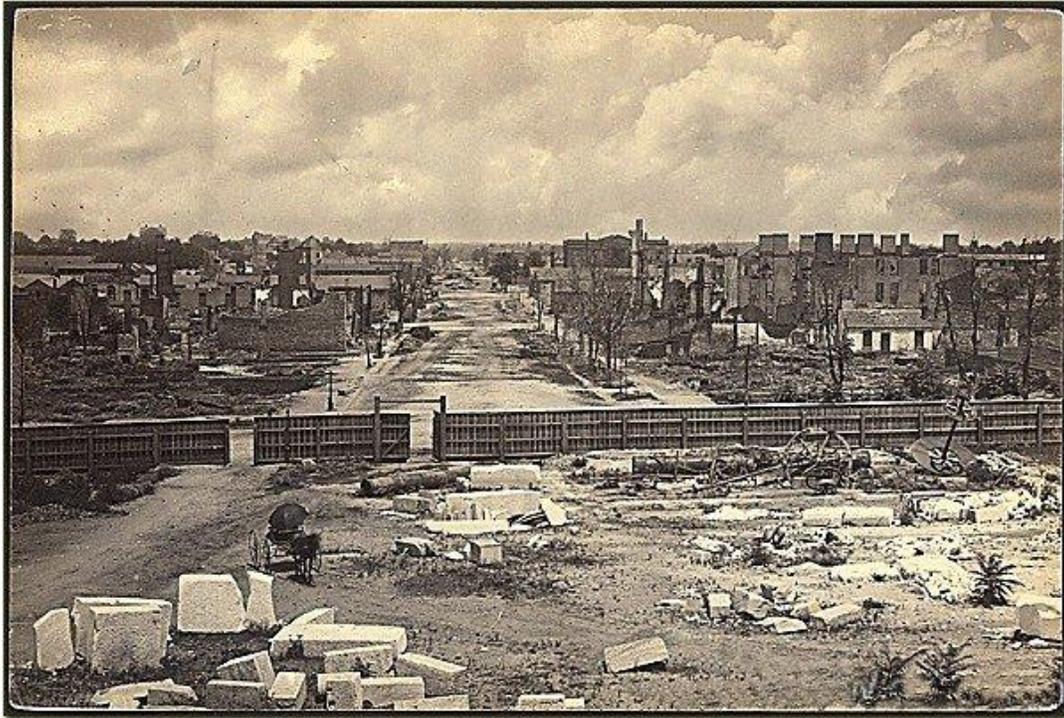


# Who Burned Columbia In 1865



## *"The True Story"*

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The responsibility for the burning of Columbia rests on the shoulders of Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, commander of the Federal forces.

First, Sherman's official report on the burning placed the blame on Lt. Gen. Wade Hampton III, who Sherman said had ordered the burning of cotton in the streets. Sherman later recanted this allegation and admitted lying in his Memoirs, Volume 11 page 287. He said, "In my official report of this conflagration I distinctly charged it to General Wade Hampton, and confess I did so pointedly to shake the faith of his people in him, for he was in my opinion a braggart and professed to be the special champion of South Carolina."

Secondly, in 1867 a chance meeting of former combatants occurred in Federal Governor Orr's office in Columbia. Gen. Howard, commander of the US 15th Corps of Sherman's army during the burning, was to be introduced to Gen. Hampton in the presence of many dignitaries. Gen. Hampton said, "Before I take your hand General Howard, tell me who burnt Columbia?" Gen. Howard

replied, "It is useless to deny that our troops burnt Columbia, for I saw them in the act." (See Edwin J. Scott, Random Recollections of a Long Life. page 185; The Burning of Columbia, Charleston, SC, 1888, page 11.)



General Oliver Otis Howard was the first steward of the Freedman's Bureau, before the 1866 founding of his namesake, Howard University, of which he was the first president.



As to the case for the burning of Columbia, South Carolina on February 17, 1865, **the responsibility lies totally and completely with General William Tecumseh Sherman ... PERIOD!**

In the centennial edition of The State Newspaper Feb. 17th, 1965, The State newspaper knew who burned Columbia as the headline on page 53 clearly states, "Orders or not, Columbia was burned." "Responsibility rested upon Sherman and his men." And on page 58 the headline read, "Drunken troops were out of control." "Federal officers, with few exceptions, admit rioting."

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**THE BURNING OF COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, FEBRUARY 17, 1865.  
[SKETCHED BY W. WAUD. for HARPER'S WEEKLY]**

**The Burning of Columbia - February 17, 1865**  
**The Last Confederate Soldier to Leave Columbia**  
**By Lieutenant Milford Overley**  
**9th Kentucky Cavalry**

I was one of Hampton's rear guard, and was probably the very last Confederate to leave the city, yet I saw no cotton burning in the streets of Columbia, nor did I hear any order from any one to fire the cotton, but I did hear one just the reverse. It was given to a detachment, three companies, from the 9th Kentucky Cavalry that was ordered back to Columbia as a provost guard after the Confederates had evacuated the place and before Sherman entered it. I asked and obtained of Col. Breckinridge, the Brigade Commander, permission to accompany the detachment, and was present and heard this order given the officer commanding: "It is Gen. Hampton's order that you return to Columbia, bring out any straggling Confederates you may find, and see that no cotton is fired." Having no time to lose, the detachment immediately proceeded on its mission, passing down in front of Sherman's skirmish line, which was in plain view, and entering the city in advance of him. In the suburbs we met Mayor Goodwyn and other municipal officers in carriages, with a white flag, going out to surrender the city. During the parley, which, however, was a brief one, we hastily visited different streets in search of straggling Confederate soldiers, but found none, neither did we find any cotton burning. Falling back as the Federals advanced along the street, the detachment passed out toward the east. I remained in the city after the detachment had gone, just keeping out of the enemy's reach by falling back from street to street till pushed out by the advancing infantry (they had no mounted men in the city at that time), yet I saw no cotton burning in Columbia. Basing my conclusions on what I saw (the Federals, in possession of the city), on what I failed to see (any cotton burning in the street), and on what I heard (the order to see that no cotton was fired), I can safely say that the Confederates had no hand in the burning of Columbia, Gen. Sherman's official report to the contrary notwithstanding."



# The Burning of Columbia

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1—State House  | 20—State Museum and Confederate Relic Room |
| 2—Trinity Episcopal Cathedral                          | 21—Columbia Canal                          |
| 3—Maxcy Gregg Birthplace site                          | 22—Horry-Guignard house                    |
| 4—University of South Carolina                         | 23—First Presbyterian Church               |
| 5—McCord house, Howard's HQ                            | 24—Wash. St. Methodist Church site         |
| 6—Hampton-Preston house                                | 25—First Baptist Church                    |
| 7—Former Columbia Theological Seminary, or Mills house | 26—Gen. James Chesnut cottage              |
| 8—Charlotte RR Station site                            | 27—Christ Episcopal Church site            |
| 9—"Diamond Hill" site                                  | 28—Crawford-Clarkson house                 |
| 10—Sherman's HQ, Duncan house site                     | 29—DeBuhl-Marshall mansion                 |
| 11—Chas. Woods' HQ site                                | 30—Mann-Simmons cottage                    |
| 12—Elmwood Cemetery                                    | 31—Maxcy Gregg house                       |
| 13—Arsenal Acad. (Governor's Mansion)                  | 32—Seibels-Hale-Elmore house               |
| 14—Palmetto Ironworks                                  | 33—The Asylum (State Hospital)             |
| 15—Finlay (Sidney) Park                                | 34—"Cotton Town"                           |
| 16—Ursaline Convent site                               | 35—Wartime Court House Square              |
| 17—St. Peter's Catholic Church site                    | 36—Beauregard's HQ, Congaree Hotel site,   |
| 18—Wayside Hospital & South Carolina RR depot sites    | 37—State Archives                          |
| 19—Evans & Cogswell Printing Plant                     | 38—"Millwood" ruins                        |



## Gen. Sherman's Burning of Columbia ~ February 17th, 1865 ~



**View down Main Street from the State House**



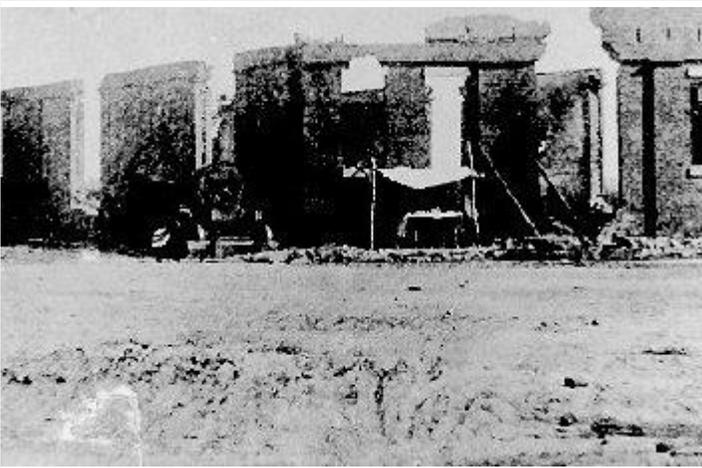
**The unfinished State House (*Note Trinity Cathedral*)**



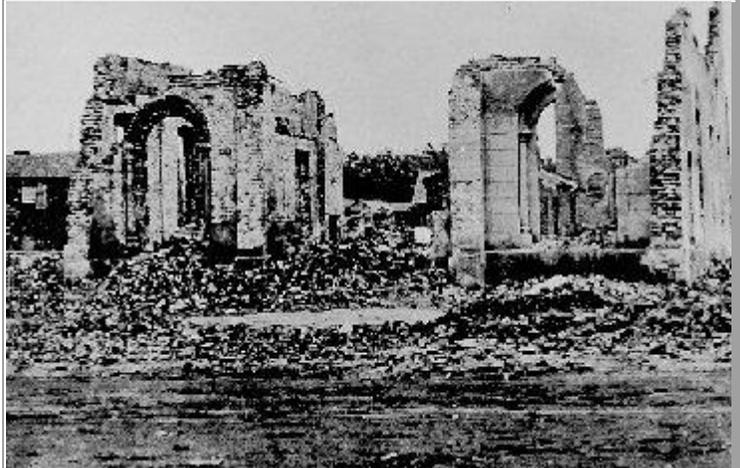
**City Hall and County Court (*Main St.*)**



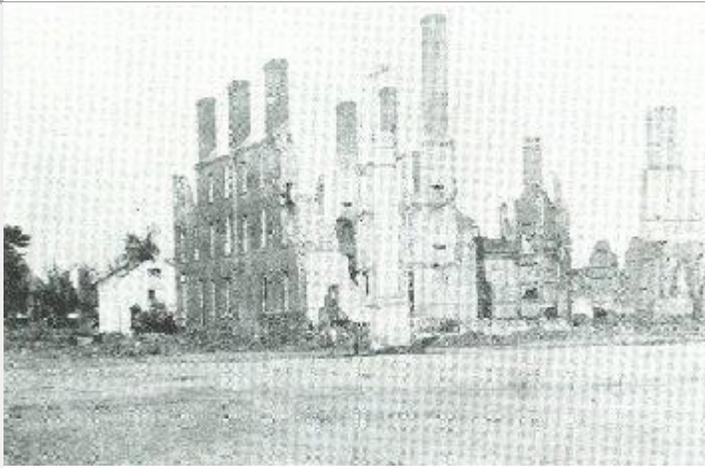
**Confederate Mint (*Gervais & Huger*)**



**S.C.R.R. Freight Depot (*Gervais & Gadsden*)**



**Carolina National Bank (*Washington St.*)**



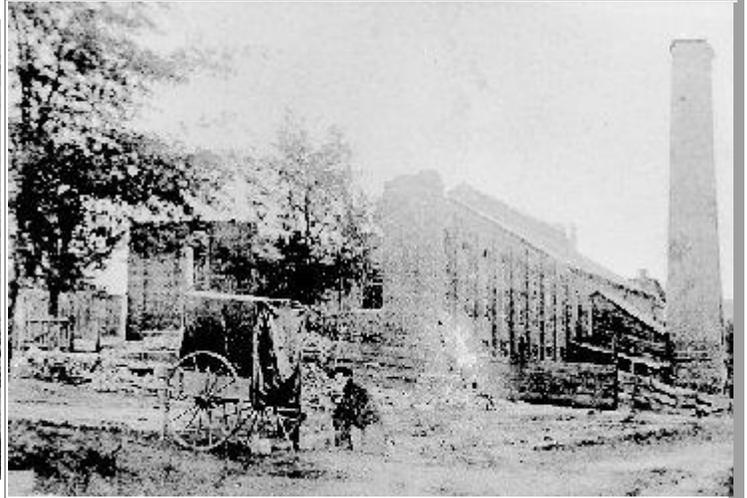
**Ursuline Convent (*Blanding & Main*)**



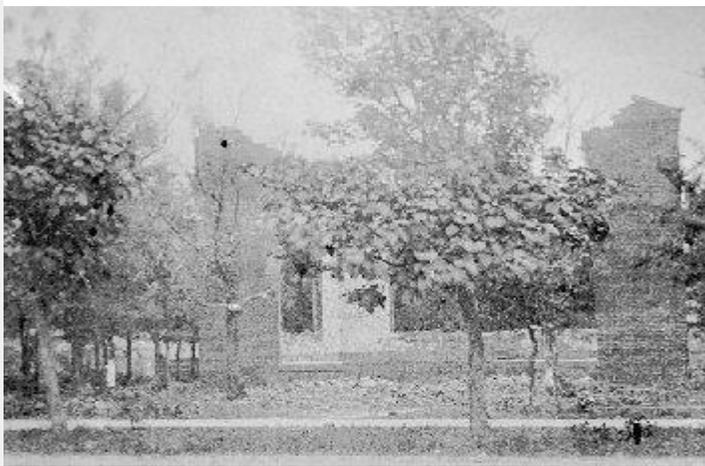
**Christ Episcopal Church (*Blanding & Marion*)**



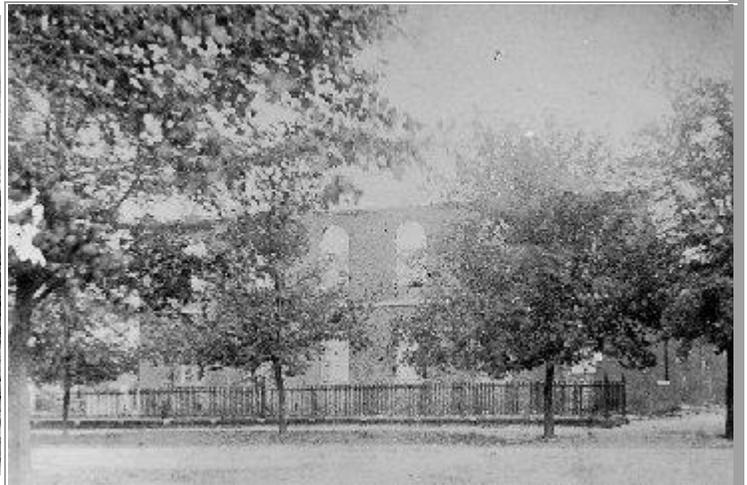
**Presbyterian Lecture Room (*Lady & Marion*)**



**S.C. State Armory (*Arsonal Hill*)**



**Ebenezer Lutheran Church (*Richland St.*)**



**Washington St. Medodist Church (*Wash. & Marion*)**