

Avery Island, Louisiana

Avery Island is located on the Louisiana Gulf Coast. As the oldest working salt mine in the United States, Avery Island has a long and interesting history. Commercial salt making began there in 1791, and the mine played an important strategic role in both the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

A shaft that was sunk in 1898 is still in operation today, along with the original steam engine that was purchased — used — in 1898 to run the hoist. The engine is rumored to have once powered a Mississippi River paddleboat, and its actual age is unknown. Mining is currently located at the 1,300- and 1,600-foot levels.

The mine at Avery Island is located on top of a salt dome formation, which is much different from the sedimentary formations found in the northern United States. A typical salt dome measures a mile or more in diameter and 30,000 to 40,000 feet in depth. The salt found in dome formations is some of the purest rock salt in the world — about 99 percent pure.

Because dome formations consist of solid salt, ceilings in the mine can reach more than 90 feet high. By contrast, mine ceilings in sedimentary formations like those found at Cleveland and Lansing are typically no higher than 20 feet.

Cargill Deicing Technology has operated the mine at Avery Island since 1997. The mine is owned by Avery Island Inc., a company formed by the Avery and McIlhenny families. The McIlhennys are known worldwide as makers of the famous TABASCO® sauce.

