

Historian and writer John Moore will be the speaker for the first of the spring season of programs at the Northumberland County Historical Society, 1150 N. Front St., Sunbury. The program at 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 16, is free and open to the public.

Moore will speak on *The Trial of Peter McManus, The Last Of The Molly Maguires*.

A Shamokin coal miner, McManus was tried and convicted in 1878 for the 1874 murder of Frederick Hesser, a night watchman at the Hickory Swamp Colliery. McManus was hanged for the crime in the Northumberland County Jail in 1879. He was the only alleged member of the Molly Maguires to be hanged in Northumberland County.

Testimony at his trial charged he was an active member of the Molly Maguires. A prosecution witness claimed to be an officer of the secret organization and said McManus had confessed to him that he had committed the murder. Hesser was beaten to death with a hammer and club.

McManus was the 20th member of the Molly Maguires to be executed in Pennsylvania between 1877-79. The other executions took place in Carbon, Schuylkill, and Columbia counties.

In 1999, the late Jane DuPree Richardson, then director of the historical society, wrote a script for a reenactment based on the transcript of the McManus trial. Moore served as director for the reenactment staged in the main courtroom of the Northumberland County Courthouse, which was where the trial was held. A video was made by NCHS of the performance.