracking and chipping. Upon removal, he discovered that Biavaschi's stone and brick facing was actually more to his liking than the stucco, and the old "Capitol Bar" sign painted above the doors was still serviceable. Another bonus was the "Wines & Liquors" sign on the corner brickwork, dating back to the Green Front days. Earl DeBrine added the porch to further enhance the bar's territorial appearance.

Socorro lost a good friend when Earl DeBrine died suddenly and unexpectedly, in February 1987. The family bravely moved on with the sons and daughters assuming the managerial reins.

### Fire Strikes Again

Several years after the death of Earl Debrine, tragedy struck again, in 1993, during a severe autumn thunderstorm. One of the authors, Paul Harden, was working at his print shop that evening when the lightning, wind and sheets of rain started. Following several very close lightning strikes, the smell of smoke filled the air. Venturing out into the heavy rain to investigate, Harden saw flames shooting into the street from the front door of the Capitol Bar. Oddly, like the fire in 1940, this was also late on a Sunday night. Calling in the alarm, the Socorro Fire Department responded immediately and fought the fire into the wee hours of the night in the pouring rain.

The interior of the building was badly damaged, but the early detection by Harden saved the bulk of the building. Biavaschi's saloon building, "built for the ages," again lived up to its promise.

Following the fire, the DeBrine family and friends were inspecting the burned building, trying to grasp the extent of the disaster. When Fire Chief Bob Brunson entered the building, they asked when the firemen would be done so they could secure the building. Brunson informed them all the firefighters were gone and the trucks back at the station.

"Then who is that man in the second story?" they asked, pointing to a man walking along the rafters — only pant legs and shoes were visible.

Moments later, the man disappeared and his footsteps went silent. They recognized the jeans and shoes as those typically worn by former owner Earl DeBrine. Was it Earl, inspecting his beloved Capitol Bar and ensuring everyone was safe? Only the century old bricks of the Capitol Bar know for sure.

The Cap was rebuilt with the Debrine family going to great efforts to preserve as much of the ambiance of the original bar as possible — preserving Socorro's only remaining Territorial saloon.

The Debrines have also preserved the long-standing tradition of hosting live entertainment on weekends and during special events such as the annual 49ers weekend, SocorroFest and others. Many notable (as well as a few less notable) artists have performed over the years. Among them are the well-known Vigilante Band, who returned this year for their 33rd reunion, and Dr. Rock's Dixieland Jazz Band for Mardi Gras weekend. Among the lesser-known was one of the authors, Robert Eveleth's, own bluegrass combo, the "Not Broke Just Badly Bent" band.



The author's (Robert Eveleth) bluegrass band, "Not Broke Just Badly Bent," provided the entertainment many a Friday night at the Capitol during the late 1980s/early 90s. The sketch artists always had difficulty with our name!

### Epilogue

Socorro of the 21st century is vastly changed from its predecessor of the 1880s. The earlier version claimed well over a dozen bars and saloons in the Plaza area alone, while today there are a mere three throughout town: the El Camino Restaurant and Matador Lounge, Ranchers Steakhouse and

Road Runner Lounge, and the Capitol Bar. All provide a wide variety of entertainment but the Cap is the granddaddy of them all. It is the only Socorro saloon that can claim a Territorial pedigree.

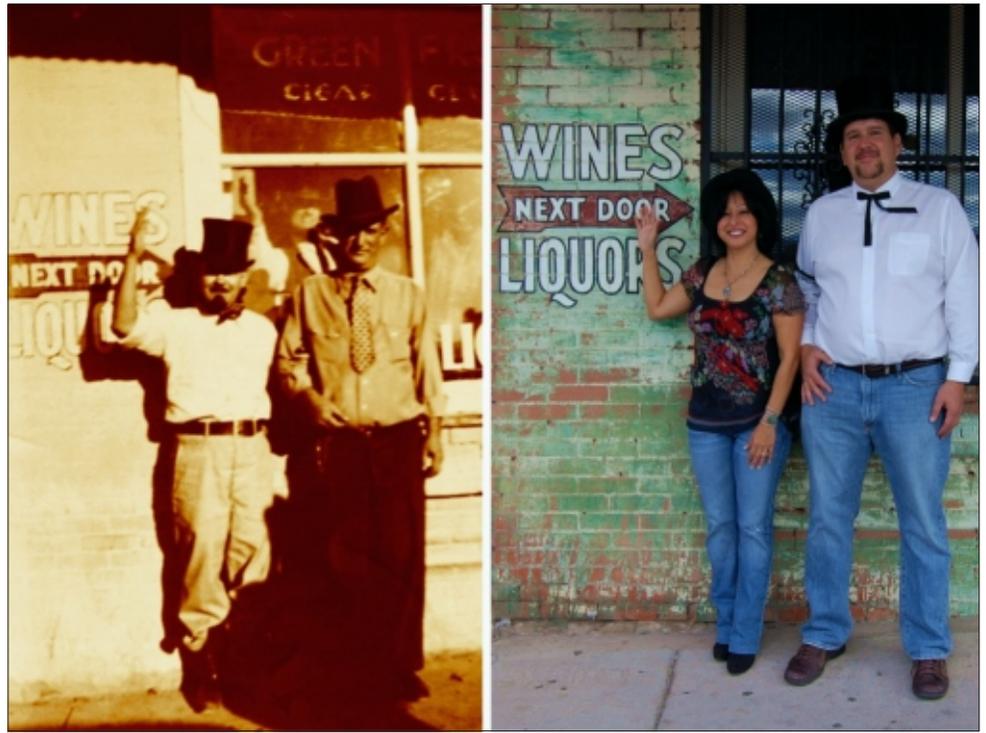
Times change, and the name may have changed, but Giovanni Biavaschi's saloon remains. Willie Emillio once wrote: "Through the years, both lean and prosperous, the Capitol Bar has survived ...Today it is simply all things to all people. It is an extension of the friendly Plaza on which it sits. From the (old-timers) who think of it as the Green Front to long-haired college kids from nearly every state in the Union, the Capitol Bar (continues to be one of Socorro's) favorite places."

The authors, during their quieter moments, imagine they can hear the jolly, rotund Biavaschi letting out with a giant belly laugh. His contemporaries built their premises from milled lumber and framed adobe, and all were lost either to fire or the simple ravages of time. Biavaschi built his, instead, of native stone and brick, and his foresight has proven itself through two fires and a near-miss third. Although he lost his pride and joy



Photo by Paul Harden

**The Capitol Bar of today. The façade has undergone several changes from Biavaschi's original native stone and pressed brick through the stucco era, and more recently, back to the original stone and brick**



Left photo courtesy Robert Eveleth; right photo by Paul Harden

**One of the few photos of the Green Front bar (left) with owner Fred Emillio standing on the right in the 1930s. Right photo shows current owners Joanna and Earl Jr. Debrine posing beside the historic "Wines & Liquors" sign – still on the corner of today's Capitol Bar.**

to hard times and financial missteps, we imagine he is still laughing. And the last laugh is always the best.

**Some of the references used in this article:** *"The Smallest Bottler," by Willie Emillio (Pepsi Cola World, 1975); numerous issues of El Defensor Chieftain and Socorro County Courthouse records; Phyllis Reiche, the Debrine family, Sarah Green-Padilla, Dave Matthews, and Max Torres for photographs and information; posthumously to Willie Emillio for preserving much of the Capitol Bar's early history; and interviews and field work by the authors. All images are from the authors' collections unless otherwise noted.*

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## About this article

It was my pleasure to team up with Robert Eveleth in preparing this two-part article on Socorro's Territorial Saloons. His knowledge, drive for research, and unique access to historical records made this series possible. Especially on the Green Front and Capitol Bars.

As a young man, Eveleth was fortunate to work at the Capitol Bar while attending the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, giving him first hand exposure to the history of the bar and access to the Emillio and Debrine families, developing lasting friendships.

In later years, Willie Emillio presented Eveleth with numerous photographs and other documents related to the history of the Capitol Bar and the Emillio families for safekeeping. Without these authentic documents, the completeness and accuracy of the definitive history of the Capitol Bar would have been impossible.

The Capitol Bar is ubiquitous with Socorro, steeped deep in local legends and lore. There has always been a curiosity for the true history of the Capitol Bar. Both of us spent many months researching this article. It was our intent to present the first documented and researched history of the Capitol Bar with utmost accuracy and quality – that like Biavaschi's Saloon – to “last the ages.”

– Paul Harden



The authors, Robert Eveleth (left) and Paul Harden (right) standing at the historic “Wines & Liquors” sign at the Capitol Bar in 2010. Photo by Joanna Debrine.

## Chronology of the CAPITOL BAR

1896	Built by Giovanni Biavaschi
1896–1909	<b>Biavaschi Saloon</b> <i>Giovanni Biavaschi &amp; Antonio Gianera, Prop.</i>
1909	<b>Biavaschi Saloon</b> – closed by sheriff for failure to renew liquor license
1909	Biavaschi building foreclosure for unpaid debts and taxes owed
1909	<b>Biavaschi Saloon</b> – Building & furnishings purchased by Henry G. May
1909–1912	<b>The Club Bar</b> <i>Judge Amos Green, Proprietor (leasee)</i>
1912	New Mexico Statehood & new liquor laws Judge Green leases out bar after statehood due to increased Judicial responsibilities
1912–1919?	<b>Torres &amp; Gallegos Bar</b> <i>Jose E. Torres &amp; Pete Gallegos, Leasee</i>
1918	N.M. Prohibition, U.S. Prohibition in 1919
1919–1923	<b>Green's Pools Hall</b> (Prohibition) <i>Judge Amos Green, Proprietor</i>
1923–1933	<b>Green's Pool Hall</b> (Prohibition) <i>Leased to Fred Emillio &amp; Damian Padilla</i>
1933	Prohibition repealed
1933–1938	<b>Green Front Saloon</b> <i>Fred Emillio, Prop.</i> (Biavaschi building)
1939–1940	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> On corner of Manazanares & Plaza (Old Plaza Café building) <i>Willie &amp; Frankie Emillio, owners</i>
1940	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> – destroyed by fire
1940–	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> – moves to old Green Front (Biavaschi Saloon/Henry May building) <i>Willie &amp; Frankie Emillio, owners</i>
1943	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> Frank Emillio purchases the Biavaschi Saloon building from Henry May. Building & bar now under single ownership
1947–1980	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> Willie Emillio purchases family interest and becomes sole owner
1959	Willie Emillio starts Pepsi Distributorship
1959–1963	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> <i>Bar run by Kippie Olguin, leasee</i>
1963	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> <i>Leased to Earl Debrine &amp; Ray Gallegos</i>
1980	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> Willie Emillio sells Capitol Bar <i>Earl and Mernie Debrine new owners</i>
1987	Earl Debrine dies
1987–present	<b>The Capitol Bar</b> <i>Earl Jr. and Joanna Debrine, owners</i>