

VIADUCT PRESERVATION PROJECT:  
Great Stone Viaduct, Bellaire Ohio

## THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ARCH

The great American conflict that pitted government against government, state against state, and brother against brother has been known by many names other than "The Civil War". "The War of Rebellion", "The War of Secession", and "The War Between the States" are known synonymously with this great American conflict. Free Blacks and former slaves were known to call this conflict "The Freedom War", while those sympathetic to the preservation of the institution of slavery were known to use more charitable descriptions such as "The War for Southern Independence" or the "War of Northern Aggression". Yet, by whatever name it was called, this conflict tore at our American Nation over which President Lincoln presided. His leadership came from his strength, and will always be remembered as preserving the union of states formed by the U. S. Constitution. President Lincoln knew that strength comes from unity despite the differences that make our nation diverse.

This same symbolism of strength can be found in the simplicity of a stone arch. The arch itself has advantages over other types of architectural design because it can span distances and support great loads without obstructing a view beyond the arch itself. The arch is a window into the future, and President Lincoln envisioned what the future would be like if secession was permitted to occur.

An arch is constructed of finely cut "ring stones" which line the arch. They are tapered so that the bottom of the stone is narrower than the "shoulder" at the top of each stone. Standing together "shoulder to shoulder", they are joined together at the apex with a larger "key stone" which locks them all tightly together, giving the arch its strength in unity. Just as President Abraham Lincoln knew that a Union of States could not remain strong with a secession of some from that union, the arch is only strong because of the support of each ring stone locked in place by the keystone. Failure of any single stone would weaken and cause the arch to fall.

After the conclusion of that war, Nebraska became the 37th state of this Union. The importance of this unity of states, by whatever name it might be called, is symbolized in the arches of the Great Stone Viaduct in Bellaire, Ohio. Planned during the last days of the Civil War, and constructed during the years which immediately followed, the first stone of the bridge was placed in the Ohio River piers in 1868, the year following Nebraska's admission to the Union. In 1870, the first arch of the Great Stone Viaduct was erected on Union Street in Bellaire. Completed in 1871, this viaduct consists of 43 separate stone arches; each arch contains 36 ring stones and one keystone, for a total of 37 stones symbolizing each of 37 states preserved by the terrible conflict that had just ended. Those arches continue to carry railroad traffic today on a daily basis because of the strength of those arches. Thanks to President Abraham Lincoln, our Union of States known as the United States of America finds similar strength and vitality today in unity.

### WHY 37 STONES?

The 37 ringstones and keystone of the arches represent the 37 States of the Union at the time of construction in 1870.

# “Each arch is composed of 37 ringstones, including the keystone, one for each State of the Union”

Source: July 13, 1871, *Saint Clairsville Gazette* reprinted from the *Bellaire Independent*.

---

1	Delaware	December 7, 1787	20	Mississippi	December 10, 1817
2	Pennsylvania	December 12, 1787	21	Illinois	December 3, 1818
3	New Jersey	December 18, 1787	22	Alabama	December 14, 1819
4	Georgia	January 2, 1788	23	Maine	March 15, 1820
5	Connecticut	January 9, 1788	24	Missouri	August 10, 1821
6	Massachusetts	February 6, 1788	25	Arkansas	June 15, 1836
7	Maryland	April 28, 1788	26	Michigan	January 26, 1837
8	South Carolina	May 23, 1788	27	Florida	March 3, 1845
9	New Hampshire	June 21, 1788	28	Texas	December 29, 1845
10	Virginia	June 25, 1788	29	Iowa	December 28, 1846
11	New York	July 26, 1788	30	Wisconsin	May 29, 1848
12	North Carolina	November 21, 1789	31	California	September 9, 1850
13	Rhode Island	May 29, 1790	32	Minnesota	May 11, 1858
14	Vermont	March 4, 1791	33	Oregon	February 14, 1859
15	Kentucky	June 1, 1792	34	Kansas	January 29, 1861
16	Tennessee	June 1, 1796	35	West Virginia	June 20, 1863
17	Ohio	March 1, 1803	36	Nevada	October 31, 1864
18	Louisiana	April 30, 1812	37	Nebraska	March 1, 1867
19	Indiana	December 11, 1816			