spread the fumes of the kilns. In the succeeding month of November I commenced the battery by constructing boxes of the dimensions of the parapet, six feet high by seven in thickness, into which boxes were poured the tapia composition, consisting of equal parts of lime, raw shells, and sand and water sufficient to form a species of paste, or batter, as the negroes term it.

At the close of this month of November a large Spanish ship called the *Bilboa* was cast away on Cape Fear in a storm. It was alleged by the crew, who were brought by Pilot Davis to my quarters, that the ship was laden with sugar, and that there was much specie in the run; that the captain and mate had died at sea, and that having no navigator on board they had put the ship before the wind and run her on shore near the cape. There were twenty-one in this crew, a villainous looking set of rascals, that I had no doubt they were. Lieutenant Fergus detained them in the block-house at the fort until the collector sent inspectors to conduct the crew to Charleston, where the ship was known to some merchant. These men all had more or less of dollars in their red woolen sashes tied around their waists. On their arrival in Charleston they were detained some time, but no proof could be found against them and they went free. The pilots and others were for some time after this exploring the remains of the wreck, but nothing was found among the drift save spars and rigging.

## FIRST STEAMBOAT ON CAPE FEAR RIVER.

Let us contrast the swift steamer *Wilmington* with the primitive example of former days—let us turn back for three-quarters of a century, when the town of Wilmington contained only a tenth of its present population, and recall an incident, related to the writer by the late Col. J. G. Burr, which created the greatest excitement at the time, and which was the occasion of the wildest exuberance of feeling among the usually staid inhabitants of the town—the arrival of the first steamboat in the Cape Fear River. A joint stock company had been formed for the purpose of having a steamer built to ply between Wilmington and Smithville or Wilmington and Fayetteville. Capt. Otway Burns, of privateer *Snap-Dragon* fame during the War of 1812, was the contractor. The boat was built at Beaufort, where he resided. When the company was informed that the steamer was



finished and ready for delivery, they dispatched an experienced sea captain to take command and bring her to her destined port. Expectations were on tiptoe after the departure of the captain; a feverish excitement existed in the community, which daily increased, as nothing was heard from him for a time, owing to the irregularity of the mails; but early one morning this anxiety broke into the wildest enthusiasm when it was announced that the *Prometheus* was in the river and had turned the Dram Tree. Bells were rung, cannon fired, and the entire population, without regard to age, sex, or color, thronged the wharves to welcome her arrival. The tide was at the ebb, and the struggle between the advancing steamer and the fierce current was a desperate one; for she panted fearfully, as though wind-blown and exhausted. She could be seen in the distance, enveloped in smoke, and the scream of her high-pressure engine reverberated through the woods, while she slowly but surely crept along. As she neared Market Dock, where the steamer *Wilmington* is at present moored, the captain called through his speaking-trumpet to the engineer below: "Give it to her, Snyder"; and while Snyder gave her all the steam she could bear, the laboring *Prometheus* snorted by, amid the cheers of the excited multitude. In those days the river traffic was sustained by sailing sloops and small schooners, with limited passenger accommodations and less comfort. The schedule time to Smithville, was four hours, wind and weather permitting, and the fare was one dollar each way.

NOTE.—Steamboats were used on the Cape Fear very soon after their introduction. On October 16, 1818, the *Henrietta* began to run regularly between Wilmington and Fayetteville, and in April, 1819, President Monroe was carried on the *Prometheus* from Wilmington to Smithville. The *Prometheus* was probably on the river long before 1819.

## THE DISASTROUS YEAR OF 1819.

The growth of Wilmington was naturally slow, notwithstanding the energy of the inhabitants. Indeed, because of the constant exodus of North Carolinians to the new country at the West and South, the population of the State hardly increased at all during the early years of the last century. The population of New Hanover County in 1810 was 11,465, and in 1820 it had fallen off to 10,866. In 1820 the population of Wilmington was, whites, 1,098, slaves, 1,433, free negroes, 102—a total of 2,633.