



MEDIA KIT

FERNIE MUSEUM | SEPTEMBER 19 TO JANUARY 6

An Immigrant Story: The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello

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The Fernie Museum is pleased to host the exhibit, *An Immigrant Story: The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello* from September 19, 2015 to January 6, 2016. The exhibit highlights the Roaring 20's and the intriguing life of Emilio Picariello, a successful Italian entrepreneur turned bootlegger whose path led to murder and infamy. Experience the rich history and culture of Fernie, BC through the life and times of one of Fernie's most notorious residents and businessmen.

Emilio Picariello remains one of the enigmatic personalities of his time, capturing the imaginations of Canadians today almost as much as he did during his sensational murder trial and death by hanging ninety years ago.

From his arrival in Canada to his death, Picariello was a larger-than-life personality. In 1899, at the age of 20, he immigrated to the United States. He came to Toronto in 1902 and arrived in Fernie in 1911. He was a loving husband to Maria and proud father of their six children. A successful entrepreneur, he operated a number of businesses, beginning in eastern Canada and culminating in Fernie and Blairmore. He served as a one-term town councillor. To the poor and friends, he was generous.

Picariello became a bootlegger operating between Fernie in British Columbia and Blairmore and Lethbridge in Alberta, as well as the American Pacific Northwest. As one of the so-called “criminal class” of bootleggers for whom this was a business, he became a target for the Alberta Provincial Police. On September 21, 1922, the A.P.P. and local police set up a sting operation in Coleman and Blairmore to entrap Picariello and his men while engaged in a bootlegging run. Chased by the police, Picariello’s son Steve was shot in the hand by A.P.P. Constable Stephen Oldacres Lawson. Picariello, accompanied by a young family friend, Florence Lassandro, confronted Lawson about his son’s condition later that evening at the A.P.P. detachment in Coleman, and Lawson was shot.

After a sensational trial in Calgary in which Picariello and Lassandro were tried jointly, they were found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang.

This exhibit traces the rise of Picariello from a young Italian immigrant to a shrewd and successful businessman to his fall and eventual death as one of Canada's most infamous bootleggers. The exhibit also paints a picture of the social context in which the fateful events took place: immigration, the push for women's suffrage and the Temperance movement.

TRAVELLING EXHIBIT

The exhibit will travel to other communities in British Columbia and Alberta, including Fort Macleod (Fort Museum of the NWMP), Lethbridge (Galt Museum and Archives), Fort Saskatchewan (Fort Saskatchewan Museum) and the Crowsnest Pass (Crowsnest Museum and Archives) between 2015 and 2017. Please contact Ron Ulrich, Director-Curator to discuss an opportunity for the exhibit to be hosted at your museum or cultural centre.

PUBLICATIONS

A book by the same name, *An Immigrant Story: The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello*, by Adriana Davies will be published by Oolichan Books, Fernie, BC in Fall 2015. Copies are available at the Fernie Museum. Out of town orders may be placed by phone at 250.423.7016, ext 1 or by email at info@ferniemuseum.com. For wholesale orders, contact Oolichan Books by phone at 250.423.6113 or by email at info@oolichan.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Columbia Basin Trust | Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance and Regional District of East Kootenay
- CTV Lethbridge
- Park Place Lodge
- Tourism Fernie

About Emilio Picariello

Emilio Picariello (1879-1923) was born in Capriglia, Avellino, Province of Campania, Italy. He immigrated to the US in 1899 arriving at Ellis Island and worked initially in Boston, Albany and Buffalo, New York.

Picariello came to Toronto, Canada in September 1902. By Christmas, he had saved enough money to open a small grocery store and continued to save until he was later able to open a second in Montreal. In the store, he met his wife Maria and they were married in a Catholic ceremony on April 16, 1904. The young couple welcomed a son, Stefano (Steve), in 1905, and a daughter, Angelina Rose (Julie), in 1907. In 1911, they moved to Fernie, B.C. where he worked in the macaroni factory owned by G. Maraniro [Maranaris], who eventually moved to Lethbridge allowing Picariello to purchase it. The couple had four more children: Carmine Mario, Luigi (Louie), Charles Albert (Chuck), and Florence Eleanor (Helen) Matson.

The family prospered in Fernie as Picariello revealed a distinct entrepreneurial streak. He added other businesses to his pasta operation including a cigar factory, ice cream parlour and plant, and wholesale food shipping and delivery service.

Around 1914, Picariello became the Fernie representative of the Pollock Wine Company and collected and bought used bottles for re-sale to brewers and distillers. This led to a monopoly and, in 1916, he advertised under the title “E. Pick, the Bottle King.”

Prohibition prompted his purchase of the Alberta Hotel in Blairmore. The illegal sale of liquor offered a business opportunity that he could not pass up and this would set the course of the remainder of his life.

Curatorial Statement

A historian (and curator) wants lots and lots of archival material – documents, correspondence, newspaper accounts, diaries, journals, photographs, etc. – to consult so as to be able to tell a compelling story. The icing on the cake is if there are people, family members, peers and others, who may have known the characters at the centre of the story or had information to pass on about them.

It's also fascinating examining what I view as "contested history" – historical events in which there are competing and even diametrically opposed points of view. These elements have shaped my research on Emilio Picariello and Florence Lassandro and the man they were found guilty of murdering – Constable Stephen Oldacres Lawson of the Alberta Provincial Police.

As the starting premise of my research, I asked the question – "What if they were innocent of the murder, as they had claimed, and had wrongfully been found guilty?" How could I pursue this question and arrive at a compelling result?

Everyone is familiar with fictional and historical investigations by police into "cold cases," generally involving an unsolved murder. Cold case research involves sifting into case files and also interviewing people involved in the case at the time to try to solve the case. This process hopefully results in some new truths.

What did my research involve? I read for a second and third time the treasure trove of resources at the Glenbow Archives and the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The former has the records of his principal defence lawyer, J. McKinley Cameron, Kings Counsel, and the latter includes some trial materials and Alberta Provincial Police Records.

Did I find a "smoking gun" (what detectives look for)? I believe so. I've meticulously set out the police case that resulted in their conviction and also challenged it by providing substantial conflicting evidence. Was there a "shooter in the alley" as both the accused contended and, if so, who was he?

Did the fact that both Picariello and Lassandro were Italian immigrants have a bearing on the guilty verdict? This is a complex subject and it can only be addressed by looking at immigration history of the time and commonly held attitudes. Were foreigners of "loose moral fibre" and criminals to boot?

With over two-thirds of the population in Fernie and the Crowsnest Pass of British origin, this was an all-too-common point of view. War-time internment, strikes and other challenges to authority made distrust of foreigners and what we would today describe as "systemic racism" the norm. Was the Italian Black Hand Society active in Fernie and the Pass as was suggested in local newspapers?

Finally, to tell a compelling story, rounded characters must be created – not just the stereotypes found in the media of the time and perpetuated in stories of Prohibition. Finding oral history interviews of individuals of the time who knew the central characters and were participants in Prohibition provided information not entered into the legal records either at the preliminary hearing or the trial. Getting information from members of the Picariello family allowed me to see what kind of person Emilio truly was.

Who did it? You will have to come to the exhibit to find out and also read the upcoming book titled *The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello* to be published by Oolichan Books, Fernie, BC.

Adriana A. Davies
Curator and Historian

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Adriana Davies was born in Italy and grew up in Canada. She received B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Alberta, and a Ph.D. from the University of London, England. Her thesis topic was “The Art for Art’s Sake and Decadent Movements in Nineteenth Century English and French Literature.”

Dr. Davies has a range of publications. Her most recent publication is the critical biography titled *From Realism to Abstraction: The Art of J. B. Taylor* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014). With Jeff Keshen, Dean of Arts, Mount Royal University, Calgary, she is co-editor of an anthology titled *The Frontier of Patriotism: Alberta and the First World War*.

For over twenty years she has worked in the museum sector in Alberta and is well-known for advocacy on behalf of the sector. She served on the Government of Canada’s Cultural Sector Initiative and co-chaired the Research Steering Committee, Capacity Joint Table, responsible for designing the first-ever National Survey of Non-Profit and Voluntary Organizations as well as the benchmarking study on charities in 40 countries done by Johns Hopkins University for UNESCO.

She has undertaken a range of curatorial work including obtaining loans from French and British museum collections for the millennium exhibit *Jesus through the Centuries* at the Royal Alberta Museum. She curated the “People of the Coal Mines: The Italian Community” for the Galt Museum covering communities from the Elk Valley to Drumheller. In 2012, she curated the exhibit titled “J. B. Taylor and the Idea of Mountains” for the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

On July 1st, 2010, she was invested in the Order of Canada for her role in creating the *Alberta Online Encyclopedia* and for her contribution to the promotion and preservation of Canada's cultural heritage. In 2012, she was awarded the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal. As a Member of the Order of Canada she officiates at Canadian citizenship ceremonies. Other awards include: the Alberta Museums Association Life Time Achievement Award, Province of Alberta Centennial Medal, Global Woman of Vision Award and the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in the Arts.

About the Fernie Museum

The Fernie Museum promotes the living landscapes and cultures of Fernie and the Elk Valley-Crowsnest Pass region through the museum and archives' feature exhibitions, permanent collections, public programming and community engagement. It is governed by the Fernie and District Historical Society; the Society was founded in 1964, was incorporated in 1976 and has Canadian charitable status.

After years of collecting, the Society opened a museum on August 4, 1979 to coincide with Fernie's Diamond Jubilee in the former Catholic Church rectory. The Society operated from this location until 1999 when the Church realized that it would soon need the property for its own purposes. The museum closed and the collections were put into storage.

It was at this time that a new group of passionate individuals brought new direction and ideas to the Society. With no facility, they began the digitization of the archives, expanded the image collection, created the Fernie Historical Calendar, published the Heritage Walking Tour booklet, and took the museum to the people with satellite exhibits around the community.

As part of Fernie's Centennial Celebrations, the Society opened a temporary museum at 362B 2nd for the months of July, August and September, 2004. High attendance resulting from a visible, central location prompted the Society to continue operating a museum and visitor center from this location until 2010 in partnership with the Fernie Chamber of Commerce and with support from the City of Fernie.

In 2009, the City of Fernie, understanding the value a permanent home for the museum to the cultural life of the community, purchased the former BC Hydro building (the historic 1910 Home Bank building) and entered into a 25 year lease with the Society. Planning and renovations began and the Society gained its occupancy permit in 2010 for a permanent home in its third location.

Over 50 community volunteers donated 6,000 hours to restore the historic building and help develop the main floor exhibit with the support from 22 local businesses. The Museum Project costs a total of \$575,000. Major funders included the City of Fernie, Teck Resources, Columbia Basin Trust, Canadian Heritage, Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance, the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund, the Resorts of the Canadian Rockies, Island Lake Resort Group, Heritage Legacy Fund of BC, Art and Ingrid Sombrowski, Igor Landa's Construction and the Fernie Rotary Club. The museum officially opened in September 2013. The Society continues to work in partnership with the Fernie Chamber of Commerce in providing a range of visitor services that promote Fernie, past and present, and enhance the Fernie visitor experience.

Exhibit Programming

FILUMENA, THE OPERA

Friday, September 18 | The Arts Station

Presented by the Fernie Friends of Opera | Admission by donation | Video Presentation

The opera Filumena follows the real life story of Filumena (Florence) Lassandro. Filumena Constanzo immigrated to Fernie from Italy with her parents and two siblings in 1909 and married Charles Sanfedele [later Lassandro] when she was just 15. The Costanzo family and the Picariello family were well acquainted with each other in Fernie. When Emilio Picariello purchased the Alberta Hotel in 1918 and moved his family to Blairmore, Florence and her husband joined them. Florence worked in the hotel as a housekeeper and Charles worked with Picariello in both his legitimate hotel business and illegal bottlegging venture. During a sting operation by the Alberta Provincial Police to catch Picariello, Picariello's 17 year old son, Steve, was shot in the hand while fleeing back to Fernie with a McLaughlin Buick full of liquor by Constable Stephen Lawson. Picariello, with Florence Lassandro in tow, went to confront Lawson, who had served as Chief of Police in Fernie just six months before. Lawson was fatally shot. Picariello and Lassandro were tried jointly for murder and were executed.

Librettist | John Murrell

John Murrell, OC, AOE, is internationally renowned as one of the most frequently produced of all Canadian playwrights. He is also a highly respected arts advocate, mentor and consultant. His plays have been translated into 15 different languages and performed in more than 30 countries worldwide. He has worked as Playwright-in-Residence at both Theatre Calgary and Alberta Theatre Projects, as an Associate Director of the Stratford Festival of Canada, as Head of the Banff Playwrights Colony, as Head of the Theatre Section of The Canada Council for the Arts and since November 1999, as Artistic Director/Executive Producer of Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre. Murrell's work has received many awards, both nationally and internationally. His most recent projects are a play about Friedrich Nietzsche for The Shaw Festival of Canada and a second opera with John Estacio entitled FROBISHER (working title) scheduled to debut at the 2006 Banff Summer Arts Festival.

CHAUTAUQUA 2015 | THE LIFE AND TIMES OF EMILIO PICARIELLO

Saturday, September 19, 2015 | Fernie Museum | 10:00 am to 4:30 pm

A 1920s style community event not to be missed!

Revisit the life and times of one of Canada's most infamous bootleggers, Emilio Picariello. Experience Fernie through Pic's eyes on a walking tour with one of our knowledgeable guides. Learn more about Picariello's fascinating life from the exhibit's curator, Adriana Davies. Participate in a 1920's style radio play about Fernie's reaction to the Picariello trial.

Join the ladies of the Fernie Temperance Society at the Box Lunch Social, a hearty lunch for only \$5! And don't forget to bring a bottle to exchange for an ice cream cone, just like Fernie-ites did at Picariello's ice cream wagon 100 years ago!

Chautauqua 2015 is being held in conjunction with the official opening of the exhibit, *An Immigrant Story: The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello*.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 10:00 am | Welcome Remarks – Dignitaries, Picariello's family
- 10:15 am | Official Opening of the Exhibit, Exhibit Open for public viewing
- 10:30 am | Walking Tour – Picariello's Fernie
- 11:30 am | Curator's Talk with Adriana Davies
- Noon | Box Lunch and Ice Cream Social
- 12:30 | Musical Entertainment – Rossana Anselmo
- 1:30 pm | Convictions – A 1920's style radio play
- 2:30 pm | Walking Tour – Picariello's Fernie
- 3:00 pm | Curator's Talk with Adriana Davies
- 3:30 pm | Walking Tour – Picariello's Fernie
- 4:00 pm | Convictions – A 1920's style radio play

HISTORY OF THE CHAUTAUQUA IN FERNIE

Chautauquas were held annually in Fernie from 1918 to the late 1920s.

Chautauqua was a travelling institution begun at Chautauqua Lake, NY with roots in Canadian Methodist Temperance rallies. Chautauquas carried education, inspiration and entertainment across North America.

John M. Erickson brought the idea from the US to Alberta in 1917. He established Dominion Chautauquas (Canadian Chautauquas after 1926) with headquarters in Calgary. With the help of his wife, Nola, Erickson spread a network of tent circuits across Canada from the Pacific to Quebec to the northern fringes of prairie settlement until 1935.



Chautauqua programs consisted of 4 to 6 days of musical numbers, lectures, dramatic productions and magic or puppet shows. Chautauqua was good family entertainment and the people loved it. To many it provided their only opportunity for a cultural experience. Its end in 1935 can be attributed to changes in popular taste, the increasing availability of movies and the spread of radio, as well as to an easing of Depression conditions.

The Fernie Museum is bringing back this tradition by hosting an annual festival celebrating Fernie's rich history and culture. This annual event for the whole family will feature musical entertainment, lectures, dramatic productions, and demonstrations. Food vendors provide a taste of Fernie's culinary traditions.

FEATURED MUSICIANS, LECTURERS, AND ENTERTAINERS AT THE 2015 CHAUTAUQUA

Adriana Davies is a well-known researcher, writer, editor and poet. She was the Executive Director of the Alberta Museums Association for thirteen years and Executive Director of the Heritage Community Foundation for ten years. Under her leadership, the Foundation created the Alberta Online Encyclopedia comprising 84 multi-media websites, which were gifted to the University of Alberta in 2009. She is the author of *From Realism to Abstraction: The Art of J. B. Taylor* (2014, University of Calgary Press) and co-editor of *The Frontier of Patriotism: Alberta and the First World War* (to be published by the University of Calgary Press in 2016). Dr. Davies was invested in the Order of Canada, in 2010 for her contributions to heritage. In 2015, she was awarded a knighthood (Cavaliere d'Italia) by the Government of Italy for her contributions to the preservation of the Italian language and culture, and her research and publications on Italian immigration to Canada.

Rosanna Anselmo was born in Creston, B.C. and moved to Natal when she was one year old. Her family moved to Fernie in 1970 and she has lived there since. She married Barry Anselmo who was born and raised in Fernie. They raised their children in Fernie and couldn't think of anywhere better to live. Rosanna learned to play the guitar in her early 20's and started song writing within a couple years. Her love for Folk music was instilled in her at any early age by her father who played the mandolin. If she had to choose what genre of music she prefers to listen to she would definitely say folk music, thus the folk songs she writes.

The Fernie Footlight Dramatic Society is the combined talent of some of the East Kootenay's finest theatre thespians. On stage at the 2015 Chautauqua is Lindsay Valance, James Murray, and Lisa Aasebo alongside Fernie's own Virginia Robinson and Randal Macnair. The 1920s radio-style play, *Convictions*, is written and directed by Lindsay Valance.

Terri Tombosso is a storyteller at heart. A long-time, community-recognized volunteer, she is fascinated by the many stories of Fernie's past. Terri joined the Fernie Museum Board of Directors in 2014 after volunteering at a number of Museum events. Terri will be leading the Picariello's Fernie Walking Tour throughout the day.

PICARIELLO'S FERNIE | A HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

Saturday, September 19 and 26, October 3, and 10, 2015 | 11:00 am to noon | \$10 per person

This hour long walking tour highlights the Roaring 20's and the intriguing life of Emilio Picariello, a successful Italian entrepreneur turned bootlegger whose path led to infamy and murder. Experience the rich history and culture of Fernie, BC through the life and times of one of Fernie's most notorious residents and business tycoons.

TICKETS

Tickets are \$10.00 per person or \$25 per family and are available at the Fernie Museum (250.423.7016, x 1 or info@ferniemuseum.com) or online at www.ferniemuseum.com.

RUM RUNNING AND WHISKY 6 BUS TOUR

Saturday, October 3, 2015 | 9:00 am to 5:00 pm | \$35 per person

Its 1922 all over again!

Relive when liquor was illegal and Whiskey 6s were loaded with hidden bottles outrunning the police. This bus tour will follow the famed rum running route through the Crowsnest Pass from the Fernie Museum to the restored Alberta Hotel in Blairmore once owned by Picariello.

An Italian lunch at the Rum Runner's Roost follows your tour of the many historic sites that feature prominently in the Picariello story. After lunch, passengers will then travel to the Frank Slide Interpretive Center to learn more about the life and times of Picariello.

Don't miss this exclusive program – only 40 seats are available!

For further information about the program itinerary or if you have special meal requirements, please contact 250.423.7016, ext 1.

TICKETS

Tickets are \$35.00 per person and are available at the Fernie Museum (250.423.7016, x 1 or info@ferniemuseum.com) or online at www.ferniemuseum.com.

Tour fee includes light onboard refreshments, lunch at the Rum Runner's Roost in Coleman, Alberta (alcoholic beverages available at restaurant, not included), admission to the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre; all gratuities and taxes are also included.

FERNIE FRIDAY NIGHT SPEAKEASY!

Friday, October 30, 2015 | 9:00 pm to 1:00 am | \$50 per person or \$90 per couple

Its 1920 and Fernie is Roaring!

In plain sight of the Fernie Temperance Society, a hidden Speak Easy operates in Fernie. A special party includes food, heritage beer and moonshine drinks, jazz music, burlesque entertainment and jitter bugging- but it must be kept a secret from the Temperance Society's Nosy Nellies!

Dig out your flapper dress and fedora hats for this illicit party Tickets are limited to 100 people!

TICKETS

Once you've purchased your Speakeasy ticket, find the location and password in your invitation available for pick up at the Fernie Museum on Friday October 30, 2015 between 8:30 and 9:30 pm.

Tickets are \$50.00 per person or \$90 per couple and are available at the Fernie Museum (250.423.7016, x 1 or info@ferniemuseum.com) or online at www.ferniemuseum.com .

Tickets include entertainment, hot and cold hor d'oeuvres, and two complimentary beverages; cash bar available. *Event open to adults ages 19 and over.*

EVENT SPONSOR



UNDER THE LENS | THE PICARIELLO TRIALS REEXAMINED

November 25 | 7:00 to 9:00 pm | Tickets \$10 per adult, \$7 per student

Be part of a jury who decides the fate of Emilio Picariello and Florence – or be part of the audience who hears the murder case against these two notorious Fernie residents.

Case 978: Rex v. Emil Picariello and Florence Lassandro was tried in the Supreme Court of Alberta at the Calgary Provincial Court House from November 27 to December 3, 1922. J. E. Brownlee, Attorney General and future Alberta premier, personally laid the murder charge and attended the entire trial. Mr. Justice W. L. Walsh presided and A. A. McGillivray, K.C., and Sam Helman of Calgary prosecuted. J. McKinley Cameron, K.C. took Picariello and Lassandro's defence and was assisted by the firm of Gillis and McKenzie of Blairmore, and Sherwood Herchmer of Fernie.

This Fernie Museum event held in Fernie's historic court house will be hosted by Keith Regular, a local Picariello researcher and author. Keith will introduce the essence of the court case in which two Elk Valley lawyers will re-examine the case that was put forward in 1922.

Then you, the jury, will have an opportunity to decide Picariello and Lassandro's fate.

TICKETS

Tickets are \$10 per adult and \$7 per student and are available online at www.ferniemuseum.com or at the Fernie Museum. The evening will also include hosted tours of the court house and refreshments.