

The Morton Salt Company was the largest producer of salt in the United States in 1938, when its new corporate headquarters was completed on this city block site. The four-story building was constructed out of the granite of the nearby Madison Park mansion and included a unique on-the-hour lunch room. The building's design featured early 20th-century modernism and Art Deco influences, as evidenced in its horizontal bands of windows and spandrels. It was a temporary modernism, such as the nearby Chicago-based firm of Graham, Ballantine, Postel and Spangenberg, which was the successor firm of Oak Ridge and Johnson. One of the Morton Building's original modernist panels was incorporated into the newly constructed building on this site at the corner Post level.

The history of the Morton Salt Company dates to 1848, when Richmond & Co. became the western sales agent for the salt manufacturers of New York State. Salt was shipped from the Onondaga Lake region to Chicago on its boats via the Erie Canal, Great Lakes, and the Chicago River. In 1885, Joy Morton took over one of the Richmond Company's successor firms, which by 1910 was incorporated as the Morton Salt Company.

A vast fleet of ships transported salt from Morton's Michigan plants to cities on the Great Lakes. The company dominated Chicago's salt trade from its warehouse complex located first near the mouth of the Chicago River, and later, its North Branch. The river served as a vital artery for the Morton Salt Company and countless other diverse industries clustered along its banks, propelling Chicago's prosperity as an early manufacturing powerhouse and the Midwest's premier distribution center.