

# CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND INDIVIDUALS JOINED IN FIGHT FOR FOUR LANE SUPER HIGHWAY TO THE BEACHES

In the year of 1882 there was great excitement in the City of Jacksonville, the hamlet of Hogan, and a small beach community known as Pablo. A dream was about to become a reality; another artery of communication was about to be born; for on August 29th of that year the Florida East Coast Railway received letters of patent for the construction of a narrow gauge railway from a point near Arlington to a point on the Atlantic Coast.

The women of the eighties carried sunshades, and the men wore top hats, but they knew what they wanted and they acted with dispatch, for by 1883 or '84 (no records are available for the exact date) construction was complete and the line opened for operation. No doubt they held a celebration. However, increased automobile traffic caused the East Coast Railway to abandon the line, which had become known as the Mayport Branch, in 1932, after years of service.

When the late Earl P. Luce, County Engineer of Duval County, learned of the proposed abandon-

ment, he realized that here was the chance to make another dream of the people come true. Knowing that this right-of-way would be the ideal location for a new road to the growing beach communities, he had the center of the railway properties fixed with permanent markers before the last ties were removed.

Luce was not alone in his fight to open a new and shorter road to the Beaches. A proposal to extend the Hogan Road to the Atlantic's shore developed into a lively discussion at the Southside Business Men's Club, Jacksonville, on February 19, 1933.

Mayor W. E. Montgomery, of Jacksonville Beach, guest speaker at the meeting, filed a protest against any move toward improving the proposed highway in the event it would intersect Road No. 78 at a point outside the south limits of Jacksonville Beach, and nearer to Mineral City.

"But," he said, "if the proposed highway were established parallel to the former railroad right-of-way, it would shorten the distance from Jacksonville to Jacksonville Beach

by seven miles."

At that time no further action was taken, but Carl M. Taylor, president of the club, announced that the November 29 meeting would be devoted to a full consideration of the road project, supported by the club as a means of supplying emergency relief workers with worth while employment, and Mayor Montgomery of Jacksonville Beach was invited to attend.

At the November meeting of the Southside Business Men's Club, an outline of the civil works project of Southside importance was given by County Engineer J. A. Long, who had succeeded Luce.

The Jacksonville Beach delegation attending the meeting, and primarily interested in the proposal to extend the Hogan Road to the ocean, was headed by Mayor Montgomery and included the late Gene Zapf, at that time Chairman of the City Commission, Councilman C. H. Brock, and Ben McCormick.

Good dreams or bad dreams that are dreamed by many men, will begin to solidify, and this dream of a

new direct route to the ocean showed signs of crystalizing, for an account of the December 14, 1933 meeting of the Southside Club states that "the question of the Hogan Road to the beach was ironed out at a meeting of the club committee," and a Jacksonville Beach delegation.

The formal resolution, adopted by a unanimous vote, embodied the following proviso relating to the favored route: "That the County Commissioners of Duval County be asked to promptly cause a survey to be made from the east end of the first curve east of Big Pottsburg Creek (on the Hogan Road) to a point at or near the abandoned railway bed at or near Center Park, and thence along or parallel with said abandoned road bed to Jacksonville Beach, a total distance of ten and one-half miles, thereby creating, when built, a highway to Jacksonville Beach two miles shorter than the present road, free from dangerous curves, opening up much valuable land, relieving the crowded condition of Atlantic Boulevard, providing for rapidly increasing traffic, creating a loop drive to the

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