

Standing shoulder to shoulder

THE GREAT Stone Viaduct Historical Education Society (GSV Society) formed just 18 months ago to become a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation. The stated purpose was to educate and promote public awareness of our rich heritage, and to protect and preserve important parts of our built environment that exemplifies that heritage. With the conclusion of the second Stone Viaduct Celebration, which included a steam whistle expo, hopefully all are aware of the mission and purpose of this organization.

The current activities of the GSV Society, has been to raise public awareness and appreciation of the Great Stone Viaduct in Bellaire which gives this organization its name. Many have joined this organization as members to support its activities and goals. One such goal is to acquire, protect, and preserve the abandoned portion of this magnificent railroad bridge for future generations to enjoy, while the active portion of the bridge con-

tinues to serve its purpose of providing rail transport between Ohio and West Virginia. Through the efforts of the GSV Society, the trees, the overgrowth of weeds and brush which has grown to keep the arches of the bridge hidden from public view since 1996 have now been removed to reveal all 43 arches of the bridge. Cooperation with adjoining landowners have permitted the recent Steam Whistle Expo to be staged within the graceful interior curve of this bridge, giving spectacular panoramic photo opportunities for those who attended. Temporary lighting of this bridge as darkness fell left no doubt that this beautiful structure is worthy of protection.

The GSV Society has already laid the foundation for the furtherance of this goal. The Society has surveyed this property, still under the ownership of CSX Corporation, and has discussed with Jacksonville officials acquisition of the bridge and surrounding property. The Society

will be conducting an appraisal which will serve as a basis for discussion on price. These discussions are ongoing, and are approached with a belief that the current owner, CSX Corporation, can be a partner in this project. Listed on the National Register of Historic Structures, recognized by the Ohio Historical Society as a transportation marvel, and through public awareness generated by the GSV Society over the past 18 months, this project can with cooperation become a reality.

The GSV Society has embarked upon an ambitious fundraising effort within the Bellaire Business Community. The theme of the fund drive is patterned after the shape of individual stones which make up each arch of this bridge, and is stated simply as "Standing Shoulder to Shoulder". Every arch is made up of smaller blocks of stone called ringstones, or voussoirs, which are locked into place by a single keystone at the top of each arch. All of these stones are finely tapered leaving

wider shoulders at the top of each stone, each of which are supported by the shoulder of the stones next to it. Together, and not individually, these stones give the arch its beauty, its strength, and a window beyond the arch itself. Individual businesses and people "Standing Shoulder to Shoulder" in this project will also give this preservation project great strength, and open a window to a future day beyond the present.

The Great Stone Viaduct Society has established a Keystone and Ringstone Club Membership in its fund raising effort. To date, more than \$32,000.00 has been raised through the investment of Greater Bellaire Businesses who want this project to succeed. Their owners have chosen to stand "Shoulder to Shoulder" with each other to make this project happen. The project concept can be viewed in detail on the Society Website at <http://www.greatstoneviaduct.org/ringstone.html>. The GSV Society wants the first arches to represent Business Arches consisting of those businesses supporting this

project. Other arches are being planned as theme arches identifying the heritage of those who built this bridge, those who went to war across this bridge, those who immigrated to the Ohio Valley over this bridge, and the many classes of students who marched under those grand arches since its completion in 1871.

The GSV Society encourages anyone who is interested in learning more about this project to contact the Society at mailto: GSVSociety@aol.com or GSVSociety@aol.com. You can also visit the Great Stone Viaduct Society facebook page for a large collection of photographs, and the Society website at <http://www.greatstoneviaduct.org> to learn more about how YOU can "Stand Shoulder to Shoulder" with those current members in protecting and preserving this magnificent structure for future generations.

*GSV Society
Board of Trustees*