

Dear Dr. Scribblerbridge:

After destruction of the **Wrightsville-Columbia covered bridge** as a result of the Gettysburg campaign, how did people get across the river (ferries, I presume) and when was the next bridge completed?

Dear Louise:

Dr. Scribblerbridge also presumes that ferries carried people and goods across the river after the bridge burning, although he has seen no reference to such.

Cross-river canal traffic, however, not only continued but is documented.

A towpath had run along the southern wall of the burned bridge. Horses or mules had used that towpath to pull boats from the Mainline Canal, which ran north on the Columbia side of the Susquehanna, over to the Tidewater and Susquehanna Canal, which ran south on the Wrightsville side.

After the bridge burned, a tugboat called the Columbia towed boats across the river from canal to canal.

The bridge problem was resolved in 1869 -- six years after the old bridge burned.

The Columbia Bridge Co. completed a covered wooden railroad bridge. The Pennsylvania Railroad soon purchased it.

According to the National Park Service's Historic American Engineering Record, the new bridge had 29 spans covering 5,390 feet.

Later, two iron spans were inserted in the middle of the bridge as a precaution against another fire damaging the entire bridge

This bridge was ruined not by fire but by a flood and wind storm on Sept. 30, 1896.

That destruction occurred, coincidentally, six days after F. Scott Fitzgerald was born to be borne back ceaselessly, not coincidentally, into the past.

•Contact The Scribbler: jbrubaker@lnpnews.com.