



Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.
Southeast Chapter
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**South
east
Limited**

The Florida Atlantic and Gulf Central Railroad

By Edward A. Mueller with additional material by Don Hensley.



Purchased by FA&GC successor Florida Central, the *Thomas Dowling* later went to the Florida Railway and Navigation Co., and is a typical 4-4-0 of the era. Photo provided by Don Hensley.

Florida had been admitted as a state to the Union in 1845 and upon its admission had received a grant from the Federal Government of some 500,000 acres of land. This was for the purpose of providing internal improvement, i. e. development. The Florida Atlantic and Gulf Central Railroad (FA&GC) was chartered by Florida's governor, Thomas Brown, on January 24, 1851, which was about ten years before the Civil War was to erupt, to build a line west from Jacksonville. Its route was from the east coast of Florida to the Gulf of Mexico in West Florida; certainly an ambitious project. The immediate object of the railroad was to build a line between the St. Johns River in Jacksonville to Alligator Town (later known as Lake City) in Columbia County, a distance of 60 miles.

Its capital was set at \$3,000,000 and the state would subscribe \$1,000,000 after \$2,000,000 had been raised from other sources. The railroad was also granted eminent domain rights as necessary and was also subject to adequate compensation.

Despite these generous terms, the railroad's initial organizers were not able to secure substantial subscriptions of its stock. They went back to the Legislative Council and asked for amendments to make the offer more attractive.

Dr. Abel Seymour Baldwin, a civic leader of Jacksonville and an able frontier doctor took leadership in 1855 when the first effective financing of the railroad took place. Financial support was tendered by the State of Florida, the city of Jacksonville, the county of Columbia and private individuals. It was thought that \$250,000 would be sufficient funding to commence operations.



The officers for the Southeast Chapter of the R&LHS for 2012. From left to right: Steve Vertescher, Secretary; Robert Van Nest, Treasurer; Art Towson, Vice Chairman; and Bill Howes, Chairman. The photo was taken by member Barry Baines at our January banquet hosted by member Larry Shughart.

Voters in Jacksonville, in mid-May 1855, approved a bond issue of \$50,000, the proceeds of which would be used to purchase stock in the railroad. Of course, a railroad would help Jacksonville to become a greater center of commercial activity. In July, Columbia County voters authorized the issuance of \$100,000 in bonds, which would be used to purchase railroad stock.

Dr. Baldwin had a most varied life. Born in 1822 in Oswego County, New York, he was orphaned in infancy and brought up by an uncle and aunt. He graduated from Geneva College and specialized in botany. In 1838 he received a MA and a Doctor of Medicine from Geneva College and started a private practice in Geneva. Frequent bouts of rheumatism motivated a move to Jacksonville in December, 1838 shortly after his marriage.

He was an active member of St. Johns Episcopal Church and helped form five other churches. For some time he was the only physician within 20 miles of Jacksonville. He was talented in art and music, played several instruments and studied the Florida climate which gradually restored him to health. He was the official meteorologist for the Smithsonian Institution.

He was elected to the Florida Legislature in 1852 and was active in advocacy of the FA&GC Railroad, becoming it's President in 1855. In mid-July, 1855 specific action was taken to start construction. F. F. L'Engle, an engineer, was hired to perform the preliminary survey of the route between Jacksonville and Alligator Town.

Even though the survey was completed by September, 1855 it was not until March of 1856 that any construction could be started. Off to a slow start, by June only 9 miles of roadbed were ready for placement of rails. However, two months before this, in May, 1856, Senator David Yulee had succeeded in getting a Congressional Grant of 120 sections of land for every 20 miles of railroad, which would be of considerable help.

Getting the construction completed to Alligator Town was disappointingly slow. John Pease Sanderson, who had been one of the directors from the beginning was becoming a more dominant force and replaced Dr. Baldwin as President in 1857. Sanderson, born in Vermont, had come to Florida in 1840 and moved to Jacksonville in 1849. He was a leading lawyer and public speaker in Jacksonville. He was particularly successful in dealing with Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund.

Despite a Yellow Fever epidemic in 1857, complications in buying railroad iron from England and periodic short-

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS

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|------------------------------|----------------------|
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This Florida Central passenger schedule was issued in 1867 during the transition of the FA&GC to the Florida Central. You could go 60 miles from Jacksonville to Lake City in about four hours and fifteen minutes. Provided by Don Henslev.

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FLORIDA CENTRAL RAILWAY.

F. DIBBLE, President, T. H. MAXKY, Sec'y and Treas. T. E. BUCKMAN, Gen. Supt., Jacksonville, Fla.

Leave.				Dec. 20, 1867.				Arrive.				
Acc.	Pass	Pass	Miles	STATIONS.				Miles	Pass	Pass	Acc.	CONNECTIONS.
	A. M.	A. M.							P. M.	A. M.		
		8 20	0	Lake City 1.	60	6 45						1 Con. with Pensacola & Georgia Railway. 2 Connects with Florida Railway. 3 Connects with steamboats on the St. Johns, and to and from Savannah and Charleston, and Atlantic and Gulf Railway.
		9 10	10	Olustee.....	50	6 05						
		10 05	20	Sanderson.....	40	5 20						
		11 45	40	Baldwin 2.....	20	3 45						
		1 00	60	Jacksonville 3.	0	2 30						
	P. M.	P. M.		ARRIVE [[LEAVE				P. M.	A. M.		

ages of labor, the project was pushed forward and the company continued its progress. The route of the railroad was quite straight. The grades were minimal and the greatest height on the line was only 42 feet. There were few curves and no curve exceeded one degree. Some 2,500 feet of trestle was built, much of which would be filled in afterward with earth.

Early in March of 1858 tracks were in existence between Jacksonville and Thigpen later to be renamed Baldwin in honor of Dr. Abel Baldwin. By November, 1858 the entire roadbed had been graded from Jacksonville to Alligator.

The iron used was thought to be of first quality, some 2,000 tons American and 1,000 tons English. It was T rail, at 52 pounds to the yard. The cross ties were of yellow pine and were 28 inches apart. As of July 1859, the rolling stock consisted of two engines: the "Jacksonville," a 4-4-0 manufactured by the New Jersey Locomotive and Machine Company of Paterson, New Jersey, and a second engine believed to be named the "Governor Perry" plus some 25 cars.

The New Jersey Locomotive and Machine Company was an outgrowth of a company founded in 1845 by William Swinburne and Samuel Smith. The company stayed in business for about a decade, but failed with the Panic of 1857. Reorganized in 1858, it was purchased by the New York and Erie Railroad and became that railroad's maintenance shops in Paterson. It has been estimated that some 225 locomotives were produced by the company during its existence.

The "Jacksonville" was placed on the road to aid in construction on July 10, 1858 and the "Governor Perry" began operating on April 1, 1859. Initial costs of operating were 68 cents per mile, fuel alone cost 1.5 cents per mile.

The cars were a single baggage and second class car, 3 box cars, 1 stock car, 5 platforms, 9 lumber and 6 small cars. The Company believed it could build its own cars cheaper and accordingly ordered wheels, axles and other material for five more cars. A turntable was also needed for turning locomotives and cars and this was erected near Jacksonville.

The FA&GC established that it would connect at Lake City with the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad. It was contemplated that this latter railroad would have its connection extended as far west as Tallahassee by the end of 1859 as the grading had been finished. Furthermore, additional work was underway from Tallahassee to Quincy where some grading had been done.

Estimates of revenue were based on handling passengers, mail, cotton, lumber, livestock, fruit, grain and miscellaneous freight.

Finally in early March, 1860, the railroad was completed to Alligator. A special train or trains carried some 800 denizens of Jacksonville to Alligator to celebrate the occasion. Festivities included free barbeque, many speeches and promises of future prosperity. At this time the population of Jacksonville was only about 5,000 people.

On March 21, citizens of Alligator (Lake City) took a train to Jacksonville for a similar celebration. At the Judson House on Bay Street, a ceremony was held that mixed the waters of the St. Johns River and the waters of Lake DeSoto, which is in Lake City. One of the railroad's engineers playfully released steam from one of the engines, which caused momentary alarm to bystanders, who believed the engine was about to explode.

The presidential election held later in the year further alienated the southern states and in January, 1861, Florida seceded from the Union. Federal forces captured Jacksonville in March, 1862 and the war now being brought to Florida

ROSTER of the FA&GC

Shown below is a roster of FA&GC locomotives prepared by Southeast Chapter member, Don Hensley.

No.	Name	Type	Purchase	Builder Information	Specifications	Disposition
-	Governor Perry	4-4-0	1858	?	?	Gone by 1880
1	Jacksonville	4-4-0	May 1858	New Jersey Locomotive & Machine	14x20-60"	to FR&N in 1884
2	Columbia	4-4-0	April 1859	New Jersey Locomotive & Machine	14x20-60"	to FR&N in 1884
3	R. E. Lee	4-4-0	Nov 1865	Newspaper noted arrival from Boston.	?	to FR&N in 1884
4	?	4-4-0	Nov 1865	Newspaper noted arrival from Boston.	?	to FR&N in 1884
5	Thomas Dowling	4-4-0	1880	Baldwin 5350	15x24-60.5"	to FR&N in 1884

forced a virtual cessation of important railroad traffic. During the conflict, rails were repeatedly torn up and replaced and the economics of the FA&GC were very poor. However, two locomotives were ordered and delivered during the first years of the war. Like the *Jacksonville*, all of these engines were 4-4-0's, but we only know the name of one of the engines, the *R. E. Lee*, and when they were purchased. Later on, some engines from the FA&GC worked on the Florida Central, the Florida Railway & Navigation and the Florida Central & Peninsular Railway.

The Civil War saw both John Sanderson and Abel Baldwin taking part but in different ways. John Sanderson was an ultra secessionist and drafted the ordinance that declared the separation of Florida from the Union. In 1862 he was elected to the Confederate Congress based in Richmond, Virginia. He continued on with the FA&GC railroad, was again elected President in 1870 and also the vice President of the Jacksonville, Pensacola and Mobile railroad.

Dr. Baldwin initially opposed secession but when Florida seceded, cast his lot with his state. He was appointed as a surgeon and was active in East Florida and the Lake City area for Confederate General Joseph Finegan. At the end of the conflict in mid-May, 1865, he was a prisoner of war.

Baldwin apparently had little to do with railroads after the war. The Florida Medical Association was founded in his Jacksonville home in 1874. He was extremely active in projects to help decrease detriments to shipping at the entrance to the St. Johns River and was active in helping to suppress the 1880 Yellow Fever epidemic in Jacksonville. His son, William, was lost in that disaster. It is difficult to think of anyone who did so much in so many productive ways.

In the spring of 1864, the Confederate War Department decided it was necessary to establish a railroad connection between the FA&GC (or perhaps it was the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad) and the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad, a line that ran westerly from Savannah somewhat parallel to the Florida-Georgia boundary. This connection was needed so that Florida could more adequately supply the northern Confederacy with troops and food products. The connection would be made between Live Oak, Florida, and Dupont, Georgia. Railroad iron was extremely scarce so this material was obtained by removing tracks of the Florida Railroad. Despite an injunction to stop this, the work continued.

By February, 1868, the FA&GC was in such poor shape that they sold all of their bad order cars to the Pensacola & Georgia Railroad. The cars included nine box cars with bad trucks, six box cars with out trucks, one mail & passenger car, one coach and a 15 car log train (4 cars condemned and broken up). All the cars needed new trucks, roofs or doors, repainting, and the passenger cars needed reupholstering.

The Reconstruction period after the Civil War was exceedingly difficult for all Florida railroads. On March 4, 1868, the FA&GC or what remained of it was sold for \$111,000 to William E. Jackson and Associates. This was about twenty cents on the dollar. A few months later in late July, the railroad was incorporated as the Florida Central.

Announcements:

- February 11th - Jacksonville Rail Fair, Prime Osborn Convention Center.
- March 9th - Southeast Chapter meeting.
- April 12th - Southeast Chapter meeting.
- April 14th - Deland, Florida Rail Fair at the Volusia County Fairgrounds.
- **May 17-20th - R&LHS Annual Convention, Birmingham, AL**