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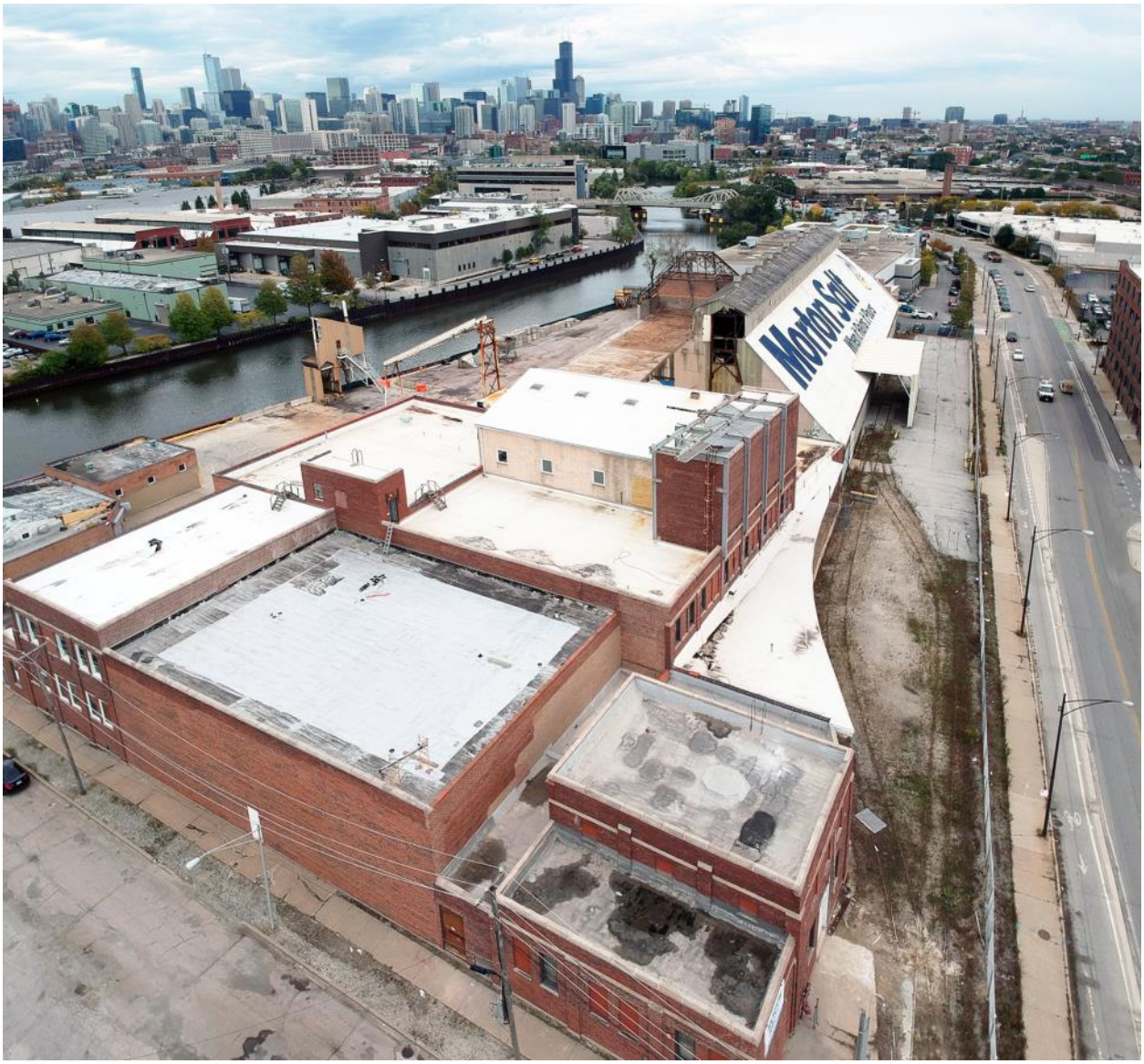
PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS IN FEBRUARY 2021



MORTON SALT COMPANY WAREHOUSE COMPLEX

1357 NORTH ELSTON AVENUE

CITY OF CHICAGO
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, Historic Preservation Division, City Hall, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 1000, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; web site: www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks

This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the final landmark designation ordinance as approved by City Council should be regarded as final.

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MORTON SALT COMPANY WAREHOUSE COMPLEX

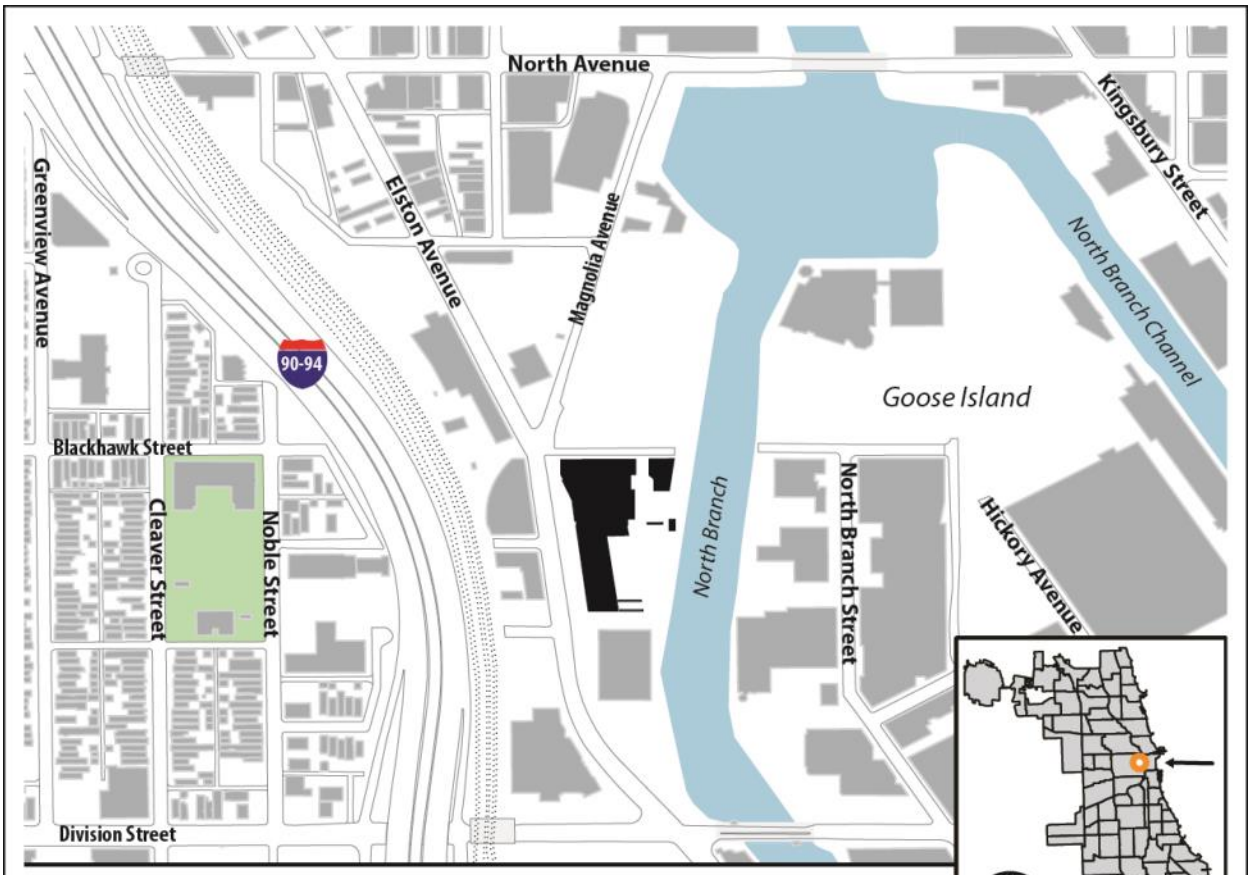
1357 NORTH ELSTON AVENUE

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1929-1930
ARCHITECT: GRAHAM, ANDERSON, PROBST & WHITE

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex on Elston Avenue is one of the most iconic industrial sites along the North Branch of the Chicago River. The purpose-built facility, informally called the "Elston Dock" by the company, was designed to house the local salt storage, packaging, and distribution operations of the Morton Salt Company, a prominent Chicago supplier and producer of salt products. The complex supported the company's Midwest market for 85 years, from the complex's completion in 1930 until its closure in 2015.

Morton Salt's Elston Avenue Complex exemplifies the importance of salt production in Chicago's history, and is significant for its central role in the salt industry in Chicago and the Midwest. Commodity suppliers and distributors such as Morton Salt supplied a range of consumers including residents, municipalities, and other industries. The complex is significant within the context of Chicago's greater North Branch industrial corridor that developed along the river beginning in the late nineteenth century. The Morton Salt Complex is also is an excellent example of an early twentieth-century industrial complex with a well-designed "production shed" building type that was designed for the efficient bulk storage of pure salt that was destined for a range of consumers and products.

The renowned Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White designed the Morton Salt Complex. The firm was one of the most prolific and important architectural practices in Chicago between the 1910s and early 1930s. They designed many of Chicago's most prominent civic and commercial buildings, including Union Station, the John G. Shedd Aquarium, the Wrigley Building, the Civic Opera Building, and the Merchandise Mart. The firm also became a significant designer of efficient industrial complexes, including the Morton Salt Complex on Elston.



The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex (in black above) is located in Chicago's West Town Community Area at 1357 North Elston Avenue.

The brick-clad Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex was built between 1929 and 1930 for the storage of bulk salt that was brought to the site via the river. The complex faces west onto Elston Avenue and north onto Blackhawk Street. A rear dock faces east onto the North Branch of the Chicago River.

LOCATION, DESCRIPTION, AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE MORTON SALT COMPANY WAREHOUSE COMPLEX

Location

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex is located in Chicago's West Town Community Area at 1305 to 1357 North Elston Avenue. The complex is bounded on the west by Elston Avenue, on the North by Blackhawk Street, on the east by the North Branch of the Chicago River, and on the south by a private parking lot and automobile dealership. The complex is set within a historically industrialized area along the banks of the North Branch of the Chicago River. Within this greater area, the complex is part of a narrow strip of industrial uses along Elston Avenue, between the North Branch of the Chicago River and the Kennedy Expressway (Interstate 90-94).

Description

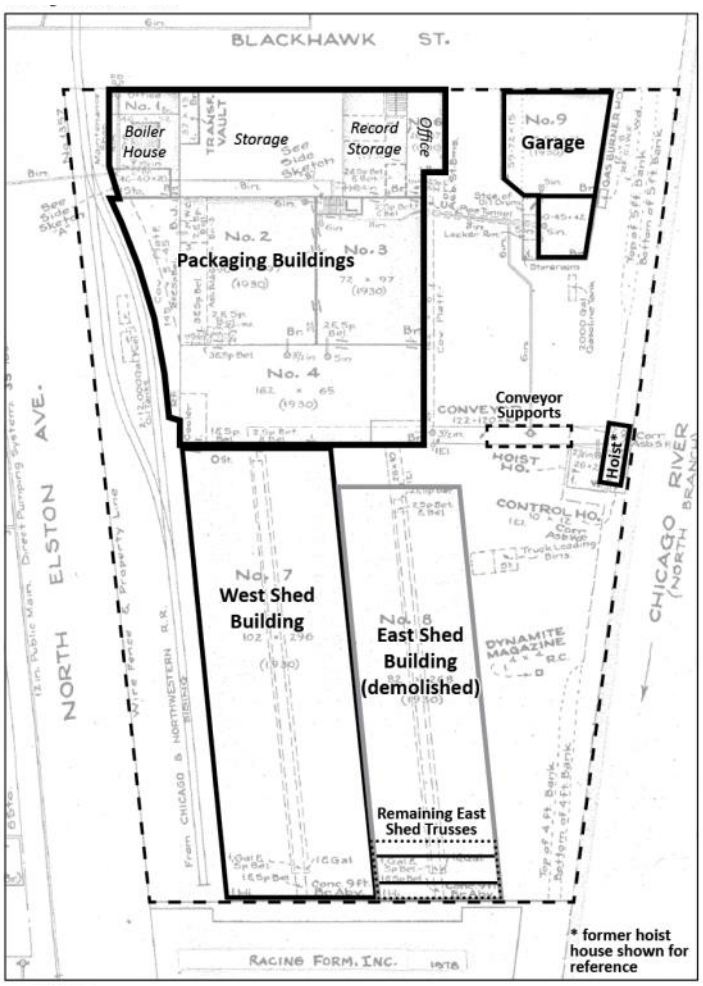
The majority of the Morton Salt complex is comprised of steel-frame buildings with brick exterior walls. It was completed in 1930 for the Morton Salt Company of Chicago primarily to serve as a storage warehouse for the local distribution of salt products; the complex also served as a processing and packaging plant for the company. The complex is organized into three main portions: a single-story West Shed Building at the south end, Packaging Buildings at the north end, and a Garage Building in the northeast corner of the site facing Blackhawk Street. In addition, there are the steel-frame remains of a second storage shed east of the West Shed Building, and a pair of steel piers that supported an overhead conveyer system. This second shed and the components of the conveyor belt were demolished in 2020 due to structural deterioration caused by the corrosive nature of salt on steel.

The utilitarian form of the complex's buildings is expressed using materials that are characteristic of early twentieth-century industrial architecture. These elements include plain brick walls with limestone trim, truss-roofed storage sheds with raised roof monitors featuring clerestory windows, and rail and truck transportation connections. The style of the buildings reflects a modern industrial style that was gaining popularity during the early twentieth century. In addition, the buildings, especially the packaging buildings and the garage, reveal influences of the Prairie School through their use of multi-hued dark brick and contrasting geometric limestone ornament and trim.

The West Shed Building, at the south end of the site, is a massive steel-framed structure for the bulk storage of salt. This is the most visually prominent building in the complex. It faces west onto Elston Avenue with brick-clad lower concrete walls and a large truss roof. Its distinctive roof is covered in original Transite roofing, precast corrugated roofing panels composed of cement and asbestos, and features a raised monitor with clerestory windows. The west side of the West Shed Building's roof was used historically as a large advertising platform. Between 1930 and the 1970s it was painted prominently with both the company's name "Morton Salt" in tall bold letters, and its trademark motto "When it Rains it Pours." During the early 1980s,

Above: The Morton Salt Company Packaging Buildings are clad in red face brick. This is a view of the north side of the buildings along Blackhawk Street. The windowless portion in the middle is a storage building that was built in 1968 where original plans called for an unbuilt soda mill.

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex is comprised of three main buildings. At the north end of the site is a group of facilities called the Packaging Buildings where bulk salt was packed for distribution. At the south end is the West Shed Building where bulk salt was stored; this building features the company name and the iconic Morton Salt Girl painted on its roof. A smaller East Shed Building was demolished in 2020. A brick Garage Building is located in the northeast corner of the site.



View of the west side of the Packaging Buildings along Elston Avenue. A covered curving dock accesses a railroad spur track.

View of the west side of the West Shed Building with its distinctive painted roof that advertises the Morton Salt Company with its motto "When it Rains it Pours." The iconic umbrella-toting Morton Salt Girl is also shown.

The Garage Building faces north onto Blackhawk Street. Historically, it served as a repair shop for the company's fleet of delivery trucks.

View looking south along the warehouse complex's Chicago River North Branch dock. At left is the former hoist, which pulled bulk salt from river barges. The metal frame that arches over the site once supported a covered conveyor belt that carried salt from the hoist to the East (demolished) and West Shed Buildings. The enclosed conveyor system and East Shed were demolished in 2020 due to structural damage.

Morton Salt repainted the roof sign to include the name, motto, and the familiar logo of the umbrella-carrying Morton Salt Girl. The interior is a vast, open, utilitarian space with concrete side walls and floors, and a ceiling comprised of large steel trusses. A small portion of the steel framing and walls of the demolished smaller shed adjoining the east side of the West Shed Building remain standing.

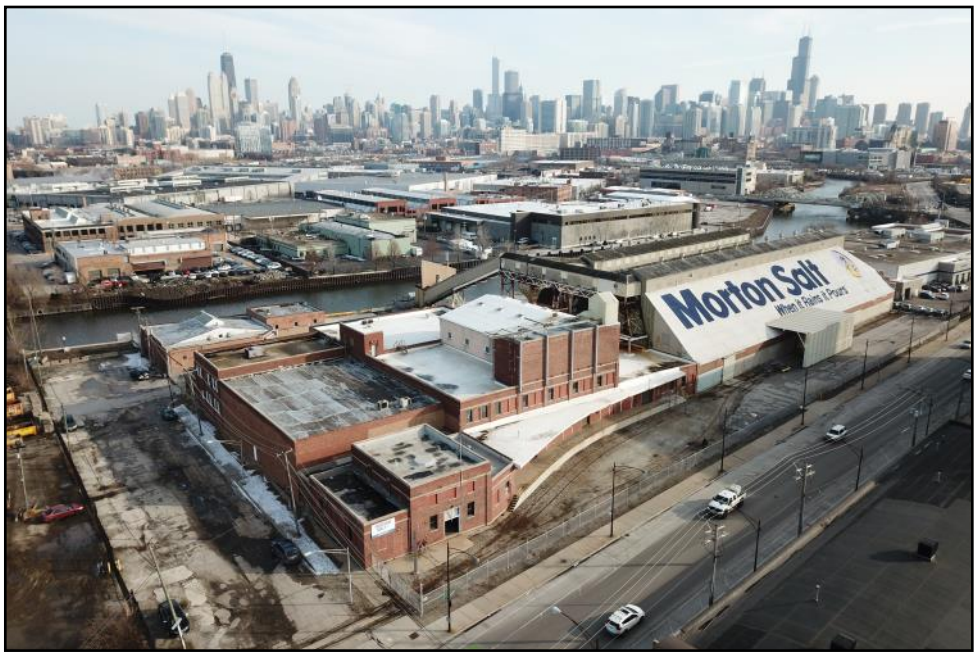
To the north of the West Shed Building are the original Packaging Buildings that are interconnected with and attached to the West Shed Building. The one- and two-story buildings are utilitarian in design with brick cladding, simple limestone trim, flat roofs, and punched window and larger openings for bulk loading and unloading. Changes to these buildings since construction include bricking up of openings, enclosure of a Commonwealth Edison electrical vault at the north elevation in 1968, and the construction of a setback rooftop addition constructed of concrete masonry units in 1982. The west elevation of the Packaging Buildings is most visible as it faces Elston Avenue. Here packaged salt was unloaded from the buildings to rail cars travelling a spur along this elevation. A raised concrete loading dock and wood-frame canopy projecting from this elevation facilitated the transfer of goods through large openings in the west elevation. Many of these openings have been bricked up.

The Garage Building is a freestanding, one-story, brick structure that faces north onto Blackhawk Street. It served as a garage for company delivery trucks and features an adjoining repair shop. The building has a trapezoidal footprint that follows the angle of the North Branch of the Chicago River and it is clad in common brick on its secondary (east, south, and west) elevations. A partial truss roof covers the building and is oriented from east to west with a monitor containing rows of north- and south-facing skylights.

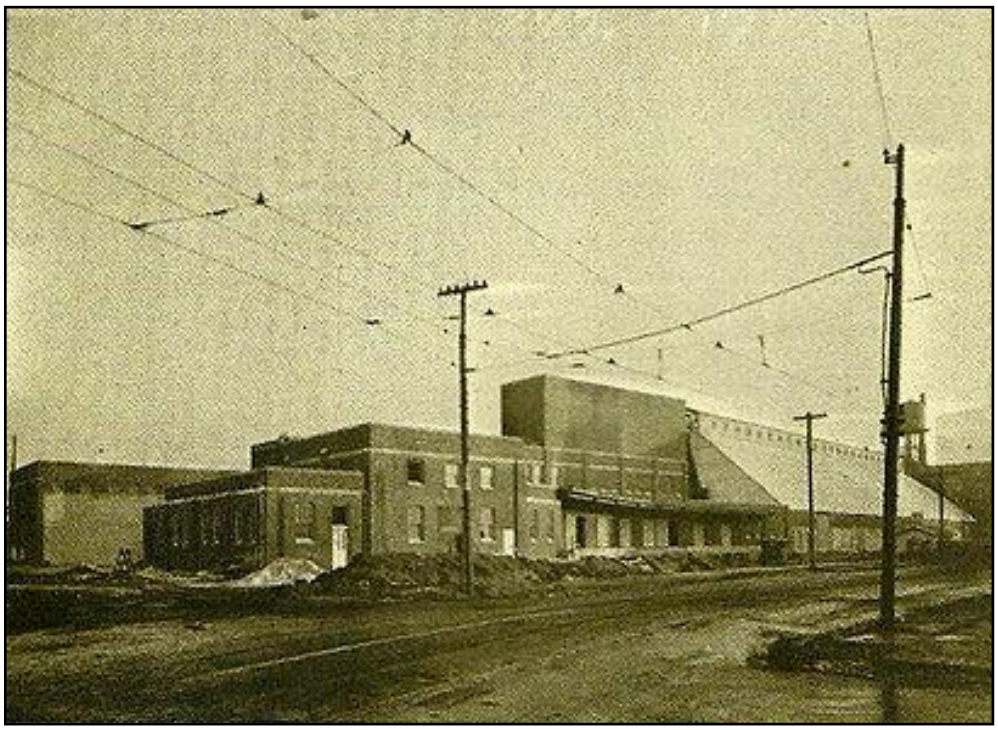
On the east side of the Shed and Packaging Buildings there is a large open dock area that is not visible from either Elston or Blackhawk but is visible from the North Branch of the Chicago River. The concrete dock extends the length of the complex along the river's edge. Original concrete paving covers the dock's northern half, while asphalt covers the southern half. A later steel-framed hoist house at the edge of the river served as the transfer point where bulk salt was off-loaded from barges onto an enclosed conveyor that extended over to the West Shed Building. The overhead conveyor was rebuilt in 1994 and all but its steel frame and piers were demolished in 2020.

Construction

In 1930, the Morton Salt Company's new Chicago warehouse and dock was moved to a large parcel in an existing industrial corridor along the North Branch of the Chicago River. The site selected, a long block along Elston Avenue between Blackhawk Street and Potomac Avenue (historically called Bradley Street), had been occupied since the nineteenth century by leather tanning companies, including the American Hide & Leather Company. Part of Morton Salt's business was in the production of salt for hide tanning, and the Elston location placed the company at the center of Chicago's tanning industry. In 1929, American Hide sold to Morton Salt the north half of their tannery grounds. Morton demolished several existing buildings on the site and prepared it for their new salt distribution center.



View of the Morton Salt Company Warehouse as it appeared in 2018 before the demolition of its original East Shed Building and enclosed conveyor system.



The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex was built between 1929 and 1930. This is a view looking southeast along Elston Avenue shortly after the complex was completed.

The architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst, & White was commissioned to design Morton's new warehouses and dock. Permits were issued for the site in April 1929, with J. B. French & Company as the contractor. The initial plans for the site included spaces devoted to: office space for printing and record storage, a soda mill, a boiler house, main shipping and packing floors, twin bulk salt storage sheds, a garage and repair shop, and an overhead conveyor system. Ultimately, the soda mill was cut from the plans, but a space was left for it in the final building and this became the location of a new, brick, storage addition in 1968.

Construction of the Morton Salt Complex proceeded quickly in 1929 and was completed a year later. Morton Salt was eager to open the new dock facility because its facility near the Chicago River was to be demolished for the Outer Drive Bridge. In order to open the Elston facility and to allow truck traffic along its new dock area, a quick-curing concrete was developed that could support heavy, salt-filled trucks but which cured in only four days. The concrete pavement, extending between the garage and main office along the dock, was designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White and completed by the Marquette Construction Company to the required high-strength specifications.

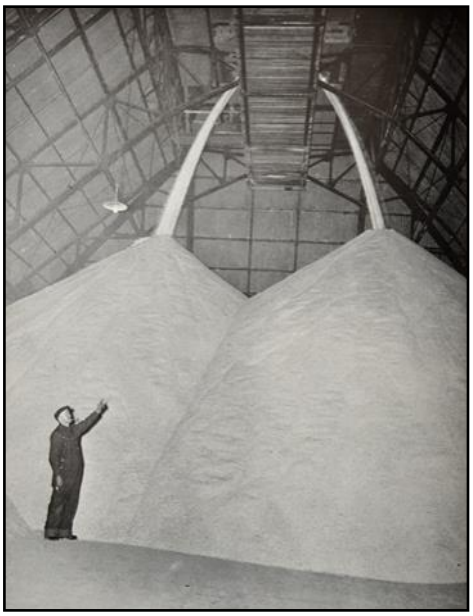
THE MORTON SALT COMPLEX AND THE PRODUCTION SHED BUILDING TYPE

The Morton Salt Complex is an excellent, intact, local example of an early twentieth-century variation of the "production shed," a building type which was innovative in its time for its large, open floor plans and ample light and ventilation. The complex is comprised of several sections, most of which are timber- or steel-frame, loft-type structures with brick exterior walls. The salt shed building's need-specific engineering and design are significant as an example of early twentieth-century industrial architecture.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, manufacturing and storage buildings evolved from general-purpose buildings, designed by builders and manufacturers, into specialized structures designed by engineers for efficiency and worker welfare. The production shed is a generic term applied to a range of single-story industrial buildings used for the production and storage of bulk goods. While production sheds built for manufacturing are characterized by a long and narrow rectilinear footprint with outer production bays running the full length of the shed, storage sheds often feature a single open space. Their design was influenced by changing technologies, especially material handling systems; the need for better ventilation and lighting; and the need for economy and efficiency in the production process.

The development of the specialized storage shed as a building type is directly tied to the rise of the professional architect-engineer. During the mid-nineteenth century, the design of manufacturing buildings was frequently conducted by the manufacturer or a builder. While both manufacturers and builders were capable of building an enclosed shelter for production

Left: The West Shed Building used for the storage of bulk salt. The view above, taken in 2020, shows the roof monitor where the internal conveyor was located.



Above, salt was carried along internal conveyers in the roof of each shed. Workers could direct the salt into the shed at any point along the conveyer.

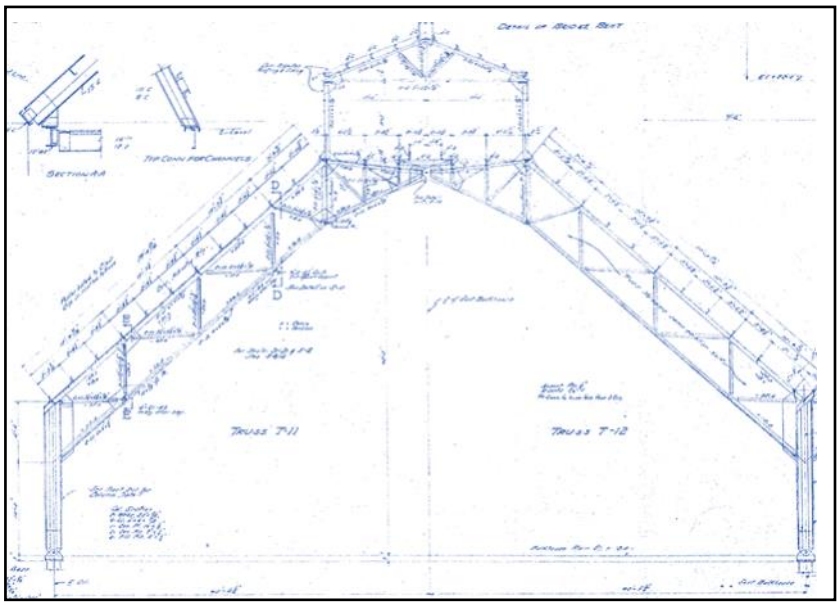
Right, salt that was diverted off the conveyer belt in the roof poured neatly into piles on the floor of the shed.

"Chicago Elston Dock Unloads a Cargo of Salt," *Morton's Spout*, August 1946: 14, 17.

At right is a cross-section drawing of the Morton Salt shed building from 1929. The architects, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, designed the shed with concrete lower walls and steel truss roof topped by a raised roof monitor. Inside the monitor was a conveyer belt for salt.

The building's truss design allowed for a large and open salt storage area without the intrusion of support posts.

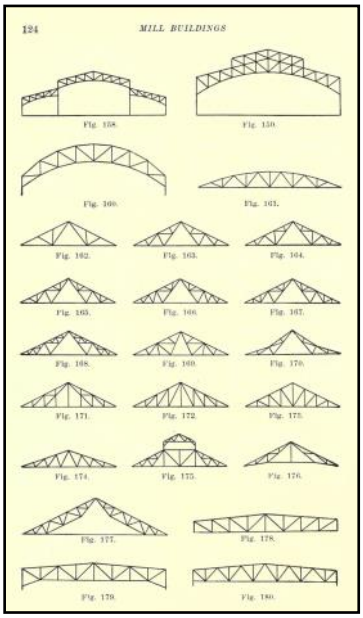
Architectural Records, 1985.0130 AT, Job# 7139/224-06, Chicago History Museum.



purposes, the increasing specific structural requirements of heavy machinery and stored material, production flows, and light and ventilation were not as well understood. Architects during this time were criticized for designing visually pleasing buildings with little regard for the structural requirements of the processes within them. Similarly, factory superintendents, with a general understanding of engineering, could design effective building improvements, but were not also equipped to consider the human needs of workers. However, as factories grew in complexity during the late nineteenth century, engineers became increasingly important for their comprehensive designs. The occupation of engineer became professionalized and formal training programs increased. By the turn of the twentieth century, industrial engineering appeared as a specialized field of engineering. Professionals in the burgeoning field worked to meet the demands of production efficiency and integrate the designs with the environmental needs of workers to develop a modern production shed.

The storage shed as a building type has its roots in mid-nineteenth-century foundry buildings; however, the engineered, steel-framed shed built with integrated material handling systems and designed for ample light and ventilation was a product of turn-of-the-century innovation. During the first decade of the twentieth century, dozens of engineering and architectural consulting firms emerged across the United States to solve industrial design challenges. While only a decade before fewer than ten percent of factories were designed by architects, by 1911 most industrial buildings and complexes were designed by architect-engineers. In Chicago, firms like Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, who designed the Morton Salt Complex, focused on the rational design of industrial buildings, including storage sheds, by studying production flows and determining the most efficient organization and plant layout. This type of detailed analysis led to new technologies and systems that influenced factory design and guided the development of new, specialized, industrial building forms.

The Morton Salt Complex West Shed Building (historically referred to as a “bulk-house”) was designed with careful attention to the means of loading and unloading bulk materials. The most



At left are some of the dozens of roof truss variations that engineer and author Henry G. Tyrrell described in his 1911 book on the design of factory and mill buildings. His books significantly influenced the design of manufacturing buildings during the twentieth century.

At right is an advertisement for Johns-Manville’s lightweight cementitious-asbestos roofing product called “Transite” that was used on Morton Salt’s East and West Shed Buildings. A corrugated version of the roofing was introduced in 1922.

important feature in the complex's West Shed Building was a thirty-inch-wide conveyor belt system built into the roof monitor that delivered salt unloaded from barges along the river. A second conveyor system beneath the floor served to draw salt from the shed into the packaging buildings to be packaged and distributed. These conveyor systems took the place of a central travelling crane, a typical feature of production sheds for moving heavy machinery or products.

As a building type, the storage shed essentially took the form of a sheltered storage yard that was assisted by an overhead product delivery system. Henry Grattan Tyrrell, an early twentieth-century civil engineer and author from Evanston, Illinois, described manufacturing buildings as, "a combination of trusses, monitors, rafters, purlins, columns and girders, properly braced together, to form a shelter and enclosure, and support for cranes and machinery." Buildings with heavy cranes, he noted, could be called fittingly "covered crane ways… for most of the framing material is in the crane supports." While the Morton Salt Complex bulk-house did not feature cranes, it did support similar material handling systems.

Another significant factor in the design of the West Shed Building was the incredible weight of salt piles. With tens of thousands of pounds of salt that could potentially be stored, the bulk-house had to be built rigidly to withstand the tremendous outward pressure of the salt piles. Each section of the shed was completed as a large, reinforced concrete bulkhead, with steel tie rods encased in eight inches of concrete beneath the interior maple floor. The tie rods helped to keep the side walls from otherwise pushing apart. In 2015, a salt pile exceeding the height of the west bulk-house's concrete sidewalls broke through the weaker upper brick wall of the south elevation. The wall was later rebuilt.

The Morton Salt West Shed and Packaging Buildings display the advancement of industrial architecture in the early twentieth century. The brick-clad, loft-type Packaging Buildings were designed with operable sash windows on nearly all elevations. Architects Graham, Anderson, Probst & White gave the West Shed Building a complex roof system with a central raised monitor lined with rows of operable sash windows to illuminate the conveyor belt space. Although the interior of the shed was intended to be dark for storage purposes, some skylights and doorways allowed natural light and ventilation, which were increasingly important for worker welfare.

Between the 1880s and 1920s dozens of roof and truss designs were invented. Trusses built of timber or steel could span wide distances and eliminated the need for support columns, thereby allowing for more open workspace in production and storage sheds. In addition, trusses reduced the amount of framing required in roofs and allowed for the introduction of more and larger roof glazing systems, such as monitors and skylights. The Morton Salt Complex's West Shed Building features steep roofs supported by basic steel trusses that are designed with internal supports organized in triangular patterns to distribute loads. Having learned from several major fires at other salt storage warehouses, Morton's new bulk-houses were specified to be fireproof. This required not only the use of steel trusses and masonry walls, but also called for the use of new, lightweight, "Transite" roofing panels installed on steel purlins.

HISTORY OF SALT PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Despite its ubiquity, few people today understand the significance of salt (sodium chloride) and the multitude of uses which touch so many aspects of their lives. Historically, salt has served as an expensive and carefully rationed commodity. Proverbially it was worth its weight in gold. Although salt has and continues to be an important dietary element in the production of foods, it has also become highly valuable in industry and is a primary ingredient in the production of many key chemicals and products. In the United States during the nineteenth century, salt served an increasingly important role in industry as a main ingredient in soda ash, a raw material used in the production of glass, paper, caustic soda, bicarbonate soda, and a variety of industrial chemicals, including hydrochloric acid, chlorine gas, and sodium sulfate, among others. Salt-based chemicals in turn are critical in the production of detergents and soaps, fertilizers, and explosives. During the twentieth century salt and its derivative chemicals became important in the production of modern synthetic materials such as plastics, foams, and rubber. Salt also became an important element of road safety for its ice-melting qualities. By 2019, according to the United States Geological Survey, de-icing accounted for around 43 percent of all salt consumed in the country.

Upstate New York was the center of salt production in the United States during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Syracuse, on the edge of New York State's Lake Onondaga, earned its name in honor of Syracuse, Sicily, which had a centuries-old salt industry. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Syracuse, New York, and the surrounding area developed as an important producer of salt due to its great deposits of halite (or common salt) tucked underground between beds of Salina shale. The salt was pumped as a briny solution out of the ground and allowed to evaporate, producing highly valuable salt crystals.

In 1848, the firm of Richmond & Company, salt producers in Syracuse, New York, opened a western sales office in Chicago and sent Alonzo Richmond to head the endeavor. Expanding the company's market territory westward was paramount. In April of that same year, the Illinois & Michigan (I&M) Canal was opened, connecting the growing City of Chicago with other towns and cities along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and their tributaries. The 1848 annual report of the superintendent of the Onondaga Salt Springs noted:

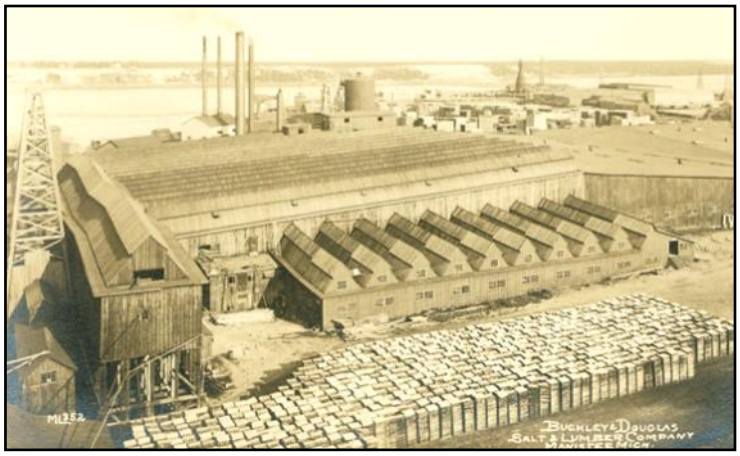
> *Another cause which enters largely in the increase of the manufacture, may be found in the vast extent of the markets openings with the growth of the country to our salt.*
>
> *The completion of the Michigan and Illinois canal has opened a new channel for the Onondaga salt of vast importance, by means of which it can be shipped directly to St. Louis, thence through both the Mississippi to the Falls of St. Anthony, a point seven hundred miles above St. Louis, and some of our salt has been carried the present year to that extreme point.*
>
> *Hitherto, the immense [meat] packing business of the extreme west, has been done at a few points only and inaccessible to our salt.*

Salt was the fourth largest commodity imported to Chicago in the mid nineteenth century. In 1849, 97,160 barrels and 17,100 sacks of New York salt arrived in the Port of Chicago; over half was distributed via canal and the Mississippi to the interior of the country. By 1857, a year with a devastating financial panic, the salt trade continued unabated with Chicago importing 204,469 barrels and 117,377 sacks of salt from New York. The dominance of New York salt in the Midwest and Western markets continued through the 1860s until it was gradually supplanted by salt from Michigan deposits first discovered during the 1850s. Because salt is a bulky and heavy commodity, it was more economical to have shorter shipping routes and therefore to establish market regions, each with its own local salt source; Michigan, therefore, became Chicago's source for commercial salt extraction and production.

Salt springs were known to exist in Michigan, but it was not until an 1850s bill passed by the state legislature offering a bounty of ten cents per bushel of salt that new firms began to bore for salt deposits. The first salt barrels were shipped from Saginaw, Michigan in 1860. Because salt brine had to be dried it was often heated in tanks to expedite the evaporation process. Michigan at the time was the center of the nation's lumber industry and it abounded in wood-waste, the perfect energy source for fueling the evaporation process. The ready wood supply was also useful for making salt barrels. Throughout the 1860s, several Michigan lumber mills entered the salt business and helped establish Michigan as the largest and closest salt source for Chicago and the growing West. Richmond & Company remained Chicago's primary salt importer. Its name changed through successive owners to Richmond & Comstock in the early 1860s; to Haskins, Martin & Wheeler in 1867; to Elkins, Wheeler & Company in the 1874; and to E. I. Wheeler & Company in 1880.

Above, workers collect salt in buckets from evaporating pans at a solar salt field near Syracuse, New York, circa 1900.

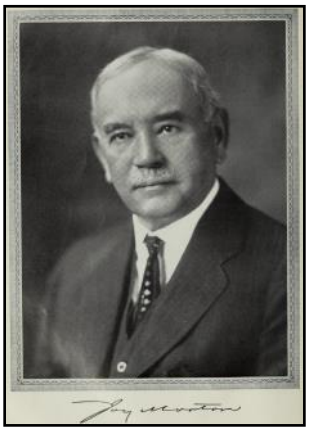
New York State Archives. Instructional lantern slides, 1911-1925, A3045-78, Lantern slide D47_SyS5, Box 17.



During the late nineteenth century, Michigan became the center of salt production in the United States. Liquid salt brine was pumped from underground and then heated to evaporate water. Michigan was also the center of the lumber industry and supplied wood waste to fuel salt evaporation. The view above shows a lumber mill with a salt brine pump tower at the far left in Manistee, Michigan, around 1910. **Manisteemi.gov.**

History of the Morton Salt Company

Joy Morton (1855-1934)



Joy Morton (1855-1934).
***Dunne,* 1933: frontispiece**

In 1879, twenty-four-year-old Joy Morton, who had recently arrived in Chicago from his family's home in Nebraska, started working for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. Wanting to invest in an enterprising business, his older brother Paul introduced him to Ezra Wheeler of the salt company. In the resulting business deal, Joy Morton acquired one-fifth of the Elkins, Wheeler & Company salt business. Following the retirement of Elkins, Morton became the "company" in E. I. Wheeler & Company. The two were among the first to invest in an experimental salt well in Manistee, Michigan, owned by Chicagoan and lumberman Charles Reitz of the Reitz & Brothers Lumber Company. In 1880, the well struck salt and Manistee became the primary salt source for Wheeler and Morton. Six years later, following the death of Ezra Wheeler, Joy Morton bought out the Wheeler family interest and changed the firm's name to Joy Morton & Company.

Joy Morton & Company: 1886-1910

Joy Morton significantly transformed the Chicago salt company from a distributor into a multi-state salt production empire. The salt company that Morton took over in 1886 had primarily served as a broker specializing in bulk salt. The company owned no mines, plants, or refining mills for the extraction and processing of rock salt and brine into consumable products. Instead, it was a distributor that connected salt suppliers, which were primarily lumber companies, with refining and packaging plants.

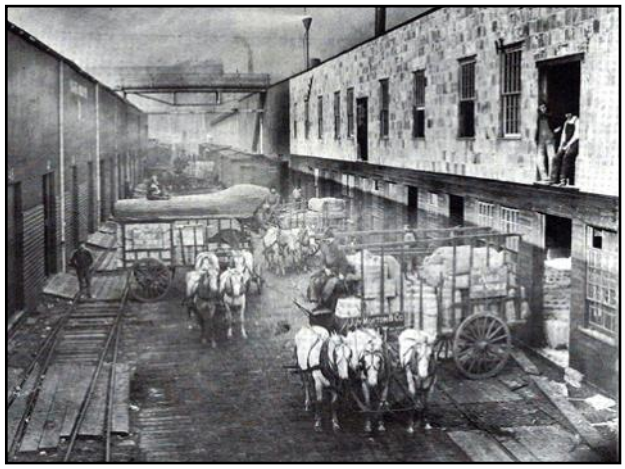
The Michigan forests that supported the incidental salt industry were rapidly thinning during the late nineteenth century; Joy Morton recognized that soon there would be little wood left to fuel the salt brine evaporation process. At the same time, Morton came from a family with a great appreciation for trees. His mother, Caroline Joy French, was an avid horticulturalist, and his father, J. Sterling Morton, had served as Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and originated Arbor Day in 1872; "Plant Trees" was his family's motto. In 1890, Morton opened a coal-burning evaporating plant to produce salt in Wyandotte, Michigan. This was the first salt plant in the United States to use a fuel other than wood; it was also the first of many Morton-owned plants.

In order to remain competitive in the salt trade, where products are generally of equal quality and value, firms had to control factors affecting prices. Salt is a bulky product that is costly to ship, and consequently results in higher prices for the commodity the farther it must be transported from its source. Fortunately, there are several subterranean salt deposits in the United States, including some in Kansas and therefore centrally located between what were the

rapidly expanding western states. As the west grew, so too did its demand for salt; however, the distance from Michigan sources made Michigan salt more expensive. In 1888, salt was discovered in Kansas. Morton, anticipating future competition, had bought the existing Hutchinson, Kansas, plant of the Diamond Salt Company in 1894 and rented other area plants. Two years later, Morton purchased the Chicago operation of the Standard Salt and Cement Company of Cleveland, Ohio, and transferred its employees to Morton's new sales office and warehouse at Illinois Central Pier No. 1 on Lake Michigan.

Pier No. 1 served a critical role in storing and processing Morton's growing stocks of salt. A warehouse not only was needed to store salt from the company's many new mines, but also created a winter reserve for when production and deliveries from Michigan largely ceased. Morton began leasing the pier in 1888 and built a warehouse, mill, stable, and other buildings through the 1890s.

The pier was the northernmost of three piers that extended out into Lake Michigan south of the mouth of the Chicago River. Bulk salt arriving from the company's Michigan plants in barges was transported in handcarts along the roof of the long warehouse building and strategically dumped through hatches into a series of piles on the warehouse floor below. A mill for refining evaporation-procured table salt and dairy salt (used in butter and cheese manufacturing) was part of the warehouse. A new company office building, designed as a replica of the First Town House of Boston designed in 1651 by Thomas Joy, a maternal ancestor, was completed in 1899. The replica building and the rest of the Morton Salt dock at the Chicago River were later demolished to make way for the Outer Drive Bridge.



Joy Morton transformed his father J. Sterling Morton's salt company in a major business by owning his own salt mines and distribution warehouses. In Chicago, Morton leased a large dock called Illinois Central Pier No. 1 that extended into Lake Michigan along the south side of the mouth of the Chicago River. The photo at left shows the entrance to the pier around 1910. The distinctive building was the company office and was a replica of the State House of Boston designed by Morton ancestor Thomas Joy in 1651. The photo at right is of Morton's long row of warehouses at the pier. Pier No. 1 was demolished in 1929 for the Outer Drive Bridge (part of Lake Shore Drive). ***The Morton Salt Tapestry, 1848-1973*** **(Chicago: Morton Salt Company. 1973): 4-5.**

Morton continued to expand the company during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1902, the company acquired the salt holdings of the failed National Salt Company of New Jersey, an association of hundreds of small salt companies. The following year Morton expanded his control of the salt production process by acquiring a fleet of ships for transporting salt from Michigan to Chicago. Morton Salt expanded to become one of the largest salt companies in the United States.

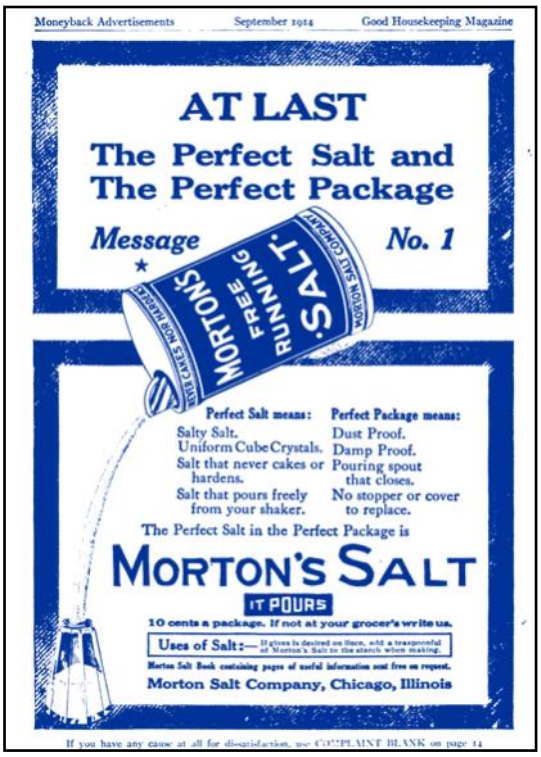
The Morton Salt Company: 1910 to 1965

In 1910, Joy Morton acquired several plants and warehouses organized by the International Salt Company, the parent company of the defunct National Salt Company. With new properties in Kansas, Louisiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin, Joy Morton incorporated the Morton Salt Company. Joy Morton's younger brother Mark Morton, who had worked for the company since the 1890s, became the vice president; and his son Sterling Morton, who joined the company in 1906, became secretary.

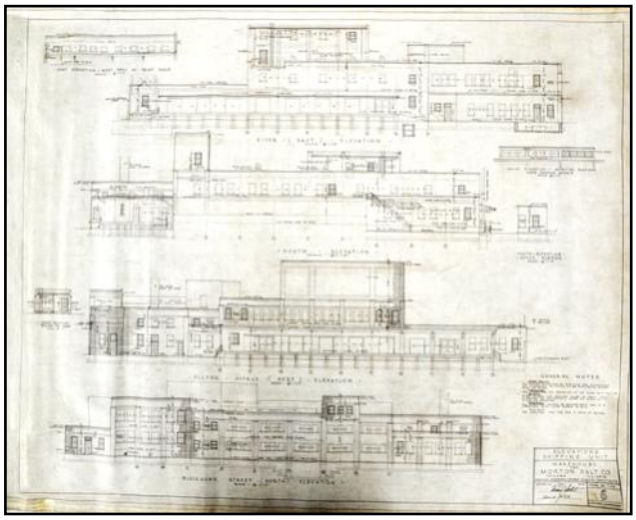
The company entered a new period of growth during the 1910s because it could effectively control the cost of production and therefore significantly lower the prices of its salt products. At the same time, new food standards were gradually shifting vendors away from bulk packaging that was vulnerable to dirt, such as barrels for selling bulk salt in dry goods stores, and towards individually packaged goods. Morton Salt had used metal canisters for salt as early as 1900 but beginning in 1912 it was the first company to sell salt packaged in a round cardboard canister with a convenient aluminum spout. The convenience came from the ability to pour salt freely under humid conditions that normally would make salt clump and harden. The addition of magnesium carbonate (now changed to calcium silicate) to prevent caking produced one of the company's best-known products. Its popularity was due in no small part to a 1914 advertising series, conceived by the A. W. Ayer advertising agency, featuring the now iconic "Morton Salt Girl" trademark. It also introduced the company slogan "When it Rains it Pours," based on the eighteenth-century proverb, which it has largely eclipsed ("it never rains but it pours").

During the 1920s, Morton Salt's real estate holdings continued to expand with purchases of a salt evaporating plant in Grand Saline, Texas, and new plants in Saltair, Utah, and Newark, California. The company also opened five new local sales offices to handle orders from regional distribution territories centered at Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; and Washington, D. C. In Chicago, Morton commissioned the architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White to design a new company headquarters at 208 West Washington Street, completed in 1927 (extant), to oversee the company's properties and branch offices. Morton Salt occupied part of the 23-story building and rented the remaining floors as speculative office and retail space.

With higher salt yields, the company required additional storage space. During the early 1900s, a massive wooden warehouse capable of holding over 200,000 tons of salt was built in the South Chicago neighborhood, but it burned to the ground in 1903. Morton had the South Chicago warehouse partly rebuilt and opened a third Chicago warehouse (called Burlington Docks) on Hoyne Avenue at the South Branch of the Chicago River (not extant).



Morton's Salt Company grew during the 1910s as a result of control over the cost of production. In 1914, the A. W. Ayer advertising agency helped popularize Morton Salt over other producers with a clever advertising campaign in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*. The campaign introduced Morton's now standard cardboard canister with an aluminum spout and the iconic, umbrella-toting, salt-spilling Morton Salt Girl. At the time, the addition of magnesium carbonate (since changed to calcium silicate) prevented the salt from clumping in humid weather, leading to the slogan: When it Rains it Pours. "Advertisement for Morton's Salt," *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, September and October 1914.



Morton again engaged the firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White to design the company's new warehouse complex on Elston Avenue in 1929. Plans at left.

Architectural Records, 1985.0130 AT, Job# 7139/224-06, Chicago History Museum.

At left is a view of the Morton Building at 208 West Washington Street (extant). It was completed in 1927 and designed by the firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White as the headquarters for Morton Salt. The company remained in the building until 1937.

The Architectural Work of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, Chicago (London, B. T. Batsford, ltd., 1933): 342.

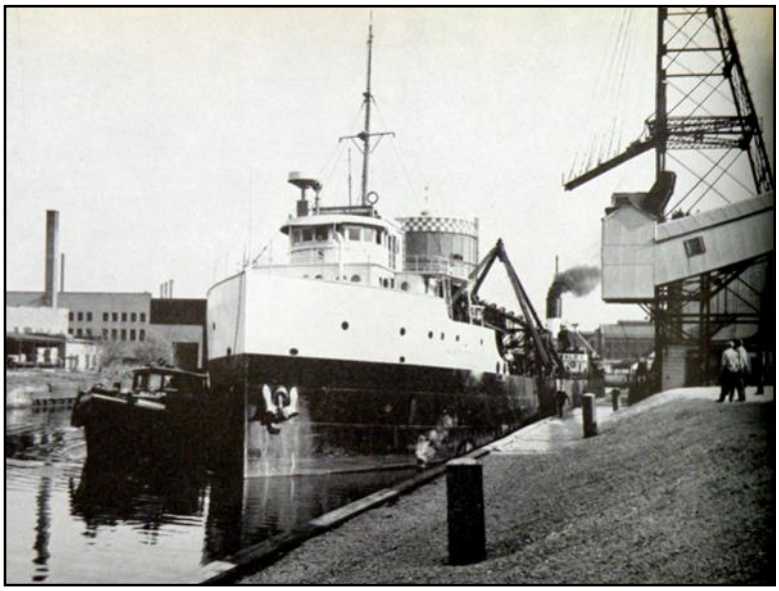
By the 1920s, additional space was needed. In 1927, a major fire damaged the Morton warehouse on Illinois Central Pier No. 1. The warehouse was repaired, but it stood in the way of the planned Outer Drive Bridge (part of Lake Shore Drive). Morton again engaged the firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White to design a new salt warehouse and distribution facility along the North Branch of the Chicago River. This became the Morton Salt Company Complex. The Pier No. 1 location was razed in 1929 (and the Outer Drive Bridge was completed in 1937 as a Public Works Administration infrastructure project). The new complex was designed with twin east and west storage sheds or bulk-houses for holding rock salt and evaporation-procured table salt. These two types of salt remained the primary staples of the company and were important not only to the consumer, but also served the meat packing, tanning, cheese and butter manufacturing, ice cream production, and chemical industries, among others.

Morton Salt entered a two-decade period of transition beginning in 1930 with the retirement of President and Morton Salt Company founder Joy Morton. In retirement, Morton continued pursuing his passion for trees and plants by working on his 735-acre wooded estate, which he opened in 1922 as the Morton Arboretum. Morton was succeeded by Daniel Peterkin Sr. who joined the company as an employee of the Standard Salt and Cement Company of Cleveland, Ohio, when it was acquired in 1896. Morton's son, Sterling Morton, became vice president of the company. Morton Salt began mining its own rock salt, instead of relying on other suppliers, beginning in 1931 with the acquisition and expansion of a mine in Grand Saline, Texas. The company also expanded into chemicals through its acquisition of a magnesium carbonate plant (the main early anti-caking ingredient) in 1933. In 1937, Morton's Chicago headquarters relocated to the Strauss Building at 310 South Michigan Avenue and sold its building at 208 West Washington Street to the Illinois Bell Telephone Company.

By the late 1940s, Morton Salt employed 3,500 people and operated 12 production plants and 22 offices across the country.

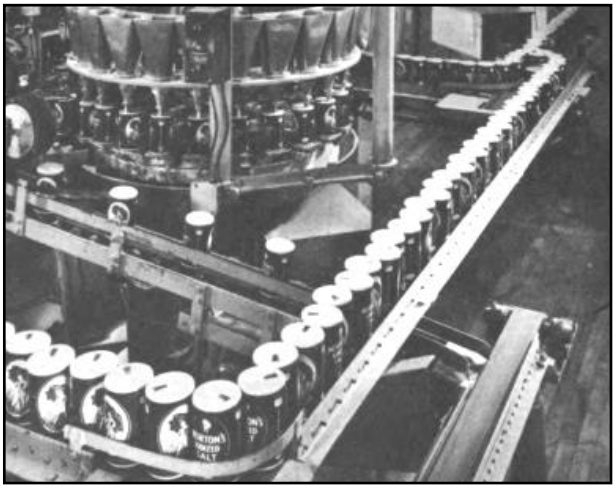
***Morton's Spout*, June 1947.**

Morton Salt's warehouse on Elston served as the company's main Chicago storage and distribution facility. The aerial view at right was taken in 2018 and shows the complex's dock and non-extant conveyer. The Garage Building is in the foreground.



Morton Salt Company bulk lake freighters delivered tons of salt for storage and packaging at the company's Elston Avenue complex.

Morton sold a wide range of salt products.

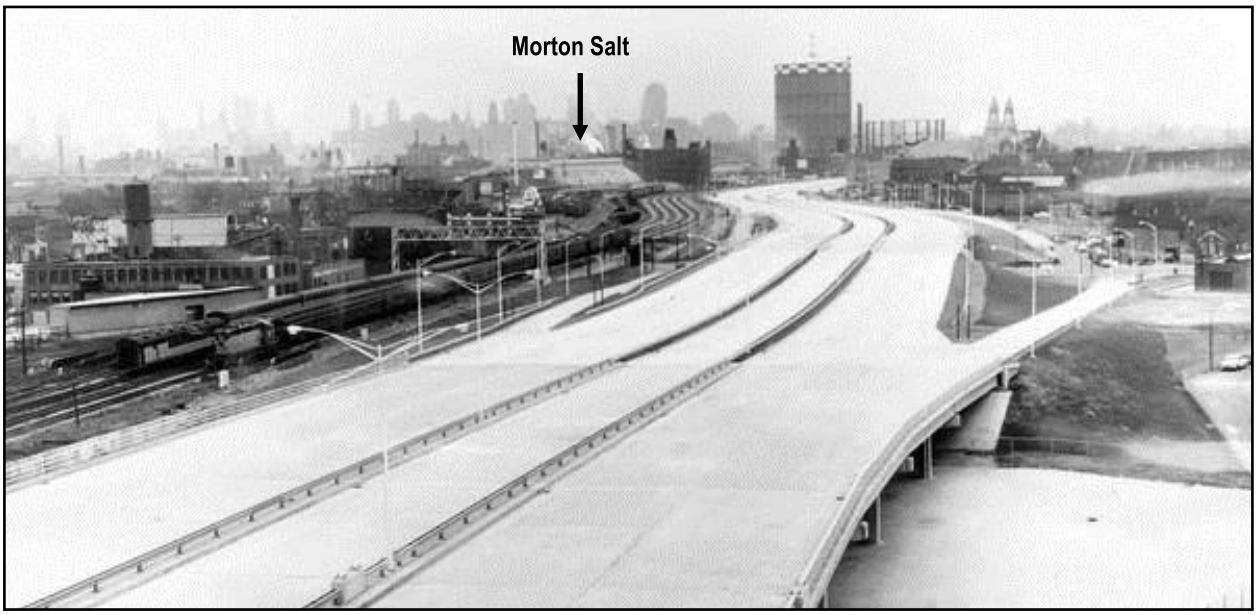


Salt packaging included cardboard canisters for table salt. Eskew, *Salt: The Fifth Element*, 1948.

Following World War II, Morton Salt expanded into new sectors and products, including chemicals, drugs, and adhesives. In 1947, the headquarters moved into the 120 South LaSalle Street Building, with the Midwest regional sales office relocated to the Merchandise Mart. That same year the company acquired a new salt evaporation plant at Weeks Island, Louisiana, in addition to a chemical manufacturing plant. By 1948, Morton salt employed 3,500 people across twelve production plants, with regional offices and warehouses located in twenty-two cities for prompt local delivery. Morton celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1948 by dropping the "s" from the company's trademarked name Morton's Salt and became simply Morton Salt.

Morton Salt expanded internationally during the 1950s with new plants and offices in Canada and later in the Bahamas where it experimented with the production of sea salt. In 1954, the Morton Chemical Company, a division of Morton Salt, opened a new research laboratory in Woodstock, Illinois, for product development led by its chemists, biologists, and engineers. Four years later, under the direction of Daniel Peterkin Jr., the company commissioned the firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White to design a modern five-story headquarters building at 110 North Wacker Drive (demolished). As with the Washington Street building, Morton Salt occupied part of the building while leasing remaining floors. At the time, Morton had grown to become the largest salt producer and supplier in the United States.

More than once during the twentieth century, Morton Salt nearly lost their new complex on Elston Avenue to a new highway. Beginning as early as the 1920s, proposals for a north-westerly roadway out of the Loop were proposed. There were several early iterations. One



The Morton Salt Warehouse Complex on Elston is visible in the upper middle portion of this photograph, a view looking southeast along Interstate 90-94 from Wabansia Avenue in 1959. The nearly completed Northwest Expressway (later the Kennedy) was routed around St. Stanislaus Kostka Church (twin steeples at right) and avoided requiring the demolition of the Morton Salt Complex. ***Chicago Tribune*, 1959, Photo Archive.**

called for an elevated roadway named the North West Elevated Limited Way. Later, during World War II, a northwest route for a proposed superhighway system identified Elston Avenue and the North Branch of the Chicago River as a route option. Beginning in the late 1940s as plans were finalized, the selected route was planned west of Elston along the existing Chicago & Northwestern railway line. The final plan resulted in shifting the rail line and highway eastward at one point so as to prevent the demolition of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church on Evergreen Avenue. The Northwest Expressway opened in 1960 and was renamed the Kennedy in 1963 in honor of the late President John F. Kennedy.

Later History: 1965 to 2015

In 1965, the Morton Salt Company was renamed Morton International, Inc. to reflect its expansive product base that included a variety of salt products and industrial and agricultural chemicals. Morton Salt merged with a pharmaceutical company in 1969, but sold the business in 1982 and purchased chemical and rocket fuel manufacturer Thiokol, Inc. In 1989, after Thiokol's products were tied to the 1986 Challenger Shuttle disaster, Morton Salt separated from the company to focus on the manufacture of salt, specialty chemicals, and air-bag systems. By 1994, Morton's air-bag business was the largest in the world and included factories in Germany. This business was subsequently sold in 1997 when the company acquired two European salt and chemical businesses. Shortly after reaching its 150th anniversary, Morton Salt was itself acquired in 1999 by the Philadelphia-based Dow Chemical subsidiary, Rohm & Haas. It was sold again in 2009 to the fertilizer and salt conglomerate K & S Group which closed Morton Salt's Elston Avenue Complex in 2015 and consolidated the company's headquarters in a building at 444 West Lake Street.

Morton Salt and De-icing for Wintertime Road Safety

During the early 1900s, demand for Morton's rock salt increased as a new use for the product took hold: street de-icing. Snow- and ice-free streets were not especially important before the widespread use of the automobile in the late 1910s. Rock salt was known to have ice-melting properties, but it was cost-prohibitive, and many cities were hesitant to use it due to its potential effect on plantings. Its primary use prior to the 1930s was in the hide tanning and food processing industries. Morton began supplying the City of Chicago with several tons of rock salt before 1920 but its use on city streets remained very limited until the 1940s.

The earliest and largest user of rock salt for de-icing streets was Detroit which started using salt in the 1930s and opened its own mine for the purpose. As winter auto fatalities increased with the number of cars on the road, municipal governments and planners searched for methods to clear and make streets safe. New mechanical snow removal equipment was invented, including snowplow and salt spreading attachments for dump trucks, which, although costly, became standard equipment. Historian Blake McKelvey notes that a series of strong winter storms during the early 1940s promoted wider use of rock salt for de-icing roadways.

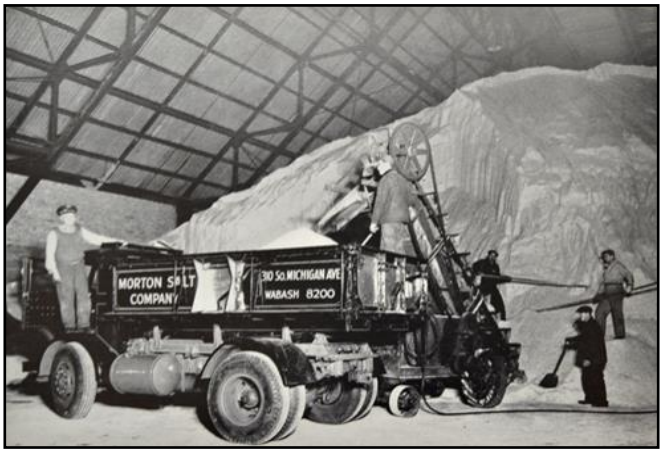
By the 1950s, hundreds of thousands of tons of salt were being used annually by cities nationwide to contend with winter weather conditions. New York City had a complete snow-fighting system and accepted rock salt as a necessary tool despite criticism of its damaging use.

The Upstate New York cities of Rochester and Buffalo increased their expenditure on snow removal and even bought bulk rock salt from Morton in Chicago during the 1950s. By the mid-1960s, Morton was annually supplying the City of Chicago with around 90,000 tons of rock salt.

Morton Salt's Elston Avenue Complex served as the primary distribution point for Morton's rock salt. Barges were unloaded by scoop and a conveyor belt carried and distributed salt into neat piles in the complex's bulk storage sheds. When needed, the bulk salt was either packaged for consumption or loaded onto rail cars along the building's west side or into trucks along the east side.

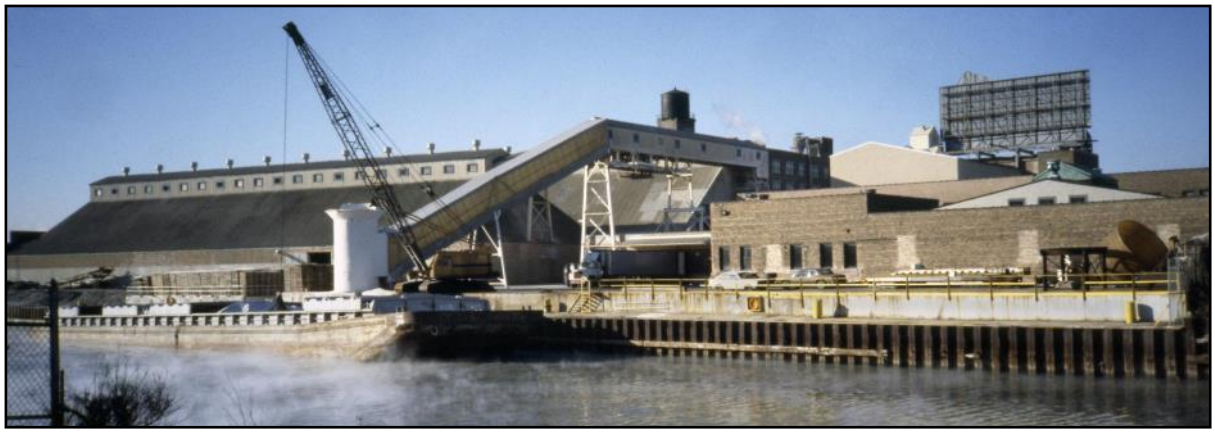
In Chicago, Morton was most frequently selected for its low bids and because of its existing relationship with the city. Each year, suburban towns outside Chicago purchased train carloads of salt, and the City of Chicago would place orders for tens of thousands of tons. In addition to

As cars became prevalent in cities, demand for roads free of snow and ice increased. Morton Salt became Chicago's primary supplier of rock salt for road de-icing. By the 1960s it annually sold around 90,000 tons of rock salt to Chicago. In addition to salt, snow-removal equipment became standard in cities like Chicago.



Here, workers in the late 1940s load rock salt for ice-melting into a specialized dump truck inside the West Shed Building.

***Morton's Spout*, February 1946.**



View looking southwest across the North Branch toward the Morton Salt Complex's dock in 1986. **Brubaker Collection, University of Illinois.**

The east side of the Packaging Buildings is lined by several truck loading bays where packaged goods were sent out for distribution across the Chicago area.

Right: the loading bays with trucks loaded with salt in 1954. ***Morton's Spout*****, March 1954.**

Below: The Packaging Building in 2020.

The east side of the West Shed Building and a portion of the remaining conveyor support structure.

In 2020, the East Shed Building was demolished due to structural damaged caused by salt corrosion of the steel. Two sets of steel trusses and a portion of the concrete wall below remain standing.

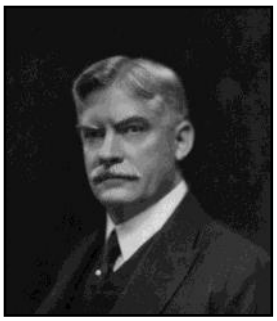
the city, Morton supplied salt to the Chicago Park District for roads and pathways and to the Chicago Surface Lines (taken over by the Chicago Transit Authority in 1945) for 400 miles of roadways with streetcar tracks. Morton Salt's Elston Avenue Complex continued to serve as the company's main distribution point for rock salt until the facility closed in 2015.

ARCHITECTS GRAHAM, ANDERSON, PROBST & WHITE

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex is the work of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, a successor to D. H. Burnham & Co. The firm was among the most significant and prolific architectural firms in Chicago in the years between World Wars I and II. It designed a wide variety of buildings and structures, including skyscrapers, train stations, museums, government buildings, and manufacturing complexes.

In 1912, **Ernest Robert Graham (1868-1936)** partnered with Hubert Burnham and Daniel Burnham Jr., sons of the esteemed architect Daniel H. Burnham, and formed the firm Graham, Burnham & Company. Graham, who was a native of Lowell, Michigan, joined Burnham's practice in 1893 and served as his principal assistant in supervising the construction of several buildings at the World's Columbian Exposition that same year. At the fair's close, Graham was made a partner. Graham formed the new firm after Burnham's death in 1912; the business lasted until 1917 when the Burnham brothers left to form their own practice. Graham partnered with **William Pierce Anderson (1870-1924)** who was born in Oswego, New York, but spent his childhood in Salt Lake City, Utah. Anderson also worked with Burnham and had attended both Harvard and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1917, Graham partnered with Anderson and two other former Burnham architects, **Edward Mathias Probst (1870-1942)** and **Howard Judson White (1870-1936)**, to form Graham, Anderson, Probst & White. Following Anderson's death in 1924, many employees of the firm rose in position to become significant designers.

The firm's association with Burnham helped it attract significant commissions during the 1910s and 1920s, such as the Wrigley Building and its north annex (400-410 North Michigan Avenue,



Ernest R. Graham (1868-1936).
Hedrich-Blessing Coll., HB33296, Chicago

W. Pierce Anderson (1870-1924).
1922 Passport Application, FamilySearch.org

Edward M. Probst (1870-1942).
Chappell, 1992.

Howard J. White (1870-1936).
1921 Passport Application, FamilySearch.org

The firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White designed the Morton Warehouse Complex. The firm is best known for their civic buildings and skyscrapers that dot Chicago's skyline. Many of the firm's buildings were designed in the Classical Revival style. Their work includes the buildings pictured below.

The Field Museum of Natural History (1915-1920).

Midwest Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library.

The Wrigley Building (1920-1924, a designated Chicago Landmark).

Chuckman's Chicago Collection.

The Civic Opera Building (1927-1929, a designated Chicago Landmark). Midwest Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library.

The Merchandise Mart (1928-1930)

Midwest Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library.

The firm also designed dozens of industrial buildings. Their designs typically embraced more utilitarian forms with simplified Prairie School-inspired details and forms. One example is the non-extant Crawford Avenue Generating Station built for the Commonwealth Edison Company in 1924.

Chicago Photograph Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago.

1920-1924, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Field Museum of Natural History (1400 South Lake Shore Drive, 1915-1920), the Old Chicago Main Post Office Building (433 West Van Buren, 1921-1934, a designated Chicago Landmark), the John G. Shedd Aquarium (1200 South Lake Shore Drive, 1927-1929), Union Station (225 South Canal Street, 1925, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Civic Opera Building (20 North Wacker Drive, 1927-1929, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Merchandise Mart (222 Merchandise Plaza, 1928-1930), and the Field Building at 135 South LaSalle Street (1934, a designated Chicago Landmark), among dozens of others. The firm's significance and contribution to the civic and commercial architecture of Chicago and many other cities cannot be overstated.

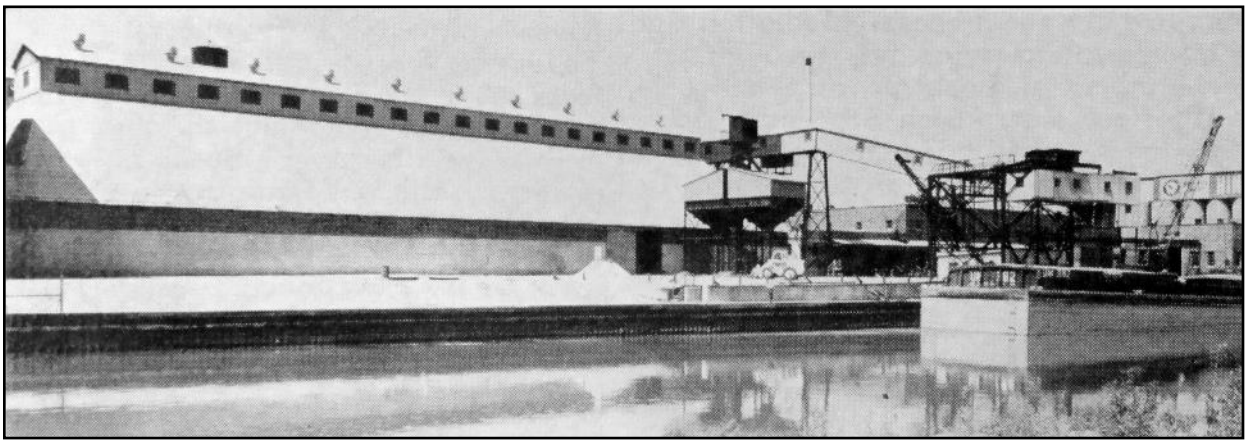
The firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White also gave great attention to the design of industrial and manufacturing buildings. In 1912, the firm designed the Butler Brothers Warehouses which served as impressive storage and distribution facilities within the greater industrial landscape at the western edge of Chicago's Loop. Rail facilities and the transportation afforded by the river were planned as key components of the building's functional character; however, unlike most industrial buildings of the time, the exterior was enlivened with brick cladding that reflected the form, massing, and visual division seen in the firm's earlier Loop skyscrapers.

Beyond Chicago, the firm designed a range of buildings, from Federal Reserve Banks and post offices to skyscrapers and train stations. A few extant examples of their work in other cities include the United States Post Office building in Washington, D. C. (1914-1934), Equitable Building in New York City (1915), Terminal Tower in Cleveland, Ohio (1926-1930), and Suburban Station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1930).

Graham, Anderson, Probst & White continued to refine and develop attractive yet efficient and functional industrial buildings throughout the 1920s with commissions for power plants and factories. One example is the non-extant Crawford Avenue Generating Station at 3501 South Pulaski Road. Built for Commonwealth Edison in 1924, the plant featured rhythmic massing on its exterior walls created by repeating bays of windows set between projecting brick piers. Taller brick towers further divided the building into segments. The striking design predated the similar style applied to the Morton Salt Company Complex along its Blackhawk Street and Elston Avenue elevations.

Overall, the firm was innovative in its designs for industrial buildings and was able to refine and apply elements of Beaux-Arts-style Classicism with which its name had become synonymous since the World's Fair. The firm's industrial buildings, unlike their commercial structures, reveal a greater shift in design that gradually opened the firm to other architectural styles, such as the Prairie School. Buildings including Morton Salt's Elston Avenue Complex illustrate this transition through their patterned brickwork, structural emphasis expressed by brick piers, expanses of windows, and the limited use of contrasting limestone trim. These design elements reflect aspects of the Prairie School as applied to industrial architecture. The Prairie School had become popular during the first decades of the twentieth century. The refined, clean, horizontal and vertical lines of the Prairie School were used extensively by

several architects in the design of manufacturing buildings. The firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White gradually applied elements of the Prairie School to their industrial buildings, and fully shifted away from Classical-inspired styles beginning in the 1930s.



East side of the Morton Salt Complex with the non-extant East Shed and Conveyer, circa 1958.
"Morton Salt Co. Offices Return to River," *The Waterways Journal*, August 30, 1958: 8.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sections 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object with the City of Chicago, if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State, or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex is significant in Chicago's history for its association with the iconic Morton Salt Company, which was founded as the western office of the Onondaga Salt Company in Chicago in 1848 and incorporated in 1910 by Joy Morton. Morton Salt grew to become the largest salt producer in the United States. The complex served as a drying, storing, and bulk packaging facility for salt that was distributed throughout the Chicago region and across the country for uses ranging from food to ice melting.
- The Morton Salt Complex was one of dozens of groups of industrial buildings along the North Branch of the Chicago River that together made it one of Chicago's most economically important industrial centers. Many characteristic industrial production and storage buildings in this former industrial corridor have since been redeveloped.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex is a well-engineered and finely crafted example of an industrial complex in Chicago. It features an excellent example of a truss-roof "production shed"-style storage building, once a common building type in Chicago, and significant in Chicago's industrial history.
- The Morton Salt Complex possesses an overall high quality of architectural design that exemplifies a period of technological innovation in the design of buildings, and the rise of industrial design as a distinct profession within architecture.
- The complex is an excellent example of small-scale industrial architecture executed in a modern industrial style with Prairie style influences. The red face brick-clad Garage, Packaging Buildings, and salt storage Shed Building display characteristic features that became identifiable with a modern and efficient industrial style. These

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex is visually prominent along Elston Avenue and its iconic roof is highly visible. Its primary elevations are clad in multi-hued red face brick with plain Bedford limestone trim, exemplifying utilitarian design with strong vertical and horizontal lines that suggest Prairie School inspiration. Tall storage tanks, boiler rooms, and other functional spaces are perfectly obscured behind the uniform brickwork.

Right: the entrance to the main office on Blackhawk Street.

The main office, a two-story record storage block, and the 1968 (windowless) storage block of the Packaging Buildings face north onto Blackhawk Street. The Garage Building is at the far left.

Along Elston Avenue, the Complex's Packaging Buildings are bordered by a rail spur track. At left is a boiler and power house, while the main packing and shipping section is to the right.

features included roof monitors, expanses of fenestration, and the limited use of limestone trim.

- The shed salt storage building is a fine example of the "production shed" building form. It was designed primarily for salt storage and featured a built-in salt conveyer system in place of a traveling crane, which had been typical of this built type.
- The west roof of the West Shed Building has become a visual landmark in Chicago and is visible from areas to the west, especially to motorists travelling along Interstate 90-94. Since the building's completion in 1930, Morton Salt has used the roof to display a large painted sign advertising the company.

Criterion 5: Important Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, the architect of record for the Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex, is nationally significant and was one of the most prolific and important architectural firms in Chicago between the 1910s and early 1930s. The successors to Daniel Burnham's notable practice, Ernest Graham, W. Peirce Anderson, Edward Probst and Howard White, designed a wide variety of projects in Chicago and throughout the country, including public buildings, parks, office buildings, and industrial structures.
- In addition to the Morton Salt Company Complex, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White also designed many prominent structures in Chicago, including the Field Museum of Natural History, begun by D. H. Burnham and Company (1915-1920), the Wrigley Building (1921-1924, a designated Chicago Landmark), Union Station (1925, a designated Chicago Landmark), the John G. Shedd Aquarium (1927-1929), the Civic Opera Building (1927-1929, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Merchandise Mart (1928-1930), and the Field Building at 135 South LaSalle Street (1934, a designated Chicago Landmark).
- The architectural firm also designed many significant buildings in cities across the United States, including the United States Post Office in Washington, D. C. (1914-1934); Terminal Tower in Cleveland, Ohio (1926-1930); and Suburban Station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1930).

Integrity Criteria

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex retains very good integrity. The complex's overall form and masonry exteriors as completed in 1930 remain intact, along with the open docks. Fenestration in the Packaging Buildings, which includes the office, boiler, and shipping

Looking southeast along Elston Avenue circa 1973. The same view is shown below in 2020.

The Morton Salt Tapestry, 1848-1973 **(Chicago: Morton Salt Company. 1973): 4-5.**

sections, remains largely intact. The characteristic roofline, consisting of distinctive parapets, roof monitors, and conveyor structures, is also intact. Especially notable is the immense truss roof of the West Shed Building, which retains some fenestration, roof monitors, and the building's iconic painted sign.

Generally, changes to the complex are largely reversible. These include non-historic windows and brick infill. Most exterior doors and garage doors are non-historic replacements. Several of the monitor windows in the Shed Building are covered by matching roofing material but the outlines of the openings remain visible.

Changes to the complex that have occurred since 2015 include the demolition of two original parts of the complex in 2020. A second, smaller East Shed Building originally adjoined the east side of the extant West Shed Building. It was demolished due to structural issues resulting from steel corrosion caused by exposure to salt. Similarly, an enclosed conveyor that extended from the loading tower at the river's edge up to the north end of the Shed Buildings was also demolished in 2020 due to long-term exposure to salt. A portion of the former eastern shed building's steel frame was left in place and the steel support piers for the conveyor system were also left standing. The loss of the East Shed Building and the conveyor was unavoidable but does not significantly diminish the resource's historic significance because the larger remaining original Shed Building, Packaging Buildings, and Garage still strongly convey the historic, significant function of the complex.

Despite these changes, the Morton Salt Company's Elston Avenue Complex retains its ability to express its history as the long-time distribution facility for a leading Chicago salt producer. As utilitarian structures, industrial buildings were often altered and improved as new materials and technologies were developed and to accommodate changing needs and these structures were no exception. As a storage and packaging facility for salt products woven into daily life in Chicago and beyond, the Morton Salt Complex exemplifies the varied industrial buildings in Chicago.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

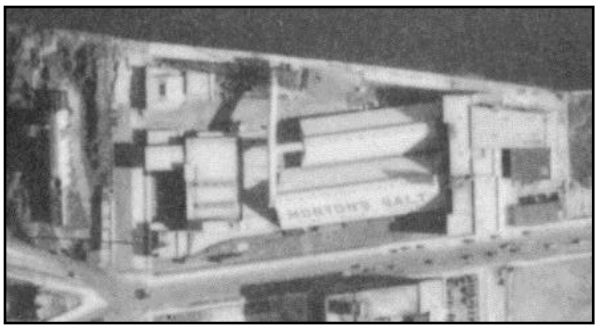
Based upon its preliminary evaluation of the Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Complex;
- The interior of the West Shed Building;
- The painted sign on the west elevation of the West Shed Building;
- The remaining structural steel trusses of the former East Shed Building; and
- The remaining structural steel supports of the former conveyor from the West Shed Building to the Chicago River.

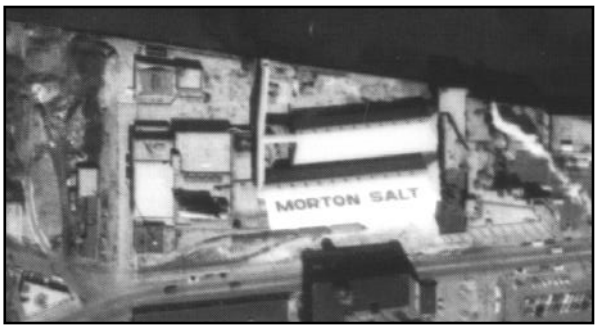
Commission Staff also recommend that the following shall apply:

Additional Guidelines—General

Pursuant to Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, on October 1, 2020, the Permit Review Committee of the Commission approved, with conditions, a pre-permit submission, including drawings, for the rehabilitation of the Complex (the "P.R.C. Project"). Notwithstanding the foregoing significant historical and architectural features listed above, all Complex alterations and/or additions contained in the P.R.C. Project shall be permitted.

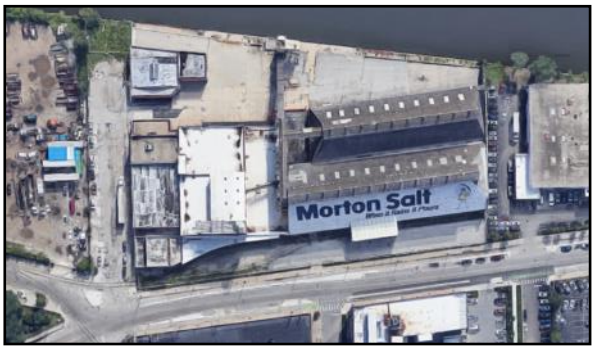


1938 ***University of Illinois***



1970 ***Chicago Metropolitan Agency For Planning***

1995 ***Chicago Metropolitan Agency For Planning***



2020 ***Google***

The Morton Salt Company Warehouse Complex's West Shed Building has served as a signboard advertising the company since the complex was built. In the above series of historic aerial photographs it is clear how the sign has changed over time. In the late 1960s, the sign changed from "Morton's Salt" to "Morton Salt." Then, sometime in the 1980s, the Morton Salt Girl was added to sign.

The Morton Salt Girl painted on the West Shed Building roof, summer 2009. ***Matthew Wicklund***

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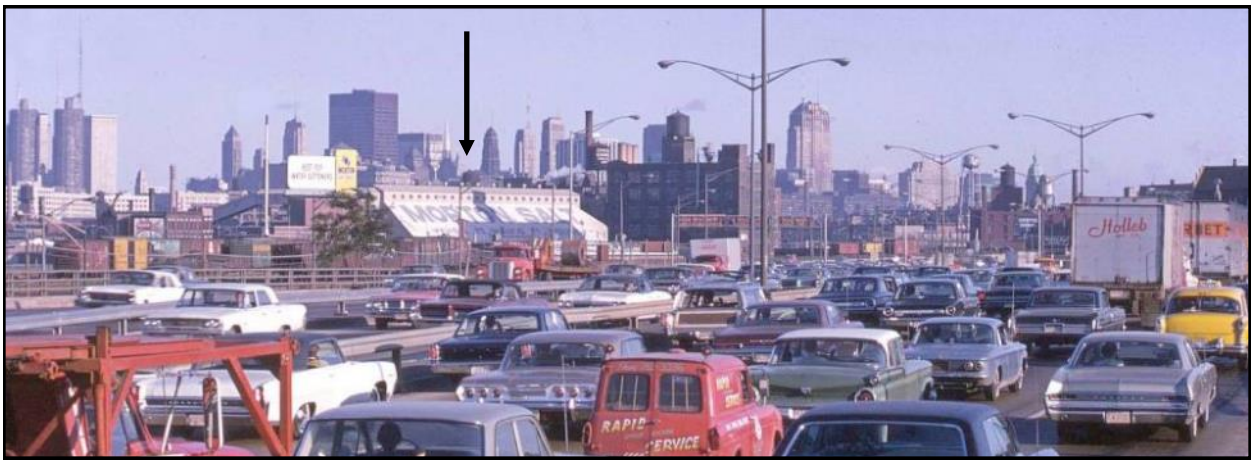

View southeast along Interstate 90/94 (the Kennedy Expressway) circa 1970. The Morton Salt West Shed Building's roof sign is visible in the distance.

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