

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RAILROADS

A book of many pages could be written on the subject of railroad projects in Florida; how a few progressive, far-seeing men struggled with Territorial Councils and State Legislatures for the passage of railroad legislation; how laws were made, repealed, and made again; how seemingly insurmountable obstacles were met and overcome; and finally when construction actually commenced, how slowly it progressed, inches on the map representing years of difficulty.

The Early Projects

As early as 1834, an attempt was made to organize a company to build a line of railroad from Jacksonville to Tallahassee and later extend it to some point on the Gulf coast. The name of the railroad was to be the Florida Peninsular & Jacksonville Railroad. The capital stock of the company was limited to one million dollars. Among the directors were J. B. Lancaster, I. D. Hart, F. Bethune, W. G. Mills, and Stephen Eddy, all of Jacksonville. The Seminole Indian war and the panic of 1837 caused the abandonment of the enterprise.^a

In the 1840's, a survey was made for a railroad from Jacksonville to Cedar Key, and another from Jacksonville to the Suwanee River. Then matters were allowed to rest and powerful opposition arose with the organization of a company, of which David Levy Yulee was the head, to build a railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Key. Yulee successfully carried out his project and the proposed railroads from Jacksonville were abandoned.^a But there were progressive citizens in Jacksonville, and a company, headed by Dr. A. S. Baldwin, was organized in 1852, to build a railroad from Jacksonville to Lake City, then called Alligator Town.[†]

Jacksonville's First Railroad

It was named the Florida, Atlantic & Gulf Central Railroad, and it was financed through bond issues, including a

^aName changed to Lake City in 1859.