

100 Year Anniversary



100 Years of Service

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100 Years of Service to Your Members,
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Brother Kenneth W. Cooper

LOCAL 688 MEMBER ASCENDS INTERNATIONAL RANKS

Initiated into Local 688 in 1986 as an apprentice, after which he completed his journeyman wireman apprenticeship in 1989, Brother Kenneth W. Cooper was appointed International Secretary-Treasurer effective May 1, 2017, to fill the unexpired term of Salvatore "Sam" Chilia.

"I grew up a poor kid in Mansfield, Ohio," Brother Cooper said. "The I.B.E.W. gave me the skills and the opportunity to move into the middle class and I want to pass that along to other people. I said it to our staff in the district office many times: The most important thing we do is to organize, represent and help working families."

Although a first-generation I.B.E.W. member, unionism runs deep in Brother Cooper's family. His father was a member of the United Auto Workers and his grandfather was in the United Steelworkers.

Brother Cooper was active within Local 688 almost from the start, serving as steward, vice president, president, chairman of the pension and welfare fund, assistant business manager, and finally, Local 688 business manager for nine years. In that position, he helped increase man-hours for construction wiremen by 28 percent and received multiple awards for his role in organizing workers and negotiating fair contracts in his jurisdiction.

He also was active in several civic and charitable organizations in Mansfield, volunteering or serving on the boards for the local chapters of the AFL-CIO, Catholic Charities, American Red Cross and the United Way.

Brother Cooper moved to Las Vegas in 2002 to be with his wife, Gina, and worked for Local 396 as assistant business manager. During that time, he was a leader in the organizing of five new bargaining units at Nevada Power Company.

Brother Cooper moved to the I.B.E.W. Fourth District office as an international representative in 2006. Then-International President Edwin D. Hill appointed him vice president



I.B.E.W. International Secretary-Treasurer
and Local 688 member Kenneth W. Cooper

five years later — replacing Brother Chilia, who became secretary-treasurer. Brother Cooper was elected later that year at the International Convention in Vancouver and was re-elected at the 2016 convention in St. Louis.

As vice president, he instituted a 100-day program for new business managers, through which he and his staff would work with each of them to develop a series of goals to reach early in his or her tenure. Not only was it a good education for the business managers, it also improved communication and developed a sense of working together within the district, Brother Cooper said.

During his tenure, the I.B.E.W. organized nearly 1,500 workers at Asplundh, an international tree-trimming service, with many of them in the Fourth District. He also oversaw the successful organization of 1,400 workers at

Baltimore Gas and Electric last January.

"Kenny's time as a vice president and business manager shows he's a leader who gets things done and will be able to maintain the strong financial position that is so important to all our brothers and sisters," International President Lonnie R. Stephenson said while appointing Brother Cooper as secretary-treasurer.



Brother Kenny Cooper (right, in red shorts) rides on the Local 688 float in a parade in 1990.



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local No. 688 100th Anniversary Celebration Gala

Saturday, May 27, 2017

5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

James W. Kehoe Center
175 Mansfield Avenue (Route 39), Shelby, Ohio

Social Hour5:30-6:30 p.m.
Invocation, Introductions and Dinner.....6:30-7:30 p.m.
(Dinner of New York Strip Steak and Roasted Chicken Breast)
Music and Entertainment7:30-11:00 p.m.
(Provided by Sound Sensations)



OUR PAST HAS ENABLED OUR CENTURY OF SUCCESS AND PROMISING FUTURE

Thank you for commemorating I.B.E.W. Local 688's 100th anniversary along with our officers and members!

One century ago, the 26 men who would become the charter members of Local 688 had a vision of a safer and more prosperous workplace. On May 17, 1917, they received a charter from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in the City of Mansfield.

These forefathers and those who followed built a union that has withstood through good times and not-so-good times.

As we celebrate the 100-years of accomplishments since, we must remember those ladies and gentlemen who came before us and gave their time and efforts to make our local's first century possible.

What's more, the future of Local 688 looks good for those willing to invest in the trade. Our apprenticeship and training program has assembled its own training facility to build upon since the purchase of the 67 South Walnut Street building in 2000 to serve as the local's union hall. Each year, classroom situations for apprentices are improved to better serve the industry.

Apprenticeship is also being involved in many high-level conversations as an alternative to college.

All of that has been made possible because of Local 688's first 100 years!

Fraternally,

Carl Neutzling, Business Manager
I.B.E.W. Local No. 688



This book was proudly produced by

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I.B.E.W. Local 688 and Union Histories give special thanks to the following for their contributions to this book

Curtis Bateman, Manager and Curator, I.B.E.W. Museum
Local 688 Retired Members Club
Mansfield Public Library, John Sherman Room Local History Center

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Art Direction: Andy Taucher
Layout & Design: Steven Demanett



THE 100-YEAR HISTORY OF I.B.E.W. LOCAL NO. 688

A Powerful Presence for Mansfield and North Central Ohio



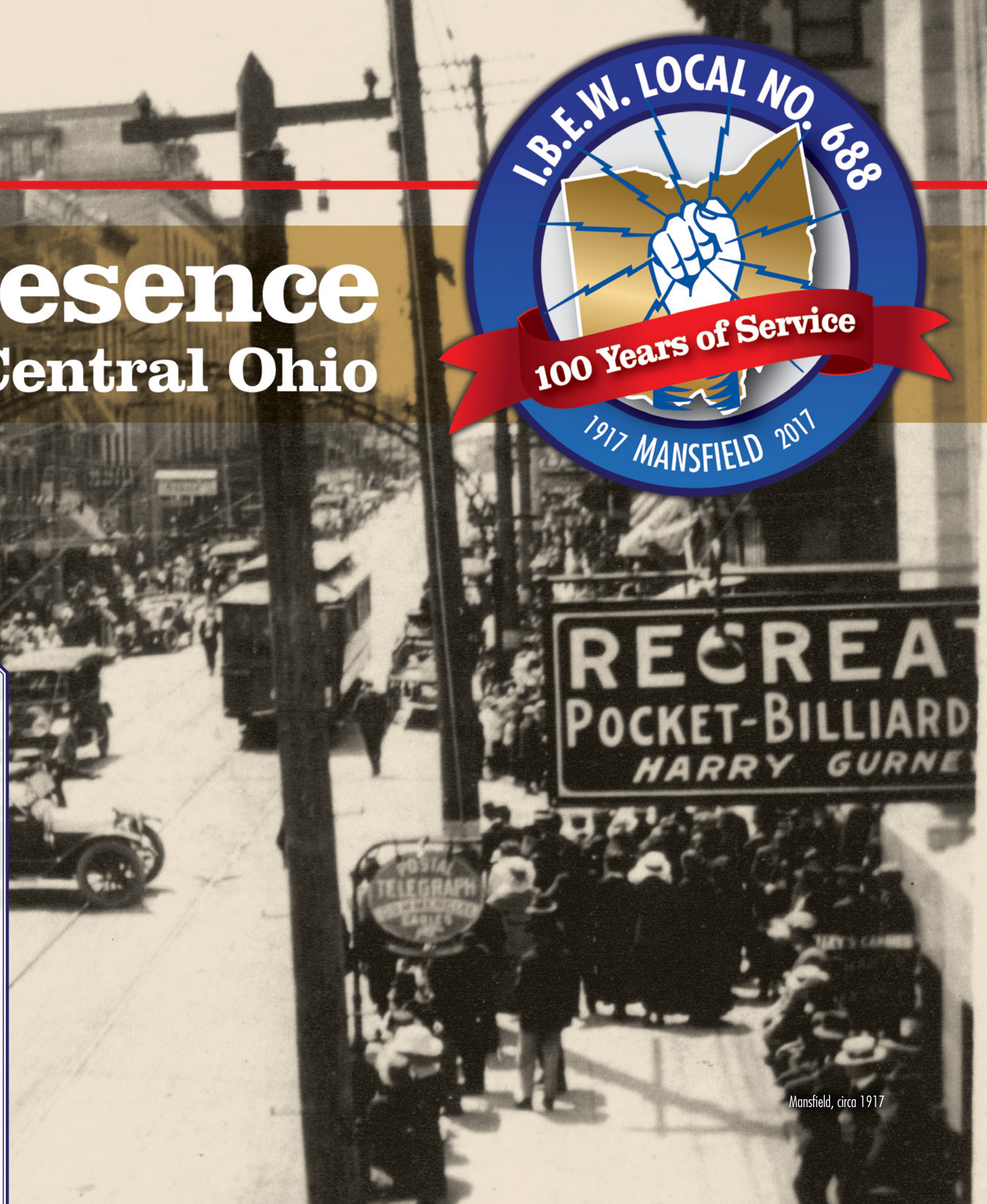
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local No. 688 of Mansfield, Ohio, held its first informal organizing meeting sometime during the middle of May 1917 in a wagon as its initial members were riding to work. Soon after, on May 18, 1917, the newly formed local held its first official meeting in the city's Building Trades Council Hall, for which the proceedings were recorded in the local's meeting minutes:

"The first order of business was the initiating of all new members."

So began the first 100 years for Local No. 688, for which just the day before, 26 men had been chartered on May 17, 1917, as a mixed inside wiremen and outside linemen local of the I.B.E.W. The initiation fee for entrance into the local was \$3, after which dues were initially \$1 per month.

Overseeing that first meeting was acting president Brother W. W. Ingalls (an organizer from Syracuse, New York, who was a member of I.B.E.W. Local 79 in that city), with Brother John W. Wood as acting financial secretary and Brother Lester A. Raby as acting recording secretary. Eventually that evening, the local's first slate of officers was elected: Brother E. F. Balliet as the local's first president, Brother Y. M. Gilbert as vice president, Brother Ingalls as business agent and press secretary, Brother Wood as financial secretary, Brother Raby as recording secretary and Brother C. E. Laneman as inspector.

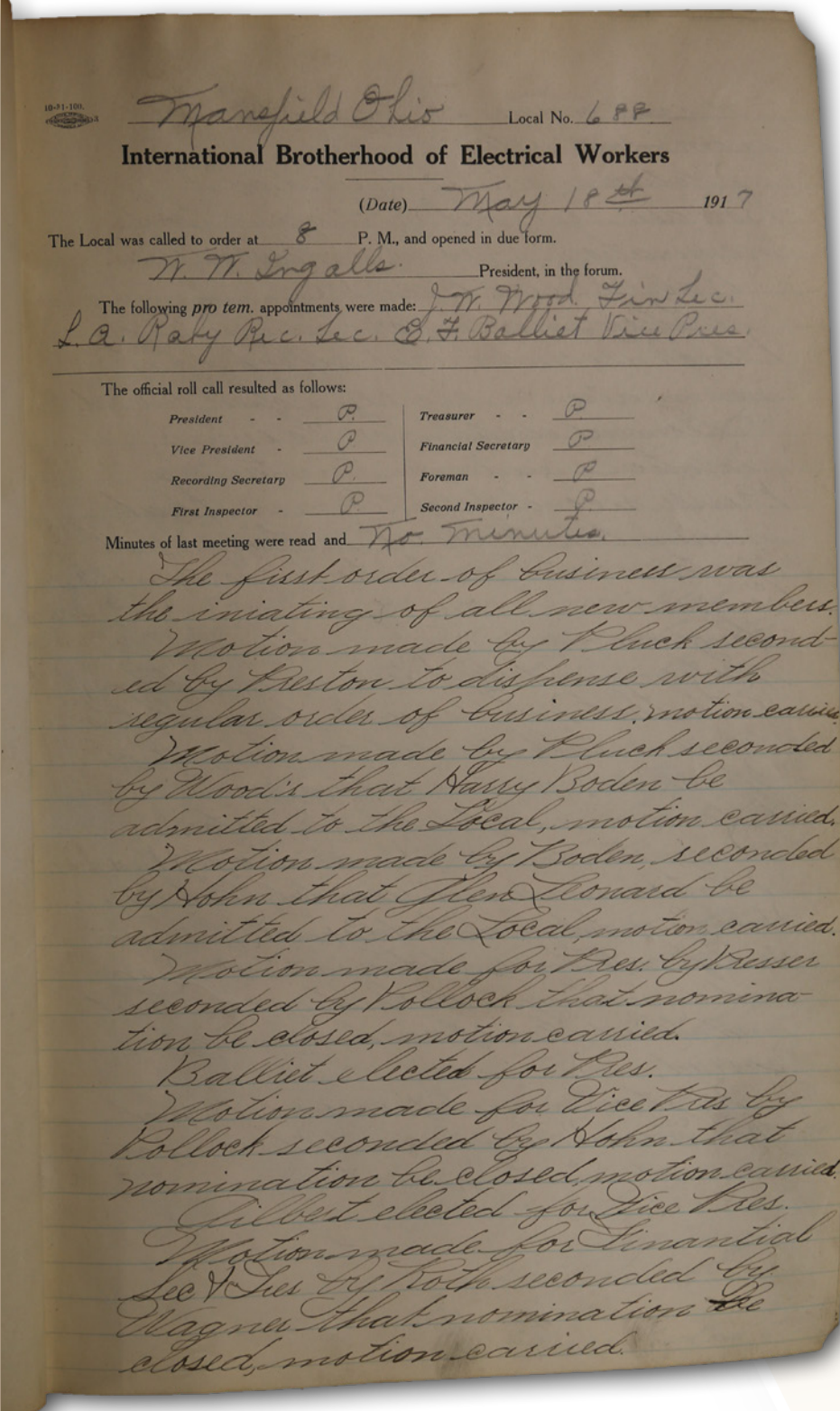
The local also approved renting the Building Trades Council Hall for "an indefinite time" at \$2 per month, in which it would hold meetings every first and third Friday of each month.



Mansfield, circa 1917



I.B.E.W. Local 688 charter, dated May 17, 1917



Minutes of the first official general membership meeting of I.B.E.W. Local 688 on May 18, 1917.

EVOLVING THE 'MIXED' LOCAL

Local 688 was not the first attempt by electrical workers in Mansfield to organize with the I.B.E.W. Less than two years before it was formed, mixed inside wiremen and outside linemen Local No. 543 was chartered in the city on March 31, 1915. However, it was defunct by April 1917.

To help assure its survival, Local 688 almost immediately joined the Mansfield Building Trades Council, voting on June 5, 1917, to enter the organization and send three delegates to its next meeting. (The Council was granted a charter by the Ohio State Building Trades in July 1916 and was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor).

However, the local soon found out that it was “up against a stiff proposition,” as new press secretary Brother W. J. Longacre declared in the June 1917 I.B.E.W. Electrical Worker journal. In fact, the local’s primary employers, the Bell Home Telephone Company and the Mansfield Light and Power Company, laid off eight members, respectively, after learning that their employees were organizing. But the local fought right back, getting the Building Trades Council and the “sympathy” of the public behind it in order to force the companies to rehire the union members – which they did within two weeks.

Meanwhile, work was good for the fledgling but already-growing Local 688, whose linemen were the only ones in the state making more in wages than their brother inside wiremen at the time. The local was even able to



BROTHER GEORGE BAST.

Whereas, It has pleased our Heavenly Father to call from our midst Brother George Bast, by electrocution; therefore be it
Resolved, That we, the members of L. U. No. 688, I. B. E. W., take this our opportunity to express our sincere sympathy; and be it further
Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to our official Journal for publication.

William Barger, Pres.

April 1918 I.B.E.W. *Electrical Worker* Journal entry following the death of traveling Brother George Bast of Local 286, who was electrocuted on a job at the corner of Third and Main streets while working for the Mansfield Light and Power Company on January 5.

find work for some traveling I.B.E.W. brothers who came to Mansfield during the local's initial months, with construction of a new Westinghouse Electric appliances plant that would open in the city in 1918 one of the key sources of jobs.

By August 1917, Local 688 was also attempting to organize the operators at Bell, which had not previously been attempted in the city. (That effort would not come to fruition for another few decades, however.)

Conditions for the local remained favorable into the following year, especially for members working for the Light and Power Company. They received a raise in early 1918 from \$4.05 to \$4.45 per day, and their new agreement also included a clause providing for no lost time for rainy weather.

Work was also plentiful for those members, as the company had just begun to rebuild its plant in Ashland, Ohio, just to the north of Mansfield. With nearly all of the electrical workers working on the job being in the union, "the boys wear their monthly (union) buttons in plain sight, which shows their spirit," Brother Longacre announced in the March 1918 *Electrical Worker*.

Members employed with Home Telephone were not as fortunate, having not yet received a raise from their \$3.60-per-day scale by that time – although all electrical workers at the company were in the union. A few months later, the local's persistence (which included a petition campaign) paid off with an increase for

the phone members, who by May 1918 were being paid \$4.23 per day – the second-highest rate in the state, behind only Cleveland's telephone workers.

After a "little fight" (during which some members were "permitted to take a vacation of six months twice a year," new Local 688 President W. E.

Barger explained in the May *Electrical Worker*), Local 688 linemen with the Light and Power Company received a second raise by May. With the dismissed workers finding plenty of alternative employment opportunities in the local's jurisdiction, including jobs with the phone company, the Power Company members soon received an increase to \$4.50 per nine-hour day.

Abundant work remained available for the local's 45 members and any travelers who came to town, too, as the Ohio Light and Power Company was building a large transmission line out of the city. Members were also being employed by the Richland Public Service Company.

By June 1919, all of the electrical contractors in the city had signed an agreement for closed shops. What's more, before the end of the year, \$3 million worth of work was already contracted by the local's employers for the coming summer.

DEALING WITH ADVERSITIES

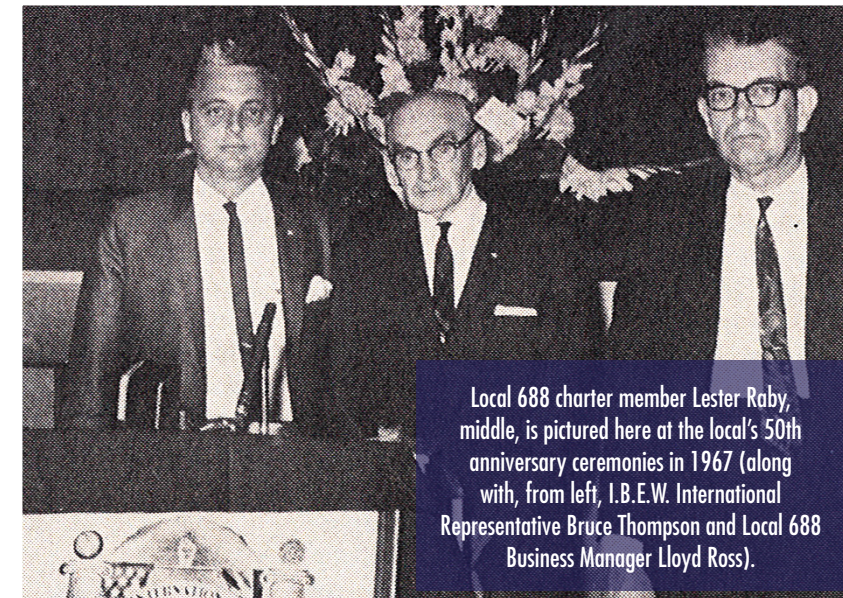
With the new decade, Local 688 was demanding a new, groundbreaking wage rate of \$1 per hour for the coming year. Contractors, however, were set on paying only 85 cents per hour – which the local learned in February 1920 during a Building Trades Council meeting with the Builders Exchange, in which City of Mansfield construction trades contractors were allied since they formed the association a couple years earlier to help negotiate contracts, among other functions.

I.B.E.W. LOCAL 688 CHARTER MEMBERS

A. A. Adams
Ollie Adams
E. F. Balliet
H. L. Bowden
J. F. Cornwall
Harry Gatton
Y. M. Gilbert
H. W. Haun
J. E. Haun

Cleve Heffelfinger
W. W. Ingalls
C. E. Laneman
Don Leonard
Glen B. Leonard
W. J. Longacre
Thomas Moffett
D. A. Penn
N. A. Pluck

H. L. Pollock
A. N. Preston
Lester A. Raby
C. H. Ralf
Harvey Rantz
Charles Wagner
John W. Wood
W. T. Zellner



Local 688 charter member Lester Raby, middle, is pictured here at the local's 50th anniversary ceremonies in 1967 (along with, from left, I.B.E.W. International Representative Bruce Thompson and Local 688 Business Manager Lloyd Ross).

BROTHER RABY WAS FINAL LIVING CHARTER MEMBER

Local 688 charter member Lester Raby, the local's last surviving charter member, passed away in 1974 at age 76. Brother Raby served 31 years as a contractor, employing many I.B.E.W. members during that time, and had recalled the "battle and hardships" to secure better working conditions.

He had also said he was "happy to state that he never had any labor disputes in his business career." Brother Raby often expressed his appreciation for the importance of apprenticeship training and union education that the local union adopted.

LOCAL 688 UNION HALLS/MEETING LOCATIONS

Trades Council Hall, 21-1/2 North Park Street
May 1917 to 1943

37-1/2 East 3rd Street
1943 to 1946

44-1/2 West 6th Street
1946 to December 1948

117-1/2 North Main Street
December 1948 to 1954
(This location also served as headquarters for the Mansfield Building Trades Council.)

101-1/2 North Main Street
1954 to 1959

200 Wilmar Avenue
1959 to 1967

1221 Park Avenue
1967 to 1974

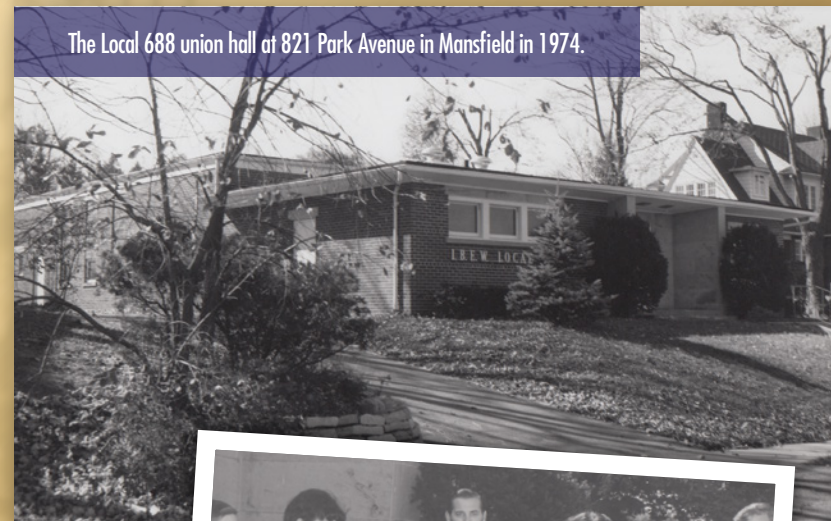
821 Park Avenue
1974 to 2000
(This was the first building ever purchased by Local 688.)

67 South Walnut Street
2000 to present
(This is the Local 688 union hall at its 100th Anniversary.)

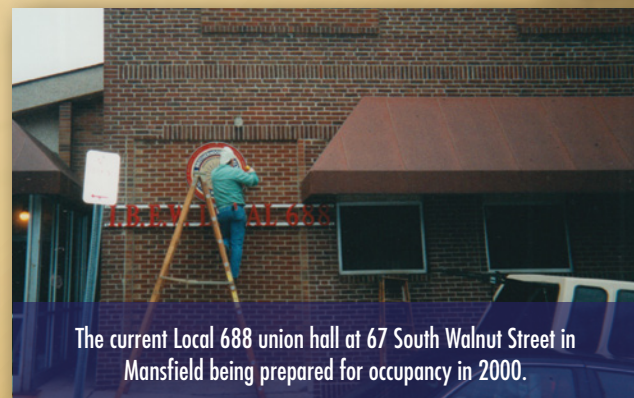
The Trades Council Hall at 21-1/2 North Park Street in Mansfield during the early 1940s.



The Local 688 union hall at 821 Park Avenue in Mansfield in 1974.



Local 688 Business Manager Harold Ebersole (right) greets guests during the open house for the local's new union hall at 821 Park Avenue on September 22, 1974.



The current Local 688 union hall at 67 South Walnut Street in Mansfield being prepared for occupancy in 2000.



But work in the area stalled by 1921, leaving the local's inside wiremen idle for much of the time, while Light Company employees were also still waiting for a new contract.

Four years later, the local was very much back on its feet; 100 percent of the Power and Light's line department was with the union, as well as many of its inside men. However, the phone company's linemen were no longer organized, thanks to "a bunch of hammerheads running that outfit who can't see the advantage to themselves and their men to have union working for them," the local's press secretary wrote in the April 1925 *Electrical Worker*. "Also, they have a lot of white mice trailers in their line department who would squeal on any man or men who did want to do the right thing."

It was the **Great Depression**, which threw the entire nation into unprecedented economic chaos after the stock market crashed in October 1929, that most severely thwarted Local 688. In fact, the entire industrialized City of Mansfield fell victim to the fiscal and subsequent human adversity of the era, reaching an overall unemployment rate of nearly 50 percent in 1935 (although that figure was far below that of other similar, mid-western towns and all of the nation's large cities.) Furthermore, by 1934 the number of firms in Mansfield had decreased to 64 from 81 companies just three years earlier.

Local 688 was not immune, but its membership worked to counter the effects of the Depression. For instance, during its March 10, 1931, general meeting, the local voted to pay the dues of members who were out of work.

Throughout Mansfield and Richland County, the Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration job-creation measures of the federal government's New Deal program provided multiple basic and large projects, including the construction of a municipal

airport, and subsequently hastened the region's recovery. In fact, the "period of great crisis" essentially came to an end in Mansfield in 1935, during which employment in the area reached its 1929 peak.

Soon after, Local 688 was also nearly back in full operation. In January 1937, for example, the local appointed a committee to draw up an ordinance "pertaining to the licensing of contractors in the City of Mansfield."



Park Theater

Like many building trades locals in the city, Local 688 left the Mansfield Building Trades Council during the Depression (most likely for a lack of funds to pay dues to the Council) and, as a result, the Council ceased operations for several years. The organization reorganized in 1936 with 250 members at first – it had 500 members in 1929 before the Depression hit – and in February 1938, the local contributed \$10 to the Council, which it had since rejoined.

Flexing its re-discovered muscle, the Building Trades Council on November 21, 1938, requested to the city's Board of Education that "union workers be given preference for skilled jobs on the two \$450,000 junior high schools to be built in the city within the next year," the *Mansfield News Journal* reported the following



day. Subsequently, the schools, including **Johnny Appleseed Junior High School** on Cline Avenue, were built the following year and into 1940 using Local 688 craftsmen.

Meanwhile, the local's members were also employed on jobs at the **Ohio State Reformatory** (also known as the Mansfield Reformatory), which had been built between 1886 and 1910, and the 1,300-seat **Park Theatre** at 38 South Park Street, which opened September 15, 1938 (and would close May 23, 1958).

TAKING ON NEW CHALLENGES

In March 1938, Local 688 officers announced that a meeting had been arranged with the linemen of the Mansfield Telephone Company to discuss organizing into the local. Nearly a year later, the local during its February 14, 1939, meeting accepted the applications of 12 phone company linemen.

The I.B.E.W. International Office then amended Local 688's charter to classify it as a "B" local on February 21, 1939, to permit additional Mansfield Telephone Company employees, including switchers and truck drivers, to join the union. On March 1, Local B-688 **President L. T. Hout** announced that about 37 employees of Mansfield Telephone were organized the night before, the *News Journal* reported, creating a new **Telephone Division** within the local. The new members represented nearly 100 percent of the linemen, switchers and truck drivers employed by the company, according to Brother Hout.

With the telephone workers, Local B-688 membership increased to 90 total brothers. Meanwhile, the local had also signed three closed-shop agreements with three electrical supply dealers and contractors in Mansfield – **Richland Electric**, **National Electric** and **Raby Electric** – and another in Shelby – **Citizens Electric Company**.



The local concurrently helped organize the female operators at Mansfield Telephone into **I.B.E.W. Local No. B-1132**, which was chartered on March 24, 1939. **Sister Mary E. Miller** served as the local's first recording secretary and **Sister Mariam Bean** as its first financial secretary.

On April 28, 1939, Local B-688 signed its first-ever agreement with the Mansfield Telephone Company. The one-year contract, which was effective April 16, provided journeyman linemen with an 85-cent-per-hour wage, cable-splicers with \$1 per hour, troublemen with 85 cents per hour and installers with 80 cents per hour.

The local's electrical members during the late 1930s and into the 1940s were involved with a large amount of public school construction work in Mansfield, including a gymnasium addition to **Mansfield High School**. Work elsewhere continued to improve for the local's electricians and linemen in 1940 and beyond, as projects such as two new buildings at the Westinghouse plant and a new General Electric plant in Bucyrus, which would be completed in 1942, provided new jobs.

With Local B-688's membership approaching 100, the local for the first time sent a delegate to the I.B.E.W. International convention when **Brother David Creps** attended the 1941 conference.

As Press Secretary L. M. Kelly declared in the February 1944 I.B.E.W. *Journal of Electrical Workers*, Local 688 was "very busy during the early 1940s" as the United States and its allies fought World War II. At the same time, the local "had a good number of boys in the service," as well.

The local further did its part for the war effort by purchasing war bonds, approving on April 27, 1943, a 1-1/2-percent assessment on members working jobs that paid over \$1.62-1/2 per hour to pay for the bonds. The local had waited until its treasury – which had been sapped during the Depression years – was at \$2,000 before it bought any bonds.

That day, the local also passed another 1-1/2-percent "welfare assessment" to be collected from all members in its jurisdiction, from which 25 percent of the fund would be used to pay the dues of members in the armed forces. The remaining funds would be held in a **Welfare Fund** "to be used to pay members' dues in hard times or sickness."

Meanwhile, Local 688 continued its slow growth. As of January 25, 1944, the local numbered 126 members, consisting of 93 journeymen, 10 helpers (or apprentices) and 23 telephone members.

LOCAL 688 BUSINESS MANAGERS

Richard M. Curry
1931 to 1939

Leon T. Hout
1939 to 1940

Dave Creps
1940 to 1943

Harry Calhoun
1943 to July 1946

Merle Pittenger
July 1946 to October 1947

R. Schneider
October 1947 to July 1948

Samuel K. Dinkel
July 1948 to August 1951

Lloyd S. Ross
August 1951 to October 1969

Harold Ebersole
October 1969 to August 1982

Joseph Marzetti
August 1982 to October 1990

James Tackett
October 1990 to September 1993

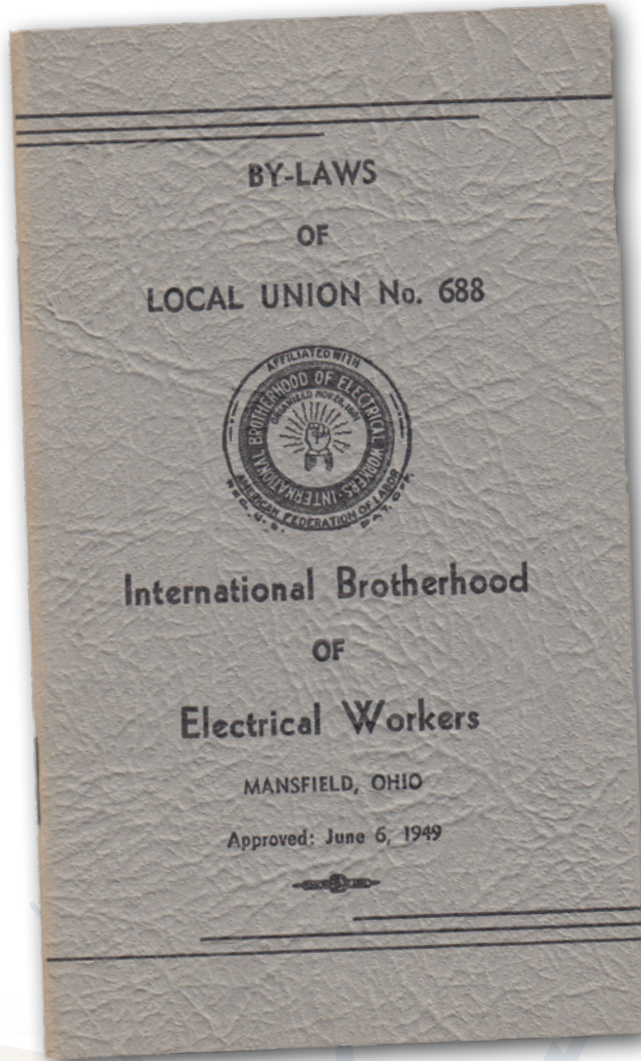
Kenneth W. Cooper
September 1993 to October 2001

Gaylord Rice Jr.
October 2001 to July 2005

Carl W. Neutzling
July 2005 to present

Electrical crew working on the new General Electric plant in Bucyrus in 1942 from Local 688: (back row, left to right) Ray Schaff, "Shorty" Schwartz, E. P. "Doggie" Long, Leo Russell, Local 683 Brother Connie Snyder, Otto Davis and Lewis Schroeder; (center row) O. Hoover, C. A. Neer, Local 683 Brother Floyd Engle, Sam Creps and G. C. Merritt; and (front row) Dave Creps, Bob Martin, Gail Peterson, Local 683 Brother Gil Buckingham, Ray "Red" Foster and "Brownie" Lang.





During the mid-1940s, the local won representation of the field electrical workers of the **Firelands Electric Cooperative** based in New London, Ohio, which had been formed in 1938, adding more members to its roll – and beginning a long-lasting relationship with the user-owned utility. *(A vote on August 25, 1975, to represent the co-op's six clerical workers would be defeated in a 3-3 draw.)*

Throughout most of the balance of the 1940s, the Local 688 electrical membership was fully employed and its jurisdiction was in “good shape,” as **Business Manager Samuel Dinkel** declared at a meeting in August 1948. During that time, a new contract went into effect on November 11, 1946, for \$1.70 per hour for journeyman electricians.

Local 688 also become involved in a highly publicized, newspaper-labeled “revolt” at the Ideal Electric Company in Mansfield in 1948, in which union employees of United Electrical Workers Local No. 758 rebelled against their international for allegedly electing “communists” to offices. When the I.B.E.W. attempted to organize the workers late that year, the National Labor Relations Board called for an election – through which Ideal Employees ultimately voted in April 1950 to remain with their current union.

HIS 'N' HER PHONE CONTRACTS

Mansfield Telephone Company's female operators of I.B.E.W. Local B-1132 were merged into Local B-688 on September 1, 1949. Accordingly, during the following years, Local 688 and the telephone company would negotiate two separate contracts – one for “Male Employees” and one for “Female Employees” that were labeled as such.

The one-year agreement beginning April 1, 1954, between Local 688 and Mansfield Telephone for “Male Employees” gave the company's journeyman linemen a pay rate of \$1.86 per hour. Cable-splicers received a raise to \$2.03 an hour, first switchmen \$1.97 per hour and installers and troublemen \$1.86 per hour, and the contract also set stepped wages, based on experience levels, for apprentices and helpers.

Operators also received a new one-year pact that day, providing the local's female members with a new wage of 92 cents per hour for those with one to three months of experience, up to \$1.255 per hour for those with more than 85 months with the company. Supervisors received a raise to \$1.345 per hour and record clerks went up to \$1.405 per hour.

Out in the electrical industry, the Local 688 electrical department remained busy through the 1950s – although members still did not have life, health or accidental death insurance,

paid vacation and paid holiday benefits by 1954. In the field, however, they were kept well-employed on various projects including construction of the new **General Motors (GM) Fisher Body stamping plant** just to the west of Mansfield in Ontario beginning in 1954.

The plant would generate substantial man-hours for the local over the coming decades. What's more, it spurred the growth of the City of Ontario, which would soon become a mix of farms and suburban subdivisions and grow into a retail hub for the county with shopping strips, big-box stores and the **Richland Mall**, which Local 688 would help build in the late 1960s.

Meanwhile, the local remained vigilant in its efforts to protect itself and its jurisdiction. To those ends, Local 688 signed on as a charter member of the city's first **Mansfield Area Trades and Industrial Council**, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, in November 1958 (three years after the AFL-CIO was formed with the merger of

In 1953, Local 688 classifications changed from a “mixed” local to Inside (i), Outside (o), Rural Electric Cooperative (rea) and Telephone (t).

the rival American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955).

Then on September 1, 1959, Local 688 won a victory after a week-long picket at the construction site of the city airport's new \$115,000 terminal building. That day, the project's contractor, Ink Electric Company, agreed to hire a union electrician to do the work on the terminal, which the non-union employer had previously been performing himself.

A merger of the Mansfield Telephone Company into **United Utilities, Inc.**, that was announced on February 16, 1965, placed members of the Local 688 telephone



Local 688 Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee members and apprentices during the local's J.A.T.C. banquet at the San Dar restaurant in Bellville, Ohio, in 1952: (standing, left to right): a J.A.T.C. instructor, Chairman Richard DeLong, contractor Bill Cron, Harry Troxel, Clayton Smith, Norm Smith, Fred Baldof, Russ Graham and Dick Ralston; and (seated) Berny Miller, Forrest DeLong, Freddy Baughman, Roy Dille, Chuck Quicksall, Toby Kelly and Harry Osbern.



Local 688 apprentice Richard Ralston receives his graduation certificate from I.B.E.W. International Representative H. B. Blankenship while National Joint Apprentice Committee representative Bill Damon looks on in 1955.

department under a new employer: **Mansfield-United Telephone Company**. At the time and going forward, the new 45,000-customer holding would be United's largest and its Ohio operations would be managed in Mansfield, the *News Journal* reported that day.

Employment for Local 688 electrical workers remained stable during the 1960s, boosted by regional industry such as the **R. R. Donnelley** printing plant in Willard, Ohio, where up to 200 electricians were working at times. The company doubled the size of the facility in 1970, providing more jobs to the local in the process.

But at the time, it was the area's flourishing steel mills, including **AK Steel**, that primarily boosted employment for the local's electricians. Over the following decades, shutdowns to re-tool and upgrade the plants would even bring in many I.B.E.W. travelers for the abundant work.

Local 688 celebrated its 50th anniversary on May 20, 1967, with a dinner party at the hall

of International Union of Electronic Workers Local 711 (which represented Westinghouse plant employees). Since it was founded half a century earlier, the local had grown to 400 members working in inside and outside construction, telephone operations and rural electrical cooperatives, while the local was busy in Ashland, Richland, Morrow, Crawford and Marion counties and some locations in Knox, Wyandot and Huron countries.

The *Journal* described some of the anniversary-celebration festivities:

"As the members and guests entered the gayly (sic) decorated hall, each woman was given a lovely corsage and each man was presented with a pen and pencil set."

The following year, Local 688 members were joined into the nationwide I.B.E.W. **Welfare Fund** insurance program.

START OF A TROUBLING TREND

Just four years after the telephone unit merger, Local 688 operators in late April and early May 1969 waged a nine-day strike against United Telephone Company of Ohio over higher pay and improved benefits. The operators eventually won a new, 23-month contract, which they approved on May 9.

Then later that year on October 6, all 123 of Local 688's repairman and installer members working for United Telephone walked off their jobs in a wildcat strike. According to Local 688 **Secretary Carlton Bemiller**, the walkout "resulted from the three-day suspension of 15 men who refuse to work Saturday night," the *News Journal* reported that day. "The men, reportedly ordered to work from 8 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., refused to return to work because they had already put in 40 hours work for the week."

The telephone workers returned to their jobs the next morning after company officials agreed to cancel the suspensions of the 15 members would had refused to work. The company also conceded to give employees 24-hour notice of scheduled overtime weekend work, and it also promised to investigate alleged mistreatment of workers by a particular supervisor.

Less than two years later, the members of Local 688 telephone plant- and operator-units – which by that time were servicing about 58,000 telephones – went out on a prolonged strike beginning midnight on March 31, 1971, to gain higher wages and benefits. The employees did not return to work until May 10, having ratified a three-year contract proposal the day before, with the operators voting 36 to 22 to accept and plant personnel voting 81 to 41 in favor of the agreement.

The new contract increased total wages for plant personnel by 31.4 percent, with the top craft rate increasing immediately from \$4.04 per hour to \$4.51 and to \$5.31 on April 1, 1973. It raised the top hourly rate of operators from \$2.58 to \$2.90 immediately, and that rate would become



Local 688 members and guests enjoy the local's 55th anniversary celebration in 1972.



Local 688 members and guests at the open house for the local's new union hall at 821 Park Avenue on September 22, 1974.

\$3.50 April 1, 1973. Fringe benefits in the contract included improved vacation benefits, an additional holiday and additional maternity and disability benefits, according to the May 9 *News Journal*.

Expansion of the Timken manufacturing plant in Bucyrus in 1971 and 1972 and construction of the **Crestline High School** in 1971 employed several Local 688 electrical workers during those years. But challenging times were ahead for the local, as the regional economy was beginning a steep and prolonged downward trend during which one plant after another shut down, including Dominion Electric in 1971, Mansfield Tire and Rubber in 1978, Hoover Plastics in 1980, National

Seating in 1985, Tappan Stoves in 1986 and a Westinghouse plant and Ohio Brass in 1990.

By August 1972, the local had many members out of work, although some were able to find employment with other locals, and **Business Manager Harold Ebersole** reported in that month's *Journal*, "Working conditions in the Local 688 territory have been poor." Two years later, and it was more of the same; inside electrical work in 1974 in the local's jurisdiction remained at a "low level."

Several of the local's electricians were unemployed in September of that year when the local moved into its new office building and union hall at **821 Park Avenue** – the first building the local ever purchased.

Meanwhile, the local's power companies had "succeeded in shutting down almost all the line work," Brother Ebersole reported in the December 1974 *Journal*, leaving most Local 688 linemen out of work at the time. In the following year's February issue, he announced, "Outside work in the distribution area is still at a standstill."

Unemployment throughout the local remained into 1975 as building materials were

also scarce in the region, compounding the construction industry's already precarious situation. While a small amount of substation work was able to keep some brothers busy, the glut increased as the year progressed, even reaching the highest unemployment rate the local had seen "in many years," the *Journal* reported as early as June.

United Telephone workers were affected by the economic slump as well, and in early 1975, the local's traffic and plant units experienced their first layoffs in "many years." The traffic unit lost nine operators, while the plant unit lost one installer repairman and two central office equipment-maintenance men.

Of course, Local 688 did not sit idly by. For example, by June, it was in the process of advertising to the public some of the nonunion



Local 688 lifetime members at the local's 60th anniversary celebration in 1977.

work that was going on in its area.

Soon after, a Local 688 **Vacation Fund** and pension contributions to the I.B.E.W. **Pension Fund** were established January 2, 1976, through a new contract with employers. As part of the agreement, 85-cent-per-hour and 30-cent-per-hour withholdings, respectively, from each member's pay were initially contributed to the vacation and pension benefits.



Local 688 members picket United Telephone Company facilities in Mansfield on April 23, 1977, during a strike by the local's telephone unit caused by a contract dispute over wage increases for 13 clerical workers. (Photo by and courtesy of Jeff Sprang/*Mansfield News Journal*.)

CLUB FOR LOCAL 688 RETIREES ESTABLISHED OVER 40 YEARS AGO

Local 688 retirees organized a Retired Members Club in 1975 with 45 initial members. The group received its charter on September 18, 1975 – and remains active as the local celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2017.

Brother Lloyd Ross, a former Local 688 business manager, was the club's first chairman. Brother Merle Pittenger, a former Local 688 recording secretary, took on that same position for the retirees.



On September 8, 1977, the Utility (u) classification was added to Local 688 while Rural Electric Cooperative was removed, after which the local was representing Inside, Outside, Utility and Telephone members.

After a master contract was settled in March 1977, member linemen and operators again struck at United Telephone for one day on April 27 after 13 clerical employees did not receive the 9-percent pay hike given to the other 200 IBEW members. All-day negotiations between the local and the company resolved the problem, which was the result of contract language, the *News Journal* reported on April 28.

The local's inside electrical workers employed by member contractors of the **North Central Ohio Chapter of NECA**, Central Division, also gained a new, three-year contract beginning June 1, 1977. In addition to wage increases, beginning that first day of the agreement a 45-cent-per-hour contribution was made into the Local 688 Welfare Fund, while vacation deductions were increased to \$1 per hour and pension contributions were increased to 50 cents per hour.

With the agreement, journeyman-wiremen wages were raised to \$11.35 per hour the first 6 months, \$11.50 the following six months and then to \$12.30 for the balance of the contract.

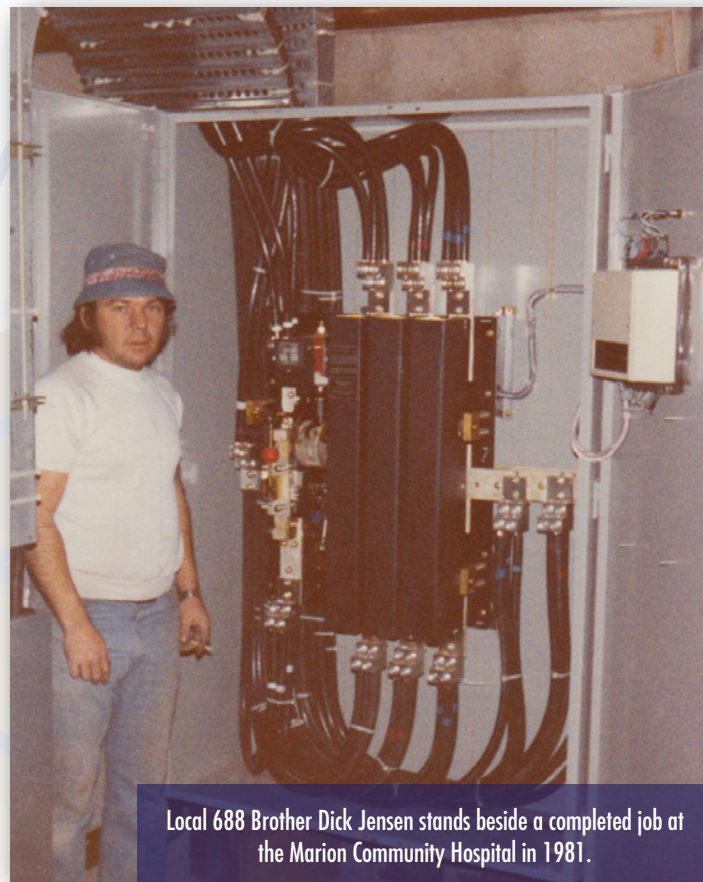
Trouble was brewing, however, within the local's Firelands Electric Cooperative unit, whose members began what would become a protracted strike on July 22, 1977, over a new contract after having been working without an agreement since the previous one expired in May. Compounding the issue was the company's decision to use an out-of-

state negotiating attorney, through whom "regardless of what we prepare, the company turns these down," Brother Ebersole declared.

After almost four months, an agreement was finally reached between Firelands Co-op and the local – without the help of the co-op's "out-of-state, union-busting attorney," the business manager crowed in the February 1978 *Journal*.

But despite some spikes in hiring during the previous year, construction employment was still down in mid-1979. Brother Ebersole warned in the August 1979 *Journal*, "The non-union element is always lurking around every corner" as the local continued its picket duties "in an effort to control this problem area."

What's more, problems with the telephone units were on the rise. While many company officials had recently been replaced, the local's situation within United nonetheless continued to worsen – an ominous sign of things to come.



Local 688 Brother Dick Jensen stands beside a completed job at the Marion Community Hospital in 1981.



Local 688 operator members Linda Kiner (left) and Nancy Suter train on new computerized telephone directory equipment in 1981.

ENDURING MORE PUNCHES

Into the 1980s, work in the Local 688 jurisdiction remained slow. Compounding the situation, plants in the area were laying off production people, which eventually took the local's maintenance workers out of those facilities.

During the early months of the new decade, for the first time ever the local's inside agreement went to the Council on Industrial Relations for arbitration. In the end, the Council gave the local "a better settlement than the contractors wanted to give," Brother Ebersole announced in the August 1980 *Journal*.

But work for both the inside and outside members later that year was as slow as it had been "in many years." By April 1981, about 25 percent of the membership was unemployed or working out of town, and by November 1981, the Firelands Cooperative unit was down to just nine members (while 18 company-employed people were working for the utility.)

An historic economic recession that crippled the nation and the Local 688 jurisdiction through much of 1981 and 1982 exacerbated the local's condition. **Business Manager Joe Marzetti** even reported during the November 9, 1982, general membership meeting,

LOCAL 688 A GOOD NEIGHBOR WITHIN ITS COMMUNITY

In 1918, as American troops – including five Local 688 members – were off fighting in World War I, the local "went on record" during a meeting to approve a War Chest Plan to help fund the war effort. The local also appointed a special committee to work in conjunction with a labor union committee that would work to secure pledges for the chest.

During a century since, Local 688 has continued to support community causes. In 1992, in fact, the local formed a **Civic Committee** to plan ways in which its members could make public-service contributions to the community – with its very first project involving volunteer work on a lighting project at the Friendly House, a local youth center.

Over the years, volunteers from the Local 688 membership have also given their time, talents and resources to help regularly with a wide range of efforts, such as the Marion Popcorn Festival, Richland County Habitat for Humanity, United Way, the Ontario Fourth of July Festival, and the annual Make-A-Difference food drive to help stock food banks located in Richland County. Additional contributions have been made to multiple other projects in the region, including the Richland County Blockhouse, Harmony House, Mansfield Central Park Gazebo, Richland County Land Bank and the Domestic Violence Shelter.

In 2016, the local also began hanging decorative Christmas wreaths for the Richland Community Development Group Beautification Sector's Christmas decoration project in downtown Mansfield.

Continued after the following spread.

LOCAL 688 MAINTAINS A STRONG COMMITMENT TO TRAINING

'We are determined to make better journeymen.'



Local 688 fourth- and fifth-year apprentices in the Joint Apprentice and Training Committee program's 2006-2007 class: (front, left to right) Andy Studer, Mike Dishon and Rich Rondy; and (back) Ray Daniel, Brian Addington and Dan Lloyd.

When Local 688 Business Manager Lloyd Ross wrote those words for the August 1955 I.B.E.W. *Journal*, he was citing many years of dedication by the local to providing its apprentices and members with the best training possible — a commitment that has continued through to the local's 100th anniversary in 2017.

While early education of its apprentices was less formal, with most training coming on-the-job, by 1920 Local 688 members were required to pass an exam that was administered by the local's Examining Board before becoming union journeyman electrical workers.

By 1923, the local was providing some classroom instruction to apprentices, and even began using an Ohio Public Service store room at 5th and Adams streets in Mansfield to hold classes. Then on October 12, 1937, the local held its first "educational meeting" to discuss enhancing apprentice training.

Continuing efforts to improve its apprenticeship programs, Local 688 appointed committees of its electrical members and its telephone group in February 1942 to "work on (the) apprentice training program."

By 1951, the local's apprenticeship consisted of a four-year program of "related instruction with practical training" that was sponsored by a joint committee of the union and its employing contractors and directed by the National Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (J.A.T.C.) of the I.B.E.W. Upon completion of the four years, an apprentice would have to pass a "qualified examination." (The starting rate for new journeymen at that time was \$55 per week.)

Then on May 4, 1955, the Mansfield J.A.T.C. made its very first presentation of certificates of completion for its program to 12 graduating apprentices during a ceremony and dinner at the San Dar restaurant in Bellville, Ohio.

As Local 688 celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2017, its five-year training program is administered by the **Mansfield Area Electrical J.A.T.C.** and Local 688. Classes are held in a modern training facility within the local's union hall, which features a classroom and three laboratory classrooms, and are taught by four journeyman wireman instructors.

As the J.A.T.C. is in the process of transitioning into blended learning classrooms, with which all homework will be completed online and reviewed by instructors prior to class, 33 apprentices are enrolled in the program, seven of whom are on schedule to complete the five-year program in the summer of 2017.

The Joint Apprentice and Training Committee training center located in the Local 688 union hall at 67 South Walnut Street in Mansfield.





During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, Local 688 softball teams enjoyed a great deal of success, including a squad (left) from the early 1980s, which won the state I.B.E.W. tournament, and a team (right) from the late 1980s, which featured current Business Manager Carl Neutzling (standing, second from left).



“Conditions are poor all over the state,” and at one point in August 1983, 70 of the local’s journeymen were out of work.

After the economy recovered, the local’s anemic work situation was not as quick to improve and remained lackluster through 1984. However, the following year and into 1986, Local 688 members were put back to work and were even hosting travelers at times.

Local 688 Brother Merle Pittenger received his 60-year award during the local’s 70th anniversary dinner-dance on June 7, 1987 – the first such award for that many years ever given by the local.

Meanwhile, the local was growing while other trade locals in the area were losing members; the local’s telephone unit led the increase in membership – although much of it was the result of United Telephone consolidating in other areas.

The respite came to a crashing halt at the end of the decade and into the 1990s when work slowed dramatically and a “long-lasting slump” continued into middle of the final decade of the

millennium. Other locals provided some work for Local 688 members, but the Mansfield union consistently faced hard times; even a new contract in 1991 conceded benefits in exchange for small wage increases, while long-term unemployment persisted into 1993 and members began running out of benefits.

During that time, the local’s telephone members lost 91 jobs in October 1991 when new phone company owner **Sprint** moved operations from Mansfield to the Indianapolis area. On October 10, the unit observed “Black Wednesday” – during which the workers expressed their objections to the move, as futile as their protests were.

COMMITTED TO RECOVERY

Construction of a Meijer “supercenter” store in Ontario and a K-Mart store in Mansfield put most every Local 688 members back to work into 1993, a trend that would continue into the new “Y2K” millennium.

To help spur employment for the local, by 1994 it had started a “stripping” organizing campaign to gain members working on jobsites and turn them union, and its **COPE** (**Committee**



Local 688 members (left to right) Randy Carroll, Robert Pifher, Chris Matthewson, Robert Crumm, Paul Delong, Andy Knapp, Jack Pifher, Roy Sheets and Dick Hannan break during a job at the Mansfield Correctional Institute in 1986 and 1987 while working for Wagner Smith Electric.

on **Political Education**) efforts were increasing. As **Press Secretary Paul Smith** described in the October 1994 *Journal*, “This effort helps shut down non-union hiring practices and it also brings customers to our contractors.”

Before the end of the year, 60 traveling I.B.E.W. members were working in the Local 688 jurisdiction and the local had finally secured a Walmart project in Ashland. What’s more, organizing efforts were making great strides; as a result, by that time, Galion Electric had become a signatory contractor.

Travelers remained on jobs throughout 1995 as employment continued to improve for Local 688 electrical workers.

Most notably, during that year, the local started work on one of the largest projects in which it had been involved in over 40 years, a continuous thin-slab caster installed at AK Steel. Before it was completed in 1996, over 200 traveling journeyman electricians were employed on the project and Brother Smith had proclaimed in the June 1995 *Journal*, “The Armco Steel plant should once again be pouring molten steel by the first of June, thanks largely to the help of I.B.E.W. members.”

Local 688 members (left to right) Rob Cottrell, John Carter, Truman Freeman, Randy Carroll, Bob Fulton, Fred Brickley, Jack Rush, Fred Claus, Don Carroll, Kenny Cooper, Alan Freeman and Robert Crumm picket a project at the Weyerhaeuser Paper Company corrugated box and container factory in Mt. Vernon on November 22, 1989.



LOCAL 688 OFFICERS PROMOTED TO I.B.E.W. INTERNATIONAL-LEVEL POSITIONS

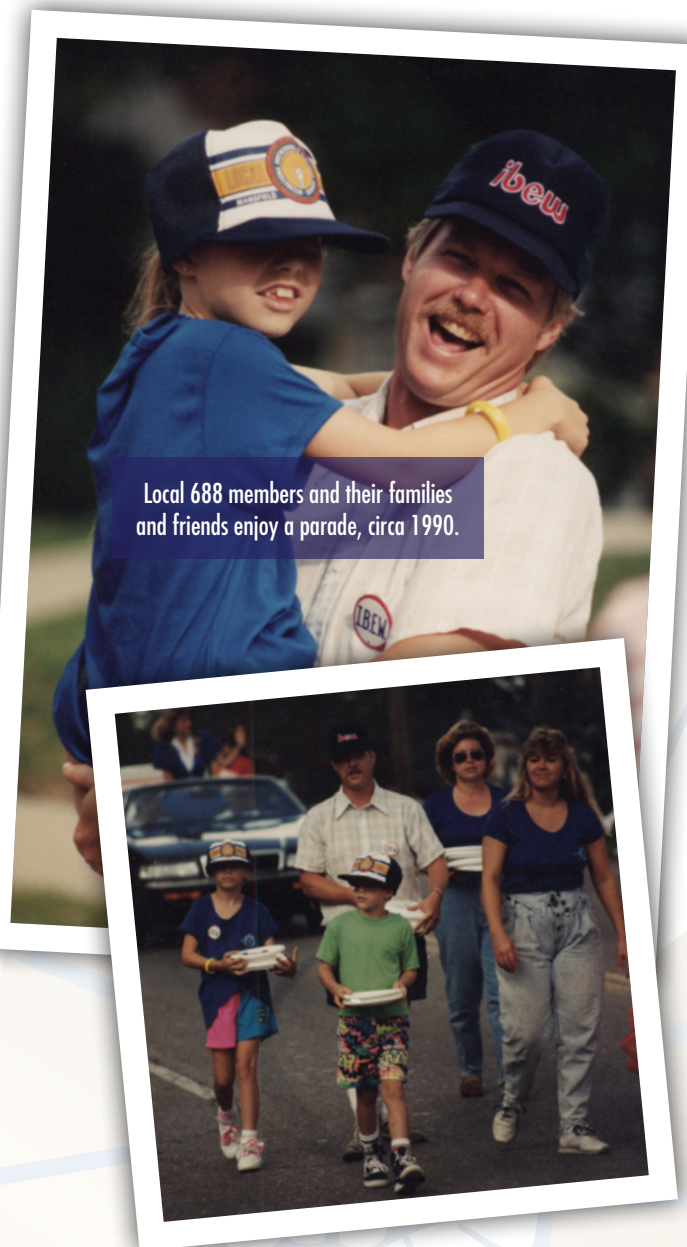
Harold Ebersole, International Representative, 1983

Alan Freeman, International Organizing Department, 2000

Kenneth Cooper, International Representative, 2007;
4th District Vice President, 2011;
International Secretary/Treasurer, 2017

Lynda Wenzel, Professional and Industrial Organizer, 2009;
State Organizing Coordinator, 2017

In 1995, the Electrical Manufacturing (em) classification was added to Local 688, after which the local was representing Inside, Outside, Utility, Telephone and Electrical Manufacturing members.



Local 688 members and their families and friends enjoy a parade, circa 1990.



On March 20, 2001, the Outside classification was removed from Local 688, after which the local has been representing Inside, Utility Telephone and Electrical Manufacturing members through to its 100th Anniversary in 2017.

That same year, Local 688 gained 114 new members with an organizing victory at **Neer Manufacturing** in Mansfield. “We can chalk this success up to training received by our members in **COMET** (**C**onstruction **O**rganizing **M**embership **E**ducation **T**raining) classes and to the work of Neer’s volunteer Organizing Committee,” Brother Smith reported.

Soon after in May, after nearly a full year of negotiations, the local secured a contract for its new Neer members. (In 2002, the Neer plant would be purchased by OZ Gedney, then in 2004, EGS Electrical Group bought the plant and in 2008 sold its equipment and moved to India.)

Organizing remained the top priority for Local 688 throughout the remainder of the 1990s; stripping efforts in 1995 put one non-union contractor out of business while the local also started an aggressive handbill-distribution drive to educate the community on the substandard wages and benefits paid by non-union contractors. As a result, into and through much of 1999, work remained “promising” for the local, which would wire the **Richland County Jail** in Mansfield the following year.

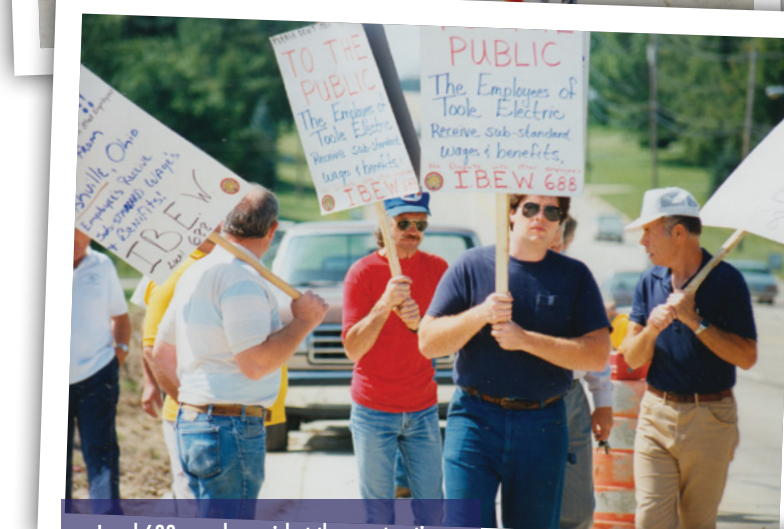
SETTLED IN FOR THE LONG HAUL

Coupled with the loss of Neer Manufacturing and in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the Local 688 labor market was again bleak and work was “very slow” – and would remain as such through the first decade of the 2000s. As always, neighboring locals were able to assist Local 688 members from time to time during that period.

Unfortunately, the gradual decline of the local’s telephone membership also continued into the new millennium as Sprint phased out hardware and cellular phones became



Local 688 members picket the construction site of a new Sam’s Club store that was using non-union labor in 1992.



“standard issue.” In that setting, Sprint notified Local 688 that it was closing its 62-employee Mansfield operator services as of September 1, 2003, because of “low call volume caused by technological reasons such as cell phones and prepaid phone cards.”

Because of language in the contract between Sprint and the I.B.E.W., 31 of those 62 employees were able to retire.

The clause stated that “employees in the affected job titles and work locations who have at least 10 years of continuous service and whose age is at least 55 years or whose age and service added together total 75” will receive employee income protection benefits.

In addition to Neer, manufacturing facilities in and around Mansfield continued to close throughout the decade, including Crane Plumbing in 2003 and Smurfit-Stone Container in 2009, further contributing to Local 688’s perilous condition. Meanwhile, non-union contractors were doing a large amount of the commercial, school and residential work in the area.

Some relief for the local did come with the \$52 million expansion of pump-

In 2008, Local 688 Brother Lance Biglin, who was president of the local at the time, released a self-published children’s book, “Bye, America,” which he wrote to teach children about the loss of America’s industrial base. The book tells the story of young Brady, whose father loses his job when the local vacuum cleaner factory suddenly closes its doors and moves to China.



manufacturer **Gorman-Rupp** facilities in Mansfield in the late 2000s.

But by June 2010, 49 journeymen were on the Local 688 out-of-work list. That year, another major blow came for the region and the local when General Motors closed its largest, most modern U.S. stamping factory in Ontario.

“We’ve been hurt by industry leaving town. That was our bread and butter,” **Business Manager Carl Neutzling** told the January 23, 2011, *News Journal*. “We worked at General Motors. We used to keep a crew of eight to 10 electricians at AK Steel, and that’s down, too.”

By that time, the local represented 165 electrical workers and just 38 cable installers working for **CenturyLink** (which had taken over **Embarq**, the former landline business of Sprint, in October 2008).

At 100 years in 2017, Local 688’s north-central Ohio electrical-industry jurisdiction encompasses Richland, Ashland, Crawford, Morrow, Marion and parts of Knox and Wyandot counties. Despite setbacks resulting from national trade policy, healthcare costs, recessions, depressions, deregulation of the telephone industry and anti-worker sentiment, Local 688 has survived and adapted in a rural area despite losing much of its manufacturing base, the decline in consumer use of the telephone landlines in favor of cellular phones and an increase in non-union competition. Utilizing alternate classifications, the local has been able to satisfy employers who are more comfortable competing for the light commercial and residential markets, helping to solidify the local’s condition going forward.

Local 688’s float in the 1993 Mansfield Labor Day parade won first place in the labor division.



I.B.E.W. International President Edwin Hill (second from right) presents Local 688 member Lynda Wenzel with a certificate to honor the local’s participation in the I.B.E.W. COPE (Committee on Political Education) program in 1998.



Local 688 members Lance Biglin, Charles Burch, Doug Simmons, Curt Ellis, Scott Pasecilich and Paul Smith volunteer their time to improve the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial on the Square in downtown Mansfield in October 2008.



Members of the Local 688 retirees club and their guests (including Business Manager Carl Neutzling, far right) during their Christmas lunch gathering in 2016.





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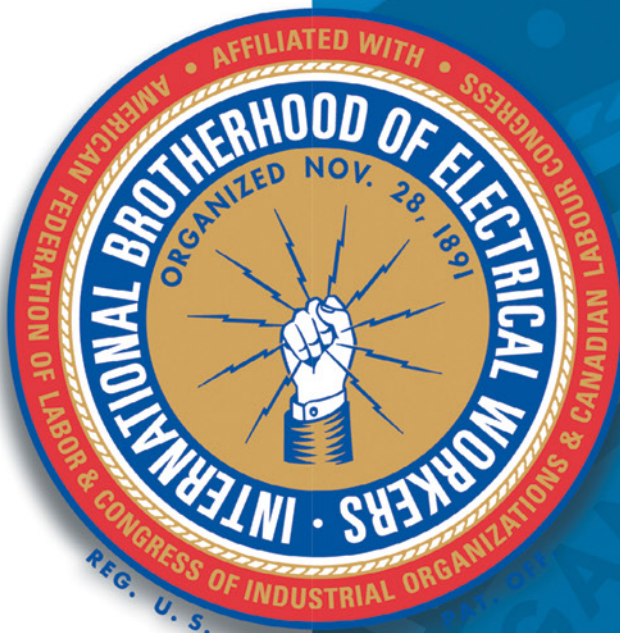
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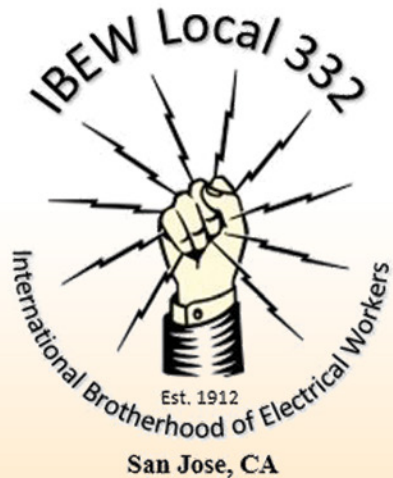
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Curt Mackiewicz, Business Manager
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INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
LOCAL UNION 1049
100 Corporate Drive
Holtsville, Long Island, New York
631-234-1800

Ronald Bauer Business Manager	Edward Conklin President
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Thomas Devlin , Treasurer	
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