

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF IRON WORKERS  
LOCAL UNION NO. 290

100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION - 2019

# IRONWORKERS LOCAL 290

100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
DAYTON, OHIO

CHARTERED MAY 14, 1919

COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY  
PROGRAM BOOK





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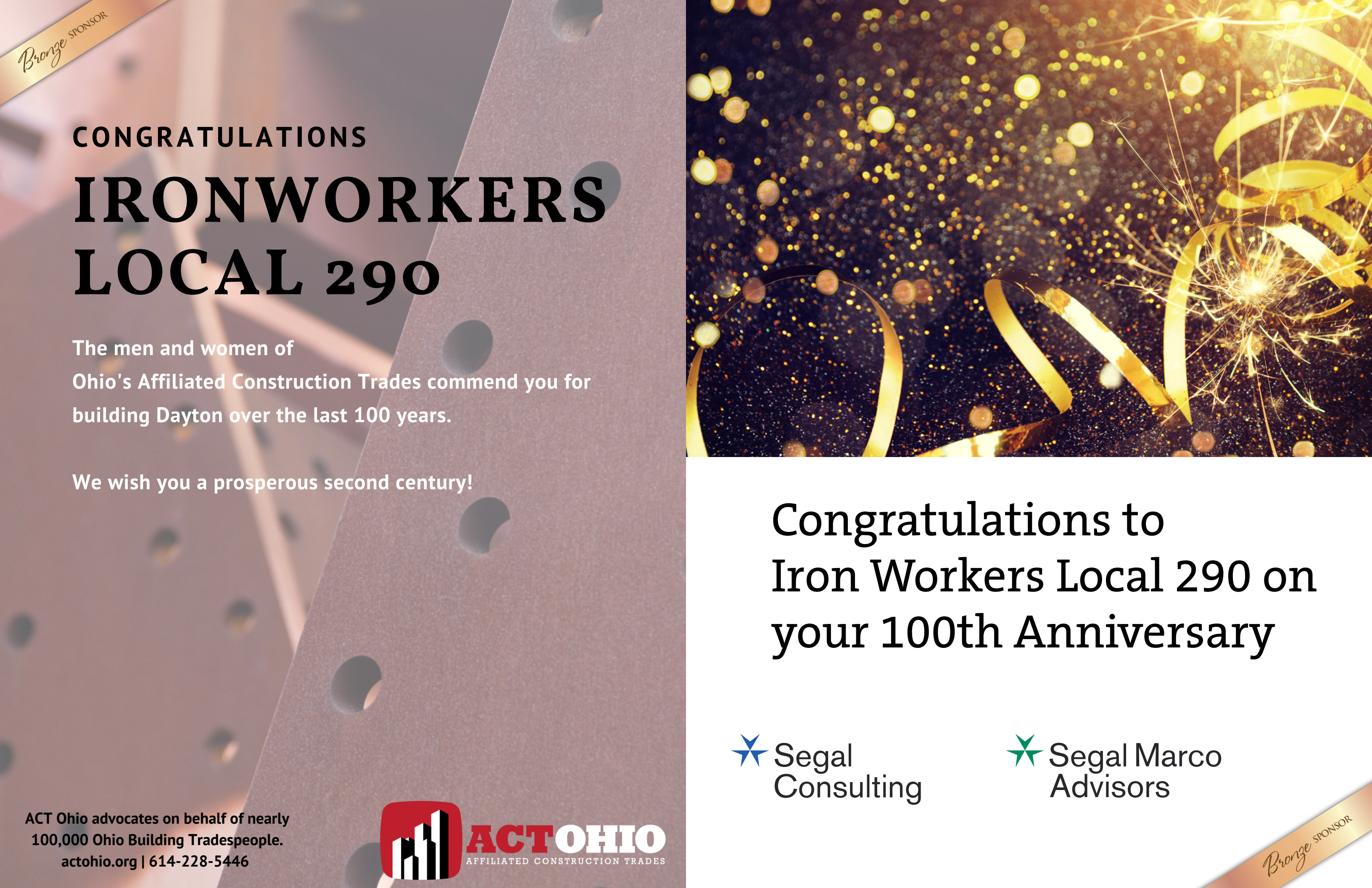
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*Congratulations*  
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## IRONWORKERS LOCAL 290 – 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**Saturday, June 15, 2019**

5:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m.

**Sinclair Conference Center – Great Room**

44 W. Third Street  
Dayton, Ohio

Cocktail Reception.....	5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Dinner Buffet .....	6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Welcome Remarks .....	7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Live Performance from Country Singer-Songwriter Wyatt McCubbin .....	8:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
DJ, Dancing and Celebrating .....	8:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

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**Ironworkers Local 290 and Union Histories give special thanks to the following for their contributions to this book:**

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Carillon Historical Park, Dayton History; Curt Dalton, Visual Resources Manager

Head Historian: Calvin Jefferson

Art Direction: Andy Taucher

Layout & Design: Steven Demanett





## AS WE HONOR LOCAL 290'S PAST, WE PLAN FOR ITS FUTURE

Brothers, Sisters and Special Guests,

As business manager of Ironworkers Local 290, and on behalf of the local's officers, staff and members, we thank you for being with us as we celebrate our 100-year anniversary. Our local was established on May 14, 1919, and we have been building our great City of Dayton and the surrounding communities with pride, dedication and hard work since that day.

We want to honor our past officers and members who worked hard every day and fought to make our great union what it is today. Looking back in time, our journey has seen good times and bad times, ups and downs, yet our local never gave up.

Local 290 has always had the reputation of hard-working, highly skilled ironworkers. Our mission is to continue to build upon that reputation and to make the necessary changes to continue that legacy going forward. We have a rich history, and change seems to be the one constant. Our commitment is to adapt, accept and implement the necessary changes to continue to be the "Best of the Best."

We want to thank all of our contractors who also put themselves and their companies at risk financially every day in pursuit of securing more jobs and regaining our market share in the industry. I personally believe that our relationship between labor and management has evolved into a much deeper partnership, and in today's market, those relationships are essential.

With the changes we have made over the last four years and with the purchase of our new training facility, we are committed to a higher level of training. This will enable us to top out a better class of highly skilled ironworkers for our contractors.

Lastly, a special thanks to all who have made this event possible tonight. Union Histories, thank you for the countless hours of research for this history book and coordinating all that you have. Sponsors and vendors, you are much appreciated for all of your support and contributions.

It is truly an honor and very humbling to be serving in this capacity for Local 290 at this moment in time. I pray for blessings and safety over all of you. Let's continue to make Ironworkers Local 290 better than we have ever been!

With my best regards, I am,



Jeffrey S. Bush Sr., Business Manager/Financial Secretary-Treasurer  
Ironworkers Local 290, Dayton



## A CENTURY OF HIGHS & LOWS HAS FORGED LOCAL 290 FOR ITS FUTURE

Brothers and Sisters,

One-Hundred years ago, Dayton, Ohio, was still in the midst of the influenza pandemic. Soldiers were finally making it home from World War I in Europe. The dams were being built in response to the Great Dayton Flood of 1913. Inflation was on the rise, and wages were stagnant.

Immigrants from eastern and southern Europe were fleeing the ravages of war and finding opportunity in the many manufacturing facilities in Dayton and the construction that coincided. Romanians, Poles, Hungarians, Italians, Greeks and Lithuanians were moving into their own little neighborhoods, trying to build a better life for their families.

The American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) was organizing strikes across the Midwest while fighting for union recognition, higher wages and the 8-hour workday.

The ironworkers International Association union had been established a mere 23 years when a handful of men banded together to create Dayton's very own Local 290. Through the Great Depression and another World War, with hard work and selfless leadership, this local has grown from its meager beginnings into the world-class organization and training facility it is today.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the generations that came before us, and with hard work, intelligence, perseverance and a little bit of luck, we will continue to grow to meet the challenges of the next century. Diversity is our strength, unity is our power.

In Solidarity, I am,



David C. Cox, Business Agent  
Ironworkers Local 290, Dayton





# THE 100-YEAR HISTORY OF DAYTON'S IRONWORKERS LOCAL No. 290

## A CENTURY OF BIRTHPLACE

## ERECTING THE OF AVIATION



*"We are sure prosperous for a new local, but there are many old heads around to teach us the moves. ... All I can say is, 'Watch No. 290 grow.' There is not a dead one in it. We are going to get all we can and then some."*

Local 290 Recording Secretary John W. Casey,  
September 1919 letter to The *Bridgemen's Magazine*

For nearly a decade-and-a-half before a local union was formed to specifically serve ironworkers in the City of Dayton, *International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers Local No. 44* of Cincinnati had jurisdiction over Dayton's union ironworking industry. While overseeing projects in and around the city, Local 44, which was formed on February 2, 1905, with the amalgamation of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers Local No. 26 and United Metal Workers' International Union Local No. 1, was affiliated with the Dayton Building Trades Council at the time.

But following the end of World War I in November 1918 and into 1919, Dayton was beginning to grow exponentially as it "adjusted itself to changed conditions incident to the closing of the world war," as *Williams' Dayton*

*Directory, 1919-1920*, explained. Indeed, most of the city's more than 600 manufacturing establishments were busy, and there was a "strong demand for labor of all kinds, especially on construction work and in the more skilled mechanical lines," according to the directory.

What's more, Dayton was not only the hometown of the Wright Brothers, who are generally credited with inventing, building and flying the world's first successful airplane some 15 years earlier, but in early 1919 it was also a decidedly union town. During that period, in fact, the city was also host to at least 65 labor unions of various types – prompting *Williams' Directory* to declare, "Dayton is strong in its fraternal organizations."

In that setting, Dayton's ironworkers believed they undeniably warranted a local union of their own, although they tussled



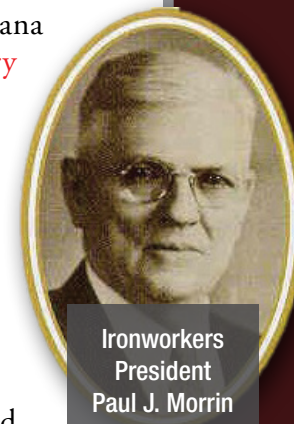
## INTERNATIONAL IRONWORKERS UNION WAS FORMED IN 1896

As the use of steel in erecting buildings and other structures became more prevalent in the United States during the 1880s and into the 1890s, a new and dramatic increase in the demand for ironworkers arose. As those "sky cowboys" began to seek better pay and working conditions, they also started to unify.

Eventually, 16 delegates from six locals held a convention in Pittsburgh from February 4 to 7, 1896, and established the International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America. During its convention, the new union adopted a constitution and bylaws; elected Brother Edward J. Ryan as its first president along with a full set of officers; and chose to establish its headquarters in Chicago.

Soon after, the International Association affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.). However, internal divisions led the union to disaffiliate in 1901, only to re-join two years later and become one of the charter members of the A.F.L.'s Building Trades Department, which was created in 1908.

In 1915 during its annual convention, the union changed its name to the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers and Pile Drivers. Over the next four years, however, the ironworkers and carpenters union engaged in a contentious jurisdictional dispute over pile-driving, which resulted in the A.F.L. forcing the ironworkers union to drop "Pile Drivers" from its name and transfer members in the pile-driving jurisdiction into the carpenters union (which was completed by April 1, 1920) — although the ironworkers regained the reinforcing rod jurisdiction from the Lathers International Union.



Ironworkers  
President  
Paul J. Morrin

with both the International Association and Local 44 before both would capitulate to the request. Subsequently, the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers chartered Local No. 290 on **May 14, 1919**, to serve the Greater Dayton region and a portion of Indiana (although Local 290 **Recording Secretary John W. Casey** would quip in a letter in the November 1919 *Bridgemen's Magazine*, the union's monthly publication, that the International Association had given the local "enough jurisdiction to do a lot of farming on").

With its new charter in hand, the "mixed" local of structural ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen held its first meetings in the **Dayton Labor Temple** at 125-1/2 South Jefferson Street every Tuesday evening. Among its 20 charter members who would help the local endure was **Brother Woodford Riley**, a former president of Local 44 who would later serve as the Dayton local's business agent from October 1924 to July 1929.

## FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, MAKING ITS PRESENCE KNOWN

**A**lmost immediately, the fledgling Local 290 clashed with the city's construction contractors over working conditions, and specifically the use of laborers to lay reinforcing steel rods for concrete work, which the ironworkers claimed as their jurisdiction. In July 1919, those differences "threatened to tie up Dayton's building program through a sympathetic strike of all the building trades," the *Dayton Daily News* reported on July 21.

That same day, the walkout was avoided when the two sides agreed to form a committee of three contractor representatives and three labor representatives to work out their controversies within the next 10 days, after which the dispute would be "submitted to an umpire whose decision is to be accepted by both sides,"

according to the newspaper. After nearly two weeks, a final meeting on August 1 settled the issues, recognizing the local's right to the rod work among other resolutions, and prevented a general strike of the building trades.

As 1919 progressed, work in Dayton and throughout Local 290's jurisdiction provided abundant employment opportunities for the local's membership, including construction

# The International Association of Bridge, Structural & Ornamental Iron Workers & Pile Drivers DO TH GRANT THIS CHARTER

To *The Bridge, Structural & Ornamental Iron Workers*

and to their successors legally qualified to establish a Local Union of the International Association to be located at *Dayton, Ohio* in the *State of Ohio* and to be known as Local Union No. *290*.

This Charter grants to Local Union No. *290* power to conduct the business affairs of said Local Union in compliance with the best interests of the trade. The autonomy of the Local Union is hereby ordained and secured:

PROVIDED: That the said Local Union No. *290* conforms to the Constitution, Laws, Rules and Regulations of the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers and Pile Drivers, and in default thereof this Charter may be suspended or revoked according to the laws of this ASSOCIATION.

Should the said Local Union No. *290* be dissolved, suspended or forfeit this Charter, then the persons to whom this Charter is granted, or their successors, bind themselves to surrender the same with such other property as shall properly belong to this ASSOCIATION.

In consideration of the due performance of the above the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers and Pile Drivers hereby binds itself to support the said Local Union No. *290* in the exercise of all its rights, privileges and autonomy as an affiliated Local Union.

In Witness Whereof, We have subscribed our names and affixed the seal of the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers and Pile Drivers this *fourteenth* day of *May* A. D. One Thousand, Nine Hundred and *nineteen*.

President.

Secretary-Treasurer.



## IRONWORKERS LOCAL NO. 290 OFFICES & MEETING LOCATIONS

**Dayton Labor Temple**  
125-1/2 South Jefferson Street, Dayton  
June 1919 into 1923

**Dayton Labor Hall**  
801 East 5th Street, Dayton  
1923 into 1932

**Meeting Place: 78 Walnut Street, Dayton**  
1931 into 1933

**Local 290 Union Office**  
(Recording Secretary Woodford Riley residence)  
840 South Main Street, Dayton  
1932 into 1933

**Dayton Labor Headquarters**  
Third Floor, Hamiel Building  
202 South Ludlow Street, Dayton  
1933 into 1961

**Local 290 Union Hall at 606  
Hillrose Avenue in Dayton.**



**Local 290 Union Hall**  
606 Hillrose Avenue, Dayton  
1961 into 2016

**Local 290 Union Hall**  
4191 East U.S. Route 40, Tipp City  
2016 to present

**Local 290 Union Hall at 4191 East U.S. Route 40 in Tipp City.**

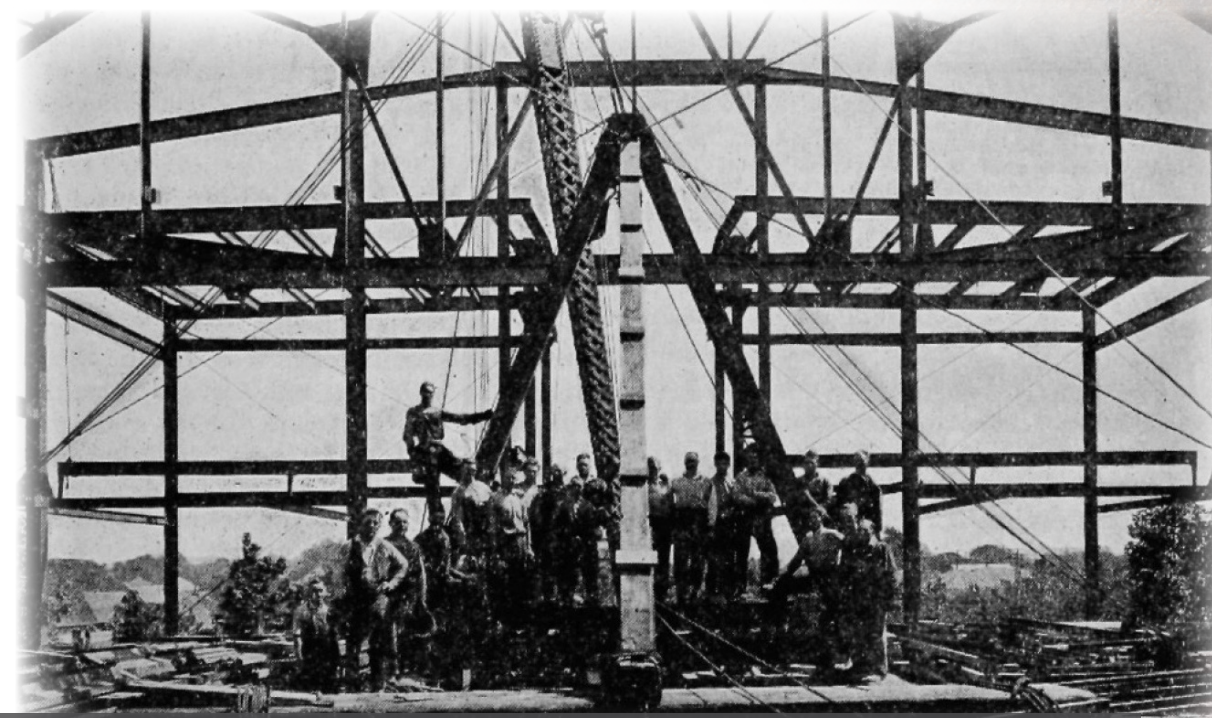


The Dayton Labor Temple at 125-1/2 South Jefferson Street was located in the Pony House building.  
(Photo courtesy of the Dayton Metro Library.)



of a \$6-million plant for the **Westinghouse-Church-Kerr Company** that had just started in Middletown, Ohio, and a large roundhouse job for Austin & Company in Richmond, Indiana. Additional projects that employed the union ironworkers included a \$1.5-million job for the Domestic Engineering Company that started in October 1919 and a new, \$1-million building for the **National Cash Register Company** that started the following month. Employers such as **Joe Lowes**, **Frank Hill Smith** and **John Poole & Son** also worked the local's membership on several other jobs that year.

The influx of work in the Local 290 jurisdiction became so overwhelming that the



Local 290 members erecting the structural steel for the new Roosevelt High School built in Dayton in 1923.

local announced in the October 1919 issue of the *Bridgemen's Magazine* that it could "use about 20 men" to help handle it – even though the local had recently endured a three-week-long lockout by contractors over working conditions and wages. The escalating construction that fall further included the new, five-story **Weber Garage Building** on North St. Clair Street for the Weber Automobile Company.

By mid-October, Local 290 had already grown to more than 100 members, about 75 of whom were working within the City of Dayton alone, and the local controlled all of the reinforcing rod work being done in its jurisdiction. At the time, the wage scale for the local's journeymen was 87-1/2 cents per hour for structural ironworkers and 80 cents per hour for rodmen.

But into 1920, the need for "closer cooperation" among the city's metal-trades unions had become more apparent with the industry's rapid growth. "The metal-trades employers have an understanding which is

equivalent to a strong organization, and it thus becomes necessary for the employees to take steps to protect themselves," an article in the January 30, 1920, *Labor Union* newspaper, the official publication of organized labor in Dayton, explained. To that end, representatives of seven metal crafts, including Ironworkers Local 290, met on January 16 of that year and formed the **Dayton Metal Trades Council**, "an organization whose absence has been noted in the past and whose presence will be of great advantage in the future," the *Labor Union* declared.

That May, however, about 70 of the local's members walked off their jobs after contractors refused the union's demand for a wage raise to \$1.10 per hour. The ironworkers returned to work a few days later on May 27 when the sides agreed to a conference and the use of a neutral mediator to reconcile the differences – but the local's scale was only up to 95 cents per hour for its ironworkers and 80 cents per hour for its rodmen as of December 1, 1921. (Comparatively, ironworkers in Cincinnati



were earning 90 cents per hour and in Columbus they were earning \$1 per hour.)

Meanwhile, Local 290 was also battling neighboring union ironworkers locals, such as Local 44 and Local No. 172 of Columbus, over territorial jurisdiction. Subsequently, the Dayton local brought a resolution before the International Association's 21st Convention, held September 20 through 29, 1920, in Cleveland, that requested the union "award to Local Union No. 290 all territory lying north of a line to be drawn (from east to west) halfway between the cities of Dayton, Ohio, and Cincinnati, Ohio, and all territory lying west of a line to be drawn (from north to south) halfway between the cities of Dayton, Ohio, and Columbus, Ohio; and ... that the present existing boundary lines ... on the north and the west of the city of Dayton, Ohio, are hereby made permanent."

However, the International Association rejected the resolution and, instead, decreed that the temporary jurisdictional borders it had set when Local 290 was established would continue to be recognized, leaving the Dayton local in a state of flux for the immediate future.

Not even two years later, the local was again forced to strike beginning May 4, 1922, after it could not come to an agreement with Dayton-

based contractors over a new wage scale, while out-of-town contractors working in the city had signed a new contract. Although the employers were only offering an eight-month agreement, eventually the union won its demand for a 12-month-long pact and a 10-cent-per-hour raise, and by the end of 1923, its journeyman hourly wages were \$1.12-1/2 for structural ironworkers and \$1 for rodmen.

Among the work that continued to keep Local 290's members consistently employed in 1923, several of its ironworkers erected the steel for construction of the new **Roosevelt High School** in Dayton. With that project and many others in its jurisdiction supplying ample man-hours, the local averaged a month-to-month membership of about 125 that year, as compared to an average of 67 members just the year before.

Then in May 1924, Local 290 and its contractors reached an amicable agreement on a new, first-time-ever, two-year contract that began May 1. The pact raised ironworker wages to \$1.15 per hour while maintaining rodmen hourly wages at \$1 through May 1926.

However, on May 3, 1926, the local's approximately 100 structural ironworkers, ornamental ironworkers and rodmen did not report to work after that contract expired and

no new wage agreement had been closed with the Dayton chapter of the **Associated General Contractors** (A.G.C.). After three days, the lone strike in the city's building trades ended after the union and its employers gained another new, two-year pact on May 6 that provided for increases up to \$1.35 per hour beginning May 1, 1927, for structural ironworkers and up to \$1.20 for rodmen for that final year of the agreement ending May 1, 1928.

During that time, employment remained strong for the local into 1928 with jobs that included construction of a new fabricating plant for the **Dayton Structural Steel Company**. The project involved erection of about 300 tons of steel performed by the local's members.

With its membership by mid-1928 averaging about 103 ironworkers, rodmen and apprentices per month during the previous year, Local 290 entered the second half of 1928 with a new agreement struck that May that continued its wage scale of \$1.35 per hour for structural members and boosted the scale for reinforcing members to \$1.25 per hour. It also sustained the standard workweek for the union ironworkers at 44 hours per week.

In fact, trades throughout Dayton's construction industry had each agreed to continue under "practically the same

arrangements which prevailed during the past year," according to the April 30, 1928, *Daily News*. Consequently and in sharp contrast to the recurrent labor strikes occurring in other sections of the country, as Dayton Central Labor Union President Ora Kress declared in the newspaper, "May Day ... will present an unusually tame aspect to Daytonians."

## DURING WORST OF TIMES, MAINTAINING ITS RESILIENCY

Initially, the **Great Depression**, which essentially began on October 29, 1929 (history's "Black Tuesday") with the devastating crash of the U.S. stock market, had little impact on the employment of ironworkers around the country. To the contrary, from July 1, 1929, to June 30, 1930, the International Association added 3,440 new members to its ranks, and while other international unions experienced wage reductions of up to 50 percent, the average wage reduction for ironworkers locals was 15.9 percent, according to the International.

In Dayton, Local 290 remained busy with major jobs into 1930 and 1931, including steel erection for the construction of the new, \$2-million **Good Samaritan Hospital** on Salem Avenue; ongoing steel work on the city's street-



Local 290 members and other employees of the Dayton Structural Steel Company gather outside the company's headquarters on August 28, 1929.



car track elevation project; and construction of the **Mutual Home Building** skyscraper (which is now Liberty Tower) on West Second Street. At 285-feet and 23-stories tall when completed in late 1931, the ultra-modern Mutual Home was the tallest building in the city until 1969.

The local and its A.G.C. contractors were also able to negotiate a mutually satisfying new agreement to begin May 1, 1930, that set journeyman wages for the ensuing year at \$1.35 per hour for structural and ornamental ironworkers. It also provided a wage of \$1.25 per hour for the local's rodmen.

But the Depression and unemployment "finally caught up with the ironworkers within two years after the crash as building construction nearly came to a halt," according to the International. During that time, the union lost almost 50 percent of its paid membership nationwide – but despite that, nearly every ironworkers local remained intact as the International Association officers "were

leaders in New Deal (federal assistance) efforts to get labor back on its feet again."

The International Association also secured two working agreements during the early 1930s, one of which was the **Bridge Erectors' Agreement** that covered the nationwide jobs of "fair" contractors in the **Structural Steel and Bridge Erectors' Association**. As part of that contract, ironworkers took a wage reduction and worked six days a week so that those employers "could compete with unfair contractors." (The International renewed the agreement on July 10, 1933, and revised it to cover building and other forms of iron and steel erection to further assist the union's membership.)

However, Local 290 went on a two-week-long strike beginning May 14, 1931, after it refused to accept cuts in its wages proposed by the A.G.C. The two sides eventually came to terms on May 28 on a contract that would continue the previous scale, retroactive to May 1.



Local 290 Brother Jim Crawford on a construction job in 1937.

As a result of those ironworkers' negotiations with their contractors, the city's building trades and the A.G.C. "heartily" adopted a new method for solving labor disputes that was proposed by the mediator in the ironworkers' conferences, H. D. Friel of the U.S. Department of Labor, the *Daily News* reported on May 29, 1931. With the contractors arguing that they were losing scores of bids on important Miami Valley construction jobs because of "unwarranted demands" by the building trades unions and because average wages in the city's construction trades were 9-cents-per-hour higher than the average national rate, the plan called for the **Dayton Building Trades Council** to confer with general contractors on individual jobs.

"The comprehensive scheme of cooperation which enthused the industry ... evolved during conferences which led to the end ... of the two-week strike of structural ironworkers," the newspaper wrote in announcing the plan. "With both the contractors and the union representatives working toward a common end – to get more jobs and to provide more work – Friel asserted that without upsetting union regulations, plans could be developed to enable Dayton contractors to compete with contractors of other centers."

Retired Local 290 member Brother Orville Young, a veteran of World War I, is presented with a medal commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the war by U.S. Congressman Tony Hall at the V.A. Medical Center on Veterans Day 1993. At the time, Brother Young was 96 years old and a 73-year retired member of the local.



## Local 290 Serves its Country A LONG TRADITION OF MILITARY HONOR



Brother John L. Metzler

Before Brother John L. "Dutch" Metzler served Local 290 as a president and business manager during the 1930s, he was a member of the U.S. Army's famed 99th Aero Squadron during World War I, which performed tactical reconnaissance flights over the Western Front in France. Likewise, 73-plus-year Local 290 member Brother Orville Young and Brother Harry Nelson, who was a member of the British Royal Air Force, also fought in the First World War.

Throughout its 100 year history, the membership of Local 290 has consistently answered the call to arms in defense of the nation's freedom. Among those many brave members, Brother Ray E. Armstrong, the local's business agent from 1938 into 1950, was a World War II Marine Corps veteran, and Brother George E. Clark, the local's business agent from 1950 into 1978, was a first-class petty officer in a U.S. Navy "SeaBee" Construction Battalion during the Second World War.

Many more members have served during the ensuing Korean and Vietnam wars and other military conflicts and actions. Brothers who served in the years immediately following the 9-11 terrorists attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, included brothers Faron Kelley, Douglas Lane, Ronald Norman, Jimmy Pierce, Kenneth White and Aaron Wilcox, while members such as Brother Abel Richards, a staff sergeant and senior medic in U.S. Army Troop C, 2-107th Cavalry, would later take up the fight in the War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As Local 290 celebrates its 100th Anniversary in 2019, within the last several years, many members have continued to answer the call to duty, including brothers Frank Anuci, James Armstrong, Tony Bettendorf, Edward Binigar, Raymond Bond, Brad Boy, Dwight Clay, Oscar Conville, Rick Cornett, Larry Gonzalez, Raymond Gonzalez, Paul Graupmann, Emerson Hillman Jr., Ron Hoffman, Ray Isaacs, Jeremy Jett, Brother Kelley, Steve Lawson, Timothy Mays, Frank McCubbin Jr., Stephen Mikalas, James Miller, Joe Pittaluga, Abel Richards, Charles Ross Jr., Jim Schweitzer, Claude Snyder, Ron Sprenkel, George Steinke, Jordan Striff, Jacob Williams and Michael Yezzi.

Local 290 has also always supported the country's men and women in uniform from the homefront, as well. For instance, in 2006, the local donated \$1,000 – the largest contribution made – to a collection to cover the cost of sending 70 Marines of a Dayton-based reserve unit that had just returned home from its fifth deployment to Iraq since the September 11 terrorist attacks five years earlier to a U.S. Marine Corps Birthday Ball commemorating the Corps' 231st birthday.



But like most of the country, Dayton and its construction industry were not immune to the suffering brought by the Depression years. As such, Local 290 accepted wage reductions to \$1.15 cents per hour for ironworkers and \$1 per hour for rodmen and shortened workweeks to 40 hours beginning May 1, 1932.

The local, continuing to feel the increased pinch of the economic turmoil, also relocated its offices that year to the home of **Recording Secretary Woodford Riley** in an apparent move to save money. The ironworkers would maintain their headquarters there throughout much of 1933, as well.

Meanwhile in May 1932, Local 290 and two other Building Trades Council unions would not yield to an additional wage-cut request for a flat 75 cents per hour from the **Building Employers' Council of Dayton**, which had replaced the A.G.C. after it announced in the fall of 1931 that it would "no longer deal

with the unions," according to the May 6, 1932, *Labor Union*. Ultimately, the ironworkers accepted a 20-percent cut in their pay scales for the coming years.



The 284-foot-tall Mutual Home Building (now the Liberty Tower) under construction with Local 290 labor in downtown Dayton in 1930 and 1931. (Photos courtesy of Liberty Tower and Liberty Savings Bank.)

As a new war escalated in Europe during the second half of the 1930s, many of Dayton's numerous factories were converted to produce war-related supplies to be shipped overseas. As a result, Dayton's economy began to recover from the Great Depression earlier than that of most other cities, according to the *Ohio Modern Dayton Survey, 1940-1970*. "By 1937, there were signs that the (city's) economy was improving," the survey reported.

Indeed, with construction already picking up, Local 290 wages had steadily climbed back to \$1.30 per hour for ironworkers and \$1.15 per hour for rodmen in its contract covering May 1, 1936, to May 1, 1937. The local then negotiated for another new agreement that contained a more than 15-percent raise to \$1.50 per hour – a trend that would continue throughout the balance of the decade and the 1940s as Dayton's building-trades industry boomed.

### THROUGH WAR AND PEACE, WIELDING A GROWING IMPACT

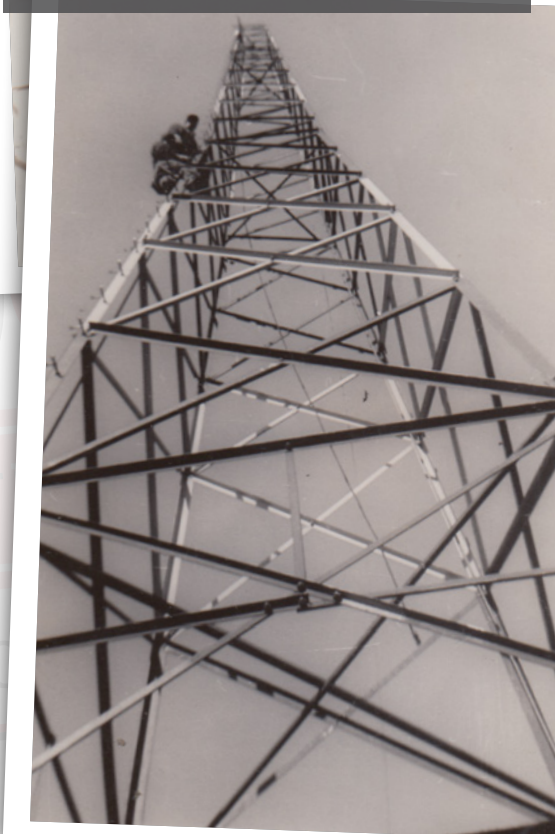
The onset of **World War II** undeniably and significantly boosted Dayton's economy. In fact, according to the book *Home Sweet Home Front: Dayton During World War II*, "The use of Dayton war products engineered and built by Dayton war plants and labor touched nearly every Allied-fighting front at one time or another."

By 1940, with local and national industries recovering from the Depression of the previous decade as Europe and Asia were already entangled in the global conflict, Local 290 wages were stabilized as the demand for its labor continued to increase. A new contract that year held the local's structural and ornamental journeyman wages at \$1.50 per hour and rodmen pay at \$1.35 per hour. As the war's end in September 1945 neared, the local would gain a year-long contract in May 1944 for \$1.65 and \$1.50 per hour for its ironworkers and rodmen, respectively.

The International Association of Iron Workers chartered Shopmen's Local No. 628 in Dayton on October 30, 1940, with 31 charter members who worked at the Dayton Fabricating Steel Company. The local's charter was revoked less than four years later on June 30, 1944.



Local 290 members erect a 180-foot-tall radio tower for Dayton radio station WING in 1940.







Local 290 Brother Eldon Larue "Whitie" Whittler

Local 290 Brother Eldon Larue Whittler was also a professional wrestler known as "Whitie" Whittler who fought 1,155 matches in the National Wrestling Alliance from 1933 into 1963 and was its Junior Heavyweight Champion in the mid-1940s, according to [wrestlingdata.com](http://wrestlingdata.com). He passed away on June 17, 1983, at age 69. (Brother Whittler's son, Eldon Lee Whittler, was also a professional wrestler known as "Smasher Sloan" who wrestled for the World Wide Wrestling Federation in the 1960s and early 1970s.)

After the United States officially entered the war following the Japanese attack on U.S. Naval Station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, Local 290's members were active both on the homefront and on various battlefields. Wartime projects throughout the local's jurisdiction included a \$15 million expansion of **Wright and Patterson Field** beginning January 1, 1942, that would build three new runways, a large test hanger, a 20-foot wind tunnel, new warehouses, a new propeller laboratory, expanded barracks facilities, a 580-foot long airplane repair dock and new, \$2.5-million headquarters building.

By 1943, there were some 61 principal war production industries in Dayton, including

material being produced at revamped National Cash Register, Dayton Rubber, Delco, Frigidaire and General Motors factories, that were employing approximately 115,000 people. However, the U.S. War Manpower Commission announced that year that Dayton was on a list of "cities designated as areas of critical labor shortage."

As the need for its labor helped generate membership growth during the war, Local 290 for the first time ever sent two delegates to the International Association's Convention in 1944. **Brother Ray E. Armstrong** and **Brother Fred Gage** represented the local at the union's 27th international conference, which was held in St. Louis beginning September 18 of that year.

The post-war years were a time of great prosperity for Local 290, as well. Throughout the second half of the 1940s, its wages rapidly escalated and work for its members was abundant during the construction boom that followed World War II.

With its wage scale for journeyman ironworkers at \$1.90 per hour for the year that began on May 1, 1946, the local joined other building-trades crafts in negotiating for raises from the recently formed **Construction Contractors' Association of Dayton** in May 1947. While the ironworkers were seeking a 25-cent increase, on May 25 the unions together won one-year "across-the-board" pay raises of 22-1/2 cents, taking the Local 290 rates to \$2.12-1/2 for ironworkers and \$1.97-1/2 for rodmen, all retroactive to May 1.

The following year, contracts between the building-trades locals and the Contractors' Association that were to go into effect May 1, 1948, were signed on March 30. The union crafts were again provided with a blanket increase, with the new agreements giving each union a 17-1/2-cent-per-hour wage boost. The resultant new \$2.30 hourly scale for Local 290's ironworkers was 5 cents lower than the pay of

their counterparts in Cincinnati but 5 cents higher than the union ironworkers in Columbus.

As construction in the local's jurisdiction continued to flourish into the final year of the decade, Local 290 and seven other Dayton building-trades locals negotiated together to gain a first-ever **three-year contract** with their respective contractors. The agreement provided for an immediate 12-1/2-cent hourly wage increase with cost-of-living wage adjustments to be made on May 1, 1950, and May 1, 1951, until the contract expired on April 30, 1952.

As such, Local 290's new scales for the first year beginning May 1, 1949, were increased to \$2.42-1/2 per hour for structural and ornamental ironworkers and \$2.27-1/2 per hour for reinforcing rodmen during a 40-hour workweek.

The agreement was "heralded by both unions and employers as stabilizing the building industry for the next three years," the May 11, 1949, *Daily News* reported. It would also go on to "serve as a pattern for four other building trades crafts" in their negotiations.

## WITH WORK ABUNDANT, FIGHTING FOR FAIR WAGES

Local 290's agreement with its employers of the Construction Contractors' Association of Dayton increased its wage scale in 1950 to \$2.52-1/2 and \$2.37-1/2 per hour for its structural and ornamental ironworkers and its reinforcing rodmen, respectively. The following year, the pact added another raise to \$2.67 per hour for ironworkers and \$2.50 per hour for rodmen for its duration to April 30, 1952.

Among the many jobs employing the local's more-than-450-strong membership during the first years of the new decade was construction of a **Frigidaire appliance plant** in Moraine, Ohio, that would open in 1951. (The plant

would later be converted in 1980 and 1981 to a General Motors truck assembly plant.)

Meanwhile in 1951, in an effort to strengthen the region's union-ironworking industry, the local was assigned to the International Association's newly formed **District Council of Southern Ohio and Vicinity** along with 13 other locals. (As Local 290 celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2019, the District Council remains a strong champion of recruiting new members through active organizing and bringing union work, wages, benefits and training to ironworkers within its jurisdiction.)

Subsequently in 1952, Local 290 gained another landmark breakthrough when its new contract beginning that May 1 included a first-ever **Health and Welfare Fund** benefit, into which the local's employers would pay 7-1/2 cents for each hour worked by a local member beginning August 1. The contribution would go into the **District Council of Southern Ohio and Vicinity Welfare Fund**, which would be used by all of the locals in the District Council to purchase group life insurance, group accidental death and dismemberment insurance, weekly accident and sickness benefits, hospitalization insurance and medical and surgical insurance for their respective members.

That one-year contract also increased Local 290 hourly wages to \$2.77 for ironworkers and \$2.60 for rodmen. Another new, one-year

(Continued after the following spread)

Local 290 was an inaugural member of the International Association of Iron Workers' District Council of Southern Ohio and Vicinity when it was formed in 1951 with Local 290 Brother Ray E. Armstrong serving as its first president. Other initial members of the District Council were Local 22 of Indianapolis; Local 44 of Cincinnati; Local 70 of Louisville; Local 172 of Columbus; Local 301 of Charleston, West Virginia; Local 372 of Cincinnati; Local 439 of Terre Haute, Indiana; Local 522 of Cincinnati; Local 529 of Indianapolis; Local 626 of Columbus; Local No. 682 of Louisville; and Local 689 of Covington, Kentucky.



# Apprentice and Member Education LOCAL 290 TRAINING PROGRAMS

Training of Local 290 apprentices during the local's nearly first 40 years was performed almost exclusively on-the-job. Before 1957, the local's apprentices were trained primarily while working alongside journeymen on jobsites for several years — being paid as they learned — before they were permitted to advance to journeyman-level ironworker status.

As the building-trades unions of Dayton and the local chapter of the Associated General Contractors worked to attract more **black apprentices** as part of a special recruiting project instituted by the Urban League during the mid- and late-1960s, Local 290 did its part by dropping residency requirements to encourage more applications. In 1967, only two black applicants were indentured into Local 290 apprenticeships, but they were believed to be the first minorities to ever take part in the program.

That year, the local started its formal apprentice-training program that enhanced the time-honored, on-the-job training with free class study and lab work, while apprentices still earned wages. The new, three-year apprenticeship program was initially held at the John H. Patterson Career Center in conjunction with the Dayton City Schools system.



Local 290 graduating apprenticeship class of 1964.



Local 290 apprentices train in 2015.

The Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (J.A.T.C.), a board of union and contractor representatives that operates the training program, moved the classes to the new Local 290 union hall on Hillrose Avenue after the local relocated there in 1961. By 1967, the program required apprentices to complete 6,000 hours of on-the-job training and 432 hours of schoolwork over a three-year period before they could graduate to journeyman.

In 2006, Local 290 completed the **Ironworker Apprenticeship Certification Program**, which was implemented the year before by the International Association of Iron Workers' Apprenticeship and Training Department to improve and standardize the quality of apprenticeship training offered at local unions. The certification was designed to help guarantee that graduates of local J.A.T.C. programs are skilled ironworkers able to meet the needs of employers and contractors by ensuring that apprenticeship programs meet or exceed established standards and requirements in areas such as implementing core curriculum; ensuring instructors have appropriate credentials; maintaining appropriate training facilities; providing access to current tools and equipment; ensuring safety of apprentices; and providing on-the-job training to prepare skilled ironworkers.

# AMS ENRICH ITS WORKFORCE

Local 290 was recognized by the International Association of Iron Workers in 2017 for exceeding the union's **Apprenticeship & Training "Key Performance Indicators."** The indicators, which were instituted in 2007, measure a local's ability to provide its membership with the highest standards of apprenticeship and training, among other operational functions, by providing a comprehensive indication of how well a local is functioning in each particular area.

A local's apprenticeship standards, for instance, indicate approaches such as open enrollment, slot-ins and competency-based training, among other parameters.

As the Local 290 training program continued to develop, a new contract between Local 290 and its contractors that went into effect in July 1981 included a first-ever subsidy benefit for an Apprenticeship Training Fund, into which the employers would contribute 6 cents per hour worked by each Local 290 member. Two years later in 1983, the local graduated its largest class of apprentices to date — 37 new journeymen — since the program started 26 years earlier.

Always seeking to maintain the first-rate education of its apprentices, the J.A.T.C. switched to daytime block training in 2015, by which each apprentice attends class from 7:30 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon for 2 weeks and then works in the field for three-and-a-half months until the next two weeks of training is necessary. Through the daytime block training, each apprentice completes 210 hours of classroom and lab training in six weeks each year over a four-year period, after which he or she must pass a completion test in order to graduate.

The following year, training was then moved into the local's current union hall in Tipp City when the local moved its operations there, providing a large amount of additional training room. Within the 45,000-square-foot facility, the J.A.T.C. was able to double its number of weld-training stations, expand its rigging training and provide a full-scale bridge training area to help prepare its apprentices for real-world, on-the-job work scenarios.

In 2019 as Local 290 marks its centennial anniversary, its four-year training program has grown into a multi-million dollar operation with a state-of-the-art, Ohio Department of

Transportation-approved weld training and testing facility, six classrooms and several workstations on which apprentices can train on material-handling systems and process equipment. The program's instructors are Local 290 members who provide valuable knowledge gained from their years of hands-on experience.

Ultimately, the program is designed to prepare every participant in all of the required skill sets needed in the ironworking trade, from reinforcing rods to roof decking, from setting steel to installing machinery, and from curtain-wall to stairways and more. As such, apprentices are continuously provided with free classroom and on-the-job-training as they also earn wages and pension and healthcare benefits, all of which are subsidized by the union J.A.T.C. program, and college credit with North West College.

The J.A.T.C. also offers a two-year program specializing in reinforcing rods and post-tensioning.

Additionally, in order to keep its journeyman members at the forefront of the ever-changing ironworking industry, Local 290 also provides continuing education through journeyman upgrade training that covers a wide range of subjects.

First Aid/CPR training is a key component of the safety training provided by Local 290 to its apprentices and journey-level members. The need for that knowledge was never more fully on display than in May 2003 when Local 290 Brother **Sean Hercutt** and Brother **Rex Hart**, working at the Ford Motor Assembly Plant in Norfolk, Virginia, saved the life of a union millwright who suffered a heart attack by performing CPR on the stricken brother until medical workers arrived on the scene.

Brother Hercutt received his First Aid/CPR training while attending a Mine Safety and Health Administration class provided by Local 290. Brother Hart, on the other hand, attended a contractor's mandatory First Aid/CPR training class before becoming an apprentice in Local 290.





Local 290 Brother Thomas L. Buettner (foreground) and other members work on construction of Bath School in Lima in 1960.

agreement with the **Dayton District Building Trades Employers Association** a year later pushed the scale to \$2.90 per hour for ironworkers and \$2.73 per hour for rodmen through April 30, 1954, while also contributing 7-1/2 cents per hour worked for the welfare benefit.

After its membership passed a strike vote on March 5, 1954, the local asked for approval from the International Association in April 1954 to go on strike against its contractors if they did not amicably settle ongoing wage negotiations by May 1. While the remaining building-trades crafts in Dayton negotiated through the Central Labor Union for a 10-cent-

The International Association of Iron Workers chartered Shopmen's Local No. 777 in Dayton on May 10, 1957, with 53 charter members who worked at the Kopelove Iron and Steel Company. The local's charter was revoked just four years later on September 30, 1961.

per-hour increase on August 1 of that year and an additional 5-cent boost on May 1, 1955, in a two-year contract, the ironworkers gained a 10-cent increase, effective August 1, in a one-year-only agreement.

During that time, Local 290's nearly 500 members were employed on several major projects, such as construction of a new, 12-story addition to the **Rike-Kumler Company Department Store Building** at the corner of Fourth and Main streets in downtown Dayton (*which is now the site of the Benjamin and Marian Schuster Performing Arts Center*). Other larger jobs being erected by the local's membership included a new National Cash Register Company manufacturing and warehouse facility on Stewart Street and a project at the **Southwestern Portland Cement Company** plant in Fairborn, Ohio.

But that work and nearly all construction in 16 Ohio and four Indiana counties were brought to a halt when Local 290 went on strike beginning May 11, 1955, after it could not come to terms with the 40 contracting firms of the Employers Association. The strike was finally settled May 31, and members returned to their jobs the next day after the two sides ratified a one-year agreement providing two raises that would take structural and ornamental wages to \$3.15 per hour and rod-work pay to \$3 per hour.

Subsequent new, one-year contracts in 1956 and 1957 raised the local's hourly rates to \$3.40 for ironworkers and \$3.16 for rodmen through April 30, 1958. The local won the second agreement, which was made retroactive to May 1, 1957, while continuing to work after the previous contract had expired.

Another contract beginning May 1, 1958, included two increases for the coming year to \$3.65 cents per hour for ironworkers and \$3.42 per hour for rodmen. It also raised the employers' contribution to the welfare benefit to 10 cents per hour worked.



Local 290 members work on expansion of the Armco Steel Corporation plant in Middletown, Ohio, as part of the company's "Project 600" nationwide improvement campaign during the 1960s.



After the nation's two competing umbrella labor organizations – the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations – merged in December 1955 to form the A.F.L.-C.I.O., on October 22, 1959, several former A.F.L. local unions in Dayton organized the Dayton Council of Labor to protest the forced mergers of A.F.L. locals with C.I.O. locals. However, Local 290, which had often fought with its C.I.O. counterparts over jurisdiction of work in industrial facilities, did not join the Council after its International Office instructed it not to affiliate. (*The Council was soon after disbanded.*)

As the decade came to an end, Local 290's structural and ornamental ironworkers were earning \$3.75 per hour, and its reinforcing rodmen were earning \$3.70 per hour, in addition to the 10-cent hourly subsidy for the Health and Welfare Fund. That year, however, as several large projects had ended and the local had been involved in strike actions over the previous few years, the local's membership had decreased to below 400 ironworkers, rodmen and apprentices.

## ANOTHER DECADE OF FIRSTS, KEEPING BUSINESS BOOMING

**L**ocal 290 remained busy with work throughout the 1960s, and by May of the first year of that decade, the local's territorial jurisdiction spread throughout 23 counties in Ohio and Indiana, and it represented more than 375 members.

To begin the decade, on May 4, 1960, the local won a new, two-year contract with total increases of 30 cents per hour for all of its membership over the life of the pact. Most notably, the local's reinforcing rodmen were given an additional total increase of 5 cents per hour that, for the first time ever, would bring their wage scale up to that of their structural and ornamental brothers.

Simultaneously, all members' base pay would



reach \$4.05 per hour plus the 10-cent-per-hour healthcare benefit for that agreement's final half year. What's more, ironworkers would be paid an extra 15 cents per hour for work on projects located 15 miles or more outside of Dayton.

Then in October 1960, Local 290 moved into a new union hall of its own for the first time in its history when it relocated from the Dayton Labor Temple to new headquarters at **606 Hillrose Avenue**. The \$100,000, single-story, brick building included a meeting hall, two offices and a waiting room.

Meanwhile, the local's members were fully employed on multiple projects, which included construction of **Marycrest Hall**, the first on-

campus women's residence at the **University of Dayton**, among several other jobs at the school. Ground was broken for the \$1.6-million, seven-story dormitory on May 1961, and it was completed in September 1962 after Local 290 members performed all of the steel-erection work for the first-ever structural-steel building on the campus.

Additional work for the local's members during the early 1960s also included construction of the new, \$10-million **Charles F. Kettering Memorial Hospital** (now known as Kettering Medical Center) in Kettering, Ohio; that city's new, \$1.1-million **Indian Riddle Junior High School**; and a new terne steel-

coating plant at the **Armco Steel Corporations' Middletown Works** steel plant in Middletown (which is now **AK Steel**).

However, a four-day strike by Local 290 beginning May 1, 1962, briefly idled many of those jobs and more before a new, two-year wage agreement was reached with the **Dayton Area Construction Industry Association** on May 4. The new contract called for incremental hourly wage boosts of a total of 30 cents that would bring the local's scale to \$4.35 per hour for its final six months through April 30, 1964 – although the *Daily News* noted in a May 5 article announcing the agreement that it had “no provision for paid holidays, pensions or other fringe benefits common in the industry.”

After that contract expired, the following agreement beginning May 1, 1964, raised wages to \$4.45 per hour. Contractors also increased their Health and Welfare Fund contribution to 15 cents per hour.

Throughout much of that time and the second half of the decade, scores of union ironworkers would be employed within the Local 290 jurisdiction on a multi-million-dollar expansion of the Armco Steel plant in Middletown as part of the company's “**Project 600**” nationwide, \$1-billion improvement campaign. Before the project was complete, ironworkers would erect more than 51,000 tons of structural steel and set more than 29,000 tons of reinforcing steel.

Other major work at that time included construction of a massive **International Harvester** truck assembly plant in Springfield, Ohio.

But by the mid-1960s, the heavy volume of building in the area resulted in a shortage of ironworkers, as well as many other skilled tradesmen, in Local 290's jurisdiction. As such, there were more “boomers” – or traveling ironworker members from other locals – working in Dayton than there were members of the local during the time.

As the building-trades unions of Dayton worked to attract more black apprentices as part of a special recruiting project instituted by the Urban League during the mid- and late-1960s, Local 290 dropped its apprenticeship program's residency requirements to encourage more applications from minorities.

Regardless, the local gained a new, one-year contract beginning May 1, 1965, that boosted their wages to \$4.50 per hour and continued the 15-cent hourly welfare benefit. The highlight of the agreement, however, was the creation of a new, first-ever **Pension Fund** for the local's members, into which contractors contributed an additional 10-cents-per-hour worked.

Local 290, along with five other building-trades unions, had to strike the following year beginning May 4 for a new contract, which the ironworkers won after being out for 16 days. The settlement immediately boosted wages 30 cents to \$4.80 per hour, while the following year, two increases took the scale to \$5.15 per hour through May 1957 with 20 cents added for the Health and Welfare Fund and 25 cents added for the Pension Fund.

With the Armco project helping to keep the local's members fully employed as the company spent \$212 million on construction in 1968 alone, the ironworkers were the first trade union to sign a new contract in June of that year after all of the construction crafts had walked off their jobs. After the local rejected an earlier proposal from contractors for a \$1.15-per-hour raise, it finally settled on a \$1.50 hourly increase for a two-year period and a 20-cent hourly increase to its Pension Fund.

The robust employment continued into 1969, during which the local's strong condition was augmented by the start of construction of the **Dayton Mall** in the Miami Township suburb of Dayton. When completed the following year, the more-than 1-million-

Local 290 members work on a steel erection job at the Armco Steel plant in Middletown, Ohio, in 1966.





square-foot, two-level shopping center was the largest mall constructed between New York City and Chicago at the time, according to its developers, Edward J. DeBartolo Corporation.

But prior to the mall's grand opening, work on the project was halted for about two weeks in April 1969 when union tradesmen walked off the job in support of Local 290's jurisdictional dispute with the Dayton Power & Light Company. However, the National Labor Relations Board eventually ruled that the company's workers could install utility lines for the project – work that the ironworkers and union plumbers had attempted to claim.

Still, Local 290 remained so flush with work opportunities as the decade neared its end that the local enlisted the services of an assistant business manager that year. **Brother William F. "Blackie" Veal** was first to take on the new position created to alleviate the local's overburdened **Business Manager George E. Clark**.

### AMONG HIGHS AND LOWS, RAISING THE CITY'S SKYLINE

Construction of several tall buildings in downtown Dayton, including the **Winters Bank Tower** (now the Kettering Tower), that would transform the city's skyline continued into the 1970s, provided Local 290 members with another steady source of employment throughout the first half of the decade. At 405 feet tall, the ironworkers bolted together 4,000 tons of steel while erecting the 30-story Winters, which became the city's tallest building when it was completed in 1970.

Additionally, Local 290 ironworkers were also being kept busy in Middletown on construction jobs such as the seven-story **J. Ross Hunt Towers** apartment complex that was completed in 1972. Other work in the area manned by the union during that period included an expansion to the Middletown

# LOCAL 290 LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE YEARS

#### Business Agents/Managers

*(Local 290 did not immediately employ a Business Agent when it was chartered in June 1919. The position was designated "Business Manager" in 1998 and was combined with the Financial Secretary-Treasurer office in 2003.)*

**Jake Geist**

July 1919 to July 1920

**Jason Race**

July 1920 to July 1921

**Otis R. Britton**

July 1921 into Oct. 1924

**Woodford Riley**

Oct. 1924 to July 1929

**Otis R. Britton**

July 1929 into Oct. 1931

**John L. Metzler**

Oct. 1931 into Oct. 1931

**(No Business Agent)**

Oct. 1931 into Dec. 1932

**Woodford Riley**

*(Served as Business Agent & Financial Secretary-Treasurer)*  
Dec. 1932 into May 1938

**Ray E. Armstrong**

May 1938 to July 1950

**George E. Clark**

July 1950 to July 1978

**Charles Willis**

July 1978 to July 1981

**Ronald Easton**

July 1981 to July 1984

**George E. Kratzer**

July 1984 to July 2000  
*(Brother Kratzer was elected an International Organizer effective July 31, 2000.)*

**Dennis E. Jones**

July 2000 to 2003

#### Business Managers/ Financial Secretary- Treasurers

**Dennis E. Jones**

2003 to July 2005

**William "Bill" Woodward**

July 2005 into April 2013  
*(Brother Woodward was elected an International Organizer effective April 21, 2013.)*

**Robert Ratermann**

April 2013 to July 2014

**Jeffrey Bush Sr.**

July 2014 to present



Brother  
George E. Clark

#### Local 290 Presidents

**James Race**

June 1919 into Dec. 1919

**Fred Gage**

Dec. 1919 into Sept. 1920

**Charles Bridges**

Sept. 1920 to July 1921

**Charles Jones**

July 1921 to July 1922

**Charles Bridges**

July 1922 to July 1923

**Fred Gage**

July 1923 to July 1924

**Charles Jones**

July 1924 to July 1925

**Michigan Cardwell**

July 1925 to July 1926

**Jason Race**

July 1926 to July 1928

**Fred Gage**

July 1928 to Sept. 1928

**Charles E. Brown**

Sept. 1928 to July 1929

**John L. Metzler**

July 1929 into 1931

**Roy T. Fox**

1931 through 1932

**J. H. Downey**

Jan. 1933 to July 1933

**John L. Metzler**

July 1933 to July 1934

**Fred Gage**

July 1934 to 1936

**Frank C. Doane**

1936 to 1939

**Charles Bridges**

1939 to July 1945

**Fred Gage**

July 1945 to July 1947

**Charles E. Brown**

July 1947 to July 1950

**George E. Clark**

July 1950 to July 1953

**Quint Fry**

July 1953 to July 1955

**James Armstrong**

July 1955 to July 1959

**Fred Sess**

July 1959 to July 1961

**Blaine Slack**

July 1961 to July 1963

**George A. Snyder**

July 1963 to July 1965

**William F. Veal**

July 1965 to July 1969

**Stephen Farrell**

July 1969 to July 1978

**Jack Richardson**

July 1978 to July 1984

**Richard Hopkins**

July 1984 to July 1996

**Frank R. Anuci**

July 1996 to July 1998

**Randell Smith**

July 1998 into 1999

**Dennis E. Jones**

1999 to July 2000

**Larry "Ned" Clark**

July 2000 to July 2005

**Robert A. Ratermann**

July 2005 to July 2013

**Joseph Pittaluga**

July 2013 July 2018

**Jeremy Jett**

July 2018 to present

#### Financial Secretary-Treasurers

**C. J. O'Rourke**

June 1919 to July 1919

**Jake Geist**

July 1919 to Sept. 1919

**Woodford Riley**

Sept. 1919 to July 1921

**W. A. J. Smith**

July 1921 to July 1923

**William Freeman**

July 1923 to July 1924

**Harland Wright**

July 1924 to July 1925

**W. A. J. Smith**

July 1925 to July 1926

**R. G. Watson**

July 1926 to July 1927

**O. H. Baker**

July 1927 to July 1931

**Woodford Riley**

July 1931 into May 1938  
*(Served as Business Agent & Financial Secretary-Treasurer Dec. 1932 into May 1938)*

**John L. Metzler**

May 1938 to July 1939

**Woodford Riley**

July 1939 to July 1942

**Joseph Leitch**

July 1942 into Nov. 1943

**John L. Metzler**

Nov. 1943 into Dec. 1946

**Fred Gage**

Dec. 1946 into 1955

**Arnold Deaton**

1955 to July 1970

**John C. Hawkins**

July 1970 to July 1981

**George A. Snyder**

July 1981 to 1986

**Charles A. Ross**

1986 to July 1999

**William E. Reid Sr.**

July 1999 to 2003

*(The position of Financial Secretary-Treasurer was combined with the office of Business Manager in 2003.)*

#### Business Agents

**Michael Yezzi**

July 1977 to July 1999

**Randall C. Smith**

July 1999 to July 2003

**Henry "Hank" Poff**

July 2003 to July 2011

**Jeffrey Bush Sr.**

July 2010 to July 2014

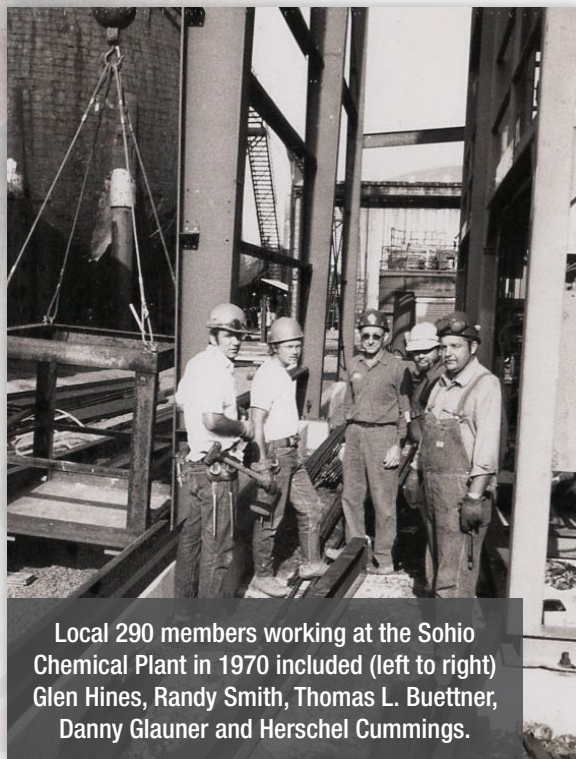
**David Cox**

July 2014 to present

Brother Ray E. Armstrong (After serving as Local 290 business manager, Brother Armstrong served as an International General Organizer for the Iron Workers union from 1952 until his retirement in April 1967.)







Local 290 members working at the Sohio Chemical Plant in 1970 included (left to right) Glen Hines, Randy Smith, Thomas L. Buettner, Danny Glauner and Herschel Cummings.

Journal building, a number of senior-citizens centers and more apartment buildings.

During that time, several of the local's members also erected the new **United States Air Force Museum** (now the National Museum of the United States Air Force and the largest military aviation museum in the world) which opened in 1971 at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Wages for the ironworkers rose during the early 1970s from \$5.65 per hour in early 1970 to \$7.45 by the end of that year and \$7.80 in May 1971. Additionally, by that time, the local's employers were further paying 40 cents per hour into the welfare fund, 55 cents per hour into the pension fund and 10 cents per hour into a new **Annuity Fund** that had been set up for the local to supplement retirement pensions.

The steady, constant work and increasing wages helped push the local's membership back up above 500 ironworkers, rodmen and apprentices into 1971.

But the relative calm and prosperity that Local 290 had been enjoying over the previous two decades were briefly but violently shattered on the morning of January 22, 1971, when the car belonging Assistant Business Manager Veal was blown up by a bomb while it was parked in front of the local's union hall. The detonation, which police theorized was caused by dynamite, threw parts of the car as far as 10 feet away and tore off its roof, the *Daily News* reported that day.

As police were investigating the incident, the local also received a bomb threat in its hall at about 8:30 that morning, according to the newspaper. The caller reportedly warned Business Manager Clark, "You have five minutes to get out of the building."

Brother Clark later told the newspaper that "he could offer no reasons for the bombing." He further noted that the local was not on strike and he "knew of no other reasons for such an attack." No conclusions about the attack were ever reported by police in the local media.



Local 290 Brother Doyle Law works on construction of the Kettering, Ohio, Courts Building in 1971.

Then on August 10 of that year, tragedy struck when Local 290 members **Brother J. C. Cronk**, age 40, and **Brother Terry D. Montgomery**, age 27, were crushed and killed by a falling steel beam on the construction site of the new, 21-story **First National Bank Building** in downtown Dayton – prompting the local's workers and other tradesmen to leave the job over safety concerns. It was soon discovered that the disaster was caused after a superintendent ordered a carpenter to unhook a cable that was holding a unbolted steel frame in place, an August 12 *Daily News* article reported.

The Ohio Industrial Relations Department's chief inspector attributed the accident to human failure, according to the newspaper. After the local met with contractors that week to voice grievances about safety provisions on the job and to demand that the superintendent be removed, work resumed on the building, which would be completed in 1972.

That year, the wage scale for Local 290 ironworkers and rodmen would be elevated to \$8.95 per hour going into 1973. But after that contract ended on May 31, 1973, and no new agreement could be reached with the **West Ohio Chapter of the A.G.C.**, the local went on strike the following day.

The subsequent nine-day work stoppage affected upwards of 250 projects in the local's jurisdiction, including the new **Dayton Transportation Center** and construction at **Wright State University** that were completely shut down, the June 4 *Daily News* reported. But the ironworkers returned to work on June 13 after ratifying a new, two-year contract the night before for a total of 71 cents per hour in wage and fringe benefit increases, while the A.G.C. dropped all demands for changes in working conditions in an offer it had previously made, according to the newspaper.

Construction work within its jurisdiction

Posing with a 2-ton scale model of a building and two derrick cranes, which would be used for training Local 290 apprentices after being presented to the local by the Oberle-Jordre Company of Indianapolis during the Ohio State Ironworkers Apprenticeship Contest in Columbus, Ohio, in 1971, are (left to right, kneeling) Brother Lester Philbeck, Brother Mervin Emrick, Brother Paul Clower and company Vice President Paul Oberle; and (standing) operating engineer Rodney Dunham, Brother John Gartman, Brother B. R. Jones and operating engineer Ralph Sims.







Local 290 members working on erection of the rotunda for the new Middletown Mall in 1973 were (left to right) brothers Doug Hill, Lynn Silvers, Don Eberhard, Larry Booth, Jack Bowers, Doyle Law, Frank Beatty, Bob Burrows, Ed Addison and Norville Roupe.

and, as a result, employment for Local 290 continued to flourish and surge throughout the mid-1970s, highlighted initially by the new, 465,000-square-foot **Towne Mall** in Middletown beginning in 1974, which would remain a strong employer for the local's membership until it opened in 1977. Additional larger steel-erection jobs that provided abundant man-hours for the local during the period included the \$60-million **Courthouse Square** urban renewal project in Dayton; the **Dayton Power and Light Building**; an expansion to the Good Samaritan Hospital in 1975; and the new, 27-story **Mead Tower** skyscraper on Second Street in downtown Dayton (which is now KeyBank Tower) that would be completed in 1978.

However, a seven-week-long strike beginning July 1, 1975, did stall if not fully impede

most all of that work before the Local 290 membership narrowly approved a new, three-year pact on August 5 for a total \$2.40 per hour in pay increases. The final vote on the contractors' offer was contentious, passing only by a 112-to-100 margin during a "heated" union meeting, according to the August 6 *Daily News*.

The agreement's first installment of 80 cents per hour, which included 25 cents for the Pension Fund, boosted the Dayton-area base wage to \$9.96 per hour. The ironworkers would then gain another 80 cents in wages until the contract expired on April 30, 1978.

With nearly 500 members by that time, Local 290 had also gained "hiring hall" rights from the employers, which provided that a contractor would have to go through the local

and its business manager in order to hire any of its ironworkers. It also required the members who were not employed on long-term jobs to sign in with the union hall each morning to declare their availability to work.

The employment glut amid the construction "boom" continued immediately after the lengthy work stoppage, as contractors pushed hard to make up for lost time, according to an article in the August 16, 1975, *Daily News*. As such, Local 290 was again employing a large number of travelers from locals in other cities such as Toledo to fill the demand for man-hours.

Job opportunities began to slacken as the decade made its way to its inevitable end, but several major projects continued to bolster employment for Local 290, including construction of the 1.8-million-square-foot **Ford Motor Company Transmission Plant** in Batavia, Ohio, in 1979 and 1980. Work on conversion of the old Frigidaire plant beginning in 1979 to the massive, 4.7-million-square-foot

**General Motors (G.M.) Moraine Assembly Plant**, which would produce light trucks, also employed numerous union ironworkers into 1981. (Both Ford and G.M. would close their respective factories in late 2008.)

Meanwhile, new agreements on wages through 1978 and into 1979 advanced the local's journeyman scale up to \$10.96 per hour. Fringe benefits being provided to the local's members were 90 cents per hour for welfare, \$1.05 for retirement and 20 cents for their annuity.

## **EMPLOYMENT HINDERED, TAKING ON NEW CHALLENGES**

**B**eginning in the late 1970s and continuing through the early 1980s, a national recession stunted the economy and, along with it, construction employment in and around Dayton. As a result, during the first years of the Eighties, nearly three-fourths of the local's membership was unemployed at



The Local 290 crew that placed the final steel beam in a "topping-off" ceremony during construction of the new, 28-story Meade Tower (now the KeyBank Tower) in downtown Dayton in November 1975.





The Local 290 25th Apprenticeship Banquet and Graduation held in 1982 awarded 30 graduating apprentices with Certificates of Completion, including the first three women to ever complete the local's apprenticeship program. Graduates and Local 290 officials pictured during that evening are (left to right, front row) Assistant Business Agent Stephen Farrell, Vince Ruddy, Instructor Bob Hunter, President Jack Richardson, Apprentice Coordinator Richard Hopkins, Instructor Bill Reid, Business Agent Ronald Easton and Financial Secretary-Treasurer George A. Snyder; (middle row) Norman Noel, William Lorenz, Charles Gambill, Tim Young, Gail Bolden, Jim Puckett, Deonne Price, Rita Callison and Caleb Gambill; and (back row) John Calloway, Melvin Hitcher, Steven Phillips, Louis Chagoyan, David Coffey, Michael Johnson, Don Cornette, Alphonso Davis, John Lamb, Phillip Carter, Gary Richardson, Greg Kuzujankis, Henry Poff, Derrick England, Brian Snyder and John Boettcher. (Graduate Deborah Kelly is not pictured.)

times because of the near-historic lack of work.

By that time, Local 290 and the region's entire organized construction industry were also facing a mounting threat from the non-union sector, which was sharply cutting into employment. As recently as May 1979, for instance, Local 290 along with several other craft locals, the Dayton Building Trades Council and the **Dayton-Miami Valley A.F.L.-C.I.O. Council** were named as defendants in a \$1 million lawsuit filed by the Ferguson Construction Company in response to a union drive to force non-union contractors to allow its workers to join unions.

The complaint asked for a restraining order to prevent union members from coming onto the property of the Dayton Machine and Tool Company, where the unions were

staging informational picketing and human billboarding as part of the campaign. But a judge denied the request, the May 30, 1979, *Daily News* reported.

Among the several other measures Local 290 instituted in its efforts to counter non-union contractors and their ironworkers, the local by early 1980 had virtually eliminated using seniority to assign jobs and instead gave work to members who were "the most skilled and the most productive," as **Business Manager Charles L. Willis** explained in the May 22, 1980, *Daily News*. "We want to get rid of featherbedding (putting more people than are necessary on a job to keep up employment levels) to keep down costs," Brother Willis told the newspaper. "It is unpopular, but it's necessary to keep up with non-union and foreign competition. ... Otherwise, we're

eventually going to lose all the jobs."

Despite the precarious conditions, membership in the local grew, and into late 1980, the Local 290 wage scale for its journeymen was up to \$13.21 per hour.

But the local and most of the Dayton area's 14 construction unions were left without new contracts when old pacts expired May 1, 1981 – after the individual trades had decided to negotiate on their own rather than as a single group as in past years, according to that day's *Daily News*. Although Local 290 had preferred to continue bargaining together with the other crafts, it was able to secure a new agreement on May 4 that called for a \$4.75-an-hour increase over the coming three years.

The new contract would bring journeyman wages to \$16.81 per hour and welfare and pension contributions to \$1.60 and \$2, respectively, in 1983. It also established a first-time **Apprenticeship Training Fund** to help finance the local's training programs, into which contractors initially paid 6 cents per hour worked by the local's members and then 10 cents per hour during the final year of the agreement.

Lagging commercial and industrial construction and the end of major work at the G.M. Moraine Assembly Plant contributed to the continued blight on Local 290 employment through 1981. Consequently, by September of that year, one in five of the local's nearly 500 ironworkers were traveling – or "booming out" – in other jurisdictions in search of temporary employment. As **Brother J. P. Watters** explained in the September 19, 1981, *Daily News*, "When times get hard here, you go somewhere else to find work."

The lethargic conditions continued throughout most of the mid-1980s, during which time wages also remained stagnant – with the membership agreeing to a pay reduction in 1984 and 1985 down to \$16.16, although more money was allocated into



Local 290 members work on construction of the new Fred C. Yager Stadium at Miami (Ohio) University in 1983.







Local 290 members erect a new, quonset-hut-type hangar addition for the U.S. Air Force Museum (now the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton in 1986 and 1987.



Local 290 members erecting the addition for the U.S. Air Force Museum in 1986 and 1987 included (left to right, kneeling) Larry Anderson, Norman Chiles, Tom Swedensky and Robert Ruddy; and (standing) Gordon Rupard, Wesley Sferro, Jeffrey Wagner, Frank McCubbin, Lance Cyr, Roger Gray, Philip Hapner, David Hapner and Eugene Jordan.

insurance and pension benefits. The scale was increased up to \$17.09 per hour for the second half of 1985 and into 1986; however, while hourly contributions to the Health and Welfare Fund remained at \$2.25, the Pension Fund remained at \$2 and the Training Fund remained at 10 cents.

An uptick in highway construction that included extensive reconstruction of Interstate 75 and a remodel and expansion of the **Dayton Convention Center** helped keep many Local 290 members working in their home jurisdiction in 1985 and 1986.

In order to help stabilize the precarious union construction industry, the local then voted in March 1987 to freeze its contract, which was set to expire April 30, through November 1, keeping pay and benefits unchanged through that year's construction season. "We don't want to jeopardize jobs," Local 290 **Business Agent Steve Farrell** explained in the March 27, 1987, *Daily News*.

A spike in new, larger construction projects also boosted local employment during the second half of the decade. With it, Local 290 members erected a large addition to the **Middletown Regional Hospital** in 1987 and the 20-floor **Citizens Federal Building** (now the Fifth Third Center) in downtown Dayton in 1988 and 1989.

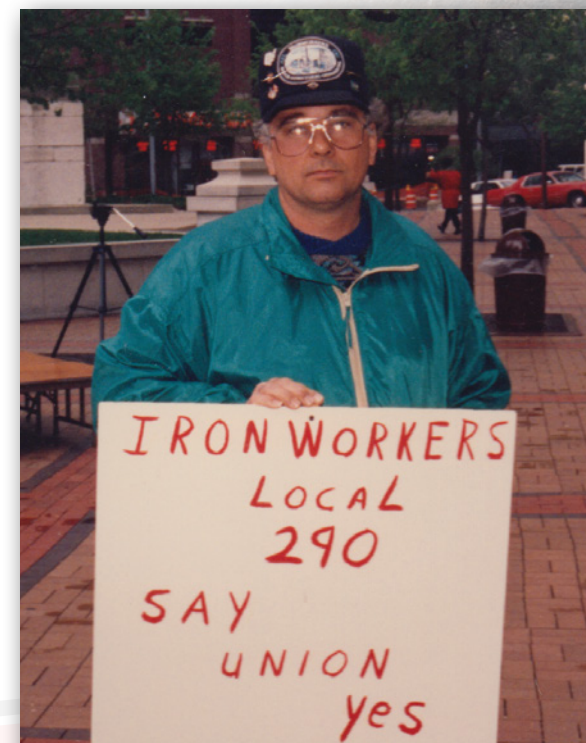
The local's wage-scale remained reserved, however, and only gained raises to \$17.41 for 1988 and \$17.66 for 1989. Fringe-benefit contributions were also stifled, with gains only made to the Training Fund up to 14 cents per hour and the Pension Fund up to \$2.30 per hour in late 1989 – although the added 5 cents was taken from the base pay.

Work slowed again during the late 1980s and early 1990s as construction was again throttled by a recession. Once again, many Local 290 members were traveling to work with locals in other parts of the country as the 1980s gave way to another new decade.

## UPS AND DOWNS INTO Y2K, WINNING BACK MARKET SHARE

**L**ocal 290 and the Dayton Building Trades made **organizing** a priority beginning in the 1990s as a way of combating non-union construction and securing more work and craftsmen for the unions. To that end, the Dayton Building Trades began an Organizing Department during the decade that originally consisted of eight different crafts, including the ironworkers, and met regularly to exchange ideas and information on ways to organize.

During the second half of the decade, the Department even purchased an old school bus and converted it into a billboard on wheels that was driven to non-union job sites and used in local parades. "This has been one of the best tools of organizing," Local 290 **Business Manager George Kratzer** stated at the time.



Local 290 Brother Russ Brown takes part in a union rally at Courthouse Square in Dayton, circa early 1990s.

Also to kick off the Nineties, the local's wage scale was raised to \$17.86 per hour in early 1990 and then to \$17.99 per hour later that year. Fringe benefits added another \$2.25 per hour for health and welfare, \$2.35 for pensions, 25 cents for the annuity and 15 cents for the Apprenticeship Training Fund.

Some of the key projects that employed the local's members at the time included the new, \$82.5-million, 10-level **Patient Tower** addition to the **Veterans Administration Medical Center** in Dayton. The local topped out the job with the setting of a final steel beam to commemorate the completion of the structural-steel erection on November 17, 1990.

The next year, jobs that employed a large number of Local 290 ironworkers included construction of the new **Fraze Pavilion**, a 4,300-seat outdoor amphitheater in Kettering, Ohio, that opened in 1991.





In March 1991, Local 290 ironworkers dismantled, moved and re-erected the 560-ton Soldier's Monument in Dayton, a memorial first erected in 1884 to honor the brave men and women who fought and died in defense of the United States, from the city's Sunrise Park to a new location at Monument Avenue and Main Street. Some 43 years earlier in 1948, members of Local 290 had moved the statue from its original location in the middle of that same intersection to the park.



With work steady if seldom spectacular throughout much of the balance of the decade, the local's wage scale slowly and incrementally grew with new agreements with contractors from \$17.69 per hour in May 1992 to \$19.84 per hour in May 1999. Additional contributions for benefits also progressively increased before the decade ended to \$2.70 per hour into the Health and Welfare Fund, \$3.70 into the Pension Fund, \$2 into the Annuity Fund and 30 cents into the Training Fund.

Work for Local 290 members was strong again during the late 1990s, punctuated by the start of construction of the **Fifth Third Field** minor league baseball stadium in downtown Dayton in April 1999. Home to the Dayton Dragons, a Single-A-level affiliate of the nearby Cincinnati Reds, the \$23-million, 7,230-seat facility opened in April 2000.

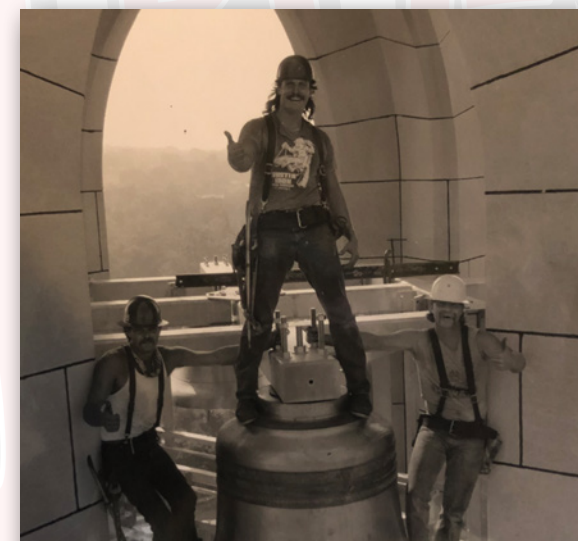
The new "Y2K" millennium brought a wage scale of \$21.04 per hour and a total pay package, including benefits, of \$30.14 for the local's journeymen. By May 2001, those rates had been increased to \$22.15 per hour in base pay and \$32.75 per hour with insurance, pension, annuity and training contributions.

Among the more prominent and challenging projects on which the local's ironworkers were employed during that time was construction

of the **Cold War Museum** at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in 2002, the third hangar constructed for the base's exhibit. The museum's 800-foot-long frame was made of 22 bow trusses weighing 48-tons each while the remainder of the structure consisted of bar joists and an extensive structural-steel bracing system. Local 290 ironworkers started panelizing the bar joists in April 2002 and were able to complete the hangar by July 2002 – finishing the unique and complicated job in a relatively short time frame.

"The erection of the Cold War Museum's structural-steel hangar serves as a symbol of what creative thinking, a good construction plan and teamwork among many people and organizations can do for a successful construction site," an article about the project in the December 2002 *Ironworker*, the International Association's monthly publication, declared. "The real credit, however, goes to the dedicated Local 290 ironworkers who exceeded all expectations on the job."

A large amount of school construction, projects at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and



Local 290 brothers (left to right) Jamie Seegar, Rob Ratermann and Leroy "Red" Laut install new carillon bells to the Deeds Carillon in Dayton in 1995 after it had been renovated in 1988 – making it the largest carillon in Ohio with 57 bells.

Local 290 was one of 27 International Association of Ironworkers locals from across the country that, in 2003, signed on to support the union's new joint labor-management effort, the Ironworker-Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust, or IMPACT, to increase jobs and market share for the industry. "IMPACT is critical to our union and our industry, and this successful launch gives us a solid foundation on which to build," Ironworkers International General President Joe Hunt said at the time.

the AK Steel plant in Middletown (formerly Armco), erection of new bridges and repair work on existing bridges into and throughout much of 2003 kept most Local 290 members busy that year.

However, the non-union industry was continuing to present new challenges for union ironworkers. In response, Local 290 was more committed to meeting that opposition with a better-prepared and more-skilled workforce, as **Business Manager Dennis Jones** proclaimed in the April 2003 *Ironworker*:

*"Competition is facing us more and more each year in this industry. The non-union associations (Associated Builders and Contractors) are riding high after the past election. They are counting on newly elected anti-union politicians to create new anti-union legislation to enhance their opportunities to win contracts. We can't outspend the A.B.C. or the anti-union politicians; however, we can beat them at their own game, and that is 'competition.'"*

That May, the local's wage scale reached \$24.13 per hour plus \$4.50 per hour for its Health and Welfare Fund, \$3.70 for its Pension Fund, \$2.40 for its Annuity Fund and other funds and 40 cents for its Training Fund. Over the next few years, as work fluctuated between steady and lackluster, the scale would only rise



Local 290 received an Ironworker Eagle Award of Achievement from the International Association in 2008, signifying its achievement within the union's Ironworker Key Performance Indicators (KPI), which are 15 goals in five major areas specific to the ironworking trade: apprenticeship and training; market recovery; political action; workforce productivity; and local union operations.

In 2016, the Golden Eagle Award was renamed the George Kratzer Acknowledgment of Excellence in honor of the former Local 290 business manager, who passed away in 2013. The program serves as a benchmark for measuring and evaluating the performance of Ironworkers locals throughout the United States and Canada to ensure ironworking contractors have at their disposal workers who continually achieve the highest level of professionalism and commitment while on the job.

to \$24.28 by May 2007; nonetheless, the local made notable gains to its benefits by that time, with welfare garnering \$6 per hour, pensions getting \$6.45, annuities and other funds receiving \$3 and training gaining 30 cents.

But a slack economy at the end of the decade and the completion of several larger projects dramatically slowed work for Local 290 in 2009 and 2010. To help counter the drop in work, the local made a push during that time to help the union construction industry at the polls, urging its members to register to vote and support labor-friendly candidates in the important approaching elections.

In another effort to turn conditions back around, the local and its building trades counterparts also lobbied in 2009 to have a federal tax break for SunCoke extended so that the company could build coke ovens



Local 290 members build the new Fifth Third Field minor league baseball stadium in Dayton, which would be home to the Dayton Dragons Single-A affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds, in 1999 for the start of the 2000 baseball season.



Local 290 brothers (left to right) Frank Stevens, James Smith, Mike Adkisson, Bo Cox, George Kratzer and Bob McMiller during construction of the GM/Isuzu DMAX diesel engine plant in Moraine, Ohio, in 1999.

in Butler County. The ironworkers and the trades had waged a public relations campaign just a year earlier to win support and approval for construction of the plant, which would make the coke product used to produce steel.

Wages to close the 2000s stood at \$25.48 per hour in base pay and \$42.53 for the total journeyman package including benefits. But at the end of the first decade of the new millennium, employment among the local's membership remained depressed.

## MOMENTOUS JOB WELL DONE, PROGRESSING TOWARDS 100<sup>TH</sup>

Employment for the Local 290 membership picked up dramatically beginning in late 2010 with the start of construction that April on SunCoke's \$400-million coke plant just outside of Middletown. "One of the largest and most controversial construction projects in Butler County" because of environmental concerns, according to an October 2, 2011, Butler

County *Journal-News* article, its 100 coke ovens would be completed later that year.

By that time, the \$88.1-million replacement of the **Jeremiah Morrow Bridge**, a pair of high-level parallel spans on Interstate 71 just outside Wilmington, by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) was also underway with Local 290 members on the job. In June 2010, the ironworkers, working for J&B Steel, partnered with prime contractor Kokosing, post-tension supplier Schwager-Davis and

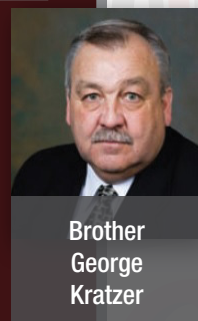
The Union Ironworkers Motorcycle Club 290, Dayton chapter, was formed in April 2012 as a non-profit organization of riders who believe in union labor. It was also established to support charities for children and the less fortunate, as well as other worthwhile causes.

The chapter's first annual Fallen Brothers Benefits and Charities Ride was held that year to raise money for the children of Brother Joe King, who lost his long fight with cancer on April 25, 2012. The monies raised by the ride were donated to his children's education fund.



## Brother George Kratzer A CELEBRATED CAREER OF SERVICE TO THE UNION

Local 290 Brother George Kratzer began his career as an apprentice in the local's training program in August 1970, graduated to journeyman ironworker in April 1973 and eventually became the local's business manager in 1984. He held that position until International General President Jake West appointed him a general organizer for the International Association of Iron Workers on July 31, 2000, and he was subsequently elected a general vice president of the union at its 2001, 2006 and 2011 conventions.



Brother  
George  
Kratzer

"Generations of ironworkers were able to earn a good living, raise their families and retire in dignity because of George's efforts," an article in the April 2013 *Ironworker* magazine announcing his death stated. "He tackled the tough jobs with innovation and professionalism, building bridges where others only saw chasms while always keeping our members' best interests at heart."

Indeed, Brother Kratzer was instrumental in moving the union forward; from organizing to the Ironworker Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust (IMPACT) to policies of the general executive council, he was deeply involved in guiding the future direction of the organization.

His lineage almost dictated that path, as Brother Kratzer came from a family of ironworkers. His father and one brother, who was killed on the job, belonged to Local 290. He had two other brothers who were disabled while working at the trade and another brother who was superintendent for a steel erector in the Dayton area.

First General Vice President George Kratzer passed away on March 23, 2013, at age 62.

In his honor, the International Association renamed its Golden Eagle Award the George Kratzer Acknowledgment of Excellence in 2016.

design engineer HNTB to undertake the historic, six-year bridge replacement, which would be completed in the fall of 2016.

The unique project involved replacing the existing deck truss bridges – the tallest and longest span bridge in Ohio at 239 feet high and

2,240 feet long – with a concrete cast-in-place, segmental-box structure using the balanced cantilever method of construction. The new, six-span, twin bridges have three 440-foot-long main spans and one interior span of 416 feet, along with side spans of 270 and 229 feet, while more than 9 million pounds of reinforcing "rebar" were installed on the project.

What's more, the ironworkers had to overcome many obstacles during construction, as noted in a July 2017 *Ironworker* article highlighting the massive rebar work done by Local 290 on the project. The steep embankments and limited access to the valley bottom made the job very difficult at times, the article stated, but "everyone worked as a team, fighting through all of the rough conditions."

Taking part in the construction of the first cast-in-place, segmental-box girder structure owned by ODOT was an honor for Local 290 and the traveling ironworkers from Cincinnati and Columbus who also worked on the project. **Business Manager Jeff Bush** further declared in 2017, "It makes me very proud to say that the job was completed on time and came in under budget with no lost-time accidents."

Even as work was returning to the area in 2011, however, the hardships of the previous two years had taken its toll on Local 290 up to that point – so much so, in fact, that the local cancelled its annual **summer picnic** that year. **Business Manager Bill Woodward** lauded the move in the local's fall 2011 newsletter, writing, "Hats off to the members for making the tough but responsible decision to keep the local financially secure."

But maintenance and upgrade shutdowns at AK Steel; continuing bridge work; construction of the **Dayton Tech Town** office, laboratory and research-space campus; work at the **Dayton Airport**; and several other significant projects all contributed to Local 290 reaching full



Local 290 members construct a facility for Flexible Foam Products in 2000.



employment by June 2011. Also among those projects providing considerable man-hours for the union ironworkers throughout the rest of the year and 2012 was construction of the **Husky Energy oil refinery** in Lima, Ohio.

The Local 290 wage scale increased in 2011 to \$25.93 per hour in base pay plus an additional \$17.80 in benefits. The following year, the local's journeyman pay was raised to \$26.23 and \$18.15 in benefits.

Man-hours stayed strong more often than not that year, as well, with a large amount of work in the Dayton and Lima areas. Continuing expansions of area hospitals such as Miami Valley, Kettering and Grandview and abundant reinforcing-rod jobs on Interstate-75 improvements helped maintain healthy employment levels.

Then in 2013, the local's work was enhanced with construction of the new **Miami Valley Gaming** harness-racing track and casino – or "racino" – near Monroe, Ohio, and the new, \$125-million **Hollywood Gaming at Dayton Raceway** racino. Local 290 ironworkers employed by Sofco Erectors raised the steel frames for both facilities before Miami Valley opened late that year and Hollywood opened in the fall of 2014.

Meanwhile, a revised multi-year contract with the A.G.C. set the local's journeyman wage at \$26.73 per hour effective June 1, 2014, and added \$6.35 for health and welfare, \$8.90 for pensions, 45 cents for training, 25 cents for an **Industry Promotion Fund** and \$3.50 for annuities for a total package of \$46.23 per hour. Subsequent \$1-per-hour increases would then come on May 31 of 2015, 2016 and 2017 before contract negotiations would take place for a new agreement to go into effect on May 31, 2018.

Local 290 closed out the first half of the 2010s with work at the best levels it had been in several years. It had also grown its



membership substantially going into 2015 by bringing in more than 60 new apprentices and starting them on work in the summer months as probationary members.

## CHANGE, ADAPT & SURVIVE, A PROMISING FUTURE AWAITS

**J**obs continued to come into the Local 290 jurisdiction in 2015 and 2016, including a natural gas facility in Middletown; an addition to **Dayton Children's Hospital**; another phase of highway construction; work at the AK Steel, **Fuyao Glass America** and **Dole Fresh Vegetables** plants; and new hospitals and schools. Additionally, maintenance work in area factories and industries would also employ many union ironworkers into the second half of the decade.

Despite the much-improved conditions the local was enjoying, Business Manager Bush, who was elected to the local's top administrative

Throughout 100 years, Local 290 has been an enthusiastic contributor to its community, supplying labor, manpower and funding to a host of meaningful causes and charitable organizations. Among some of the more recent, prominent volunteer efforts in which the local and its membership have been involved, in 1998 the local donated the labor of an apprenticeship class to the construction of the 5,400-square-foot South West Neighborhood Community Center in the Huber Heights suburb of Dayton, saving the community about \$20,000.

Then in 2000, the local's apprentices and instructors donated 260 man hours to erect two sets of bleachers for a charity rodeo in Dayton to benefit the Children's Wish Foundation and help children with cancer. Some of the local's many other recent community projects included endowing the Charles Henry Black Leadership Development Scholarship at the Dayton Urban League in 2009, and in 2018, Local 290 members constructed two custom park benches for the newly refurbished historic Lakeside Lake in Dayton.

*(Continued after the following spread)*

Standing alongside a 250-ton crane sometime during the late 2000s are (left to right) the crane's operator and oiler and Local 290 brothers Doug Hill, Larry Black, Frank Harmon, Leroy Reynolds and Tony Charles.



## 'THOSE GUYS PICKED ME UP, LET ME KNOW THEY WERE MY BROTHERS AND THAT WASN'T GOING TO CHANGE.'



Brother Jack Deakins

Local 290 Brother Jack Deakins detailed his life as a husband, father and union ironworker and his struggle with terminal cancer in an essay in the March 2015 Ironworker magazine. Following the crushing diagnosis in March 2013 that he had cholangiocarcinoma and hepatocellular cancer and only a few years, if not months, to live, while he and his wife were "destroyed," his union brothers and sisters rallies around them and their children.

Brother Deakins went on to describe how, as he suffered through chemotherapy treatments while trying to sustain his family of six on government welfare, the local's Union Ironworkers Motorcycle Club 290 chapter organized a "Poker Run" to raise money for the family. While he did not have a bike of his own, Brother Jeff Bush rode him around during the event.

Then the local's members — "all of them, from the motorcycle club to the guys and gals out of the hall" — raised money to help the Deakins family have a good Christmas with presents for their four children.



Brother Deakins with his wife, Pamela, during the Local 290 "Poker Run" held to benefit the Deakins Family in 2013.

"I felt so much love," Brother Deakins wrote. "... So much love, I can't even begin to express how much the ironworkers at Local 290 in Dayton, Ohio, mean to my family and me."

Brother Jack D. Deakins passed away on November 19, 2015, at age 36. He was survived by his wife of 12 years, Pamela Deakins; daughters Ruby Kate Deakins, Madison Perkins and Melinda Johnson; and son Gary King III.



Brother Deakins rides with Brother Jeff Bush during the Local 290 "Poker Run" in 2013.



Brother Deakins and his wife, Pamela, and daughters Madison (left) and Ruby enjoy a Christmas celebration organized by Local 290 in 2013.



# REPLACING THE JERE

# MIAH MORROW BRIDGE

Local 290 members install rebar for the southbound-side Pier 5 for the new Jeremiah Morrow Bridge in April 2011.



Local 290 members install rebar for the southbound-side Pier 3 for the new Jeremiah Morrow Bridge in August 2012.



Local 290 members install rebar for the northbound-side Pier 3 for the new Jeremiah Morrow Bridge in May 2014.



Local 290 members install rebar for the northbound-side Pier 4 for the new Jeremiah Morrow Bridge in June 2014.





office in July of that year, would not allow the membership to become complacent. Instead, he almost immediately began a personal campaign to get members to “start thinking out of the box and to start accepting change.”

The primary objective of the “**Want to Survive**” initiative was to focus the local on adapting to change so that it could reverse the trend of unions losing market share. To that end, Brother Bush challenged the membership by declaring in his credo, “We must end the

‘we’ve always done it that way’ mentality and start asking ourselves, ‘What changes can I make?’ to better our membership, gain our market share and to be the best of the best.”

A major component of the crusade was realized in early 2016 when Local 290 purchased a manufacturing building in Tipp City for \$1.5 million to serve as its new union hall and training center. Ultimately if not immediately, the expanded 46,500-square-foot space (a measurable step up from its 9,000-square-foot former facility in Dayton) would help the local grow its apprentice-training program to meet workforce demand.

“We’ve not been able to do the training that we’ve been wanting to do for years now,” Brother Bush told the *Dayton Business Journal* shortly after the sale. “We had to grow our facility so we can grow our membership. ... There’s a big surge of work and we are trying to get ahead of that curve.”

Over the next two years, Local 290 members worked nearly 1.7 million man-hours in 2016



Local 290 and Local 44 members constructing a third addition to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in 2016, which involved erection of structural steel at a new, specially designed hangar for static display of aircraft – which was completed with over 27,500 man-hours without a lost-time incident.



and more than 2 million man-hours for 2017. Projects on which the union ironworkers were employed were highlighted by construction of another addition to the National Museum for the U.S. Air Force in 2016, which involved the erection of structural steel at a new, specially designed hangar for displaying aircraft – for which Local 290 and Local 44 members performed over 27,500 man-hours without a lost-time incident.

Work for Local 290 remained solid through 2018 and to the local’s 100th anniversary in May 2019 for its nearly 520 journeymen, apprentices and probationary members. That month, the local also negotiated for a new contract effective June 1, 2019, that set journeyman wages at \$29.23 and provides contributions of \$8.20 for health and welfare, \$9.50 for pensions, 60 cents for training, 2 cents for industry promotion and \$4 for annuities for a total package of \$51.60 per hour.

The pact also provides that fourth-year apprentices be paid 90 percent of the journeyman wage plus \$1.50 from the annuity contribution for a total \$27.81 base hourly pay,



Local 290 Brother Cody House works on construction at the Good Samaritan North Hospital in Englewood, Ohio, in 2017.

## LOCAL 290 TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION, 2019

### Ohio Counties

Allen  
Auglaize  
Butler  
Champaign  
Clarke  
Clinton  
Darke  
Fayette  
Green  
Harding  
Highland  
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Madison  
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Miami  
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Van Wert  
Warren

### Indiana Counties

Fayette  
Randolph  
Union  
Wayne

in addition to all of the fringe benefits enjoyed by journeymen. Third year apprentices earn 80-percent of the journeyman wage, second year apprentices 70 percent and first year apprentices 60 percent – while each is afforded all of the benefits.

At 100 years, Local 290 also continues to build relationships with the communities it serves, as well as building the infrastructure of their cities and towns, just as it has done throughout the past century. All the while, the local and its union ironworkers continue to work in partnership with their employing contractors to train the membership so that the union construction industry can ensure projects are safe and completed on time and under budget. •



# *Tornadoes Ravage The Dayton Area* **WHEN DISASTER STRIKES, LOCAL 290 RESPONDS**

As Ironworkers Local No. 290 prepared to celebrate its first century in June 2019, the local's region was struck by devastating tornadoes. As the local looked to begin its second 100 years, on Memorial Day 2019, 15 confirmed tornadoes carved paths of destruction through the communities of its members and the residents it serves.

The EF-4 category tornado that hit at 10:41 p.m. on May 27 west of Brookville and traveled through Trotwood, Dayton, Riverside and Northridge was over one-half-of-a-mile wide and stayed on the ground for 19 miles, causing the most severe damage with its 170-mile-per-hour winds. One person was killed as a result of the tornadoes.

The next morning and for next several days to come, the ironworkers of Local 290 joined many volunteers to undertake the massive cleanup effort. One ironworker even rallied his entire football team to go out and help clean up and cut fallen trees. Two members bought two new chainsaws and skids of bottled water to distribute while they helped with tree removal.

Elsewhere, a group of members met to take care of one of the local's lifetime retirees, whose home and the houses of his neighbors were affected. The local's contractors also stepped up and had skids of bottled water brought into the neighborhoods for the ironworkers to hand out.

The Union Ironworkers Motorcycle Club 290 teamed up with other members and their wives, cooking hot meals for the community and placing a 53-foot trailer on site to collect donations and give out supplies. The local also had members working with a local church to help man food banks and food pantries.

These are just a few examples of Ironworkers Local 290 members volunteering their time and money to help those who were affected by the historic storms.







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FROM  
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**IW LOCAL 55**

# CONGRATULATIONS TO LOCAL 290 ON YOUR 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

*A Century of Excellence.*

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The Officers & Members of the **New York State  
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**LOCAL 290**

ON YOUR

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President  
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**IRONWORKERS**  
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# CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL UNION 290

## 100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

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who guided the local to becoming the industry force that it is today through his professional  
manner and caring presence in all that he did, including union organizing and support  
for the Ironworker Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust (IMPACT).*

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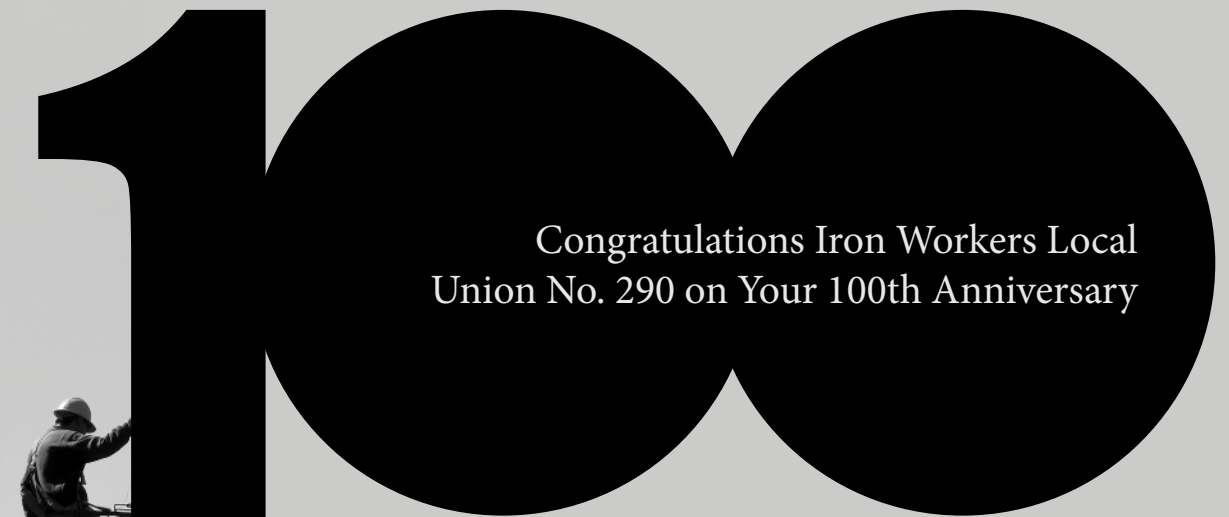
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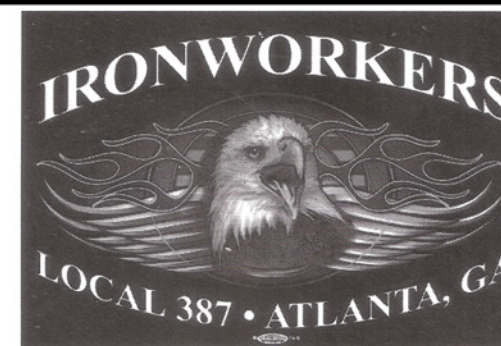
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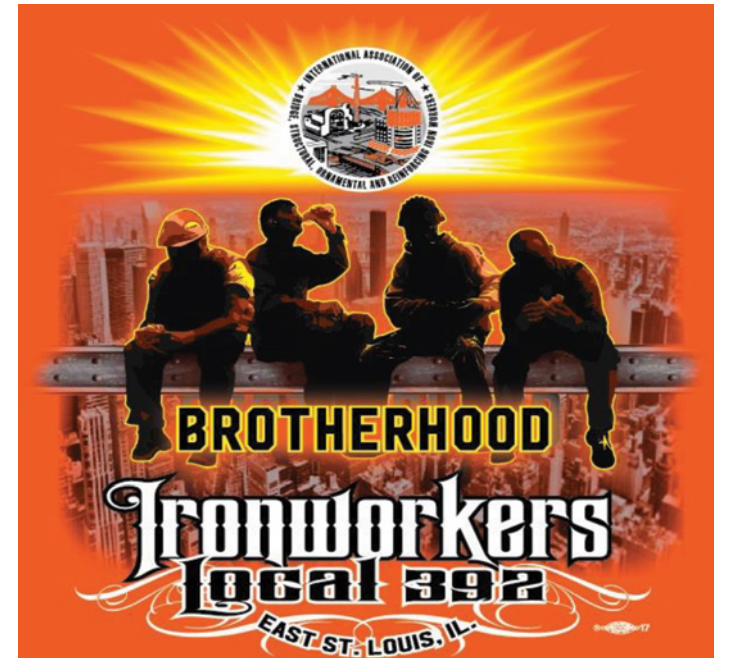
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