THE CHATHAM RAILROAD COMPANY.

The authorities of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad Company, and some citizens of Raleigh, accustomed to look ahead, foresaw that in the progress of the war the coal and iron of Virginia might be controlled by the Federalists. At any rate it seemed certain that the working of the mines, and transportation of products would be greatly impeded. I concurred strongly in this view and not only subscribed to the stock but advocated in the Convention the granting of state aid to the company. I also published an article urging the voters of Raleigh to authorize the subscription for $50,000 of stock. The proposal was ratified by a handsome majority.

The proposed ordinance was adopted by the Convention. It authorized the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad Company to subscribe for $200,000 stock in the Chatham Railroad Company, and the City of Raleigh $50,000; the state to issue six per cent bonds to them in exchange for bonds of like amounts of Railroad and City bonds. Because of my zeal in behalf of the enterprise I was elected President, with the small salary of $1500 in Confederate money. Major Wm. W. Vass Secretary and Treasurer. I gladly accepted the position, because I could aid the Confederacy more effectively, and more agreeably than as a private in the army.

We were fortunate in securing the services as Chief Engineer of Colonel Elwood Morris, who had done excellent work in the location and building of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and who was brought to North Carolina, after the death of Colonel
igation Company. When that was stopped by the breaking out of the war, he was employed by the State to erect batteries on the Coast.

It was at first determined to let out the grading to two energetic and responsible contractors, Messrs. A. Frank Page of Cary and D. E. Murchison of Harnett County. But the rapid rise of prices, the difficulty of procuring labor, and the depreciation of Confederate currency made it impossible for them to fulfill their contract. After doing some preliminary work they applied for release from their bargain, which was granted by the Directors. I was directed to take proper measures for completion of the grading, Mr. D. E. Allen, an experienced Railroad man being employed as Superintendent.

The charter required the terminus of the road to be Raleigh and the Coal-Fields in the County of Chatham. The Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company had completed a dam at Lockville communication by water between that point and the Coal Fields. It was resolved that our earliest work should be confined to the location and grading of the road from Raleigh to Lockville about a mile above the junction of Deep and Haw rivers.

Col. Morris reported that he could secure a line down Walnut Creek into Raleigh shorter and at less expense than one running by Cary, but if the North Carolina Rail Road Company would allow the Chatham Railroad Company to widen the cuts and fills of its roadbed from Cary to Raleigh, that route would be best. It would enable the former to get its coal and iron for use at Company Shops, now Burlington, then the seat of its foundries and other shops, and thus be of advantage to both corporations. I went before the directors of the North Carolina Company and secured the arrangement, thus saving four miles of grading.
I began the work in 1862. For two years the Confederate authorities took no interest in building the road. The difficulties in my way cannot now be realized. All economic ideas and calculations proved worthless. For example it was supposed that slave owners near the coast would remove their slaves into the interior and their labor could be secured with ease and at moderate prices. But the number of removals was far below, and the demand for labor far exceeded anticipation. Although the directors and the public gave me credit for doing all that was possible, the grading did not progress as rapidly as was desired.

there was much trouble in procuring food for men and beasts. The enormous demands of the army and the distrust of the currency operated to create scarcity. Especially it was difficult to procure meat. I was forced to send an agent to Southwest Georgia to procure supplies. He bought hogs and had them cut up and cured under his inspection. Even then the officer in command in that section prohibited the provision being carried out of his jurisdiction, and I was compelled to appeal to the war department at Richmond to have his decision reversed. When my agent, W. J. Holleman, brought his accounts for settlement, he said, "You need not be surprised to see items for a bottle or two of whiskey charged against the company, because there were such quantities of freight piled up at Charlotte and other points that I had to treat freight agents, as well as exhibit my government papers in order to get priority of transportation."

A branch railroad was being built from Florence to connect with the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad, in Anson County. A charter was secured to extend it to Deepriver. There was a dispute as to whether the extension should go through Montgomery County or
should cross the Pee Dee lower down the river and pass through the eastern part of Moore County. To inform our directors as to which route they should favor Col. Morris and I rode on horseback to Florence in South Carolina by the eastern route from Deep river and returned through the southern part of Montgomery County to Carthage. We reported that there were no material differences between them. As Col. Macfarland, the President of the Florence branch was in Charleston we proceeded to that city by rail to arrange for future negotiations between the patrons of the two lines. There was then complete stagnation of business in the city, and on a subsequent visit in 1867 to consult General Canby about some details of the tax law in North Carolina, the harbor was like a secluded inland lake.

In our journey north from Cheraw we passed by a gang of laborers, negroes, men, women and children, brought from the Sea Island Plantation, slaves of ex-Governor of South Carolina. There were a few mules and carts, but the women and older children were carrying dirt in trays.

An incident in our ride from Cary to Cheraw throws light on the condition of things in the backwoods.

We asked entertainment for the night at the home of a Mr. Fooshee. He was out but his wife met us with warm greetings. She said that deserters from Lee’s army had attacked the store of Mr. Poust, a country merchant, robbed him of all its contents, tore up his books of accounts and promissory notes and treated him shamefully. She was glad to have us in her house as possibly they might make an attack on it during the night. Mr. Fooshee soon came in and joined in the welcome. He said I saw you gentlemen an hour fore this. I was on one side of the avenue and an employee on the other as you passed, ready with guns
loaded with buckshot to defend my premises." We spent a pleasant night with the hospitable couple assuring them of our readiness to join in the defence if needed. We learned afterwards that they were not molested.

Governor Vance did me the honor to consult me in regard to a proposal urged upon him by men living in communities where deserters were numerous, to punish them by sending their wives and children out of the limits of the Confederacy. He promptly concluded that the plan was too inhuman. Of course I concurred in this view. One of these deserters hid himself in a copse of wood near his residence, keeping comparatively comfortable in winter by means of a stove, conducting the smoke through underground piping opening into the kitchen chimney. It is said that one of the objects of Sherman's diabolical march through Georgia, South Carolina and part of North Carolina, (was to) increase the desertions of soldiers, anxious about the fate of their homes. Our people visit on his memory the odium of this destructive campaign, but it is certain that it was agreed on between him and Grant, Lincoln and Secretary Stanton.

In order to show the discomforts to which our people were subjected in war times, I mention that at the home of a substantial farmer on Deep river we spent a night very agreeably. He had a beautiful and attractive daughter with sprightly and agreeable manners. There was a piano in the parlor and we asked her to play for us. Without hesitation she did so remarking that it was out of tune; and she had been unable to procure an expert to put it in order. And out of tune it was. I never have heard such discord. Although I am no connoisseur, it was really painful, yet the amiable little lady gave us the best music in her power. The piano tuner who made the
rounds in Chatham County was called away to the maelstrom of the army. My memory has lost the cacophonous sounds but retains the grace and pleasantness of the kindly maiden, although, if living, she must be over three score and ten years of age.

In the Fall of 1863 Col. Elwood Morris, our Chief-engineer, after efficient service, became intensely home-sick. His anxiety to see his mother preyed upon him. I accepted his resignation and procured for him a passport from the war department, authorizing him to go through the lines to Newark in New Jersey. The Federal officers interposed no obstacle. I never heard from him afterwards. He had finished the location and his chief-assistant, Henry A. Brown was quite equal to taking up his task.

Inasmuch as our design was to connect with the Deep river dam at Lockville Col. Morris ran the Railroad line through the lowgrounds of Dr. Richard Smith, near Haywood. He was so bitterly opposed to this that he endeavored to get a preliminary injunction against it. As this would have seriously delayed our work I procured an argument against the application by Hom. Samuel F. Phillips and defeated the plaintiff's plan by laying the argument before every judge in the State, adding my statement that the government needed the road, and delay would be an irreparable injury. After meeting with a refusal from each of four or five judges Dr. Smith surrendered. Of course we expected to pay any damage which might be assessed.

After the Raleigh and Augusta Airline concluded not (to) go up the deep river valley, the line was changed to run over the hilly country and the embankments on the lowlands were levelled.

In the Fall of 1864 we secured as Chief Engineer W. W. T. D. Myers of Richmond. He was in the service of the War department
and by his influence the procuring of supplies was made more smooth and expeditious. To him was given, at my request the power of impressing trees on the route for cross-ties. It was not exercised however.

The War department for some time granted details of such of our white employees as were under the conscript age. But near the end of the war General Theophilus Holmes, who was then commanding in North Carolina informed me that it was necessary to recall all details. From his expressions of regret he evidently thought that I would go to the front. I felt sure the Secretary of War would exempt me if requested, but I had, in the language of the day a safe bomb proof under the Conscript law, because I was Attorney of the City of Raleigh, a municipal officer.

Early in April 1864 offer was made by E. Wilkes & Bros of Charlotte to transfer their force of 330 hands and 150 mules, which had been used in the grading of the Piedmont Railroad to the service of the Chatham Railroad, on condition that we could procure at government prices 1000 bushels of corn monthly delivered at Charlotte. I at once applied in person to the War Department at Richmond for this privilege. I stated that the work had been retarded by the necessity to buy such supplies in South Carolina, at $15 per bushel, and with indifferent success as the planters generally declined to sell their supplies for currency. Moreover when such meagre purchases were made, it was necessary to divert part of my laborers and mules to haul them to the Railroad stations. As the government had been supplying 1600 bushels a month for use of Wilkes & Bro. on the Piedmont road there would be a saving of 600 bushels. I stated that the Chatham R.R. Company owned cars sufficient for transportation of the corn asked for.
Of course I pressed the importance of speedy access to supplies of coal and iron on account of the military operations in Virginia. I also stated that sufficient strap iron had been secured for the road when the grading should be finished.

Friends in Richmond assured me that such were the delays of red-tapeism in governmental business circles that I would be fortunate in getting the aid asked for in two weeks. The prediction proved not to be true.

Taking as my introducers, Hon. R. R. Bridgers, then member of the House of Representatives, afterwards the very able President of the Wilmington and Weldon R. R. Co. and its extension, and a former client, Major W. S. Downer, then in the Ordinance Department. I was at the opening of the doors of the Rail Road Bureau at 9 o'clock. As Lt. Col. F. W. Sims, its Chief, stepped in, I stated my business and handed him my application. In less than a half-hour he endorsed that "the Chatham R.R. was of first importance to the Gov't and Railroads and any aid towards its completion consistent with other interests ..... is earnestly recommended." I then hastened to Lt. Col. J. N. St.John, Chief of the Nitre and Mining Bureau. He promptly endorsed, "The recommendation of Lt. Col. Sims is Cordially Concurred in. The Gov't. coal and iron interests demand the Early Completion of the Chatham Railroad,- Wilmington at present being the only outlet of the Deep River Coal mines and Iron Works." The capitals are of his handwriting and were evidently intended for emphasis.

Without delay I laid the matter before the Chief of Ordnance, Col. J. Gorgas, and then after him before A. L. Rives, Lt. Col. and Acting Chief of the Commissary Bureau, both of whom signed the endorsement of
Col. St. John. Thus in spite of red tape in two hours I was in the ante-chamber of the Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, along with a number of others awaiting their turn for an interview. I sent in my name and about 12 o'clock I was called in, and was introduced by Col. Bridgers. The Secretary was seated, head stooping over the table, repeatedly coughing as if the victim of tuberculosis. I predicted his early death but he lived sixteen years longer. Without rising he was courteous, read my application and endorsements and said "It will be odd if I cannot help you with all these endorsements". He then wrote, "Q.M.G. Can the aid requested he granted consistently with the other demands on you for transportation & supplies for the Govt? 6th of April, 1864."

Armed with this I hurried to the Department of the Quarter Master General, A. R. Lawton, at 1 o'clock. He was out of town, but I was informed that he would be willing to see me on next day, although it was Sunday. Accordingly next morning he readily authorized his subordinate, Major Charles S. Carrington, to arrange the details of the sale asked for.

I give the history of this transaction in order to throw light on the common complaint that matters were not managed at Richmond on business principles, that government movements were delayed by too much circumlocution. Certainly I procured the approval of my application for 1000 bushels of corn at government prices by four heads of bureaus and from the Secretary of War in four hours. And Gen. Lawton, Quarter Master General, who was absent from the City, have his approval only twenty hours later, not even closing entirely his office on Sunday. Complaints of undue delay in the transaction of government business was probably unjust. They originated presumably from the ill
humor of applicants, who lacked the knack in pushing their applications or from those applications having doubtful merit.

The only officer who, although courteous, was not responsive, was Secretary Mallory. Probably because he thought his department was not interested, he did not take time to understand my application, but referred me to a subordinate whose approval I did not think it necessary to obtain.

In arranging the details with Major Carrington, it was found best for both parties, not to deliver the corn at Charlotte, but from the government stores at Egypt and Haywood in Chatham County, and at points in Harnett, collected under the tithing law. Also by mutual agreement oats in the sheaf was sometimes substituted for Indian corn. With this governmental aid the force of E. Wilkes & Brother was added to that of the company in May 1864, and the grading was about finished from Cary to Lockville when it became necessary to suspend operations on the approach of Sherman's army. Every effort was made to save the property of the company. The Wilkes Brothers carried off their effects towards Charlotte. Those of the Chatham Railroad Company were hurried north-west out of the path of the coming troops, but they were pursued by cavalry detachments or stolen by bummers and thieves, and mostly lost. I applied to General Schofield for orders that the company's property should be restored. He evidently believed that the Confederate government was virtually interested in the road and refused.

After the war was over the requirement that the Chatham R.R. Co. should have its terminus in the Deep River Coal Fields was repealed. A new corporation took its place, the Raleigh, Columbia and Augusta Airline, and the Chatham Railroad became part of it.
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readily granted it to me but the approach of Sherman's army rendered it unnecessary to exercise it.

When funds approached exhaustion I procured from ex-Governor John M. Morehead, a subscription to the capital stock of $100,000 payable in cotton yarns at a bunch. I hoped that the farmers would readily exchange farm products for cotton yarns, in fact there was a general belief among business men that this could be readily (done) but after energetic efforts such exchanges in kind could not be effected. We were forced to sell the yarns for Confederate currency and pay for our purchases with the same.