

The site storage business has been around as long as tractor trailers themselves. Some of the older rental companies have been around since the late 1960's.

Until the mid to late 80's most units used for storage were old tractor trailers. They provided a large amount of storage and were easy to move. Although they were the simplest form of storage they had their disadvantages. Maintenance and difficulty of entering and exiting the trailers (most are about 4 feet off the ground) made them less than ideal for some situations.

By the early 80's intermodal containers started to become readily available from shipping lines and leasing companies. They offered advantages over the trailer such as ground level access and less overhead in maintenance. However, delivery was an issue as there was not a good way to get them from a flatbed trailer to the ground. In the early days, a lot of rental companies would hire cranes or wreckers to meet the at the delivery location which increased the cost of delivery to the customer. Delivery trailers (rollbacks) would come into play overtime and today there are several different types of trailers specifically designed for the delivery and pick up of intermodal containers.

By the early and mid 90's, with the help of the growth of Walmart, site storage companies grew at an incredible pace. Some Walmart stores would take as many as 125 storage containers for retail season from August through December.

Today Walmarts are no longer the golden egg of the site storage business. Continued education of the general public as to the advantages of storage containers along with new construction and continued retail business, the site storage industry continues to grow.

Containers were not the invention or brain child of one man, many individuals and companies had experimented and used different types of containerization since the late 18th century. However it wasn't until Malcom McLean loaded a converted tanker with 58 loaded 35 foot containers in 1956 that modern containers were born.

Malcom Purcell McLean (born "Malcolm"; but late in life he changed his given name to its historic traditional Scottish spelling) (November 14, 1913 – May 25, 2001), born in Maxton, North Carolina, was an American entrepreneur, often called "the father of containerization". In 1956, he developed the metal shipping container, which replaced the traditional break bulk method of handling dry goods

and revolutionized the transport of goods and cargo worldwide. He later founded Sea Land Inc., one of the pioneers in the intermodal cargo transport business.^[1] McLean was named "Man of the Century" by the International Maritime Hall of Fame.

With only a high school education, McLean pumped gas at a service station near his hometown and saved enough money by 1934 to buy a second-hand truck for \$120. He and his sister, Clara McLean, and brother, Jim McLean, founded McLean Trucking Co. Based out of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, McLean Trucking started out hauling empty tobacco barrels – with Malcom as one of the drivers.

From that beginning, with his single pickup truck, he built it into the second-largest trucking company in the US, with 1770 trucks and 32 terminals. On January 6, 1958 (after McLean had sold his interest in the company), McLean Trucking became the first trucking company in the nation to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

In 1937, McLean was delivering lumber from North Carolina to New Jersey. While sitting on a dock waiting for his truck to be unloaded onto a ship, he was watching other trucks being unloaded. Every crate on every truck had to be unloaded, put in a sling and hoisted up and then down into the hold of the ship. There, more longshoremen took it off the sling and made sure it was properly stowed. This method is called "break-bulk shipping". It was slow and labor intensive, and there was lots of pilferage and accidents. McLean first conceived the idea of using the entire truck trailer itself to load onto and off of a ship. McLean could not develop the idea further because the Interstate Commerce Commission did not, at the time, allow truckers to own shipping companies.

But in 1955, McLean sold his trucking company for \$25 million, moved to New York and bought Pan-Atlantic Steamship Company for \$7 million.

McLean secured a bank loan for \$22 million and in January 1956 bought two World War II T-2 tankers, which he converted to carry containers on and under deck. McLean oversaw the construction of wooden shelter decks, known as Mechano decking. This was a common practice in World War II for the carriage of oversized cargo, such as aircraft. It took several months to refit the ships, construct containers to carry on and below the vessels' decks and design trailer chassis to allow removable containers.

In some ways, McLean's vision was nothing new. Beginning in 1929, Seatrain Lines had carried railroad boxcars on its sea vessels to transport goods between New York and Cuba. Likewise, the idea of putting truck trailers on railroad flatcars was a method of moving less-than-railroad carload shipments economically. This integrated transport concept held the hope of competing with trucks, which were taking more and more of this business from the railroads. From 1926 to 1947, the Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railway carried motor carrier vehicles and shippers' vehicles loaded on flatcars between Milwaukee and Chicago. In the mid-1930s, the Chicago Great Western Railway Company and then the New Haven railroad began piggy-back service limited to their own railroad. By 1953, the CB&Q, the Eastern Illinois and the Southern Pacific railroads had joined the innovation. Most cars were surplus flatcars equipped with new decks. By 1955, an additional 25 railroads had begun some form of piggy-back trailer service. What was new about McLean's innovation was the idea of using large containers that were never opened in transit between shipper and consignee and that were transferable on an intermodal basis, among trucks, ships and railcars.

Using these concepts, McLean initially favored the construction of "trailerships"—taking trailers from large trucks and stowing them in a ship's cargo hold. This method of stowage, referred to as roll-on/roll-off, was not adopted because of the large waste in potential cargo space onboard the vessel, known as broken stowage. Instead, he modified his original concept into loading just the containers, not the chassis, onto the ships, hence the designation containership or "box" ship.

On April 26, 1956, with 100 invited dignitaries on hand, one of the converted tankers, the *SS Ideal-X* (informally dubbed the "SS Maxton" after McLean's hometown in North Carolina), was loaded and left the Port of Newark, New Jersey, for the Port of Houston, Texas, carrying 58 35-foot containers, along with a regular load of liquid cargo. As the *Ideal-X* left the Port of Newark, Freddy Fields, a top official of the International Longshoremen's Association, was asked what he thought of the newly-fitted container ship. Fields replied, "I'd like to sink that son of a bitch." McLean flew to Houston to be on hand when the ship safely docked.

In 1956, most cargo was loaded and unloaded by hand by longshoremen.^[2] Hand loading a ship cost \$5.86 a ton at that time. Using containers, it cost only 16 cents a ton to load a ship, a 36-fold savings.

In the mid-1950s, mechanization overall was entering the shipping industry as operators tried to increase profit margins. The mechanization they had in mind, however, was larger single loads, pallet-ization, mechanical conveyor belts and other ways of using more machinery to move break bulk cargoes. McLean's container concept moved the mechanization movement ahead by a quantum leap.

In 1957, the first full-celled container ship, the Sea-Land Gateway City, began regular service between New York, Florida and Texas.

McLean's operation was profitable by 1961 and he kept adding routes and buying bigger ships.

Pan-Atlantic became Sea-Land Service, Inc in 1960. In 1964, McLean opened a 101 acre port at Elizabeth, New Jersey, to handle even more container traffic. The development of the container market was slow until the late 1960s. Many ports did not have the cranes to lift containers on and off ships and change was slow to come to an industry steeped in tradition. Moreover, unions resisted an idea that threatened their very livelihood.

As America's involvement in the Vietnam War grew in the 1960s, McLean profited from carrying cargo to Southeast Asia for US military operations. Ultimately, it took McLean's success in supplying U.S. forces in Vietnam to persuade the world of the container potential.

To achieve the dramatic reductions in labor and dock servicing time, McLean was vigilant about standardization. His efforts to increase efficiency resulted in standardized container designs that were awarded patent protection. Believing that standardization was also the path to overall industry growth, McLean chose to make his patents available by issuing a royalty-free lease to the Industrial Organization for Standardization (ISO).

The move toward greater standardization helped broaden the possibilities for intermodal transportation. By the end of the 1960s, SeaLand Industries had 27,000 trailer-type containers, 36 trailer ships and access to over 30 port cities.

As the advantages to McLean's container system became apparent, competitors quickly developed. They built bigger ships, larger gantry cranes and more sophisticated containers. Sea Land needed cash to stay competitive. McLean turned to Reynolds Tobacco Company, a company he knew from his trucking company days when his trucks transported Reynolds cigarettes across the US.

Reynolds agreed in January 1969 to buy Sea Land for \$530 million in cash and stock. McLean made \$160 million personally ^[3] and got a seat on the company's board. To carry out the purchase, Reynolds formed a holding company, named R.J. Reynolds Industries, Inc., which bought Sea Land in May 1969.

Under Reynolds, Sea Land's profits were intermittent. By the end of 1974, Reynolds had put more than \$1 billion into Sea-Land, building huge terminals in New Jersey and Hong Kong and adding to its fleet of containerships.

Sea-Land's biggest expense was fuel, so in 1970, RJR bought the American Independent Oil Co., better known as Aminoil, for \$56 million. RJR put millions into oil exploration, trying to get Aminoil to the size to compete in the world exploration market.

In 1974, R.J. Reynolds Industries had its best year. Sea Land's earnings increased nearly 10 times, to \$145 million. Aminoil's earnings soared to \$86.3 million. Dun & Bradstreet, the financial-ratings firm, named RJR one of its five best-managed companies in America. But in 1975, Sea-Land's earnings dropped sharply, along with Aminoil's.

Increasingly frustrated with the conservative culture within Reynolds, McLean gave up his Reynolds board seat in 1977 and cut ties with the company.

In June 1984, RJ Reynolds Industries, Inc. spun-off Sea-Land Corporation to shareholders, as an independent, publicly held company, with stock trading on the New York Stock Exchange. Sea-Land achieved the highest revenues and earnings in its 28-year history.

In September 1986, Sea-Land Corporation merged with CSA Acquisition Corp., a subsidiary of CSX Corporation. Sea-Land Corporation common stock was exchanged for \$28 per share, cash.

Sea Land's international services were sold to Maersk in 1999 and the combined company was named Mærsk Sealand, which, in 2006, became known simply as Mærsk Line.