



# BURNING OF CLARENDON BRIDGE



## *Confederates Evacuate Fayetteville*



### CAROLINAS CAMPAIGN

The Carolinas Campaign began on February 1, 1865, when Union Gen. William T. Sherman led his army north from Savannah, Georgia, after the March to the Sea. Sherman's objective was to join Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia to crush Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Scattered Confederate forces consolidated in North Carolina, the Confederacy's logistical lifeline, where Sherman defeated Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's last-ditch attack at Bentonville. After Sherman was reinforced at Goldsboro late in March, Johnston saw the futility of further resistance and surrendered at Bennett Place near Durham on April 26, ending the Civil War in the East.

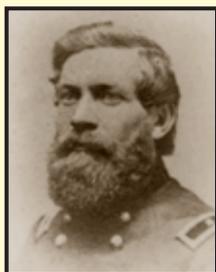
On March 12, 1865, Confederate Gen. Wade Hampton's cavalry under Gens. Joseph Wheeler and Matthew C. Butler formed the rear guard of Gen. William J. Hardee's corps as it evacuated Fayetteville. Wheeler deployed artillery and dismounted cavalry on the eastern bank of the Cape Fear River to protect the Clarendon Bridge until the last Confederates crossed, then set it afire.

Union Gen. Henry W. Slocum, commanding Gen. William T. Sherman's Left Wing, had been ordered "to do all that is possible to secure the bridge" as he captured Fayetteville. When Confederate skirmishers delayed Slocum's lead division as it approached from the west, however, part of Sherman's Right Wing, with elements

of the 15th Illinois Cavalry leading, entered the city first. Hampton and his men held them off in street fighting, then fired the bridge while withdrawing as Union Gen. Giles A. Smith's infantry division arrived in support. Confederate small arms and artillery fire from the eastern



Gen. Wade Hampton



Gen. Giles A. Smith

*Courtesy Library of Congress*



**Burning of Second Clarendon Bridge, 1909**  
*Courtesy North Carolina Office of Archives & History*



**Second Clarendon Bridge, 1866–1909, photo of 1908 flood**  
*Fayetteville Area Transportation & Local History Museum*



**Town Lattice Truss** – *Courtesy Library of Congress*

Named for Clarendon County, from which Cumberland County was later formed, Clarendon Bridge was completed in 1819. This large, covered wooden toll bridge was constructed using the patented Town Lattice Truss System, which used planks pinned together with pegs instead of the laborious mortise-and-tenon construction method. A new covered bridge was completed in 1866 and stood here until 1909. It remained a toll bridge until about 1885.

bank held off the Federals until flames engulfed the bridge. Union soldiers "struggled manfully with washtubs of water" to extinguish the fire but without success. Hampton's cavalymen abandoned the east bank and marched toward Averagesboro twenty-five miles north, while Butler covered routes to the east toward Clinton. Sherman's engineers placed pontoon bridges across the river, and his army left Fayetteville on March 14.