

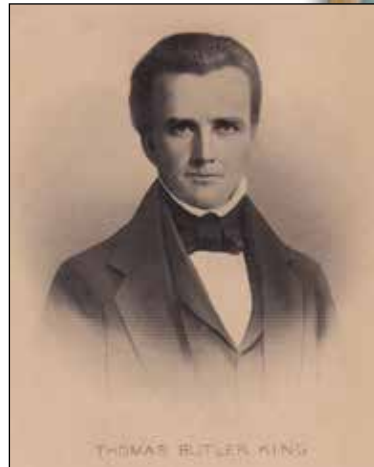
IN CELEBRATION of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society's 50th Anniversary, the monthly "SSI Archives" pages during 2015 will feature artifacts from the Society's archives and the stories behind them.

50 YEARS
1965-2015

The Brunswick-Altamaha Canal

Thomas Butler King, a native of Massachusetts, whose wife was heir to Retreat Plantation on St. Simons Island, served as a Georgia state senator and a U.S. congressman. He was a progressive and commerce-minded thinker who foresaw the development of Brunswick as a major commercial port.

King had a bold idea: to construct a 12-mile canal that would link the Altamaha River to the Brunswick harbor as a cost efficient way to transport cotton and timber from upland Georgia to Brunswick's deep-water port. In 1836, King engaged Loammi Baldwin, Jr., famous for his design of the Union Canal in Pennsylvania and dry docks at the Boston and Norfolk Navy Yards, to survey and plan the canal route. King, his brother Stephen and William W. Hazzard were the incorporators of the Brunswick Canal and Railroad Company.

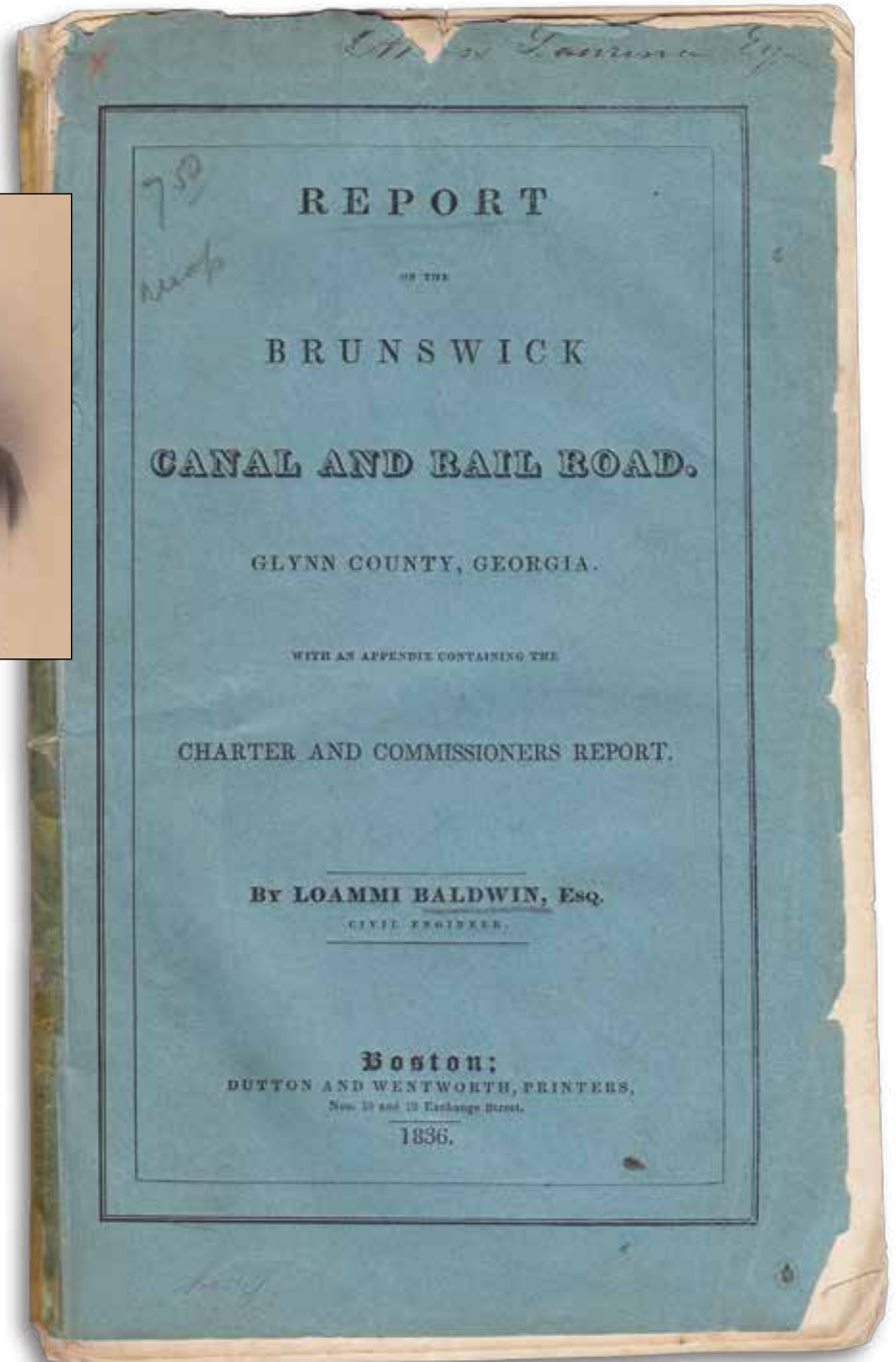


Baldwin's estimate for the herculean task was approximately \$450,000, including the construction of two locks at the beginning and end of the canal at \$15,000 each. The costs were astronomical for the day.

Work on the project began in October of 1836. Though plagued by financial and labor problems, the canal, running from Academy Creek in the Brunswick harbor to the Altamaha River in McIntosh County, was opened in 1854. However, it was by then made obsolete by railroads (which Thomas Butler King saw as the future of transportation) and was abandoned by 1860. According to an archaeological survey from 1981, remnants of the canal, cutting through the pinelands, hardwood swamps and marshes of the coast, remain an important feature of our area's history. Despite the failure of the canal, the Brunswick Port is today one of the busiest on the east coast.

This month's images, from the Coastal Georgia Historical Society's archives, show the cover of a booklet from 1836 containing Loammi Baldwin's plans and specifications for the canal and a portrait of Thomas Butler King, the mind behind the failed project.

Since its founding in 1965, Coastal Georgia Historical Society's archival collection has grown to over 15,000 historically important artifacts, documents and photographs. The Society invites you to turn to this page each month in 2015 as our 50th Anniversary year unfolds.



Our monthly images on this page are from the vast archives of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. The Society's mission includes the "administration, restoration and maintenance of historic facilities and resources ... preserved as a living part of the historical and cultural foundations of our coastal community." Society facilities include the St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum, the A.W. Jones Heritage Center, and the Maritime Center (formerly the U.S. Coast Guard Station). To learn more about the Society, its diverse programs, and the benefits of Society membership, please call (912) 638.4666, or visit www.saintsimonslighthouse.org.