



ISSUE NUMBER 177- MAY 26, 2022
FRENCHY'S DEFENDER- OVIDE ROBILLARD
 APRIL 26, 1902

I haven't been able to locate a photograph of Ovide Robillard to date.

*Montreal Gazette
 April 26, 1902*

DELIVERER OF FRENCHY RETURNS TO MONTREAL

Mr. Ovide Robillard Recalls Events Leading Up to the Arrest and Release.

Mr. Ovide Robillard, of New York, a graduate of McGill University, prominent in the legal profession, and who has acted for the French Government on several occasions, is in Montreal. Mr. Robillard is en route to Europe, and came to this city to pay a visit to his mother.

Mr. Robillard has for several years been making efforts, which were successful, to secure the release from New York States prison of Amer Ben Ali, otherwise "Frenchy," the Algerian, who had been condemned to life imprisonment for the murder of Caroline Brown, known to her associates as "Old Shakespeare." The murder was committed at the East River Hotel, New York, on the night of April 24, 1891. "Frenchy" was arrested for the crime, and after trial, convicted of murder in the second degree, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

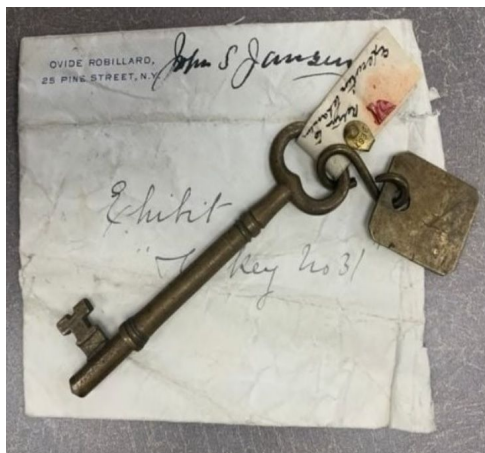
The murder occurred about the time that "Jick the Ripper" was abroad in the Whitechapel district of London. One day Inspector Byrnes, then in command of the New York police, was asked what would happen if "Jack the Ripper" were to ply his trade in New York.

"He would be caught within twenty-four hours," was Byrnes' reply.

His words were hardly in type before he was called upon to make them good.

The Brown woman and a man went in to the hotel at night, and the next day the body of the woman was found mutilated and the man had disappeared.

Byrnes took personal charge of the work of his sleuths. Finally, several days after the murder, he arrested "Frenchy," a seller of fruit, with a stand not far from the scene of the crime, charged him with the murder and secured a conviction in the second degree. It was established that the man had occupied a room directly across the hall from Room 31 on the night of the murder, and the police said that on the walls of that room and on the door bloodstains were found. Expert chemists testified that the scrapings from beneath "Frenchy's" finger nails showed on analysis that they contained the same



substances found in the stomach of the murdered woman.

In 1897, the French Consul-General of New York asked Mr. Robillard to take up Ben Ali's case. In October of that year a petition for the man's pardon containing 5,000 names was presented to Governor Black, who refused to interfere. Another appeal was made to Governor Roosevelt with the same result.

Then Mr. Robillard secured the affidavits of several newspaper men, who reported the case and who reached the East River Hotel before the police, in which it was stated that there were no blood stains in "Frenchy's" room or on the room door when the reporters examined them. That was in the nature of new evidence, and more followed when Mr. Robillard found George Damon, of the firm of Damon & Peet, manufacturers in Beekman street. Mr. Damon told of having had in his employ at his place in Cranford, N. J., a man whose first name was Frank, whose appearance tallied much better than "Frenchy's" did with that of the man who went to the hotel with "Old Shakespeare."

Damon said that Frank was not at home on the night of the murder and disappeared the day the case was reported in the papers. After he disappeared there was found in his room over Damon's stable a blood-stained pair of trousers and shirt and a key, with a tag attached, bearing the number 31. The key was like those to the rooms of the East River Hotel.

After reviewing all this new evidence, Governor Odell concluded that the man ought to be pardoned. "Frenchy" has now left for his native country.

Mr. Robillard is a native of Montreal, and after graduating at McGill, practiced law in Montreal for some time, and afterward removed to New York, where he has since engaged in general legal practice.