ANSEL CLARK
DIES AFTER
LONG ILLNESS

Born in Slavery, but Came
North Near Close of
Civil War

Ansel Clark, nonagenarian, everybody’s friend, and known and respected by every man, woman and child in Portage, died Monday night, April 18, following several years of declining health. The end came at St. Savior’s hospital where he had been confined for several months past. The remains were removed to Murison’s chapel from where the service will be held at 2 o’clock Wednesday afternoon, conducted by Rev. J. V. Berger of the First Presbyterian church. For many years deceased was a member of the Wisconsin National Guard, enlisted with the Portage unit, and full military honors will be accorded at the burial which will be in Silver Lake cemetery. Friends desiring to do so may call at Murison’s chapel until the hour of the funeral.

The appended tribute to his memory is written by Portage’s noted authoress, Zona Gale Breese, who has known him since her earliest recollection:

By Zona Gale Breese

There is hardly anyone in Portage whose first recollections of the town do not include Ansel Clark. In his death last night at St. Savior’s hospital, Portage lost a friend—lost, too, its most unique citizen. Ansel had lived here for about seventy years. He was born a slave, in Mississippi. He came here in the course of the Civil War. The span of his life ran back of that twenty-odd years. No one knows exactly how old Ansel was—he hardly knew himself—but he was well in his nineties.

As a young boy he was taken from his family on the Mississippi plantation where he was born, to work in the cottonfields of Tennessee. He never heard from or of his family after that. In Memphis he was put up on a block at the slave market and sold.

What things those first years of slavery held for him were buried with all the rest of his early memories. As he moved about the streets here—and watched generation after generation grow up, the picture of those first days were still in his mind. The lot of a slave—not by hearsay, but by suffering: the actual experience of the being who has been sold at auction. All these Ansel carried and buried in his silence.

When the war came, he was forced to take part against the union army. He was a member of the Wisconsin National Guard, and full military honors will be accorded at the burial which will be in Silver Lake cemetery. Friends desiring to do so may call at Murison’s chapel until the hour of the funeral.

The appended tribute to his memory is written by Portage’s noted authoress, Zona Gale Breese, who has known him since her earliest recollection:

By Zona Gale Breese

There is hardly anyone in Portage whose first recollections of the town do not include Ansel Clark. In his death last night at St. Savior’s hospital, Portage lost a friend—lost, too, its most unique citizen. Ansel had lived here for about seventy years. He was born a slave, in Mississippi. He came here in the course of the Civil War. The span of his life ran back of that twenty-odd years. No one knows exactly how old Ansel was—he hardly knew himself—but he was well in his nineties.

As a young boy he was taken from his family on the Mississippi plantation where he was born, to work in the cottonfields of Tennessee. He never heard from or of his family after that. In Memphis he was put up on a block at the slave market and sold.

What things those first years of slavery held for him were buried with all the rest of his early memories. As he moved about the streets here—and watched generation after generation grow up, the picture of those first days were still in his mind. The lot of a slave—not by hearsay, but by suffering: the actual experience of the being who has been sold at auction. All these Ansel carried and buried in his silence.

When the war came, he was forced to take part against the union army. He was a member of the Wisconsin National Guard, and full military honors will be accorded at the burial which will be in Silver Lake cemetery. Friends desiring to do so may call at Murison’s chapel until the hour of the funeral.

The appended tribute to his memory is written by Portage’s noted authoress, Zona Gale Breese, who has known him since her earliest recollection:

By Zona Gale Breese

There is hardly anyone in Portage whose first recollections of the town do not include Ansel Clark. In his death last night at St. Savior’s hospital, Portage lost a friend—lost, too, its most unique citizen. Ansel had lived here for about seventy years. He was born a slave, in Mississippi. He came here in the course of the Civil War. The span of his life ran back of that twenty-odd years. No one knows exactly how old Ansel was—he hardly knew himself—but he was well in his nineties.

As a young boy he was taken from his family on the Mississippi plantation where he was born, to work in the cottonfields of Tennessee. He never heard from or of his family after that. In Memphis he was put up on a block at the slave market and sold.

What things those first years of slavery held for him were buried with all the rest of his early memories. As he moved about the streets here—and watched generation after generation grow up, the picture of those first days were still in his mind. The lot of a slave—not by hearsay, but by suffering: the actual experience of the being who has been sold at auction. All these Ansel carried and buried in his silence.

When the war came, he was forced to take part against the union army. He was a member of the Wisconsin National Guard, and full military honors will be accorded at the burial which will be in Silver Lake cemetery. Friends desiring to do so may call at Murison’s chapel until the hour of the funeral.
Ansel Clark, Former Slave, Soldier, Civil Officer and Respected Citizen of Portage.

W. W. Corning. For years he drove the Corsing carriage—early memories of Portage. A photo of the picture of young Ansel, back of a fine team, the barrows filled with young people. When these families dispersed, Ansel remained here. When C. F. went into camp, Ansel was one of the few who remained. His skill in cooking was a byword. New steam "Slaps" fire engine was rushed to a fire, Ansel went with it. He was a member of the Volunteer Fire Department. He was made constable, and his bearing and his presence were such that those themselves upheld the law. He had an innate dignity and poise, which everyone felt. A severity in kindness too—he was made humane officer, and his love for animals and sympathy with their lot expressed itself toward them and in his relentless following-up of any one of their suffering.

As the years went by his background and experience ripened in a personality which no one forgot. His uprightness, his gravity gained respect, made him his secure place. A middle place. Living a life of peculiar loneliness, such loneliness as no one else in the community duplicated, he was yet contented, reserved, kindly and everyone was his friend.

In time he became the owner of the W. W. Corning house on Wisconsin street, to which he had come as servant. He let the house, reserving a room for himself, and went into old age with the dignity of a citizen of substance, Pet...
"Farewell From Down South"

"I'm glad I don't see a horse," he said. "I don't know what I'd do with one now without Ansel to keep people from being cruel to them."

"Remember how he never would admit that Washington was a great man?" another said. "Lincoln was a great man because he freed the slaves, but Washington was no good because he was a slave owner. Wouldn't do any good to explain that emancipation hadn't been thought of in Washington's day. Ansel would say, 'Washington was a great man, then he should have thought of it.'"

"Just the same, he held no grudge against the southerners; a woman protested in a soft southern accent. 'He would always say to me: 'So you are from the south. Mighty fine folks down south, high-flying folk.'"

\[Image: A group of people in a room, possibly discussing the events mentioned in the text.\]

\[Image: Map of Portage, possibly showing the location of the events described.\]

\[Image: Photograph of a group of people, possibly the leaders of the vigilante group.\]

\[Image: Photograph of a group of people, possibly an official group.\]

\[Image: Photograph of a group of people, possibly a military group.\]