# Business Pioneers

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## SAMUEL FRAUNCES

*Born in the West Indies, Fraunces came to America and became an innkeeper. In 1755, he amassed enough money to purchase the "Queens Head Tavern" which was later known as "Fraunces' Tavern."*

*The purchase was made in 1762 (deed dated January 15, 1762) for two thousand pounds. In 1765 he leased it to John Jones, in 1766 to Bolton and Segill and in 1770 Fraunces took possession again.*

*The Tavern is famous because it is said that here is where many plans for the Revolution were fermented and where General George Washington said farewell to his officers at the end of the hostilities.*

## ISAAC JOHNSON

*The "Alligator Store" was often time the name given to the business owned and operated by Isaac Johnson. He started as a boy helping around the store, learning all he could about the business.*

*When he had learned enough and the opportunity presented itself, he bought the business. His hand bills tell the story of his activities.*

*Isaac Johnson, manufacturer and dealer in Florida curiosities, jewelry, novelties, live and stuffed alligators, chameleons, shells, palmetto fans, fly brushes and all kinds of alligator tooth jewelry.*

"Queen's Head Inn for 2,000 pounds. It is written that many of the plans and ideas of the revolution in 1783 were fermented here under George Washington's leadership.

After the revolution, it was at Fraunces' Tavern in the Long Room on Dec. 4, 1783 that General Washington said farewell to his officers. Today Fraunces' Tavern is a museum which was restored in 1902 by the Sons of the Revolution who were not aware and denied that Fraunces was a black man.

In the south many blacks were learning by observation and participation in business as part of their duties as slaves. Little by little they were educated to be more functional within the business community so that the owner or the white clerks did not have to do much more than greet the customers and pass the time of day.

In instances where blacks were taught to read and write there was evidence of a direct connection with anti-slavery activities. Several states passed laws "prohibiting the use of or employ of slaves in any business whatsoever in which a knowledge of reading or writing was required."

There were, however, some free blacks and slaves that knew white people in influential places or were related to them by miscegenation, that were able to conduct businesses. These businesses required little capital, hard work, minimal in nature or catered to the wants of a segregated world not served by the business enterprises of the white community.

Long before the Jews came and saw the economic possibilities in the black ghettos of Baltimore, Md., Richmond and Norfolk, Va., Wilmington, Del., Charleston, S.C., Savannah, Ga., Mobile, Ala., and New Orleans, La., the free blacks in business were the exploiters.

This half free status of the Freedmen with its social and economic drawbacks, was the eventual demise of the "Free Negroes" business.

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The blacks in the South had acquired a number of personal service skills during their enslavement which allowed them to later engage in businesses associated with these trades such as restaurants, barbershops, tailoring, etc.

Other businesses such as grocery stores, meat markets and livery stables were viable because they required little or no capital. And, still others were in business as the result of skillfulness in carpentry, mechanics, and bricklaying.

The Northern blacks were in more developed business communities which required skills, efficiencies, and capital not available to the Southerners. They were free, hence, they had no one to observe in business ventures and they were never excluded from trade unions.

The Irish and German immigration

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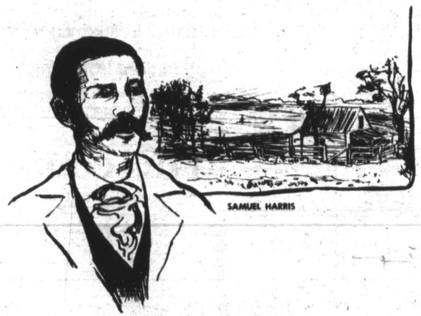


## SAMUEL HARRIS

*Started in business around 1880 in Williamsburg, Va., with a capital of $75.00. By 1900 he was doing a business of $55,000 a year. He owned ninety-six building lots in Williamsburg, four large farms in the state, and other property in Richmond, Norfolk and Newport News.*

*His large store was stocked with goods shipped in his own vessel that was manned by his own crew.*

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