With the ending of the Seminole war and the recovery of the country from the hard times following the panic Jacksonville’s growth became more pronounced. In 1842 the population was 450 and in 1847 it was 750, an increase in five years of 67%. Though much smaller in population than St. Augustine, Jacksonville had by this time come to be considered the most important town in East Florida, on account of its location with respect to marketing the principal revenue-producing commodity of the time—cotton. Cotton was grown extensively on the plantations of this section and it was brought to Jacksonville and shipped from this point by sailing vessel. A considerable amount of timber was also shipped from here. Thus Jacksonville grew to be the trading point for a large surrounding territory. Steamer communication with Savannah was more or less regular on a weekly schedule bringing the mail, and a steamboat made weekly trips up the river as far as Enterprise. These boats were small, but they marked the beginning of a most important transportation facility for Jacksonville, which later on contributed largely to its growth.

Local Conditions in the Early 1840’s

The dwellings here were mostly one story wooden structures of rough boards as there were no planing mills then. Many of them were unplastered. Stoves had not come into use; the fireplace was the only means of heating and this was looked upon as a luxury for the well-to-do. The stores were rough buildings with rude fittings. The ordinary necessities could be purchased in the town; most of the stores carried general stocks, and from the rear of many of them came that unmistakable odor that permeates the air where whiskey kegs are kept. The stores usually closed at dusk; the stillness of the town at night after 9 o’clock, the curfew hour, signified that Jacksonville had gone to bed.

There was an event known to have occurred in the early 1840’s that must have shaken the community with excitement.