

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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'UNCLE ROSS BROWN'

Tales of 'Ol' South Told
by 'Uncle Ross', Ex-Slave



UNCLE ROSS BROWN

Albion Folks Never Tire of Reminiscences of
Ross Brown, Born in Servitude, Who Made
Way North to Join Forces of Union

The clipping shown here was taken from the
Rochester Democrat & Chronicle August 26,
1927. The story which accompanied it was one of

human interest about Ross Brown, an old black gentleman who lived in Albion at that time. Since February is black history month, it only seems appropriate to reflect on this bit of local folklore.

The general tone of the news article which went with this picture, suggests that Mr. Brown was highly respected and beloved by all who knew him. It indicates that neither he nor his listeners ever

Ross Brown lived in a small house on the north side of West Avenue near Albanese's Newport Landing. He was born a slave on a plantation near Charleston, South Carolina. When the confusion of the Civil War began he was able to escape to a boat bound for New Orleans. This was in 1862. From New Orleans he made his way up the Mississippi River to St. Louis and later from there he went to Davenport, Iowa. There he enlisted in the 18th United States Colored Regiment in October 1864. With this unit he was present at the battle of Nashville in December 1864. He was mustered out of the service at Huntsville, Alabama in November 1865.

After the war Mr. Brown worked for some years on Mississippi steamboats as a fireman. He still later, worked on lake boats from Buffalo to Detroit to Chicago. Sometime in the late 1880s Ross Brown arrived in Albion with wife where they eventually purchased a home. However, in the late 1890s the house burned to the foundation "... and as Brown explains it, his wife got discouraged and left him after that calamity." Undaunted, he eventually rebuilt his house on the same foundation.

The D & C article stated: "It was not an easy matter to get him to pose for his photograph, but his objections to his state of dress finally were overcome by the assurance that he was wanted just as he was. The promise of some prints of his picture did not seem to appeal greatly to the old man, who replied with some dignity that he had picture enough in his own person ... His table is covered with bottles of medicine including a container of liquid with small leaves and growths in it. This is a liniment which the old man concocts himself from herbs which he gathers, and he says it is good for the stiffness which he sometimes feels.

A dignified, tolerant old man, "Uncle Ross Brown" gives Albion a touch of the real old South and his many friends hope he will continue to brighten his neighborhood for many years to come."