boats were first put on the line between Wilmington and Charleston, say in 1839, possibly a little before, the Cape Fear River had to be lighted at the expense of the railroad company, as navigation at night was a necessity, but Congress in 1840 appropriated $5,000 a year for this service and lighting the river has since been a charge of the General Government.

Perhaps nothing more strongly marks the difference in railroads between 1842 and 1895 than the fact that between Monday noon, July 11, 1842, and Thursday night, July 14, 1842, three heavy trains were lost between Wilmington and Weldon. No one could tell what had become of them. A deluging rain had submerged the country between the Roanoke and the Tar Rivers, causing three breaches in the road-bed. One or more trains got between the rivers and lost all communication with the outer world, and one or two others had been thrown from the track, in a like situation, by fallen trees.

Nothing has been said about perils of travel in those days of snakeheads and slow brakes, but time and space are up.

SENEX, JR.

## THE PUBLIC SPIRIT OF WILMINGTON.

(The Fayetteville Observer of January, 1850.)

The public spirit of the citizens of our sister town is really amazing; it seems to have no limit when any scheme is presented which is regarded as essential to the prosperity or honor of the place. And the resources of the community seem to be as abundant as the spirit with which they are employed is liberal.

Some twelve or fourteen years ago, when the population was but three or four thousand, she undertook to make a railroad 161 miles long (the longest in the world), and a steamboat line of equal length. For this purpose she subscribed more than half a million dollars, we believe.

This accomplished with almost the total loss of the half million, so far as the stock was concerned, however profitable in other respects, one might have expected a pause at least if not a total cessation in the march of improvements, and so it would have been with almost any other people. But soon the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad was projected, and Wilmington subscribed to it $180,000. Then came the Deep River and Navigation Company, and she gave $30,000 to $40,000, we believe, to that. Next the Central Railroad, and she subscribed



about $50,000, and finally, it being found necessary to raise an additional sum for the Manchester Road, she held a meeting on the 5th inst., at which $50,000 more, making $230,000 in all, was subscribed to that work. (This was increased to $100,000 by the 10th, making $280,000.)

Thus this community, even now not containing more than eight or nine thousand inhabitants, of whom probably not more than two-thirds are white, has contributed to public works eight or nine hundred thousand dollars—nearly as much as is required from the State to secure the Central Railroad.

With all this prodigious expenditure, who hears of any pressure of bankruptcy—any interruption of her onward course of prosperity? Truly, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth."

It is not for the purpose of honoring Wilmington merely that we make this statement, but it is to encourage the friends of internal improvement throughout the State, and, if possible, to remove the objections of those who doubt the policy or profitableness of the system.

## ACTIVITIES ON THE RIVER, 1850-1860.

In the fifties there were frequently as many as ninety vessels in the port of Wilmington loading or unloading, or waiting for berths at anchor in the stream. The wharves were lined two vessels deep, and those waiting for orders were moored nearly as far down the river as the Dram Tree. It was a season of great activity.

Also, a large coastwise business in corn in bulk was carried on with Hyde County, and for this trade a fleet of small schooners called "Corn Crackers" was employed. It was most exhilarating on a fine day to see this tiny fleet, twenty to thirty white wings, rounding the Dram Tree, led by the *We're Here, I'm Coming,* and *So Am I,* with every stitch of canvas spread to the favoring breeze on the last stretch to the Custom-house Wharf.

Direct importations of coffee from Rio de Janeiro, of sugar and molasses from Cuba, Jamaica, and Demerara, of hoop-iron and cotton ties from England, of salt from Turks Island and Liverpool employed many square-rigged foreign vessels; and three times as many beautifully lined American schooners