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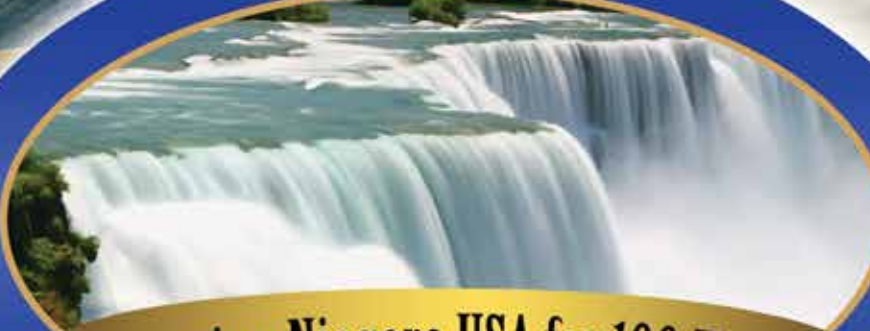
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CONGRATULATIONS, I.B.E.W. LOCAL 237!

Let me begin our celebration of I.B.E.W. Local 237's 100th Year Anniversary with some thoughts of Nikola Tesla, who started as an apprentice to Thomas Edison. Like me, you may have been impressed as a child by his larger-than-life statue in the Niagara Reservation Park, just feet away from the mighty Falls. The first hydroelectric power plant in the world, powered by Tesla's theories on AC electricity, was located less than a mile from where we sit today in Niagara Falls, New York. This innovation has made life so different for all of us – all of the modern conveniences of today's world would not have been possible without him. Nikola Tesla started the electrification of the world!

International Brotherhood. As I applaud my local, let it be known that without the strength of the International, so much of what we have done and what we plan to do would not be possible. We thank it for being such an amazing power that has led the way in all aspects of our business.

Political Activism. Last year, when we decided that we needed to become more politically involved, 18 of our members became Democratic Committee Members. One member ran for the Niagara Falls School Board, and he was the highest vote-getter in a race with two incumbents! Then there was the Niagara County Legislature race, where three of our members stood up to the challenge to run for office. Once again, we joined together to promote our candidates, and against impossible odds, one of our members was elected Niagara County Legislator. This was all accomplished in one political year!

Community Service. I am so proud that when our members do volunteer work for the community, they always come through with flying colors. I will not mention all of the things we do, but it almost seems that since our presence is a constant, the community has come to expect that we will step up year after year. This is OK with our members, as we feel that this is our community – a place where our families and friends live, worship, work and spend, and we want to give back as much as we can, whether it be our time, our talents or our treasure – or all three.

Trained Professionals. Our training is awesome, and it is getting better and better. So, if any of your children would like to become electricians, now is the time to embark on one of the greatest careers that there is. Almost all of our training is conducted by our own journeymen wiremen. Who better to teach than the journeymen in the trenches?

My Appreciation. I would like to thank the 100th Anniversary Committee Members who helped to put our celebration event together. A special thanks goes out to our local's Office Staff, whom I could not do without. What a very different bunch, but they work great as a team, so I would like to thank each one of them ... you are the best. I would also like to recognize our retired members who paved the way for our success, and personally say "thank you" to the Brothers and Sisters who welcomed me in and trained me, beginning in 1983, helping me to fulfill a dream that I had since my electrical training began in vocational high school and college.

Our Future is Strengthened by Our Past. Attending all of the events held by Local 237 through the years, it is easy to see how we made it through the first 100 years. Everyone cares and watches out for each other. When we run an activity, members and families jump in to help and are so loyal. It is amazing the balance that is achieved with everything that we do, especially when a member needs help or training, or even in politics. It is with confidence that I can say that I.B.E.W. Local 237 will be strong for many more years to come, ready to serve each other and our community.

Russell G. Quarantello

Business Manager, I.B.E.W. Local No. 237



This book was proudly produced by

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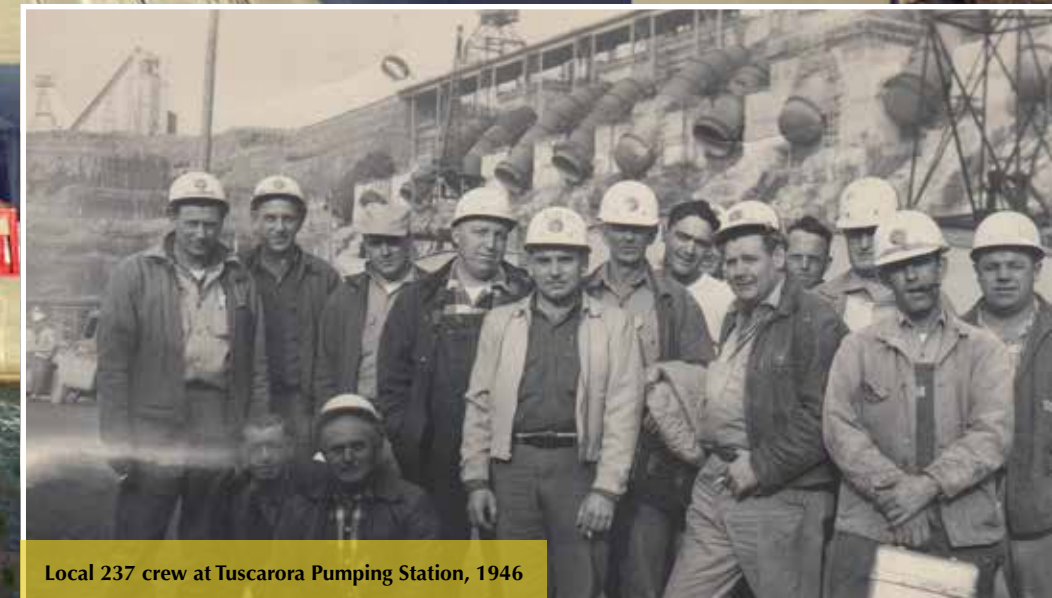
POWERING NIAGARA USA FOR 100 YEARS

The 100-Year History of Local No. 237, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers



“In 1914, a group of men, recognizing the need for a union in (the) Niagara County area, applied for a new charter for the area. The International Office granted this charter and Local No. 237, I.B.E.W., was in operation.”

I.B.E.W. Local 237 50th Anniversary Celebration Program



Local 237 crew at Tuscarora Pumping Station, 1946

Well before I.B.E.W. Local 237 was chartered on July 24, 1914, to serve the Niagara Falls area, a group of wiremen, linemen, telephone men and utility employees in the city met several times just before the turn of the 20th Century to discuss applying for a charter from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Eventually, they were organized and chartered on August 12, 1899, as **I.B.E.W. Local 58**.

The following year, that local's members were already working their first large job, a project for the Shredded Wheat Co., which employed 100 electrical workers. By Labor Day 1900, Local 58 had grown from its original membership of 11 to 70 members (despite having to face the “labor-crushing monopoly” Bell Telephone Co., as the Central Labor Council of Niagara Falls described in its Labor Day program.)

But in 1908, “due to a dual movement in the International and perhaps the weakness of the local, the

International Office removed the charter from Niagara Falls,” according to the Local 237 50th Anniversary program. The International officially declared Local 58 defunct in August 1910.

It was during that time that a large number of locals – disenchanted with bickering between wiremen and lineman and provoked by disappointed office-seekers, among other causes – split from the I.B.E.W. in 1908 and formed a competing faction. Refusing to recognize sitting President Frank J. McNulty and Secretary Peter W. Collins as the true officers of the I.B.E.W., the “**Reid-Murphy Split**” locals instead elected J.J. Reid as their president and J.W. Murphy as their secretary.

After two I.B.E.W. conventions were held in 1911, a court decision in February 1912 declared the actions of the seceding locals illegal. In the end, the I.B.E.W. 12th convention in Boston in 1913 included most but not all of the splinter locals, some of which had dissolved.



A New Local for Niagara

By 1914, a group of electrical workers had again recognized the need for a union in the Niagara County area and reapplied for a charter with the I.B.E.W., which was granted to them on July 24 to Local 237. The local's charter members "were quick to organize and, before long, a strong union had a foothold on the Niagara frontier," the local's 50th Anniversary program recounted.

No. 237, Niagara Falls, N. Y.—Financial Secretary, Roland Shumway, 1511 Pierce Ave.

Journal of Electrical Workers, August 1914

Initially meeting every Friday night in **Lierch Hall at 136 11th Street in Niagara**, but only every other Thursday by 1916, Local 237 over its first year and a half "was given quite a boost by about 40 new members," the I.B.E.W. *Electrical Worker* magazine reported in January that year. However, the local did not want linemen, so Local 45 of Buffalo took them in, according to the *Worker*.

(b) No. 237, Niagara Falls, N. Y.—Meets every Friday night at 8:00 o'clock at Lierch Hall, 136 11th St. President, Rowland Shumway, 1511 Pierce Ave.; Vice President, Geo. Ferringan, Lockport, N. Y.; Financial Secretary, Maurice Doyle, 307 10th St.; Recording Secretary, H. F. McMillan, 312 8th St.; Treasurer, Maurice Hoyle, 307 10th St.

Journal of Electrical Workers, December 1914

International Vice President Gustave M. Bugniazet, credited with helping the local increase its membership during those initial years, also assisted a Local 237 committee in negotiations for a contract with employers in Niagara Falls in early 1916. By May, the local signed an agreement that provided an increase of 5 cents per hour.

Soon after, the local also reached a settlement with the Samuel Austin Construction Co., which had the contract for additions at the Hooker Electro Chemical Plant at Niagara Falls. That agreement affected 86

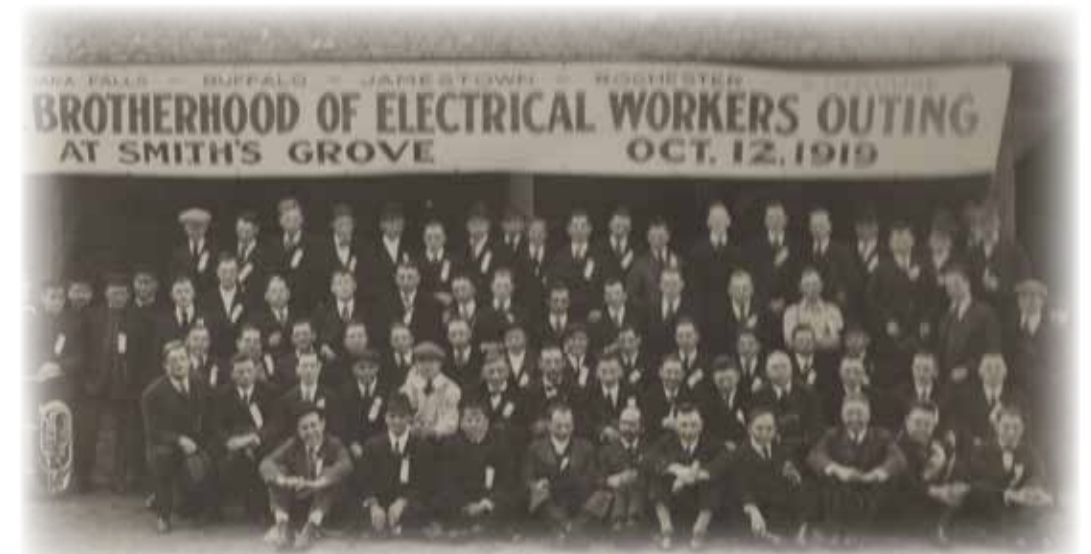
I.B.E.W. Local 237 Charter Members

Charles Beckett
Roland L. Shumway
Maurice Doyle
Harley McMillan
Allen Scott
Roy Durkin
George Finnigan
James Rosa
Floyd Van Norwick
Thomas Burke

electrical workers employed on the job, the May 1916 *Electrical Worker* reported, giving them an increase of 5 cents per hour, a reduction in their work days from nine to eight hours, time-and-a-half for overtime and double-time for Sundays and holidays.

Local 237 was not averse to sharing its good fortunes, too. For example, when Local 61 in Los Angeles put out a call for funds to keep it afloat during a strike that year, the Niagara brothers responded in kind with a \$5 donation.

Before year's end, the local also adjusted grievances – with the assistance of legendary I.B.E.W. Organizer Mike Boyle (who would become Sixth District vice president in 1930) – with the Hooker Chemical Co., the Alkali Co., Austin Co. and the Brass Co., establishing union-shop conditions with each.



(continued after next page)

Tesla Captures the Power of The Falls

Nikola Tesla and Niagara Falls will be forever linked by the legacy of electrical power – right in I.B.E.W. Local 237’s own backyard just years before the local was founded. It was Tesla who designed the world’s first hydro-electric power plant for Niagara Falls, and it was Tesla and George Westinghouse who built the plant in 1895 right in Niagara Falls.

It was here where Tesla “started the electrification of the world” with his creation of the Niagara Falls Power Plant to harness power from the Falls and generate long-distance electricity.

The plant, which originally consisted of three generators set up at 5,000 horsepower each to produce 2,200 volts, was the product of Tesla’s inventions to utilize alternating currents. It first sent power about 22 miles from Niagara to Buffalo beginning at midnight on November 16, 1896. Niagara’s energy later reached about 400 miles away to power New York City’s electric lights, and by 1905, the plant was producing and providing one-tenth of the electrical power in the United States.



The interior of Power House No. 1 of the Niagara Falls Power Co. Plant, which was designed by Nikola Tesla, circa 1899. (Photo courtesy of Tesla Memorial Society of New York.)

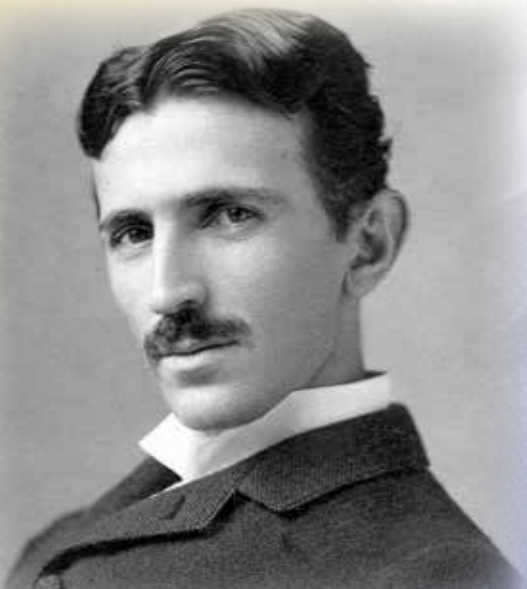
left him unemployed, but not long after, investors helped form the Tesla Electric Co. in Manhattan, where in 1887 he developed an induction motor that ran on alternating current.

“Tesla’s alternating current work put him firmly on the ‘AC’ side of the so-called ‘War of Currents,’ an electrical standards battle waged between Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse,” according to “War of the Currents – An Update,” an article in the April 2012 Transmission & Distribution World.

But a short time later, it was Tesla who made his first-ever visit to Niagara Falls in 1896 to view the ongoing construction of his AC powerhouse.

He passed away on January 7, 1943, at age 86.

The monument to Nikola Tesla on Goat Island in Niagara Falls, which was sculpted by Frano Kršinic and delivered to its location in 1976.



Nikola Tesla in 1890 at age 34.

Born in 1856 in what is now Croatia, Tesla moved to New York in 1884 and began working for Thomas Edison at his Edison Machine Works. Tesla’s commitment to alternating current (over Edison’s direct current) soon

The local’s promising start was not without its concerns, however. A February 1918 I.B.E.W. *Journal* column from Local 237 Recording Secretary W.R. Potter warned, “Everything has been moving along pretty quiet in this burg the last year.” While the local had recently gained about 20 new members, as many as 75 men remained “on the outside working in the factories, which are all open shops except one.”

30

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Name J. Behrens Age 25 Initiated April 15 1914 Card No. 320411
450.00

Dr.

On the first of each month, charge on this side the monthly dues in advance, and all assessments or fines when levied.

Cr.

On this side enter all dues and assessments when paid, with exact date and full amount of payment, all on one line.

REMARKS

19	22	Dues	Assessments	Fines	Totals	19	Date of Payment	Amount Paid	Totals
Balance Due, \$						Balance to Credit, \$			
JAN.					2.90	Jan 12/12		8.70	✓
FEB.					2.90				SK
MAR.					2.90				
Total Charges for Quarter, \$8.70						Total Payments for Quarter, \$			
APR.					2.90	4-13		8.70	OK ✓
MAY					2.90				
JUNE					2.90				
Total Charges for Quarter, \$						Total Payments for Quarter, \$			

Local 237 dues ledger, 1923

July 12 8.70 612 ✓

The local did have five contractors in Niagara that were all on its “fair list,” but Potter was still left to ponder, “The men working in the factories are slow to get awake that the I.B. is the place for them if they want to better their working conditions.”



Working card, 1925

Flourishing After a Slow Start

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Local 237 virtually went dark outside of Niagara Falls; it did not have a representative attend any of the I.B.E.W. international conventions during the ‘20s (no conventions were held in the ‘30s), nor did it communicate within the *Journal* during either decade – although it was participating with the Niagara-area Building Trades Council on some level.

The local was meeting every second and fourth Friday of each month at the Trades & Labor Hall in the early 1920s and by the end of the decade was gathering in the Orioles’ Hall every second and fourth Tuesday. But by 1939, after the end of the Great Depression, the local was only meeting once per month – every fourth Thursday at the Labor Hall in Niagara.

A Local 237 delegate, Business Manager Harry S. Jordan, did attend the I.B.E.W. Convention in 1941 in St. Louis, but by that

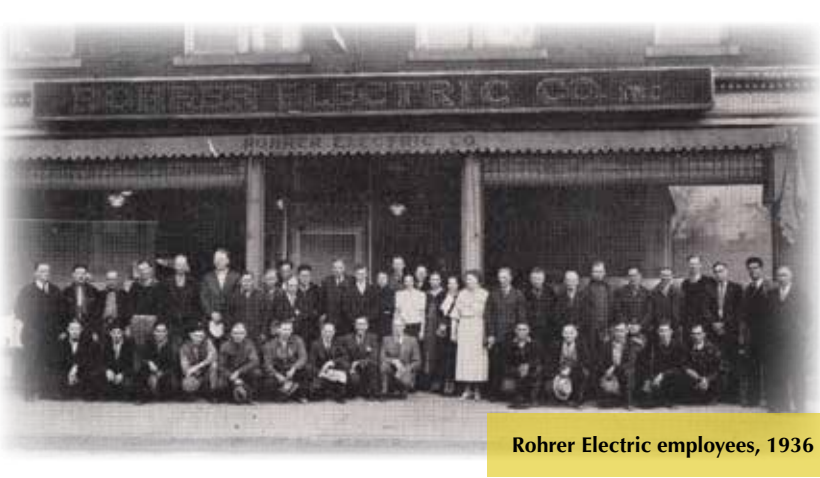
time the local’s membership had dwindled to just 37 electricians. However, with World War II on the horizon, the local was on the cusp of a period of solid growth and increasing stability.

To begin, the local signed a new agreement with the Associated Electrical Contractors of Niagara Falls in 1944, which took effect on May 1 and would



continue year-to-year “unless changed or terminated.” The contract itemized 8-hour workdays and 40-hour workweeks and provided for double-time pay for overtime and work on six holidays. It set pay rates at \$1.75 an hour for journeymen, \$1.90 an hour for cable splicers, \$1 an hour for fourth-year apprentices and 70 cents an hour for first-year apprentices.

The very next year, **I.B.E.W. Marine Local 509 of Lockport, New York, which had**



Rohrer Electric employees, 1936

winter,” as he ticked off a list of jobs that included work at the Dupont, Hooker and Mathieson Chemical plants. That year, the local sent two delegates to the I.B.E.W. 22nd Convention in San Francisco, as its membership had swelled to 151 electrical workers.

(The San Francisco convention was arguably one of the more “colorful” – as Jordan later remembered it – in the union’s history, checkered with “heated” election campaigns including D. W. Tracy’s win over incumbent International President Ed J. Brown for the top I.B.E.W. position. The convention authorized the 20-cent assessment as a permanent part of the dues apportioned to the Pension Benefit Fund; increased the benefit in the Pension Plan from \$40 to \$50 a month; and started the ball rolling on National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) contractors establishing the National Electrical Benefit Fund.

The 1946 convention also created the “BA” membership, so



Harp A.S.B.G., circa 1943

been chartered on March 24, 1915, was amalgamated into Local 237 on October 11, 1945. “This step brought many new faces into the fold of Local No. 237 and created a bigger and stronger union,” the Local 237 50th Anniversary program proclaimed.

Jordan was then able to report during the local’s 1946 meeting, “It looks like a good



Local 237 crew at Fort Niagara, 1945



Harrison Radiator crew, circa 1946

thereafter the I.B.E.W. offered three types of membership: “A,” “B” and “BA;” and actions at the convention led to the creation of two new vice presidential districts, the 11th and 12th.)

The good times continued through the end of the decade, with Jordan stating during Local 237’s September 23, 1948, meeting that there was “lots of work” and not enough men to fill the jobs. The local was then compelled to request that any of its members working outside of the jurisdiction report to the 237 hall for work and to apply for a traveling card.

In that climate, Local 237 grew to over 160 members by 1950.

Good Times & Strong Growth

Throughout the 1950s, the Local 237 employment situation was consistently positive as there was “plenty of work,” particularly with the many chemical plants operating within Niagara Falls, such as Stouffer Chemical, and especially towards the end of the decade when the massive **Niagara Power Project** commenced construction. During the initial years of the ‘50’s, work in Buffalo (which “in most cases is more attractive than work locally,” Business Manger Jordan reported during the local’s September 28, 1950, meeting) provided a good source of jobs, too.

Also in 1950, Local 237 began to further add to its membership by organizing shop men in Niagara, beginning with those at Steele Electric.

A new supplemental agreement that began January 1, 1952, brought journeymen wages to \$2.90 per hour and paid apprentices \$1.20 during their first 1,000 hours and

up to \$2.30 per hour for their final (10th) 1,000 hours.

Local 237 Press Secretary William Parkhill would report in the April 1952 *Journal*, “Our local is growing as the demands of the work and territory increase.” While many industrial plants had begun to use the local’s services, its members were also being employed on the \$182 million hydropower development across the river in Canada, where vast industrialization was occurring and, consequently, the need for greater quantities of power was increasing.

South of the river, employers such as Niagara Mohawk Power Co. and Buffalo Electric Co. were keeping Local 237 electrical workers busy, too. By 1953, the local’s members were also finding ample work wiring new schools and revamping existing schools in and around Niagara County.

The local then gained one of the outstanding benefits it provides its members when it negotiated for a **Welfare Plan** that began in May 1954. That original plan provided sound hospitalization coverage to each member of the union in good standing, with contractors initially paying 7-1/2 cents per hour per man into the fund. *(Through the years, benefits added to the Welfare Plan have included a dental plan, an eyeglass program and a hospitalization plan for retired members and their dependents.)*



Local 237 members, 1946

The work in the area remained “excellent” into 1956, by which time Mathieson Chemical was building a new plant along the Niagara River. The following year, Local 237 even had another classification group within its membership, the motor winders.

(continued after next page)

Training: Ensuring a Best-Prepared Workforce



By 1950, Local 237 was providing a five-year apprentice-training course, whereas most locals had only three- or four-year programs, as the local felt that the new five-year plan would overcome many of the “difficulties” of the four-year apprenticeship. Additionally, the local believed it would be “a much better selling point to the public to show that it takes at least five years training to become a qualified craftsman.”



From the beginning, Local 237 has had a very rigorous apprentice training program, which has improved throughout the years in order to help ensure its members are outstanding tradesmen.

In 1946, the local coordinated its apprenticeship with the New York State Apprentice Council and Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, and with the added cooperation of the Niagara Falls School System, the local further improved its apprenticeship training program and standards. Two years later in 1948, the local held its first annual apprentice graduation dinner.



By the 1960s, the local was also participating in a Joint Apprenticeship Committee consisting of three union members and three representatives from its signatory electrical contractors. The group’s primary purpose was to enforce the apprenticeship program’s rigid scholastic and mechanical requirements and keep its standards high.

As Local 237 turns 100 years old in 2014, training for its apprentices and journeymen remains a priority. To that end, the local partners with its signatory contractors of the Western New York State Chapter, National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), to operate the **Niagara County Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (J.A.T.C.)**.

The committee works with the National Electrical J.A.T.C. to provide state-of-the-art, standardized training for new apprentices and continuing education for journeymen members of Local 237.



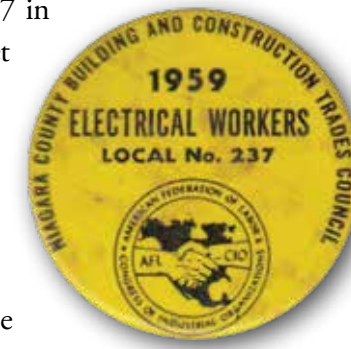
Local 237 Apprentice Class, 1950

With the start of the **Niagara Power Project** construction in 1957, which included building of the Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Station, Local 237 members would have a nearly insatiable source of employment right in their own backyards for several years to come. During the project, which would end in 1963, over 6,000 traveling I.B.E.W. brothers would work in the jurisdiction at one phase or another, with a peak of about 960 electricians employed at one time.

Feeling the effects of its growth, Local 237 in 1958 purchased a building at 445 3rd Street in Niagara Falls to be the “nerve center” of the union. It would house the local’s records and serve as the office of its business agents and the Welfare Plan Department of its hospitalization insurance.

Another large job at the time had the local’s electricians installing tens of thousands of control wires at the E. I. DuPont Co. facility in Niagara by decade’s end as part of the company’s new aluminum bus fabrication and installation technique. With the process, all of the bus was prefabricated in the electric shop, each to carry 20,000 amperes at 300 volts DC.

Remaining committed to further enhancing each member’s well-being, in 1961 the local established a Safety Committee and was able to add a book of Safety Regulations



to its work agreement with contractors. Also that year, the local adopted a **Vacation Plan** “as a means of creating more work for members,” according to an essay in the local’s 75th anniversary celebration program; that plan mandated each member place a small percentage of their salary into a savings account that could be withdrawn for vacation time.

The Niagara Power Project came to an official close when its Power Vista Center building was dedicated on July 19, 1963. The occasion inspired Local 237 Press Secretary John Mooradian to reflect upon the local’s participation in the October 1963 *Journal*:

“The last five years have been good years for Local 237. From the first shovel of dirt that was turned for the start of the project to the last fixture installed at the Power Vista Center, our local has gained not only in the experience but in meeting new friends from other locals throughout the country.”

However, early the following year the Niagara area was in economic decline and the work picture for Local 237 “was not a very bright one,” Mooradian announced in the March 1964 *Journal*. To compound the situation in the City of Niagara Falls, two major chemical plants, Olin-Mathieson and Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., were not in operation because of strikes by the building trades, and construction work in

(continued after spreads)



Local 237 crew at old Shredded Wheat building conversion project, March 1957

'POWER FOR PROGRESS' — The Niagara Power Project

"Since 1759, the forces of the Niagara River have been harnessed in some manner for the advantage and advancement of mankind."

From "Niagara Falls: Thunder Alley"



"which granted the Power Authority a federal license to fully develop the United States' share of the Niagara River's hydroelectric potential," according to the New York Power Authority.

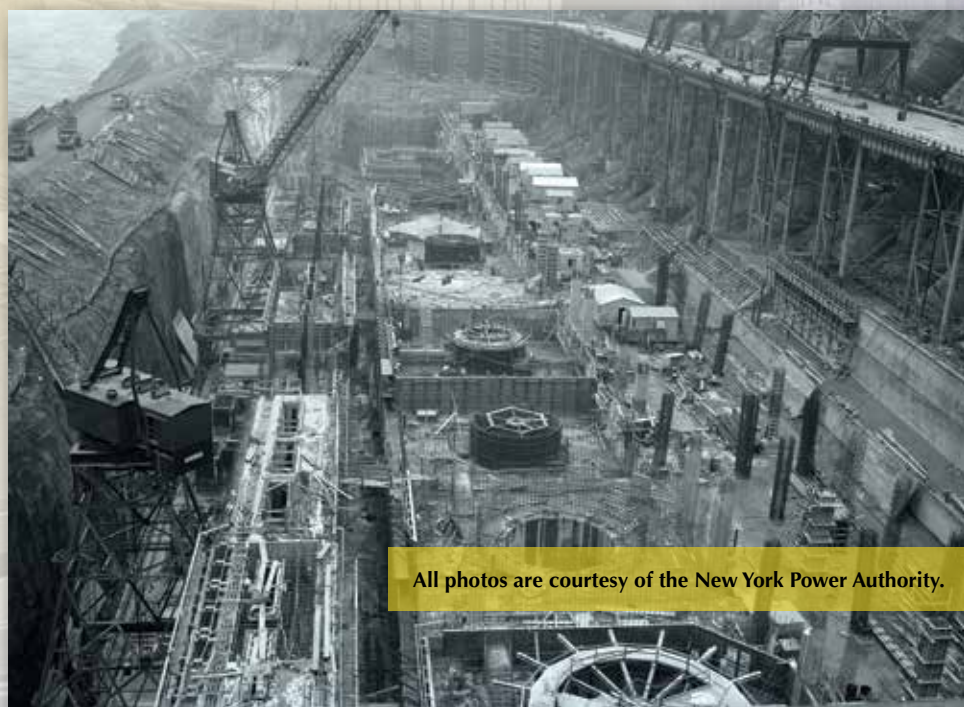
The Power Authority then authorized construction of a new power station along with a giant reservoir in Lewiston, New York — the result of which was the nearly \$800 million, three-year Niagara Power Project.



The first known person to have harnessed a portion of the Niagara River's power was recorded to have been Daniel Joncairs, who in 1759 dug a narrow ditch above the falls on the American side of the river to draw water to turn a waterwheel that powered a small sawmill.

By 1881, the Niagara Falls Hydraulic Power & Manufacturing Co. had built a small generating station by the river to provide electricity to light the village of Niagara Falls and power several of its mills. Since 1882, a number of hydroelectric plants along the Niagara have generated electricity in both the United States and Canada.

But when on June 7, 1956, the outdated Schoellkopf Power Station collapsed into the Niagara, destroying two-thirds of the plant and six of its generators, the most ambitious power-producing effort was soon after undertaken along the river. To replace the Schoellkopf, Congress the next year passed the Niagara Redevelopment Act,

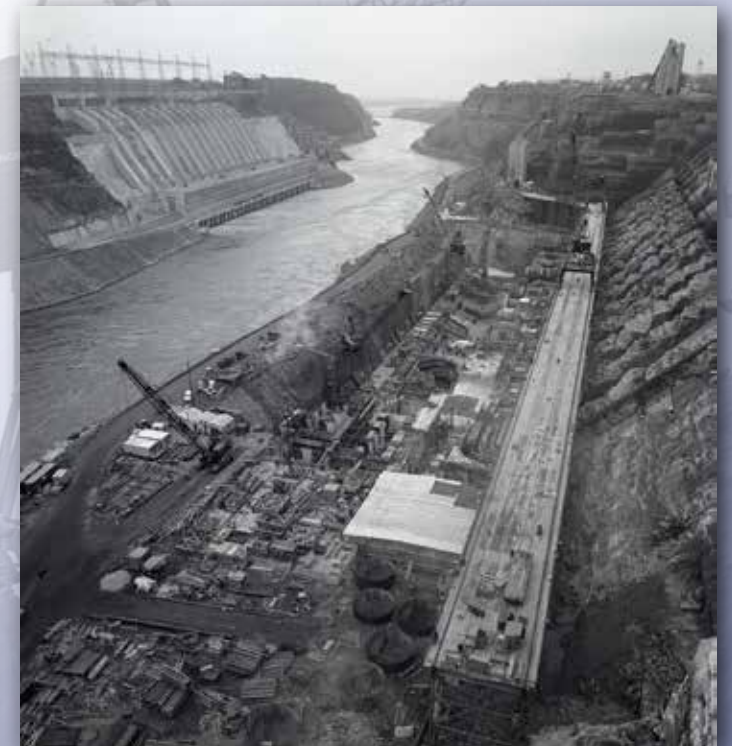


All photos are courtesy of the New York Power Authority.

"Within three years — on exactly the day predicted by Robert Moses, the 'Master Builder' and then-chairman of the Power Authority — the Niagara project produced its first power," the Power Authority still boasts today.

After starting construction in 1957, the Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Station opened in 1961 as the largest hydropower facility in the Western world, having employed 960 electrical workers at its peak, including scores of **I.B.E.W. Local 237** members. During construction, up to 9,863 total workers were employed on the project in July 1960, over 12 million cubic yards of rock were excavated and 20 workers died.

In its February 5, 1961, special issue covering the project's completion, the Niagara Falls Gazette reported, "The labor-management relations record during the three years of Niagara Power Project work looks fairly good in retrospect." Only four walkouts occurred, including on October 3, 1960, when 250 electricians and pipefitters left their jobs for five days because of a jurisdictional dispute with the millwrights over installing governors on the plant's generators. In the end, the strikers returned to work even before a settlement was reached, according to the newspaper.

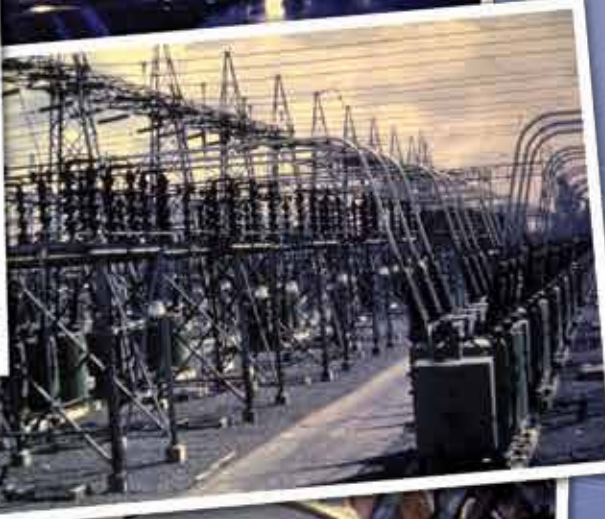
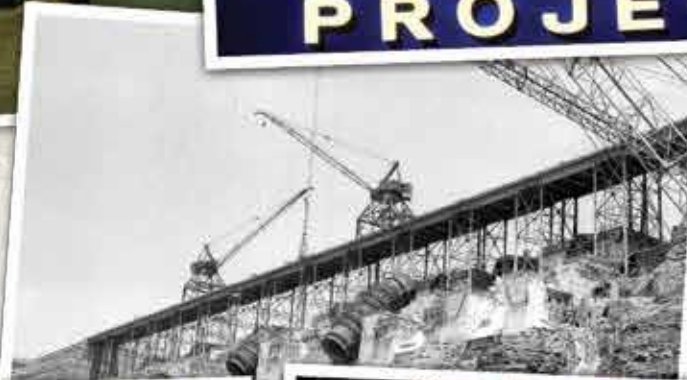
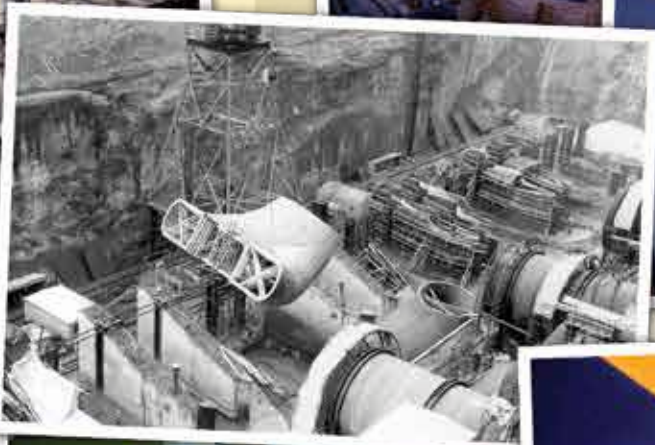
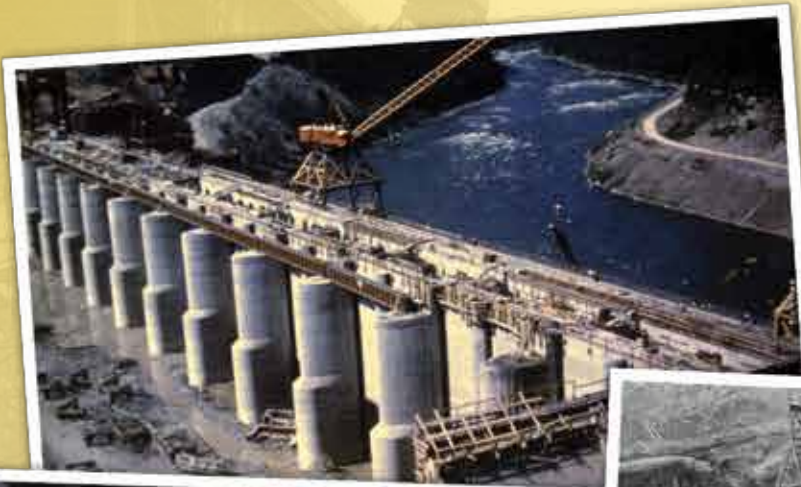


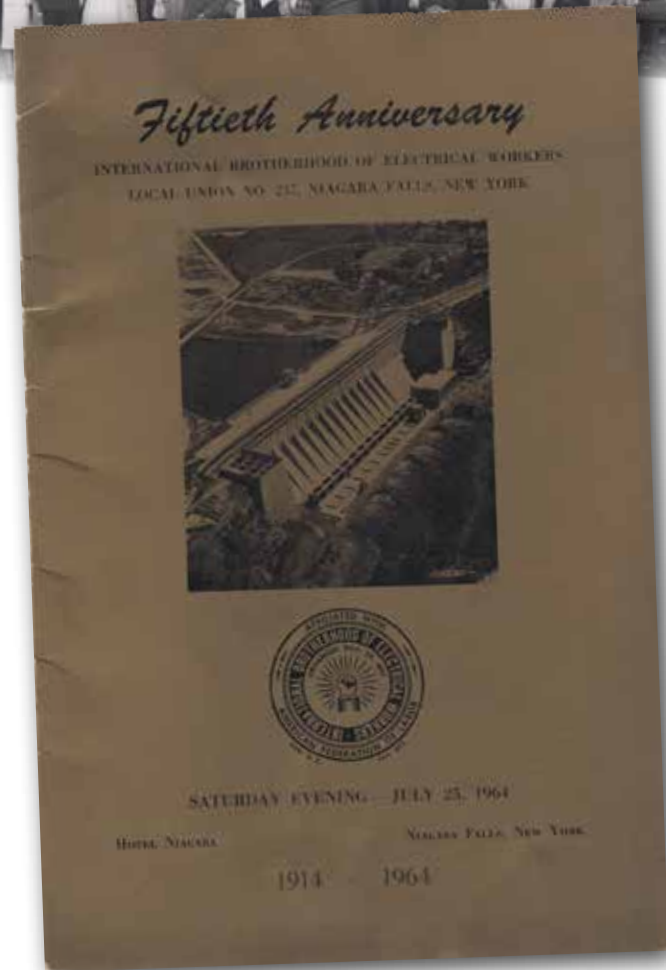
Today, Robert Moses is the biggest electricity producer in New York State, generating 2.4 million kilowatts, according to the Power Authority. Utilizing 13 generators, the plant diverts water from the Niagara River above Niagara Falls and returns the water into the lower portion of the river near Lake Ontario.

In 2006, the Power Authority completed a \$300-million upgrade and modernization at the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant, again using I.B.E.W. Local 237 manpower. In 2012, the Authority began a \$460 million upgrade to the Lewiston Pump-Generating Plant, with Local 237 electricians on the project once again.

"Local 237 feels proud to have been a part of the construction of this gigantic power project and will always look with pride at our contribution to the development of the Niagara frontier."

Local 237 Press Secretary John C. Mooradian, October 1963 I.B.E.W. Journal





(continued from before spreads)

the area was very slow, forcing some Local 237 members to travel to other jurisdictions for employment.

Regardless, the local celebrated its 50th anniversary that year in July with two events for members and friends. On the 24th, the local held a gala stage show at the Strand

Theater in downtown Niagara Falls, and the next evening, the local held a dinner and dance in the ballroom of the Hotel Niagara.

Local 237 also then became the first union in Niagara County to obtain a shorter work week when it established a 37-1/2-hour week in 1965. The following year, the local started a **Retirement Fund** in May 1966, “encouraging senior members and disabled members to retire,” the local’s 75th anniversary program states.

Work was beginning to pick up again, too, with new construction jobs in the area and a new contract with the City of Niagara Falls in January 1966 that included a 20-cent hourly raise. Meanwhile, jobs were progressing well for Local 237 members in Lockport, where a bridge was being built, and work on the LaSalle and Rainbow expressways was to begin soon.

Soon after, Mooradian was even confident enough to proclaim in the April 1968 *Journal*, “The future looks bright for Local 237 with many construction jobs on the boards, which should provide nearly full employment for some time.” Among those projects on the horizon were some major tourist attractions for the Niagara area.

Ups & Downs in the ‘70s

A new mall in the Town of Wheatfield. A proposed \$45 million sewage disposal plant in the City of Niagara Falls. A new convention center, a new community college, and “lots of urban renewal plans” for downtown Niagara Falls.

With many projects in planning stages or on the books by mid-1971 – and the local actively picketing non-union jobs in the area – the work scene was again encouraging for Local 237 after it had “slacked off slightly” to begin the 1970s. “We can consider ourselves very fortunate in work potential compared to many states throughout the country,” Business Manager Jordan declared during the local’s January 21, 1971, meeting.

By the end of the year, “the beginning of a new downtown Niagara Falls” was underway and employing Local 237 members, with construction of a \$24 million convention center, the electrical work being done by Ferguson Electric, and the seven-story Carborundum Center building (now the Niagara Office Building), whose electrical contract was under Buffalo Electric. So, too, was the Niagara County Community College campus project, the local’s largest job at the time.

Another promising development for the local at the time was its participation in an **Affirmative Action Program** that was attempting to attract more minorities and women into building-trades careers, although the effort got off to a very slow start.

However, work opportunities slowed considerably by mid-1972 as projects in the area stalled; Local 237 Press Secretary Jim Terreberry even commented in the August 1972 *Journal*, “Politicians and the Urban Renewal Commission have the convention hotels and the mall tied up.”

While some members had been forced to work in Buffalo and Oswego, by June 1973 the convention center was picking up as the lighting work on its arches, for which lights were installed 90 feet off the floor by using a large bucket truck and a 120-foot boom, had begun. The 418-room downtown Niagara Hilton hotel also started under Ferguson Electric, helping the local reach full employment by the fall of 1973.

But after the convention center opened in January 1974 and the 2,500-seat Performing Arts Center in Lewiston was completed in spring that year, employment again stagnated. It would remain poor throughout the year, with some members out of work even during the summer months.

The Nabisco warehouse, for which Ferguson Electric was doing the electrical work, employed some members at the time. But one of the problems in the local’s area was that although Niagara Falls industries wanted to expand, “they can’t get power allotments from the State Power Authority to do so,” Terreberry explained.

Mounting reasons pushed the employment situation from bad to worse through 1975, with half of the local’s 200 members out of work by September. A sizable Airco

Harry S. Jordan Longtime Business Manager Shaped Local 237

“The members of Local 237 thank him for all that he has done for them, on the job and for our community.”

March 1972, I.B.E.W. Journal

Harry S. Jordan joined Local 237 as a part-time business manager in 1919 and assumed full-time duties with the local in 1939. He was business manager from 1919 until 1971, when he chose not to run for another term and retired shortly after.



Harry was president of the Niagara County AFL-CIO Council from 1956 until his retirement. He was president of the Building Trades Council, Niagara Falls, from 1933 until 1941 and president of the Niagara Falls Federation of Labor from 1941 until 1956. He was also a trustee of the Niagara County Building and Construction Trades Council beginning in 1942.

In 1958, Harry received a citation from Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell for outstanding service in the interest of developing the highest standing of trade craftsmanship. He had served for many years on the Local 237 Electrical Apprenticeship Board and was instrumental in setting up courses and keeping up the high standards of the apprentices.

Recognized as “the father of public housing in Niagara Falls,” Harry served on the Housing Authority beginning in 1943, serving as chairman for 14 years. In 1963, he received recognition from the Public Housing Administration for faithful service in the Low-Rent Housing Administration.

Harry was also active in the American Red Cross and the Community Chest and was a member of the Urban Renewal Agency of Niagara Falls and a trustee of the Niagara County Community College Campus in Sanborn.

The Niagara-Orleans AFL-CIO Central Labor Council has annually awarded the Harry S. Jordan Scholarship since 1983 to local students. The scholarship dinner program for the 2011 awards dinner noted:

“Jordan’s long record of continuous service to Organized Labor stands as a tribute to the ordinary man. Everyone who knew him benefited from knowing him; his hard work, positive influence upon his community, as well as to the area’s Unionized Construction Industry, continue to this day.”

Local 237: An Extended Family

"If there is another union whose local membership involves itself more in its community than I.B.E.W. Local 237 does in Niagara County, then let them step forward."

WNY Labor Today, June 26, 2011

When not working together, the Local 237 family often plays together or serves its community – and has throughout its 100 years.

Gathering and enjoying annual family picnics, celebration events such as pin ceremonies and apprentice graduation dinners, and Christmas parties for young and old has been an enduring staple for the local's members. Other events over the decades have included campouts (stag and family) and even annual sailboat races, the first of which was held in 1978.

Among Local 237's countless community-support efforts, its members have also been involved throughout the years with volunteer endeavors such as Meals on Wheels; wiring Habitat for Humanity housing; the Clothes Closet; the Food Pantry; a charity motorcycle ride; youth sports programs; and the annual Festival of Lights in Niagara Falls. In one particular instance, 70 members donated their time to perform electrical work for the World University Games that were held in Buffalo in 1993. In 2011, the local for a third-straight year picked up debris and garbage along Military Road in its "Clean Sweep" effort.

Local 237 has always been active in sports activities, too, with its bowling teams participating in the city leagues for many years, as well as the International tournament. The local has also had baseball and basketball teams in many of the area's industrial leagues.

As a November 2004 I.B.E.W. *Journal* article stated, "Bringing members together is important in any organization, and Local 237's social calendar does just that." Specifically, the article went on to highlight the local's annual venison dinner at Macris Palace, which raised money for the local's "Sick Committee;" the local's annual dinner dance; its annual kids' campout at Allegany State Park on Father's Day weekend; and the local's annual family picnic at Fort Niagara State Park.



Speer job, with Buffalo Electric handling the lights and power and Ferguson Electric the bus and furnaces, helped clear the local's unemployed bench in December for the first time that year.

A Niagara Falls waste treatment plant and Airco Alloy and Airco Speer jobs had every member working, including as many as 60 travelers in the jurisdiction, the next year. In fact, the work situation was "good" throughout 1976 into 1977 – including almost full employment during the winter thanks to projects that included a Hooker Chemical plant expansion, which started in June 1977.

In 1978, Local 237 built a new union hall at 8803 Niagara Falls Boulevard (as the local turns 100 years old in 2014, it remains the center of the local's management while housing its records and the offices of its officers and staff). A grand opening for the building was held October 20, 1978, at which time it was dedicated to past business managers Harry S. Jordan and William T. Johnson.

Work held steady for the local's members, most all of whom were working through October 1978. However, the situation again slowed and up to 30 men were on the bench during the winter of 1978, and things worsened as 70 members were out of work at one point in early spring 1979.

But by the end of that year, the Hooker Chemical trash-burning "waste-to-energy" plant job, for which Industrial Power and Light Company had the electrical contract, and the Somerset Power Plant job under Ferguson were underway. Local 237 was not only enjoying full

employment by decade's end, but at one point in September there were 40 out-of-town brothers working in its area. Helping the situation was a successful picket at the Summit Mall Industrial Park – which by August had resulted in getting Local 237 people employed on the project.

Steady Towards a New Millennium

Another new decade for Local 237 brought with it another landmark event: **In July 1980, the local swore in its first-ever sister, Cynthia Sullivan, as a new member.** *(The following year, she would marry Local 237 journeyman Brian Ordway.)*

Despite 9-percent unemployment in the Niagara Falls area, 1980 was a relatively good year for the local, which enjoyed full employment much of the time. The Union Carbide gas plant project peaked in early 1981, and Hooker Chemical Corporation started its new office building in downtown Niagara Falls, which was completed by spring 1982 (although the construction trades honored a month-long strike at Hooker in 1981.)

Perhaps Terreberry would best summarize the local's condition throughout the rest of the millennium in a single column in the September 1981 *Journal*: "The work situation has been strange. We are close to full employment now, but it's up and down and will probably stay that way until all the trades settle their agreements." At the time, while the local was in the middle of a two-year agreement with its contractors, the plumbers and



New Local 237 hall grand opening, October 20, 1978

I.B.E.W. Local 237 Leadership

Roland L. Shumway President, 1914

John Miller President, 1915

William Grier President, 1916

(1917 - *undocumented*)

F. Wilson President, 1918

Harry Jordan Business Manager, 1919-1970

Bill Johnson Business Manager, 1971-1976

Robert V. Clarkson Business Manager, 1977-1985

William Choboy Business Manager, 1986-1991

Gerald "Gerry" Zell Business Manager, 1992-July 2007

Russell Quarantello Business Manager, July 2007-present

pipefitters were "out," so many jobs were slowed down.

Over one-third of the local was again out of work by February 1981 as jobs were delayed or set back, primarily because of the country's poor overall economic conditions. Meanwhile, the Somerset Power Plant was at a standstill as new engineering plans reduced the size of its generating capacity and new permits were being issued.

But by end of the year, all Local 237 members were working again thanks to an abundance of small projects that kept the local busy. Members were even inclined

to spread their good cheer as 116 electrical workers donated a total of 700 hours to wire the South End mall for the Niagara Falls Festival of lights. *(Once complete, 2,500 lights decorated the walkways from the convention center to the park at the falls, including animated displays and hand-painted murals.)*

The shopping mall was employing almost 60 men by spring 1982 for its July 2 grand opening, and Somerset picked up by the end of the year, making 1982 productive for the local. It was even compelled to add an assistant business manager for the



first time, with Richard Harpham taking the position that year.

The good employment continued through most of 1983 and 1984. Many smaller jobs, Somerset and construction of Albion Prison in 1984, under O'Connell Electric, even required the assistance of I.B.E.W. traveling brothers much of the time.

Some members of the local were also employed in Model City, where Ferguson Electric was working with the Department of Energy at the munitions plant to remove nuclear waste from the Manhattan Project that was stored in an old water tower. To do so, high-pressured water made a "slurry" of the waste, which was pumped a mile away into an old building foundation and covered until a national waste site was selected.

The 625,000-kilowatt **Somerset Power Plant** began generating electricity Friday, August 10, 1984 – "beating the timetable and the budget originally set by planners," according to an August 11 article in the *Buffalo Evening News*. The power plant, originally slated for completion in October, was built in 39 months for about \$70 million less than its original \$1.25 billion budget, the newspaper also reported.

But with the power plant and prison jobs complete, the local suffered and by mid-1985, the local was discussing with its contractors implementation of the local's rotation plan for

the unemployed. As many projects were delayed at the time, including additions to the Robert Moses Power Plant, one third of the local was out of work by year's end.

The local did, however, establish its Local 237 Retired Members Club on September 16, 1985.

As 1986 began and progressed into the spring, almost half the local was out of work, although many sister locals were again able to assist during those difficult times.

Business Manager William Choboy offered a ray of light, however, during the local's August 1986 meeting, during which he announced there would be a "dramatic change in employment" and the "work picture should look good for awhile." Soon after, the local was employed on five school remodeling jobs and most members were eventually working on the DuPont Niachlor project, with contractors Ferguson Electric, Buffalo Electric, Cleveland Electric, McCabe Electric and M.K. Ferguson. *(In 1987, Olin Niagara Falls formed a joint venture with DuPont to establish the Niachlor plant to process chemicals such as bleach, caustic soda, chlorine, hydrochloric acid, hydrogen and sulfuric acid for a multitude of uses. Ten years later, Olin purchased DuPont's portion of the facility.)*

With all of its members employed by June 1987, as many as 61 travelers were working in Local 237's jurisdiction during that time. Additional work throughout this period



included the building and remodeling of chemical plants in the Niagara Falls area, including those for Hooker, Olin Mathison, Alox, Goodyear and Union Carbide. The local also participated in many national defense projects, such as Bell Aerospace systems, self-defense missile sites and work at the Air National Guard Station (originally the Naval Air Station established in 1946 during World War II and today the Air Reserve Station) located adjacent to Niagara Falls International Airport.

Looking forward, Local 237 put its **Work Recovery Program** into effect in August 1987. Under the Inside Agreement between Local 237 and its contractors of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), employees would pay 1-1/2 percent of their wages to fund the program, which would actively organize non-union projects in the area to gain more work for contractors.

But once the Niachlor plant was completed by the end of 1987, no more large projects were available to the local and nearly half of its members was out of work again at some point in 1988. The local continued to suffer primarily as a result of an ongoing nationwide recession throughout the rest of the 1980s, and many members were forced to go on the road for work.

While it was more of the same as a new millennium approached, with work slow for Local 237 in the Niagara Falls area but small jobs keeping members employed, the local remained undaunted. It instituted an **Annuity**



Local 237's own Joseph Pulitzer

For a 30-year period, the outside world was kept well-informed about the proceedings, conditions, activities and projects of Local 237 in large part because of one member. James G. "Jim" Terreberry, a member since 1962 who retired in 2001, served as scribe for the local beginning in mid-1971, constantly and consistently submitting columns to the *I.B.E.W. Journal* as the local's press secretary until his last submission in the May 2001 issue.



Fund in 1990, and new organizing efforts proved fruitful that year as the local signed two new contractors, Cataract Electric and Lewiston Electric, for example.

In early 1991, Ferguson Electric received the contract on the second phase of the Goodyear cogeneration plant. Meanwhile, Local 237 was picketing a new 59-room motel being built on Niagara Falls Boulevard that year because the builder was using non-union electricians and paying substandard wages, the local contended.

The following year, most Local 237 members were at the General Motors-Harrison Radiator cogeneration plant, where Dynalectric was a major electrical contractor on the job. With construction of a Wal-Mart and a Topps market in the city, also, work was good in 1992 for the local.

Among many training opportunities Local 237 had provided up to that time, in 1993 the local and the Western New York Chapter of NECA conducted an intensive

Local 237 Helps Honor City's Vets

The Niagara Falls Veterans Memorial located in Hyde Park is dedicated to the 463 members of the military who were residents from the City of Niagara Falls and gave their lives in defense of the United States. Officially opened on Memorial Day 2014 and consisting of approximately 1,800 tons of solid granite, it is the largest national granite monument outside of Washington, D.C., that is dedicated to men and women who have honorably served in the armed services.

Much of the labor to build the monument was donated by the Niagara County Building Trades – including operating engineers, tinsmiths, cement finishers and electricians from I.B.E.W. Local 237. The local's electrical workers joined many others who gave shipments of stone, pieces of equipment and manpower whenever needed, often at no cost.

The monument's main feature is the sarcophagus, which is an exact dimensional replica of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington. Inside the sarcophagus are the personal effects of some of the fallen warriors, such as a Silver Star Medal, a Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart Medal, dog tags, a rose, pictures and letters from the government informing families of the deaths of their loved ones.

Niagara Falls Veterans Memorial in Hyde Park



foreman training program, from which 13 journeymen electricians graduated in December. The program was started “to help journeymen electricians stay current on new technology and job management practices,” according to Press Secretary Terreberry in the March 1994 *Journal*.

But work again slowed that year, and half of the local's members were unemployed during the spring. Throughout much of the remainder of the decade, the employment situation remained difficult for Local 237 members, although many were kept busy from time to time on projects such as new school work and jobs at the Somerset Power Plant.

However, utility deregulation and restructuring began to thin the Western New York area's independent energy plants by 1998, resulting in the closure of United Development Group's Niagara Falls cogeneration plant, among several others. This contributed to more slow times for the local that year and in 1999, although members did work on a new high school in the city and a new stainless steel plant as the millennium came to a close.

Into Y2K and Beyond

Local 237 entered the new millennium with a firm commitment to the future – case in point, the local installed solar panels on its union hall roof in 2000. The two panels, with 120 modules, were installed by members William Schreader and Mark Grozio, who at



Local 237 members participate in the annual Motorcycle Dice Run in Niagara County, which the local started in 2011 to benefit numerous area charities.

the time were the only two union, certified installers in the State of New York. Using time and materials donated by Ferguson Electric and U'Ren Equipment Rental, the solar panels were up and operating in 2-1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, the Seneca Nation of Indians was granted permission from the State of New York to build a casino on sovereign land in downtown Niagara Falls that included the outdated convention center – but it had to be up and running by December 31, 2002. What's more, new electrical distribution, service equipment, and lighting had to be coordinated with other trades to ensure limited down time to retrofit the building to house the new, \$80 million casino on time.

Thanks to the “round-the-clock work” of over 100 Local 237 members and four separate electrical contractors, as well as over 1,300 other union trades workers, the casino opened in the allotted 100-day time frame. “This was impressive because the building is basically brand new inside the old shell,” Local 237 Press Secretary Jeffrey Plache explained in the *Journal*.

But soon after, work was slow in Niagara Falls again – although there were other projects on the drawing board and the local would work on the **Yahoo Data Center** in Lockport, New York, in 2010. One of the world's most efficient data centers, it is powered mainly by

hydroelectric power from Niagara Falls.

In 2011, the local took another blow when Norampac hired a Louisiana firm for electrical work in the construction of a new, \$430 million lightweight linerboard and containerboard plant off Packard Road in the city while many Local 237 electricians remained unemployed. (*The project, which was subsidized with more than \$100 million in tax credits, low-cost power and grants from the state and its partners, was completed in 2013.*)

Though still reeling from the decline of western New York's industrial base as it approached its 100th anniversary, Local 237 has “never given up hope that organized labor can help to shape public policy and encourage the county's industrial development authority to ensure that any new projects (in Niagara Falls) — in industrial production, tourism or other quarters — use local workers and pay family-sustaining wages.”

“Instead of sitting back and waiting for other people to make change, the members of Local 237 decided to get personally involved,” Business Manager Russell Quarantello, who served on the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission at the time, proclaimed in the March 2013 *Journal*. To that end, Quarantello was arrested in August the previous year while protesting against Norampac.

But after a century, the local has become more

I.B.E.W. Local 237 members gathered around the Nikola Tesla statue on Goat Island in Niagara Falls State Park.



conventionally active, especially politically; for example, 18 Local 237 members were serving on the Niagara County Democratic Committee in 2013. In October, the local's members and their allies in other unions helped elect a new party chairman, Nick Forster, a public employee union steward, "to replace a leader who had distanced himself from organized labor," according to the *Journal*.

Committed to shaping its own future, the local has also stepped up efforts to register members to vote and participate in hand-billing and phone-banking in election cycles. Always looking to seize on new opportunities,

Quarantello planned to rally more of the local union's retirees behind upcoming political campaigns and to volunteer for community-based projects.

In a recent letter to the editor of the *Niagara Hub* blog, Joseph Ruffolo, president and CEO of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, thanked Local 237 for its "stunning" holiday lighting display and for work on the recent expansion of the center's surgical unit. "Not only do they do quality work," Ruffolo wrote, "they are good neighbors who consistently display their willingness to give back to our community."

"From the beginning, the local has strived for better working conditions and benefits for its members. Not expecting something for nothing, we give the contractor a highly skilled and trained mechanic. ... The members of Local No. 237 can look back through the years with pride. The old members can look back at the many challenges which they met and conquered. The younger members can look forward to accomplishment of new challenges and be ever mindful of the good reputation and example set for them by many good union men."

I.B.E.W. Local 237 50th Anniversary Celebration Program

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the labor movement!



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Congratulations to the IBEW Local 237 On Your 100th Anniversary

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From All your brothers & sisters at



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ON YOUR FIRST 100 YEARS!

On the behalf of the Officers,
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International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
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To All Our Friends and Brothers
At
IBEW LOCAL 237

FROM



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Business Manager \ Financial Secretary
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IBEW Local 237 on Your 100th Anniversary



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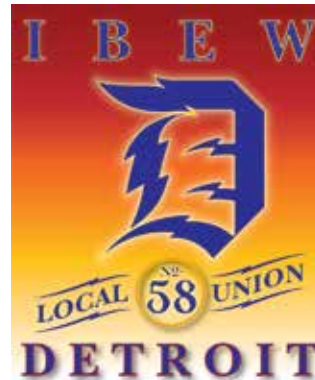
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& Sisters of Local 237 on their 100th Anniversary!
We wish you continued success as you celebrate this
important milestone.
Congratulations on a century of achievement!

Michael Richard
Business Manager/Financial Secretary

Congratulations to Local 237 on your 100 Years!



From Business Manager Bill Boire, our officers and the entire
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From the Officers and Members
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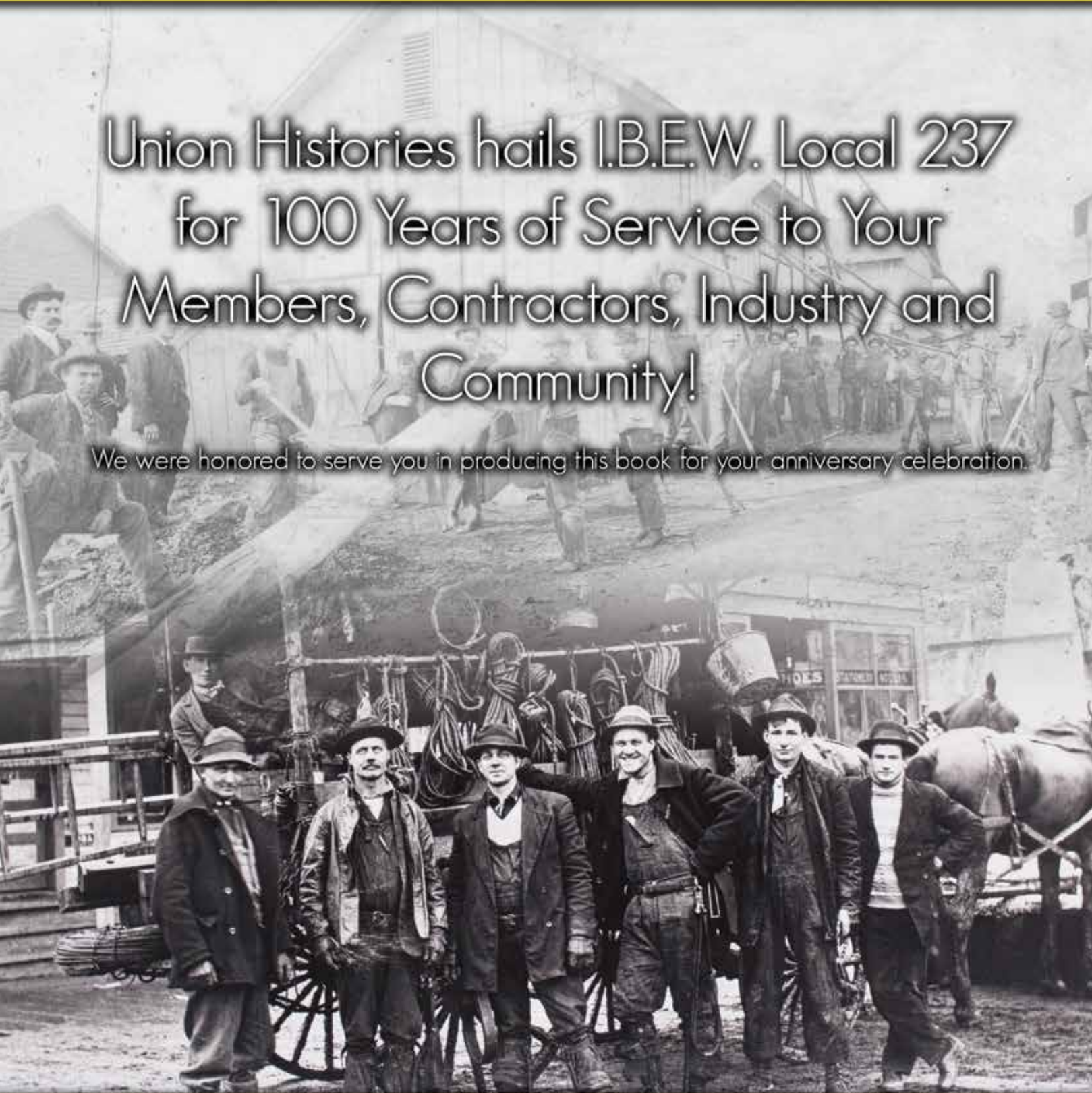
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