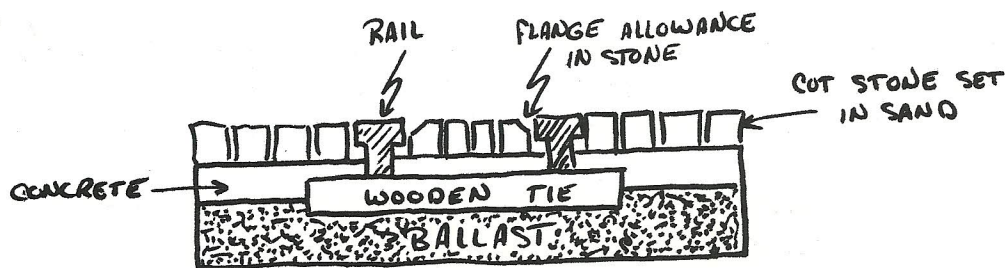


The older paved track construction consisted of ballast for proper drainage, 6" x 8" x 8' oak ties and steel rails. A filler of concrete was poured over the ballast and ties, then cut stone was laid in sand.



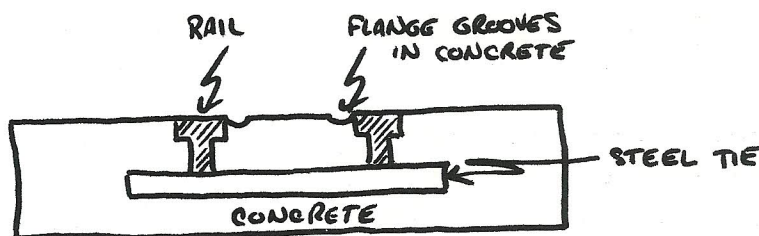
The paving stone used depended upon the requirements of the municipality involved — and in Pittsburgh that was specified as “Ligonier block”. Believe it or not, these cut stones once formed the foundation of a political ring’s power in Pittsburgh.

Commonly called Belgian block, the local ones are only about half the size of paving stones used in other regions. True Belgian block measures 5"-to-6" square and 7"-to-8" deep, cut with the bottom side about one inch smaller than the top. Local paving stones are less regular in size and come under the second dictionary definition of Belgian block: “Any stone paving block.” Here they averaged 4" wide, 8"-to-9" long and 5" deep — nearer the size of a large brick.

During the days of the famed Flinn-Magee political ring in Pittsburgh (1875-1900) they were called “Ligonier block” and because city construction bids specified that name, William Flinn’s construction company got all the public contracts. Since his firm had the only quarry producing such blocks in the Ligonier area (about 60 miles east of Pittsburgh), it was the only one which could meet the specifications so his inflated bids were always accepted. When a rival contractor opened a quarry near Ligonier, the city contracts were changed to read “gray Ligonier block” because Flinn’s quarry was in an area of gray stone while that of his competitor was pink.

The ring was smashed in a political war with Matthew S. Quay, the state political boss, but because Christopher Magee controlled all the trolley franchises Flinn continued to pave and repair the area between all the trolley tracks with his Ligonier block at those outrageous prices.

By World War II, the general construction practice was to pour concrete over T-rails welded to metal ties to make a solid unit. It was poured to the top of the rail with flange grooves formed in the concrete. This method became possible once the quality of concrete had been improved. Drainage was handled from the surface.



Beginning on 18 March 1949, when the repaving of the city streets occurred, asphalt was to be used instead of stone block for the part between the rails and 15 inches beyond the outer rail.