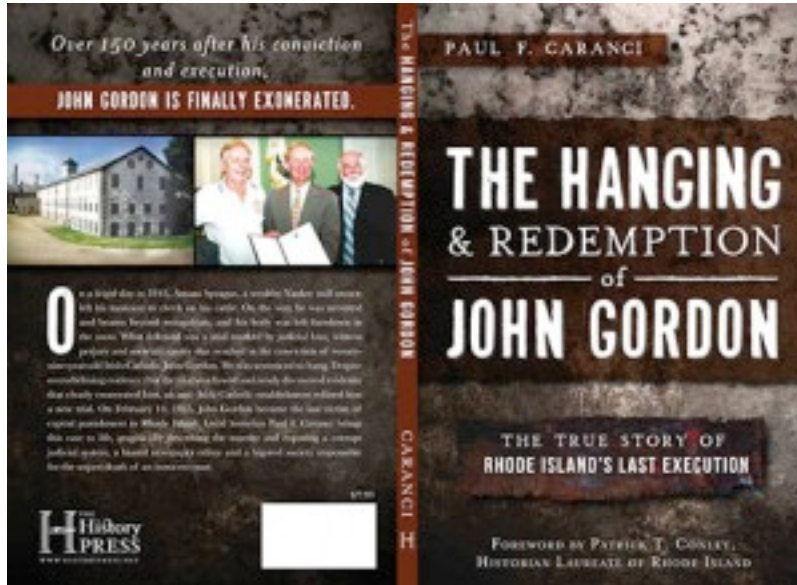


Local historian inks final chapter of the John Gordon saga



Falsely accused, he was hanged in state's last execution

By [ETHAN SHOREY, Valley Breeze Staff Writer](#)

NORTH PROVIDENCE - Almost 170 years after the grizzly slaying of a wealthy and politically powerful Cranston industrialist, the murder still remains unresolved. Yet, one day after Amasa Sprague's body was found lying near the footbridge over the Pocasset River separating Cranston from Johnston, two Irish Catholic immigrants were arrested for their part in committing the deed.

Within three days, nearly the entire Gordon family, including the family dog, for his footprints, was arrested. Three brothers were formally charged with the murder and, in a trial remembered for the actions of a corrupt judge and a bigoted society, one was found guilty.

Sentenced to death, 29-year-old Irishman John Gordon was hanged on Feb. 14, 1845, in the prison yard. The Providence Place Mall was eventually built on the site of the former prison complex where Gordon was hanged.

Gordon, a folk hero to the Irish across Rhode Island, is today buried at St. Mary's Cemetery in Pawtucket.