

business. After talking over the matter it was thought best to postpone action until April 4, with the expectation that J. R. Whiting and James Galloway would be present at that time."

At the April 4 meeting the board authorized that the plant be rebuilt and that the company's debt be restructured. It also authorized the president, Charles F. Moore, to use electricity or "gasoline" (by which he probably meant natural gas) for lighting the new building.

Armed with the board's backing to rebuild, Moore borrowed \$15,000 from a Detroit bank and, after several months without production, Diamond Crystal finally went back into business. The question, of course, was whether Diamond Crystal's old customers would return after the interruption of production. Then, as now, the salt business was highly competitive, and those who wanted or needed salt were not in a position to wait until the St. Clair plant was rebuilt.

However, Moore and others had gotten that far by stressing quality and customer service. Customers who had been persuaded to pay a premium price for a premium product in the first place had done so because that product best suited their needs. Also, perhaps, Diamond Crystal's competitors' products had failed to impress those who used them as substitutes. A turn-of-the-century history noted: "Alberger salt was on the market when the whole plant burned down . . . News of this was sent out. Orders were returned. But the demand for Diamond Crystal salt was so insistent and had grown to such a volume that the management decided to rebuild . . . and rebuild in accordance with the demand voiced voluntarily for its product."

Rebuild they did, only to have the plant be damaged again by fire in 1894. This blow came while the country was in the midst of the depression that followed the financial panic of 1893, and repairs took money that could have been used for growth and expansion.

However, business was coming in, and the superior

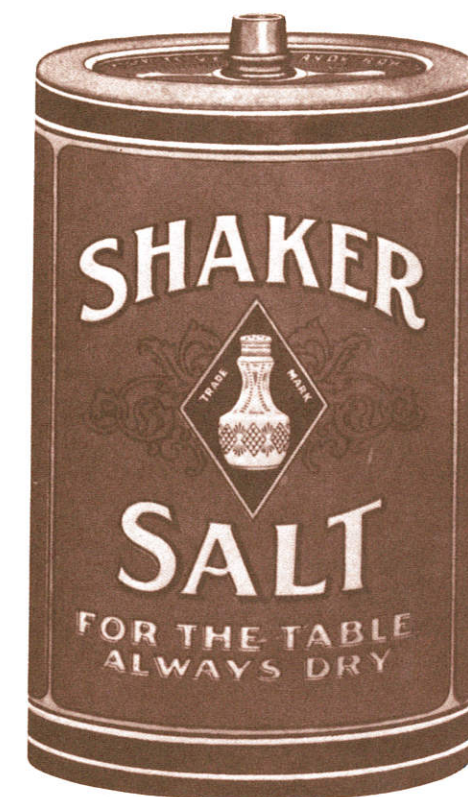
quality of Diamond Crystal salt was finding more and more favor with customers. During the 1890s, the company built another building, added more boilers, drilled another well, installed Alberger heaters, and purchased additional property. During these times the skills and dedication of such employees as Jim Powrie, plant superintendent, were responsible in large part for keeping the company operating efficiently while larger markets were sought for Diamond Crystal's high-quality, higher-priced products.

Company growth was not spectacular, but it was solid and steady. A new product, Shaker Table Salt, had been placed on the market by 1900 and was greeted enthusiastically by consumers. As sales grew and product lines expanded, new salt sources and increased production and processing capacity were needed.

By 1900, seven wells for the production of brine had been sunk, one to 2,168 feet into a rock salt layer 250 feet thick. Company sales reached \$420,000 for the year of 1904. By 1909, production capacity was about 1,000 barrels a day and was being expanded to 1,200 barrels with new construction and additions to the plant. About ten tons of coal were used daily. The company was selling enough of its butter salt annually to salt an estimated 340 million pounds of butter and was in the process of adding once again to its production capacity.

In 1908 Diamond Crystal constructed a new office building in St. Clair described by the local newspaper, the *St. Clair Republican*, as "doubtless the most convenient and comfortable office structure in this section of the state." That original office building is still in existence today and still is used as an office.

The Diamond Crystal Salt Company had survived its early hardships and had prospered under the leadership of Charles F. Moore and through the efforts of other officers and employees. The company had become such a major part of St. Clair's life that the entire front page of the *St. Clair Republican* of April 23, 1908 was devoted to the company, its history, and its products.



"The latest production of the Diamond Crystal Salt Company," noted the newspaper, "is a fine, free-flowing salt made for table use. It is called Shaker Salt, and has had perhaps the most remarkable success of any salt made. During the few years in which it has been on the market, its sales have run into the millions of packages, and it would seem that the demand has only just started." The paper also commented on the air-tight Shaker Salt package with its "handy little patent spout for pouring the salt into the shakers without the bother of waste that occurs in filling from bag-salt." The paper's story was full of superlatives and included Diamond Crystal's opinion that Shaker Salt was "the greatest advance made in the manufacture of salt during the last hundred years."

By 1910, Diamond Crystal was the lone survivor of the three St. Clair area salt works. The Thomson Company, where the Alberger process had first been demonstrated, failed in 1906. Four years later, McElroy's operation at Marine City also went under after the plant was destroyed by fire. In 1912, Diamond Crystal bought the remaining Thomson buildings from the Morton Salt

(Above) Early packages of Shaker Salt featured a pouring spout in the center of the top which could be stopped with a cork to keep out moisture.

(Right) The St. Clair Republican in 1908 called the new Diamond Crystal office building "doubtless the most convenient and comfortable office structure in this part of the state." The building is still in use today as part of a vastly expanded office complex.



Company, which had acquired them when the business had failed. Oddly enough, the Thomson Company had operated almost directly next door to Diamond Crystal during the twenty-two years of its existence.

Charles F. Moore, the man whose determination and belief in a quality product sustained Diamond Crystal in its early years, retired in 1910 and was followed as company president by Henry Whiting. Moore's contributions to the company and the community were well-recognized at the time of his retirement. The accolades he received are priceless mementos of the gilded age of American writing and oratory:

"He encouraged those who were working with him; he bought the stock of those who wanted to get out; he improved the methods of manufacture; he made banking and marketing connections; he rebuilt the plant after a disastrous fire—slowly he built up a selling organization—for all those ten heartbreaking years he stood between the company and utter loss. And in the end—he triumphed. Through the raging waters of doubt and disbelief he came, swimming with strong strokes. He planted his enterprise on the base of quality . . . There is many a man in Michigan who would doubt his own eyes, sooner than doubt the judgement or the integrity of Charles Freeman Moore."

There is a story which illustrates something of the character of Charles F. Moore and his company. When the Morton Salt Company, seven miles north, near Port Huron, suffered a catastrophic fire around the turn of the century, Moore hitched up his horse and went to see Joy Morton, company president and a tough competitor. Moore offered to add another shift in order to make extra barrels that he would provide to Morton, so that he could continue to serve his customers. The offer was accepted, with Morton saying, "I can't believe my competitor will help me." Later the favor was returned when Diamond Crystal was in need of additional plant space. Morton sold his competitor the buildings remaining on the old Thomson block that he had acquired

when the Thomson brothers' operation folded.

Another striking feature of Charles Moore's pioneering years as president of Diamond Crystal was the company's heavy use of advertising. A company-sponsored brochure from the time of Moore's retirement claimed that Diamond Crystal was "the only salt company that has consistently employed the great force of advertising to help the jobber and the dealer who handle its goods."

In the days before radio and television advertising, companies made extensive use of newspaper and magazine ads, point of sale and trade show displays, and printed booklets and brochures to advertise their products. In the Diamond Crystal archives are surviving examples of brochures dating from the first decade of the twentieth century. One is directed at the home consumer, one at the dairy segment of the food processing industry, and one—an early example of corporate image advertising—at a general audience. All three reflect the language and accepted advertising practices of their times. A glimpse at the rhetoric then in vogue is enough to make the modern customer appreciative of today's more regulated advertising.

The 1900 consumer brochure, complete with colorful reproductions of the round, red boxes of Diamond Crystal Shaker Salt and Cooking Salt, led off with a two-line headline stating: ALL ORDINARY SALT Is Dangerously Impure.

"You would not knowingly eat disease, would you? Yet that is what you do unknowingly with almost every mouthful of food if you use ordinary table salt, for all common salt contains Sulphate of Lime—Gypsum.

"That is dangerous because: It will not digest. It is insoluble. It cannot be assimilated. It cannot be expelled. It causes serious disorders of liver, kidneys and spleen. It forms gravel and gallstones.

"Shaker Salt is Not Ordinary Salt. It is Healthful Salt, a Production of the Twentieth Century." The booklet went on to extoll the advantages of the Alberger flake salt and of the modern pouring spout—a wooden spout



For many years, salt was packed by hand into cloth sacks, or pockets, which, in turn, were packed into barrels for shipment.

which was pressed into the top of the box and which could be stopped with a cork to keep out moisture.

An elaborate booklet directed at dairymen around 1900 featured an elegant drawing of a young woman out of classic mythology strewing precious salt upon the earth. Entitled "Just Salt," the publication promised to tell "How and where Diamond Crystal Salt is made and its purity, goodness and profitableness plainly told by the makers."

"Just Salt" went on to put the traditionally higher price for Diamond Crystal salt in perspective by comparing it to "ordinary cheap salt": "If you use ordinary cheap salt, you may flavor 4,000 pounds of butter for thirty cents less than DIAMOND CRYSTAL SALT would cost you. If the butter is not mottled, the grain is not

injured, the flavor not destroyed, the butter is not tainted, the salt does not wash out, and you have good luck all around, you will save (?) fifteen cents per ton on all the butter you make."

All this emphasis on purity and quality did not come out of the blue. The Alberger process gave the company distinct advantages in density, solubility, and purity. The process was still the most expensive way to make salt, though, so Diamond Crystal had to clearly state the added value of its products to its customers. The Shaker Salt Booklet noted that analyses by government chemists showed that practically all the salt on the market—except Shaker and Diamond Crystal—contained impurities that endangered health. "The same analyses show that we make Shaker and Diamond Crystal absolutely

THE HISTORY OF SALT

Camel caravans still wind through the African desert laden with huge slabs of salt pried from the floor of the Danakil Depression in Ethiopia. Only last century, 120 slabs would buy a bride. Centuries before, salt traders stacked their wares near ancient gold mines and withdrew into the night while the miners examined the salt and determined its price in gold. In the Sudan salt was scarce and, therefore, was truly worth its weight in gold.

Today the average American thinks of salt as an inexpensive and abundant commodity—if he or she thinks of it at all. In ancient times, however, salt was the stuff upon which much trade depended and upon which civilizations could rise or fall.

Until the advent of the industrial revolution, salt was used primarily for human nutrition, food preservation, and flavoring. As an essential commodity, it commanded the attention of governments and traders alike. Rome's major highway was called the Salt Road, Via Salaria, and soldiers who guarded the precious salt transported along the road from the coastal salt pans to Rome were paid *salarium*, or salary, for their work.

In China, salt was first taxed in 2200 B.C. by the Emperor Wu. The Chinese were drilling brine wells to depths of more than 1,000

feet hundreds of years before Marco Polo showed up. Some scholars maintain that natural gas found by the Chinese while drilling for brine was used as fuel for the evaporation of salt two centuries before the birth of Christ.

Mediterranean civilizations grew and flourished because of an abundance of food, water, and salt. At first salt was pried from ancient sea beds, dug from the earth where prehistoric deposits breached the surface, or scraped from deposits left by solar evaporation on the shores of saline lakes and springs or coastal plains. By the first century B.C. coastal solar evaporation sites ringed the Mediterranean, and salt was a prime trading commodity. As the coastal salt works declined, salt from inland African and European sources became even more valuable.

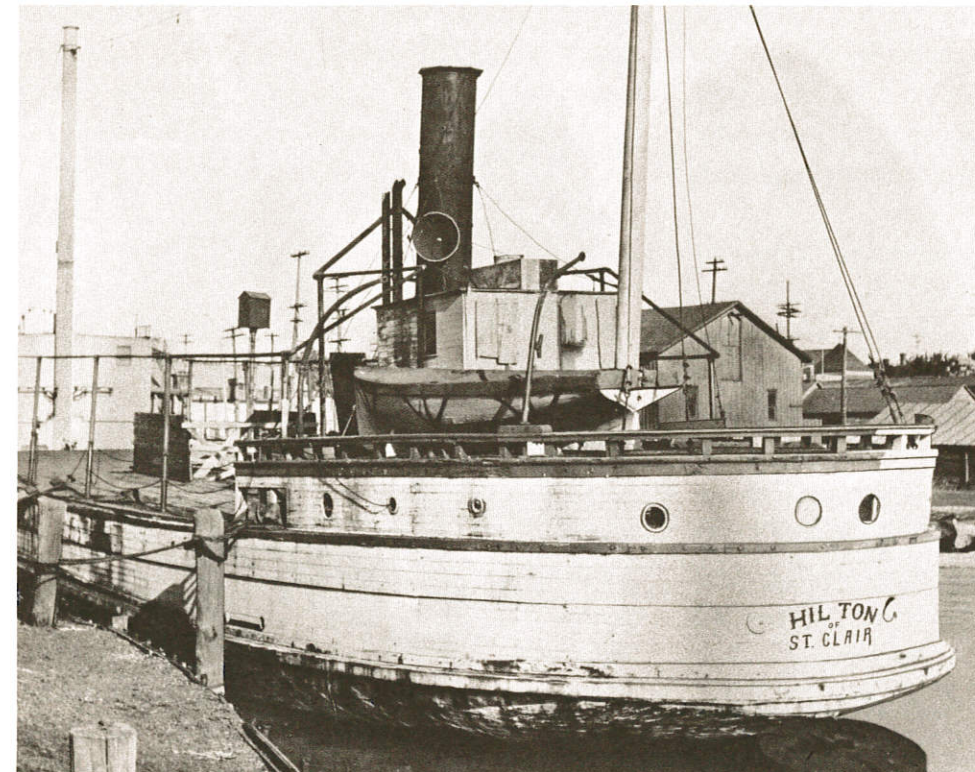
In the mountains some fifty miles from Salzburg (Salt Town), Austria, an underground salt deposit has been mined since at least the early Iron Age (1000 BC-100 AD). Many European rulers and governments established salt monopolies and imposed salt taxes, and salt smuggling often was punishable by death.

Aside from being a vital nutrient, salt was also essential for the tanning of leather and the preservation of food. Salt herring and other salt fish were a Euro-

pean staple food for centuries, and the iron men in wooden ships who set out to explore the world took with them foods preserved by salting or drying—the only effective means of food preservation until canning and refrigeration came along.

Early European settlers in the New World did not leave salt production to chance. Virginia colonists were producing solar salt from sea water as early as 1614. Colonists at Plymouth, Massachusetts, imported a saltmaker from England in 1624, but he was so incompetent that he managed to burn down his own salt works before producing any quantity of salt. In 1645 the Onondaga Indians of the Iroquois Nation were kind enough to show French explorers a salt spring on the shore of a lake near Syracuse, New York, and that area became the early center of salt production in America.

Today the search for salt takes most Americans no further than the local grocery store. Salt is cheap and abundant, but only about 5% of total domestic production is destined for the tables and kitchens of America. Once a staple in food preparation and preservation, salt also became a staple of modern chemistry and industry.



(Left) Until the advent of reliable rail transportation from St. Clair in the mid-1920s, much of Diamond Crystal's production was shipped by barge across the St. Clair river to the rail-head at Courtright, Ontario. The Hilton awaits loading.

(Below) In the days when grocers made house calls, they advertised Diamond Crystal Salt on the sides of their wagons and in their shop windows.



free from dangerous impurities—the only salt in the world above 99 per cent pure. In his official report the government chemist says of our salt: The claims of the Diamond Crystal Salt Company for exceptional purity and dryness are fully substantiated by the analytical result obtained . . .”

In 1910 the company commissioned Cy H. Davis to write a series of booklets, oddly titled “Men Who Have Done Things.” Twelfth and last in the series was a tribute to Charles F Moore, whose principles “in five words are ‘a square deal every time.’” The booklet recounts in dramatic style Moore’s insistence that his foreman drill another hundred feet in search of salt. After several additional hundred-foot pushes, salt was struck “deeper and better than any they had known about before.” Moore’s optimism and persistence in going “just 100 more feet” literally made the company possible. Davis aptly captured the character of his subject: “Charles Freeman Moore is a slender man under the medium height, mild in appearance and gentle in manner. One would scarcely pick him for a fighter, yet the incident of the well is typical. He has ‘kept on drilling’ all his life.”

Only two years after his retirement, Charles F Moore died. The Diamond Crystal board passed a resolution which read, in part: “From the organization of this company he made its concern his life’s work and by his unflagging and sovereign ability was largely instrumental in its maintenance and successful development . . . (He was) not only a wise business counselor but also a true friend who had the well-being of his associates at heart as but few men have.”

Charles Moore’s successor as president was well qualified to guide the company for its next sixteen years. Henry Whiting had been with the company from the beginning and had been company secretary after Mark Hopkins had sold out to the Moore family and others in 1887. He had been Moore’s right-hand man and had worked as assistant general manager of Diamond Crystal

operations until becoming company president. A dapper man with a Van Dyke beard, Whiting once, during the company’s lean years, had dutifully reported a fifteen-cent expenditure to buy a customer a milkshake.

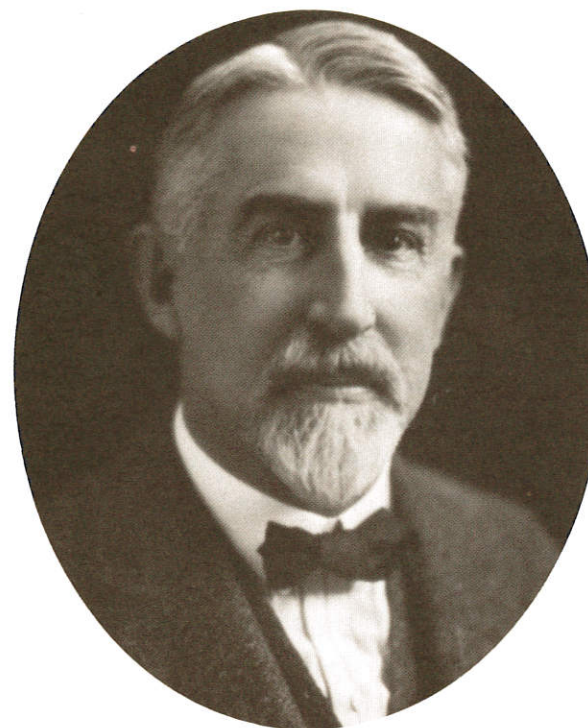
If the time of Charles Moore was one of foundation and growth, then the tenure of Henry Whiting was one of modernization and improvement. During his sixteen years as president, the company grew into a twentieth-century enterprise with new buildings, more modern equipment, updated sales and marketing programs, and scientific research and development efforts.

Early in Whiting’s presidency, Diamond Crystal added a chemist and an engineer to its staff to work on new and improved products and production methods. The fertile minds of several employees created inventions for improvements ranging from the complex to the seemingly simple. Steam systems, salt box closures, and manufacturing processes were all patented. Such technical improvements were in keeping with the company’s emphasis on technical excellence which dated to the original experiments with the Alberger process.

In 1911 a Diamond Crystal engineer, Charles L. Weil, received Patent 1,009,361 for a new method for feeding salt to livestock. As simple as it seems, the patent meant a great deal of business for Diamond Crystal. It was also the forerunner of the salt blocks made today and used throughout the livestock industry.

“The invention relates to improved means for providing cattle with the salt they require,” the patent said, “and its object is to dispense entirely with the customary method of supplying salt to cattle involving the use of iron receptacles in which lumps of rock salt are placed and to provide in lieu thereof a specially shaped briquet of salt which may be hung upon a wooden peg and rotate thereon as the salt is licked by the cattle.”

Today various minerals and nutrients are supplied to livestock through salt in their diets. Diamond Crystal is still very active in that area of the salt business, as would be expected from a company that was a pioneer in the



*(Left) Henry Whiting,
Diamond Crystal president
from 1910 until 1926.*

*(Below) The Diamond
Crystal plant in 1919.*



field of supplying salt for livestock.

But technical innovations within the company could not address one of the salt industry's oldest and most vexing problems: the difficulties and expenses of transporting the product. Many believed that the growth of the company was being retarded by the lack of adequate rail transportation from St. Clair. As early as 1906, the *St. Clair Republican* had noted, "There is only one drawback to even greater success of this industry and that is the inadequacy of our shipping facilities in St. Clair. However, the officials of the Michigan Central have practically agreed to extend their road from Lennox to Rochester within the course of the next two years, which would give St. Clair a through outlet, and be the means for building up the city more than any other thing that we know of."

Charles F. Moore, namesake and grandson of Diamond Crystal's founder, recalls that although the Michigan Central Railroad did come to St. Clair, not much salt was shipped over the line because the company had more direct access to its markets from the rail lines directly across the St. Clair River in Courtright, Ontario. "There were boats coming up from Detroit to Port Huron that stopped in St. Clair, but I don't think very much salt was shipped by them. In the early days we used to ship across to Courtright. There was difficulty, of course, in the winter getting the channel opened up so that the boats could operate. They kept a tug here for a good many years. Even before then they were able to haul salt on sleighs across the river. Every once in a while when trying to get the shipments out they would extend into the spring and the ice would get honeycombed and weak. I can remember my father telling about how they lost a team and a driver at one time."

Charles F. Moore also remembers riding on the ice-breaking tug as a child. "I used to ride the tug which was used to break up the river ice. It had a long, high bow and would ride up on the ice where its weight would break it up. There is a two-to-five mile current

in the St. Clair River and the tug would break the ice across, go down the Canadian bank, break the ice back across and come up the U.S. side. The current would drive the broken-out section downstream and under the solid ice below. If the upstream ice held, we would have open water. When the tug broke through the ice, the bow would slam down and it would wallow from side to side. It was pretty exciting for a youngster."

Things were also pretty exciting around the plant, too. New buildings, including a five-story screening and packing building, were constructed. The cooper shop, where barrels were made, employed forty-six people at its peak in 1916. The year before, 590,531 barrels of Alberger salt had been produced, and the company had done \$1,420,000 worth of business in its various product lines. The company was also expanding its sales and distribution. In 1913, Diamond Crystal had signed an agreement with the Consenza Company of London, England, to sell Shaker Salt there. The five-year agreement called for Diamond Crystal to reimburse Consenza for half of its advertising costs, not to exceed one shilling per case of Shaker Salt sold.

Several members of the Moore family worked for the company during the years Whiting was president. Reuben R. Moore was vice president of sales and Fred Moore, his brother, was works manager. Not only were the two sons of the founder active in operations, but also a grandson, Charles Moore, was working summers at the plant. That same Charles Moore was later to figure in one of the most important events in the history of Diamond Crystal, when he and other family members bought the company back from General Foods.

Company executives, such as chief engineer Weil, sales manager C.R. Walker, and advertising manager Gordon W. Kingsbury, deserve much credit for the advances made during that time by Diamond Crystal. Company leaders, however, cannot bring success to a company alone; for this, they depend on the loyalty and dedication of their employees. It is purely coincidental,

of course, that Diamond Crystal was founded in the same year that the Statue of Liberty was dedicated, but a look at the employment records from 1919 shows that the employees of the company formed a melting pot, just as the American populace did. (Records of nationality are seldom kept today, but such records were required during World War I.) Of the 373 employees, seventy-two (about one-fifth of the workforce) were foreign-born. These employees or their parents came from Scotland, England, Germany, Canada, Belgium, Ireland, Russia, the Isle of Man, Norway, Wales, Austria, Sweden, and France.

Over the years, the company has been very conscious of the contributions its employees have made to its success. As early as 1913, the board granted two weeks extra pay as a Christmas bonus for all employees with more than one year's service "to promote loyalty and continuity of service."

By 1919, twenty-seven employees had been with the company twenty years; eleven of those had gone to work for Diamond Crystal between 1886 and 1890. James Powrie, heater man John Roundhill, cooperage foreman Robert Randall, laborer Henry Lively, and carpenter Fred Scheuricker had been with Diamond Crystal since the earliest times. Scheuricker had worked there since the company was founded, before the start of production. Even today, in a more mobile age, Diamond Crystal has more than its share of long-term employees and a good number of second and third generation employees.

Over the years, Diamond Crystal has published several newsletters and bulletins for its family of employees. Among the earliest was a four-page quarterly newsletter titled "Diamond Crystal Salt Maker." In addition to news about the plant and employees, the paper also published special feature articles, such as one which warned against the use of credit. "Credit is nothing more than gambling with the future," the article warned. However, the 1920s ushered in a period of economic growth in the country, fueled in large part by consumer credit spending.

Diamond Crystal profited from the good economic times. Plant improvements included the company's first block press, a tunnel under the highway from its offices to the factory, and an all-brick cooper shop. In 1926, reliable rail transportation finally came to St. Clair with the Port Huron and Detroit Railroad built by the Handy Brothers of Bay City, Michigan. About that time, Diamond Crystal landed its first major national account, the A & P grocery chain. Among the hundreds of other accounts were fifty-six large flour mills which used Diamond Crystal exclusively.

The company's traditional commitment to quality had become the focus of their business strategy and the basis of their customer loyalty. Bakers, canners, and dairymen were more than willing to provide testimonials for Diamond Crystal. The Igleheart Brothers, producers of Perfect Biscuit and Swans Down flours, wrote, "We believe that there is no better salt on the market at the present time . . . Although we have been offered contracts on salt at \$1 to \$2 the ton less than the present price we are paying you, we do not care to make any changes, as we are getting the results we desire . . ." The makers of Tillamook Cheese said, ". . . we have paid you higher prices than other salt could be had for because we want only the very best."

The Postum Cereal Company, makers of Grape-Nuts, Postum Cereal, and Post Toasties, testified, "We are glad to say that Diamond Crystal Fine Salt has been used exclusively at our Battle Creek factory for about ten years because we have always found it of the highest quality and your service under all conditions has been in keeping with the quality of your product."

This last testimonial carried with it a touch of irony. The praise of Diamond Crystal came in 1924. The following year, Postum made its first acquisition when it bought Jell-O. Other acquisitions followed and, in 1929, the company name was officially changed to General Foods. That same year, it also became the parent company of Diamond Crystal Salt Company.