THE WILMINGTON AND WELDON RAILROAD.

In January, 1834, the bill to incorporate the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad became a law; but the terms of the charter were so restricted that an amended charter was obtained in December, 1835, conferring larger privileges and changing the course of the proposed road. At the time of granting the first charter it was the intention to construct a railroad merely to connect the principal seaport with the seat of the government; but, as the project was more thoroughly considered, the advantages of building to some point on the Roanoke to connect with the Virginia lines, thereby completing one of the important links in the line of iron rail that was to extend from Maine to Florida, was realized, and in the amended charter the new corporation was given the privilege of changing its destination.

The first meeting of the stockholders was held on March 14, 1836, in the Wilmington Courthouse, and organized by electing Edward B. Dudley president (at a salary of $2,000), and the following directors: Andrew Joyner, W. D. Moseley, James S. Battle, Aaron Lazarus, Alexander Anderson, William B. Meares, James Owen, P. K. Dickinson, R. H. Cowan, and Thomas H. Wright. Gen. Alexander MacRae was elected superintendent, and James S. Green, secretary and treasurer. After passing several resolutions and agreeing to start the building of the road at both Halifax and Wilmington at the same time, the meeting adjourned to meet again on the first Monday in November and thereafter annually on the first Monday in May. After Mr. Dudley was elected governor, he was succeeded in the presidency by Gen. James Owen.

The building of the road was commenced in October, 1836, although little was done until January, 1837, and on March 7, 1840, the last spike was driven. Its actual length was 161½ miles, and at the time of its completion it had the following equipment: Twelve locomotives, which were named, *Nash, Wayne* (built by R. Stephenson & Co., Newcastle-on-Tyne, England), *New Hanover, Edgecombe, Brunswick, Duplin,* and *Bladen* (built by William Norris, Philadelphia, Pa.), *Greene, Halifax,* and *Sampson* (built by Burr & Sampson, Richmond, Va.), etc. There were also in use eight 8-wheel passenger coaches, 4 post-office cars, 50 freight cars, and 4 steamers, viz.:

the *North Carolina, Wilmington, Governor Dudley,* and *Cornelius Vanderbilt.*

The entire road was constructed under the following supervision: Walter Gwyn, chief engineer; Alexander MacRae, superintendent; Matthew T. Goldsborough, principal assistant engineer of the Southern Division, and Francis N. Barbarin, principal assistant engineer of the Northern Division. The road was first laid with plate iron 2 inches by ⅝ inch on wooden stringers.

On April 5, 1840, the celebration of the completion of the railroad was held in Wilmington. The report says:

"A large number of gentlemen assembled in the town from various parts of the State and from Virginia and South Carolina at an early hour in the morning. The bells gave out sonorous peals and the shipping in the harbor came up, their flags waving. Cannon were fired every fifteen minutes throughout the day, with a national salute at meridian. At 2 p. m. a procession, composed of invited guests and citizens, including the president, directors, and officers of other roads, the Board of Internal Improvement, the Literary Board, the president, directors, engineers, agents and others in the employ of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad, was formed on Front Street, under the direction of Gen. Alexander MacRae, marshal of the day, assisted by Maj. R. F. Brown, and marched thence to the dinner table, escorted by the Wilmington Volunteers with their fine band of music.

"The dinner was set out at the depot under sheds temporarily prepared for the purpose. About five hundred and fifty were at the tables, which were amply prepared for hungry men.

"Gen. James Owen, the president of the company, presided, assisted by the directors, acting as vice presidents. Good feeling ruled the hour and good cheer gave quick wings to the nurslings of wit.

"Then followed a number of toasts—fifty-seven toasts and eleven letters with toasts."

Other reports are as follows:

Nov. 8, 1841.—"Annual meeting of the stockholders of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad Co. Gen. James Owen declined further service as president. Edward B. Dudley was elected in his stead and the following gentlemen were elected directors: P. K. Dickinson, Alexander Anderson, Thomas H. Wright, Robert H. Cowan, of Wilmington, Samuel Potter, of Smithville, and B. F. Moore, of Halifax."