CHAPTER XI

1855 to 1860

Jacksonville recovered rapidly from its reverses of 1854. Its people with wonderful energy set to work building better stores and houses in the burned area. Larger steamboats and tug boats for towing appeared on the river. The railroad to western Florida was assured and actual work on it was about to begin. Travel from the State and from abroad increased. More interest was taken in Church and school attendance. Prosperity was evident everywhere; the people were united and anything that promised to advance the interest of the town was liberally pushed forward. A board of trade was formed to advertise the locality.

Trade

There was a large local trade in furnishing supplies to the mills and loggers, and there was also an extensive river and back-country trade. The country trade came in the well-known country cart, from distances of 60 miles and occasionally 100 miles, bringing in cotton, syrup and country produce and exchanging for goods. Trains of six-mule teams were maintained regularly between Alligator (Lake City) and Jasper and Jacksonville. Owing to the shallowness of the bar large schooners could not come in; the water on the bar at high tide was not more than 10 feet. A cargo of lumber of 100,000 feet was considered tremendous; yet there was an annual exportation of more than 25 million feet.

With a property valuation in 1856 of $400,000 Jacksonville had put its calamities behind it and was looking forward into the future. But the end was not yet.

Another Big Fire

At 4:30 a.m., November 15, 1856, fire broke out in a wooden store on the south side of Bay Street between Pine (Main) and Laura, and before it stopped the entire block was in ashes. The volunteer fire department, with their bucket brigades, had a difficult time in keeping the fire from wiping out the new structures east of Pine Street erected since 1854.