MILESTONES IN SALT

THE 75-YEAR HISTORY OF
Diamond Crystal Salt Company
1886-1961
His business just isn’t big enough for both of us,” Mark Hopkins told his friend and partner, Charles Freeman Moore, one day in February, 1887.

At that time, the infant Diamond Crystal Salt Company certainly wasn’t. It was 10 months old and hardly off to a roaring start. If either man had been clairvoyant, he would have foreseen that five more years were to pass before the books would show a profit. And nine more were to go by before a dividend could be paid.

Mr. Hopkins, namesake and contemporary of the famed California rail pioneer, had a proposition. If Moore could not buy out Hopkins, then Hopkins would buy out Moore.

Mr. Moore prevailed. On Feb. 11, 1887, this dedicated man, grandfather of Diamond Crystal’s current president and already a leader in several unsuccessful salt-drilling ventures in the St. Clair, Mich., area, replaced Hopkins as president. From this day forward—through the “bootstrap” period and the first decade of the twentieth century—the story of Diamond Crystal would be, to a great extent, the story of Moore’s faith in the salt-making potential of his hometown and his relentless drive to develop it.

He was a slender man of less than medium height who had a degree from the old Michigan State College of Agriculture in East Lansing and had dabbled in both farming and lumber. Once salt became his life, he was seldom known to accept defeat.

The first recorded salt activity in St. Clair had occurred on July 9, 1863, when 15 citizens decided to pump the brine pools believed to exist between 800 and 1,200 feet below the surface of the town. Similar pools were known to underlie the Saginaw Valley to the west where operators were producing a low-grade salt by burning waste mill lumber to evaporate the brine.

The organizers called their enterprise the “St. Clair City Salt Co.” A Mr. F. Spangler was hired to bore the well at $2 a foot, but it was not until June, 1864, that brine was struck. A “salt block,” as salt enterprises were called in those days, was then constructed. After several years of operation, however, the venture ceased to be prosperous and was abandoned.

It was not without its lesson, however. Moore and his followers were encouraged by optimism on the part of the driller, Matthew Porter of Canada. A veteran at this game, Porter contended that the huge rock salt formation of Ontario was saucer-like, about 135 miles in diameter and sufficiently deep and thick to carry over into eastern Michigan.

In 1880 another St. Clair group—including Charles F. Moore—raised $1,200 to repair the old well and re-establish the business. Cleaned out and fired with proper machinery, the well yielded brine 100 per cent saturated. But again the enterprise proved unprofitable.

Although the St. Clair brine was twice as deep as that in the Saginaw Valley, local diehards reasoned that it should be there in sufficient quantity for someone to tap at a profit. Their spirits were buoyed by salt strikes at nearby Marine City, Mich. (1,633 feet) in 1882 and at another St. Clair block (1,630 feet), owned by the Thomson brothers, two years later.

The stage for a revolutionary approach to salt-making was set in 1886. That year J. L. Alberger, a Buffalo, N. Y., inventor, arrived in St. Clair, seeking capital for what he claimed was a new, more economical way of producing salt.

After watching Alberger perform, Moore and Hopkins headed a group which accepted the inventor’s offer. They organized on Apr. 10, 1886, as the “St. Clair Rock Salt Co.,” with Hopkins as president, Justin R. Whiting as vice president, and Franklin Moore, brother of Charles, as secretary-treasurer.

Economically, the Alberger process did not measure up to its claims. However, chemical analysis proved it to be the purest salt ever known. This revelation prompted the young firm to change its name three.
weeks later—on May 1, 1886—to "Diamond Crystal Salt Co."

Nine months later, Hopkins made his history-making you-or-me proposition. As a result, Hopkins left the company and Charles F. Moore was elected president, ushering in a near quarter-century in which he personally would be the driving force behind every phase of Diamond Crystal activities. Other officers chosen were Justin K. Whiting, vice president; Henry Whiting, Jr., secretary; and Franklin Moore, treasurer.

**The 'Bootstrap' Years**

In the beginning, hardships came in wholesale quantities. There were financial failures, a disastrous fire in 1892 which nearly destroyed the plant, and another fire in 1894. After the first blaze, production was halted for several months. Moore was forced to borrow $15,000 from a Detroit bank to keep the company going.

It was President Moore who encouraged the disillusioned, bought the stock of all shareholders wishing to sell and, in every possible way, laid a foundation for quality products. A particularly strong right hand during this period was Jim Powrie, the first plant superintendent who later became a member of the board of directors.

By the turn of the century, seven wells had been sunk, one to a depth of 2,168 feet through a stratum of rock salt 250 feet thick, and table (shaker) salt had been placed on the market.

Through the 1890s, progress had been slow, for little money could be poured back into the company. Yet Building 9—the oldest of the still-existing structures—was erected and a second grainer pan operation was set up. In addition, the boiler total was increased to four, No. 2 well was drilled, Alberger heaters were installed and additional property was purchased.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, Diamond Crystal was "out of the woods" financially. More wells were sunk and, by 1904, the company was in a position to approve an ambitious program for plant modernization and the construction of fireproof buildings. This was to include additions to the office building, erection of the Alberger B and C pan buildings, a coal hoist and a new boiler house.

By 1910 Diamond Crystal was the lone survivor of the St. Clair area's three nineteen-century salt operations. The 22-year-old Thomson Company had failed in 1906. Four years later the McElroy enterprise at Marine City, never a great success, was disbanded after the plant was destroyed by fire. In 1912 Diamond Crystal purchased the Thomson buildings, one of which is still in use today, from Morton Salt Company.

When Mr. Moore retired in 1910, he left a legacy of superior products. He had believed in the Alberger process, predicted greatness for it, sunk his last dollar in it. Today, with Alberger grades still Diamond Crystal "exclusives" and still the keystones of vastly expanded product lines, his faith and perseverance stand justified.

Succeeded by Henry Whiting in the presidency, Moore died two years later. By this time his son, Fred W., was already working his way through the ranks.

Ask any oldtimer around St. Clair who
best answered the description, "Van Dyke beard . . . black eyes . . . thin plug of tobacco," and chances are good that the reply will be "Henry Whiting."

Revolution in Methods

During the Whiting regime, the plant underwent a marked transformation. Just prior to World War I, American industry was introduced to a wave of new labor-saving, production-speeding machinery. Diamond Crystal kept pace. A "shaker line" was established, and the company broadened its scope of activities by adding a chemist and a consulting engineer. The latter was Charles L. Weil, a university professor who served first in a consultant capacity, then later as chief engineer.

Whiting's 16 years in the presidency witnessed many notable projects. The Alberger D and E pan buildings, the grainer building (no longer standing) and the second story of the office building were completed in 1910. Construction of a five-story dairy salt mill and the Packing Building followed in the next half-decade.

The Cooper Shop—where barrels were made—was brought to its loftiest state about 1916, and the A and F pan building, newest of them all, was completed in 1917, along with the plant cafeteria and a new coal dock. The year 1920 saw the plant's first block press, construction of the tunnel between office and factory and completion of a brick Cooper Shop where the shaker line now stands.

Cooper Shop employment was something of a status symbol around the factory. At its peak, the department employed 46 men. Most shipments were by barrel. There were also the "pockets" (small bags), in various sizes dating back to Diamond Crystal beginnings, but the 100-pound paper bag still belonged to the future.

Reasons of cleanliness induced the company to make its own barrels—bearing head diameters of 16, 18, 19 or 20 inches but always weighing the standard 280 pounds when filled. These passed to the Packing Department. From thence, horses took the barrels to a loading dock where they were rolled aboard ship by hooks.

One Cooper Shop veteran, who worked in the department from 1912-29, is still active at the St. Clair plant. He is Lealond "Lee" Perkins, 64, foreman of the Pipe Shop.

Just after World War I, warehouse buildings 16 and 17 went up. Some of the prominent executives who served under Whiting were Fred Moore, works manager; Reuben R. Moore, Fred's brother, sales vice president; C. R. Walker, sales manager; and Gordon W. Kingsbury, advertising manager.

Until the mid-1920s, shipping was a real problem at St. Clair. The town was only 50 miles from Detroit, as the crow flies, but it might as well have been 250. The only freight-carrying railroad within reasonable distance was the Chesapeake & Ohio, whose closest stop was Courtright, Ontario—across the river. This meant that virtually all salt had to be ferried to Canada. On occasion, some salt was shipped to Detroit via the long-defunct Detroit United (interurban) Railroad, which made several St. Clair stops. But this was rare.

River steamers were the queens of transportation at the turn of the century. Among those serving St. Clair were the "Douglas" and "Pilgrim," which sailed between Detroit and Alpena, and the "Mary," which made a Detroit-Port Huron round
trip daily. They carried both passengers and freight. Diamond Crystal later had its own ferries, most memorable of which were the "Colburn" and the "Hilton."

In spring, summer and early fall, ferry voyages were routine. But in winter there was the constant specter of ice, which was bound to have its inning despite the swift river currents. When thick ice prevailed, horse-drawn sleighs were used as "ferries." This method was generally successful although, on a few tragic occasions, both driver and horses were lost through the ice.

When the wintry waters were jammed with broken ice, still different problems faced the company's shipping department. It took an "ice breaker" to carve a channel for the salt-laden ferries. To be prepared for such emergencies, Diamond Crystal engaged a tugboat for all-winter "ice breaker" duty. Many still remember the "Abner C. Harding" which lay in the Pine River on call.

St. Clair oldtimers insist that winters really were tougher "in the old days."

It was in the 1920s that Diamond Crystal landed its first large national customers, among them the A. & P. grocery chain. Sales territories were established with headquarters in Minneapolis, Chicago, Boston, New York, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Dallas and Kansas City.

When Whiting died in 1926 after 40 years in company service, he had been a party to the entire evolution of a vital American enterprise. The reins passed to Fred W. Moore, son of the founder. While the father had been essentially an administrator and salesman, the son was essentially a production man.

Fred Moore spent only a short time in college. He loved boats and, as a young man, sailed on lake freighters. At Diamond Crystal, he started as a laborer and over an eight-year period worked his way up through virtually every department. The day he was called from his foreman duties to become superintendent he swore he couldn't handle the assignment. But he handled the superintendency—and later the presidency—well.

Fred Moore was seldom in his office, almost always in the plant. He loved machines and, as oldtimers recall, he had a self-styled index on the state of the business—"When Maintenance has nothing to do, things are going well."

One year later a transportation breakthrough revolutionized the company's shipping situation. A freight railroad came to St. Clair! No more the ferries to Courtright! The rail line's owner-builders were the Handy brothers of Bay City, Mich., and long after the new artery was officially named "Port Huron and Detroit Railroad," many veteran employees continued to dub it the "Handy Brothers Railroad."

Seeking to add rock salt to its line of products, Diamond Crystal purchased a mine at Lyons, Kan., in April, 1927. But this 11-year relationship was not destined to be successful. Among other things, sufficient water was often not available. In short, this episode is one which Diamond Crystal management would like to forget. Lyons is most remembered by many oldtimers for the national publicity received from the employee Christmas parties held inside the mine.

Enter General Foods

By 1929, Diamond Crystal was one of the nation's largest salt producers and, as such, attractive to the growing General Foods Corporation, which was seeking to diversify its line of food products.

At the same time, Fred Moore realized that he was the last living male in the families of Charles F. and Franklin Moore and that many people were looking to him through Diamond Crystal as their only means of support. In addition to his own family, there were four widows and their families as well as four unmarried sisters and cousins. A responsibility of this magni-

He Didn't Stay Fired

One of the leading figures in Diamond Crystal progress almost didn't make it. He was fired back in 1914.

As a young man, Milt Gearing went to work as a draftsman under Professor C. L. Weil, head of the engineering department. Annoyed at one of Milt's ideas, the professor asked, "Are you telling us or making a suggestion?" Then he fired him.

A few days later the lad was asked to return, and he did. When he retired in 1952, Milt Gearing was plant manager as well as a veteran of two World Wars, a past district governor of Rotary International and recipient of a host of civic honors.
tude was more than he cared to assume. Thus, his only solution to the problem of protecting what his family had accumulated—through his father’s and his own efforts—was to diversify the family holdings.

Diamond Crystal was sold to General Foods on Aug. 15, 1929. To such famous food brands as Jello, Post Toasties, Maxwell House Coffee and Log Cabin Syrup, Diamond Crystal Salt was added.

From the viewpoint of Diamond Crystal owners, the transaction could not have come at a worse economic point in American history, for part of the selling price was 100,000 shares of General Foods common stock. On the purchase date, this stock was selling between $70 and $75. But, by the time the stock transfers were completed, the market had crashed, the Depression was on the way and the stock price had sunk to 42.

To General Foods, two of the most attractive Diamond Crystal potentials were the Shaker and Kosher business on the eastern seaboard. Diamond Crystal was made part of the Calumet Certo Division of General Foods and placed under centralized corporation control in New York. Fred Moore remained as plant manager in St. Clair.

But the parent company had not reckoned with all the peculiarities of a processing business. The new regime overproduced the slow-selling grades and at one time was forced to dump thousands of tons of salt in the St. Clair River. The Diamond Crystal operation lost money the first year and by 1935 was losing almost $500,000 annually. In desperation, General Foods looked to St. Clair for help. As a result, Fred Moore was named general manager and given a freer hand to run the business. This was the first step in general centralization policy which was formulated for the entire General Foods organization.

"Evidently there is more than science in salt-making," a corporation executive conceded.

But regardless of financial outcome, the General Foods era contributed much to Diamond Crystal. Sound wage structures, administrative policies and employee benefit programs were established. The important departments of Methods-Standards and Quality Control were organized as was a formalized Personnel Department. Too, being under the wing of a large corporation had its advantages during the Depression years when business in general was subjected to rigid federal regulation.

Fred Moore, who also found time to serve as mayor of St. Clair for several terms, continued as Diamond Crystal’s chief executive officer until 1941. During his tenure, numerous technical improvements were accomplished.

In 1928, great strides were made in brine purification. Larger gravelers in addition to lime and soda ash treatment proved capable of eliminating magnesium...
chloride and calcium chloride impurities.

In 1929, fuel economies enabled the company to produce 17-18 barrels per ton of coal, compared with 10-12 previously. Installation of a centrifugal flasher, which provided scouring action at high velocity, eliminated "build-up" in the Alberger pans and saved an hour's production each day. At the same time, a filter in combination with forced air at high temperature prevented solidification of drying medium salt, a dilemma which had often required dynamiting in former years.

In 1934-35, a new vacuum pan building and a "triple-effect" vacuum pan operating on exhaust steam from the Alberger systems were constructed. This system, producing cubical grains from brine by evaporation at less than atmospheric pressure, proved vastly more efficient than the old grainer pan method which required one ton of coal to make two tons of salt. Although some grainer salt would still be produced in Alberger pans, the grainer pans at St. Clair were to be discontinued in 1956.

On the personnel front, the war year of 1941 saw the beginning of a service recognition program which has since blossomed into annual dinners for veteran employees at all Diamond Crystal plants.

In that year, Robert M. Farr, who had been secretary-treasurer of the company from 1927-30 and later assistant general manager under Fred Moore, succeeded to the presidency. His tenure was featured by General Foods' purchase in 1945 of Colonial Salt Company, a 44-year-old producer of evaporated salt in Akron, Ohio. This was a last-ditch attempt to make the corporation's salt operation profitable.

Reaping substantial freight-rate savings through the Akron purchase, General Foods combined the two salt plants into a single division.

J. J. "Jerry" LeClare, a crack salesman, succeeded Farr as general manager in 1946. LeClare had opened Diamond Crystal's New York office in 1918 and distinguished himself by capturing the round-can market in that area from larger competitors. He was sales manager before advancing to the top rung.

During the period 1946-50, the Diamond Crystal-Colonial Division introduced four new products—trace-mineralized salt for animal feeding, salt nuggets for water conditioning, anti-oxidant salt for maintaining the keeping qualities of high-fat products, and individual service (portion-control) salt and pepper packets.

When the corporation executives looked for a successor to LeClare in 1952, they leveled their sights on energetic, experienced Charles F. Moore, who had been making a name for himself in selling both salt and other General Foods products.

The new boss, grandson of Diamond Crystal's founder, had literally grown up in the St. Clair plant. He started working summers at the age of 13. First he stapled hoops on barrels in the old grainer building. Later he worked in the electrical shop, in the pipefitting crew, on the loading dock, in the laboratory and in the IBM department.

Moore was a student at the University of Michigan when the company was purchased by General Foods. This development was a big disappointment to the

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The Sailor Stayed On

Boat racing, always a popular sport around St. Clair, contributed one executive to the Diamond Crystal ranks. He was Joe Gannon.

It all started in the early 1900s when 12 St. Clair boys—including Fred Moore, two other Moores and three members of the Whiting family—chipped in $100 apiece to buy an all-steel sloop.

They competed in races up and down the Great Lakes with much success. Prizes were in cash, and soon the boys had won enough to cover maintenance expenses and hire a one-man crew.

The crewman was Gannon. When cold weather halted the racing season, his pals got him a job at Diamond Crystal for the winter.

That was the turning point in Gannon's life. He was such a good worker that the company never let him go, except for his normal vacation. Eventually he rose to vice president.
youth, for he had hoped to join Diamond Crystal following his graduation in 1930. As it was, he went to work—as retail salesman—for General Foods Sales, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the new parent corporation. After serving his apprenticeship in the field, he returned to St. Clair and the salt industry in 1936 as a sales correspondent. From this position, he advanced to advertising manager, then to product manager on Weather-pruf salt, then to general sales manager. He was promoted to general manager of the Diamond Crystal-Colonial Salt Division in 1952.

At this time, Moore learned that General Foods was no longer interested in the salt business and had decided to sell both its salt operations. This was his second great disappointment.

"Salt had not fit into the General Foods scheme of things," he recalls. "They wanted products which were basically grocery items and which had coast-to-coast distribution. We had neither."

Independent Again

Moore thought long and hard before making the biggest decision of his life. On one hand, he could remain with General Foods in an executive capacity, perhaps for the rest of his life. On the other hand, this was the enterprise which his own grandfather had carved out of the earth and his father had nurtured.

His decision was to buy the business, return it to independent ownership and guarantee that its headquarters would remain in St. Clair. On March 30, 1953, he and members of his family purchased the assets of the Diamond Crystal-Colonial Salt Division. Against the trend of the times, two segments of a giant publicly-owned corporation had reverted to private ownership.

The Akron Story

Time has proven the wisdom of the move. For the first three years under the current regime, Diamond Crystal earnings were greater than in all the years under General Foods. In acquiring Colonial, the new company not only increased its production capacity but, through more favorable shipping rates, was able to extend profitable sales operations to sections of the country not reachable from St. Clair.

Colonial thus became the second plant in the triumvirate-to-be. It had a rich history. Producer of evaporated salt grades similar to those at St. Clair, and by similar methods, Colonial had been the first factory in a tiny settlement called Halo, which lay along the Erie Railroad between the northern Ohio communities of Akron and Barberton.

Salt was deeper in Ohio than in Michigan. Strikes down to 2,900 feet were common. But great strides were being made in machinery, and the men who founded Colonial Salt Company were fast workers. Louis H. Severance, a Cleveland industrialist-philanthropist, associate of the original Rockefeller clan and one-time treasurer of the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, provided the capital.

Distressed by the failure of United Salt Company in his home city, Mr. Severance determined to recruit the talent which
Some of Diamond Crystal's first advertising slogans and claims were:

- "The Salt That's All Salt"
- "1,000 Meals for Five Cents"
- "5 Cents a Year"
- "The Salt That's Always Dry"
- "Purest Salt in the World"
- "The Original Shaker Salt"
- "A Barrel of Salt Will Season 4,480 Pounds of Butter"

Here's the way some of the copy from an 1893 advertisement read:

"Did you ever consider the effect that the salt you use may have upon your health? Ordinary salt contains a large percentage of sulphate of lime or plaster of Paris, which obstructs the capillary tract."

In those days, you could run a four-inch column ad in 52 issues of the Bay City Times for $46. The punch line reads:

"A Barrel of Salt Will Season 4,480 Pounds of Butter"

In the early 1900s, before the era of the throwaway container, many housewives would make dressers or generous bowls of salt. Later bags were made of such relative luxuries as gingham and Irish linen. These afforded homemakers endless possibilities, because all printing on the bags was in water soluble ink.

The Cooper Shop, in St. Clair, once 46 men strong, began to fade out of the picture in the late 1920s. But as a part-time operation serving farmers (who had plenty of other uses for the barrels), it lingered until March 1, 1943.

St. Clair's Blacksmith Shop, another link with the past, lasted on a full-time basis until William Ross retired in 1944. Even after the horseshoeing era, Diamond Crystal blacksmiths turned out such items as well tools, pipe hangers and brackets. 

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Until 1936, Colonial employees could still buy a family-style cafeteria meal for 10 cents. On Tuesdays this included meat pie and all the ice cream you could eat!

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The record book in which incoming coal shipments were first logged in 1905 is still in use at St. Clair.


A feature article in that issue, reprinted from "The Valve World," cautioned wage earners against credit buying and checking accounts.

"Credit is nothing more than gambling in futures," the writer declared. "You are betting against chance when you buy today with the promise of paying tomorrow. You are assuming that your position will remain secure, that sickness will not come, that business will remain good."

"The place to put your spare cash is in the savings department of a bank. When you haven't the cash, don't buy or promise to buy."

The punch line reads:

"Pay cash, dodge 'front' (as credit was then known) and be happy."
trolley was four blocks from the plant, and men came to work on horseback. At that time, Colonial had five salt wells and a total property area of five acres. The plant included 14 grainer pans, 10 for food grades and four for coarse types, as well as a "double-effect" vacuum pan. Employment varied between 200 and 225, and already a night shift was in operation. By 1905, the office force at Colonial was larger than its counterpart at nearby Firestone Rubber. Between 1905 and 1912, the Erie Railroad became doubly important to Colonial. Not only did it carry salt to market, but it was the Erie which brought the "immigrant trains" from eastern ports to the Rubber City and its environs. There, according to the grapevine, jobs were abundant. The easiest way to sign up new employees was to send an official to meet the "immigrant train."

Once the first member of a family was established in a job, he sent for his relatives in the Old Country. Akron oldtimers can remember helping to prepare scores of affidavits by which newcomers would "sponsor" their kin in Hungary, Poland, Germany and Italy.

These were the days of hand operations and rugged individualists. Some of the immigrants, flushed with the new opportunities afforded by their adopted land, were production marvels. One of these, veterans recall, prided himself on being able to carry a packed salt barrel, weighing about 290 pounds, on his shoulder. One of the leading production men of the early Colonial era was Jim Shaw, a master mechanic of the old school and, according to the grapevine, jobs were abundant. The easiest way to sign up new employees was to send an official to meet the "immigrant train."

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It was Shaw who laid out the original factory buildings, many of which are still in use today. As late as 1945, when he was in his seventies, he still served as chairman of the board.

Colonial was unique in that it operated its own bag factory. The company bought material by the yard and made its own bags until 1948. Early examples covered sizes from one to 15 pounds. Hand-stitching was the rule, and later even 100-pound bags were hand-sewn for a time.

In the beginning, bags were not officially weighed, and often they contained more salt than necessary. Later railroad demands for accurate weights spurred a switch to hand-weighing, which in time gave way to automatic methods.

Like Diamond Crystal, Colonial made its own barrels—until they were completely replaced by the paper bag in 1939.

The company survived a buffeting in World War I to become one of the largest single-plant producers of salt. As such, it developed a particularly large marketing territory which blanketed the eastern half of the United States. This territory also penetrated as far west as Montana.

The company contributed many innovations to the salt industry. One was Log Cabin table salt, introduced in 1902 and marketed in a square carton with pouring hole in a corner.

Another was a 70-pound bag of "kilndried" Special Farmers' Salt, introduced in the early 1920s. Still another was a butter salt developed about the same time and rendered super-clean by magnets which removed metallic particles. For a time, this product was an industry phenomenon.

The list would also include canning and heat-fatigue tablets. At one time, the company furnished its customers with a filter pad test, by which Colonial and competitive salts could be compared.

Taking the Depression in comparative stride, Colonial had an impressive volume of business on the books and a fine sales organization when General Foods pur-
chased the company in August, 1945. However, its facilities were badly in need of renovation. Henceforth, the Akron plant was to become part of General Foods' combination Diamond Crystal-Colonial Salt Division.

Many individuals have left their marks on Colonial progress.

Walter F. Ince, long-time sales manager, became president in 1934 and four years later headed an employee group which bought the company.

As vice president, Frank J. Crane directed sales under Ince. Charles J. Dunn, long-time general sales manager, had served the company for 46 years when he retired in 1951.

A major role in the early years was played by Charles Smith, the first plant superintendent (under Shaw), first mayor of Kenmore and father-in-law of Lee Santee, the plant's current traffic manager.

In addition to LeClare, general manager of the Diamond Crystal-Colonial Salt Division, men who sparked production growth during the General Foods era included Robert Ball, Keith Gilkey and George Martin.

Today Diamond Crystal's Akron operation, under plant manager Lyle F. Pohly, has 12 wells with a maximum daily capacity of 700 tons of salt. Employment is about 215 persons, and annual payroll is approximately $1,200,000.

In 1948 a $3,000,000 modernization project was undertaken at the Akron plant. More recent improvements include the installation of a can-making and can-filling line, the revitalization of boilers, the installation of a new turbo-generator and the addition of an Alberger system.

Diamond Crystal prospered in the early years after its return to independent management. However, it was apparent that a road block to growth was the lack of a rock salt facility. The company was losing business to larger competitors who could offer customers both evaporated and rock salt.

The JI Story

To fill this breach, it was natural for Moore to reopen negotiations for Jefferson Island Salt Company, largest independent salt producer in the South and operator of a renowned mine in the Bayou Teche region near New Iberia, La.

Fred Moore and J. Lyle Bayless, Sr., heads of the two firms, close friends and fathers of the current presidents, had concluded in the late 1920s that the two companies would fit together like hand and glove. But first the Depression, then absorption of Diamond Crystal into the General Foods family were to shelve these plans for a generation.

This time the negotiations bore fruit. The acquisition of Jefferson Island was announced on Jan. 10, 1957.

As the third plant in the Diamond Crystal triumvirate, JI provided the parent company with its own high-purity rock salt source as well as an introduction to the southern market.

In the process, Diamond Crystal inherited the wealth of scenic beauty and romantic lore which spices the surrounding Cajun country. This is the land of Longfellow’s “Evangeline,” buried pirate treasure, shrimp boats, voodoo legends and eye-popping flora and fauna.

In the space of a few hundred yards, the visitor can see such colorful wildlife as white pelicans, blue herons, purple gallinule, armidallas, alligators, cranes and

Free Gas!

In October, 1927, drillers on Wells No. 12 and No. 13 at St. Clair struck an unexpected bonanza at 2,500 feet... a pocket of gas.

Run through a pipeline above ground with special 1,000-pound valve fittings, this gas was used as fuel for more than two years and saved the company considerable money.

The gas well was plugged in January, 1932, after the supply had finally run out.
It would be hard to find a more picturesque and romantic region than that surrounding the Jefferson Island mine.

A big question with visitors is: How did this peculiar geological formation get that way?

The popular theory is that pre-historic Louisiana was covered by a neck of sea. Later cut off from its main body, this neck formed a salt lake like Utah's. The water evaporated, and in time heavier overburden deposited on the salt bed by the Mississippi River caused salt to flow upward through a crack in the earth's surface. Thus, five salt domes were created within a 30-mile area, the largest of which is Jefferson Island.

Snowy aigrettes. Or he can wander among exotic cypress, magnolia, palm, giant lotus or moss-draped oak trees.

Here the fabled pirate, Jean Lafitte, is supposed to have buried his treasure. As recently as 1923, three pots of his Mexican and Spanish gold and silver coins were unearthed by a Jefferson Island labor crew.

Not the least of the area's wonders is the underground "cathedral" or "man-made Mammoth Cave" — terms aptly describing the JI mine which has become a tourist attraction in itself.

A writer from a national travel magazine had this impression after a recent visit to Jefferson Island:

"No area of the nation is more diversified... or offers a comparable blend of the scenic and historic."

The island, its small community and its salt plant are named for Joseph Jefferson, famed Broadway actor and artist who built a magnificent plantation house on the grounds in the 1870s. Jefferson had vaulted to stardom as Asa Trenchard in "Our American Cousin," the play Abraham Lincoln was watching the night he was assassinated. In the quiet of the Louisiana bayous, he sought a refuge and retreat from city tumult.

Best known for his title role in "Rip Van Winkle," Jefferson has another living namesake in the company's "Old Rip" brand, a top seller in the South.

The island's vast rock salt dome remained undiscovered until a local handy man named Lucas, hired to drill a water well on the Jefferson estate, struck the salt instead. This was the same man who achieved undying fame in 1901 as driller of "Spindletop," the world-record gusher which opened up the great Texas oil field.

It was primarily as a hunting preserve
that a group of Louisville, Ky., men purchased Jefferson Island in 1917. At first, they raised rice and sugar cane on the plantation. But, intrigued by local tales of Lucas’ discovery generations before, they began exploring the salt dome.

On July 29, 1919, three men—J. L. Bayless, Sr., Lawrence Jones, Sr., and Warner L. Jones—incorporated the “Jefferson Island Salt Mining Company” under the laws of Delaware. Lawrence Jones, Sr., became the first president.

Armed with $300,000, obtained from the sale of preferred stock, the company began drilling and mill construction in late 1919. But the first shaft was a failure, and an additional $300,000 in 6 per cent preferred stock had to be sold.

By late 1920 a new shaft, 100 feet in circumference, was sealed into the salt dome at a depth of 100 feet. From this shaft, the mining of rock salt began. Construction of the mill building as well as crushing and screening equipment were also completed that year.

Crushed rock salt was sold to chemical concerns almost from the start, but it was not until 1923 that JI embarked on an ambitious sales program. In that year, JI produced 93,462 tons of salt, less than 12 per cent of its record output of 785,894 tons in 1960. The firm’s letterhead read:

Jefferson Island Salt Mining Company
Miners and Shippers of the Celebrated
“Rip Van Winkle” Salt
Jefferson Island, Delcambre, Louisiana

Jefferson Island proved to be one of five so-called “islands” within a 30-mile radius, each situated on a huge salt dome. Of these, JI is the top producer. Its mine is deepest of the five and, at time of installation, possessed the world’s largest round shaft. Mines on nearby Weeks and Avery Islands are operated by two competing salt companies. Salt deposits on the remaining islands, Belle Isle and Cote Blanche, are non-producing.

Though the mine was deep in the heart of the Louisiana bayous, Jefferson Island was, until acquisition by Diamond Crystal, a Louisville company. Its owners were

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**No Compromise**

“Quality has never been an empty word at Diamond Crystal.

Of many cases in point, veteran employees remember this one:

In the late 1920s, President Fred Moore ordered two days’ production dumped because it wasn’t up to snuff.

“Nothing goes out of this plant unless it’s the best,” he declared.

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primarily Louisville men, and its main offices were always in the Kentucky metropolis.

J. Lyle Bayless, Sr., succeeded Lawrence Jones, Sr., as president in 1922 and, for the next 25 years, the top post alternated among these two men, George H. Lindenberger, Lawrence Jones, Jr., and W. W. Winter. J. Lyle Bayless, Jr., still a director of Diamond Crystal, held the reins between 1947 and the 1957 merger date.

The name, "Jefferson Island," became synonymous with the South through its familiar barn signs. An evaporating plant was completed in 1932, and a year later grainer pans were installed for the manufacture of flake salt. A unique JI innovation was its Hexagon table salt carton, introduced in 1928.

In August, 1940, disaster struck. Fire completely destroyed most of the buildings above ground. In addition, flooding in the mine itself was so extensive that five months passed before crews could go down. Even then, the presence of gas and smoke necessitated the use of oxygen equipment. The flood's high-water is still visible today.

Production was finally resumed in August, 1941, just four months before Pearl Harbor and a full year after the fire.

In 1947, the company's name was officially changed to "Jefferson Island Salt Company."

After World War II, railroad freight rate increases forced JI to seek new methods of distribution to distant markets. The dilemma eventually proved to be a blessing in disguise. Using several barge lines and shipping companies, JI was able by 1956 to serve markets in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa for the first time.

Today seaports served include Tampa, Fla.; Boston, Mass.; and Edgewater, N. J. River ports include Minneapolis; Prairie du Chien, Wis.; Davenport, Iowa; Chicago and La Salle, Ill.; Michigan City, Ind.; St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; Omaha, Neb.; Louisville, Ky.; and Cincinnati, East Liverpool and Marietta, Ohio. A system of marine depots, each capable of stockpiling up to 20,000 tons of rock salt, has been set up.

By merger time in 1957, JI had survived a depression, a crippling fire and a 57-day strike (1952), all in a little more than two decades. But its organization was strong, its policies sound. The marriage of Diamond Crystal and Jefferson Island was a natural. The northern firm had the purest evaporated salt known. The southern company had Louisiana rock salt, the purest in the world.

The task of coordinating the two-com-
pany consolidation was huge. Diamond Crystal’s regional sales offices were moved from Cincinnati to 4050 Westport Road in suburban Louisville, and the former JI building was sold. A nucleus of JI executives and supervisors moved to St. Clair. And a group of men and girls from the Louisville office was transferred temporarily to help consolidate the office functions of the two companies.

Executives of both firms watched the two clerical staffs under normal performance conditions, then selected the best equipment and methods for the consolidated operation.

The difficult job of integrating sales forces and territories was accomplished without a hitch under the direction of sales vice president Spencer S. Meilstrup.

Diamond Crystal offered jobs in St. Clair to all Louisville personnel. Those who decided against the transfer but agreed to remain on the job as long as needed were given severance pay equal to at least six months’ salary.

JI’s product line, well established throughout the South, remained unchanged by the merger. Such old reliables as Champion’s Choice, Sof-T-Salt and Old Rip brands are still available.

Progress in large doses has come to both mine and mill over that period. New, more efficient explosives replaced the old. Booms, drills, shovels and undercutters were gradually upgraded. A new, 28-foot-high crusher and underground screening increased the payload capacity per “skip” from four and one-half to five tons. An “aerial platform” affords more efficient scaling. Hoist operators communicate with shaft inspectors by two-way radio. And two giant 59-foot silos have greatly increased storage capacity.

Today JI is a model mine about 1,000 feet deep, with an excellent safety record to match its constantly improving production marks. Under plant manager George S. Barber, as many as 3,500 tons of rock salt have been removed in a single day, and in October, 1960, the plant set an all-time monthly output record of 96,560 tons. It employs about 225 persons and has an annual payroll of about $1,250,000, including employee benefits.

JI serves markets in many northern states by sea or inland waterway routes. In addition, it has a substantial export business through the port of New Orleans.

Now firmly consolidated, the three-plant operation has recorded steady progress. Production has reached levels beyond the wildest dreams of bygone days, and the human elements of safety and working conditions have kept pace.

A modern electronic communications system links the company’s headquarters in St. Clair with its three plants as well as its 10 eastern regional sales offices—New York, Boston, Akron, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Louisville, New Orleans, Atlanta and Charlotte, N. C. This speeds transmission of customer orders to headquarters, thence to plants, within minutes.

In the American market, intricate combinations of rail, truck and water transportation back up Diamond Crystal promises of customer service. In the overseas market, the company exports 16 products to 20 different countries through the ports of New York and New Orleans.

**Looking Ahead**

Since resuming its status as an independent concern, Diamond Crystal has been in the forefront of salt industry developments. In addition to several new products in the portion-control packet field, it has—in the past five years—introduced an Alberger pretzel salt, trace-mineralized phenothiazine salt (for parasite control in animals), enriched bakers
salt and bloat control salt. The first three were pioneered by Diamond Crystal.

To meet the challenge of the future, the company has established a research and development department. Meanwhile, its technologists continue to work closely with representatives of scores of industries, always with the objective of producing the right salt for the right job.

In 1960 the company achieved another long-cherished goal. It obtained a source of northern rock salt—the Goderich, Ontario, mine of Sifto Salt Company, Ltd.—through an agreement with Crystal Rock Salt, Ltd. Through depots established at various Great Lakes ports, Diamond Crystal is now able to supply numerous midwestern markets—from Buffalo to Chicago—not previously reachable with Jefferson Island rock salt.

Today Diamond Crystal ranks third among the nation's salt producers. Its maximum capacity is 5,200 tons of salt a day. It employs more than 1,000 people, and its annual payroll is in excess of $6,750,000, including employee benefits.

Looking ahead, a new corporate symbol has been designed to represent Diamond Crystal wherever the company meets the public—on stationery, products, advertisements, billboards. Fittingly, the new trademark—a crystalline star composed of six diamonds—has been called "The Symbol of Excellence."

But the real symbols of excellence are the people of Diamond Crystal who strive each day, as they and their forebears have for 75 years, to make the name, "Diamond Crystal," stand for highest quality wherever its products are sold.

It is they who merit the honors in this Diamond Anniversary Year.