The First Declaration of State Policy.

On July 4, 1833, the Internal Improvement Convention assembled in Raleigh with one hundred and twenty delegates, representing twenty-one counties in the eastern and northern sections. It seems to have been the first concerted effort towards organized action looking to the establishment of a railroad. Governor Swain presided and Gen. Samuel F. Patterson and Mr. Charles Manly were appointed secretaries. The personnel of the convention must have been remarkable, as the record says "So many distinguished and talented men are said never before to have assembled in the State."

In this convention Governor Graham, then in the prime of his rare powers, urged as the internal-improvement policy of the State, three north-and-south lines of railroad. He was antagonized by Joseph Alston Hill, of Wilmington, one of the most gifted orators of that period, who advocated east-and-west lines, marketing the products of the State through North Carolina ports. It was a battle of giants, and Hill won the victory.

The convention adopted resolutions to the effect that the General Assembly ought to raise by loan such sums as will "afford substantial assistance in the prosecution of the public works; *that no work should be encouraged for conveying produce to a primary market out of the State;* that the Legislature be asked to take two-fifths of the stock of companies; that a Corresponding Committee of twenty be appointed in each county, and that a second convention be held on the fourth Monday in November."

The delegates from Wake, Johnston, Lenoir, Wayne, Sampson, Craven, and New Hanover resolved that "means be devised for carrying into effect the scheme of a railroad from Raleigh to Waynesboro (Goldsboro), and thence to Wilmington."

The committee for the town of Wilmington was composed of Edward B. Dudley, William B. Meares, William P. Hort, Joseph A. Hill, and Alexander MacRae. Circulars were issued to the citizens of Wake, Johnston, Wayne, Sampson, Duplin, New Hanover, and Brunswick to ascertain what amount of aid they would contribute, and stating that $113,000 had been subscribed by the citizens of Wilmington, and that a total of $150,000 would be raised.

In July, 1833, the citizens of Wilmington formulated a proposition to make application to the Legislature to incorporate the

town of Wilmington, the object being to raise funds on which immediate action could be taken in the construction of railroads; but in January, 1834, the bill "to incorporate the city of Wilmington and extend the limits thereof" was rejected.

The Origin of the Railroad Project.

Communication from Wilmington to the North was by means of an occasional packet ship and two lines of stages, one by way of New Bern and the other through Fayetteville and Raleigh.

The commerce of the town had but slowly increased and the future prospect was gloomy. A railroad or two, very short lines, had been constructed elsewhere, and this new method of travel was being talked about; but as yet it had not been proven a success.[1] Such was the situation when Mr. P. K. Dickinson, a young Northern man who had located in the town, went one summer to New England and saw there a little railroad in operation. It had only wooden stringers, with narrow, thin, flat iron on top, and the carriages were of light construction. Mr. Dickinson was greatly impressed with its capabilities. Convinced of its success, he became enthusiastic, and hurried back to Wilmington with the news that he had found what was needed to assure the future welfare of the town—a railroad. He was so enthusiastic, so insistent and persistent, that his idea took shape, and the people determined to have a railroad. With Wilmington to resolve is to act, and the Wilmington and Raleigh Road was chartered; but Raleigh would not subscribe, while the Edgecombe people would, so, although the line from Wilmington to Goshen pointed to Raleigh, the construction was northward to Weldon. Mr. Dickinson was one of the chief promoters and remained through life the leading director. He was one of the most useful, most esteemed and valued citizens of the town, and his large lumber plant, located north of the railroad terminal, was one of the great industries of Wilmington.

[1]The first American-built locomotive was put on the South Carolina Railroad, November 2, 1830. The first roads were operated by horse-power.