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## Documents Department

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## Documents Department

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The Zito family exemplifies the hard-working Italians who came to New Mexico seeking a better life for themselves, and for those who stayed in the Old Country. Pete Zito came to Albuquerque in the early 1900s. He boarded at the Los Angeles House on South Third Street, operated by another Italian family, the Morellis. He soon went into business with A. M. Morelli, and was proprietor of the New York Saloon at 315 South Second Street. Here, Pete had a Wild West-style shootout with a thief who skulked to the bar, disguised by a white handkerchief with eyeholes. Zito won the exchange, and the felonious fiend was brought to justice.

Angela (Angie) Barbieri came to America in 1907 to stay with her brother, Dominic. She was dreaming the European version of the American Dream, of “picking up money off the streets” to help her family in Italy. Because young working men shared his house, Dominic deemed the environment improper for a young lady, so he sent her to live at Mrs. Morelli’s boarding house, where she met Pete Zito. Angie worked as a seamstress at the Imperial Laundry and went to night school at Albuquerque High School. When Pete and Angie fell in love, the young man not only asked Dominic for his sister’s hand, but he wrote to her parents in Italy and obtained permission to make her his bride.

The young couple had three children: Mary, Lee, and Johnny. “My parents worked hard,” says Mary Zito Armstrong. Side by side, they achieved the real American Dream, owning both homes and businesses—The Metropolitan Hotel and Bar, the Alamo Hotel and Grocery Stores, the Venetian Bar, and other establishments. The Zitos never forgot their families and always shared their good fortune with relatives in Italy.

Pete Zito died during World War II while his son served with General MacArthur. Angie and the children carried on his work, adding property in the booming Northeast Heights to the family holdings. One of the buildings they owned is the recently renovated Guild Theater.

Like other Italian American families in Albuquerque, the Zitos were active in religious and community organizations like the Immaculate Conception Church, the Colombo Society, and the Italian Women’s Charity Club. Mary remembers dancing around with other kids in Colombo Hall, while their parents attended meetings and events. The Zito sisters still live in Albuquerque, and are proud to be both Italian and American.

Mo Palmer  
The Albuquerque Museum

The following newspaper articles have been transcribed verbatim from the *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, dated 23 February and 11 April 1907. We could not adequately duplicate them with our scanner given the quality of the reproductions we obtained.

23 February 1907

**ONE LONE BANDIT IS FOILED IN BOLD HOLD UP—MASKED ROBBER INVADES THE NEW YORK SALOON—Takes Four Shots at Proprietor When Latter Draws Revolver and Escapes in Darkness. Bullets Go Wild**

The lone bandit got in his spectacular work again last night when a masked man with a revolver entered the New York saloon near the corner of South Second Street and Silver avenue [sic], and ordered *Proprietor Zito* to throw up his hands. The latter, instead of doing so made a spring for the rear end of the bar, whence he grabbed a revolver and instantly fired at the would-be robber. The latter commenced shooting at the same instant and six shots were exchanged, the highwayman firing four times and Zito twice. All the bullets went wild and as the sixth shot cracked, the intruder ducked out the door and disappeared. Zito was alone in the saloon when the episode took place.

All the description Zito could give of the man was that he wore a black hat and had a white handkerchief over his face with holes cut for the eyes. He lost his hat in the fusillade but otherwise left no clue to his identity. The exchange of shots caused considerable excitement in that vicinity, the attempted robbery occurring at fifteen minutes before midnight. Zito told the police who arrived on the scene five minutes after the thug's disappearance that there was \$100 in the saloon, of the presence of which the stranger was probably aware.

Every effort is being made to apprehend the criminal. By a strange coincidence, a similar attempt was made in the New York saloon several months ago.

The police found where four of the six bullets perforated the walls. The holes made by the other two could not be found, and it is believed that two of the bullets were carried away by the bandit.

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11 April 1907:

**FISHER CONVICTED OF HOLDING UP THE "NEW YORK"—RAGGED BLACK HAT FIGURES IN EVIDENCE—Found Guilty of Daring Attempt to Rob Pete Zito—Jury Empaneled in Case of Ernest, Alleged Wire Thief.**

John Fisher was found guilty by a jury in the district court yesterday afternoon of attempting to hold up proprietor Pete Zito and rob the New York saloon on South Second street at midnight on the night of February 22.

The attempted robbery was one of the boldest ever tried in this city. Zito was alone in the saloon when a masked man entered with a revolver which he pointed at the head of Zito with the laconic command "hands up." Instead of obeying Zito grabbed his gun from under the counter and dodged behind a wooden partition in the rear of the saloon. Through this partition the two men emptied their guns at each other. when the fusillade was over the partition resembled a sieve and Zito had a slight flesh wound in the breast where a spent bullet hit him after piercing the partition. The would-be hold up ran

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out the back door and disappeared leaving a ragged black slouch hat with a bullet hole through it and a splotch of paint on it. Zito did not grapple with the robber and was not knocked down as per the remarkably [sic] inaccurate account in the evening paper. The hat was identified by Stacy the painter as belonging to Fisher who had worked for him and a well known character named "Blackie" McIntyre positively identified Fisher as the man who did the job, making the interesting statement that he had been asked to help, but confined himself to watching the performance from the other side of the street. "Blackie" afterward changed his mind and professed to have never seen Fisher before.

Fisher was bound over to the grand jury by justice Craig who was a witness yesterday, as were marshal McMillain [and] assistant Marshal Kennedy, Policeman Highbargain, a painter named Vincent for whom Fisher worked, and others, including Zito who identified Fisher by his voice, stature and the hat which was produced in evidence. Attorney Heacock defended the prisoner and Attorney Wilkerson assisted Mr. Clancy in the prosecution.

A jury was empaneled last evening and the trial begun of James Ernest, charged with stealing copper wire from the Santa Fe Railway Company.

Editor's note: The Ernest and Fisher cases are unrelated.

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