The following remarkable official statement was made by the United States engineers in 1853:

"The Cape Fear River is the natural and actual outlet of the products of 28 or more counties in North Carolina and of several counties in South Carolina. In one item of future exports other Southern States are interested and the whole country must be so in time of war: Coal in large quantities and of an excellent quality has been found upon the waters of the Cape Fear, about 120 miles from its mouth, and at no distant day, it is supposed, will become a regular article of export. We may, therefore, have—what must be regarded as a national benefit at all times, and in time of war as of very great importance—a depot of coal upon the Cape Fear, independent of supply from the North, and beyond the reach of the enemy. But this depot will, in great measure, be lost to the country unless the Cape Fear shall be improved so as to admit our ships of war."

Unfortunately, the mining of this coal a few years later did not prove a success.

Congressional Aid to River Improvement.

It was not until 1826 that Congress began to make appropriations for river and harbor improvements, and three years later the Cape Fear River was included in the list. For ten years an annual appropriation of $20,000 was regularly made, and then because of a change in public policy such appropriations ceased. The Democratic party was opposed to internal improvements at the expense of the government. From 1838 to 1866 only a few river and harbor bills were passed. Mr. William S. Ashe, the representative from the Cape Fear district in 1854, differed with his party on the subject of internal improvements and succeeded in getting through a bill carrying $140,000 for the Cape Fear River, the particular object being to close New Inlet, forcing all the water of the stream over the Main Bar. In order to accomplish his purpose he had to persuade many of his Democratic associates to withdraw from the chamber, and so many withdrew that, although his bill received a large affirmative vote, there was no quorum, and he had to call in others to make a quorum. On the final vote the bill passed, but there were still more than eighty Democrats absent. That was the beginning of the effort to close New Inlet, which was nearly accomplished when the war stopped operations, but when blockade running began, every one rejoiced that the inlet was still open.

In after years Senator Ransom exerted himself with success for the improvement of the river, but the greatest improvement has been accomplished under the influence of Senator Simmons, at the time acting chairman of the Committee on Commerce, having such matters in charge. He has secured a 26-foot channel, increasing immensely the commercial facilities of Wilmington, which her business men have quickly developed. Senator Simmons has likewise secured the adoption of a project to canalize the river from Wilmington to Fayetteville, and has been a strenuous advocate of the Coastal Canal, now about to be constructed. He has long appreciated the value of inland waterways and was a member of the Commission on Waterways sent to Europe by Congress a few years ago. In 1909 he was a prime factor in securing the adoption of the proposition to have a survey made for an intercoastal waterway from Boston to the Rio Grande. In 1912 he secured the adoption of the Norfolk and Beaufort section of that great undertaking and the purchase by the government of the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal. He also secured the deepening of that waterway to twelve feet.

The River and Harbor Bill now pending carries a provision for a survey to increase the depth of water from Wilmington to thirty-five feet.

RAILROADS—THE FIRST PROJECT.

In March, 1833, the commissioners of the city of Fayetteville were instructed to negotiate a loan of $200,000 to be invested in the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, which, with individual subscriptions, would be more than enough for the organization of the company, and work could be begun in the spring of 1834.

On May 1, 1833, the *People's Press* advertised that the subscribers to the stock of the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, by applying to Dr. William P. Hort, would be refunded the amount of money paid by them on their shares, after deducting 12 per cent for disbursements. It was further stated that the project was abandoned because of lack of support by the inhabitants of the western section, who would not contribute one cent to the enterprise of establishing a railroad from the seaboard to the mountains.