

## CHAPTER XIX

## RIVER NAVIGATION

## Early Steamboats

The first steamer to ply the waters of the St. Johns River and the first in Florida was the *George Washington*, in 1830.<sup>a</sup> In 1834 the steamer *Florida* was running more or less regularly between Savannah and Picolata on the St. Johns.<sup>c</sup> The *Essayon* carried troops and supplies up and down the river during the Seminole war.<sup>b</sup> Along in the 1840's, the *Sarah Spaulding* plied between Jacksonville and Lake Monroe. This was a high-pressure boat and she made a fearful noise while in operation. She was often used for near-by excursions on the river, and occasionally went to Fernandina by the inside route. Her accommodations comprised eight berths, four on each side, opening into the saloon, but provided with curtains that could be drawn as a means of separation.<sup>d</sup> The *General Clinch* ran between the St. Johns and Savannah in 1842.<sup>b</sup> Then the *Thorn* made her appearance on the river, running to Palatka.<sup>h</sup>

The *Darlington* came in 1852, and up to the time of the war was the regular boat between Jacksonville and Enterprise. The *Darlington* was perhaps the best known of the early river boats. She was built in South Carolina in 1849, and for a time ran up the Pedee river into Darlington District, hence her name.<sup>b</sup> She was captured by the United States forces at the draw-bridge near Fernandina, in 1862, and remained in their possession until the close of the war, being used most of the time as a transport vessel.<sup>e</sup> In 1857 the steamers *Hattie Brock*, *Zephyr* and *William Barnett* began running as up-river boats. The *William Barnett* met with disaster in about a year, when her boiler exploded, killing her captain and a number of other persons.<sup>b</sup> The *Hattie Brock* was captured far up the river by a Federal gunboat in 1864; she was confiscated, and sold in 1866,<sup>e</sup> but after the war she ran on the river as one of the Brock Line.

## The Savannah Line

About 1845 a regular line between the St. Johns and Savannah was inaugurated. The pioneer vessels of this