

# The 1946 Moore's Ford Lynching Case: Another Push for Justice on 10/3/2018

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*Mourners carry the flag-draped coffin of lynching victim George W. Dorsey out of Mount Perry Baptist Church in Bishop, Ga. on July 28, 1946. Dorsey was killed along with three others by a mob in 1946. (AP)*

*By all assessments, the 1946 Moore's Ford Lynching in Walton County, GA, still stands as America's last unsolved mass murder. On October 3, 2018 in the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, a decision may be reached that could either bring a long overdue closure to this 72-year-old case or consign it to an obscure and fading memory.*

On the evening of July 25, 1946, a mob of 20 – 50 white men ambushed four African-Americans near the Moore's Ford Bridge linking Walton and Oconee Counties, about 50 miles east of Atlanta. The victims were slaughtered in a barrage of gunfire and fell along the banks of the Apalachee River. Their names were George W. Dorsey (a decorated WWII veteran), his wife Mae Murray, and Roger Malcolm and his wife Dorothy.

Despite federal grand jury testimony in December, 1946 and despite numerous FBI and GBI investigations spanning the next seven decades, no one was ever prosecuted for these ghastly crimes.

In his book, "The Last Lynching: How a Gruesome Mass Murder Rocked a Small Georgia Town," author and historian Anthony S. Pitch paints a raw and unflinching picture of life in 1940s rural Georgia. Based on all available evidence, he meticulously documents the Moore's Ford lynching along with all its cultural and political precursors and aftershocks.

Yet even as the book went to press in 2016, Pitch knew he was still missing key pieces of the story, specifically, the testimony taken under oath inside an Athens, GA Grand Jury Room in December, 1946. For an historian of Pitch's stature, actual witness testimony would provide compelling – and far more reliable – information than casual interviews of local residents or stories from the town newspaper.

Since February, 2014, Joseph J. Bell (Rockaway Township Attorney and former Morris County Clerk), has been working with Mr. Pitch to win the release of those 1946 grand jury transcripts in order to provide historical closure to the case.

It's important to understand that petitioners who challenge the rigidly structured rules of grand jury secrecy seldom prevail in Court; in fact, it took Mr. Pitch and Mr. Bell several attempts since February, 2014 to finally win [a favorable decision from Judge Marc T. Treadwell in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia on August 18, 2017](#) (i.e., that the 1946 Moore's Ford grand jury transcripts could, in fact, be released).

However, the case is now at a critical juncture. Despite Judge Treadwell's favorable decision for petitioner Pitch, the Government elected to challenge the Court's ruling and stand by a strict interpretation of the rules governing grand jury secrecy. The challenge, filed in January, 2018, means that the case now moves to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta for resolution.

There, on October 3, 2018, the Eleventh Circuit Court will hear oral arguments regarding the release of the 1946 Moore's Ford grand jury records. It's possible that there may be challenges to the Eleventh Circuit Court's decision; there is even a possibility that the case could make its way to the United States Supreme Court.

With the unfortunate death this past January of Rich Rusk, co-founder of the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee in 1997, who certainly would have attended the proceedings, both Anthony Pitch and Joe Bell are now encouraging everyone who can do so to attend the October 3, 2018 Circuit Court hearing, especially those who live in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

This show of support will mean a great deal for everyone who has been touched by the Moore's Ford tragedy and especially for the descendants of Roger Malcolm, one of the four victims.

While legal closure has probably passed with the last of the perpetrators, historical closure can and should bring a measure of cultural healing that's now 72 years overdue.

**To learn more about the Moore's Ford case:**

[A Visual Chronology of the Moore's Ford Case](#)

[Morris County Attorney Wins Release of 1946 Grand Jury Transcripts](#)

[Author/Historian Anthony S. Pitch Speaks Before the National Archives \(1:06:13\), 5/4/2016](#)