



The Hanging and Redemption of John Gordon:: The True Story of Rhode Island's Last Execution

Paul F. Caranci

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On a frigid day in 1843, Amasa Sprague, a wealthy Yankee mill owner, left his mansion to check on his cattle. On the way, he was accosted and beaten beyond recognition, and his body was left facedown in the snow. What followed was a trial marked by judicial bias, witness perjury and societal bigotry that resulted in the conviction of twenty-nine-year-old Irish-Catholic John Gordon. He was sentenced to hang. Despite overwhelming evidence that the trial was flawed and newly discovered evidence that clearly exonerated him, an anti-Irish Catholic establishment refused him a new trial. On February 14, 1845, John Gordon became the last victim of capital punishment in Rhode Island. Local historian Paul F. Caranci brings this case to life, graphically describing the murder and exposing a corrupt judicial system, a biased newspaper and a bigoted society responsible for the unjust death of an innocent man.

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