



# Beyond the Burning Bridge: Wrightsville, Pa., in the Civil War

*Scott Mingus*

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It was one of the world's longest covered bridges, spanning southern Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River more than a mile and a quarter from Wrightsville across to Columbia. For decades, Wrightsville had in many ways been the entry point to the heart of Pennsylvania's Underground Railroad, and then in the summer of 1863, the town and the bridge became the focal point of Confederate Major General Jubal A. Early and one of his best subordinate generals, John B. Gordon, and his veteran, excellent Georgia brigade. This is the micro-history of the river town, its people and the soldiers from the region, and perhaps most of all, the chaotic Sunday night which proved to be pivotal in the history of Wrightsville -- the night the town became the farthest point east that Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia came during the entire Gettysburg Campaign. But this is more than just the story of the attack and defense of the bridge. It's a collection of human interest stories of not only that night, but of soldiers and civilians from Wrightsville and the nearby township and their deeds during the Civil War. Scores of young men from the town fought in the Union army. Some never came home. This is their story, as well as the story of that fateful night so long ago when a wall of flames almost a mile wide marked the river crossing.

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