100th Anniversary Celebration

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

1914 - 2014

COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY PROGRAM BOOK
I.B.E.W. Local 611 Press Secretary T.O. Drummond opened the first-ever correspondence from the local in the April 1915 issue of the I.B.E.W. Electrical Worker Official Journal with the above line. (The entire entry is shown below.) Drummond is pictured here, center, in 1908 standing with fellow linemen of the Albuquerque Gas & Electric Company, which later became the Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM). At that time, he was a member of Local 306, a mixed-classification local in Albuquerque, and was likely its president when the photo was taken. Drummond would later serve as Local 611’s press secretary, and in October 1950, he was a local delegate to the 24th I.B.E.W. Convention in Miami. He passed away on April 2, 1963, receiving the local’s death benefit No. 106.

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One Hundred Years ... and Counting

Members, Retirees, Friends and Guests:

As Local 611 begins the first days of its second 100 years, I want to recognize and thank – on behalf of the Local – all of those who made the I.B.E.W.’s first century in New Mexico a time of growth and progress. To all those who came before us, to all those who have been our friends and our partners and fought by our side, and to all of you who continue standing with us today – Thank you.

It is hard to imagine the profound sense of responsibility that must have been experienced by the charter members of this local so long ago, the ones who set our course in the pursuit of safety, fairness and prosperity.

To now look back at 100 years of our history and see the major contributions achieved on the foundation that was set for us, and to recognize and admire the hard work and tenacity of the thousands of our members who followed, is overwhelmingly humbling to me today.

But as we enjoy the prideful celebration of the accomplishments achieved in our first century, we cannot ever lose sight of the challenges that remain before us today – and every day.

The legacy and the future of our great Union deserves nothing less than our complete determination, our renewed energy, our unwavering integrity and the courage to pursue our mission of improving the lives of our members, our community, our state and our nation.

The next 100 years start now. We must not ever forget the founders of I.B.E.W. Local 611, who worked so hard and sacrificed so much to make their dreams a reality. Be proud of who we are, be honored by where we came from, and get ready to fight for where we must go in the next 100 years.

Fraternally,

Mark Trujillo
Business Manager/Financial Secretary
I.B.E.W. Local Union No. 611

Local 611 Thanks our Historian, Tracy Hall

The history contained in this book is in very large part the product of over six years of work by I.B.E.W. Local 611 Historian Tracy Hall. His tireless efforts to collect historical information about the local helped make this book as complete and accurate as possible – giving Local 611 members and generations to come the opportunity to learn the local’s heritage.

After serving in the U.S. Navy, Tracy became a member of Local 611 in 1970 after participating in its J.A.T.C. program beginning in 1968, and he retired in 2003. Along the way, he was chairman of the local’s Examining Board from 1975 to 1985 and was the local’s press secretary from 1978 to 1984. Upon his retirement, Tracy took over the secretary position of the Local 611 Retirees Club, and in 2005, he became the club’s president ... as the local turns 100 in 2014, he is president, vice-president, treasurer and recording secretary of the club.

During his days as a journeyman, Tracy was a steward, foreman or superintendent on several jobs (despite having been blinded in his right eye because of an on-the-job accident in 1985). He has always been active in the activities of the union, often helping to represent the local at various conventions and events – even while taking four years off from 1988 to 1992 because of his eye.

Tracy never lost a single day of work from 1968 through 2003 unless he wanted to, following the same work record as his father, Wilbert W. Hall, a journeyman member of Local 611 from 1949 until he passed away in 1978.

He also served as president of the New Mexico Federation of Labor Retirees Council from 2005 through 2009.

Tracy has been married 51 years to his wife, Ernestine, who is a Native American from the Pueblos of Cochiti/Santo Domingo.

Thank you, Tracy, for all of your hard work and dedication!
Congratulations to IBEW Local Union 611

Hard at Work for 100 Years

Union Savings Bank and United Labor Bank extend our congratulations to IBEW Local Union 611 on celebrating this 100th year anniversary. We honor all the courageous men and women who have made the IBEW the outstanding organization that it is today. The proud heritage established over these 100 years was created through using the skills of its members to make a better life for everyone. We are inspired by your story of success. We stand with you as you extend your mission and build an even greater IBEW, a strong brotherhood for the future.
Just two years after Congress admitted New Mexico to the Union as its 47th state, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers installed a “mixed” local of outside linemen and inside wiremen to serve the state’s most populous city, Albuquerque. Chartered February 17, 1914, I.B.E.W. Local No. 611 would go on to represent workers throughout the entire region and state for 100 years now, extending its reach over a century beginning from the Carpenters Hall at 317-1/2 Second Street, in which the local’s original charter members first officially met.

The desire – and need – to organize the city’s electrical workers was evident well before finally taking hold in 1914 with the establishment of Local 611. Albuquerque nearly doubled its population to more than 11,000 residents between 1900 and 1910, expanding along with the railroads – including the New Mexico Eastern, which by then had stretched the town’s trading area to the Texas state line.

In that promising setting, the I.B.E.W. chartered Local No. 306 for the city on September 8, 1902, with about 12 members. That fledgling group would not last seven full years, going defunct in April 1909 – or, more likely, disengaging from the International as part of the union’s “Reid-Murphy Split” secession movement by many of its locals.

But during its relatively brief existence, Local 306 grew modestly and one of the largest contractors in the city, Frank Davidson,
Local 611
Through the Years

1890
Electrical Wiremen and Linemen’s Union No. 5221 is formed in St. Louis by the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

November 21, 1891
National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers holds its first convention in St. Louis. 10 delegates, representing 286 members, attend.

1899
The union is renamed International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers with the entrance of Canadian locals.

1908-1912
The Reid/Murphy Split, during which two competing I.B.E.W. factions exist, takes place.

1908
Charter member W.V.E. Bueche recounted the inauspicious beginnings of Local 611 with the above lines in the July 1960 Electrical Workers’ Journal; he specifically noted that the local was a product of that contentious struggle within the I.B.E.W., the Reid-Murphy Split, during which a large number of locals across the nation formed a competing faction beginning in 1908. Driven by dissension between wiremen and linemen, disappointed office-seekers and a former grand treasurer removed from office in 1907 because of “irregularities,” as History of The I.B.E.W. describes, the splinter group elected J.J. Reid as its president and J.W. Murphy as secretary during a special convention in 1908.

With the seceding locals refusing to recognize President Frank J. McNulty and Secretary Peter W. Collins as the true officers of the I.B.E.W., two union conventions were held in 1911. However, a court decision in February 1912 declared the 1908 convention illegal and its actions void, and the I.B.E.W.’s 12th convention in Boston in 1913 was attended by nearly all of the locals that had earlier left.

Emerging from the shadows of its predecessor Local 306 and the Reid-Murphy episode, the initial Local 611 members were employed by the likes of the Arnold Huning and Nash electric companies. By January 1915, the local was meeting in the Union Labor/Painters Hall at 217-1/2 South Second Street and also had enlisted the Albuquerque Gas & Electric Company (which later became the Public Service Company of New Mexico) as a signatory employer.

The mixed local, with President Frank Quier, a lineman, at its helm, made steady progress in its infancy, getting a new agreement and wage scale in early 1915 “thanks to the boys and our worthy president, whose never-tiring efforts aided us very much,” Press Secretary Drummond wrote in the April 1915 Journal. He even noted that while work was “very slack” during the year, the local was going to levy a special assessment “to buy Bro. Hatless Beech a hat” (misspelling “Bueche”).

The following year, with “quite a little work going,” Local 611 was “still in the ring and doing business at the old stand,” new Press Secretary J.G. Fishburn reported in the July 1916 Journal. Among their jobs, members were performing street railway work in and around the city.

The light employment continued into 1917, Fishburn wrote in that year’s February Journal, but he also noted that all of the membership was working. He went on to announce that the local was part of an effort to organize a Building Trades Council “so as to do away with our old central body and so as to have an even break with the larger
Local 611’s promising beginnings came despite its relatively small size; in fact, Press Secretary F.J. Pineau declared in the September 1917 *Journal*:

“Little 611 has been building up lately. We are getting members now and then from the Telephone Company and Postal Telegraph Company. We feel that any one of the men working in the electrical game should drop in and be one of us. Conditions around here are fair. We are all working and look for a pretty good winter.”

By 1924, Local 611 was the only I.B.E.W. local in the entire State of New Mexico after Local 967 in Albuquerque was “busted up” in the wake of a railroad strike two years earlier, according to an article submitted by 611 to the *Journal* in November, signed only with “Correspondent.” (The essay also noted that a local in Raton went defunct as a result of the rail strike, but the I.B.E.W. has no records of a local being in that city; also, I.B.E.W. archives recorded that Local 967 would not officially be decommissioned by the International until 1927.)

The *Journal* entry went on to announce that there was a “rat shop in our midst operating under the name of Gilbert Electric Company,” despite there being “plenty of work to be had.” Shortly before, Gilbert had advertised that it would pay any building job $50 for a contract if it would not use union labor – but Local 611 and organized labor responded in kind: “We got the rats off the job thanks to the efforts of our local trades council business agent and an electrical contractor who is fair to us,” the *Journal* correspondent wrote.

Meanwhile, the entire State of New Mexico was beginning to experience worsening financial conditions in the face of a string of bank failures. Local 611 weathered the storm fairly well, though, and an April 1925 *Journal* entry echoed sentiments...
similar to those in other Journal issues throughout the rest of the decade: “Old 611 is not flourishing but holding her own pretty well, considering the hard times.”

By July, the local had made significant progress during the previous two months “squaring up one of the shops that was unfair to us,” an article in the Journal reported, leaving only “one scab outfit in this locality now.”

These victories did not produce immediate wage gains for members, however, the November Journal revealing that while the area’s plumbers and steamfitters received a raise, pay levels for electricians “as well as all the other building crafts” remained the same. At a joint meeting of journeymen and contractors soon after, a new agreement was proposed, “to which the master electricians agreed to a man,” although it did not include a wage increase, Press Secretary Kline P. Liers reported the next February.

Soon after, the local faced additional adversity with the same measure of success, as Liers wrote in the July 1926 Journal:

“Our little old local here is holding its own pretty well despite the organized onslaught conducted by the Chamber of Commerce and the real estate men. We have got the only scab shop in our midst where we want him, on the jump towards the rocks.”

The local worked to build on its momentum, voting during its May 19, 1926, meeting to affiliate with the State Federation of Labor and even holding a Labor Day picnic later that month at the city’s Alameda Park. It also passed a motion on October 6 to pay helpers 34 cents per hour for their first six months and 5 cents more every six months thereafter; and the local agreed at its October 20 meeting that a helper after one year on the job “could shoot trouble by himself.”

On July 20 the following year, Local 611 created an Examining Board. In August, the local sent a delegate to the I.B.E.W. Convention for the first time when J.C. Hughes traveled to Detroit to attend the international union’s 19th semi-annual meeting. By that time, the local had grown to 26 members, and the next year, on September 19, 1928, the financial secretary’s salary was raised from $3 to $5 per meeting.

Perhaps feeling emboldened, the local during a special meeting in 1938, the local’s float featured a band and the names of the 38 men who contributed to building it and rode on it. In 1940, all seven classifications of the electrical crafts rode the Labor Day parade float – which looked like a ship in the desert.

Building on this legacy, Local 611 expanded to the New Mexico State Fair parade, in 1992 spending $1,500 on a float for that year’s procession. Just three years later, the local put $3,000 into its moving display for the fair’s parade.

Not forgetting its roots, at that time the local’s float came in first place in four straight Labor Day parades from 1993 to 1996.
on January 24, 1927, voted to withdrawal from the Building Trades Council. By all accounts, it was a move also brought about by a tense relationship between the two organizations. The local did pass a motion at its May 4 meeting to re-affiliate with the Council, but only after Business Manager J.C. Hughes wrote a “red-hot letter that Local 611 is not satisfied with the business of the Building Trades,” meeting minutes recorded. Then in June, the Building Trades Council fined Local 611 $20 for not attending its meetings. In September, the war of words continued when the local informed the Council that if it were allowing the carpenters to maintain an open shop, then Local 611 would do the same.

Out in the field, among the jobs Local 611 members were working was the KiMo Theatre on Central Avenue in downtown Albuquerque. Built in 1927, it featured extravagant Art Deco/Pueblo Revival Style architecture (and as the local turned 100 years old, the theater was still in use, saved from the wrecking ball in 1977 when the city purchased the structure to help restore it to its past glory.)

Meanwhile, the local continued working to make conditions in the city more “favorable” for its membership. On August 17, 1927, the local appointed a committee to draw up handbills advertising that Conway Ind. Electric had been declared “unfair.” In December 1928, Sunshine Pharmacy and the Safety First Fire Company were both put back on the “Fair List” through the efforts of the local. The next year, on January 12, Local 611 approved an offer from the Albuquerque File Company “to accept any amount that he wants to pay for the benefit of other crafts” after its owner thought the joining fee of $52 was too high, according to minutes of a special meeting (which only seven members attended).

By the end of the decade, Local 611’s membership had reached 33, with the newest members by that time paying a $20 initiation fee. However, minutes did record that each one of the local’s union meetings – including special meetings – throughout 1929 were attended by 10 members or less ... despite the local during its May 18, 1927, regular meeting starting an attendance fund of 50 cents per member for a drawing among all those present.

**Highs & Lows in the ‘30s & ‘40s**

The dawn of the 1930s was more encouraging for Local 611 than much of the rest of the decade would be for much of the country as it drudged through The Great Depression. In May of 1930, local Press Secretary W. A. Chauvin declared in the *Journal* that work had picked up and construction had started on a $10 million conservancy project in the Rio Grande Valley, which included the installation of several dams and levies.

As the decade progressed, the local held its own. While no Local 611 members (or union labor, for that matter) were hired on Albuquerque's
Court House project in 1936, by 1937 the local had “signed up” Dawson Electric, according to January 6 meeting minutes. Even more notable, during a June 28, 1937, special meeting to discuss organizing powerhouse employees of Albuquerque and Bernalillo, the powerhouse workers decided to join the local “after much discussion,” according to meeting minutes; 21 men filled out applications and were obligated that same day. On July 7, the local passed a motion to include meter men, and on July 21, employees of the Albuquerque Gas and Electric Company and “meter-readers” were obligated during the local’s meeting, minutes recorded. Local 611’s W.L. Strohecker described those significant milestones, which would go on to greatly impact the local, in the October 1937 Journal:

“For years this mixed local has been trying to sign up the local power company, and after working under a non-recognition and then an oral agreement, now we get a signed agreement which not only gives the members a 14% average increase in salary, but better working conditions, including sick leave and paid vacations, to say nothing of recognition and increasing our local by 91 men. ... We have organized into our local the entire utility bunch and have a live membership and good attendance. ... Under the head of the good of the union, get up and shout for these brothers who made this victory possible.”

Also that year, the State of New Mexico held its first state American Federation of Labor meeting in five years, and Local 611 member Ben Valk was elected to serve on the Federation’s executive board. “We feel that organized labor is reawakening,” Strohecker proclaimed.

With the local representing seven different craft workers – lineman, inside, gas, radio, meter, neon and powerhouse – in 1938, everyone was working “at least enough to keep the wolf away from the door,” C.L. “Shorty” Adcox reported in the October 1938 Journal. In fact, Adcox would go on to write in the December Journal that “everything has been going along with a bang for the last month or so,” highlighted by the first state fair since 1916, which employed several 611 members.

That year, the local’s membership also wired the newly lighted University of New Mexico’s football field under contractor Lee Miller Electrical Company. Zimmerman Field, which held 16,000 people at its peak, would host the university’s football team until it moved to University Stadium in 1960; the stadium would be used for intramural sports until 1969, when it was demolished to make way for new academic facilities.

As the 1940s and World War II approached, Local 611 grew to about 130 members by 1939 and most were working steadily most of the year, according to Journal reports; significant jobs included a new $700,000 airport east of town and a new 12-story Hilton Hotel in the city. Adding to the favorable atmosphere of the time, Local 611 and other locals around the state succeeded in getting an electrical code passed through the state legislature, Adcox announced in the April 1939 Journal.

In August, the local’s inside men were on strike for a few days because of “problems with contractors,” but they received a new agreement soon after – and although some employers did not sign it, other new contractors did, Adcox reported. By October, utilities employees also were working under a new agreement, signed for two years.

As the end of the decade approached with the country finally escaping the throes of The Depression, work was beginning to slow for Local 611 members; in fact, the local passed a motion during its August 8, 1939, meeting for the Business Manager to “get off his ass” and “get the rats out of our shops” and to get
union members on those jobs. Another motion was also passed giving the business manager "full power to order picket lines on any job he sees fit."

But with World War II on the horizon, the work situation remained difficult, Adcox reporting in the March 1940 Journal, "The majority of our inside boys are loafing and have been for some time, and it is beginning to look like they might be for some time to come. No big jobs at present. Utility work is holding up pretty well, should pick up a bit in the spring."

Apparently, employment was so bad that the May 8 meeting that year was adjourned right after it started because no members were in attendance, meeting minutes noted. By February 1 the next year, Local 611 held a special meeting and passed a motion requiring all journeyworkers in the jurisdiction earning $1.37½ cents per hour to pay an additional assessment of 3 percent of their earnings per month to help the local's financial situation and those out of work.

The onset of war did bring relief to the employment situation as defense work ramped up – though the local was hampered by a Federal Government-imposed wartime wage freeze. In particular, members were working at the Albuquerque Army Air Base when it was being built in 1941 and well afterwards (it would be renamed Kirtland Air Force Base in 1942), and many electricians were employed at Los Alamos, where the U.S. Government's "Manhattan Project" was driving to create an atomic weapon. (Los Alamos Laboratory, known as "Project Y," was conceived during the early part of World War II when the United States sought to build an atomic explosive to counter the threat posed by the German nuclear development program, according to the Los Alamos Historical Society.)

Supporting Armed Forces at Kirtland
Local 611's February 21, 1941, meeting minutes reported that "21 members are working on Albuquerque Army Air Base" in Albuquerque. Under construction beginning in January, the base would be completed in August 1941 – those beginnings of what would soon after become the Kirtland Air Force Base also the start of a mutually beneficial relationship between Local 611 and the air field that would last through the decades.

During World War II, the base provided advanced flying training in "AT" (advanced trainer) aircraft and transition training in combat-ready aircraft, primarily the B-17 Flying Fortress and the B-24 Liberator, according to U.S. Air Force literature. The 19th Bombardment Group arrived at Albuquerque Army Air Base in April 1941, shortly after the base was activated. The group's purpose was to train air and ground crews for reconnaissance and bombing duty on Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortresses" before deployment to Clark Field in the Philippine Islands. The 19th Bombardment Group became the most famous bomber unit of World War II for its part in the strategic bombing campaign against Japan.

Kirtland Air Force Base was renamed in February 1942 in honor of Col. Roy C. Kirtland, one of the army's oldest pioneer aviators. He learned to fly in 1911 in one of the first Wright airplanes at Dayton, Ohio, and during World War I, he organized and commanded a regiment of mechanics.

On June 1, 1957, the I.B.E.W. chartered Local 1988 at Kirtland; the local still serves the electrical maintenance and operation needs of the base.

On July 1, 1971, Kirtland merged with the nearby Manzano and Sandia Base's bases to create a sprawling military complex – the third largest installation in Air Force Materiel Command.
All along, the local continued to forge ahead internally; on July 9, 1941, it passed a rule whereby all new members must take the local, city and state electrical examinations before being accepted into the local. In August that year, the local signed a new agreement at the A.G.&E plant, and in October, the local voted to purchase five $100 government bonds.

Perhaps most significantly, the local had entered into an almost unheard-of three-year contract with Albuquerque Gas and Electric Co. on September 1, 1941, that called for an approximate average increase in wages of 5 percent for the second year and again for the third year. The National War Board initially denied the third year, however, under the Emergency Price Control Act, Press Secretary James Merrifield reported in the November 1943 Journal, but after a “long battle,” the company was permitted to give the raises, Merrifield announced in February 1944.

That year, Local 611 lost its first job to a nonunion contractor since defense work started, missing out on the helium gas plant job at Shiprock, New Mexico.

The state’s labor unions also were consistently confronted with a number of anti-labor bills in the state legislature during the war years, from proposing the outright abolition of unions to an act that would repeal certain sections of the state electrical code. Local 611 was very active in fighting such legislation, from letter-writing campaigns to working with other trade unions to properly educate legislators. The unions of New Mexico even set up a special committee to study the records of all candidates for public office and worked together “to get all their members and friends registered and informed as to who their friends are among the candidates. ... The committee has outlined numerous proposals, from opposing bills, opposing new amendments to the tax laws ... to setting up absentee ballots,” Merrifield outlined in the May 1944 Journal.

Closer to home, Local 611 took in the members of Local 658 when the Santa Fe group, which had been chartered January 16, 1931, was folded into 611 on May 5, 1945 – expanding the local’s jurisdiction and adding new members to its roll. (An E.L. Tarver of Local 658 had submitted a letter in the March 1931 Journal “to tell the world we have a local in the oldest town in the United

### Always Lending a Helping Hand

Since its inception, Local 611 has been dedicated to giving back to the community whose electrical industry it serves. This is witnessed through the many charitable and civic activates the local has initiated and sponsored over the past century – all in which its members have enthusiastically participated, many times utilizing their considerable professional skills, as local Press Secretary W.L. Strohecker summarized in the September 1951 I.B.E.W. Journal:

“We have many members interested in religious, fraternal and civic affairs as officers of churches and fraternities. Our business manager, Brother Zemke, is on the mayor’s committee to erect an auditorium and is also chairman of the state electrical administrative board since its formation over 12 years ago. Brother Cecil Badsgard, line foreman, has served at $1 per year as County Commissioner, first by appointment then by election, in our newest New Mexico County, Los Alamos, since the county was created. Bill Nelis, wireman and steward, was recently appointed to the Los Alamos Hospital board. Our local union recently sponsored a Boy Scout troop and one of our members, brother Delbert E. Duncan, is to be scout master.

“So these members, the mentioned and non-mentioned, are giving of their time and effort, working for free, representing our members in religious, fraternal and civic affairs.”

Indeed, the local’s benevolent undertakings have varied widely, from donating electrical work at the St. Anthony’s Orphanage in 1949 to purchasing circus tickets for the orphans there in 1952. And from donating $100 to the Central Labor Union to purchase an Iron Lung to be donated to the Indian County Hospital in 1953 to giving their time to wire the recreation hall at Inlow Youth Camp, a nonprofit organization operated by the Baptist Convention of New Mexico.

Among the many other notable helping hands Local 611 has extended in late 1973 it established an educational fund for the handicapped, allowing such persons to pursue higher education.” In November that year, the first scholarship was awarded to Dorothea Ann Bulkeley. Stalwart activities have come to include the annual Dollars Against Diabetes (D.A.D.) Day, which early on collected substantial donations such as $1,764 in 1988 and $1,346 in 1992 to help fight the disease – an effort that continues its success as Local 611 turns 100 years old. The local’s annual charitable softball tournament began in 2000, with proceeds going to worthy causes such as The University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center and the UNM Children’s Hospital; in 2013, the event raised $10,778.

Local 611 has always responded in the face of disaster, as well. During the local’s 2001 annual Christmas party, proceeds from raffle drawings were given to the I.B.E.W. Local Union No. 3 Disaster Fund in New York City, which benefited families of the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.
States,” which had 17 members and “a fair agreement signed by all the local contractors” at that time.)

Apparently reinvigorated by the new-found progress and expansion, Local 611 would enjoy a string of successes and growth throughout the rest of the decade (even raising the lineman initiation fee from $50 to $100 in July 1945).

On August 20, 1945, the local amended its charter to include non-beneficial members; the new “BA” members were employees of the Public Service Company of New Mexico. On September 12, the charter was returned from the I.B.E.W., having added “B” membership and signing it on August 30, and the local was then referred to as Local Union A & B-611.

Two agreements negotiated in early 1946, one with the Albuquerque Gas and Electric Co. (G&E) and one with the Zia Co. of Los Alamos, brought more promise. The original contract with G&E did not expire until September 1, but a clause allowed for “reconsideration by mutual consent of both parties before expiration,” according to an account from Merrifield in the July 1946 Journal.

With the recent agreement, employees received a 7-cent-per-hour raise from April 1 to September 1 and 11 cents more was added the next year, while the powerhouse employees were also granted double time for holidays.

The Zia Co. by that time had charge of installation and maintenance of utilities at Los Alamos; during the war, electrical work there was partly done through civil service and under Army engineers, “and the furnishing of men for the project was a source of considerable controversy and dissatisfaction,” Merrifield wrote. The Local 611 contract with Zia in 1946 was for one year beginning April 17 and covered all electrical maintenance and plant operation – wiremen, lineman and power plant operators received $1.58 per hour and all helpers $1 and $1.25 per hour.

Property at 209-211 South Second Street SW in Albuquerque had been purchased for the future site of Local 611 in 1946, and in the January 1947 Journal, Merrifield reported on the local’s new headquarters. The building itself had been erected 60 years prior as a hotel, but to the local, “The best thing about the building and its furnishings is that it is entirely paid for and without a special assessment and it is more than self-supported through rentals,” Merrifield pointed out.

On March 26, 1947, the local agreed to send 15 cents per member per month to the Albuquerque Union Labor Press and to also send 10 cents per member per month to the defense fund of the Central Labor Union.

A new agreement with its employing contractors’ group, the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), then came in April that year. Minimum wages for a journeyman and cable splicer were $2.50 per hour; for a foreman, not less than 25 cents per hour above the journeyman rate; and for a general foreman, not less than 25 cents per hour above the foreman’s wage. Fourth-year apprentices were to be given 75 percent of the journeymen’s wage rate.

Remainig squarely focused on the needs of its members, Local 611 on August 13, 1947, passed a motion during its regular meeting to finance the establishment of a federal credit union to serve the membership. On October 9, a special meeting was called for the purpose of installing officers and a charter for the credit union.

The local’s very own financial institution did well its first year, posting a 3-percent dividend and growing to 72 members, according to the local’s January 26, 1949, meeting minutes. By Local 611’s May 25 meeting, the credit union had 94 members.

Following years of discussion and planning guided by a special committee, the local during a meeting on December 8, 1948, accepted the committee’s plan for a death-benefit fund for members. On February 1, 1950, the Local 611 Death Benefit Fund went into effect. (On August 3, 1951, the local increased the death benefit to $650, and by January 14, 1953, it had been increased to $850 and had $8,000 in reserves.)
Accomplishing Much: The Next 20 Years

“Upon looking back over the 40 years which have passed since the issuing of the charter ... We note with pride that continued progress has been made, and today the local union members are employed on the majority of the electrical jobs of all types done within its jurisdiction, and the membership now numbers over 1,100.

“The local union has established a joint apprenticeship school and on-the-job training, which has enabled electrical contractors and the union to train and graduate qualified and competent journeyman wiremen. In addition, a skill improvement program has been established. Other activities of which we are proud include our federal credit union and a Boy Scout troop .... “We believe that L.U. 611 has made much progress since the signing of the charter .... May we accomplish as much in the next 40 years.”

Press Secretary Loren O. Taylor, May 1955 Journal, on the occasion of Local 611’s 40th Anniversary

During the 1950s, Local 611 remained on a relative roll, for the most part. Entering the decade, its members had just completed installing a substation at the Public Service Company of New Mexico properties in Belen, tripling the electrical power capacity of that town. Early the first year, however, there was a jurisdictional dispute with the operating engineers at Los Alamos Laboratory that would last for several months.
But the local seemed undeterred on many fronts; on February 14, 1951, it elected to donate $200 to the New Mexico State Federation of Labor because it was in financial trouble and was asking for help, according to meeting minutes. Even more satisfying, the Public Service Company agreed to a wage adjustment of 7.4 percent for all of its employees, including Local 611 members at Santa Fe, Las Vegas and Deming, Press Secretary W.L. Strohecker reported in the March 1951 Journal.

By the end of that year, Local 611 elected to represent the Jemez Mountain Electric Co-op, the local’s first effort to organize a “rural electric cooperative” utility, Strohecker announced in the February 1952 Journal. In May, he was able to report that Jemez Mountain had become the local’s seventh unit, “and with the two monthly meetings in Albuquerque makes a total of nine meetings a month.”

Also as that year closed out, utility members with the Public Service Company completed the 20,000-kilowatt first section of the planned 70,000-kilowatt Person Station in Albuquerque. The progress of that project encouraged Strohecker to examine the mutually beneficial relation between the company and the local in the March 1953 Journal:

“The growth of this local union and the Public Service Company of New Mexico have been parallel. We enjoy enviable labor relations with this company and have an agreement that is effective in all its properties, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Vegas and Deming. The wage scale and working conditions are practically the same on all properties.”

Members were involved with yet another large project beginning in 1953 with construction of the $2 billion AEC Portsmouth, Ohio, installation under Reynolds Electrical Corporation of Santa Fe. A letter from Reynolds Electrical to Local 611 as the project commenced paid tribute to the local’s technical skills and knowledge, which provided its employing contractors the ability to handle such work:

“We desire to share this honor with the I.B.E.W. electrical workers unions that have assisted us in developing an engineering approach to electrical construction which is unique in our industry and that is designed to keep them and ourselves abreast of the rapidly growing technological advances in industrial construction.”

Continued prosperity during the 1950s was further tribute to the local’s abilities within the industries it served. In April 1953, journeyworkers’ wages increased 15 cents to $2.60 per hour, and after a strike at Los Alamos, meeting minutes of May 9, 1956, reported that 90 percent of workers there were back on the job with an increase of 3 to 5 cents per hour. Employment improved that year to the point where “the bench is virtually unloaded,” the local announced in the July Journal, spurred by the City of Albuquerque’s growth, the Public Service Company’s installation of “Turbine No. 4” at its Person Generating Station and construction of the city’s new 8,000-seat Civic Auditorium.
Making Training a Priority

As early as 1940, Local 611 was already highly focused on apprenticeship training and making sure its apprentices were properly prepared to become skilled journeymen. Case in point: During the local’s March 28 regular meeting that year, it was reported that fourth-year apprentices would be called before the examining board (which was not yet a permanent panel at that time) for testing and if they were to fail, their wages would be set back to helper pay – a cut of 60 cents per hour (no small reduction around then).

A decade later, Press Secretary L.L. Galloway boasted in the March 1950 I.B.E.W. Journal: “Our apprenticeship school has become a permanent establishment in this jurisdiction and the local electrical contractors are to be commended for their cooperation and for their generous donations of equipment to supplement equipment furnished by the Board of Education. Much credit should likewise go to the Joint Apprenticeship Committee for the Electrical Industry in New Mexico and to the instructors ....”

By that time, the local had long-established a system for making certain its members had access to the best and most current skills and safety training in the electrical industry through apprenticeship under its Joint Apprenticeship Committee. On March 27, 1946, the local approved paying an apprentice instructor $9 per week supplement to teach electronics at the Albuquerque High School. Additionally, as Galloway had earlier reported in the March 1947 Journal, “Local 611 is in phase with the program of the National Apprenticeship Council,” noting that the local was “fortunate” to have an instructor as fully qualified as Dr. E.R. Harrington.

That year, the program had an enrollment of 30 apprentices in Albuquerque and 42 students in B-611 in Los Alamos. Always seeking to expand and enhance the apprenticeship program, during the local’s May 14, 1947, meeting, a motion passed that the building committee and the apprenticeship committee look into adding another building for school.

Also that year, 19 apprentices graduated from the training school, “the results of years of time, planning and expense” – features that have sustained in the years since.

Determined to continue improving and expanding its training, on September 7, 1951, the local voted to match the funds for apprenticeship training contributed by its employing contractors, the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA).

And as Local 611 turns 100 years old, the importance of training apprentices and providing upgrade training to journeymen remains a priority for the local. Its Apprenticeship School is run by the New Mexico Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee for the Electrical Industry (N.M.J.A.T.C.), which is equally sponsored by Local 611 and the New Mexico Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA).

The local’s linemen are trained through the Southwestern Line Constructors Joint Apprenticeship & Training Program, an independent training agency operating under the auspices on the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee. The Southwest Line Joint Apprenticeship Committee was formed in 1965 with Local 611 members and their contractors.

Like apprentice linemen, students of the N.M.J.A.T.C. “earn while they learn” to become inside wireman electricians in the apprenticeship, a five-year electrical program registered with the state of New Mexico and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, for men and women to become state licensed, union, journeyman wiremen.

Apprentices go through 8,000 hours of paid, on-the-job training in a 13,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility on Montbel Loop in Albuquerque (into which the N.M.J.A.T.C. moved in January 1997). They are taught AC and DC electrical theory; regulations pertaining to the electrical industry; a variety of electrical systems; heating; air conditioning; alarms; use of electrical measuring devices; transformer theory; motor control; electrical distribution using switchboards, panelboards and circuit breakers; applications for commercial and industrial electrical work; and control devices. In addition, apprentices are taught proper use of hand and power tools, First Aid/CPR, safety and safe working conditions, welding, advanced Algebra and Trigonometry, programmable logic controls and power quality.

That education is augmented with 50 college credits of related instructional training. Apprentices also receive paid health insurance, advancement opportunities and guaranteed pension benefits from Local 611.
On February 7, 1957, local meeting minutes reported that Kit Carson employees “only agreed to sign with Local 611.” Internally, Local 611 appointed its new Voter Registration Committee in 1957, complying with the International to form such a group.

Entering 1958, members of the local were taking full advantage of instruction classes at the atomic installation at Los Alamos – advancing their skills to better prepare themselves for the advancing industry.

By May, the local was in the process of negotiating nine different agreements, having already settled one with the Public Service Company for 6-percent wage and benefit increases across-the-board. Other contract talks included the Zia Co. at Los Alamos (which by then were taking place under the cloud of a weeks-old strike) and NECA, according to a May 1958 Journal entry from Press Secretary James Coons.

He also noted that the local was working to organize tree-trimmers who worked for the Public Service Company and various other electrical cooperatives. By the local’s August 14, 1958, regular meeting, the tree-trimmers of Aspulnd Co. had signed their agreement, minutes show.

As the decade was coming to a close, Business Manager Harold Golleher reported during the local’s September 4, 1959, regular meeting that “work is looking good, the bench is nearly clean.” Among the most prominent projects on which the local’s members were working – at that time and at any time to that point – was wiring one of the world’s largest energy-storage capacitor banks, located at Los Alamos and named “Zeus.” When completed, it would produce power for thermonuclear research experiments, which require extremely large amounts of energy for very short periods of time, according to the January 1960 Journal.

To kick off the 1960s, Local 611 signed an agreement on July 22, 1960, with Electrical Products, the only sign company in New Mexico that was organized at the time. The company was owned by ex-member J. Wilbur Jones, who had been 611 president in 1944.

While the local’s first-ever “out of work list” was posted in the hall in May 1961 and Local 611 men working in Farmington were subject to an eight-day strike in July, the early ’60s were otherwise encouraging. In fact, the local made note during its June 27, 1962, regular meeting that there were “no men on the bench,” and on March 23, the local’s Executive Board reported that its electrical constructors were to soon start a line job “out of the Four Corners area to Glen Canyon.”

But 1963 proved to be a tumultuous year. The May 1963 Journal announced that the “work picture is very dim for the future in this area,” with 65 wireman on the Group I Book and out of work. The July 1963 Journal painted the same picture: “Work still slow” a column from Local 611 announced.

Regardless, that year, the local moved into new and larger headquarters at 105 Texas Street SE (where it would remain until 1997), a property the local had purchased back in 1959. A special Building Company committee meeting on December 8, 1962, approved a loan of $10,000 from the Albuquerque National Bank for the new building and also the hiring of The Banes Co. to be the builders.

The local began to move into the building on May 30 and held an open house and dedication on July 27, according to the September 1963 Journal. The June 26 regular meeting that year was the first in the new headquarters – after the local’s business office, meeting hall and Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (J.A.T.C.) classrooms had moved there shortly before.

(This consolidation of its operations in one location was the culmination of an arduous few years for Local 611. After it moved to the International Hod Carriers Hall in 1960, the local set up a business office and J.A.T.C. office at 277 Wyoming Boulevard NE from January 1960 to January 1962. After that, the local set up its business office and J.A.T.C. office at 8402 Zuni Boulevard SE from January 1962 to June 1963 before finally settling in at 105 Texas SE.)
Work picked up in 1964 but would fluctuate for much of the rest of the decade. The Navajo Irrigation Tunnel project in the northwest corner of New Mexico started that year – with Local 611 labor – under the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The large agricultural development (one of the biggest Native American-owned-and-operated agricultural businesses in the United States) was designed to provide jobs for Native American family farms, according to Bureau of Reclamation literature. Construction began with the Main Canal headworks and Tunnel No. 1; by the end of 1977, work was completed on the 46.3-mile Main Canal and the 14.5-mile Gravity Main Canal, and construction of the Navajo Dam Power Plant and Switchyard began.

Business Manager John Milosevich was able to report in the May 1965 Journal that the local had signed a three-year contract with the Public Service Company of New Mexico, with increases of 3.5 percent the first year, 4 percent the second year and 3.75 percent the third and final year. The contract would expire February 29, 1968. In December, members approved a Health and Welfare Program for Local 611.

During the local’s January 1966 regular meeting, it was revealed that Milosevich was reprimanded by the International Office for authorizing an earlier strike by Local 611 members. He would remain the business manager but was ordered by the International not to conduct any union meetings for two years.

That notwithstanding, Local 611 was enjoying relative prosperity at the time. In April 1966, the Four Corners Power Plant in Farmington, which would be manned by Local 611 members, broke ground. During the local’s September 14 regular meeting, it was reported that City of Gallup employees had requested to join the local and Foley Electric, a signatory contractor, had been awarded construction of a 366-mile, 500 KV line to California.

Employment slowed again in 1967, Press Secretary E.R. Griggs announcing in the June 1967 Journal, “Work in our jurisdiction is not too good at this time. We have quite a few of our brothers out of town working in other jurisdictions. We still have quite a few brothers on the bench.” However, the local did gain line work jurisdiction throughout the entire state that year, and signatory Jelco Electric would begin a line job from El Paso to Albuquerque by the following April.

But a controversy with NECA that had come to a head after contractors insisted Local 611 give up jurisdictional zoning and re-instate “free zones” compounded the entire local’s situation. According to June 14, 1967, meeting minutes, the contractors refused to meet with a federal mediator over the issue and an unfair labor practice suit was being filed against NECA while union members had stopped working.

As the strike continued, NECA filed a restraining order against the local and Milosevich, in particular, for causing the stoppage. By July, the local had taken its case back to the Council on Industrial Relations, but that board refused a request by Local 611 to strike. At a November 13, 1967, special meeting, the local began discussions for going back to work and the contractors signing the new agreement.

A boom in work soon followed for Local 611 members, with the powerhouse job in Farmington and a copper mill in Tyrone supplying employment, Press Secretary Marvin E. Anna noted in the August 1960 Journal. He also reported that line work “has been good throughout the year” and the lineman scale was $5.05 per hour.

The local again announced during its October 23 meeting that work “looked good” with only two wireman on the books. By its March 26, 1969, meeting, there were over 500 travelers working in the jurisdiction, according to meeting minutes, and by its May 28 meeting, 972 men had been referred out by the dispatcher since the beginning of the year, minutes recorded.

Capping off the decade, Local 611 signed a contract with the Otero County Electric Cooperative in October 1969 after winning an election in March to represent its workforce. (Having started
Local 611 membership has reached 1,724.

September 1974
Local 611 adds Telephone: Commercial, Plant & Electrical Manufacturing (em) to its classifications.

August 1974
Local 611 adds Radio-Television Service (rts) and the Mora-San Miguel Co-op. “The local would remain as an inside, outside, "rtb, "u, "rts, "em" and "t" local until October 1978.)

May 1, 1973
Local 535 in Roswell was amalgamated into Local 611.

November 1972
Local 611 adds Radio-Television Service (rts) and Electrical Manufacturing (em) to its classifications.

Prevailing Though the ’70s & ’80s
Local 611 would next go on a decade-long roller-coaster ride. The San Juan Power House project began in late 1970, employing many members, and Milosevich reported during the local’s July 25, 1973, meeting that it had 20 contractors “signed up.” But in between, The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed charges against the local over negotiations with the Public Service Company and others in late 1970, while the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) withdrew charges but held a hearing on February 1, 1971, on those issues. By July, there were 200 men on strike in Los Alamos against Brown & Root and a strike was also in progress in Silver City against Burns Construction Co. However, Press Secretary Albino Garcia announced in the January 1972 Journal that “work is good,” supported by power plants in Farmington – but a wage freeze brought on by a new economic policy of the Federal Government “hampered the local’s contract, and negotiations underway with the Zia Company, Public Service Company of New Mexico and the Mora-San Miguel Co-op.”

Work slowed by March 1972, but Local 611 was still manning several prominent area projects, including the MESON facility, a $55 million installation, and by October the local was enjoying full employment.

Local 611 established an annuity program through negotiations, Garcia described in the February 1973 Journal, but in the end, “it was not exactly as planned.” Negotiations effected a 40-cent-per-hour annuity plan, but a Federal Government rule reduce the annuity per-hour amount to 30 cents.

On May 1, 1973, Local 535, which had been chartered September 17, 1941, in Roswell, was amalgamated into 611. Two years later on July 1, 1975, another local, No. 740 of Gallup, chartered June 16, 1937, also was brought into 611.

Between those two events, work was so scarce in the jurisdiction that it prompted Garcia to proclaim in the May 1974 Journal, “We keep hoping for better times.” Meanwhile, a strike against Zia ended August 13, 1974, and contentious negotiations in April 1976 were highlighted by the local’s rejection of a contract on April 28 with a request to the I.B.E.W. International Office that its “no-strike clause” be removed.

Approximately 150 Local 611 electricians, including travelers, were working on construction of the powerhouse units at the San Juan Power Plant in the Four Corners area, whose unit stacks were to be 300 feet high. Press Secretary Wilbert Hall reported in the May 1977 Journal. He was also at liberty to write, “Work overall in New Mexico is fairly good right now,” as other noteworthy projects on which Local 611 members were working that year and the next included the Bernalillo County Detention Center and the Santa Fe Medical Center.

Committed to better informing not only its membership but the public, as well, about the many advantages of unions, what they stand for and how they affect the future of each person in the state, Local 611 formed an Education Committee on 1978. It held its first meeting April 8, with members Charlie Stein (chairman), Charlie Baca (co-chair), Tracy Hall (secretary) and Ed Mros (the local’s president) present. Graham Smith was absent from the meeting.

Also as dedicated as ever to training its membership to be the most skilled workforce available, the local’s J.A.T.C. apprenticeship program moved into its new building at 2801 Girard Boulevard NE in Albuquerque by August 1978. The local had broken ground for the 7,400-square-foot facility in January, and when completed, it contained eight classrooms, a motor-control lab, a transformer lab and a pipe-bending lab, Tracy Hall, the local’s...

A new Health and Welfare package soon followed for members, paying 100 percent of their preventative services, 80 percent of basic services and 50 percent of major services, it was announced during the local’s May 23, 1979, meeting. Initial cost for each member for the “I.B.E.W./NECA Southwestern Health & Benefit Fund” was $14 per person per month.

In September 1979, the local started an apprenticeship class for its sound people.

But the onset of the 1980s and its brewing political climate under “Reaganomics” would test the local – and unionism – for the next several years. Hall reported in the August 1980 Journal that the local had signed a new contract “after taking a beating the last four years,” only to also note, “Work not looking good in New Mexico.”

On a lighter note, a Retirees Club, whose founding was guided by Brother Ken Kraven, met for the first time on September 11, 1980.

In 1981, the local’s members were working on the new Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque and were employed at the Hillsboro Copper Mill/Mine. The local’s Farmington unit purchased its own 2,300-square-foot building in 1981 though a lease/purchase deal.

However, Business Manager Ferdy Martinez reported to the local’s January 30, 1982, meeting that only one out of eight jobs in Albuquerque was union.

But the local’s electricians were working on the state prison in Grants, which was being done by Bomur Electric – although it had told the local, “No more coffee breaks,” to which Local 611 members responded, “We will have our coffee,” according to September 24, 1983, meeting minutes. In the fall of 1983, all electrical work in the construction of the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West in Montezuma, New Mexico, was done by Hughes Electric of Santa Fe using 611 labor. (The college was one of six United World Colleges promoting international understanding through education.)

By the mid-1980s, however, work had slowed considerably for Local 611 members as the local even struggled to retain its contractors, Press Secretary Jerry Mericle noted in the December 1986 Journal. He also reported, “Our Book I just grows and grows” as about 200 members were out of work at that time.

In the November 1987 Journal, Mericle called the work scene “dismal,” with 180 members on Book I and “nothing exciting” happening. By July 1984, the Zia Company and Craig Electric had terminated all agreements with the local; by March 1985 Bomur Telephone had ended its agreement; and by January 1986, NECA contractors Gardner/Zemke, Masthead, Craig, Yearout, Phillips and Coronado had all terminated their agreements, too.

The activity prompted Martinez to announce during its June 29, 1985, meeting that Local 611 had lost $1 million in electrical work during the month. He then reported on September 11 that the local had lost $2.68 million over the previous two weeks.

But the local responded in kind; in particular, it held a special meeting on September 27, 1986, “for the purpose of a new agreement,” during which it passed a motion to eliminate the vacation clause from the contract and place it back “on the paycheck.” Another special meeting on October 25 concluded with the local voting to raise members’ working assessments another 2 percent to a total of 4 percent, effective November 1.

Local 611 would also finance construction of a new water park in the city using its Pension Fund beginning in 1986. After its completion, Mericle would exult in the September 1987 Journal that the job was “built union and financed by our local pension fund.”

The C.S. Mitchell Award

Local 611 member Claude Stephen (C.S.) Mitchell, who passed away August 23, 1983, was instrumental in organizing the Local 611 Retirees Club, which was chartered on December 8, 1980. Brother Mitchell was part of the first Executive Board of the Retirees Club and is mentioned on the club’s charter.

As homage to all he did for the local, the C.S. Mitchell Award is given each year to the local’s outstanding first-year apprentice at the annual apprentice graduation banquet. Students are judged on their grades, attendance and commitment to Local 611 and the I.B.E.W.
While the local gained some additional work over the next couple of years, including the Albuquerque International Airport renovation job under Masthead Electric in 1987 and the Abiquiu Dam the next year, on May 5, 1988, Local 611 instituted its Market Recovery Program. By the local’s March 8 meeting the very next year, Business Manager Dub Baker reported that “33 jobs were picked up with Market Recovery,” meeting minutes state.

I.B.E.W. Local 643, which had served Carlsbad since March 1, 1934, was joined into Local 611 on April 1, 1988.

A flurry of contractor signings followed that year, including H&H Electric Services, BF&C Electrical Contractors, Whitehouse Electric and Armstrong Electric.

By decade’s end, Local 611 was keeping its head well above water; in addition to the implementation of its Market Recovery Program, contributions to the local’s Committee On Political Education (COPE) and its legislative fund were “way up,” according to Press Secretary Darrell J. Blair’s column in the May 1989 Journal. But while work in the jurisdiction was good, “it is controlled by the nonunion sector,” Blair reported in the November Journal. However, the local did enjoy its first picnic in six years (though attendance was low) and the local’s Legislative Committee began asking each member to contribute $12 per year to COPE.

Powering Into a New Millennium

Passing a motion on March 14, 1990, at its regular meeting that stated, “From this moment forward, Local Union 611 suspends granting concessions to contractors and owners outside of the agreement between NECA and the I.B.E.W.,” Local 611 was seemingly laying the course for its entire future. To be sure, the local was enjoying another period of prosperity: Baker reported on August 8, 1990, that since he took office, “the books have been cleared twice.

Meanwhile, the local’s organizers had signed over 21 electrical contractors, over 50 new construction members and 250 utility BA members.

Early in 1991, however, work was slow – and it would remain as such through 1992 and into 1993; Blair regularly reported in the Journal that there were upwards of 130 men on the books, despite jobs at the General Mills plant during that time. In mid-1992, the local would also have to endure a three-and-a-half day strike against Mora San Miguel Electric Co-op before a contract was settled.

The signing of 10 new signatory contractors by the beginning of 1993 and the start up of the Intel Corp. facility expansion essentially helped empty the local’s bench, Blair reported in the November Journal. He would even declare in the January 1994 Journal, “Local 611 was booming with work during the months of August and September 1993,” although by November Hughes Electric had begun laying off at the Intel project.

By June 1997, Assistant Business Manager Ruben Romero announced that there were 400 electricians working for 5 different contractors on the Intel jobsite. Masthead Electric also was successful in picking up a job there, on which several nonunion contractors had bid, allowing Romero to announce, “We expect eight wiremen on this job for about nine months.”

(Intel began operations in New Mexico in 1980, and more than three decades later, it is the largest industrial employer in the state, with approximately 3,500 employees at its campus in Rio Rancho – including many over the years who were and are represented by Local 611. Today, the site is home to Fab 11X, one of Intel’s largest 300-mm semiconductor manufacturing facilities.)

With employment “looking good,” Blair proclaimed in the May 1994 Journal, “Our organizing efforts seem to be putting the hurt on the nonunion sector.” In July, he was able to announce that...
Local 611 members participate in a rally against the Santa Ana Casino in 1999 after the Pueblo refused to honor commitments to utilize only union craftsmen and union labor.

April 1, 1996
Local 2044 in Santa Fe is amalgamated into Local 611.

January 1997
New Mexico Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee for the Electrical Industry (N.M.J.A.T.C.) officially moves into its new apprenticeship building on Montbel Loop NE in Albuquerque (where it resides as Local 611 turns 100 in 2014).

August 9, 1997
Local 611 officially opens the business office and union hall in its brand new headquarters at 4921 Alexander Boulevard NE (where it resides as it turns 100 in 2014).

September 2000
Local 611 holds its first annual charity softball tournament.

Local 611 members participate in a rally against the Santa Ana Casino in 1999 after the Pueblo refused to honor commitments to utilize only union craftsmen and union labor.

In June, however, the local was able to ratify a new contract with its contractors that called for a $1.75 increase over two years – with 45 cents on checks and 45 cents into retirement the first year.

Remaining cognizant of its ability to impact the political landscape – and as aware as ever that it must do so to protect its industry and its union – the local participated in a labor rally at the State Capitol in Santa Fe on February 3, 1997 (one of many political activities in which the local has participated over 100 years). “The purpose of the rally was to show our low-paying, union-hating, out-of-state-hiring governor that we won’t sit still while he tries to walk all over us,” Blair wrote in the May 1997 Journal.

The final year of the millennium, 1999, started slowly and fluctuated for the local and its membership as the year advanced towards Y2K, with 200 wiremen on Book I when November began.

One of the local’s biggest nonunion competitors, DKD, had begun working with Local 611, and between March 10 and April 22, 1994, the local had 175 calls for dispatch “mainly from DKD.”

As the work picture remained strong throughout 1994, the local continued to ensure its membership was the best-qualified workforce available. Among other training enhancements in addition to its standard curriculum, J.A.T.C. Director Chris Padilla introduced a fiber optic journeyman enrichment course that year, with 48 members completing the first class.

Two years after the local’s employment “boom” began, conditions were still looking good, according to Blair in the May 1995 Journal. “We are enjoying full employment, and 800 travelers are working in our jurisdiction. When one contractor lays off, another puts in a call for more workers.” He would also report in the February 1996 Journal that the local had gone from having only 10 percent of the work in the state to over 50 percent in recent months.

By June 1995, Local 611 members were manning outside work that had started on a power job in Sandia Mountain with three crews. The local’s electricians were also wiring the Camel Rock Casino in Santa Fe under A-1 Electric, a casino in Pojoaque for DKD Electric and the San Felipe Casino, north of Algodones.

Local 2044 in Santa Fe, which had been chartered by the I.B.E.W. on May 1, 1959, was then integrated into Local 611 on April 1, 1996.

Work had “slowed to a trickle” by then, with 140 members sitting on the local’s books after Intel began laying off employees.

In June, however, the local was able to ratify a new contract with its contractors that called for a $1.75 increase over two years – with 45 cents on checks and 45 cents into retirement the first year.

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The new millennium brought with it much-improved employment, including jobs during and after the construction of the $100 million Isleta Casino in the desert of Albuquerque. Intel also was using many members again, with Rosendin, Masthead and B&D Electric the local’s main employers there, Blair reported in the November 2000 Journal.

In August 2000, the local had been discussing ways in which it could finance a strike against PNM, if a strike were needed during negotiations. Assistant Business Manager Edward Misquez reported during the August 26 local meeting that 90 percent of employees at PNM voted to strike and that he had met
A Family that Plays Together

Throughout the decades, Local 611 has been like a family to its membership, enjoying time together away from the job at a host of special activities and events, including annual Christmas parties for members and their families; yearly summer picnics, golf outings and baseball game outings (formerly at the Dukes and recently at the Isotopes minor-league games).

with I.B.E.W. Seventh District Representative Orville Tate in an effort to resolve negotiations.

On October 14, after months of talks, the local voted to ratify a new contract, which included a $1 raise, with 60 cents retroactive to June 1 and 40 cents on December 1. The local also did away with its “grandfathering” policy, and the apprentice rate was bumped from the then-current 45-to-85 percent up to 55-to-95 percent.

For that year’s negotiations, Local 611 and NECA used a “mutual gains bargaining” method “to bring a positive atmosphere to negotiating,” Blair had reported in the May 2000 Journal.

But work in 2001 “was like a roller coaster, up and down all year long,” Blair described in the March 2002 Journal. Into that new year, there were over 300 members on Book I and just as many on Book II as work slowed for a couple of months.

Times remained “rough” into 2003, with 11 members requesting

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Making the NEF a Reality

When Local 611 sent its first member to work at the National Enrichment Facility (NEF) construction site in Eunice, New Mexico, on January 15, 2007, it was the culmination of a unique process for making the country’s first civilian-owned uranium enrichment facility in 30 years a reality.

Construction of the complex could only proceed under a unique alliance of the I.B.E.W. and three competing National Electrical Contractors Association members – Budwine Service Electric Co., Prime Electric and Rosendin Electric, which formed a new company for the project named Trico, Inc.

Groundbreaking for the more-than-$1.5 billion, 543-acre complex, which would become the largest facility of its kind in the United States and when fully online in 2015 will produce 5 percent of the nation’s enriched uranium, took place August 29, 2006. It was an event that would not have been possible without the I.B.E.W. Seventh District and Local 611.

Early on, before any shovel hit the ground, the local took on the task of making sure skilled manpower needs would be met with workers who would build it right the first time, on schedule and under budget. Business Manager Chris Frentzel saw the job as a great opportunity: “We have a commitment not only to the company, but to the entire community to hire locally as much as possible. But a project of this scope means a lot more than jobs. We have an opportunity to raise the standard of living in an area that’s been depressed quite a while.”

Along with recruiting and training apprentices, the I.B.E.W. provided one of the largest pool of “travelers” of any union in the country. “We’ll have an ample supply of labor,” Frentzel said, “611 has negotiated a package of wages, benefits and per diem that will bring in the best, and that package will keep getting better as demand goes up.”

Using centrifuge technology, the facility is designed to power the United States commercial nuclear power plants through creating a sustainable, domestic source of enriched uranium that will substantially reduce U.S. reliance on the global nuclear enrichment marketplace, according to NEF literature. Construction will continue until 2015, “when URENCO USA will produce nearly 10 percent of the nation’s energy needs using leading edge enrichment technology.”

“Nuclear power is an important energy source for our future, so we need to make sure the I.B.E.W. and NECA are taking the lead in doing the work,” Frentzel said in the September 2008 I.B.E.W. Electrical Worker. At the time, James Ferland, president of Louisiana Energy Services, a nuclear-power consortium behind the facility, also told The New York Times that the nuclear industry viewed the go-ahead for the plant’s construction by federal and state officials as “a bellwether for future nuclear construction.”

But in order to make sure the plant was built union, the I.B.E.W. and NECA contractors had to pool their collective resources to get it done, according to the Electrical Worker. The sheer size of the facility made it difficult for just one contractor to handle all the work.

Seventh District Vice President Jon Gardner said at the time, “An emphasis on building a partnership with the community, the customer, the contractors and Local 611 was a key factor in securing this project as a union job.”

Since then, enrichment officially began on June 25, 2010, and Phase I of the facility’s construction was completed in January 2013 – but the impact it will have on future generations and Local 611, in particular, will last well into the future. Just as Local 611’s impact on the National Enrichment Facility will forever endure.

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during a March 26 local meeting that their dues be paid on a loan basis. By May, 350 members were on Book I.

At year’s end, the local had a new Insurance Provider, First Health, and its prescription plan was now under Save Rx.

Work remained slow into 2004, with 301 journey wiremen and seven linemen on Book I and 44 wiremen on Book II as of January 14. At the time, the local continued plans to get a project labor agreement signed for a high-voltage line starting in New Mexico and crossing Arizona.

But after three-and-a-half months of a lab-wide stand-down, Los Alamos was back up and running by January 2005, Blair announced in the Journal. (During the stand-down, the lab provided funds to avoid layoffs and allow for training.)

I.B.E.W. Local 496 of Silver City, which was established on June 15, 1939, was then amalgamated into Local 611 on April 1.

Work would remain “steady” for the first several months of the year and through 2006, highlighted by the University of New Mexico hospital project, which was manned by about 100 Local 611 members at its peak before completion in early 2007. The job had 1.5 million hours for crafts people with only one recordable lost-day accident, Blair reported in the July 2007 Journal.

In early 2006, members who had worked on the San Juan Regional Medical Center addition in Farmington in 2005 won a major victory against the electrical contractor, Mills Electric, a large nonunion outfit out of Dallas. Workers were awarded $550,000 in back pay from six contractors on the $66-million
As Local 611 reached its 100th anniversary in February 1914, its members could look back on a continuing legacy that has helped build the City of Albuquerque, the University of New Mexico and the State of New Mexico, as well as having impacted many world-renowned projects – including the U.S. “Star Wars” missile defense system efforts at Los Alamos – and working for some of the world’s most renowned companies – including IBM. After one century, the local numbers about 2,400 members and covers inside construction, outside construction, utility, maintenance, manufacturing, technical and telephone bargaining units.

The inside construction agreement between Local 611, New Mexico Chapter NECA, U.S. Electrical Corporation and LANS covers the State of New Mexico with the exception of Otero, Dona Ana, Luna and Hidalgo counties. The local’s jurisdiction also covers Apache County in Arizona.

The utility bargaining units include Bureau of Reclamation in Elephant Butte; Central New Mexico Cooperative in Moriarty and Mountainair; City of Carlsbad; City of Farmington; Continental Divide Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Grants and Gallup; Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Cuba, Española and Jemez Springs; Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Taos; Los Alamos County, in Los Alamos; Mora-San Miguel Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Mora, Las Vegas and Pecos; Tree’s Inc. in Albuquerque; and Public Service Company (PNM) of New Mexico Electric in Albuquerque, Belen, Bernalillo, Deming, Las Vegas and Santa Fe. PNM also includes the San Juan Power Plant in Farmington.

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The outside construction agreement between Local 611 and Southwestern Line Constructors Chapter NECA covers the entire state of New Mexico.

Local 611 serves one manufacturing contract, Electrical Products of New Mexico (Zeon Signs) in Albuquerque.

The local serves four government service “technical” contracts: Five Rivers Services, LLC at Engle near Truth or Consequences, New Mexico; LANS Maintenance in Los Alamos; ITT Systems at the TARS Site near Deming; and Aleut & BAE Systems at the Stallion Site near Socorro.

Local 611 also serves one telephone cooperative, La Jicarita in Mora, New Mexico.
Presidents of I.B.E.W. Local 611

Frank Ouier - February 1914 - May 1916
W.V.E. Bueche - 1916
G.G. Griffin - July 1917 - circa 1921
J. Serra - 1921 - 1922
Joe McNutt - 1923 - circa May 1926
Guy Ritter - circa July 1926 - July 1927
J.C. Hughes - circa July 1926 - at least 1928
Ray Hoazman - 1929 - 1933
Joseph Conway - 1934 - 1935
John Helfinch - January - August 1936 (resigned)
Bill Adams - August - December 1936
G.B. Volt - circa 1937
“Baldy Morgan” - circa 1937/1938
Aimsley Seagrest - during 1938
Roy Erwin - during 1938
A.C. “Jack” Pierce - 1938 - June 1939
J.N. Yearout - July 1939 - June 1940
Roger Roehl - July 1940 - circa 1943
Fred Wenz - 1943
Wilbur Jones - 1944
“Brother” Dansforth - 1945
Erla A. Bailey - 1946
Shelby Hendrix - 1947
Ray Brown - 1947 - 1949
Al Williams - 1949 - 1951
James Smith - 1952 - 1953
Earl Weatherford - 1954 - 1955
L.L. Galloway - 1955 - 1957
Ray Brown - 1958
L.L. Galloway - during 1958
Ray Brown - 1959
John “Arky” Webb - First Half 1960
Sam Heaslip - July 1960 - June 1962
Ed Binder - July 1962 - 1965
John “Arky” Webb Sr. - 1966 - 1972
Jim Meadows - 1973 - 1974
Gene Chauvin - July 1974 - 1976
Ed Mros - 1976 - 1983
Jasck Tugwell - (Acting President) 1983
Ruben Romero - 1984 - 1986
Bobby Atencio - 1986 - 1987
Brian Condit - 1987 - 1993
Richard A. Sandoval - 1993 - 2004
Chris E. Frentzel - 2004 - 2005
Carl T. Condit - July 13, 2005 - present

Business Managers of I.B.E.W. Local 611

“Business Agents”
W.V.E. Bueche - May 19, 1926
J.C. Hughes - July 1926 - circa July 1927
(No other records prior to 1930)
R.L. Gaul - 1930 – 1931

Business Managers
R.L. Gaul - Second Quarter 1931 – Third Quarter 1932
Elmer A. Zemke - Third Quarter 1932 – First Quarter 1935
Guy Ritter - First Quarter 1935 – Second Quarter 1935
Ben Volk - Second Quarter 1935 – February 1937 (resigned)
Aimsley Seagrest (also Financial Secretary) - February 1937 – September 1939 (resigned)
(No Business Manager until 1940)
Erla L. Bailey - Second Half 1940 – 1941
A.D. Cox - 1942

(Business Manager/Financial Secretaries)
Elmer A. Zemke - 1943 – September 1955
Clifford E. Clark - September 1955 – September 1958
Harold L. Golleher - September 1958 – November 1961
John Milosevich - November 1961 – October 1968
F. Glenn Frazier - October 1968 – August 1974
John Milosevich - August 1974 – November 1977
Ferdy Martinez - September 1981 – October 1987
Jenaro D. Pedroncelli - October 1990 – September 1993
Chris E. Frentzel - September 1993 – October 1999
Andy Palmer - October 1999 – September 2002
Ruben E. Romero - September 2002 – October 2005
Chris E. Frentzel - October 2005 – 2013
Mark Trujillo - 2013 – present
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WISHES YOU MANY MORE YEARS OF SUCCESS

100 Years of Serving New Mexicans.

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Congratulations to I.B.E.W. Local #611 on your 100 year anniversary!

Thank you for your support of our industry and the tradespeople who make it great. We are proud to be partners with you in building a strong New Mexico!

U.S. Electrical Corporation
301 California Street S.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87108-3023
Phone (505) 260-1000
Fax (505) 260-1001

Atlanta Capital Management Co., LLC
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Atlanta, GA 30309
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We are proud to celebrate IBEW Local 611’s 100th Anniversary!!!
Congratulations Local 611

Congratulations on your 100th anniversary.
Your trusted partner for the past decade.

Best Wishes and Continued Success from the Members, Retired Members, Officers & Staff of IBEW Local #570

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Mark Watson III

The New Mexico Building and Construction Trades Council congratulates IBEW Local 611 on its Centennial Anniversary. May your next 100 years be even better than the first!

Congratulations Local 611!

Your Brothers and Sisters at Local 769 salute all the local has done for its members and the electrical industry as well as its State and our Country over the past 100 Years!
Union Histories hails IBEW Local 611 for 100 Years of Service to Your Members, Contractors, Industry and Community!

We were honored to serve you in producing this book for your anniversary celebration.

1914 - 2014