

NORTH BEND



Federal Headquarters



LEE VS. GRANT – THE 1864 CAMPAIGN

Part of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Potomac occupied North Bend on June 14, 1864, en route to Weyanoke Point. Two days earlier, Union forces had disengaged from the Cold Harbor battlefield so stealthily that it escaped Gen. Robert E. Lee's notice. Grant had decided to cross the James River, then assault the weak Confederate defenses protecting Petersburg.

Part of the army boarded ferryboats three miles upstream at Wilcox's Landing, while the rest crossed the river half a mile east of here on the Weyanoke pontoon bridge, an engineering masterpiece. It utilized 101 pontoons to span 700 yards of water, incorporated schooners anchored in mid-stream to counteract the swift current, and featured a swing span to allow the



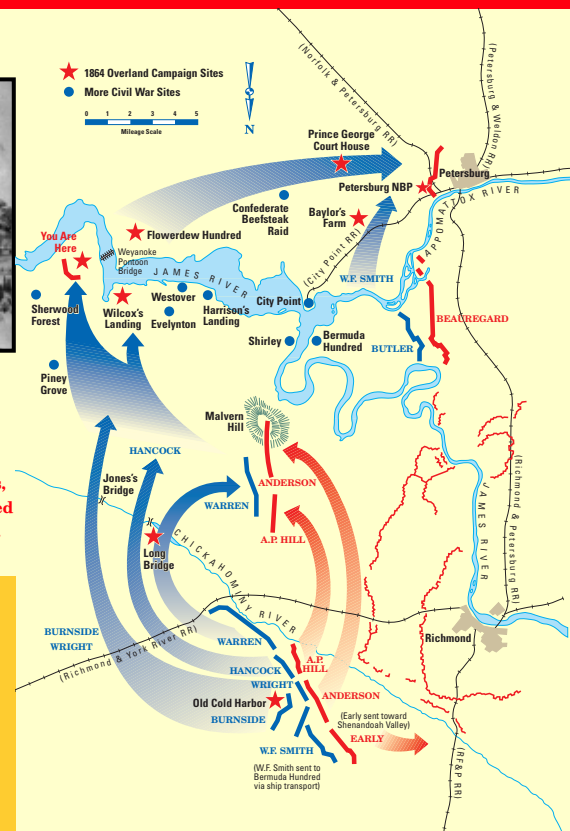
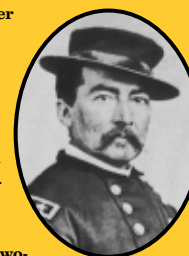
Edwin Forbes sketch of Weyanoke pontoon bridge

passage of Federal vessels. To protect it, Union soldiers entrenched across this narrow peninsula. United States Colored Troops occupied the earthworks on the morning of June 16 as the Federal rear guard, and were the last Union troops to cross to the south bank of the James. Some of the earthworks survive on the North Bend property. On June 18, with the army safely across, engineers dismantled the pontoon bridge.



North Bend, antebellum house and outbuildings, photographed in the 1920s.

Union cavalry commander Gen. Philip H. Sheridan and his forces occupied North Bend for three days beginning June 25 while they awaited transports to ferry them across the river to Windmill Point (Flowerdew Hundred). Sheridan was rejoining Grant after a two-week expedition to destroy railroad track. When the last of the troopers crossed over on June 28, cavalry activity north of the river ended.



Grant's movement across the James River caught Lee unaware. While the Federal army marched toward Petersburg, Lee's Confederate forces kept guard against a possible advance toward Richmond.