The bridge is one of the last remnants of Alexandria’s first railroad, the Orange & Alexandria. The "O&ARR," as it was commonly called, opened in 1851 and had 148 miles of track by 1860. The bridge was constructed in 1856 to span Hooff’s Run, the first waterway crossed by the railroad as it went from Alexandria’s Potomac River wharves to the roundhouse at Duke and Wolfe streets, and then west to Manassas Junction, Orange, Gordonsville, and finally to Lynchburg, Virginia. The O&ARR made Alexandria a regional commercial center in the mid-nineteenth century. During the Civil War (1861-1865), the railroad was seized by the U.S. Military Railroads and used to transport troops and supplies west and south. Thousands of wounded Union soldiers were also brought from the battlefields to the more than 30 U.S. military hospitals operating in Alexandria.

The Hooff family has had a continuing presence in Alexandria since the eighteenth century. Family members have been involved in farming, butchering, banking, and real estate.

The southern addition to Hooff’s Run Bridge constructed of red Seneca Sandstone has an arch composed of 33 rock-face ashlar voussoirs and a larger keystone. The exit wing wall descends on top of the Alexandria National Cemetery wall, which is made of familiar stone. Alexandria Archaeology Museum

The railroad car used to take President Abraham Lincoln’s body to Illinois for burial, as seen with the W.H. Whitney engine, January 1865, was made at the U.S. Military Railroads yard east of the bridge. National Archives

The bridge consists of two round-arch sections: the northern, older portion, and the southern addition. The northern part dates to 1856 and replaced a wooden trestle (1851-1856) used when the Orange & Alexandria Railroad began operation. The 28-foot wide structure was constructed with a brick barrel vault, still observable under the bridge today, and faced with gray dry-laid sandstone. The Washington-Southern Railroad built a 16-foot wide addition, circa 1885-1895, to accommodate another track. By the early twentieth century, two more bridges stood to the north with additional tracks; they both were dismantled around 1948.

The Hooffs Run Bridge is the only existing stone structure associated with the Orange & Alexandria Railroad in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is the oldest surviving bridge in Alexandria, and with the Wilkes Street Tunnel, one of two preserved structures associated with the town’s first railroad.