



CHAPTER I.

The original main line of the Boston & Lowell Railroad was only twenty-six miles in length; and for many years it remained "little among the thousands" of great railway lines. Now that it has widely reached out, and, by purchase, lease and business contract, secured the management or traffic of many connecting and tributary roads, so that it has become the largest railroad system in New England, it is interesting to recall the fact that, as it was the first railroad chartered in New England for passenger transportation, so it was the first to be completed and operated its entire length, and it was the third or fourth in the United States.

In 1821, what is now the city of Lowell was a straggling village of twelve houses; some time previous a canal had been dug around Pawtucket Falls, on the Merrimack River, for purposes of navigation. In 1822, an organization was effected under the name of "The Locks and Canal Co." on the Merrimack River, to utilize the water power for manufacturing purposes, and the first wheel was set in motion Sept. 1, 1823. The facilities for the transportation of raw material to, and manufactured goods from, the place, were the river from Newburyport *via* Haverhill, the Middlesex Canal from Boston, and the highways; the latter being sandy in summer, muddy in spring and early winter, and often blockaded with snow in mid-winter. In 1829, Messrs. William Appleton, Patrick T. Jackson and Kirk Boott, of Boston, with other far-seeing men of the owners and managers of water power and mills located at Lowell, were convinced that there must be greater transportation facilities for the proper development of their investments; for already on an average as many as twenty-four tons of freight passed daily between the manufacturing village and the then young city of Boston, and "six stage-coaches, drawn by four and six horses each," conveyed "from 100 to 120 passengers daily from one town to the