

HIGH BRIDGE



Critical Span

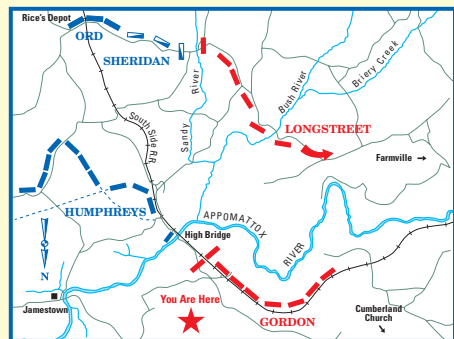


LEE'S RETREAT

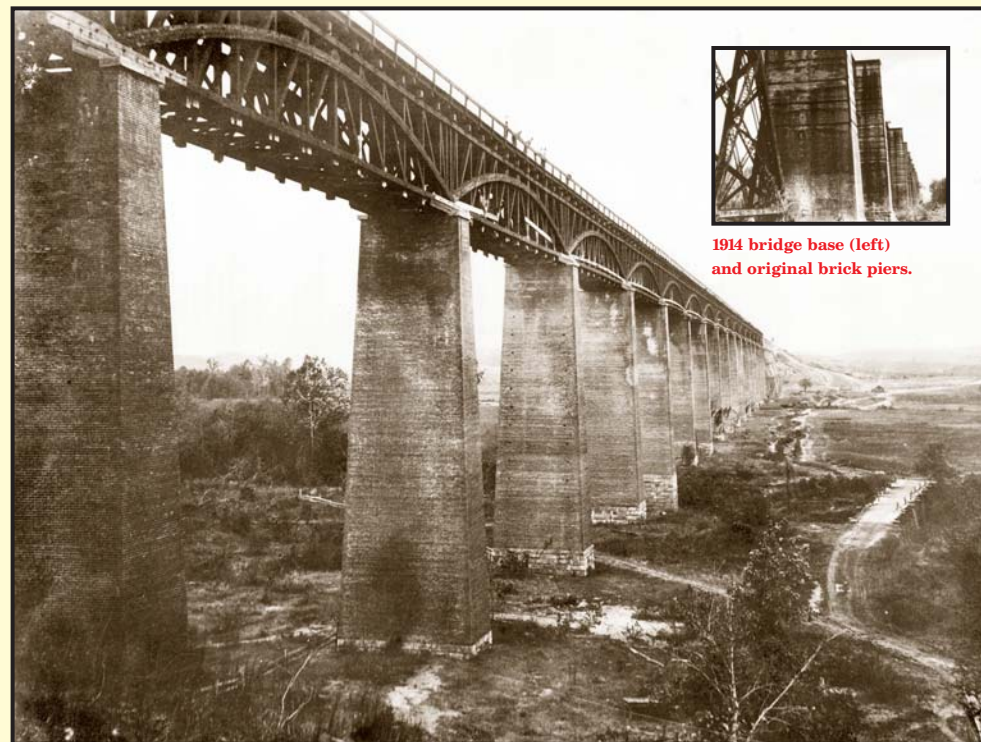
From here you can see the 1914 steel railroad bridge that spans the Appomattox River above the brick piers of the antebellum High Bridge, which carried the South Side Railroad. The old wooden bridge and the wagon bridge, just to the east of it, were the scene of two desperate engagements in April 1865. The first occurred on April 6, when Confederate cavalry prevented a mixed detachment of Union infantry and cavalry from capturing and burning the bridges to block the Confederate retreat. The second took place the next day, when withdrawing Confederates in turn attempted to destroy the structures to restrict pursuing Federals to the south side of the Appomattox from crossing or using them. They succeeded in burning several spans of the railroad superstructure, one of which collapsed into the river, but failed to destroy the wagon bridge when Union soldiers swarmed over it despite Confederate small-

arms fire and extinguished the flames with canteens and wet tent canvas.

The Confederates – Gen. John B. Gordon's corps and Gen. William Mahone's division – continued retreating west. Gordon followed the South Side Railroad to Farmville, while Mahone took Jamestown Road to Cumberland Church, three miles north of the



Morning of April 7, as troops moved into Farmville.



1914 bridge base (left) and original brick piers.

High Bridge and wagon bridge (right), 1865, looking north.

town. There the division entrenched, and soon Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys' Union corps, which had crossed the wagon bridge, closed in to attack.