



The Rise & Fall of EMILIO PICARIELLO

Adriana A. Davies



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Emilio Picariello is a character who captures the imagination. His entrepreneurial spirit garnered him many successful legal businesses. The rising tide of Prohibition meant that bootlegging was a natural progression of “Emperor Pick’s” acumen. Bootlegging put him on the wrong side of the law, however. After a failed sting operation set up by the Alberta Provincial Police, Picariello had a heated argument with Constable Stephen Lawson. Shots were fired and Lawson lost his life. Picariello and Florence Lassandro were found guilty and both were hanged in Fort Saskatchewan in 1923.

Historian Adriana Davies approaches Picariello’s story as a cold case. While there is little doubt he was a bootlegger, she calls into question the circumstances that lead to Constable Lawson’s death and if Picariello was ultimately responsible.

Did his Italian heritage play a role? Was his trial defense adequate? Was there another shooter? Were Picariello and Lassandro wrongfully convicted?



Adriana A. Davies is a well-known researcher, writer, editor and poet. 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.

