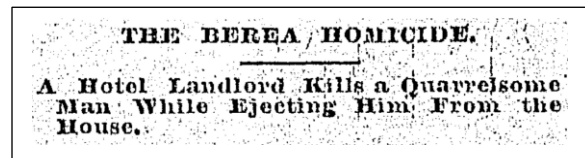


The Sad Story of Samuel Blood by Wendy Warner

Samuel Blood was born in England in 1848. It is not clear when he immigrated to the United States, but he moved to Berea around 1866. He was 5 feet 7 inches tall, well built with dark eyes, dark hair and moustache, a dark complexion, and had quite a reputation for being a boxer. Sam was known to boast of his pugilistic abilities with little shame, and rarely backed down from a chance to mix it up. Sam made the local newspaper more than once in his 20-year residency in Berea as he and his friend, Fred Bullinger, were quite well known for violating the liquor laws in town.

Sam married Miss Sophia Specht, originally from Germany, on May 18th, 1875. In 1880 he owned a saloon across from the Central Hotel (located at the NE corner of Front and Church Streets). Sam was found dead at his home the morning of December 5th, 1886 at the age of 39. There was quite a lot of interest in the death as he had been ejected from the barroom in the Central Hotel the evening before by O. M. Sprague. Local rumor had it that he had been shot first, but the post mortem did not reveal a wound. The Cleveland papers caught wind of the story, and Berea was buzzing with a swirl of conjecture.

It seems that on Saturday, December 4th, 1886 in the Central Hotel barroom, Sam and Charles Schaaf had words several times over a debt of 75 cents owed to Sam (about \$23 today). There was a lot of swearing and drinking, but the fracas was calmed a few times by Martin Heyn and Mr. Sprague with Sam and Charles even shaking hands at one point. Both men were noted to be drunk as time went on, and Schaaf started the argument again while in the dining room. A traveler fueled the flames further by insulting Sam for walking away. Sam was set to square off against the stranger, but Sprague had had his fill of the trouble and came from behind the bar to open the door and push Sam outside. Sam resisted and shoved Sprague back toward the bar, so Sprague retaliated by using what appeared to be "all his strength to shove Blood out of the door." Both men fell with the effort; Blood backward out the door and Sprague onto the floor. Blood was found unconscious across the sidewalk and was carried back inside to the dining room with Schaaf reportedly saying, "That serves you right, you ___ of a ___." It was never reported how Sam got home.



The death, and the rumors surrounding it necessitated a Coroner's inquest with multiple Bereans being called as witnesses. The inquest lasted two days with the coroner ruling that Sprague had used *no more force than was necessary* to eject the disorderly Samuel Blood, who fell and hit his head on the edge of the sidewalk resulting in a skull fracture. The Cleveland paper described Sprague as "a young man of good address" who had owned the hotel for about one year and was having a strong business with his new bar. I am sure Mr. Sprague was relieved to dodge criminal charges.

Sam is buried in Section B, Lot 119, Grave 1. Sam's wife Sophia, married widower Anton Stuber of Cleveland in 1895 and helped to raise three of his five children. She died in 1944 and is buried in Berea's St. Mary of the Falls Cemetery; her husband Anton who died in 1924, is buried with his first wife and children in St. Joseph Cemetery in Cleveland.