

Alexandria Times

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Reminder of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad

Alexandria's first railroad, the Orange and Alexandria, now only has two surviving structures in the city. One is the Wilkes Street Tunnel, and the other is Hooff's Run Bridge. Built in 1856, the bridge spanned Hooff's Run – the first waterway crossed by the railroad as it left Alexandria's Potomac River piers to the roundhouse – along with Duke and Wolfe Streets. The railroad continued west to Manassas Junction, Orange and ended in Lynchburg.

Hooff's Run Bridge has two round-arch sections: the northern portion was built first, and a southern addition was constructed in the late 1880s or early 1890s. A wooden trestle bridge operated between 1851 and 1856 as

a temporary part of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad until the stone bridge was operational. The northern portion of the bridge opened in 1856. A brick barrel vault features prominently in this portion and is still observable under the bridge. The vault is faced with gray, dry-laid sandstone.

The Washington-Southern Railroad added the southern addition between 1885 and 1895 to lay another track. In the 20th century, two more bridges built north of the current bridge allowed additional tracks to be laid, but both were dismantled shortly after World War II.

The success of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad made the city the regional commercial center it had sought to be with the construction of the



Hooffs Run Bridge is the last surviving stone structure of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad.

PHOTO/ALEXANDRIA
 ARCHAEOLOGY

Alexandria Canal. The Civil War changed the railroad's and the city's history shortly after the bridge's construction. The Union Army seized the railroad at the beginning of the war in 1861 and used the rails to send troops and supplies west and south of Alexandria. The U.S. Military Railroads also used the tracks to transport wounded soldiers from the battlefields to the more than 30 United States military hos-

pitals in Alexandria.

Today, Hooff's Run Bridge is the only surviving stone structure of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad in Virginia. Its current version is the oldest surviving bridge in the City of Alexandria and one of the last reminders of Alexandria's first railroad.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.