

## **Samuel Francis (1800) - 1882): Case Study by Mitsuko Brooks**

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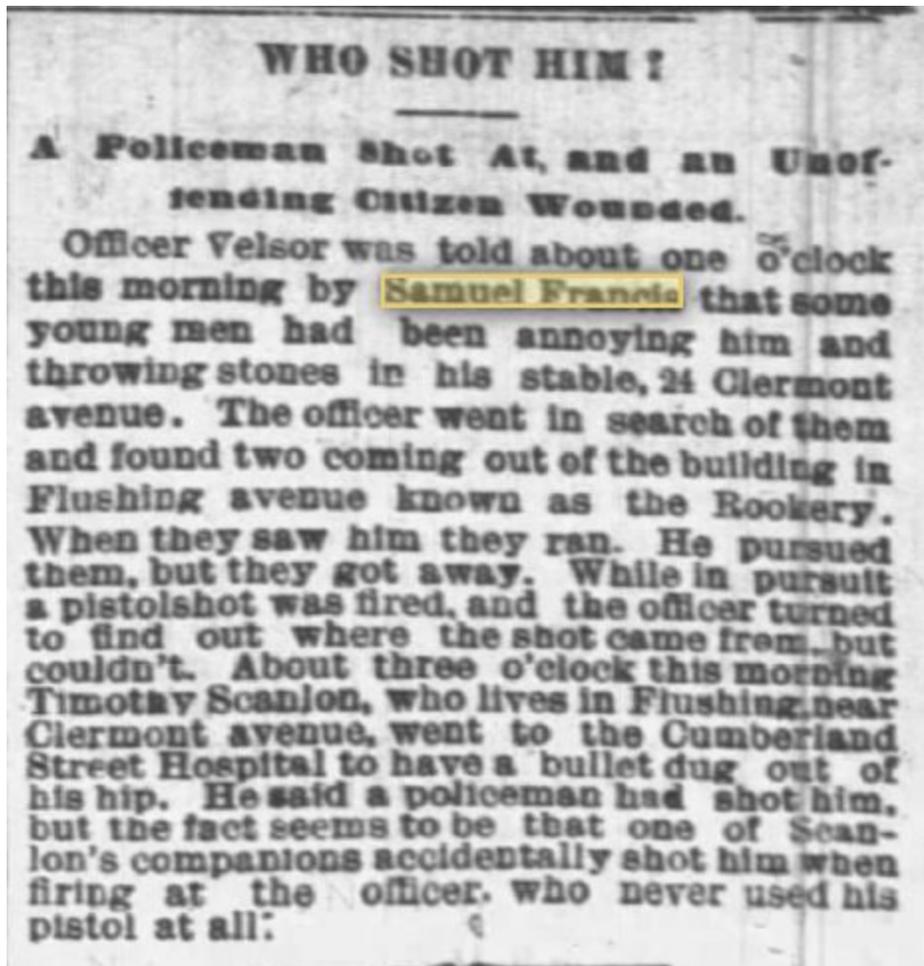
Samuel Frances was born (estimated) 1800 in Newton, Long Island and died March 7, 1882 in Flushing from tuberculosis (phthisis) at 82-years-old. In *The Tuberculosis Movement and The Race Question*, 1890-1850, author Marion Torchida describes how “at the turn of the century, the nation’s nine million blacks, ..., were segregated and impoverished under the Jim Crow system, and their annual mortality rate from tuberculosis was well over,...three times the white rate (152),” explaining how dying from T.B. in 1882, although a common occurrence, is also an indication racial and socioeconomic disadvantages of Black people, and the way one would most likely die.

His employment was noted as a laborer on the Stone-Hartmann Index. In The 1880 United States Census, there is a Samuel ‘Francis’ who was born, estimated 1808, who is Black and married. He was 72-years-old at the time of the record and his occupation is described as whitewashing, which is mixing a dusty lime concoction to paint on buildings and fences to improve their appearance and reduce rot. “Whitewashing...offered abysmally low earnings and very little stability or security” (SenGupta, 2009, p. 57).

It is quite alarming to imagine Frances working at such an older age, in fact working up until sometime between two and ten years before he died in a physically demanding job that did not pay enough to support him and his wife. If this slight misspelling of his last name is the recorded Samuel Frances, his wife’s name is Caroline Francis, born in 1821 and whose occupation was laundry work. Caroline was born in New Jersey and so were both of her parents. There is no record of a child between them. His father’s name is Samuel Frances as well and his mother’s first name is unclear, although both are noted as being born in the United States (through The New York Death and Burials, 1795-1952).

Not finding enough solid substantial news on Samuel Frances, let alone anyone else on my list has left me feeling frustrated with the lack of news reporting on BIPOCs (Black, Indigenous, People of Color [plural]) in the 19th century records. There were very few news articles referencing Samuel Francis, both recorded during his lifetime, but most likely are not him, or are unverifiable. On November 3, 1881 at 1am, a Mr. Samuel Francis was in a Brooklyn stable in the evening on Flushing Avenue and Claremont Avenue (which is our current Brooklyn

Navy Yard today). Four youths threw stones into the stable to annoy him ("Who Shot Him," 1881), entered the stable and possibly assaulted him and then he chased them away ("A Shooting Affray," 1881).



## A SHOOTING AFFRAY

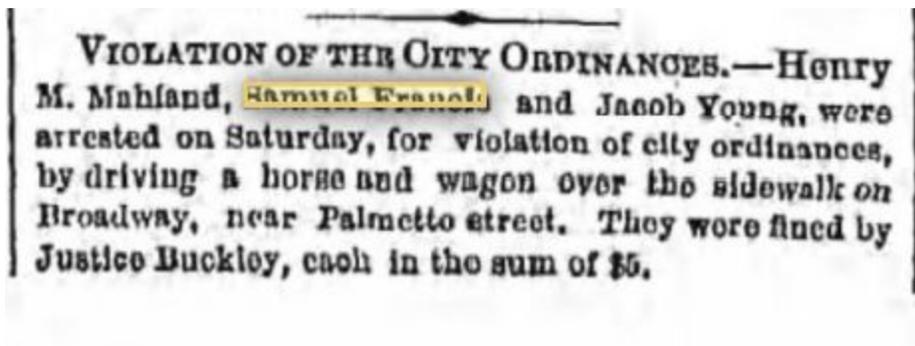
### Which Seems to be Clouded in Mystery.

Early this morning, Officer Thomas P. Wilson, of the Fourth Precinct, was told by Mr. **Francis** that four unknown young men had entered his stable, No. 24 Clermont avenue, and assaulted him. From the descriptions furnished, the policeman thought he could recognize Mr. Francis' assailants, and without delay he started in pursuit. On Flushing avenue he saw two young men leave a building bearing the disguised title of The Reekery. On seeing the officer, the young men ran rapidly up Flushing avenue and turned into Waverly avenue, where they were temporarily lost sight of. Officer Wilson reported the facts at the station house on Myrtle avenue saying that while in pursuit of the fugitives he heard a pistol shot.

At 3:15 this morning Timothy Scanlon, aged 18, who lives on the corner of Grand and Flushing avenues, entered the Homeopathic Hospital on Cumberland street having a pistol shot wound over the right hip. Ambulance Surgeon Mirrifecs probed for the ball, but was unable to find it. Scanlon, in giving an account as to how he received his injuries, said that he was shot by a policeman on the corner of Flushing and Washington avenues, and, further than that, he identified Officer Wilson as the person who shot him. The policeman denies that he fired at Scanlon or at any one else, and his statement is believed by his superiors, notwithstanding the fact that appearances seem to be against him. It is supposed that Scanlon's wound was inflicted by some other party with whom he was associated during the night.

Potentially, Frances was a livery-stable keeper and tending to the horses because the United States Census did list him as a laborer, or this article is about another person with the same name as our Samuel Francis. Later, in this case, there was involvement with a police officer and a shooting, which did not cause harm or had any bibliographic relevance to Samuel Frances. Another potential finding is that a 'Samuel Frances,' along with Jacob Young and Henry Muhland (unknown persons) were arrested for a violation of a city ordinance by driving a

horse and wagon over the sidewalk on Broadway near Palmetto Street (what is an area between Bedstuy and Bushwick today). They were fined for five dollars cash. At first I was hesitant to include this incriminating news in Frances' case study because it further perpetuates the criminalization of Black men, deep into the 19th century, which is still a large, undealt with problem today ("Violation of the city ordinances," 1871).



**VIOLATION OF THE CITY ORDINANCES.—HENRY M. Mahland, Samuel Frances, and Jacob Young, were arrested on Saturday, for violation of city ordinances, by driving a horse and wagon over the sidewalk on Broadway, near Palmetto street. They were fined by Justice Buckley, each in the sum of \$5.**

I decided to include this article, to consider perhaps Samuel Frances, Jacob Young, and Henry Muhland were all Black laborers and simply doing a job they need to do to survive, in which they were told to temporarily pull the wagon on the sidewalk to make loading or unloading easier. If this record is Samuel Frances, who is interred at The Olde Towne Burial Ground, this is an example of how those in power have a racialized bias being placed unfairly upon Black persons and to an unwarranted excess, many times without reason.