market house was again and for the third time destroyed by fire."

Reference was made to two of these fires by Sir Charles Lyell, the famous geologist, who was in Wilmington in December, 1841, and again in January, 1842, and still again in December, 1845. In a letter written by him from Wilmington in December, 1845, he said: "The streets which had just been laid in ashes when we were here four years ago are now rebuilt; but there has been another fire this year, imputed very generally to incendiarism, because it broke out in many places at once. There has been a deficiency of firemen, owing to the State having discontinued the immunity from militia duty, formerly conceded to those who served the fire engines." Some mention of the fire of 1843 is also made in the article on Governor Dudley.

## FIRST CAPE FEAR IMPROVEMENTS.

I find in the annual report of William P. Craighill, then major of Engineers, and brevet lieutenant colonel, United States Army, for the year 1873, a brief history of old surveys and maps and charts made of the Cape Fear River between its mouth and the port of Wilmington, which is a record of some value to us. I have also found in the records of the War Department of 1828, a lengthy report by Capt. Hartman Bache, of the Engineer Corps, transmitted by Maj. Gen. Alexander MacComb, chief engineer, to Hon. James Barbour, Secretary of War, who in turn transmitted it to Congress, which had called for it by resolution dated the 20th of December, 1827. This report is not only interesting but valuable, as it indicates the initial measures recommended and subsequently carried out by the Federal Government for the removal of obstructions to navigation between the bar and the port of Wilmington, the navigation of the river being greatly hampered by shoal water, which afforded, under the most favorable conditions, a channel of less than nine feet.

It also appears from this report and from other data, that the State work under Mr. Hamilton Fulton, State engineer in 1823, was unsuccessful and was condemned in its most important features by Captain Bache and by those who were directly interested in the commerce of the Cape Fear River.

About the year 1819 the State authorized Mr. Peter Brown, an eminent lawyer residing at Raleigh, then intending to visit



Great Britain, to employ an engineer for the purpose of improving our rivers and water transportation; and Mr. Brown engaged Hamilton Fulton, at a salary of $5,000.

The work of putting in the jetties below Wilmington seems to have been under Mr. Fulton's direction; but it is said that the engineer in charge was Mr. Hinton James,[1] who had been the first student to enter the State University. Afterwards, Mr. James, it is said, was mayor of Wilmington; and he lived in the town to a ripe old age. Mr. Fulton's work may have been founded on correct principles, but his plans, not only for the Cape Fear River, but for other improvements, were beyond the financial resources of the State, and after some years they were abandoned.

### Steamboat Line to Charleston.

The progress of river improvement by the Federal Government during a period of ten years, from 1829 to 1839, was very slow, and it resulted in a gain of only two feet depth below Wilmington; but, after an hiatus of eight years, in 1847 it began to be pushed forward with great diligence and success from Wilmington to the sea, resulting in a safer channel of thirteen feet at high water and nine feet at low water. It is notable that in 1853 some of the citizens of Wilmington, enterprising men that they were, impatient at the slowness with which river and harbor bills were passed by Congress and anxious to continue the work without interruption, subscribed $60,000 (a large sum in those days for a small community) in furtherance of the improvement of the river and bar under the direction of an officer of the United States Engineer Corps. This was officially approved June 9, 1853, by Hon. Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War. The officer in charge of the work was General Woodbury, who married a daughter of General Childs. Meanwhile, there was much enterprise shown by the merchants of Wilmington in shipbuilding, in a large and increasing turpentine and lumber trade, in the establishment of packet lines to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, and in a daily mail steamboat line to Charleston, consisting of the steamers *Vanderbilt, North Carolina, Gladiator,* and *Dudley.*

[1]His tombstone was recently discovered by Rev. Andrew J. Howell, of Wilmington, in the graveyard of the old Hopewell Presbyterian Church in the northern part of Pender County, formerly a part of New Hanover County. The inscription on the plain marble slab states that Mr. James was born September 20, 1776, and died August 22, 1847.