The paving brick industry flourished in Ohio from the 1880s until the 1930s. Today, due to the durability of the products, we still see lasting reminders of this industry in the streets and sidewalks of nearly every town or village in the state.

This map shows many cities where paving bricks were manufactured and the area of Pennsylvanian-age rocks where high-quality clays used in the manufacturing of paving bricks were found.

The paving brick industry began in Ohio because of the vast amounts of high-quality clay found in many areas of the state. The most abundant and most important clay beds occur in eastern Ohio in association with coal-bearing rocks. Other clays, formed in association with glaciers of the Ice Age, or shale formed in ancient seas, furnished additional raw materials for the industry.

The eastern Ohio clay beds, known as underclays, are most commonly found beneath coal beds. These rocks formed when Ohio was in tropical latitudes about 300 million years ago, during the Pennsylvanian Period. At that time, Ohio was a coastal area with low-lying deltas upon which vegetation flourished and beds of coal formed. The soil zones upon which the swamp vegetation grew became the clay beds used by the paving brick industry.

**THE PAVING BRICK INDUSTRY IN OHIO**

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The Fox Creek "S" Bridge, west of New Concord (Washington County), was the last section of the National Road to be bricked in 1919. The bridge was restored and rededicated on October 19, 1997. Note the striking contrast between U.S. 40 (at left) and the original National Road.

Ohio's oldest bridge (1828), the Blaine Hill "S" Bridge (Belmont County), carried National Road traffic until 1932 when a new viaduct was built beside it (U.S. Route 40). In 1999 it was saved from demolition and by 2005 it had been fully restored.

The village of Trimble (Athens County) boasts of its "Trimble Block" being used to pave the entire Indianapolis Speedway in 1909 and 1910. However, the Metropolitan Paving Brick Company (Stark County) also makes claims to having provided brick to repave the Speedway in 1909. Ultimately, the Speedway maintains that Indiana pavers alone were used.

Men working the north end of the Trimble shale pit, circa 1910.

The Methodist Episcopal Church in Haydnville (Stark County) is just one example of the many buildings and homes in the former company towns that were built using a variety of different bricks, blocks, and tiles from local brick companies.

Brick companies from Zanesville (Muskingum County) and Bellaire (Belmont County) may have contributed the brick originally used in the Blaine Hill Bridge.

The beveled edges of the brick used in the Fox Creek "S" Bridge, called "hill" block, helped horses gain a secure foothold as they navigated the hill.

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Below: Several patented brick designs were created. One such design was patented by Frank Dunn. His design allowed bricks to be stacked closely together for drying and burning during manufacture, but also to aid in the uniform spacing of those bricks as they were laid in a pavement.

The Metropolitan Paving Brick Company in Canton (Stark County) patented a similar design to Dunn's. With this design the company tried to solve a problem of the brick pivoting and otherwise moving out of alignment when rolled after placement. Note that this patent was issued in 1927 as the paving brick industry was waning in end.

Above: Frank Dunn of Conneaut (Ashtabula County) held many patents relating to the brick industry. The above patent covered the design of a brick known as the "wire-cut" method. This machine could create bricks of a uniform shape more quickly than any other method of the time.

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The paving of West Center Street in Marion (Marion County) around 1925. These bricks replaced a pavement of wood block that was laid around 1900. The inset of the brick detail shows an unusual brick that may or may not be originally from Ohio.

Workers constructing a portion of U.S. Route 61 in Franklin County in 1912. Roads constructed of brick employed many men per project, but was back-breaking work.

Despite what the paving brick manufacturers claimed in their ads (see below) repairs of a brick pavement did have to be made. Here is a “blow up” on U.S. Route 42 in Delaware County in 1926.

More repairs being made to U.S. Route 40 in 1930. One method of filling the gaps between bricks was to pour buckets of tar over top of them, letting the tar harden a bit, and then scraping the top off.