

### Portage Long Ago.

The following narrative was written by Mr. J. A. Fox, a resident of Bangor, who is now 87 years of age, and is interesting in coming from the pen of one under whose observation occurred several incidents pertaining to the pioneer history of this city.

We arrived at Ft. Winnebago, May 21, 1840, from Madison Barracks, N. Y. There were eight companies of the Eight Regiment U. S. Infantry, with Col. W. J. Worth in command. The fort was occupied by two companies of the Fifth Infantry, and as near as I can recollect one company of the Second Cavalry was also stationed there as scouts to gather in Winnebago Indians for the purpose of removing them to a reservation in Minnesota. We were tented out a short distance east of the Garrison and were doing picket duty. The main guard was under a tree on the marsh north of a little place which was started a few years afterwards and named Pacific. One post was at a stone wind-mill, near the ferry across the Wisconsin river. The old mill was owned by Jean Baptiste DuBay. Every two hours our guard for relief was taken across the river in a canoe by an Indian.

There was but one house at that time, where the city is now located and that was near the road under the bank where we crossed from the ferry to the fort. I had no idea at the time the land would ever be settled where Portage is now located. In describing it after I left the army, I called it nothing but a sand bed with no timber but a few stunted oak saplings, and those too far apart to be classed neighbors. Imagine my surprise when I came there in the fall of 1855 and found a prosperous and thriving city.

Our stay at the fort was only one month, therefore can give you a very limited idea as regards settlements made at that time. The Lowe House was built on the west side of the Fox River. There was also a Council House on the same side of the river and was owned by Du Bay, which several years after caused much litigation and in connection a tragedy by Du Bay, who shot and killed Reynolds. There was a saloon near Silver Lake. While we lay at the fort a sad and fatal accident occurred to Private Baird, of company C, (the same company I belonged to).

He went to the lake to bathe and although an expert swimmer was seized with cramps and sank to the bottom. The

body was recovered a short time after we left, and buried at the fort. I am under the impression there were two or three houses at that time on the bank of the river a short distance below the ferry. The latter part of June the Indians loaded their ponies and baggage on a steamboat and left for Prairie du Chien. We left June 22d by military road for the same place and remained there about 10 days, when we left by boat for Jefferson Barracks, Mo., where we arrived July 11th. We left there by boat Sept. 25th and landed at Tampa Bay, Fla., Oct. 22d. In closing these lines, although having lived past the life allotted to man, let me here say I am one of the favored few of the Old Florida Soldiers left to write this short narrative.

J. A. Fox.

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