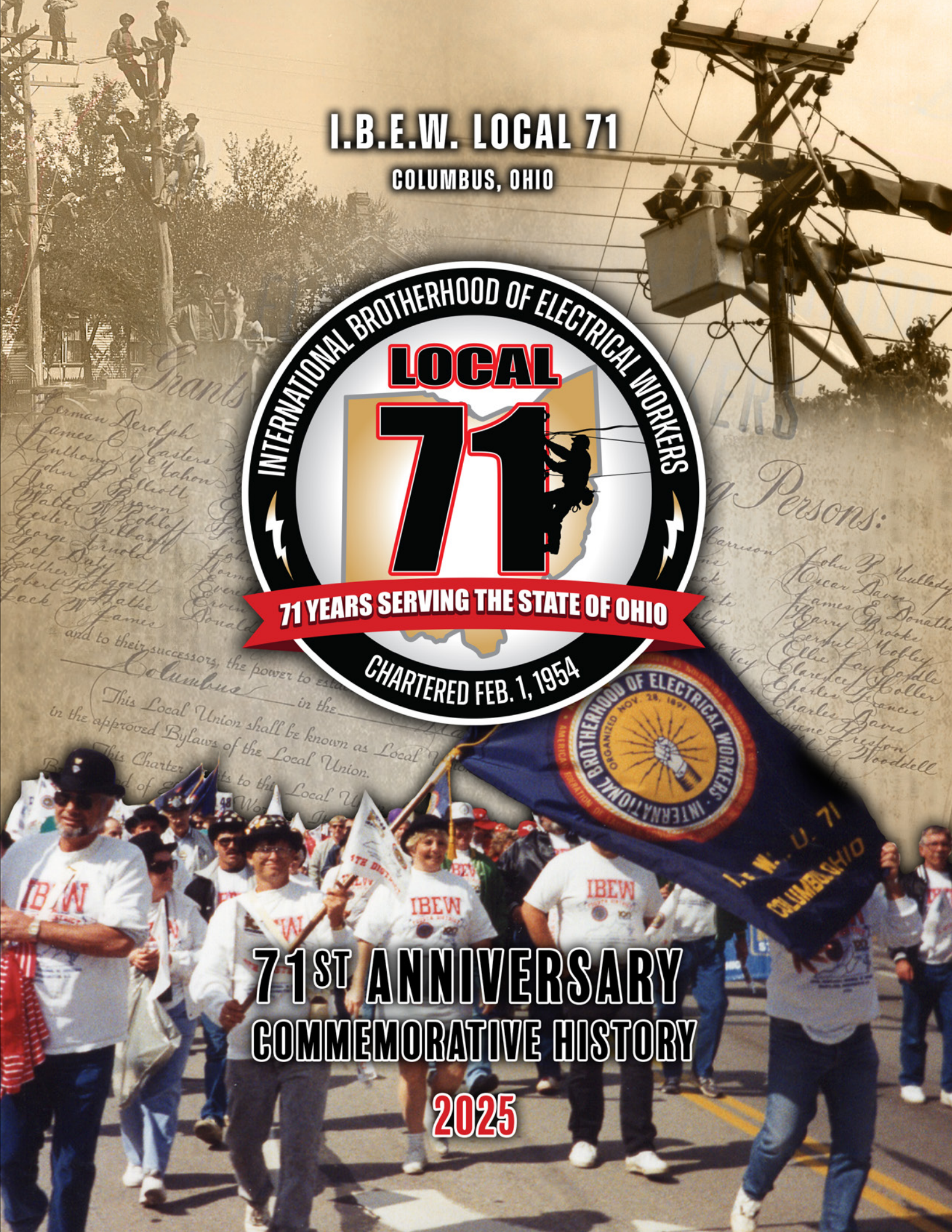


I.B.E.W. LOCAL 71

COLUMBUS, OHIO



71ST ANNIVERSARY
COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

2025



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FROM THE OFFICERS, STAFF AND MEMBERSHIP OF I.B.E.W. LOCAL 683

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BUSINESS MANAGER
FINANCIAL SECRETARY

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**I.B.E.W. LOCAL 71
71ST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
DINNER-DANCE GALA**

**Saturday, February 8, 2025
5:00 to 11:00 p.m.**

Hyatt Regency Columbus
4350 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215

Registration, Gifts, Photo Ops, Open Bar, Hors D'oeuvres
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Dinner Ringing (move into Ballroom)
6:30 - 6:45 p.m.

Welcome Remarks, Invocation, Appetizers Served
6:45 - 7:00 p.m.

Dinner and Dessert
7:00 - 8:15 p.m.

Remarks and Presentations
8:15 - 8:45 p.m.

Music and Dancing, Open Bar
8:45 - 11:00 p.m.



AS WE CELEBRATE I.B.E.W. LOCAL 71'S PAST, LEADERS & MEMBERS PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

Brothers, Sisters, Signatory Contractors and Special Guests:

Good evening and welcome to Columbus, where we all gather to celebrate the 71st anniversary of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 71. As Local 71's business manager, it is truly an honor and a privilege to serve the membership and reflect on the rich history, remarkable achievements and enduring legacy of this union.

Seventy-one years ago, a group of 57 dedicated and visionary individuals came together with a shared purpose: to protect the rights of workers and to elevate the electrical trade as a vital and respected profession. As we reflect on the last 71 years, we want to honor our past leaders, officers and members, including those who are no longer with us and those who worked tirelessly every day and fought to make our great local union what it is today. Since being chartered, Local 71 has grown not only in numbers but also in strength, solidarity and impact. We have faced many challenges, but time and again, we have risen to meet them with resilience and unity.

But our union is more than its work; it is its members and their families. It is the skilled lineman and electrical workers who power our homes, businesses and communities. It is the retirees who laid the groundwork for our success. It is the apprentices who represent our future. It is our leaders who guide us with their wisdom and integrity. It is every member who believes in the power of unity and the dignity of labor. We are truly blessed to have members so dedicated to ensuring our success well into the future.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our contractors, who take on financial risks every day to secure new opportunities and expand our market share in this challenging and ever-evolving industry. The labor-and-management partnership is essential for our growth in today's market and into the future.

On behalf of the Local 71 leadership team and the entire membership, thank you for being part of this journey. Thank you for your contributions, your dedication and your unwavering belief in the power of union membership. Here's to 71 years of progress, solidarity and success – and to many more to come.

May God continue to bless, watch over and protect Local 71 for another 71 years and beyond.

Fraternally,

Todd Kessler, Business Manager/Financial Secretary
I.B.E.W. Local Union No. 71



This book was proudly produced by

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I.B.E.W. Local 71 and Union Histories give thanks to the following for their contributions to this book:

Local 71 retiree and former business manager Gregg "Wally" Sickles

Local 71 Recording Secretary/Frontier & Broadcasting Business Rep. James "Jay" Roessner

The I.B.E.W. Museum and Museum Curator Curtis Bateman

Head Historian: Calvin Jefferson

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Art Direction: Andy Taucher

Layout & Design: Steven Demanett



The History of I.B.E.W. Local No. 71

EMPOWERING ITS MEMBERS AND OHIO FOR 71 YEARS



Although established decades later, the origins of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) Local No. 71 – which in 2024 now represents more than 2,500 members working in various disciplines of the electrical industry throughout the Ohio Valley – can actually be traced as far back as July 1, 1899. That day, the international union chartered “linemen” **Local No. 39** to serve the “outside” electrical industry in and around Cleveland, Ohio.

(Local 39 would be one of the primarily linemen locals that seceded from the union in 1908 and formed their own I.B.E.W. under President James J. Reid and Secretary James W. Murphy over their discontent with the union’s officers and dissension between linemen and inside wiremen. The “Reid-Murphy Split” locals would be reinstated in 1913 after a court declared their 1908 convention was illegal and its actions void, effectively ending the rift.)

Shortly after Local 39 added “utility” workers to its membership in 1950, 57 of its linemen signed and submitted a charter application to the I.B.E.W. on January 8, 1954, requesting they be organized into a new outside local. Subsequently, the union chartered “outside linemen” Local 71 in Cleveland on **February 1, 1954**.

(With the split, Local 39 became a utility-only local whose members were employees of the City of Cleveland. In 2024, the local continues to operate as a utility local serving the Cleveland area.)

ADVANCING A FLEDGLING LOCAL

“We haven’t been in existence long enough to make news, but we think that we are destined to be one of the biggest and best outside locals in the Brotherhood.”

– Local 71 Business Manager J. C. Masters
August 1954 issue of the I.B.E.W. Journal

Under the initial leadership of **Business Manager James “J. C.” Masters**, who had served in that same position for Local 39 since 1945 and would lead Local 71 for the next 10 years, the jurisdiction of the new, outside utility-line construction local was scattered around the State of Ohio. As such, the local held unit meetings in Cincinnati on the third Tuesday of each month, in Columbus on the third Wednesday, in Dayton on the third Thursday and in Cleveland on the third Friday.

“Our new bylaws are a model of democratic rule by the majority,” Business Manager Masters announced in the August 1954 issue of the *I.B.E.W. Journal* while introducing Local 71 in the union’s monthly member publication. “No minority group can elect officers or pass changes in the bylaws. These things are determined by referendum, by mail.”

From the outset, the local’s linemen worked under a collective-bargaining agreement between the I.B.E.W. Fourth District (which encompasses Ohio, Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.) and the **American Line Builders** chapter of the **National Electrical Contractors Association** (NECA), whose affiliated contractors employed the local’s members. The so-called “Five-State Line Agreement” would officially be known as **Agreement 4-00-A** – under which the local’s linemen would operate until the early 2000s.

As Local 71 members enjoyed plentiful work throughout the local’s statewide jurisdiction during the first five months of its existence, its membership increased to numbers equal to those of Local 39 before the separation. Among projects that employed the local’s members at that time, independent telephone companies had a backlog of work that provided manhours for the local’s linemen.

But primarily bolstering the local’s strong employment conditions was a massive transmission-building program for the **Ohio**

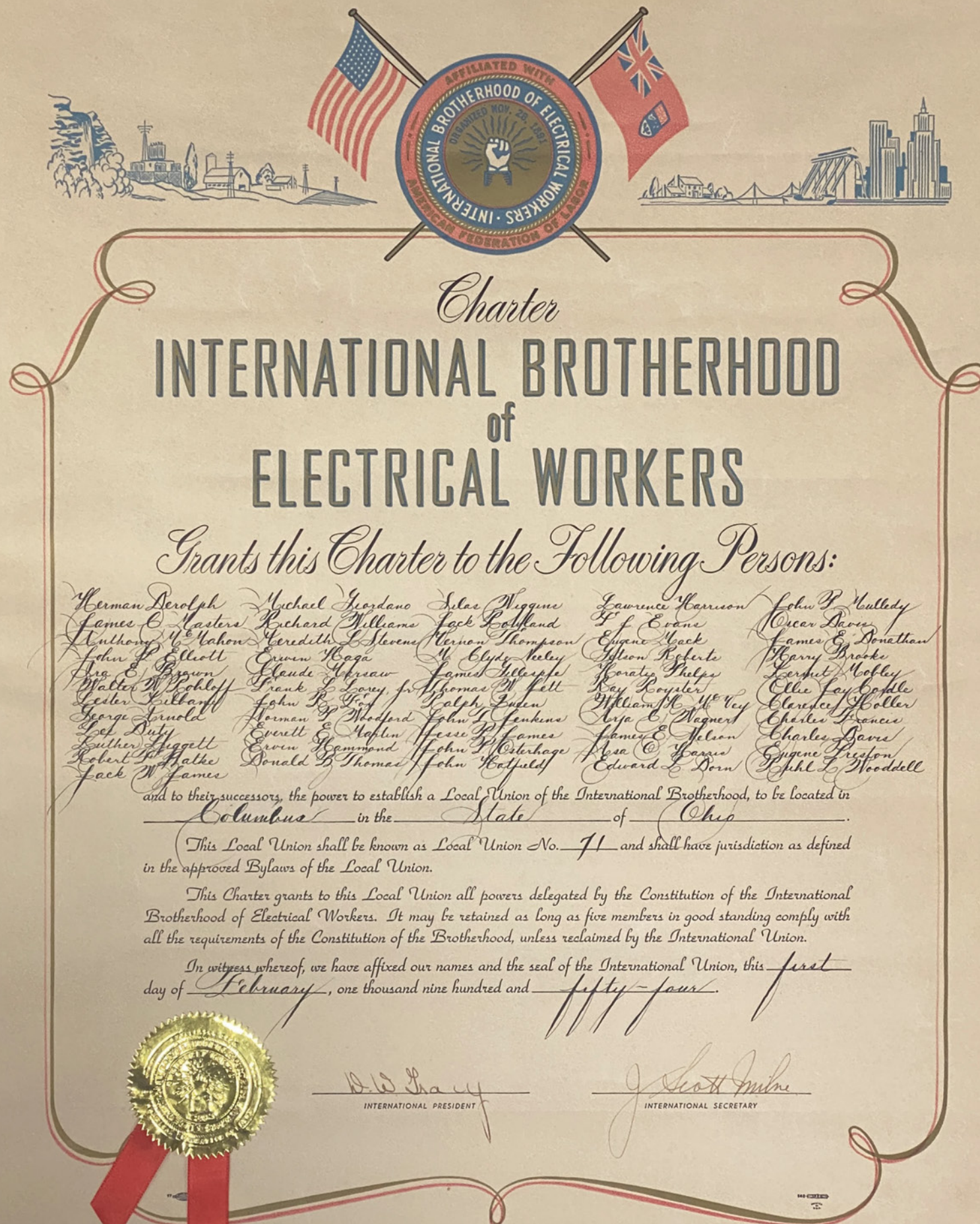
MILLER, OTHERS FOUNDED I.B.E.W. 133 YEARS AGO

After he and a small group of inside electricians and outside linemen officially formed the **National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** during a convention on November 21, 1891, in St. Louis, founder and first president **Brother Henry Miller** reportedly went without food and other necessities and instead used his earnings to travel the country to organize local unions in various cities into the new national union. At its 1899 convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the union officially changed its name to the **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** (I.B.E.W.) after it added a local in Ottawa, Ontario.

Brother Miller passed away on July 10, 1896, while working as head lineman for the Potomac Electric Power Company after he was shocked, fell from a ladder and died the next morning from a concussion. He was only 38 years old.

Now in 2025, the union Brother Miller helped establish represents nearly 750,000 workers and retirees in the electrical industry in the United States, Canada, Panama, Guam, Wake Island and several Caribbean island nations. That membership primarily consists of inside wiremen working in the construction industry and outside linemen and other employees of public utilities.

Valley Electric Corporation, which was pooling the facilities of several southern-Ohio power companies into a network to supply energy for the Atomic Energy Commission’s new **Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant** in Pike County. As part of the unique project to support the facility, which would produce enriched uranium for the nation’s nuclear-weapons program beginning in 1954, Local 71 members erected the first-ever double-circuit, 330-volt, Pierce South X-530 steel tower line for service to the plant, and substations that tied together circuits from power stations that were then routed to the plant.



I.B.E.W. Local 71 charter, dated February 1, 1954, and signed by I.B.E.W. General President Daniel W. Tracy and I.B.E.W. Secretary J. Scott Milne (both of whom served in their respective position from 1947 into 1954).



LOCAL 71 CHARTER MEMBERS

On January 8, 1954, these 57 linemen, who were all members of I.B.E.W. Local No. 39 of Cleveland, applied for and were then listed on the chartered granted by the I.B.E.W. on February 1, 1954, for outside linemen Local No. 71 based in Cleveland:

George Arnold	Luther Liggett
Robert F. Batke	Frank L. Lorey Jr.
Harry Brooks	Eugene Mack
Ira E. Brown	Claude Marsaw
Ollie Jay Cordle	Everett E. Martin
Charles Davis	James C. Masters
Oscar Davis	Anthony McMahon
William Davis	William H. McVey
Herman Derolph	Kermit Mobley
James E. Donathan	John P. Mulledy
Edward L. Dorn	M. Clyde Neeley
Lee Duty	James E. Nelson
John P. Elliott	John P. Osterhage
T. J. Evans	Horatio Phelps
John R. Fox	Eugene Preston
Charles Francis	Ralph Queen
James Gillespie	Getson Roberts
Michael Giordano	Walter W. Rohloff
Erwin Haga	Jack Rowland
Ervin Hammond	Ray Royster
Asa O. Harris	Meredith L. Stevens
Lawrence Harrison	Donald B. Thomas
John Hatfield	Vernon Thompson
Clarence Holler	Arja C. Wagner
Jack W. James	Silas Wiggins
Jesse P. James	Richard Williams
John T. Jenkins	Ruhl L. Wooddell
Thomas W. Jett	Norman P. Woodford
Lester Kilbane	

After 30 months, a large number of the local's members also completed work in late 1955 on the 13-1/2-mile **Rapid Transit** double-track electric-car line for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that ran each way from the center of the city and 18 minutes end to end. The I.B.E.W. had won out over other building trades for most of the work, including installation of 300,000 feet of underground control cable, 423,000 feet of aerial control cable, 120,000 feet of aerial power-feed cable, 25 relay houses and 230 signals.

Although work remained strong well into the second half and late 1950s, particularly in the Dayton area for the **Dayton Power & Light Company** (now AES Ohio since 2021), before the end of the decade a decrease in spending by most utility companies in the state on capital improvement projects severely reduced employment for the construction-only outside local. With the lack of utility work around Ohio, many Local 71 members traveled to the jurisdictions of other I.B.E.W. locals across the country for jobs.

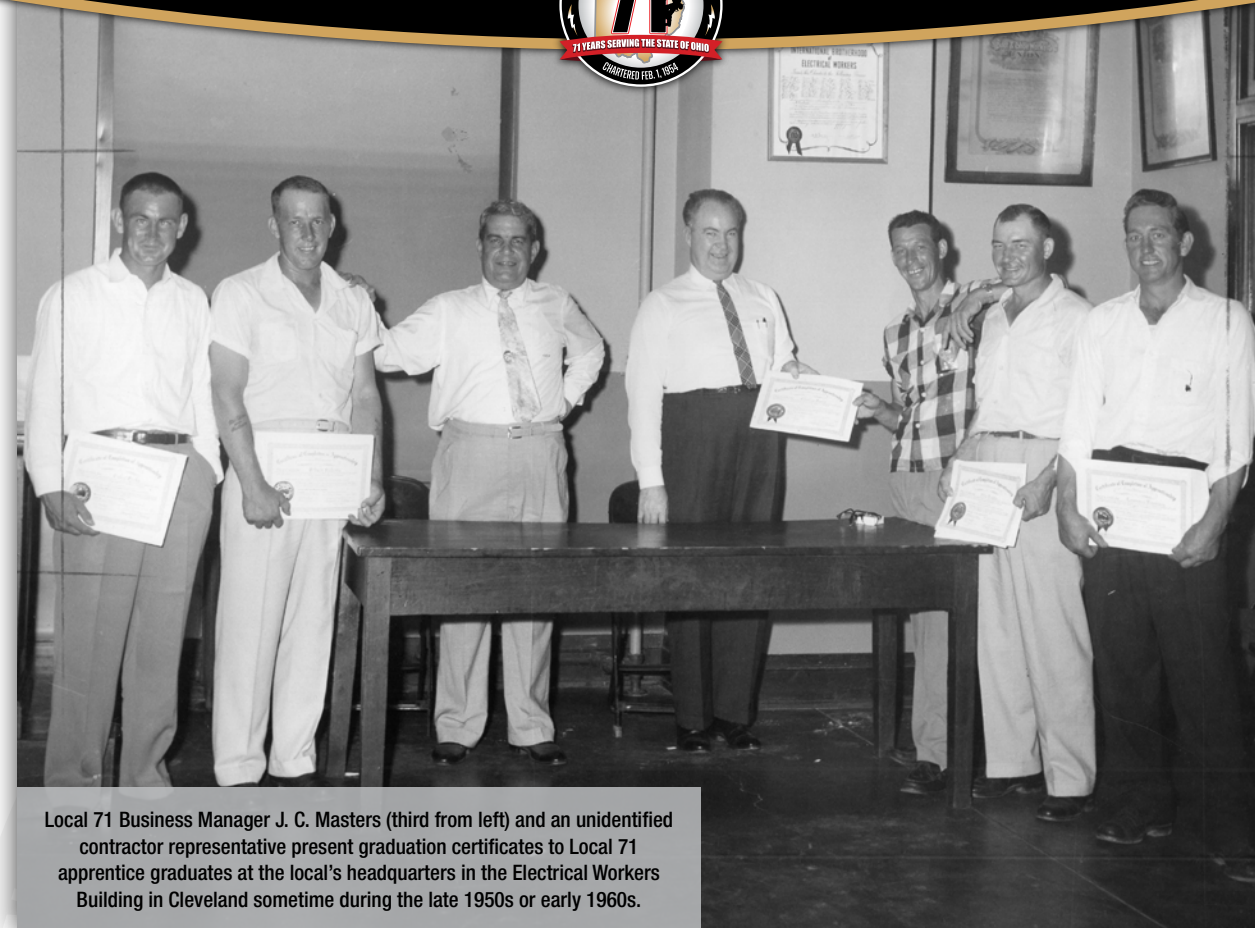
MOVING THE LOCAL FORWARD

Construction line work stayed sluggish during the early years of the 1960s, a period that Business Manager Masters described as "lean" for Local 71 in a letter in the July 1964 *Journal*. During that time, with many of its members not regularly employed, those who were able to work steadily paid an increased union-dues rate in order to keep the local solvent.

Employment for Local 71 began to improve, however, as it entered the mid-Sixties. What's more, by June 1964 the local had among its membership more than 400 tree-trimmers working for **Karl Kuemmerling Associates** and the **Asplundh Tree Company**.

But in the local's election that month, **Assistant Business Manager R. L. "Buck" Wooddell** ran for its top position on a campaign promise to centrally locate the local's headquarters to "better serve our statewide membership." True to his word, after Brother Wooddell defeated Business Manager Masters in the June 24, 1964, race, the local moved its offices that December to **3225 West Broad Street** in Columbus.

The new slate of officers, who would serve over the next two years, represented each of the major cities within the local's jurisdiction for the first time in its 10-year existence. An announcement in the November 1964 *Journal*



Local 71 Business Manager J. C. Masters (third from left) and an unidentified contractor representative present graduation certificates to Local 71 apprentice graduates at the local's headquarters in the Electrical Workers Building in Cleveland sometime during the late 1950s or early 1960s.

listing the new officers, who also included **President Victor Brady**, **Vice President William J. Brewer**, **Recording Secretary Richard Norris** and **Treasurer Homer Dillon**, further noted that the local's move to Columbus "makes it possible for members from all cities to run for office in the local."

Out in the field, construction work in its jurisdiction and, as a result, employment of the Local 71 membership continued to improve into the second half of the decade and would remain stable when not abundant throughout the balance of the 1960s. Highlighting the projects that provided a large amount of manhours for the local was the entire roadway lighting system on the new **Interstate 270**, which would form a beltway-loop freeway around Columbus when completed in 1975, that was illuminated by Local 71 workers during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Additionally, during that time major transmission projects and substations were built throughout Ohio using the local's linemen.

Those projects and others not only employed large numbers of outside workers but also provided a great deal of overtime for the local's membership throughout the period.

Meanwhile, however, Local 71 did face encroachments into its outside work on various jobs from other building trades, including the operating engineers, laborers and ironworkers. However, as Local 71 **Press Secretary Richard Norris** declared in the December 1969 *Journal*, the local was always "able to remain at the top of the heap in our battles over jurisdiction."

Before the end of the decade, the local's membership was also employed on an

Local 71 held its first-ever **Annual Family Picnic** on July 10, 1965, at the Gooding Amusement Park in Columbus. Each family brought a picnic basket, and the local provided free beer and soft drinks; ice cream and snacks; and various rides including a Ferris wheel, a merry-go-round and a roller coaster.



LOCAL 71 HEADQUARTERS

After I.B.E.W. Local 71 was formed by lineman members of I.B.E.W. Local 39 in Cleveland and then chartered on February 1, 1954, the new linemen's Local 71 originally maintained its offices in the same location in which Local 39 had been headquartered, the **Electrical Workers Building**, for the previous 14 years.

Electrical Workers Building
3043 Superior Ave., Cleveland
1954 – 1964

Local 71 Offices
3225 West Broad St., Columbus
1964 – 1973

Local 71 Offices
50 Old Village Road, Columbus
1973 – 1982

Local 71 Offices
5255 West Broad St., Columbus
1982 – 1987

Local 71 Offices
5311 West Broad St., Columbus
1987 – 1994

Local 71 Union Hall
6322 O'Harra Road, Galloway
1994 – 2009

Local 71 Offices
3403 Farm Bank Way, Grove City
2009 – current

abundance of steel-transmission lines, substations and distribution and street-light work, while its high-voltage, pipe-cable work progressed in Cincinnati, Dayton and Columbus. What's more, contracts for the local's tree-trimmers had greatly improved for the contract members on the properties of the Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric Company, the Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company and the Ohio Power Company.

"During the past five years, work has been booming in our jurisdiction," Press Secretary Norris was also able to announce in the December 1969 *Journal*. "Our members and

many travelers (*members from other I.B.E.W. locals working through Local 71 within its jurisdiction*) have enjoyed the best working conditions and wages, plus overtime work, ever in the history of our local."

ENSURING THE LOCAL SURVIVES

As work in its jurisdiction continued to flourish, Local 71 made strides in its collective-bargaining agreements with the American Line Builders into and during the early 1970s. Those advances included regular wage increases and a new **Vacation Fund** that began on January 1, 1972, with a 20-cent-per-hour worked deduction from members' pay contributed to the fund.

The local also increased its membership and jurisdictional area during that time when the I.B.E.W. amalgamated "mixed" outside linemen and utility workers **Local No. 54** of Columbus into Local 71 on October 1, 1971. With the merger, the union soon after added "**Utility**" to the local's trade classifications, in addition to "Outside."

But by the mid-1970s, with most all of the major utility transmission-line and substation construction projects in Ohio completed, and utility companies such as Dayton Power & Light did not contract for new construction work in 1975. What's more, non-union contractors were accelerating their collective incursion into the local's jurisdiction.

Primarily as a result of those factors, the Local 71 membership suffered a sharp decline in employment throughout that time – prompting Business Manager Wooddell to even report during the local's January 21, 1975, monthly general membership meeting that "work is very bad ... all over the local." Subsequently, many members dropped out of the union to find jobs elsewhere, and the local experienced a steep drop in membership, losing half of its members by early 1975.

"It was a difficult time," Local 71 retiree and former 23-year business manager **Brother Gregg A. "Wally" Sickles** recalled in 2025 as the local prepared to celebrate its 71st charter anniversary. "Not only did our membership drop in the mid-Seventies, so did our treasury. Money was so extremely tight, it was even necessary that many members voluntarily donated money just so the local could meet standing bills."

The local did expand its trade classifications into "Radio-Television-Broadcasting" when the I.B.E.W. merged **Local No. 1300** of Columbus into Local 71 on February 1, 1976. With that, the local began representing engineers, cameramen and technicians at radio stations WTVN-AM and WBUK-FM and television station WTVN-TV.

The lack of work with the state's utility companies, however, compelled the union to remove utility work from the local's jurisdiction on March 31, 1976.

MERGERS THAT GREW LOCAL 71

- I.B.E.W. "Utility Workers" **Local No. 54** of Columbus, which the union had chartered on September 28, 1899, was merged into Local 71 on October 1, 1971.
- I.B.E.W. "Radio-Television Broadcasting" **Local No. 1300** of Columbus, which the union had chartered on January 21, 1942, was merged into Local 71 on February 1, 1976.
- The outside linemen of I.B.E.W. "Inside Wiremen and Outside Linemen" **Local No. 88** of Chillicothe, Ohio, which the union had chartered on January 24, 1918, was merged into Local 71 on March 1, 1994.
- I.B.E.W. "Outside Linemen and Utility Workers" **Local No. 411** of Warren, Ohio, which the union had chartered on June 6, 1903, was merged into Local 71 on January 1, 1999.
- I.B.E.W. "Electrical Manufacturing and Telephone Workers" **Local No. 986** of Norwalk, Ohio, which the union had chartered on March 2, 1947, was merged into Local 71 on October 1, 2013.



Local 71 officers shown in 1984 are (left to right, front row) Business Manager Wally Sickles, President R. L. "Buck" Wooddell (a former business manager) and Treasurer Elmer Kuhns; and (back row) Executive Board members, Cecil Revis, Solomon "Wink" Brown, Harold Daugherty, Douglas "Ed" Powell and Michael "Hardrock" Righman, and Vice President Donald Taylor. Absent from the photo is Recording Secretary Richard Norris.

Continued after following spread.



Local 71 Apprentice Training PREPARING A HIGHLY SKILLED LINE-BUILDING WORKFORCE



ALBAT apprentices at the ALBAT Training Facility in 2024.

Shortly after it was established and chartered by the I.B.E.W. on February 1, 1954, that September Local 71 instituted a four-year apprentice-training course operated by the local. With the time-tested system of apprenticeship, potential linemen are taught the trade while working side-by-side on jobsites with experienced journeyman-level linemen – while the apprentices earn wages as they learn.

Unique to the Local 71 program, the local initially permitted apprentices who had advanced, on-the-job credits “to take the course as rapidly as they could.” Subsequently, after just two years, six “advanced” apprentices were the first to graduate from the training program during the summer of 1956.

But “the very nature of the outside branch of the electrical industry will not allow the training of its apprentices to be carried on in the same manner as the inside branch of the industry,” as Local 71 **Business Manager J. C. Masters** explained in a column in the July 1958 I.B.E.W. *Journal*. With work spread over large

geographic areas and members continually moving as jobs progressed, they were denied training opportunities because training facilities were not available.

To remedy that obstacle and provide outside electrical apprentices with a uniform, basic training program, in early 1958 the **I.B.E.W. Fourth and Sixth Districts**, encompassing Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia; and the **American Line Builders** chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), which serves affiliated contractors who employ I.B.E.W. members in those districts, appointed an eight-member apprenticeship committee to create a training program for lineman apprentices. Officially established on August 26, 1958, the **American Line Builders Apprenticeship and Training (ALBAT) Committee** consisted of four members representing the union, including Business Manager Masters, and four members representing the employers.

The ALBAT Committee quickly formulated a set of



Apprentices taking part in the ALBAT Climbing School in 2021 at the ALBAT Training Facility.

standards to be used as the minimum requirements for its training program. The related training material to be used had been prepared for the outside electrical apprentice by the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee for the Electrical Industry, and the committee planned to finance the program through contributions from the contractor employers based on hours worked by I.B.E.W. member journeyman linemen and apprentices.

Since that time and through 2025 as Local 71 celebrates its 71st charter anniversary, the ALBAT program has become a cooperative labor-management training program funded and administered by American Line Builders and the I.B.E.W. Fourth and Sixth Districts. Administered at the 17-acre **ALBAT Training Facility** in Medway, Ohio, the ALBAT training programs provide flexible, job-related

Local 71 apprentice **Brother Jesse Brooks** was the local's first apprentice to graduate from American Line Builders Apprenticeship and Training (ALBAT) lineman training when he completed the program in June 1964. Brother Brooks passed the program with what at the time was the highest degree registered by an ALBAT apprentice.

technical instruction combined with structured on-the-job learning experiences.

ALBAT provides training in **Cable Splicing, Outside Line, Substation, Traffic Signal, Transmission and Underground Residential Distribution (URD)** disciplines. The apprenticeship programs are a mixture of on-the-job and classroom training over a period of 3 to 4 years, during which apprentices work full-time with I.B.E.W. signatory contractors and earn wages, regular raises and benefits while learning a new trade.

ALBAT also offers **continuing-education training** for journey-level I.B.E.W. members. The additional training enhances the skills of those electrical workers and helps to ensure they remain current and up-to-date on the newest technologies and changes in their industries.



The ALBAT Training Facility in Medway, Ohio.



Local 71 members break while working for contractor New River Electrical Corporation on an underground residential distribution job on Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric Company property in 1987.

But the local persevered through those difficult times and was even galvanized for the better, as Brother Sickles described while looking back on the decade: “We showed true Brotherhood. We were our brother’s keeper. We fought to keep the lights on. When we had virtually nothing, we did what we had to do to keep moving forward. I saw many a brother time after time volunteer for a layoff in order for another Brother to get his time in and become eligible for benefits. True Brotherhood!”

TAKING THE LOCAL A NEW WAY

Amid a nationwide anti-union climate and slow economic growth resulting from a recession, employment slowed dramatically for the Local 71 membership during the first half of the 1980s. As a result, many members again traveled for work to the jurisdictions of I.B.E.W. locals such as No. 84 of Atlanta; No. 17 and No. 58 of Detroit; No. 1245 in California; No. 1393 of Indianapolis; and No. 358 and all the other locals in New Jersey.

While the local continued to struggle, when Business Manager Woddell announced during its April 17, 1984, monthly general membership meeting that he would run for reelection later that summer, he also added that he would “try to keep the local going.” But after 20 years as business manager, Brother Wooddell instead decided to retreat to the position of president of the local.

He subsequently nominated the local’s attorney, **Brother Stanley Hostler**, who held a “groundsman” ticket in the union although he was a fulltime attorney, to succeed him. Running unopposed, Brother Hostler was elected in June 1984 to lead the local, but his tenure would be short-lived as he refused to abandon his law practice to become a fulltime business manager and resigned in October 1985.

The following month, the Local 71 Executive Board appointed then-Assistant Business Manager Sickles to be the local’s next business manager. He was subsequently voted into the position during the local’s ensuing election

of officers and would head the local until he retired in 2008.

The grueling early years of the 1980s had taken its toll on the local, however, and when Business Manager Sickles assumed his new position in November 1985, only 32 Local 72 members were working within its jurisdiction on a handful of roadway lighting projects. Additionally, the local’s treasury was \$400,000 in debt at the time – and it would not be until adequate work returned to the local’s jurisdiction in the late 1980s and early 1990s that it was able to pay off its debts and put its treasury back in the black.

Meanwhile, early on in what would be a 23-year tenure leading Local 71, Business Manager Sickles advocated for the local taking control of negotiations for its collective-bargaining agreements, which had been negotiated by the I.B.E.W. Fourth District. The local soon gained control of the negotiations, after which it

LOCAL 71 TRADE CLASSIFICATIONS

I.B.E.W. Local 71 was designated an **Outside Linemen** local when it was chartered by the I.B.E.W. on February 1, 1954.

On April 3, 1973, the I.B.E.W. added **Utility** to Local 71’s trade classifications.

On March 10, 1976, the I.B.E.W. added **Radio-Television Broadcasting** to Local 71’s trade classifications.

On March 31, 1976, the I.B.E.W. removed Utility from the local’s trade classifications.

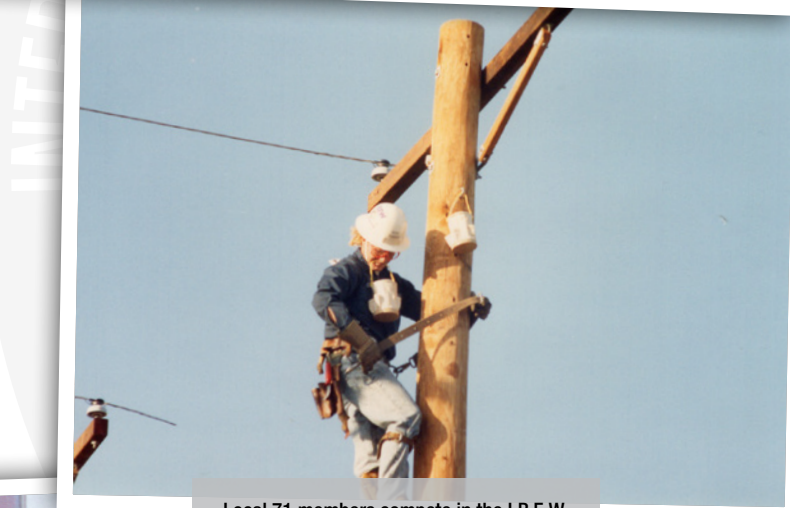
In 1998, the I.B.E.W. added **Line Clearance/Tree Trimming** to the local’s classifications.

As of February 1, 2025, the 71st anniversary date of its charter, Local 71 represents the following trade classifications within its jurisdiction:

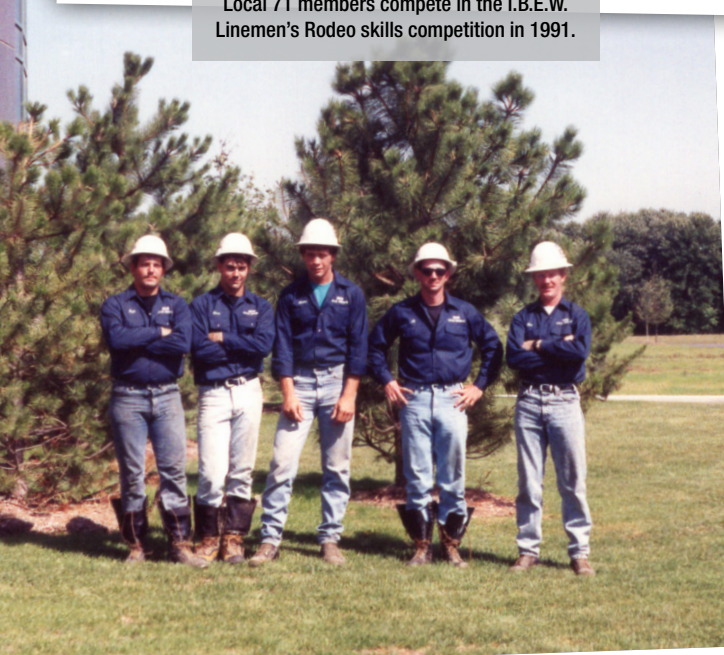
- Outside Linemen
- Radio-Television Broadcasting
- Line Clearance/Tree Trimming



Local 71 members (left to right) “Talley” Richmond, David Fissel, “Hotlegs” Grunder, Jack Sexton and Miles Davis break while working on a utility job for contractor L. E. Myers in 1989.



Local 71 members compete in the I.B.E.W. Linemen's Rodeo skills competition in 1991.



bargained for the new **Lineco Plan** healthcare benefit for members while leaving the district-wide **Outside Electrical Welfare Fund** it had been part of since being chartered.

The new business manager also championed realignment of the jurisdictions of the 16 Ohio locals that had outside trade classifications since only six locals, including Local 71, actually had lineman members. An initial phase of realignment took place in 1989 under new I.B.E.W. Fourth District Vice President Paul J. Witte, during which all outside jurisdiction was divided among Local 71, **Local No. 411** of Warren/Youngstown and **Local No. 245** of Toledo based on utility-company properties – resulting in some Local 71 members working for **Ohio Edison Company** being transferred into Local 411.

Out in the field throughout the second half of the decade, employment in both the commercial and utility sectors fluctuated after initially picking up in 1986 when L. E. Myers Company started eight distribution crews on the **Ohio Power Company** property (the local's first good-sized distribution work in some time). Utility construction work and employment dropped the following year while major projects were slow to materialize before work increased considerably beginning in 1988, after which employment escalated to a point at which in 1989 the local was hosting travelers to help handle all of the jobs in its jurisdiction and overtime was even available on the Dayton Power & Light property.

EXPANDING THE LOCAL RAPIDLY

With a strong outlook for utility construction in its jurisdiction that was supported by several power-distribution projects from Lorain to Columbus and from Dayton to Cincinnati already underway and more than \$20-million worth of construction projects in the Cleveland area set to begin, Business Manager Sickles

optimistically declared in the March 1990 *Journal*, “We enter this decade with promise and expectations of strong employment and growth in the 1990s. We have over 100 apprentice linemen indentured in our **American Line Builders Apprenticeship & Training** (ALBAT) program. This statistic alone is the key to our future.”

Later that year, among additional jobs on which Local 71 members worked were street-lighting and traffic-signal projects in Central Ohio, a significant Greater Cleveland RTA project. Before the end of 1992, linemen from the local would also be employed on the \$20.5-million distribution project in Cleveland under L. E. Myers Company and construction of nine substations under contractor M. J. Electric.

Construction work for the local's members was again solid in 1993 and 1994, particularly in the Dayton Power & Light area, where the local hosted many travelers from other I.B.E.W. locals and manpower would peak at 400

LOCAL 71 BUSINESS MANAGERS

James “J. C.” Masters
1954 – 1964

Patrick L. Grice
2008 – 2011

Ruhl L. “Buck” Wooddell
1964 – 1984

Bryan Stage
2011 – 2023

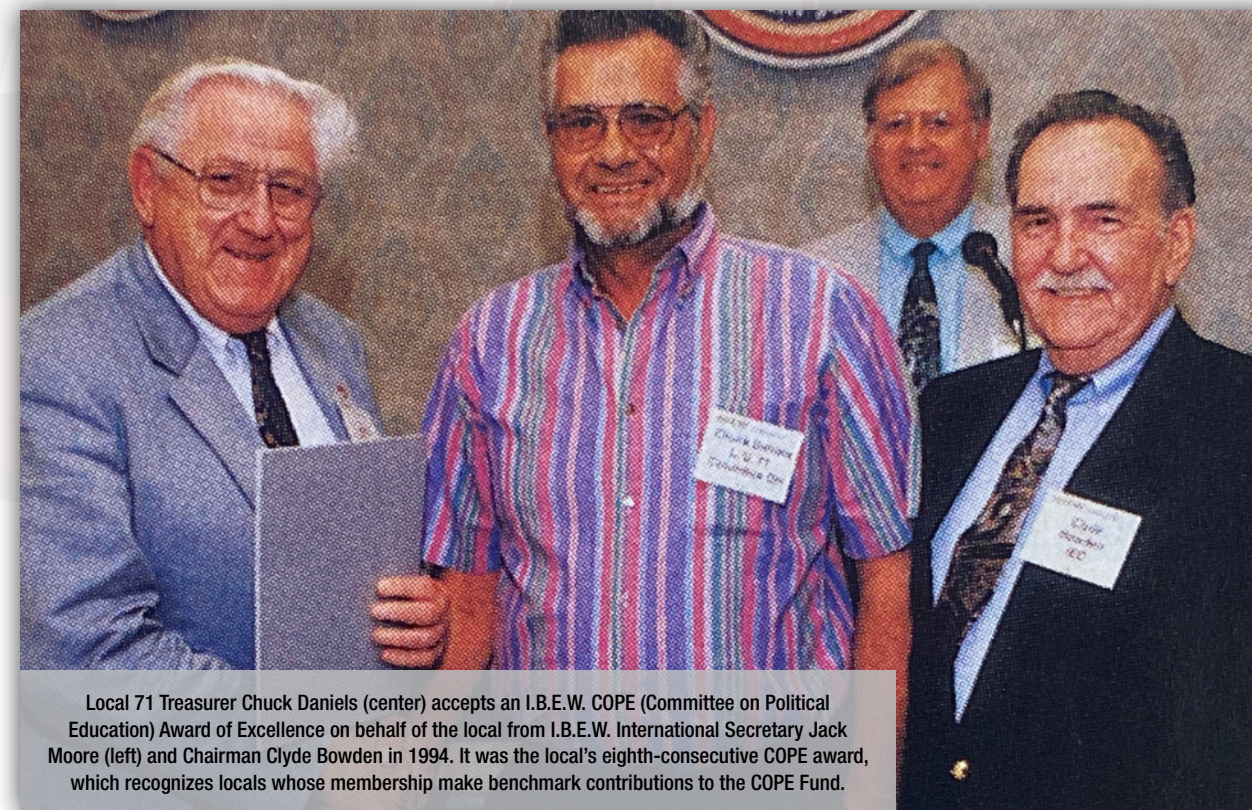
Stanley Hostler
1984 – 1985

Todd Kessler
2023 – Current

Gregg A. “Wally” Sickles
1985 – 2008

workers. The local also retained distribution work on Columbus Southern property for which signatory contractor R. H. Bouigny was awarded a five-year contract in early 1993.

Subsequently, during that time the local increased its membership while making gains in organizing, education and apprentice training. The local also made significant advances in its contract negotiations in early 1993, including a 3.5-percent wage increase in the Cleveland



Local 71 Treasurer Chuck Daniels (center) accepts an I.B.E.W. COPE (Committee on Political Education) Award of Excellence on behalf of the local from I.B.E.W. International Secretary Jack Moore (left) and Chairman Clyde Bowden in 1994. It was the local's eighth-consecutive COPE award, which recognizes locals whose membership make benchmark contributions to the COPE Fund.



OFFICE STAFFERS WERE INVALUABLE TO LOCAL 71

Two pillars of Local 71 actually worked exclusively in its offices during their entire careers with the local: Secretaries/office managers **Delores J. Frey** and **Phyllis A. Price**.

Mrs. Frey was employed by the local from 1972 through 2015 – making her the longest-ever tenured employee of the local. In a September 1986 I.B.E.W. *Journal* article, Business Manager Wally Sickles described her as “the heart and soul of our office.”

Upon Mrs. Frey’s death on December 14, 2015, at age 91, Business Manager Bryan Stage wrote in the March 2016 I.B.E.W. *Journal*, “She was the most dedicated worker I have ever known – she worked every day up until the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, when she was taken by ambulance to the hospital.”

Mrs. Price, who was Mrs. Frey’s daughter, was employed by the local from 1972 until her retirement in 2003. Upon her passing on October 28, 2013, at age 63 after a long, brave battle with cancer, Business Manager Stage described the local’s longtime office manager as “devoted.”



Mrs. Delores Frey

Outside Commercial Agreement and a 4-percent wage increase for the first year of the Columbus Commercial Agreement, and in the 4-00-A Outside Utility Agreement that summer.

The local grew again when the I.B.E.W. amalgamated the outside linemen of **Local No. 88** of Chillicothe, Ohio, in Local 71 on March 1, 1994. (The inside wiremen members of Local 88 were likewise merged into Local No. 575 of Portsmouth.)

But pending deregulation of the electrical industry, which prompted several utilities to curb spending, and advances by non-union contractors across Ohio slowed employment for Local 71 into the second half of the decade. Business Manager Sickles even warned the local’s December 1995 general membership meeting, “Work in Ohio looks bad for union people for the next five years.”

However, the local was able to maintain stable employment of its membership beginning in early 1997 and throughout the balance of



Local 71 retiree Brother Robert Solomon (far right) receives his 60-year I.B.E.W. Service Award from Local 71 Assistant Business Manager Ed Powell at the local's Cleveland Unit meeting on September 3, 1997.

the decade as construction jobs in the local’s Dayton, Columbus and Cleveland units held steady while the **Ohio Department of Transportation** (ODOT) provided abundant work as well. Among contract gains made during that time, in 1997 the local ratified a new, three-year package covering Cleveland outside commercial work that included a “handsome” wage settlement, as the business manager described it in the July 1997 *Journal*.

Then in 1998, the I.B.E.W. added its new **“Line Clearance/Tree Trimming”** classification to the Local 71 trade jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, Local 411 had been dealt a devastating blow in late 1995 when Ohio Power awarded its contracts covering the Youngstown/Warren area in the Northeast portion of the state to non-union companies. In the aftermath, just three years later the I.B.E.W. merged Local 411 into Local 71 on January 1, 1999.

That year, the local’s signatory contractors secured several outside commercial contracts and more signal and lighting jobs for ODOT, including a four-year, \$22-million project for Sprint telecommunications company (now T-Mobile) that employed members working for contractor Henkels & McCoy under the union’s Teledata Agreement and a project building 72 cell towers in southwest Ohio. In that setting, Local 71 was enjoying strong work in Central Ohio and steady employment throughout the rest of the state at the close of the 1990s – and the 20th Century – and into the new “Y2K” (Year 2000) millennium.

IMPROVING THE LOCAL AGAIN

A second and final “phase” of the restructuring of outside commercial trade jurisdictions among Ohio’s I.B.E.W. locals took place in the early 2000s when the union assigned territory for the



Local 71 charter members (left to right) Clarence "Bunny" Holler, Ollie "Tony" Cordle and T. J. Evans pose with the local's charter during a Local 71 event in May 2003.

classification based on counties instead of utility companies. As such, Local 71 was given outside jurisdiction over 77 counties in Ohio and counties in Northern Kentucky in which **Duke Energy Company** operated, and Local 245 was assigned to represent 17 northwest Ohio counties.

After obtaining the new jurisdiction, Local 71's market share increased abundantly, providing more job opportunities for its members. Initially, the local had outside-commercial agreements with only the Central Ohio Chapter and the Greater Cleveland Chapter of NECA, but because of the restructuring the local has since also negotiated with the Cincinnati, Dayton and North-Central Ohio chapters.

Long also a proponent of Local 71 exiting the 4-00-A Agreement between the Fourth

District and American Line Builders, Business Manager Sickles believed too many locals with little or no outside representation were a party to the contract and its negotiations. Along with I.B.E.W. General President J. J. Barry – and despite the contractors filing a complaint with the Council on Industrial Relations, which provides a forum for the peaceful resolution of labor disputes – in 2001 Brother Sickles finally effected the creation of the new **71-245-A Outside Agreement** with the NECA chapter that provided double-digit percentage increases in wages during its first two years.

But the first decade of the new millennium was essentially bookended by severe, national economic recessions in 2001 and 2008 that significantly slowed work for Local 71. Despite the local organizing into its contracts three new "Underground Residential Distribution"



LOCAL 71 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Local 71 members, families and friends celebrate the local's 50th charter anniversary during a dinner-dance on November 6, 2004.





Local 71 members construct a 145-foot-tall, 345-kilovolt connector for the Lordstown Energy Center 940-megawatt combined-cycle natural gas-fueled electric generation facility being built in Lordstown, Ohio, in 2017.

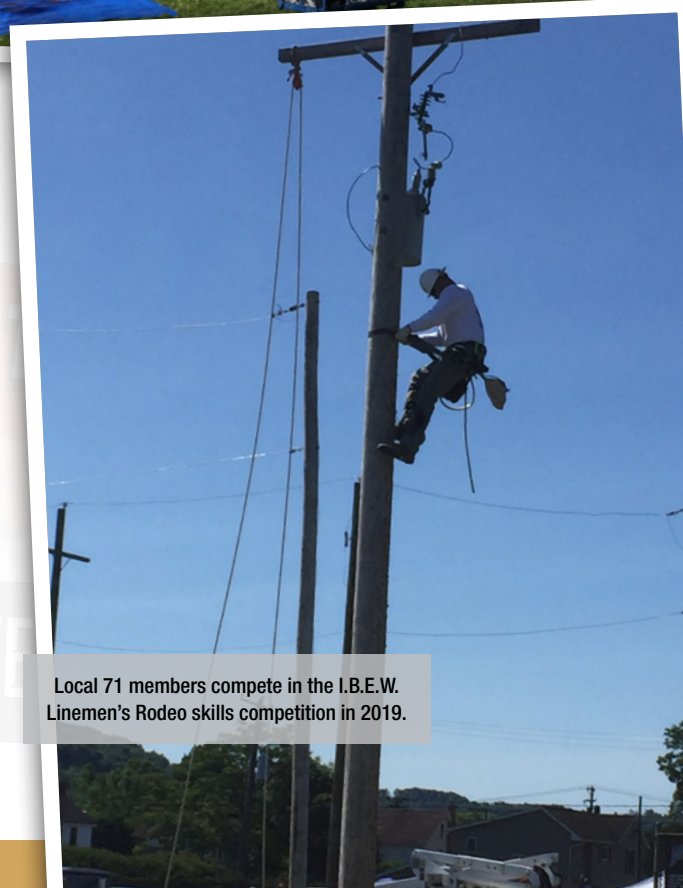
(URD) employers and a unit of Asplundh Tree in late 2002, which added more than 70 new members, and negotiating a new, four-year agreement for its broadcast engineer members with WCMH-TV in Columbus, every unit represented by the local was affected by the slow economy.

As a result, for the first time in more than 20 years the number of tree-trimmers working in the Cincinnati area was reduced in 2003. What's more, while the local's broadcasting and outside line construction units remained relatively steady, its utility and outside commercial work slackened.

The new 2010 decade provided a complete turnaround for the local from the previous 10 years, as an abundance of work in its jurisdiction early on, including a wealth of jobs on all four of the local's major utilities, had some members working six-day weeks in 2012. That year and into mid-decade, the local's transmission and station work remained steady while more was in the so-called "pipeline," while the local also continued to fight the uphill battle to win back its commercial work and protect its jurisdiction.

"Our work remains very good as of this writing with no signs of slowing down," Local 71 **Business Manager Bryan Stage**, who had assumed the local's top position in 2011, announced in the November 2013 *Electrical Worker* (the revamped publication of the I.B.E.W.) as work that year was plentiful and would remain as such throughout the coming years. "From transmission to underground, we have seen increased man-hours worked in all facets of our industry."

The amalgamation of I.B.E.W. **Local No. 986** of Galion/Norwalk, Ohio, on October 1, 2013, also brought telecommunications members working for **Frontier Communications** into Local 71. The former Local 986 had a contract with the Northern Ohio Telephone Company since the local was chartered in 1947, after which the company changed names over the



Local 71 members compete in the I.B.E.W. Linemen's Rodeo skills competition in 2019.



Line equipment frames a street leading up to the Della Selsor building at the Madison County Fairgrounds on November 2, 2022, where a celebration of life was being held for 30-year Local 71 member Brother Jason Allan Doran, who passed away suddenly on October 23, 2022, at age 48.



Local 71 member Brother Chance Ruiz (center) displays the Local 71 Life Saving Award he received for his actions resuscitating Local 71 member Brother Mark Nixon (right) after he was unresponsive on a jobsite in early 2023. Local 71 Business Representative Dirk Dozer looks on after presenting Brother Ruiz with the award.



Retiring Local 71 Business Manager Bryan Stage (left) and incoming new Business Manager Todd Kessler congratulate each other in 2023.

years to GTE, Verizon and Frontier – whose acquisition by Verizon Communications was approved by shareholders in late 2024.

Work for the Local 71 membership remained strong throughout the remainder of the 2010s and into the 2020s, with distribution, substation and networking projects leading the way – but a shortage of workers often hampering the local. “Local 71 has been using all the tools in the tool box to keep up with the demands from our contractors, from starting new apprentices to using our conditional lineman program,” Business Manager Stage even divulged in the July 2018 *Electrical Worker*. “We have been laboring to keep up with the demands lately.”

Also during that time, in 2018 Local 71 representative **Assistant Business Manager Fred Sabol** participated in the first negotiations between Frontier and the new **MIFA 1 (Multi-unit I.B.E.W./Frontier Agreement)** I.B.E.W. bargaining unit that represents members of Local 71, Local No. 1106 of Mason, Michigan; Local No. 289 of Durham, North Carolina; and Local No. 1431 of Sumpter, South Carolina. That initial bargaining resulted in a four-year agreement with the company that guaranteed wage increases and protected the current pension system, and MIFA 1 would gain another new contract in negotiations in 2022.

RIDING THE LOCAL HIGH TO 71

Thanks to continuous robust work and employment throughout its jurisdiction, Local 71 experienced a major increase in membership over the 10-plus years leading up to its 71st charter anniversary in 2025. “Local 71 continues to be blessed by an abundance of work,” Business Manager Stage was able to declare in the June 2022 *Electrical Worker*, “with no end in sight.”

Indeed, work on the properties of employers Duke, **AEP (American Electric Power)**, **FirstEnergy** and **AES Ohio** (formerly Dayton

Power & Light) has shown no signs of slowing. With billions of dollars invested by the Federal government into the country’s infrastructure, as Local 71 approached its 71-year milestone its future never looked better.

But first, after 12 years leading the local, Business Manager Stage retired in 2023. Elections held that June put in place a new set of officers and board members to lead the local into that future: **Business Manager/Financial Secretary Todd Kessler; President Walter Gribble III; Vice President Dirk Dozer; Recording Secretary Chris Corney; Treasurer Kurt Williams; and Executive Board members Matt Bruggeman, Cody**

Davis, Jake Hostetler, Josh Malone and Mitch McCloskey.

Together, they will guide a local that in 2025 serves 70 of the 88 counties in Ohio, two counties in West Virginia, three counties in Indiana and eight counties in Kentucky. Across that jurisdiction, the local represents a vast range of industries, from Electrical Transmission and Distribution to Substation and Cable Splicing, along with Traffic and Street Lighting and a wide variety of workers in the Teledata industry, the Tree-Trimming sector, the TV Broadcasting/Production industry and the Flagging trade throughout its territory. ●



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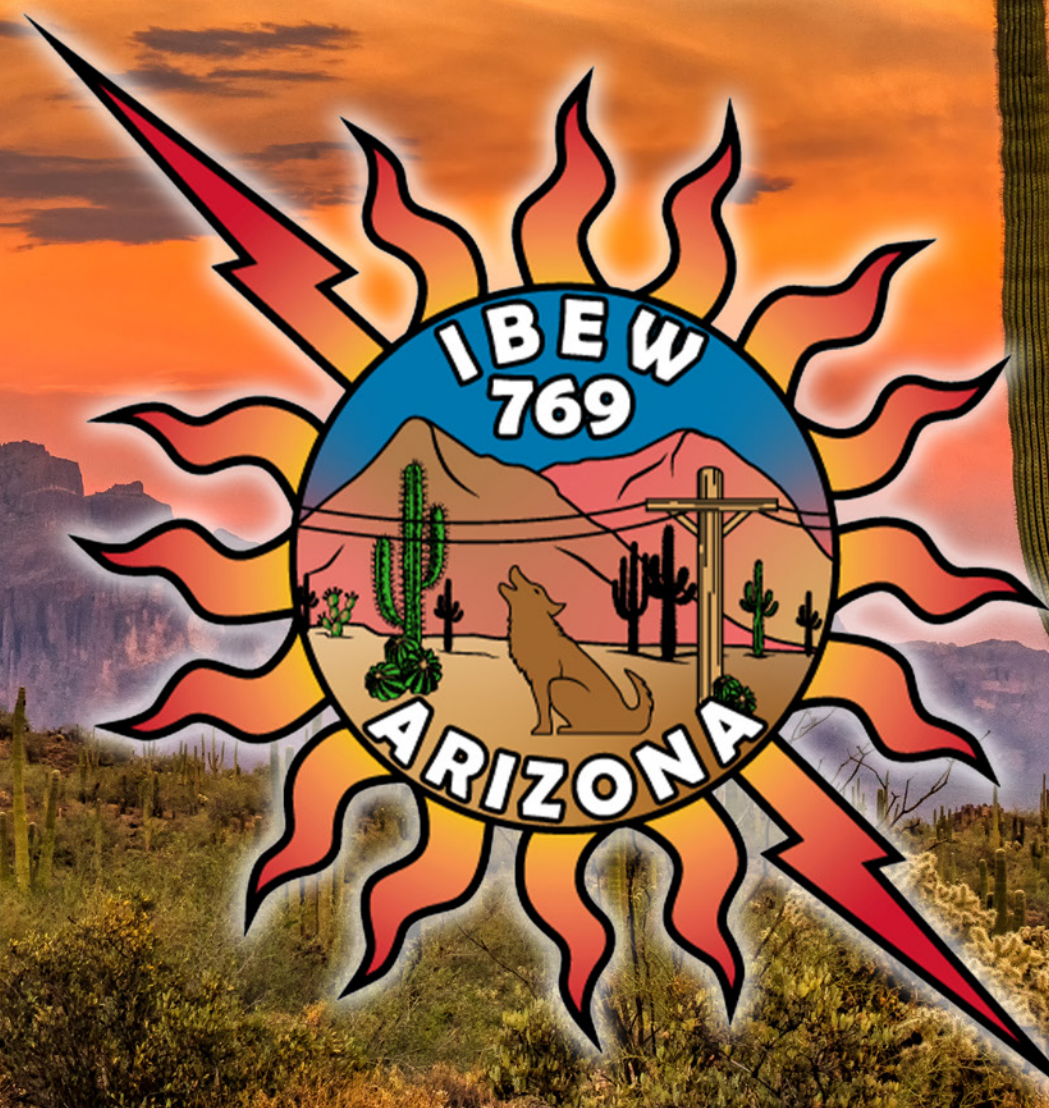
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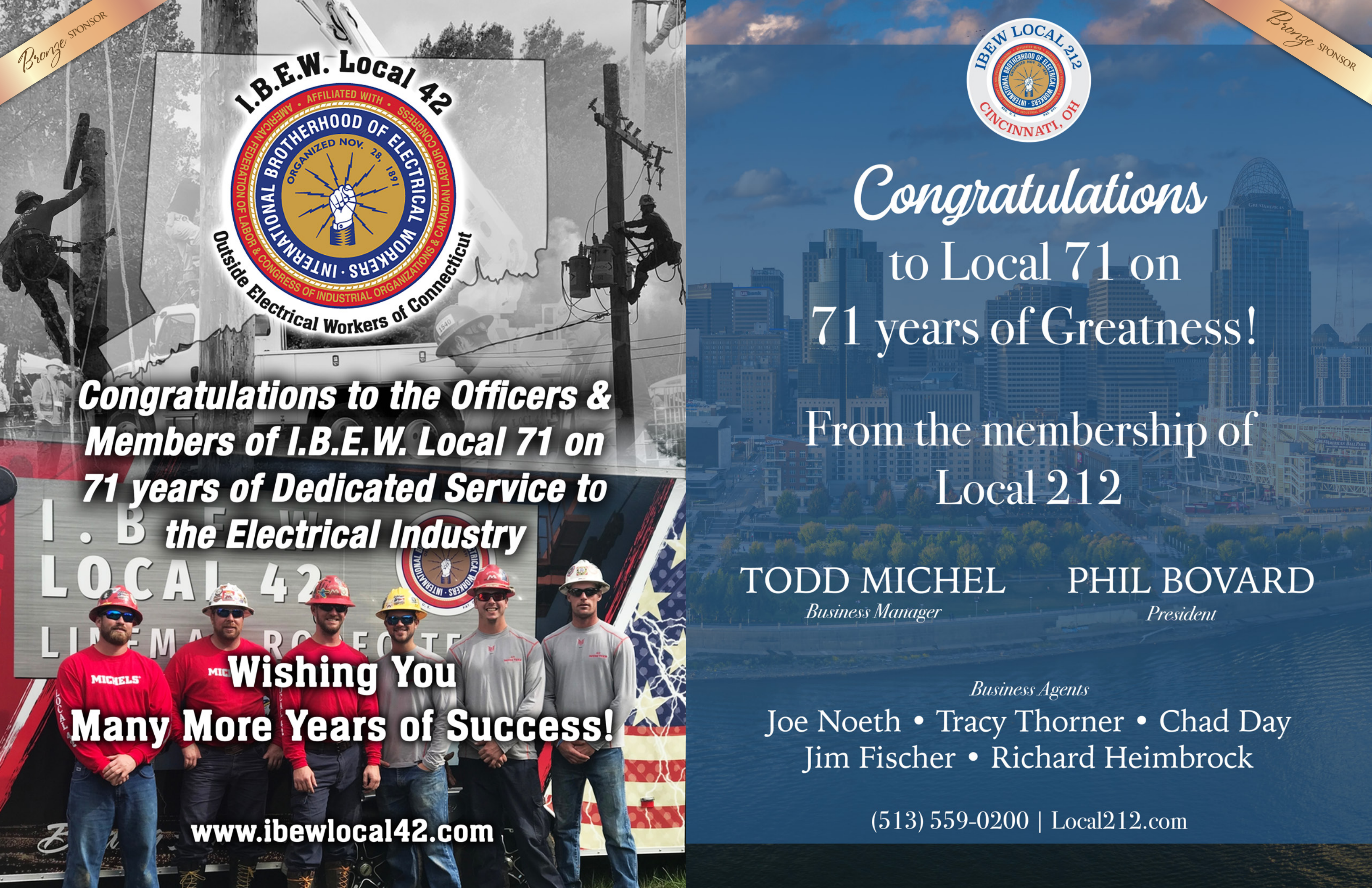
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71 years of Dedicated Service to
the Electrical Industry**

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Many More Years of Success!**

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***Best Wishes on your
71st Anniversary Celebration
I.B.E.W. Local Union No. 71***

From

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**Happy 71st
Anniversary**

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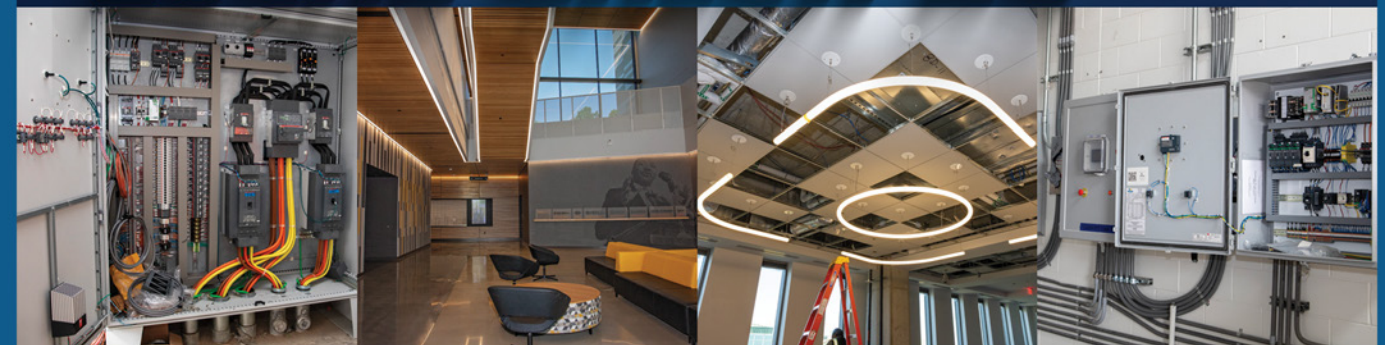
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of Powering Columbus



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on 71 Years of Service**

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Officers & Members
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ON 71 YEARS
POWERING OHIO!**

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Happy 71st Anniversary!

IBEW LOCAL
245



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Steubenville, Ohio*

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