S. E. LATHROP RECALLS AN EARLY PILGRIMAGE
WHICH HE MADE TO PORTAGE AS A PAROLED
PRISONER ON FOOT WELL ON TO SIXTY YEARS AGO

"I see there is to be an historic pilgrimage to Fort Winnebago on
September 2," remarked S. E. Lathrop, retired clergyman, veteran
printer, fine old patriot of the civil war. "But I made an early pilgrim-
age there myself—not in an automobile or street car for there was
none of the first in existence then and no railway to Portage by the
road I took.

"You see, it was in mid October, 1862. I had been a prisoner of war
in Arkansas, paroled and sent to St.
Louis from Little Rock, on 'Shank's
horses.' All Wisconsin paroled pri-
soners were sent via Mississippi
steamer to old Fort Crawford at
Prairie du Chien, where some of us
were furloughed and sent home. I
had railroad transportation to Madison,
where I decided to make a bee-
line across country to my old home at
Westfield, 60 miles north. I started
northward on foot, carrying knap-
sack, overcoat and blanket. Weakened
by strenuous campaigning, imprison-
ment, poor food, chills and fever, I
made slow progress. And the miles
seemed very long. At last I reached
Token Creek, ten miles north, utter-
ly exhausted. Having had no pay
for six months I was penniless.
Telling my story to the kind-hearted
Token Creek landlord of a little tavern,
he was very sympathetic—fed
me on the (chicken) fat of the land,
and put me in the best bed, where
I slept most refreshingly. Starting
out next morning with the landlord's
breakfast and blessing, I resumed the
homeward march. I cannot remem-
ber the landlord's name, but I heard
later that he raised a company and
got to the war. Traveling in the
teeth of a sharp, cold north wind, I
trudged on mile after mile, getting
a ride for several miles with an old
farmer whose son was in the war
down south. There was no railroad
to Portage then. Late that night I
reached Portage, where another pa-
triotic landlord gave bed and board,
refusing my offer to pay him when I
arrived home. I shall always re-
member my first pilgrimage to the
historic city of Portage, and I
should greatly like to go on this
later one. How full of interest and
reminiscence must be the old fort
Winnebago and the famous Portage
of other days between the Fox and
Wisconsin rivers."

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