

Brief History of Florida East Coast Railway's Mayport Branch

The Arlington and Atlantic Railway Company received letters of patent August 29, 1882, for the construction of a narrow gauge railway from a point on the St. Johns river, near Arlington, to a point on the Atlantic Coast. The original incorporators were John Q. Burbridge, George B. Griffin and J. C. Greeley. In September of the same year the name of the line was changed to the Jacksonville and Atlantic Railroad.

There is no record available as to the exact date the line was constructed and opened for operation. This probably was in 1883 or 1884. The line was narrow gauge, 3 feet between the rails, and ran from South Jacksonville to Pablo Beach, a distance of about 17 miles.

The bonds and stocks of this railroad were purchased by Henry M. Flagler in 1889. He soon widened the line to standard gauge. A station building was erected at South Jacksonville, the road was regraded, laid with new rails and ties, and ex-

tended from Pablo to Mayport, a distance of 8 miles.

At Mayport, a large dock was built with coal bins and chutes. The Florida East Coast Railway at that time was converting its wood-burning locomotives to burn coal, as the supply of fat pine had become practically exhausted along its main line. Coal was brought into Mayport by ship, costing at that time less than \$3 per ton.

At Atlantic Beach, Flagler constructed a huge wooden resort hotel, "The Continental," which opened around 1901. This hotel subsequently burned down.

Increasing automobile traffic caused the Florida East Coast Railway to abandon the Mayport branch in 1932, but its operation over a 32-year period, had greatly aided in the early development of Jacksonville's adjacent beach community.

Rails and ties of the former Mayport railroad branch were removed and the rights of way of the line is now the location of the beautiful new Beach Boulevard from Jacksonville to Jacksonville Beach.



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