



ISSUE NUMBER 181 - JUNE 15, 2022
 THE THREE CAMPAIGNS TO PARDON ALI
 1893-1897-1900

New York Evening World
 July 13, 1893

"FRENCHY" WANTS A PARDON.

Gov. Flower Petitioned to Release the Supposed "Ripper."

Lawyer House Satisfied the Man Should Remain at Matteawan.

District-Attorney Nicoll received word this morning from Gov. Flower that application had been made to him to pardon George Frank, alias "Frenchy," who was convicted of murder in the second degree for killing Carrie Brown, alias "Old Shakespeare," in the East River Hotel, April 24, 1891.

Who made the application for the pardon Gov. Flower's letter did not say.

"Frenchy" was sentenced to life imprisonment, and a few months ago was adjudged a lunatic and transferred to the State Asylum for Insane Criminals at Matteawan.

A reporter who visited the Insane Asylum several weeks ago and saw "Frenchy" describes him as follows:


"From the dashing, good-looking Arab, more like a cavalier than a criminal, he has grown almost to a shadow, and those who saw him before his sentence would not recognize him now. His cheeks are sunken, and his form very much emaciated. He cannot eat sufficient of the prison fare to keep up his strength. The confinement is also something terrible for him, as his hollow cheeks and dull, lustreless eyes, like great beads of dull jet, set in tan-colored parchment, plainly show."

Lawyer Fred House said he could not imagine who was pressing the application for pardon. He said that "Frenchy" was undoubtedly insane, and ought to be kept at Matteawan.

Supt. Byrnes told an "Evening World" reporter that he had not learned of my application to Gov. Flower in behalf of Frenchy, and therefore declined to say more on the subject.

A despatch from "The Evening World's" correspondent at Albany this afternoon says: "The application for Frenchy's pardon is accompanied by no petition, signed or unsigned. Frenchy writes a letter to the Governor asking for a pardon."

Roswell Pettibone Flower



30th Governor of New York

In office
 January 1, 1892 – December 31, 1894

Buffalo Evening News
 November 9, 1897

PARDON FOR "FRENCHY."

Ameer Ben Ali, Who Killed "Old Shakespeare," May Go Free.

ALBANY, Nov. 9.—Formal application has been made to Gov. Flower for the pardon of Ameer Ben Ali, better known as "Frenchy," who was convicted in New York city in 1891 of manslaughter, first degree, for the killing of an old and dissolute woman, known as "Old Shakespeare."


The petition praying for executive clemency is signed by many men of national and international repute. Among them are: Edward Bruwaert, the French consul general; A. E. Olarouski, the Russian consul general; J. B. Eustis, ambassador to France; A. Forgett of the Transatlantic Steamship company; Alfred Collin of the United States navy; Frederick R. Condert, James B. Martin, Joseph Bartels, William C. Borey, Frederick Gibbs and Louis Condert.

Although the crime for which Frenchy was convicted is well known, it can be briefly told as follows: One April morning in 1891 "Old Shakespeare" was found mutilated on her bed in a cheap lodging house in New York city. Frenchy, who was a sort of an imbecile and could neither speak English or good French, occupied a room across the hall from that of "Old Shakespeare's."

He was arrested, and upon circumstantial evidence was railroaded through a trial and was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for life. Although not insane, he has spent these six years of imprisonment in the Matteawan state hospital for criminal insane.

While there he has learned the English language and it is upon his frequent and fervent protestations of innocence that so many prominent people have become sufficiently interested in his case to plead for clemency at the hands of the governor. The application for his pardon is based particularly on the ground that he did not have a fair trial and that had he been able to have made himself understood, while he was being tried, he could have cleared himself.

Frank Swett Black



32nd Governor of New York

In office
 January 1, 1897 – December 31, 1898

Three of the men who supported a pardon for Ali. Interestingly, one of them would probably be considered a racist in 2022 for his remarks concerning black self-reliance. Nevertheless, he threw his hat in the ring to support Ali. His name was James Biddle Eustis

Biddle was a former U.S. Senator from Louisiana

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_B._Eustis

James Biddle Eustis



This is Edmund Bruwaert, the French Consul-general Bruwaert spearheaded the petition effort in 1897

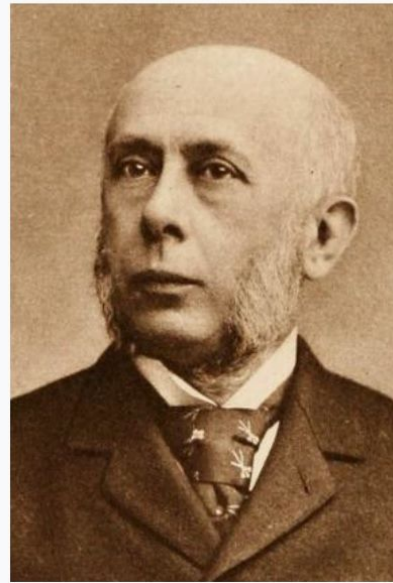


Edmund Bruwaert

The article declares him as 'Edward' but it was Edmund.

This is another supporter, a man who turned down the opportunity to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court

Frederic R. Coudert



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic_Ren%C3%A9_Coudert_Sr.

Governor Black turned the second pardon attempt down after Ali nearly killed someone in prison.

*New York Sun
March 3, 1900

FOR THE PARDON OF "FRENCHY."

**Convicted of Murdering "Shakespeare"—By
Petition to the Governor.**

Another effort is being made through the French Consul in New York to secure the pardon of Ben Ali, known to New Yorkers as "Frenchy," who was convicted nine years ago of the murder of the old woman Shakespeare in the East River Hotel. It was just about the time of the Jack the Ripper murders in the Whitechapel district in London and the old woman, who was of the character of Jack the Ripper's victims, was mutilated much as they had been. The police here were on their mettle. They picked up "Frenchy," who had been a frequenter of the hotel, and he was convicted. He couldn't talk English. He was an Algerian ex-soldier. The police found no blood on him to speak of, but his finger-nails were scraped and the dirt from them was analyzed by chemists, who swore that it contained corpuscles of human blood and some half-digested food. The half-digested food they declared was the same as they found in the mutilated stomach of the old woman, and it was on this testimony that Ben Ali was convicted of murder in the second degree and was sent to State's prison for life.

There was a very general public sentiment at the time that the conviction was unjust, but public protest was softened by the opinion that "Frenchy," who was an outcast, was better off in jail than he was out of it. "Frenchy" was and is a French subject and once or twice before the French Consul has interested himself to the extent of applying for a pardon for the man. This time a big petition has been prepared and it is signed, among others, by a number of the jurymen who convicted "Frenchy." Lawyer Ovide Robillard of 25 Pine street has the petition. He is now in Montreal. He will stop and see Gov. Roosevelt on his way back, and will make a plea for the pardon. "Frenchy" is now at the Matteawan Asylum for the Criminal Insane. He was sent there from the Auburn State Prison some years ago. After seeing the Governor Lawyer Robillard will call at the asylum.

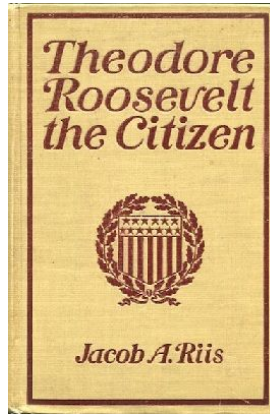
*Rochester Democrat
March 12, 1900*

*Buffalo Times
April 1, 1900*

Petition for Ben Ali's Pardon.

New York, March 11.—The murder of the woman "Old Shakespeare," nine years ago, is recalled by the announcement today that Edmund Bruwaert, French consul-general, has gone to Albany to present a petition to the governor asking for the pardon of Ben Ali, or "Frenchy," who was sentenced for the crime and who is now serving a life sentence in Matteawan. The petition which the French consul bears is signed by many thousands who believe Ben Ali to be innocent of the crime.

This third pardon campaign was also turned down by then-Governor Theodore Roosevelt, shown here with Jacob Riis, one of those who claimed they didn't see blood leading from Room 31 to Room 33 back in April 1891.



*Jacob Riis (left) and
Theodore Roosevelt.*