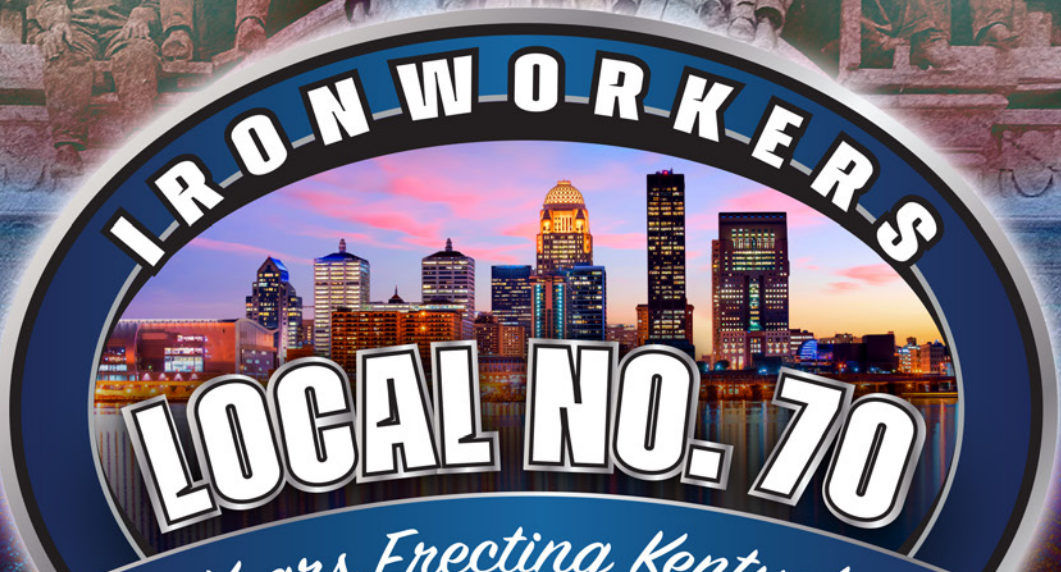
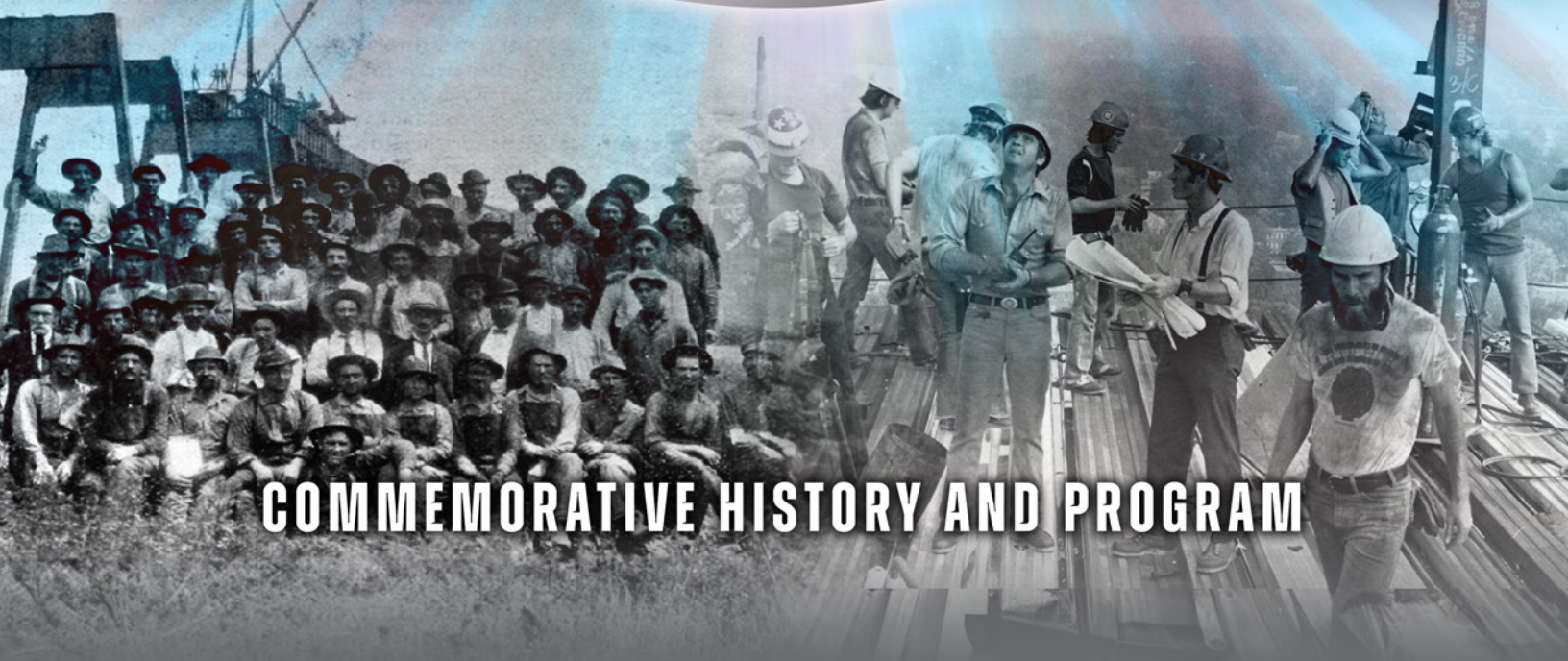


**IRONWORKERS LOCAL NO. 70**



*120 Years Erecting Kentuckiana*

**CHARTERED 8.6.1903**



**COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY AND PROGRAM**



# Padgett Congratulates Local 70

## 120 YEARS SERVING & ERECTING LOUISVILLE & LEXINGTON



Padgett, Inc., is a full-service crane rental, machinery moving, rigging, steel fabrication and erection company founded in 1962.

[PADGETT-INC.COM](http://PADGETT-INC.COM)

Platinum SPONSOR



As a professional boxer in the 1930s, William M. Abel knew it was hard to make a living with just his fists. In the waning days of the Depression, a professional boxer did not make much money, so William started a small concrete construction company with the simple philosophy of providing a good job at a good price. This philosophy remains true today and is why now, over eight decades and four generations later, that small concrete construction company has become one of the largest general contractors, construction managers, and design/build firms in the region.

### What we do:



#### Design Build

Whether you're thinking about a renovation, planning an expansion, or undertaking a new project altogether, ABEL Construction can help from concept to execution. Our in-house architects use the latest in computerized estimating and design, while our multi-level design process ensures you'll always receive accurate estimates and up-to-date sketches. It's our top priority to finish your project on budget and on time with no surprises.



#### Real Estate Development

Successful development of a site requires careful planning, responsible financing, skillful construction, and ultimately effective management—not to mention having the experience and resources to bring it all together into a project that works.



#### General Contracting

ABEL Construction is fully equipped to handle even the most complex projects. Our experience and ability to successfully manage every aspect of a build, along with our unmatched commitment to client service—has helped us become one of the region's leading general contractors.



#### Construction Management

The key to the smooth completion of any project is diligent and comprehensive construction management. It's all in the details. That's where our people thrive. Our CM team consistently meets the critical demands of compressed schedules and intensive workloads for even the most challenging projects. We have the people and systems in place to keep things on track, on time and on budget.



#### Preconstruction/Estimating Services

ABEL has been in business for over 8 decades and maintains an extensive database of relevant cost information, but more importantly, we have developed, with competent specialty contractors and material and equipment vendors, the relationships that are necessary to obtain the most up-to-date cost information available. No less important, ABEL maintains cost estimating procedures that are pertinent at every phase of the projects design-schematic, development and detailed.

[www.abelconstruction.com](http://www.abelconstruction.com)



Gold SPONSOR



## A PROUD HISTORY OF SERVICE ENSURES LOCAL 70'S FUTURE

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends:

Since August 6, 1903, the ironworkers of Local 70 have been an instrumental part of the City of Louisville and the other 44 counties in Kentucky and 15 in southern Indiana that make up our jurisdiction. We have built this city and many other cities and towns with pride and professionalism.

It has been a privilege and honor to be a part of this historic event, celebrating 120 years of Local 70's contributions.

While we remember the sacrifices our brothers and sisters went through to get us here today, we take pride in knowing that the future will be bright with the pride and integrity that is instilled into the membership by the outstanding apprenticeship program and its instructors and leadership. We wish to carry the load for the next 120 years to come with pride, leadership, integrity and honor for the future. It has been one of my greatest privileges to serve this membership – past, present and into the future.



On behalf of the members of Ironworker Local 70, I would like to thank all you for your support in making this possible. Thank You.

Fraternally,

Chris Bell, Business Agent  
Ironworkers Local No. 70, Louisville, Kentucky

### Ironworkers Local No. 70 120-Year Anniversary Family Celebration Day & Member Awards Ceremonies

**Saturday, June 10, 2023**

**11:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Blind Squirrel**

592 North English Station Road, Louisville, Kentucky

**Lunch Buffet..... Noon**

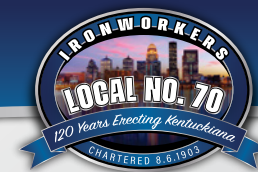
DJ Entertainment, Golf Simulators, Cornhole, Sand Volleyball, Inflatable Obstacle Courses

**Member Awards Ceremonies ..... 2:00 p.m.**

Retiree Service Pins, Apprentice Graduation

**Dinner Buffet ..... 5:00 p.m.**

Live Band and Dancing



## MEMBER DEDICATION WILL CONTINUE TO SUSTAIN LOCAL 70

Brothers, Sisters and Guests:

The impact of Ironworkers Local 70 throughout Louisville and “Kentuckiana” over the past 120 years is apparent each and every day ... we can see it by just looking at its skylines and traveling across our jurisdiction. But the ability for the skilled ironworkers of our local to make a difference and help build our hometowns and their neighbors did not happen by chance – and for that, we remember and recognize our founding members for their courage and foresight beginning 120 years ago to organize Local 70 and then fight for its existence. As you will read the history in this book, it was not an easy battle, and it still continues.



Our many previous members would be proud of today's membership and the pride we take in our work and in sustaining our local. Since being chartered in 1903, Local 70's members have expanded the influence of our union craftsmanship in our jurisdiction. We should all be proud of the many skills we possess that contribute to that success as a local, skills that are enhanced in our own, state-of-the-art training center.

Most of all, Local 70's success is the product of the commitment and standards of excellence demonstrated by our founding members, current members, and all of those in between. Each one of us provides our younger members with a purpose: Performing jobs to the best of our abilities, doing our best to maintain our proud reputation, and producing the best-trained and most-productive members in the iron-working industry, which allows us to thrive.

Again, you can see it all in the latest landmarks throughout our territory: The bridges that cross the Ohio River, KFC Yum! Center, University of Louisville Football Stadium, McAlpine Locks and Dam, Louisville City FC Stadium and Churchill Downs, just to name a few. You can also see it in our modern union hall and training center, both of which our membership recently made possible.

As business manager of Local 70, I am very appreciative of my fellow union members for the hard work and dedication they have shown in supporting our union. It is an honor to lead this local as we commemorate its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I look forward to it thriving for the next 120 years with even better wages and benefit packages and increasing employment opportunities.

Fraternally,

James Stiles, Business Manager/Financial Secretary-Treasurer  
Ironworkers Local No. 70, Louisville, Kentucky

This book was proudly produced by

**UNION HISTORIES™**  
Preserving the Proud Stories of Local Unions  
[unionhistories.com](http://unionhistories.com)

**Ironworkers Local 70 and Union Histories give special thanks to the following for their contributions to this book:**

Local 70 Retirees Club

International Association of Ironworkers, International Office

Head Historian: Calvin Jefferson  
Research Assistant & Proofreader: Ann Wilkins Jefferson

Art Direction: Andy Taucher

Layout & Design: Steven Demanett





# IRONWORKERS LOCAL NO. 70 2023 OFFICERS AND LEADERSHIP

*President*  
JIM BREWER

*Vice President*  
KELLY COOPER

*Business Manager / Financial Secretary-Treasurer*  
JAMES STILES

*Business Representative / Political Coordinator*  
CHRISTOPHER BELL

*Recording Secretary*  
FRANK R. JONES

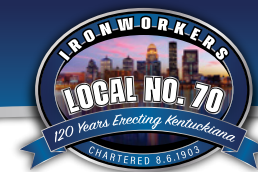
*Sergeant At Arms*  
SCOTT LASLIE

*Conductor*  
CHARLES CONLEY

*Executive Board*  
CHARLIE FELL  
CHARLES POPHAM  
ADAM QUINTON  
GARY R. TERRY  
JEFF WISE

*Examining Committee*  
MIKE FUQUA  
PATRICK GARNETT  
JOSEPH NALL

*Trustees*  
ANTWAN SHOULDERS  
GARY THOMAS  
BILLY ROBARDS



# IRONWORKERS LOCAL NO. 70 2023 AWARDEES

The following Local 70 members are receiving their benchmark International Association of Ironworkers years-of-service awards and pins during this 120th year of our local.

## 70-YEAR MEMBER

Edward C. Hudson

## 65-YEAR MEMBER

Kenneth B. Williams

## 55-YEAR MEMBERS

Robert H. Buchanan  
Russel N. Cordts Jr.  
Marion T. Mattingly  
Paul C. Sharp Jr.  
Charles R. Shelton  
William E. Thomas  
Vincent H. Woods

## 50-YEAR MEMBERS

Chester L. Gallahue  
James D. Wells  
Ralph P. Judge  
Gary F. Beckman  
Roger D. Haley

## 45-YEAR MEMBERS

Frederick Washington  
Samuel E. Dale  
Michael W. Egnew  
Ronald W. Hayes  
Ronald L. Lynch  
William C. McGuire  
John D. Noon  
James R. Peyton

Mark A. Revell  
William E. Robards  
Bobby J. Snyder  
Roy H. Story  
Joseph B. Wise III  
Steven M. Yount

## 40-YEAR MEMBER

Larry W. Hamilton

## 35-YEAR MEMBERS

Mark Metsker  
William L. Mercer  
Gary L. Wright  
Grover E. Vorbrink  
John D. Heintzman  
Clyde J. Harris  
Steven B. Hubbard  
Donald L. Vessels Jr.  
David R. Cissell  
Frederick G. Neben  
Joseph S. Blanford  
Mark E. Quinton  
Glenn E. Fackler

## 30-YEAR MEMBERS

Randy A. Lanham  
William M. Chapman  
Taz S. Noon  
Patrick S. McCabe

Timothy J. Oliver  
Dale W. McDaniel  
Steven R. Bush  
Jody W. Carwile  
Andy Caudill  
Robert Franke  
James D. Rodgers  
Dennis B. Chism  
Carl E. Phillips  
Mark T. Shrader

## 25-YEAR MEMBERS

Timothy L. Steelman  
Aron Howlett  
Jason T. Wells  
Adam Glutting  
Joseph I. Deck III  
Travis C. Holliday

## 2023 IRONWORKERS LOCAL 70 APPRENTICESHIP GRADUATES

Nathan Keys  
Stephen McCoy  
Paul Rolph  
Justin Sandlin  
Mason Whobrey  
Malakh HaMavet  
Cody Logsdon  
Jackson Tharp  
Alex Wright

History of Ironworkers Local No. 70, Louisville

# RAISING UP AN ORGANIZATION, CITY & REGION FOR 120 YEARS



**Welcome, Local No. 70. Louisville, Ky.**

The Bridgemen's Magazine, September 1903

## NEW UNION FORMED.

**Bridge Constructors and Iron Workers Organize.**

*A new union was formed last night at Beck's Hall consisting of the bridge constructors and iron workers. The union was organized by Thomas Galloway, of Cincinnati, who came down expressly for that purpose. The first meeting was held last night and the men responded with enthusiasm. Seventy men were present and formed the union and officers were elected. The union has applied for a charter which is expected to arrive in the next few days.*

*(The Louisville Courier-Journal, August 5, 1903)*

Two days after that group of about 12 to 15 "bridge constructors and iron workers" met to organize a local union in Louisville, the International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America chartered Local No. 70 on **August 6, 1903**, to serve "Louisville, Kentucky, and vicinity." The new local subsequently set regular meetings in **Beck's Hall** on Jefferson Street in the city (initially on the first and third Thursdays of each month) and elected a slate of officers led by **President Oscar Nelson**.

Most of the fledgling Local 70's member ironworkers were initially employed on construction of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad's **South Louisville Shops**, a massive train-production and -repair complex south of downtown Louisville. However, just two months after being chartered, on October 2, 1903, the local's 40 men working on the shops went on strike against its iron-erecting

contractor, the Oscar Daniel Company, in an effort to gain improved working conditions.

Two weeks later, all the members were back on the job even though "the grievances have not been settled altogether," *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal* reported on October 16. However, International Association President James Buchanan would visit Louisville the following week to "take steps towards the final adjustment of the trouble between the ironworkers and the contractors ... (and) to bring about a final agreement."

*(The 34-building South Louisville Shops opened in 1905 and would go on to build and repair thousands of steam engines and tens of thousands of passenger and freight cars. The shops were closed in 1987 by then-owner CSX and were subsequently demolished, after which the property was sold to the University of Louisville and the school's Cardinal Stadium was built on the site in 1998.)*



## INTERNATIONAL IRONWORKERS UNION WAS FORMED OVER 125 YEARS AGO

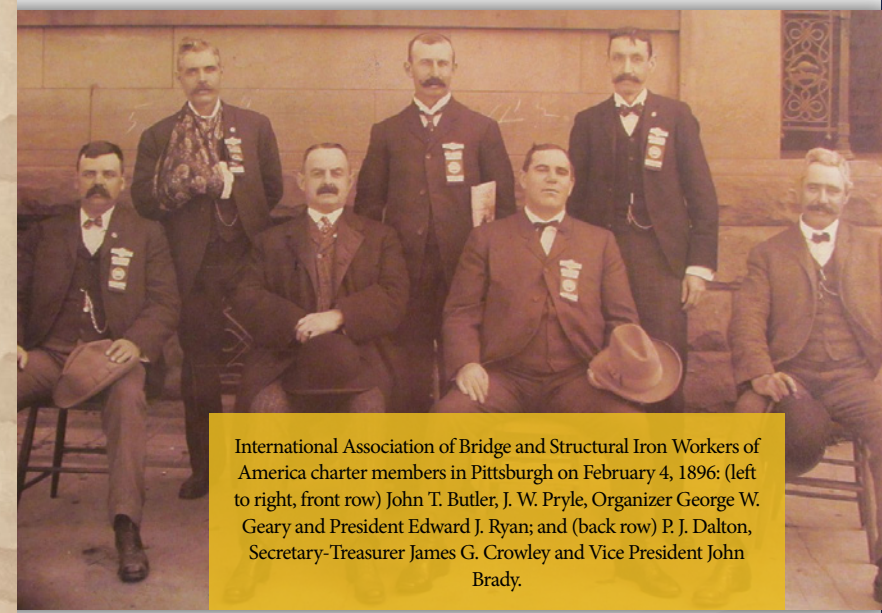
As the use of steel in erecting buildings and other structures became more prevalent in the United States during the 1880s and into the 1890s, a new and dramatic increase in the demand for ironworkers arose. As those “sky cowboys” began to seek better pay and working conditions, they also started to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

Eventually, 16 delegates from six locals held a convention in Pittsburgh from February 4 to 7, 1896, and established the [National 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 Chicago as the city in which it would establish its headquarters.

The union would vote to change its name to the [International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America](#) during its convention from October 22 to 26, 1900, in anticipation of organizing locals in Canada.

Soon after it was first formed, the National Association affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.). However, internal divisions led the International Association 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 1914 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.



International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America charter members in Pittsburgh on February 4, 1896: (left to right, front row) John T. Butler, J. W. Pyle, Organizer George W. Geary and President Edward J. Ryan; and (back row) P. J. Dalton, Secretary-Treasurer James G. Crowley and Vice President John Brady.

By February, more than 100 union ironworkers, including Local 70 members and others from sister International Association locals who had traveled (or “boomed”) into the Louisville jurisdiction for work, were employed on the South Louisville Shops. With the local also having initiated 23 new members who were working on construction of the new, grand [Seelbach Hotel](#) (now the Seelbach Hilton Louisville) on the southeast corner of Fourth and Walnut (now Muhammad Ali Boulevard) streets, which would open on May 1, 1905, Local 70 [Recording Secretary Emory M. Hughes](#) announced in the February 1904 issue of the international union’s *Bridgemen’s Magazine*:

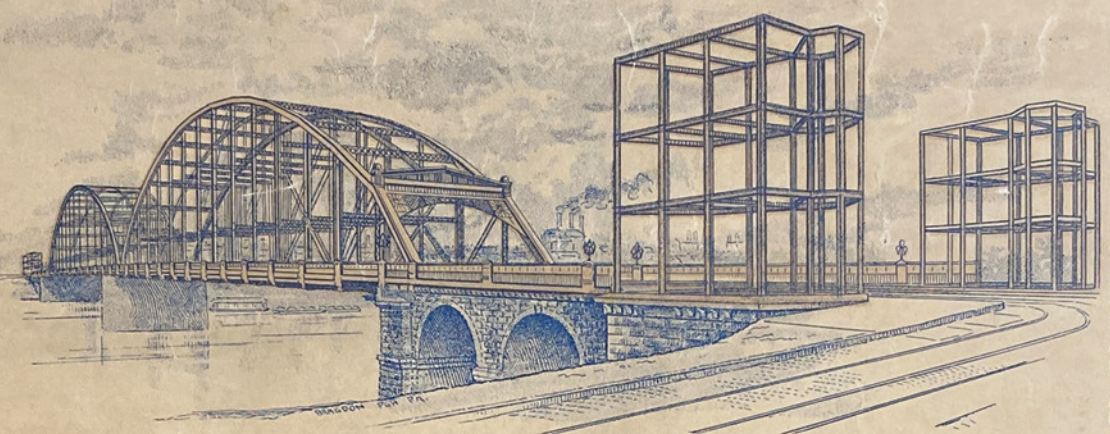
*“We are in the land of the living, and are growing, too.”*

### PUTTING UP A FIGHT - AND GETTING NOTICED

**A**mong the several battles Local 70 was made to fight early on was that with Louisville Mayor Charles F. Grainger, who also operated the steel-construction Grainger & Company that employed non-union ironworkers and built the Seelbach Hotel.

## THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION of

# Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America



February 4, 1896.

## DO TH GRANT THIS CHARTER

To *Bridge & Structural Ironworkers of Louisville Ky & vicinity*  
Located at *Louisville* County of *Jefferson* State of *Kentucky*.

To constitute a Union to be known as *Local Union No. Seventy* of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, for the purpose of effecting a thorough organization of the trade. And the said Union being duly formed, is hereby authorized and empowered to initiate into the Union any person or persons duly proposed and approved according to the Constitution of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, and to enact By-Laws for the government of their Union.

Provided always, that the said Union No. *Seventy* conforms to the Constitution, Laws Rules and Regulations of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, and provided also, that the said Union be located in *Louisville* State of *Kentucky* and not removed therefrom without consent of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, and in default thereof, or any part, this Charter may be revoked or taken away by the decision of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, and should the said Union No. *Seventy* be dissolved or forfeit this Charter, then all property, books, papers and moneys of the Union shall become the property of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION; and

Provided further, in consideration of the due performance of the above, the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BRIDGE AND STRUCTURAL IRON WORKERS OF AMERICA do bind themselves to support the said Local No. *70* in the exercise of their rights and privileges as a subordinate Union.

In Witness Whereof, we have subscribed our names and affixed the seal of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, this *Sixth* day of *August* One Thousand ~~Nineteen~~ Hundred and *Three*.

*Frank Buchanan* President.  
*J. W. Johnston* Secretary-Treasurer.



Ironworkers Local 70 charter, issued August 6, 1903, and signed by International Association General President Frank Buchanan and General Secretary J. W. Johnston.



## LOCAL 70 UNION HALLS

### Beck's Hall

117 West Jefferson Street  
Louisville  
1903 into 1908

### Germania Hall

107 West Jefferson Street  
Louisville  
1908 into 1915

### Beck's Hall

117 West Jefferson Street  
Louisville  
1915 into 1922

### Union Labor Temple

133 West Market Street  
Louisville  
1922 into 1937

### Tyler Hotel

310 West Jefferson Street  
Louisville  
1937 into 1940

### Commercial Building, 503

107 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Louisville  
1940

### National Theater Building

504-1/2 West Walnut Street  
Louisville  
1940 into 1941

### Local 70 Offices

423 West Liberty Street  
Louisville  
1941 into 1944

### Local 70 Union Hall

128 East College Street  
Louisville  
1944 into 1952

### Local 70 Union Hall

1273 South Shelby Street  
Louisville  
1952 into 1975

### Local 70 Union Hall

2441 Crittenden Drive  
Louisville  
1975 into 2018

### Local 70 Union Hall

2429 Crittenden Drive  
Louisville  
2018 to current

Although the mayor and his iron-erecting firm, against which the local waged an unsuccessful strike in early 1904, used “the police and the influence of his office to defeat our association,” as International Association Organizer J. J. McNamara declared in his report in the May 1904 *Bridgemen's*, he was voted out of office in 1905 (after which he purchased Churchill Downs horse-racing track in Louisville).

The local – and other International Association locals around the country – had also been up against the rival United Metal Workers International Union of America, but by 1904 that organization “was out of existence ... but existed on paper for the purpose of giving its old officials a standing in the new Industrial

Workers of the World (I.W.W.)” labor organization that the United Metal Workers would join, as former I.W.W. General Secretary-Treasurer Vincent St. John divulged in the book *The I. W. W.: A Study of American Syndicalism*. As a result, the Louisville-based **United Metal Workers Local No. 22** merged into Local 70 during the spring of that year.

While work in the local's jurisdiction began to slow in 1904 as construction of the South Louisville Shops approached its end, the majority of construction at the time was being handled by the mayor's Granger & Company, “who refuses to employ union men or pay wages that would be satisfactory to free American workingmen,” President Buchanan announced in his report in the May 1905 *Bridgemen's*. However, work on new bridges in Burnside and Gilbertville, Kentucky, and Nashville allowed members to boom to other locals for employment.

Early in 1905, construction of a viaduct bridge for a Louisville and Nashville rail line employed about 30 members in their home jurisdiction. Then as the year progressed, a boom in steel erection in Louisville even required travelers from other International Association locals to help handle the “flourishing” jobs that included the **Jefferson County First Regiment Armory** on Sixth and Walnut streets that would be completed in December; a new, 14-story headquarters building for Louisville and Nashville; and a new passenger station in Louisville for the railroad company to replace the former facility that had burned down.

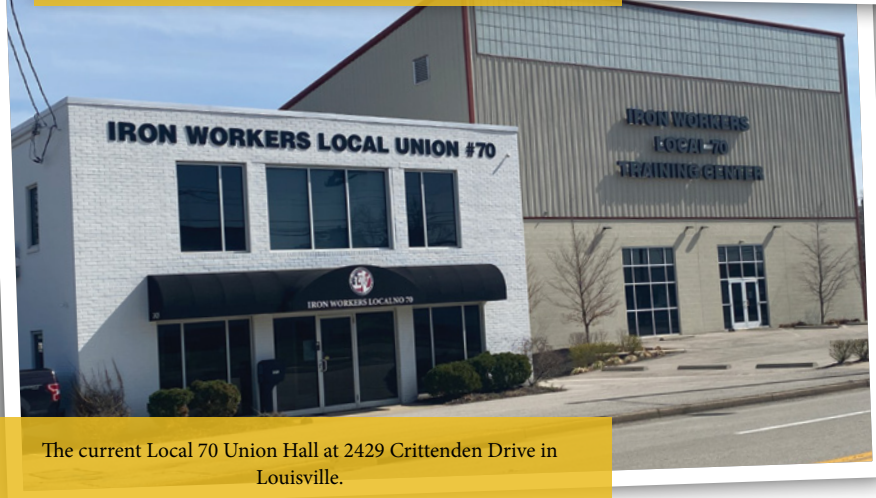
Many Local 70 members and International Association travelers were also erecting a large viaduct for the **Southern Indiana Traction Company** in Louisville to the Big Four Bridge



Local 70 members and other union ironworkers on a job in 1905.



The Local 70 Union Hall at 1273 South Shelby Street in Louisville.



The current Local 70 Union Hall at 2429 Crittenden Drive in Louisville.

railroad truss over the Ohio River between Louisville and Jeffersonville, Indiana, for which the heaviest steel ever shipped into Kentucky was put up by the union ironworkers. In a display of both solidarity and promotion during that noteworthy project, which the local's membership collectively wrote in the September 1905 *Bridgemen's*: “The members of Local No. 70 have had an elegant chance to show their metal on this work, and it is to be hoped that unionism has received a boost in Louisville that will give it a standing among the other great union centers of the country.”

Unfortunately, that year, the local's financial secretary and temporary business agent, Oscar Nelson, left town after the local discovered its treasury was short \$165, it had not paid its recent taxes to the International Association, and a fund set up to help defend member Walter Jones for the murder of the foreman on the South Louisville Shops project in 1903 was missing \$175. Although the local proceeded to give Mr. Nelson a “speedy trial” and assessed a \$200 fine and took away his union card, “he has left here for parts unknown,” Local 70 **Recording Secretary George M. Clark** reported in the November 1905 *Bridgemen's Magazine*.

Local Union No. 70 of Louisville, Ky., requests that mention be made in *The Magazine* that the proprietors of the “celebrated” Paul Jones whiskey had a building erected recently and that scab labor was used throughout. Efforts were made to have union men employed, but to no avail. Union men when having a “smile” should give “Paul Jones” a wide berth.

The Bridgemen’s Magazine, July 1906

Then beginning in 1906, a brutal nationwide “war” waged by non-union, open-shop contractors who in 1903 had formed themselves into the National Erectors’ Association against the International Association and its membership took its toll on union ironworkers. “A grim litany of strikes, threats, failed negotiations, espionage, and violence typified the open shop war,” Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission literature explains. *(The conflict would not be effectively ended until labor-friendly reforms were implemented with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal” during the mid-1930s.)*

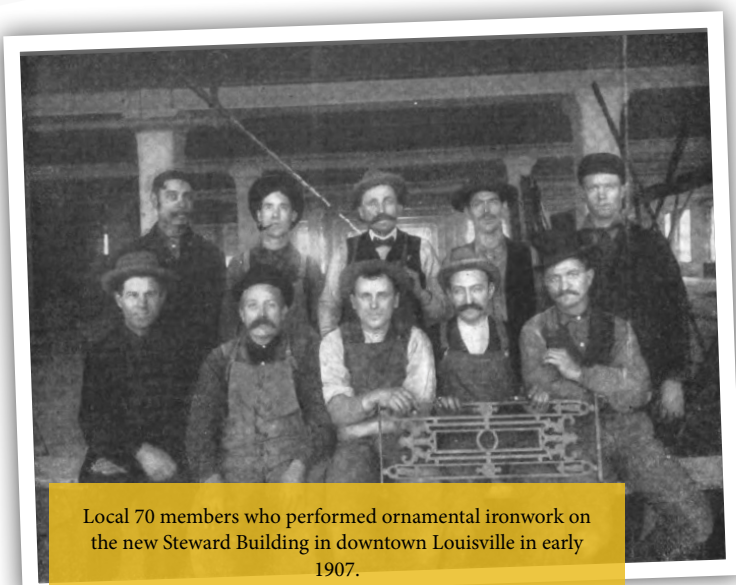
Later in 1906, Local 70 delegate **Financial Secretary Joseph B. Potts** reported to the International Association’s Tenth Annual Convention in Detroit on September 18, “While every member of our local is working, there are also a large number of non-union men working,” noting that while the local had about 60 members, the more than 100 non-union ironworkers in its jurisdiction were performing the bulk of the “considerable amount” of work in and around Louisville. “We have tried in many ways to get these men to see their mistake, but with very little success,” Brother Potts continued. “Local No. 70 has had a very hard struggle, and has at the present time.”

Jobs such as a large, new **Stewart Dry Goods Company** store at Fourth and Walnut streets; a new facility for the **Whiteside Baking Company** in Louisville that had about 120-tons of iron erected; 16-story and 18-story buildings on Market Street; and a bottling

house for the **Falls City Brewing Company** continued to provide manhours for Local 70 members throughout 1906 and 1907.

But employment slowed dramatically for both union and non-union construction-tradesmen in early 1908 as the city, region and country were stifled by a sharp economic recession that had been triggered by the banking Panic of 1907 (during which many state and local banks nationwide entered bankruptcy). “Conditions here are not what we would like them to be, but then we have the satisfaction of knowing that our enemy, the non-union man, is having his troubles also,” Brother Potts wrote in the May 1908 *Bridgemen’s*, while also noting that, at the time, not a “fair” union contractor was located within Louisville.

What’s more, as the local marked its fifth anniversary on August 6 of that year, the local’s financial secretary further pointed out, “We have had nothing but a fight since we have been organized; we have not gained so very much, but we have lost nothing.” He went on to further explain, “The one great trouble with our members is that they do not take enough interest in their meetings. If there is plenty of work then they will attend meetings, but if there is no work there is no meeting.”



Local 70 members who performed ornamental ironwork on the new Stewart Building in downtown Louisville in early 1907.

Subsequently, Local 70’s average membership between June 30, 1908, and July 1, 1909, stagnated at 24 union ironworkers. During that time and leading up to the 1910s, union contractors did not win bids on any of the scarce ironwork that was performed in Louisville, including construction of the pavilion and grandstand for the new State Fairgrounds in the city – but with a “few” Local 70 members being employed when work did pick up, Brother Potts was able to declare in the August 1908 *Bridgemen’s*:

*“Some of the unfair contractors have begun to note the difference between our members and the other fellow.”*

## REORGANIZATION AMID FLUCTUATING CONDITIONS

Despite the previous optimistic outlook of the local’s financial secretary, International Association acting **Financial Secretary Herbert S. Hockin** reported in the July 1910 *Bridgemen’s Magazine* that he found conditions for Local 70 “very bad” when he visited Louisville in June of that year, with “very little very little going on there in the building line.” While he was able to place Local 70 members on a hotel job upon a return trip to the city later that year, following another visit from November 18 through 21, he reported in the February 1911 *Bridgemen’s*, “By this time, I had become thoroughly convinced that the only thing to be done in Louisville was to reorganize the local.”

Over the next several weeks, Brother Hockin organized all but two of the ironworkers in the city, after which he held a meeting on January 24, 1911, that was attended by 35 ironworkers who made out applications for membership into the international and Local 70. The group then elected officers for the local, set dues at \$1 per month and selected delegates to the **Louisville Building Trades Council**. “It was a



Local 70 Brother Joseph B. Potts, the local’s first financial secretary after it was chartered on August 6, 1903, and who served in that position again from 1905 into 1915.

splendid meeting,” the international financial secretary reported in that year’s March issue of *The Bridgemen’s*, “and I believe in time the ironworkers of Louisville will have a local.”

With several jobs scheduled to be erected in the local’s jurisdiction that summer, such as the new the **Kentucky & Indiana Terminal Railroad Company** bridge across the Ohio River between Louisville and New Albany, Indiana; a new viaduct from the Big Four Bridge; a \$1-million hospital; a Young Men’s Christian Association building; a 15-story office building; a 10-story department store; a 12-story hotel; a 10-story annex to the Seelbach Hotel; and two large apartment buildings, on March 18 the local appointed Brother Potts as its business agent. By that time, only two ironworkers in the city had not signed with the local, which numbered 60 members.

Brother Potts was ultimately able to report to the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the





Local 70 members on a job in 1912.

International Association, held in Indianapolis on February 27, 1913, that “our conditions are better than ever before.” By that time, the local’s wage scale was 50 cents per hour for an eight-hour day and three local contractors were hiring only union ironworkers, and the local’s 85 members were all working on several large jobs including the Kentucky & Indiana double-track bridge.

Local 70 maintained its hourly pay at 50 cents for eight hours on weekdays and Saturdays throughout 1915. But during that time and into 1916, its ongoing battle with the city’s largest contractor, the non-union, “open-shop” Grainger, was compounded by the carpenters’ union, which refused to join the Building Trades Council and was performing the work of other trades – including that of Local 70, particularly reinforcing-rod installations in concrete projects. As such, conditions for the union ironworkers eventually became “deplorable,” International Association Fourth Vice President John R. McMullen reported

in the October 1916 *Bridgemen’s* after having visited Louisville in September.

The local’s situation remained precarious throughout 1917 and into 1918, as did that of all the union building trades in Louisville. Following a visit to the city in July 1917, International Association General Organizer P. J. Morrin reported in the September *Bridgemen’s*, “We called on the various iron shops in the city and interviewed them relative to using our men on their work but did not meet with a great deal of success, as they are a very hard lot of employers to deal with.”

In that setting, Local 70’s membership between June 1916 and June 1917 averaged just 18 ironworkers. The following 12 months through June 1918, the local averaged only 24 members, although in early 1918 its wage scale was increased to 60 cents per hour and Saturdays were reduced to four working hours.

Also in 1918, by which time the union had changed its name to the International

Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers, Local 70 members were employed on the reinforcing-rod work for a **Standard Oil Company** plant being built several miles south of Louisville. Committed to procuring more work and better conditions, the local in May 1919 went on strike against an open-shop contractor erecting a pumping station for the Louisville Water Company, but the local was unsuccessful in its efforts to turn around the non-union construction by the federal government of airplane hangars in Jeffersonville, Indiana.



Local 70 member Brother Jacob H. Lemons served with the U.S. Army Engineer Corps in France during World War I.

### MEMBERS SERVED IN WWI

Among the many International Association of Ironworkers members who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War I, in which the United States was militarily involved from April 6, 1917, until the war ended on November 11, 1918, Local 70 members who served in the war included brothers **Edward Beck**, **John Bernard Fagan**, **Jacob H. Lemons** (formerly Lemour), **Joe Pitts** and **Robert Weaver**.

## WAVERING WORK THROUGH HIGHS, LOWS OF ‘20s, ‘30s

The troubles plaguing Local 70 persisted into the 1920s, including its struggles with the carpenters’ union. Subsequently, by mid-January 1920, most of the local’s members were working through other sister locals around the country.

The average membership of the mixed-trades local did continue to grow, however, and between June 1920 and June 1921 it averaged 43 member ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen. Furthermore, while full employment remained sporadic, that year the local negotiated two scales of wages with its contractors, one at \$1 per hour for structural and ornamental ironwork and the other at 80 cents per hour for rod work.

After the so-called “Roaring Twenties” – a nearly decade-long period marked by a surging economy and mass consumerism in the United States following a recession in 1920 and 1921 – got underway in earnest, Local 70 members began working on several projects across Louisville, including a new Elks Temple, new Labor Temple, two 18-story buildings and another eight-floor structure in 1923 alone. That year, the local’s wage scale was increased to \$1.25 per hour for its ironworkers and \$1 per hour for its rodmen.

Throughout much of the balance of the decade, the local’s membership remained steady, averaging 47 members from June 1923 through June 1924 and 45 members from June 1927 through June 1928. Wages likewise were held at \$1.25 and \$1 per hour for ironworkers and roadmen, respectively, throughout 1924 and into 1929.

However, on October 29, 1929 – history’s “Black Tuesday” – a devastating U.S. stock market crash ignited the Great Depression, the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world.



# IRONWORKERS LOCAL 70 LEADERSHIP/OFFICERS

After Ironworkers Local 70 was first chartered on August 6, 1903, the local's primary officer was its president. A business agent took over many of the administrative duties of the local beginning in 1921, after which the combined position of business manager-financial secretary/treasurer was established in 1975 to fully administer the daily functions of the local.

The local's very first elected officers after it was chartered were [President Oscar Nelson](#), [Treasurer Joseph P. Fagan](#), [Financial Secretary Joseph B. Potts](#) and [Recording Secretary E. M. Hughes](#).

## Presidents

**Oscar Nelson**  
1903 into 1904

**James M. Estes**  
1904 into 1905

**O. Julian Berry**  
1905  
(Passed away September 30, 1905, after being injured while working on a job.)

**James M. Estes**  
1905 into 1906

**John J. Hession**  
1906 into 1910

**John Schwaniger**  
1910 into 1911

**Harvey B. Staten**  
1911

**John J. Hession**  
1911 into 1912

**Jason A. Staten**  
1912 into 1913

**Charles Kellem**  
1913 into 1915

**John L. Edlin**  
1915 into 1916

**Joseph P. Fagan**  
1915 into 1917

**George W. McNatt**  
1917 into 1919

**William J. Donovan**  
1919 into 1921

**Joseph E. Williamson**  
1921 into 1923

**Joseph P. Fagan**  
1923 into 1924

**William J. Donovan**  
1924 into 1926

**W. Frank Hepler**  
1926 into 1927

**Joseph C. Underwood**  
1927 into 1929

**C. B. Mitchell**  
1929

**Joseph C. Underwood**  
1929 into 1930

**Frank L. Gilmore**  
1930 into 1932

**Clinton K. Bartman**  
1932 into 1934

**John A. Boyle**  
1934 into 1935

**Charles K. Petty**  
1935

**Joseph C. Underwood**  
1935 into 1936

**George Fugit**  
1936 into 1937

**Charles K. Petty**  
1937 into 1938

**George Fugit**  
1938 into 1939

**John A. Boyle**  
1939

**John M. O'Hara**  
1939 into 1940

**Frank L. Gilmore**  
1940

**John M. O'Hara**  
1940 into 1941

**LeeRoy Dones**  
1941 into 1942

**Larry Le Sage**  
1942 into 1943

**Virgil Mears**  
1943 into 1947

**Fred L. Green**  
1947 into 1948

**Sam Ezelle Jr.**  
1948 into 1949

**James R. Bunch**  
1949 into 1950

**William G. Cravens**  
1950 into 1955

**Kenneth Voight**  
1955 into 1962  
(Passed away in May 1962 in a single-car accident.)

**Sam Ezelle**  
1962 into 1967

**John L. Bruce**  
1967 into 1972

**Earl Haley Jr.**  
1972 into 1975

**James E. Daly**  
1975 into 1984

**Charles S. Noon**  
1984 into 1987

**Earl Haley Jr.**  
1987 into 1996

**Frank E. Jones Jr.**  
1996 into 2002

**Ronnie L. Lynch**  
2002 into 2005

**Taz S. Noon**  
2005 into 2008

**Michael Rodgers**  
2008 into 2011

**Dean Tharp**  
2011 into 2014

**Blair Cissell**  
2014 into 2017

**Christopher Bell**  
2017 into 2019

**Gary Terry**  
2019 to 2021

**James Brewer**  
2021 to current

## Business Agents

**Charles K. Petty**  
1921 to 1922

**William J. Donovan**  
1922 into 1923

**George W. McNatt**  
1923

**R. J. Kelly**  
1923

**Jesse E. Hunter**  
1923

**J. L. Yancy**  
1923

**Jesse E. Hunter**  
1923 into 1924

**Ben Nuckles**  
1924

**J. E. Hood**  
1924

**Robert L. Ice**  
1924

**J. E. Hood**  
1924 into 1925

**Jesse E. Hunter**  
1925 into 1926

**W. Frank Hepler**  
1926 into 1930

**Joseph Ellerkamp**  
1930 into 1932

**Reed Bunch**  
1932 into 1933

**Harry P. Bruck**  
1933 into 1939

**George Fugit**  
1939

**John A. Boyle**  
1939 into 1940

**Joseph H. Roney**  
1940

**John M. O'Hara**  
1940 into 1941

**Clarence Dunn**  
1941 into 1943

**LeeRoy Dones**  
1943 into 1947

**James M. Foster**  
1947 into 1948

**LeeRoy Dones**  
1948 into 1949

**James Falone Jr.**  
1949 into 1950

**James R. Bunch**  
1950 into 1955

**William G. Cravens**  
1955 into 1967

**James E. Daly**  
1967 into 1972

**John L. Bruce**  
1972 into 1975

## Business Manager/ Financial Secretary-Treasurers

**John L. Bruce**  
1975 into 1987

**Charles R. Crabb Jr.**  
1987 into 1993

**Denver Skaggs**  
1993 into 2002

**Carl J. Peyton**  
2002 into 2007

**Ronald Lynch**  
2007 into 2014

**Tommy Carrier**  
2014 into 2021

**James Stiles**  
2021 to current



Brother Oscar Nelson



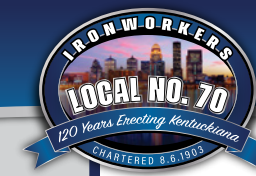
Brother John L. Bruce

Initially, the Depression had little impact on the employment of union 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 Association.

But mass unemployment caused by the Great Depression “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.”

As the turmoil took hold and continued into the early 1930s, Local 70 in 1932 took wage reductions down to \$1 per hour for ironworkers and 80 cents per hour for rodmen as employment in its jurisdiction significantly declined. Regardless, members did work on construction of the new [U.S. Post Office, Court House and Custom House](#) in Louisville in 1931 and 1932.

The labor-friendly reforms of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal” federal-government funded public-work projects, programs and regulations beginning in 1933 helped curb the Great Depression’s damaging impact on employment. Many union members, including the ironworkers of Local 70, were employed through its federally sponsored work programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works Administration. Among New Deal projects that created building-trades jobs in Louisville was construction of the [University of Louisville Law School](#) (now the university’s Louis D. Brandeis School of Law) in 1938 and 1939.



Adding to the relief for ironworkers across the country, during the early 1930s the International Association secured two working agreements, one of which was the **Bridge Erectors' Agreement** that covered the nationwide jobs of "fair" union 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.

The "second phase" of the New Deal, which President Roosevelt launched in 1935, included legislation that guaranteed workers the right to unionize and bargain for better

working conditions and higher wages, such as the **National Labor Relations Act** that created a **National Labor Relations Board** to oversee union elections and supervise businesses' treatment of their workers. With this, the program also effectively ended the nationwide iron contractors' anti-union, open-shop campaign that had been ongoing since 1906.

After four years, in 1936 Local 70's wages were restored to \$1.25 per hour and \$1.10 per hour, respectively, for ironworkers and rodmen. As employment also slowly increased as the latter half of the decade progressed and the Depression slowly subsided, among the major projects on which Local 70 members worked was erection of the \$600,000, 13-story **Kentucky State Office Building** in the capital city of Frankfort in 1937 and 1938.



Steel erected by Local 70 members for the new Kentucky State Office Building in Frankfort in 1937.



Local 70 members on a job in 1940.

## HELPING NATION WIN A SECOND WORLD WAR

With Europe and Asia engaged in a growing global war beginning in September 1939, U.S. defense and military-production spending increased into the 1940s, creating additional work for union members nationwide, including Local 70 ironworkers. Strengthening that source of jobs, the Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.), of which the International Association of Ironworkers was an affiliate, entered into an agreement with various government agencies engaged in defense construction work in order to help stabilize the building industry during the "national emergency" declared by President Roosevelt as the country's allies were fighting the already destructive and spreading conflict.

With steady work increasing, Local 70 finally began to stabilize, and its membership and the number of booming International Association members it was hosting soared to more than

a combined 1,200 structural and ornamental ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen during 1940. The local's wage scale also increased that year to \$1.50 per hour for ironworkers and \$1.32 per hour for rodmen.

Among the major projects erected by the local's members at that time was the **Indiana Ordnance Works** near Charlestown, Indiana, by the DuPont de Nemours (DuPont) Company in 1940 and 1941 to manufacture military explosives, propellants and smokeless powder; and the **Naval Ordnance Station Louisville**, which was constructed beginning in January 1941 until it was completed in October 1941. Over the next 50 years, the naval facility would provide maintenance and equipment for the U.S. Navy and, eventually, work for NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

An internal dilemma momentarily unsettled the local, however, when Local 70 President and Business Manager John Michael O'Hara was removed from office and subsequently sentenced to four years in jail on November 27, 1941, after pleading guilty to converting

## MEMBER GAVE HIS LIFE IN SECOND WORLD WAR

Of the numerous Local 70 members who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces throughout the local's history, **Brother Frank Edward Dengg** made the ultimate sacrifice when he was killed in action in World War II on July 27, 1944.

A B-24 Liberator heavy bomber pilot with the 514<sup>th</sup> Bomber Squadron, 376<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group of the U.S. Army Air Forces, Second Lt. Dengg was killed on his seventh combat mission when his plane was shot down and crashed near its base in Lazio, Italy.

Brother Dengg was 23 years old and was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart (which is presented to service members who have been wounded or killed as a result of enemy action while serving in the U.S. military). He is buried in the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno, Italy.



Local 70 Brother  
Frank Edward  
Dengg

throughout the local's jurisdiction included the Howard Shipyards in Jeffersonville building submarine-chasers and landing craft that were used in the D-Day invasion of Normandy and in the Pacific Theatre; Curtiss C-46 planes built at one of Louisville's airports with parts from Louisville's Reynolds Metals and American Air Filter plants; and Louisville's Ford plant producing more than 100,000 jeeps.

Also during the war, the still-growing Local 70 moved into a union hall of its own in 1944 at **128 East College Street** in Louisville. The local's headquarters and meeting location would remain there for the next eight years.

While the local and all other construction trade unions were bound by U.S. Government-imposed and -monitored policies controlling wages during and immediately after World War II, the Local 70 scale in 1944 and into 1945 was set at \$1.50 per hour for ironworkers and \$1.32 per hour for rodmen. An increase was then approved by the Wage Adjustment Board on May 16, 1945, for \$1.67-1/2 and \$1.50 per hour, respectively, for the local's ironworkers and rodmen.

Following the war's end in September 1945 with the surrender of the Japanese after Germany had capitulated that May, Local 70 continued to grow and its wages continued to increase. By June 1948, the local's ironworkers were earning \$2.10 per hour and its rodmen were making \$1.90 per hour, and by January 1, 1949, its ironworkers and rodmen were being paid \$2.30 and \$2.10 per hour, respectively.

## MIRRORING THE GROWTH OF ITS CITY DURING THE 1950s

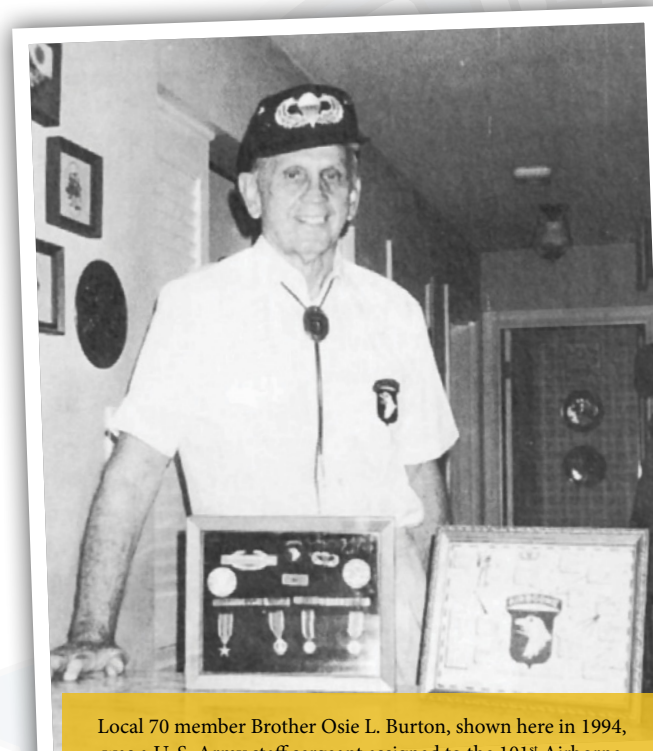
**A**s the Louisville/Jefferson County metropolitan area grew substantially in population during the 1950s from about 476,000 residents in 1950 to roughly

as much as \$14,157 from the local "to his own use," an article in the next day's *Courier-Journal* reported. Specifically, according to the newspaper, O'Hara "drew the time he must serve on a charge that he converted \$2,200 of the union's funds, and received (a) probated sentence on a charge that he uttered a forged instrument in writing for \$11,000, all growing out of the \$14,157 shortage."

New Local 70 **President LeeRoy Dones** and **Business Agent Clarence Dunn** were in place when the United States officially entered World War II following the Japanese attack on U.S. Naval Station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, after which the local's members were active both on various battlefields and on the home front, where the Louisville area was an essential contributor for war production. As existing facilities were converted and new ones were built to manufacture military materiel, wartime projects

595,000 in 1959, so too did Local 70 flourish throughout its jurisdiction of 72 counties in Kentucky and 10 in Indiana. As such, the local wielded its new-found strength, garnered from its expanded membership, to gain improved working conditions, more work and escalated pay. Its hourly wage scale rose from \$2.45 for structural and ornamental ironworkers and \$2.25 for reinforcing rodmen in 1950 to a mutual \$3.17-1/2 for all members in 1955 and eventually to \$3.70 in 1959 – by which time the local was also receiving a health-insurance fringe-benefit contribution from its employers.

The union ironworkers also worked to help all of organized labor to gain an upper hand throughout their jurisdiction. For instance, in March 1951 while the hotel and restaurant workers union was on strike against employers



Local 70 member Brother Osie L. Burton, shown here in 1994, was a U. S. Army staff sergeant assigned to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during World War II when he parachuted into France as part of the "Pathfinders" on D-Day, June 6, 1944, with the Allied forces invading Nazi-held Normandy. He went on to jump in Holland and fought in the Battle of the Bulge at Bastogne, Belgium, the largest and bloodiest single battle fought by the United States in the war. Following his discharge from the Army in December 1945, Brother Burton joined Local 70 in April 1947 and retired in August 1984.

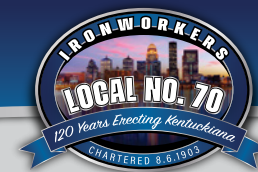
in the city for a new wage scale, Local 70 "refuse(ed) to help construct the proposed 19-story addition to the Martin Brown Building," the March 28 *Courier-Journal* reported. The local also "condemned the hotel and restaurant industry of Louisville for 'organized opposition to a fair minimum-wage law for its employees.'"

Later that same year, about 300 of the local's roughly 500 members, including about 40 ironworkers employed on construction of the large, new **General Electric Company (GE)** plant near the unincorporated town of Buechel, went on strike on October 10 against 11 contractors in a dispute over the length of the workweek in a proposed new working agreement with the Associated General Contractors (A.G.C.). Seeking an unlimited week that would allow for overtime hours on Saturdays while contractors sought to maintain a strict 40-hour week that was contained in a contract that expired on August 31, the ironworkers returned to their jobs on October 15 after the local signed workweek agreements with each individual employer.

A new contract with the A.G.C. subsequently increased the local's wage scale to \$2.60 per hour for ironworkers and \$2.40 per hour for rodmen.

In addition to the \$200-million, 410,000-square-foot air-conditioner manufacturing plant at GE's Appliance Park near Buechel (which has since been merged into Louisville), which would produce its first units in October 1954 before being completed in 1957, other major projects providing manhours early in the decade for Local 70 members included construction of a \$17.5-million **Mathieson Hydrocarbon Corporation Doe Run Plant** near Brandenburg, Kentucky. Once online in 1952, the facility would manufacture petrochemicals made either directly or indirectly from petroleum.

Elsewhere in 1952, about 80 of the local's members helped restore the Indiana Ordnance



## Local 70 Training and Education

# DEVELOPING A WELL-PREPARED WORKFORCE FOR THE IRONWORKING INDUSTRY

“We feel that we have a duty to see that Kentucky has plenty of skilled men on hand in order to assist in attracting new industry. With more emphasis on skyscrapers for the Louisville area, and highway and bridge programs, Ironworkers Local 70 wants to be prepared with a skilled membership second to none in the country.”

*Local 70 Business Agent William Cravens,*



Local 70 apprentices participate in a training class in 1961.

*The Kentucky Labor News, April 1, 1961*

Prior to 1957, Ironworkers Local 70 apprentices were primarily taught the ironworking trade through “on-the-job” training on active construction sites while working alongside experienced journeyman ironworkers and receiving pay while they learned. But the local had come to realize that it needed to enhance the education of its

trainees in order to ensure it would have a pool of highly qualified ironworkers to supply to employing contractors.

To that end, that year during contract negotiations with their employers, Local 70 [President Kenneth Voigt](#), [Business Agent William Cravens](#) and [Financial Secretary James Bunch](#) bargained for a 1-cent-per-hour contribution

from contractors for each hour worked by a member of the local to be placed into a new educational account, the [Ironworkers Local No. 70 and Ironworkers Employers Association Apprentice Educational Fund](#). With the funds, Local 70 and the Louisville Ironworkers Joint Apprenticeship Committee (J.A.C.), consisting of three representatives each from the local and their contractors, began to administer a new training school that featured shop and classroom work to augment the on-the-job, paid training apprentices were already receiving.

The J.A.C. tapped Local 70 member [Brother Theodore “Ted” Gibson](#) to organize the new “Ironworkers School” apprenticeship program – the first of its kind in the southeast. He would go on to serve as the local’s apprenticeship coordinator for the next more than 40 years. (Brother Gibson passed away at age 104 on July 25, 2019, as a lifelong member of Local 70.)

The local set up a shop and a classroom for its new, three-year apprenticeship program, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Apprenticeship and the Kentucky Department of Industrial Relations, in a rented building at [1265 South Shelby Street](#). With apprentices attending classes two nights each week

Local 70 became an initial participant in the new [National Ironworkers and Employers Apprenticeship Training and Journeyman Upgrading Fund](#) by March 1, 1984, along with five other International Association of Ironworkers locals. Established earlier that year, the fund would work with contractor associations and use financial contributions from the locals and contractors to enhance local and national training through programs such as developing a training course for ironworker instructors and training materials.



Graduates and instructors of the first Local 70 40-hour hazardous materials (HAZ/MAT) training class, which was held in 1995, were (left to right) Instructor Carl Peyton, Anthony Scott Blanford, Gaylon W. Blanford, Dennis Schrader, William (Billy) D. Smith, Taz Noon, Michael Engler, Darrell Herron, David Sheets, Business Agent Denver Skaggs, Kenneth Mills, Terry Tanner, Donald Ferron, Anthony (Tony) Ryan and Instructor John Joseph.

In 1995, 13 Local 70 members graduated from the local’s first-ever [40-hour hazardous materials \(HAZ/MAT\) class](#), which was sponsored and certified by the National Ironworkers and Employers Apprenticeship Training and Journeyman Upgrading Fund. All three Louisville television stations and the Courier-Journal newspaper covered the training in their news reporting.

while working full-time during the day, the curriculum provided instruction on related topics that included reading blueprints, welding, steel-setting, using a cutting torch, cable-splicing and safety.

From the outset, the J.A.C. adopted standards of excellence for the school, choosing only “interested, fully qualified instructors” to teach the trade to apprentices, according to an article in the July 1961 issue of *The Ironworker*. The local’s officers likewise were just as selective when choosing apprentice applicants, as they considered their apprentices to be the “cream of the crop.”

“They are doing a splendid job in seeing that their future craftsmen have the best possible training,” Robert S. Bowman, supervisor of the Kentucky Bureau of Apprenticeship, said of Local 70 and the J.A.C. at the time. “They have literally worked night and day to assure their apprentices of a well-rounded, high-caliber training.”

Over the ensuing decades, Local 70 and the J.A.C. have developed and expanded the school, growing its



## Local 70 Training and Education

# DEVELOPING A WELL-PREPARED WORKFORCE FOR THE IRONWORKING INDUSTRY

Local 70 completed the International Association's [Ironworker Apprenticeship Certification Program](#) in 2009. The union's Apprenticeship and Training Department implemented the program in late 2005 to certify local apprenticeship programs in order to improve and standardize the quality of apprenticeship training offered at locals.

Certification is a method of ensuring an ironworker apprenticeship program meets or exceeds all established standards and requirements in related areas, such as implementing a 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.

assets with stepped-up contributions to the educational fund and even moving its classrooms and labs into the [Theodore Ahrens Trade School](#) for a time. Concurrently, apprentices' earnings increased as stepped percentages of the journeyman wage scale based on each trainee's advancement through the program, and they each were also provided with fringe benefits such as health insurance that were negotiated into working contracts between the local and contractors.

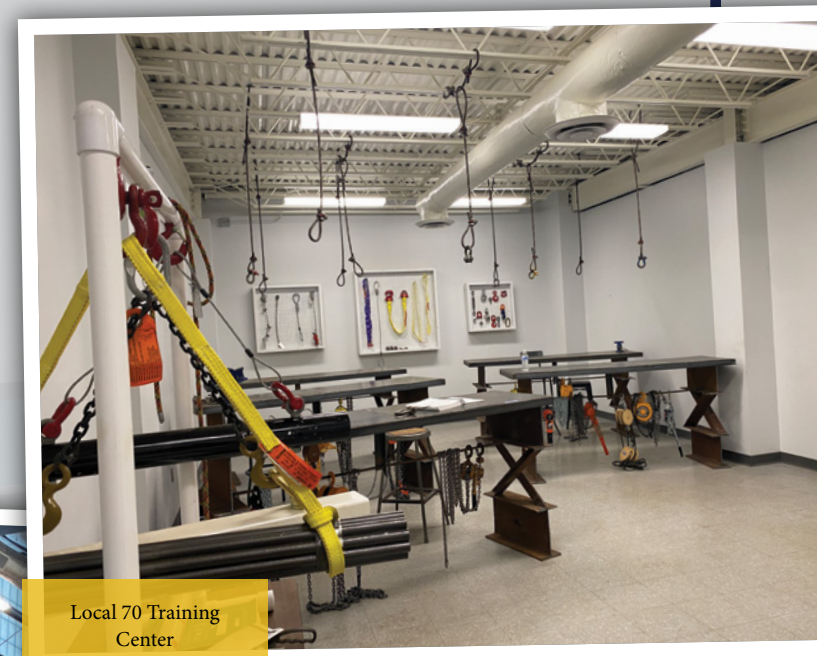
Meanwhile, the program itself has been extended into a four-year apprenticeship offering journeyman certification and an associate degree from Ivy Tech Community College.

Local 70 further boosted its ability to train on its Louisville campus on Crittenden Drive in 2017 with construction of a modern, 4,500-square-foot educational facility. The new, \$1.2-million [Ironworkers Local 70 Training Center](#) added a 3,400-square-foot training area with classrooms, office space and a welding shop, and ultimately offered more hands-on training with a crane. The high-bay, multi-use building allows apprentices to practice assembling a

curtain wall system, skylights, door installation and other architectural and ornamental finish work, as well as working on reinforcing concrete; it is normally set-up for rigging, structural, reinforcing and fencing instruction.

With the addition, the local's training is now administered in two large facilities located next to its union hall. The attached Weld Shop and School Administration Building, which is located in the local's former union hall and training center, houses staff offices and areas for various types of welding, burning and cutting.

The apprenticeship program itself now consists of 208 classroom hours and 1,500 hours of on-the-job training each year while apprentices "earn while they learn."



Local 70 Training Center



Local 70 Training Center



## AN ORIGINAL MEMBER OF ITS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Local 70 was one of the 13 founding affiliates of the [Ironworkers District Council of Southern Ohio and Vicinity](#) when the International Association of Ironworkers chartered the council on November 14, 1951.

Other original members were locals 44, 372 and 522 of Cincinnati; Local 301 of Charleston, West Virginia; Local 689 of Covington, Kentucky; Local 290 of Dayton, Ohio; Local 682 of Louisville; locals 172 and 626 of Columbus, Ohio; locals 22 and 529 of Indianapolis; and Local 439 of Terre Haute, Indiana. (In 2023, the District Council consists of locals 22; 44; 70; 147 of Ft. Wayne, Indiana; 172; 290; 292 of South Bend, Indiana; 769 of Ashland, Kentucky; and 787 of Parkersburg, West Virginia.)

Works (later the Indiana Army Ammunition Plant, which since was deactivated in 1992) for DuPont. But among several jurisdictional disputes in which the union ironworkers became entangled throughout the 1950s, the ironworkers walked off that project for a day beginning June 10 when jobs they claimed were assigned to the carpenters' union. The ironworkers returned to work the next day after the company reached an agreement between the two unions that "cleared up a jurisdictional dispute ... over job assignments," Local 70 [Business Agent James R. Bunch](#) explained in the June 12 *Courier-Journal*.

But the local went on strike against contractors again beginning August 1 of that year in a bid to secure a pay raise and a first-ever fringe-benefit healthcare plan. After six days, the local and the 11 firms of the [Steel Erectors Association of Kentucky](#) agreed on a new, one-year contract that provided a 10-cent hourly raise retroactive to August 1 and another 2-1/2 cents per hour beginning February 1, 1953.

The pact also established the first [Health and Welfare Plan](#) ever granted to a building-

trades union in the southern portion of the United States, into which the employers would contribute 7-1/2 cents per hour worked by each member. The plan covered hospitalization for each member and his dependents and provided surgical, sickness and accident benefits and life insurance.

Subsequent new working agreements negotiated by the local increased its wage scale to \$2.85 per hour for ironworkers and \$2.75 for rodmen for the second half of 1953. Members also continued to receive 7-1/2 cents per hour worked into the welfare fund, which was being operated under the [Ironworkers District Council of Southern Ohio and Vicinity](#), in which Local 70 was an associate local.

During that time, Indiana-Kentucky Electric Corporation began constructing its \$175-million [Clifty Creek Power Plant](#), a 1,300-megawatt, coal-fired power station in Madison, Indiana, in late 1952 with Local 70 ironworkers erecting its steel. The six-generator, steam-electric production facility, which would serve the new billion-dollar uranium-diffusion plant of the Atomic Energy Commission at Piketon, Ohio, would employ dozens of union ironworkers until its first five units were completed in 1955 and its sixth unit was online in 1956.

*(The plant's electricity output helped power the Atomic Energy Commission's facility until the supply agreement ended in 2003. Since then, power produced by Clifty Creek has been supplied to its sponsoring companies, according to their ownership share.)*

However, work on the plant was plagued by strikes launched over jurisdictional disputes between the building trades, including the union ironworkers. In one instance, Local 70 put up picket lines at the plant on September 1, 1954, in a dispute with the boilermakers over the construction of ash hoppers at the powerhouse. Regardless, according to a March 25, 1956, Associated Press article, Clifty Creek,

the world's largest privately owned generating plant at the time, was completed more than two months ahead of schedule.

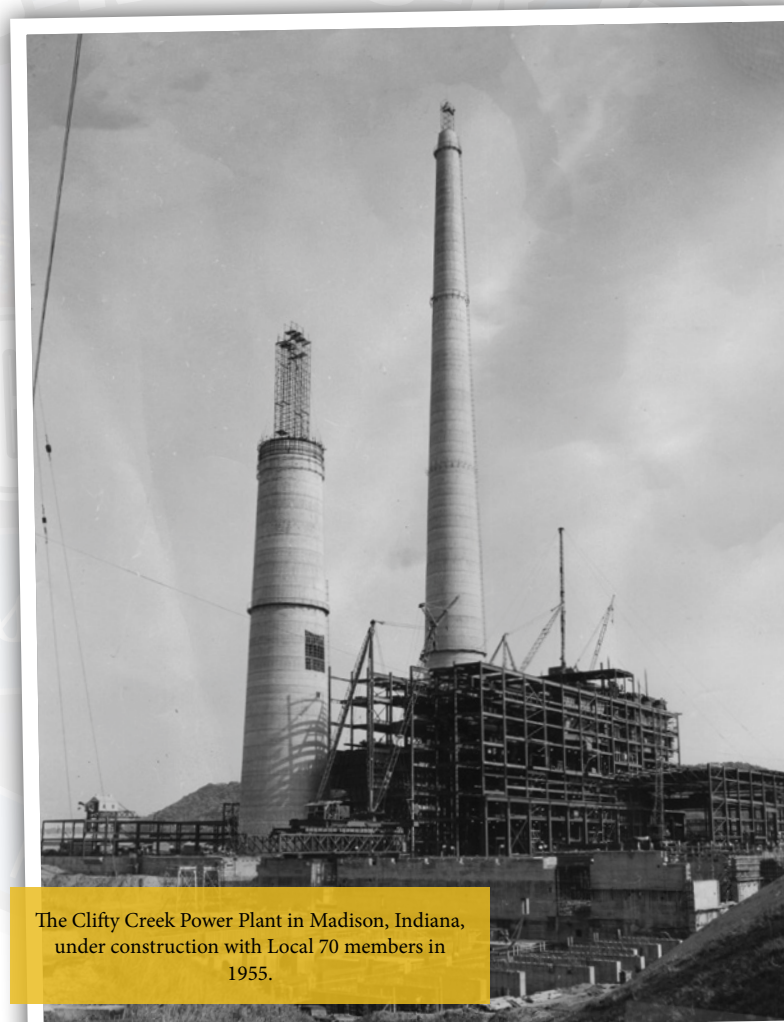
Ford Motors also started building its [Louisville Assembly Plant](#) in 1953 on the south side of the city with Local 70 members, who would help erect the factory for its opening in 1955. The plant famously produced Edsel automobiles from 1957 to 1959 that were considered to be a marked commercial failure for the company. However, over the ensuing decades, Louisville Assembly provided employment to thousands of union ironworkers for expansions, maintenance and changeovers to produce new automobile models.

Another new, one-year contract agreed upon between Local 70 and the Associated Steel Erectors on August 5, 1954, increased base pay for the local's more than 1,000 members to \$3.05 per hour for ironworkers and rodmen. Exactly one year later, another new agreement for two years provided incremental raises totaling 25 cents per hour for the local's members by January 1, 1957, at which time their wage scale would be \$3.30 per hour for the remaining six months of the pact. Employers would also be contributing 10 cents per hour worked by members into the local's health-and-welfare benefit fund.

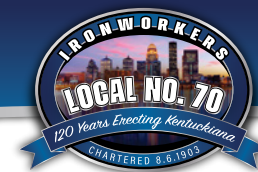
Also by the time that contract was signed in mid-1955, Local 70 had grown to the point at which it needed to hire an assistant business agent to thoroughly and effectively monitor and service its jurisdiction and members. Brother Bunch, the local's current financial secretary-treasurer, was subsequently selected to serve in the new position beginning that year.

Continued wage increases through collectively bargained contracts over the balance of the decade pushed the local's hourly scale for its ironworkers and rodmen to \$3.40 in 1957, \$3.55 in 1958 and \$3.60 in 1959. Their welfare fund also continued to receive 10-cent hourly contributions from employing contractors throughout that period.

But the 1950s was not without its internal issues for Local 70, the most notable of which involved its bookkeeper embezzling \$14,000 from the local between the time he was hired in September 1956 and February 1957. Robert E. Kilkelly received a 2-1/2-year prison sentence on April 1 of that year, the next day's *Courier-Journal* reported, after the judge presiding over his trial learned Kilkelly had lost the money while gambling.



The Clifty Creek Power Plant in Madison, Indiana, under construction with Local 70 members in 1955.



## GAINING A PENSION, STRONG EMPLOYMENT

A construction boom that ushered in the 1960s for “Kentuckiana” (as the Louisville region is known), whose population would continue to grow, provided Local 70 members with a steady source of employment throughout the decade.

Wages for the local’s members also kept trending upward throughout the decade. New working contracts with its contractors raised the hourly pay scale for structural and ornamental ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen to \$3.85 in 1960 and \$4 in 1961.

That year, in addition to earning 10 cents per hour for members’ healthcare insurance, the local gained a new **Pension Plan** for members’ retirements as another fringe benefit. As part

of their collectively bargained agreement, the local’s employers would contribute an additional 10 cents per hour worked toward the local’s pension.

Among the abundant work employing Local 70 members at that time was construction beginning in the spring of 1961 of a six-lane, single-deck cantilever bridge that would carry Interstate 65 across the Ohio River between Louisville and Jeffersonville. The \$10-million, 2,498-foot-long bridge was completed in late 1963, but it was not named until after U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, after which it was christened the **John F. Kennedy Memorial Bridge**.

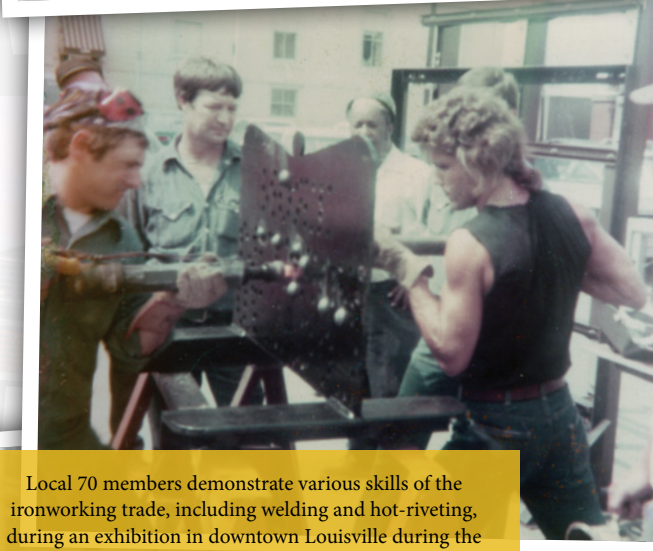
Sadly, the prosperous early years of the decade were marred when Local 70 **President Kenneth Voigt** was killed in late May 1962 in a single-car accident. Brother Voigt, who was

52 years old at the time and had been reported missing since May 31, was found in his car on June 21 when it was pulled from the White River at Hazleton, Indiana.

Just a couple of weeks later on July 1, the local went out on strike for five days before settling on a new, three-year contract with the eight-firm Associated Steel Erectors of Kentucky on July 6. The pact gave the local’s 700 journeyman members raises totaling 35 cents per hour for wages, which took their scale to \$4.35 on July 1, 1964, for the remaining year, and it also established the local’s pension fund with an initial 10-cent-per-hour contribution from contractors, in addition to an increased 15 cents paid into the health-and-welfare fund.

Meanwhile, strong employment persisted throughout the first half of the decade, with members constructing an expansion at the **Philip Morris** cigarette plant in Louisville in 1963 and a new facility for **Girdler Catalysts** on Crittenden Drive in 1964, among several other sizable projects. The local’s ironworkers also earned overtime on shutdowns for maintenance and upgrades at the Ford and GE plants in 1964 as the local scrambled for manpower to help handle all the work in its jurisdiction (which was an issue in the jurisdictions of other International Association locals around the country at the time as well).

Key jobs that continued to provide abundant manhours for Local 70 during the second half of the 1960s included construction of the new, 4-million-square-foot **Ford Kentucky Truck Plant** in Louisville that opened in 1969; a new, modern, 10-story addition to the State Office Building in Frankfort that was completed in 1967; and a 19-story office and classroom tower for the **University of Kentucky** in Lexington. What’s more, scores of union ironworkers were employed on the construction of and additions to multiple public grade schools throughout Louisville and Jefferson County school districts during that time.

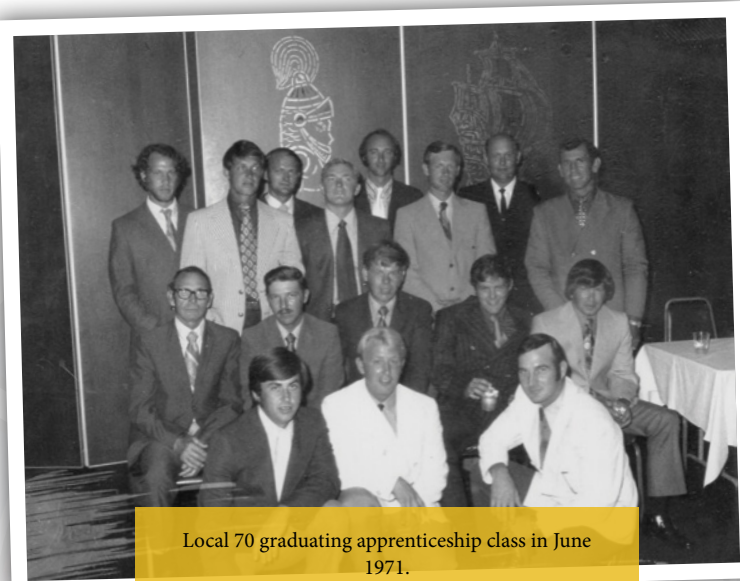


Local 70 members demonstrate various skills of the ironworking trade, including welding and hot-riveting, during an exhibition in downtown Louisville during the early 1970s.



Local 70 retirees (standing, beginning second from left to right) Joe H. Roney, James T. Egbert, Charles “Hog Head” Brown, W. E. “Hap” Adams, Oscar P. McClure, Emmett C. Fagan and Edward J. Lietz receive the first check payments to the local from the Southern Ohio and Vicinity District Council Pension Fund in 1963 from Local 70 officers Financial Secretary/Treasurer James Bunch (standing, far left) and (seated, left to right) Business Agent William Cravens, President Sam Ezelle and Recording Secretary James Daly. The checks were for \$25, which would be paid monthly for life to each recipient, none of whom had contributed to the fund since each was already retired when the local joined the pension fund in 1962.





Local 70 graduating apprenticeship class in June 1971.

After having received a two-year contract in 1966 that increased its wage scale to \$5.20 per hour its health-and-welfare and pension contributions to 20 and 25 cents per hour, respectively, Local 70 went on strike for four weeks beginning June 1, 1968, to gain a \$1-per-hour yearly raise from the Associated Steel Erectors in a new agreement. The ironworkers returned to their jobs after the two parties settled on a two-year contract on June 27 that provided a \$1.60-per-hour total increase in wages and fringe benefits over two years, which set the local's scale at \$6.55 per hour beginning November 1, 1969. The agreement also boosted hourly contractor contributions to the health-and-welfare fund to 25 cents and 45 cents to the pension fund.

## RAISING UP TOWERS, FREEWAYS, BENEFITS

Another strike gained Local 70 a new, 3-year contract with the Associated Steel Erectors and its 26 member contractors after about 165 of the local's roughly 560 members stayed off jobs from June 1 through June 12 while asking for a total hourly pay increase of \$4.50 per hour. The 11-day action resulted in an agreement that provided raises in hourly

## LOCAL 70 MADE MOVING EFFORT FOR SICK CHILDREN

While Local 70 was moving its headquarters and offices from 1273 South Shelby Street into its new union hall at 2441 Crittenden Drive in Louisville in October 1975, the local's officers and members also took time to move the occupants of the **Jewish Home for Convalescent Children** into their new location. One Saturday morning during the local's transfer, more than 75 of its member ironworkers transported all the furniture and most of the children from the old Jewish Home to the new **Home of the Innocents** on East Chestnut Street in the city.

Ironworker **Trainee Coordinator Mike Mudd** and **Apprenticeship Coordinator Earl Haley Jr.** led the operation, which was described in the March 1976 issue of *The Ironworker*: "Such a move could have been lengthy and disruptive to the little lives of these children, but it wasn't. ... In a mere two hours, all of the home's furnishings were removed from the two-story building on South First Street and onto flatted trucks and pickups."

Local 70 members also moved most of the children, many of whom were new-born infants, to their new home. While three children had to be transported to their new quarters by ambulance, the ironworkers moved about 15 others in station wagons borrowed from the Red Cross.

The 65-year-old Jewish Home for Convalescent Children had "a long history of service to sick children from around Kentucky," according to an article in the October 31, 1975, *Courier-Journal* newspaper, and it was the only facility in the state to provide "round-the-clock convalescent care for children."

wages and fringe benefits totaling \$3.15, which brought the local's base scale to \$9.15 an hour plus 55 cents per hour total for pensions and healthcare. During the strike, the rest of the local's members continued to work for contractors not belonging to the association.

The strike's biggest impact was made during its last two days, an article in the June 12 *Courier-Journal* reported, "when the ironworkers set up picket lines at more than 30 construction

sites in the Louisville area." According to the newspaper, "Work at those sites stopped when members of a dozen or more non-striking crafts declined to cross picket lines."

Work on the two tallest buildings in Kentucky highlighted the multitude of projects that kept Local 70 members fully employed during the initial years of the 1970s. First, the union ironworkers erected the 29-story **Citizens Fidelity Plaza** (now 500 West Jefferson and previously PNC Plaza) as the headquarters for Citizens Fidelity Bank and Trust Company on West Jefferson Street in downtown Louisville for its opening in 1971, when it became the state's tallest building.

That distinction was lost the very next year after Local 70 members put up the 40-story **First National Tower** (now PNC Tower)

that opened in 1972 on South Fifth Street in the city's downtown area. The 512-foot-tall skyscraper, constructed by union ironworkers with steel columns on concrete piles of caissons, would remain the tallest building in the state until 1993.

With Kentucky seemingly reaching for the sky, Local 70 members put up another signature high-rise in downtown Lexington from 1973 to 1979 with construction of the 22-floor **Kincaid Tower**. After completion, the \$20-million building on Vine Street would be the tallest in central Kentucky for the next eight years.

Most of the 620 members of Local 70 were working despite its strike against the Associated Steel Erectors that began June 1, 1974, as they had letters from their independent employers



Local 709 officers (back row, left to right) President Earl Haley Jr., Business Agent John L. Bruce and Financial Secretary/Treasurer William Cravens; and longtime member and Training Coordinator Ted Gibson (seated, far right) celebrate the local's 70th anniversary in 1973.

## MEMBERS WERE EXTRAS IN \$6-MILLION-MAN FLICK

The major action-adventure motion picture “Steel” released in 1979 starred Lee Majors, Jennifer O’Neill, Art Carney, George Kennedy – and **Local 70 ironworkers**. Filmed during the actual construction of the 22-story Kincaid Towers in Lexington, the movie portrayed everyday working conditions for union ironworkers and featured the local’s members in backgrounds throughout the picture and even alongside Majors, who also famously played the title character in the 1970s hit TV series “The Six Million Dollar Man.”

The movie opens with contractor “Big Lew Cassidy” (played by Kennedy) erecting the tallest building in the history of Kentucky, the fictional Hayes Plaza Building, but just before his dream high-rise is completed, Cassidy falls from a beam while trying to save a young worker. In his memory, his daughter, Cass (played by O’Neill) vows to complete the building herself, although the remaining nine floors must be raised in three weeks or Cassco Construction will default on bank loans.

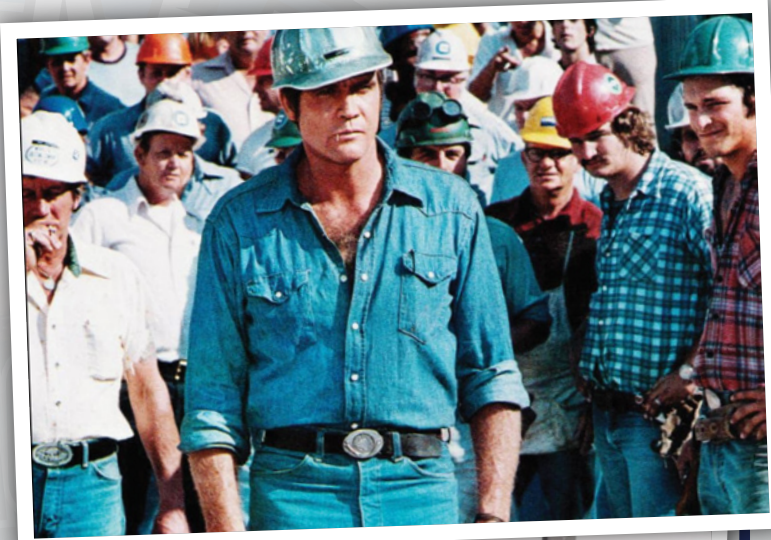
Old friend “Pignose” Moran (played by Carney), who is the business agent for the local union, tells Cass that the building will never be finished unless she hires ironworker Mike Catton (played by Majors). As the story continues, the building rises despite the intrusions of a greedy banker who hopes for a default, and the deadline is met when the traditional final steel-beam “topping out” ceremony takes place with the American flag flying above the iron skeleton of the building.

At least one ironworker from Local 70 worked with the film crew throughout the filming of the movie as a technical advisor. “We couldn’t have done it without them,” production associate William Bartman said at the time. “While we were filming, an ironworker who was with us would say, ‘That isn’t the way we do that.’ ‘He wouldn’t say it that way.’ We tried to tell a story and be as accurate as possible.”

Union ironworkers were also photographic doubles for Majors and the other actors. As part of their acting “jobs,” ironworkers had their hair cut and work clothes designed to match their doubles.

“We spent a lot of time talking with ironworkers,” producer William Panzer also stated. “They are the heroes of the story.”

Because the construction site could only be used at irregular hours (after 4 p.m. and on weekends), three other sets were built: a three-story wood skeleton erected on the roof of the 22-story University of Kentucky administration building; a replica just 13 feet off the ground in the university’s stadium; and a studio set.



“Work went slowly during the 43-day-long shooting schedule,” according to an article in the August 1980 issue of *The Ironworker*. “It took over an hour every morning just to get the equipment up 22 stories using cranes and baskets. The crew couldn’t move very quickly because of their natural fear of heights. Even the director had to walk up 26 stories every time he wanted to talk to the cast and crew.”

But the article also noted the movie’s positive impact on the trade:

*“Angles of the naked iron, the rusted beams against the deep blue sky and the contrast between Lee Majors against the erect steel beams gives the viewers a better appreciation of the art of ironworking.”*

saying they would retroactively receive wage increases negotiated in a new, one-year contract settled more than a week later. That pact and another one-year contract agreed upon the following year for June 1, 1975, took the local’s wage scale to \$9.95 per hour through May 31, 1976, at which time members were also receiving an additional 65 cents per hour for health and welfare and 70 cents per hour for pension benefits.

During that time, in 1975 Local 70 moved into a new union hall at **2441 Crittenden Drive**, where it would reside for the next 43 years, and its ironworkers also started erecting the new, \$20-million **Kentucky International Convention Center** in Louisville. The 400,000-square-foot, multi-use facility would go on to host a range of large events after it opened in 1977.

Elsewhere, other large projects that employed Local 70 members throughout the mid- and late-1970s included reconstruction of the **Interstate-65** highway from Louisville to Elizabethtown that continued into the 1980s. Members during that time also built the **Gene Snyder Freeway**, the Kentucky stretch of the Interstate-265 highway that partially encircled the Louisville metropolitan area after it was fully completed in 1987.

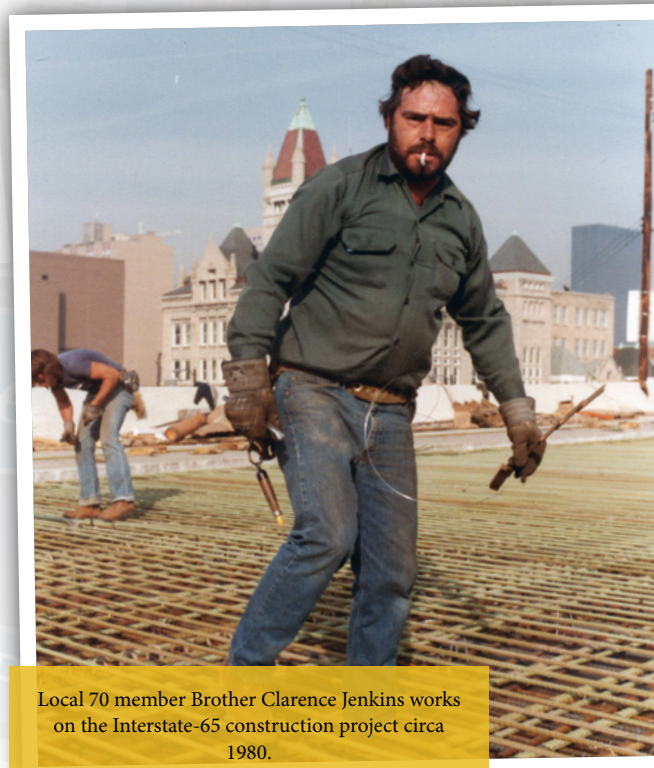
The local approached the end of the decade with a new, two-year contract with the Ironworkers Employers Association that went into effect June 1, 1977. During the life of the agreement until it expired on May 31, 1979, the local’s wage scale increased to \$11.45 per hour and fringe benefits were raised to 90 cents per hour for health and welfare, \$1.05 per hour for pensions and 10 cents per hour for a **Retirement Annuity Fund** that had been negotiated earlier in the decade.

Perhaps one of the most significant events for Local 70 during the 1970s, however, was the start of construction of the **Marble Hill Nuclear Power Station** in August 1977 in

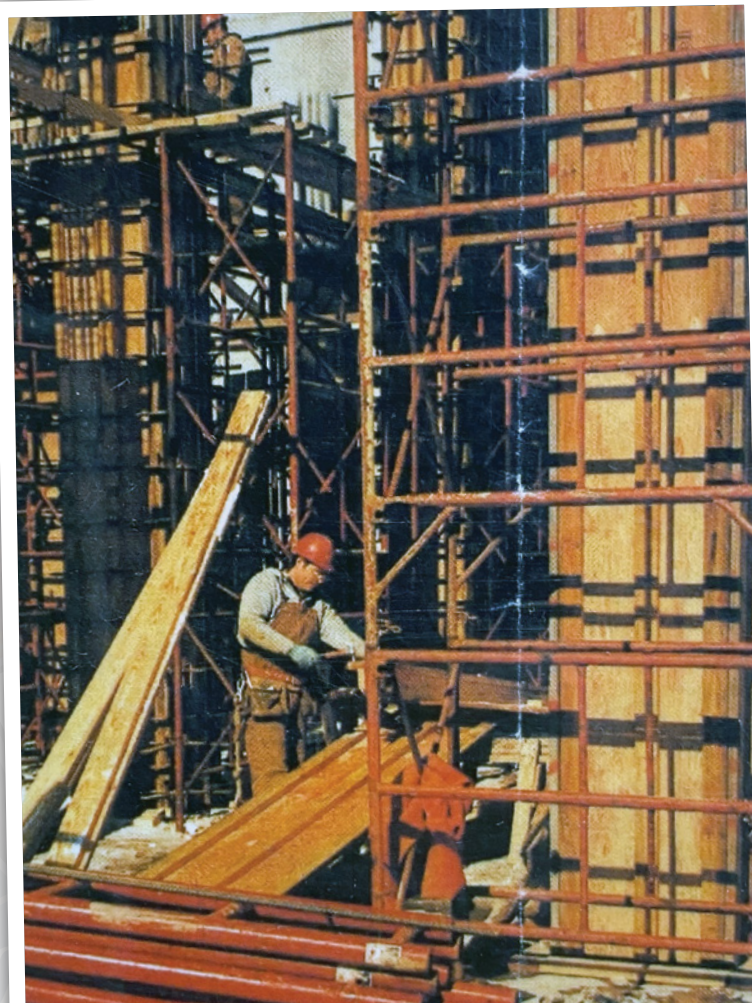
Saluda Township, Jefferson County, Indiana. Over the next seven years, during which the planned \$4.3-billion plant was the largest construction project in the state, the project employed more than 1,600 building-trades craftspeople, including hundreds of union ironworkers – until the Public Service Company of Indiana (now Duke Energy) abandoned work on the half-finished facility in 1984 after spending \$2.5 billion on its construction up to that point. (According to a January 17, 1984, *New York Times* article, the work on Marble Hill was stopped because of an “overwhelming increase in costs and a lack of money to finish construction.”)

## FACING ADVERSITY IN SECOND HALF OF 1980s

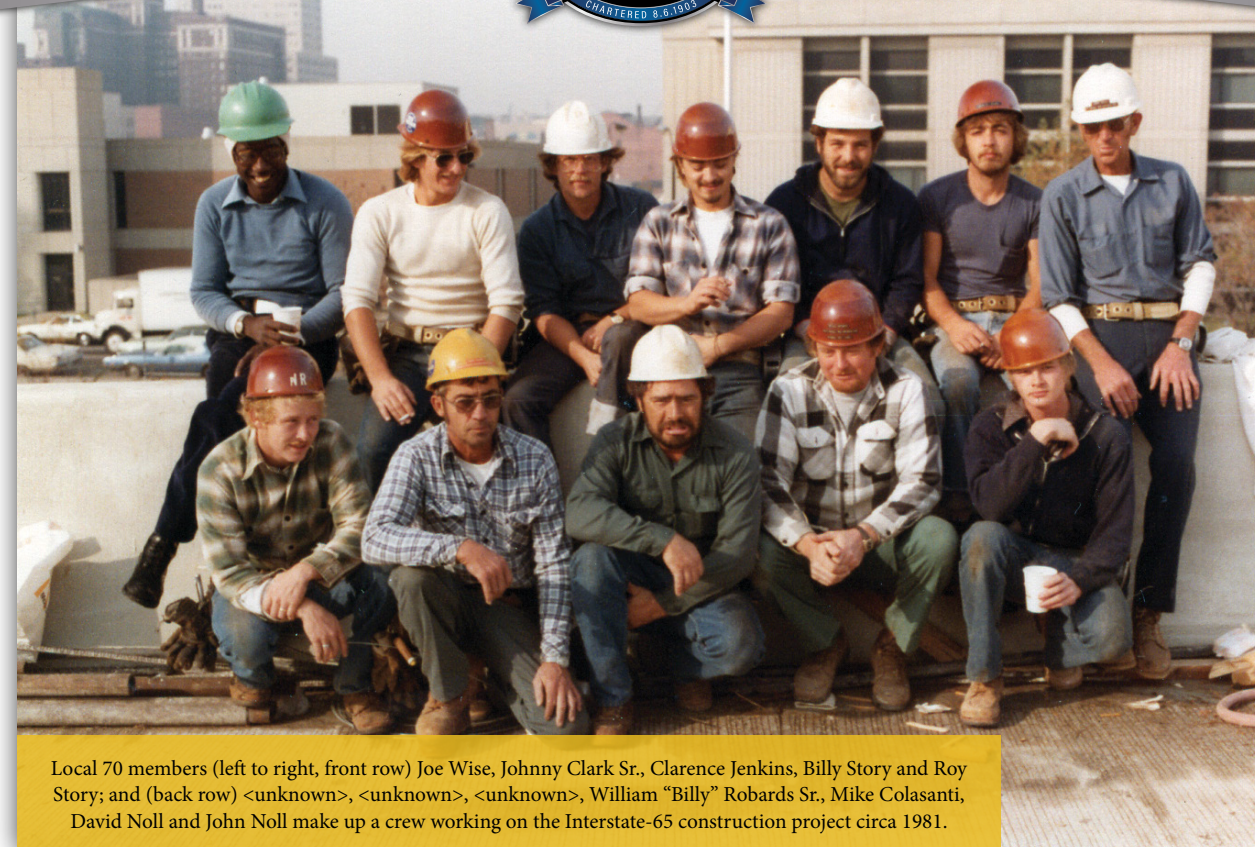
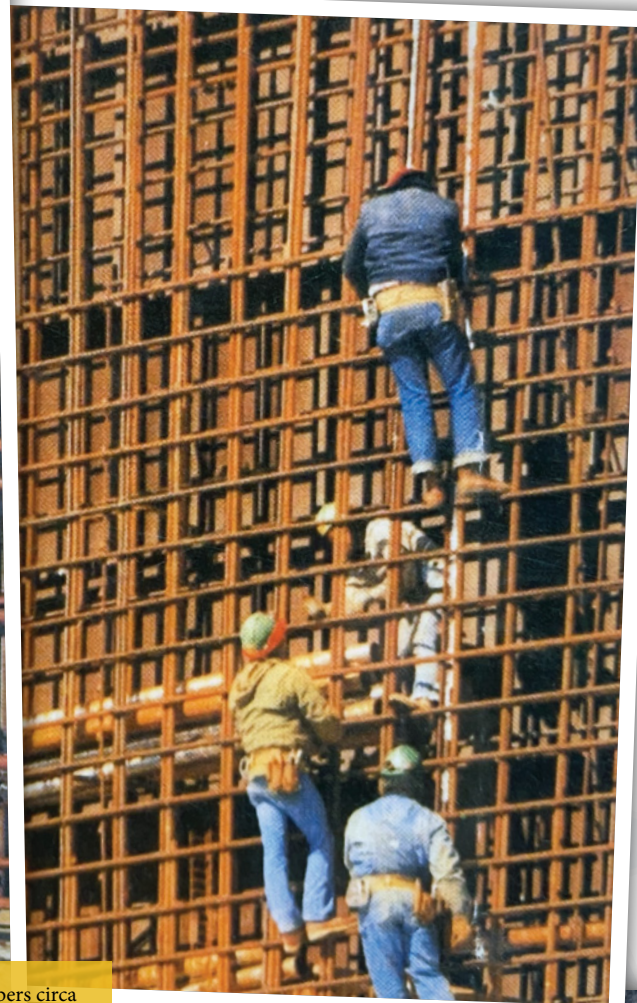
Local 70 entered the 1980s under a three-year working agreement with the Iron Workers Employers Association that went into effect on June 1, 1979, and its members gainfully employed on jobs such as the Marble Hill



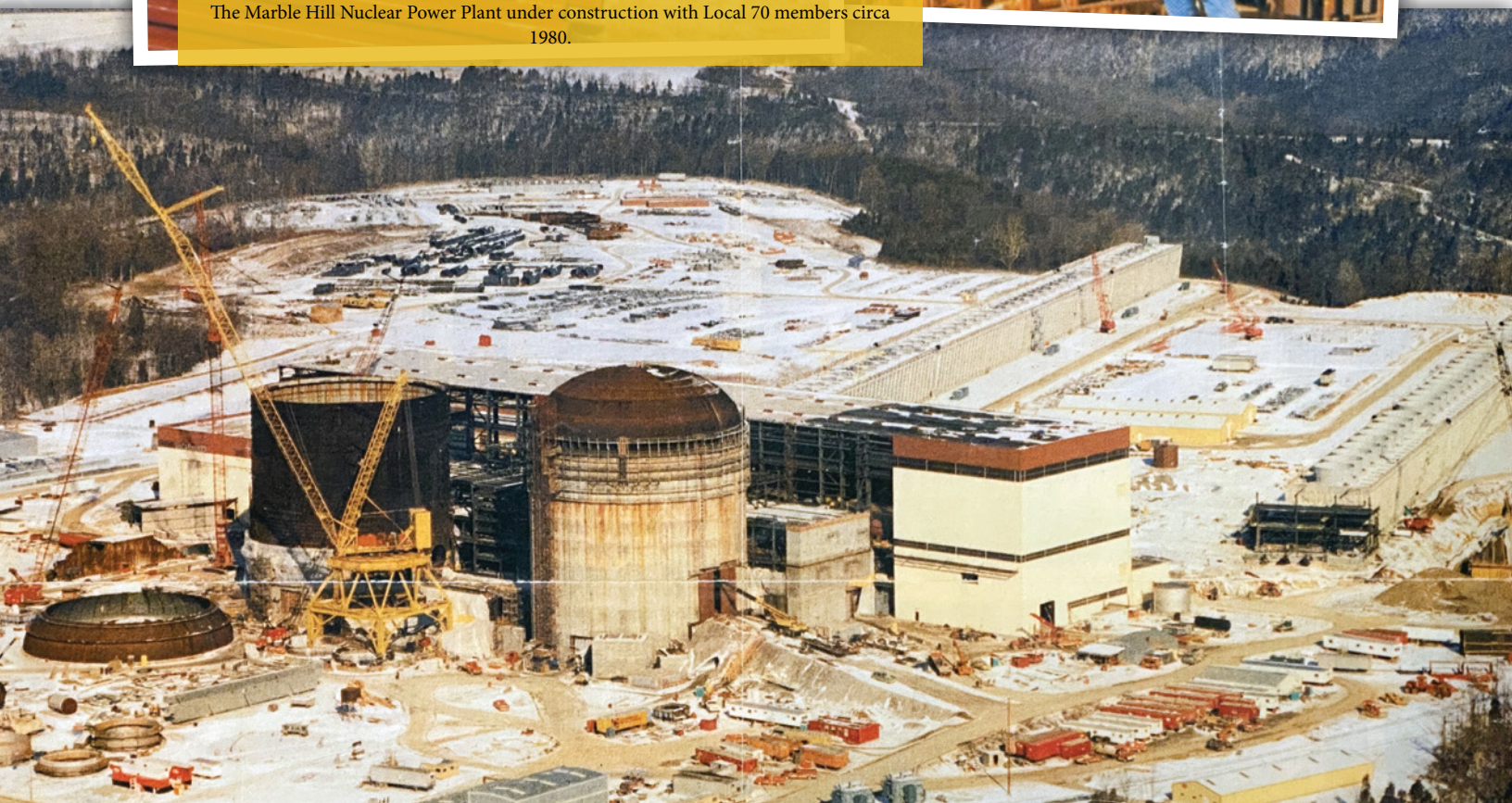
Local 70 member Brother Clarence Jenkins works on the Interstate-65 construction project circa 1980.



The Marble Hill Nuclear Power Plant under construction with Local 70 members circa 1980.



Local 70 members (left to right, front row) Joe Wise, Johnny Clark Sr., Clarence Jenkins, Billy Story and Roy Story; and (back row) <unknown>, <unknown>, <unknown>, William "Billy" Robards Sr., Mike Colasanti, David Noll and John Noll make up a crew working on the Interstate-65 construction project circa 1981.



nuclear generating plant and multiple highway projects. With those jobs and others going when the contract expired on May 31, 1982, journeyman members by that time were being paid \$13.45 per hour while also receiving \$1 into their health-and-welfare fund, \$1.85 per hour into their pension fund, \$1 per hour into their annuity fund and 10 cents per hour into a Local 70 **Apprenticeship Educational Fund**.

Construction had also begun in January 1980 on the \$130-million **Louisville Galleria** with union ironworkers working on the "attempt to revitalize the once bustling heart of the city," as an article in that year's October 25 *Courier-Journal* described the development. When it was completed in September 1982, the Galleria featured more than 1.4 million square feet of office space and was anchored by two 27-story glass-and-steel office buildings and a three-level retail mall between the towers. *(In 2004, the retail portion of the struggling Galleria would go through a \$75-million renovation featuring a collection of bars, restaurants and stores that is now Fourth Street Live!)*

Among other high-profile projects that Local 70 members helped erect was the **Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts** in Louisville in 1982 and 1983, which was "intended to make Louisville one of the nation's top regional art centers," as a February 6, 1983, United Press International article conveyed. When it opened that year as home to the Kentucky Opera, Louisville Ballet and the Louisville Orchestra, the long-delayed, \$33-million facility was the largest state-funded arts center in the nation.

Meanwhile, by 1983, working agreements gained by the local during that time increased its base wage to \$14.25 per hour in base wages and total additional fringe-benefit payments to \$4.72 per hour.

But the permanent halt to construction of the Marble Hill Nuclear Power Plant in 1984 and increased non-union competition in its jurisdiction ushered in a period of stagnant employment for the local's members that would persist throughout the remainder of the decade as work in the region also slowed dramatically.

The **Local 70 Retirees Club** was started in 1985, with retiree **Brother Frank Metsker** as the prime organizer behind the group.

As such, the declaration by **Business Agent Charles R. Crabb** during the local's regular membership meeting on August 28, 1984, that "employment looks bad" would be often repeated at meetings over the ensuing years.

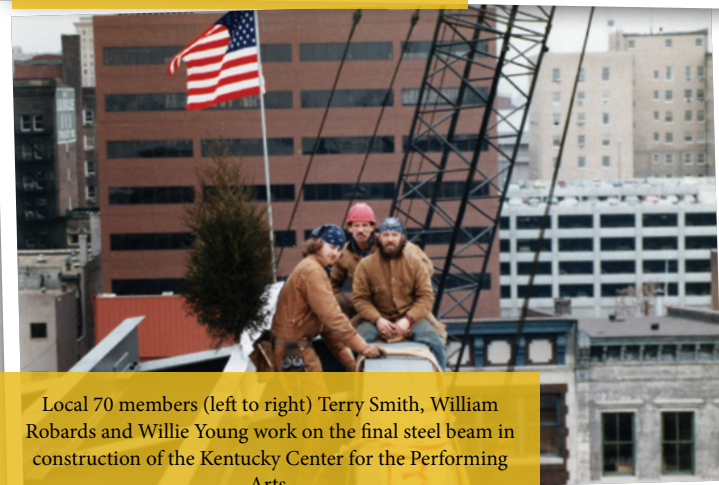
In the throes of those challenging times, Local 70 was unable to negotiate for a pay increase for the first year of a new, three-year working contract in May 1984. "A scarcity of large construction jobs and a 20 percent unemployment rate in the membership have persuaded Ironworkers Union Local 70 to accept a year's wage freeze," the May 25 *Courier-Journal* announced when reporting on the agreement. Raises in the second and third years of the contract were subject to negotiation, and the local also agreed to work overtime for time-and-a-half pay rather than double time Monday through Friday.

What's more, Local 70 was one of 21 Louisville Building and Construction Trades Council locals that on June 21, 1984, signed what amounted to a 19-year **no-strike agreement** for projects in the city's enterprise zone. According to an article in the next day's *Courier-Journal*, "Under the pact, the unions agree not to strike those contractors certified by the city for special tax breaks and regulatory relief in the zone." In return, the newspaper reported, "The city agrees in effect to certify only companies that will submit disputes to arbitration and not lock out the unions."

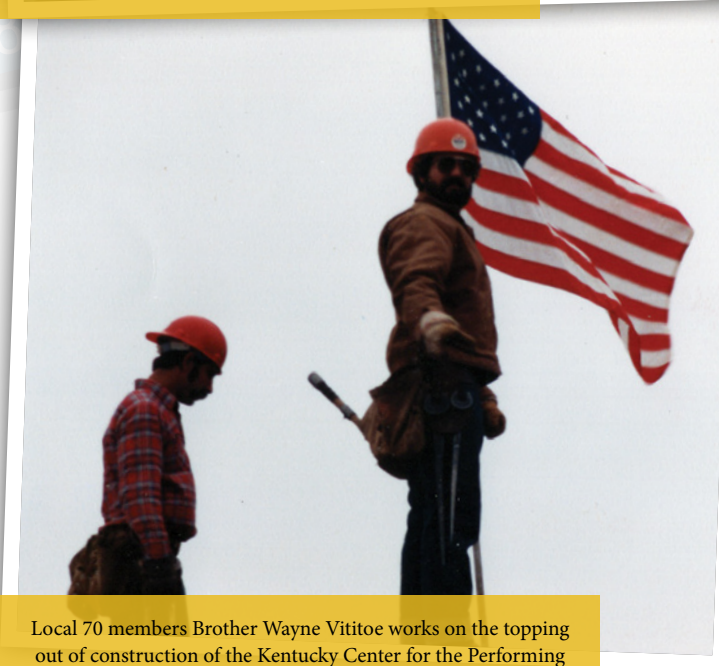
The agreement was set up to last for the life of the enterprise zone, which started a 20-year run a year earlier to attract businesses and jobs to an economically depressed area just west and south of downtown. "Both sides hope that by eliminating threats of union-sanctioned work



Local 70 members lay the final steel beam to "top out" construction of the new Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville in 1983.



Local 70 members (left to right) Terry Smith, William Robards and Willie Young work on the final steel beam in construction of the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts.



Local 70 members Brother Wayne Vititoe works on the topping out of construction of the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts.

stoppages during construction of projects," the newspaper reported, "it will make the 6.72-square-mile area more attractive to businesses and result in more jobs."

Two years later, however, Brother Bruce, who by then had been elevated to business manager of the local, was still obliged to announce during its August 11, 1986, meeting, "Work is bad," and then report, "A non-union contractor contacted the union hall about hiring men for a job downtown. He stated that, at the time, he was having a hard time manning the job."

Projects that did supply Local 70 with some measure of regular employment included major reconstruction of the vintage Interstate-264 **Watterson Expressway** beginning in 1985. Over the remainder of the 1980s and through to 1995, union ironworkers helped reconstruct and rebuild dozens of bridges and the majority of the interchanges on the partial highway loop around Louisville.

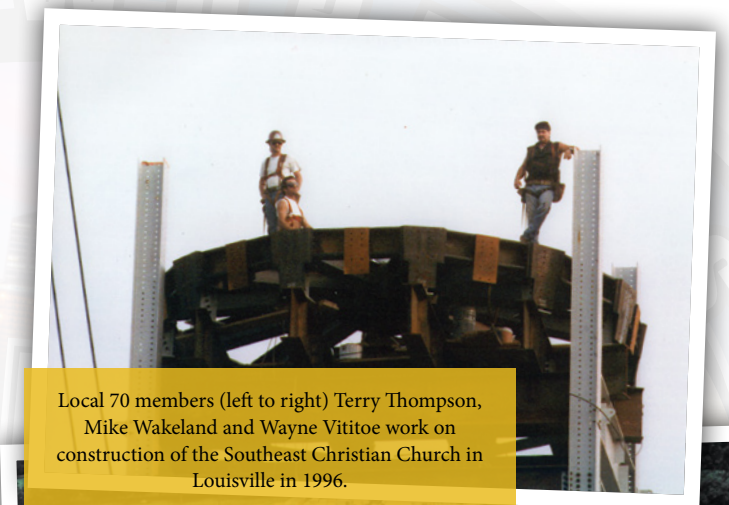
## MAKING STAND AGAINST THE NON-UNION SECTOR

*"Even in difficult situations, there has been a measure of achievement. I'm referring specifically to the courage shown by our Ironworker brothers of Local 70 in Louisville, Kentucky. Over the past year, they hung tough and refused the temptations of work on a non-union project being put up by a Japanese construction firm for the automaker Toyota. It's a big job and it means a lot of work in Kentucky. But our Local 70 brothers showed that the principles upon which our International Association – indeed, the American trade union movement – is based are worth fighting for. Local 70 would rather walk and walk proud; and for that we thank them."*

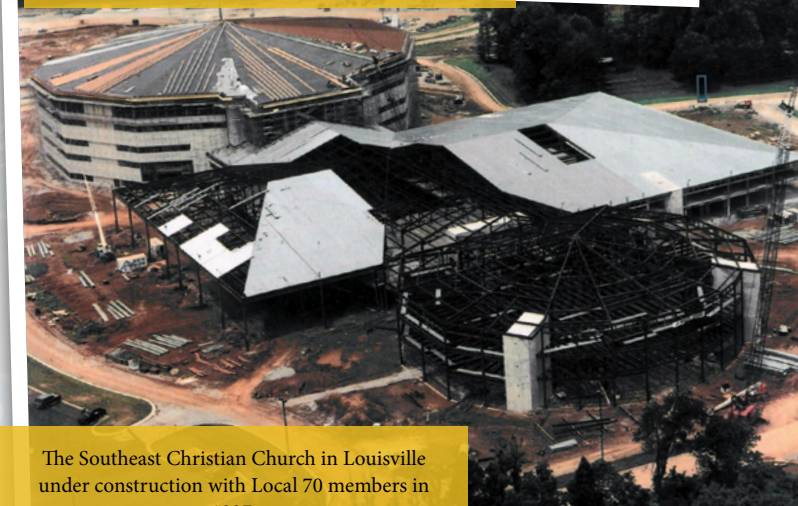
International Association General President Juel D. Drake in an essay in the December 1986 issue of *The Ironworker*, the union's renamed

member magazine, celebrated Local 70's new project agreement with Toyota that switched construction of the company's new automobile assembly plant in Georgetown, Kentucky, from open shop to union-hall hiring. During a long-running dispute with the Ohbayashi Corporation, the Japanese construction firm that was overseeing the Toyota project, the ironworkers and other trades successfully mounted a 12-month nationwide campaign protesting the firm's hiring policy, with mass demonstrations in Washington and New York as well as Kentucky.

Other actions taken by the ironworkers and other unions to win the union-friendly project agreement for the \$800-million **Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky**,



Local 70 members (left to right) Terry Thompson, Mike Wakeland and Wayne Vititoe work on construction of the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville in 1996.



The Southeast Christian Church in Louisville under construction with Local 70 members in 1997.



which became effective December 1, 1986, included a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of a more than \$300-million Kentucky subsidy for the Japanese auto manufacturer; environmental challenges to potential toxic discharges from the plant; and lobbying efforts against an additional \$61-million property tax break for Toyota.

Local 70 specifically met with Ohbayashi agents on seven occasions, while members led an effort to monitor the jobsite, appearing on unannounced dates and times to take video and pictures, record license numbers and make visual identification of individuals entering and leaving the project. "During all of these visits, it was the union members who, while keeping their composure and pride intact, took the abuse and name-calling from non-union employees on this job," Business Manager Bruce told officers from locals throughout the International Association in a report following the signing of the agreement. "It was the rank-and-file who were in the trenches and were there each time we called on them. It made me proud to represent Local Union 70."

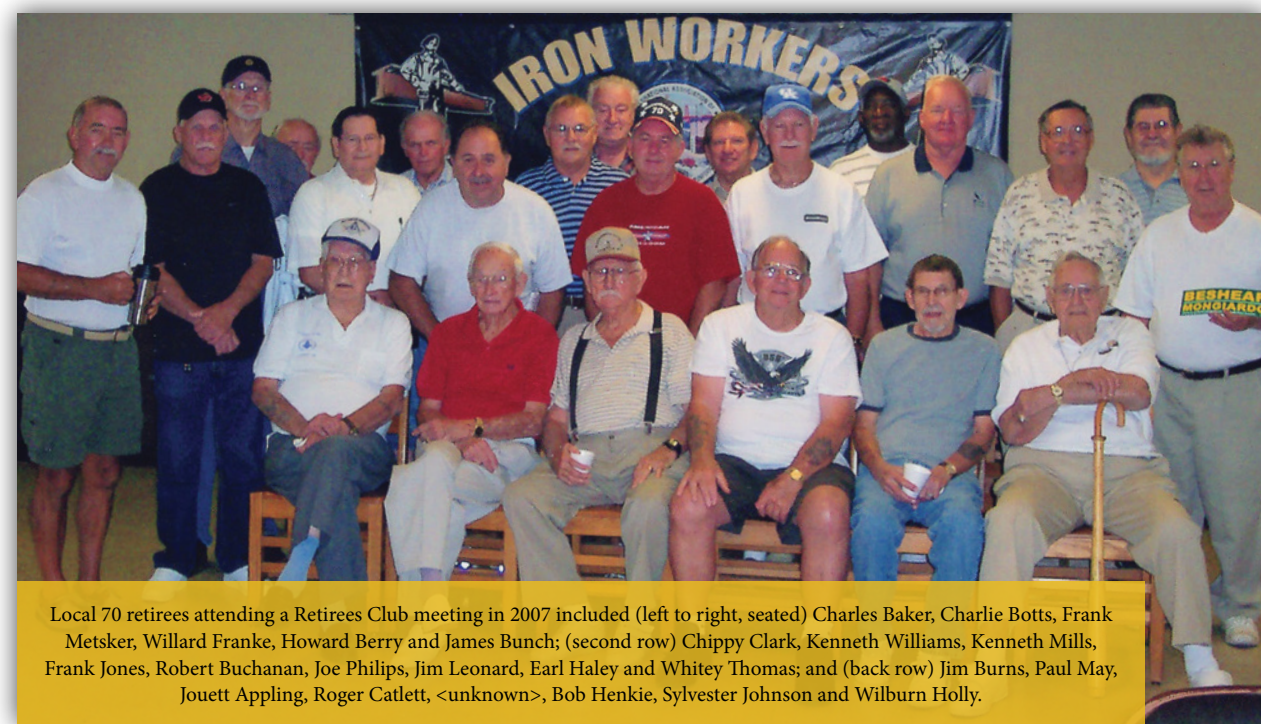
During a news conference after A.F.L. Building Trades Department and Ohbayashi officials signed the union-hiring accord, a company spokesman said, "The plus factor for management will be the greater efficiency, quality and productivity it anticipates from the skills of union building-trades workers." Also under the agreement, Kentucky residents would be given priority in the union hiring-hall referrals.

With union ironworkers in place, Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky was completed in 1988 as the company's largest vehicle-manufacturing facility in the world. After ground was broken for the plant in May 1986, it produced its first Camry automobile in May 1988.

Elsewhere, on July 22, 1986, Local 70, Millwrights Local No. 2209, Pipefitters Local No. 522 and Plumbers Local No. 107 set up pickets at GE Appliance Park to protest the use of non-union contractors on maintenance and upgrade projects there. "The use of non-union contractors who once were confined to smaller jobs by big companies such as GE is a



Local 70 member Brother Vernal Vincent (center) receives his 50-year United Association membership award during a dinner presentation in 1998 while he is flanked by Local 70 officers (left to right) Business Manager Denver Skaggs, Business Representative Edward Cralle and President Frank Jones Jr. and Local 70 apprentice instructor Brother Ted Gibson.



Local 70 retirees attending a Retirees Club meeting in 2007 included (left to right, seated) Charles Baker, Charlie Botts, Frank Metsker, Willard Franke, Howard Berry and James Bunch; (second row) Chippy Clark, Kenneth Williams, Kenneth Mills, Frank Jones, Robert Buchanan, Joe Philips, Jim Leonard, Earl Haley and Whitey Thomas; and (back row) Jim Burns, Paul May, Jouett Appling, Roger Catlett, <unknown>, Bob Henkie, Sylvester Johnson and Wilburn Holly.

serious problem," Greater Louisville Building and Construction Trades Council Business Manager James Daly said in a July 23 article in the *Courier-Journal* reporting on the pickets. "Unions have seen the number of contractors who use union employees shrink drastically in the past few years."

The pickets were removed on July 24 after GE sued the unions in U.S. District Court and charged them with unfair labor practices, according to the July 26 *Courier-Journal*.

But after a one-year contract with the Employers Association that was effective June 1, 1987, expired on May 31, 1988, Local 70 and the association signed an "innovative" six-year agreement that linked wages to those earned by other union locals in the region," as a May 28, 1988, *Courier-Journal* described it. In an effort to help union contractors secure more work, the agreement, which was signed May 26 and went into effect June 1, 1988, set wages and benefits for about 460 active members of the local at the average the 12 other ironworkers locals that made up the union's District Council of Southern Ohio and Vicinity.

Iron Workers Employers Association President Tyrone Mitchell told the newspaper that the pact would give association members "a tremendous advantage" in bidding on contracts because it would "permit them a view of labor costs '18 months down the road.'" Local 70 Business Agent Crabb further stated the agreement would "save members the trouble and uncertainty of negotiating a contract every year."

Jerry Hammond, executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, said in the article that "hard times in the building trades in recent years have led to shorter contracts as builders needed to change costs to compete." But, as the newspaper reported, President Mitchell said the longer contract would be an improvement, stating, "We were spending all of our time fussing and hollering every year. It got to be ridiculous."

At that time, Local 70 had 562 members, 100 of whom were retired pensioners and 25 of whom were active members but unemployed, although most had been working until recently and were expected to be back on jobsites.



The contract immediately boosted Local 70 wages 25 cents per hour, pension contributions 25 cents, annuity contributions 20 cents and health-and-welfare contributions 5 cents per hour. Ultimately, by the time the agreement expired on May 31, 1994, the local's base wage scale was \$16.59 per hour, and contractors were making total fringe-benefits contributions of \$7.95 per hour worked by each Local 70 member.



Local 70 members picket the construction site of the Muhammad Ali Center museum and cultural center in Louisville in 2005 to protest the use of non-union contractor Lykins Reinforcing on the project. The following year, the Ironworkers Southern Ohio and Vicinity District Council initiated a campaign against Lykins after organizers' conversations with workers for the company revealed Lykins subjected its employees to workplace injustices such as poor working conditions, lack of insurance, substandard wages and harassment and intimidation. After nearly two years of delegations, rallies and jobsite actions, Lykins signed an agreement with the District Council in September 2008.



## EFFORTS PAY OFF WITH INCREASED EMPLOYMENT

Local 70 continued its defense against the non-union construction sector into the 1990s, taking the fight to its open-shop nemeses on many occasions. In one prime example of its resolve to protect its jurisdiction, on September 27, 1991, the local withdrew \$350,000 it had invested with a Capital Holding Corporation subsidiary while protesting hiring policies at two major construction projects backed by the company.

The ironworkers and several other union building-trades locals were protesting contractors for hiring non-union workers and paying them less than union-scale wages on construction of the 35-story Capital Holding Center and One Commonwealth Plaza in Louisville. In a statement presented to the company, Brother Crabb, who was then Local 70's business manager, said, "We will not allow our union members' deferred earnings to be invested in a corporation which has denied our members job opportunities."

After the local's six-year working contract expired, it agreed to a two-year deal with the Iron Workers Employers Association that went into effect on June 1, 1994, and raised the local's wage scale to \$18.16 per hour and total fringe-benefit contributions to \$8.70 per hour before it expired on May 31, 1996. Another two-year agreement that followed provided base wages before it ended on May 31, 1998, at \$19.31 per hour and hourly contributions for health-and-welfare at \$2.60, for pensions at \$3.70, for the annuity at \$2.70 and for training at 22 cents.

As employment picked up for the local's members into the second half of the final year of the decade, the century and the millennium, among a growing number of significant construction jobs on which they worked was the new **Cardinal Stadium** (now L&N Federal



Local 70 members (left to right) Jimmy Peyton, Shawn Clark, Bobby Cowles, Vicki Garrett, John Joseph, James Williams, (Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson) and Blair Cissell attend the Louisville St. Patrick's Day Parade in 2008.

Credit Union Stadium) for the University of Louisville from June 1996 until it opened in September 1998. With an initial seating capacity of 42,000 – which has since been increased to 60,000 – the stadium serves as the home of the school's football program.

During that time, Local 70 members were also kept busy on projects at the Ford Motor Louisville Assembly Plant and on construction of the new **Jefferson County Judicial Center** at Seventh and Jefferson streets in Louisville beginning in May 1997. When it opened in early 1999, the 10-story, \$45-million home for the county's Circuit Court and Family Court included about 2,000 tons of steel erected by the local's ironworkers.

A new three-year contract that began on June 1, 1998, and then carried into the new millennium immediately increased the local's wage scale to \$20.26 per hour and total fringe benefits to \$9.32 per hour. When the agreement expired on May 31, 2001, the local's journeyman ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen were receiving \$21.66 per hour in base wages and \$3.40 per hour for health and welfare, \$3.70 for pensions, \$2.70 per hour for annuities and 22 cents per hour for training, equating to a total pay package of \$31.68 per hour.

The local's members also ended the decade working on two more major projects in their jurisdiction: the new **Southeast Christian**



Construction of the KFC Yum! Center indoor arena in downtown Louisville with Local 70 members in 2008 and 2009. (Images compliments of Hillsdale Fabricators.)



**Church** in a southeast suburb of Louisville and the start of a massive expansion of the **McAlpine Locks** on the Ohio River.

Beginning in the spring of 1996, more than 50 Local 70 members working for Ben Hur Construction contributed to the 776,000-square-foot, \$77-million church on Blankenbaker Parkway while erecting 8,000 tons of structural steel beams and girders. When completed for its first service on Christmas Day 1998, the worship center had a 9,175-seat sanctuary, a 450-seat chapel, a Fellowship Hall, a 120,000-square foot Youth and Activities Center, a bookstore and a library under eight acres of metal roofing that was set in place by the union ironworkers.

After work on Southeast Christian Church was completed, a Ben Hur spokesman stated, "Because of the high quality of the Local 70 ironworkers, we will be bidding more work in this area."

That year, Local 70 members also began work on a \$278-million expansion project for the McAlpine Locks and Dam after the

Water Resources Development Act of 1990 authorized the **McAlpine Locks Replacement Project**, for which a large number of union ironworkers installed 77,000 tons of reinforcing rebar by the time the new lock was completed and opened April 2009. *(The locks and their associated canal were the first major engineering project on the Ohio River, completed in 1830 as the Louisville and Portland Canal.)* The work replaced the 600-foot and 360-foot locks with a 1200-by-110-foot lock on the Kentucky-side bank of the canal, and the existing swing and bascule bridges were replaced by construction of a two-lane, fixed-span concrete bridge to provide access to Shippingport Island and the Louisville Gas and Electric hydroelectric generating station.

## NEW GAINS, KEY JOBS WITH NEW MILLENNIUM

The new "Y2K" (Year 2000) millennium began for Local 70 with a new, two-year contract with the Iron Workers Employers Association that went into effect on June 1, 2001. By the time it expired on May 31, 2003,



Local 70 members top out construction of the Human Resource Center of Excellence at U.S. Army Fort Knox near Louisville with the setting of the final steel beam in 2009.



the agreement was providing journeyman members with a wage scale of \$23.25 per hour and hourly benefits contributions of \$4.15 for the Health and Welfare Fund, \$2.70 for the Pension Fund, \$2.70 for the Annuity Fund and 22 cents for the Educational Fund.

Over the balance of the decade, the local gained three-year working agreements through collective bargaining in 2003 and 2006 that eventually increased the wage scale to \$22.93 per hour in 2003 and then to \$23.93 per hour before the later contract expired on May 31, 2009. By that time, fringe-benefit payments from employers had reached \$6 per hour for healthcare, \$7.20 per hour for retirement pensions, \$3.04 per hour for annuities and 50

cents for training – an entire pay package that totaled \$40.67 per hour.

The Local 70 membership experienced steady employment throughout the decade, for the most part, that was highlighted by work on several prolific construction projects. Early on, for instance, in 2001 a crew of the local's ironworkers erected a large new hangar at the massive **United Parcel Service (UPS) Worldport** facility to maintain aircraft operated by the worldwide delivery company, for which Louisville is a hub. "Needless to say," the January 2002 issue of *The Ironworker* reported, "the erection job by the Local 70 crew went smoothly."



Local 70 members work on construction of the Ohio River Bridges Project in 2016.



Local 70 retirees attending a Retirees Club meeting on June 6, 2017, included (left to right, seated) Ted Gibson, William Cheatham and Kenneth Mills; (standing, front row) Bobby Sinkhorn, William Thomas, William Hawkins, Dickie Lee, Danny Lynch, Frank Jones Jr. and W. Ray Franke; and (standing, back row) Jim Leonard, Charles Branham, Roger Catlett, Robert Buchanan, Jay Walters, Sherrie Wilson and Bob Hert.

From there, many of the local's members worked on construction of the largest office building in the state, the \$206-million **Human Resource Center of Excellence** at U.S. Army Fort Knox in Kentucky, beginning in late November 2006. Built to serve the soldiers and civilians who were relocating to Fort Knox as a result of the U.S. Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure process, the nearly 900,000-square-foot headquarters for the consolidated Army Human Resources Command and Accessions Command opened May 24, 2010.

Work on the \$252-million, 22,000-seat **KFC Yum! Center**, a multi-purpose sports arena for the University of Louisville on the Ohio River waterfront in downtown Louisville, also commenced in November 2008 with members from Local 70 and **Local No. 372** of Cincinnati on the project. Together, the union ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen working for Harmon Steel of Indianapolis installed 4,913 tons of reinforcing steel and 421,206 pounds of post

tension cable, and those employed by Hillsdale Fabricators erected approximately 3,500 tons of structural steel.

Altogether, KFC Yum! Center consisted of auger cast pile foundations, six reinforced concrete decks, a reinforced pan joist floor system and a structural steel roof-truss and concrete superstructure system. When it opened on October 10, 2010, the new home of the Louisville Cardinals men's and women's basketball teams was the fifth-largest college-basketball arena in the nation.

Before the arena was completed, Local 70 also had members erect the new **City of New Albany Riverfront Amphitheater** in 2009. The Ohio River-fronted venue would be home each spring and summer to numerous free concerts, productions, festivals and other events hosted by the Indiana town.

That year, Local 70 and the Iron Workers Employers Association negotiated a new, three-year working agreement that began





on June 1 with an increased wage for the local's journeymen of \$24.78 per hour and fringe benefits of \$6 per hour for health and welfare, \$7.50 per hour for pensions, \$3.04 per hour for annuities and 50 cents per hour for training. Over the course of the contract, which carried the local into the next decade before ending on May 31, 2011, its wage scale increased to \$25.77 per hour and total fringe-benefit contributions from employers to \$18.28 per hour.

### **MORE PROGRESS ON WAY TO MARKING 120 YEARS**

**S**et for the first year-and-a-half of the 2010s with its working agreement, among the multiple noteworthy projects throughout the decade that Local 70 members erected was the new **Milton-Madison Bridge** to carry U.S. Route 421 over the Ohio River between Milton, Kentucky, and Madison, Indiana, from the fall of 2010 until it was opened to traffic in April 2014. Along with union ironworkers from several other International Association locals, the Louisville members helped replace the existing old crossing with a 3,184-foot-long



Local 70 members work on construction of an expansion to the Buffalo Trace Distillery in Frankfort, Kentucky, in October 2019.



Local 70 members erect the soccer-specific Lynn Family Stadium in Louisville in 2019 for the city's professional USL Championship league and National Women's Soccer League teams.



Local 70 members working on an expansion project at the Ford Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville in November 2021.

continuous-truss bridge that was constructed on temporary piers and slid into place after demolition of the old span.

After it was completed, thanks in no small way to the craftsmanship of the union ironworkers, the \$103.7-million Milton-Madison Bridge project was awarded second place for the coveted Matthew Myles Walsh II Founders National Safety Award for Tier 3 Projects.

Meanwhile, the local and the Iron Workers Employers Association reached agreement on a three-year contract for June 1, 2012, through May 31, 2015, that ultimately raised the local's journeyman wages to \$26.97 per hour and total fringe-benefit contributions from employers to \$19.75 per hour.

Out in the field, Local 70 members began work in 2013 on the massive, \$2.3-billion **Ohio River Bridges Project**, which consisted

of building two bridges over the Ohio River between Kentucky and Indiana. Together with member reinforcing rodmen from **Local No. 22** of Indianapolis and Local 372, Local 70 members installed 26,627 tons of rebar for both new bridges, improvements to the existing Kennedy Bridge and their approaches.

The six-lane **Abraham Lincoln Bridge** carried northbound Interstate 65 between Louisville and Jefferson, Indiana after it opened on December 6, 2015, and the **Lewis and Clark Bridge** connected the two previously disjointed segments of Interstate 265 between Prospect, Kentucky, with Utica, Indiana, after it opened on December 18, 2016. As part of the project, the work included rebuilding "**Spaghetti Junction**," as the Kennedy Interchange where Interstates 64, 65 and 71 intersect at the northeastern edge of downtown Louisville by the Kennedy Bridge is known.



While that project and others were employing Local 70 members, the local and Employers Association negotiated a new, six-year-long contract that went into effect on June 1, 2015, and would continue through May 31, 2021. After initially setting the local's wage scale at \$27.56 per hour and total fringe-benefit earnings at \$20.30 per hour, the contract provided regular raises that eventually set journeyman base pay at \$30.42 per hour and contractor hourly contributions of \$8.30 for health and welfare, \$9.50 for pensions, \$4.55 for annuities and 80 cents for training.

Construction of a new **Ford Paint Shop** at the car company's plant in 2016 and 2017 involved Local 70 members erecting structural steel for the shop and trestles over the top of the existing paint shop to connect to new shop during shut down and reinforcing columns in the existing paint shop to accept trestles for supporting the new paint shop expansion



Local 70 members construct the new, 126,800-square-foot Baptist Health Breckenridge five-story office building and outpatient medical center in Louisville in March 2022.



Local 70 members and their families participate in the 2022 St. Patrick's Day Parade in Louisville.



design. While many safety considerations had to be addressed to protect the employees and property of the still-operating facility, such as a site-specific erection plan that included the process of erecting trestles over the top of an existing building without any interference with plant production, the local's members completed over 64,175 manhours without any reportable-recordable incidents.

The year after that project was completed, Local 70 moved into a larger and more-modern union hall at **2429 Crittenden Drive** in Louisville, where it resides as it

celebrates its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. The new headquarters is right next to its former hall, which the local converted into part of its training center.

As stable – when not robust – employment conditions persisted, also that year the local's members began erecting **Lynn Family Stadium**, a soccer-specific facility in the Butchertown neighborhood of Louisville. After it opened in March 2020, the \$60-million, 11,700-seat stadium would serve as the home field of Louisville City FC of the USL Championship professional men's soccer league and Racing Louisville FC of the National Women's Soccer League.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which first appeared in the United States in early 2020 and would claim the lives of nearly 1-million Americans over the next two years and into 2022, affected Local 70 as social distancing became the norm and jobsites were either slowed or closed to help stop the spread of the disease. With the health of its members its primary priority, the local practiced social distancing and canceled meetings and training while also ensuring active jobsites were safe so that members could continue to staff key projects.



The local did gain a new contract during that time, with which its wage scale was set at \$31.79 per hour as the local entered its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Fringe benefits going into 2023 were also fixed at \$9.50 per hour for the Health and Welfare fund, \$8.70 per hour for the Pension Fund, \$5 per hour for the Annuity Fund and \$1.10 per hour for the Education Fund.

An expansion to the Ford Kentucky Truck Plant in 2021 provided needed manhours during the pandemic years, as well. The \$5.2-million project encompassed erecting more than 1,000 tons of steel, including construction of a trestle over the existing structure, to help boost production of the company's F-Series Super Duty trucks.

Elsewhere, among a growing number of jobs on which Local 70 members were employed as the state and nation emerged from the pandemic and the local approached its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, the union ironworkers began erecting

the new **Baptist Health Breckenridge**, a major outpatient medical center, in early 2022. The five-story office building will house physician practices, an ambulatory surgery center, urgent care, physical and occupational therapy, imaging, laboratory services and a retail pharmacy when completed in 2024.

Before then, Local 70 will reach its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August 2023 while having jurisdiction across 45 counties in Kentucky and 15 counties in southern Indiana and operating its main union-hall office and a sub-office in Lexington to service all of its members. Over the years, those union structural and ornamental ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen and their predecessors have worked in every aspect of the trade, including steel erection on buildings and bridges, plant maintenance, concrete reinforcing, conveyor work, sheeting, welding, rigging, fence erecting, curtain wall and window wall – as they have built up Kentuckiana and will continue to do so. ♦



Local 70 members and their families participate in the 2023 St. Patrick's Day Parade in Louisville.

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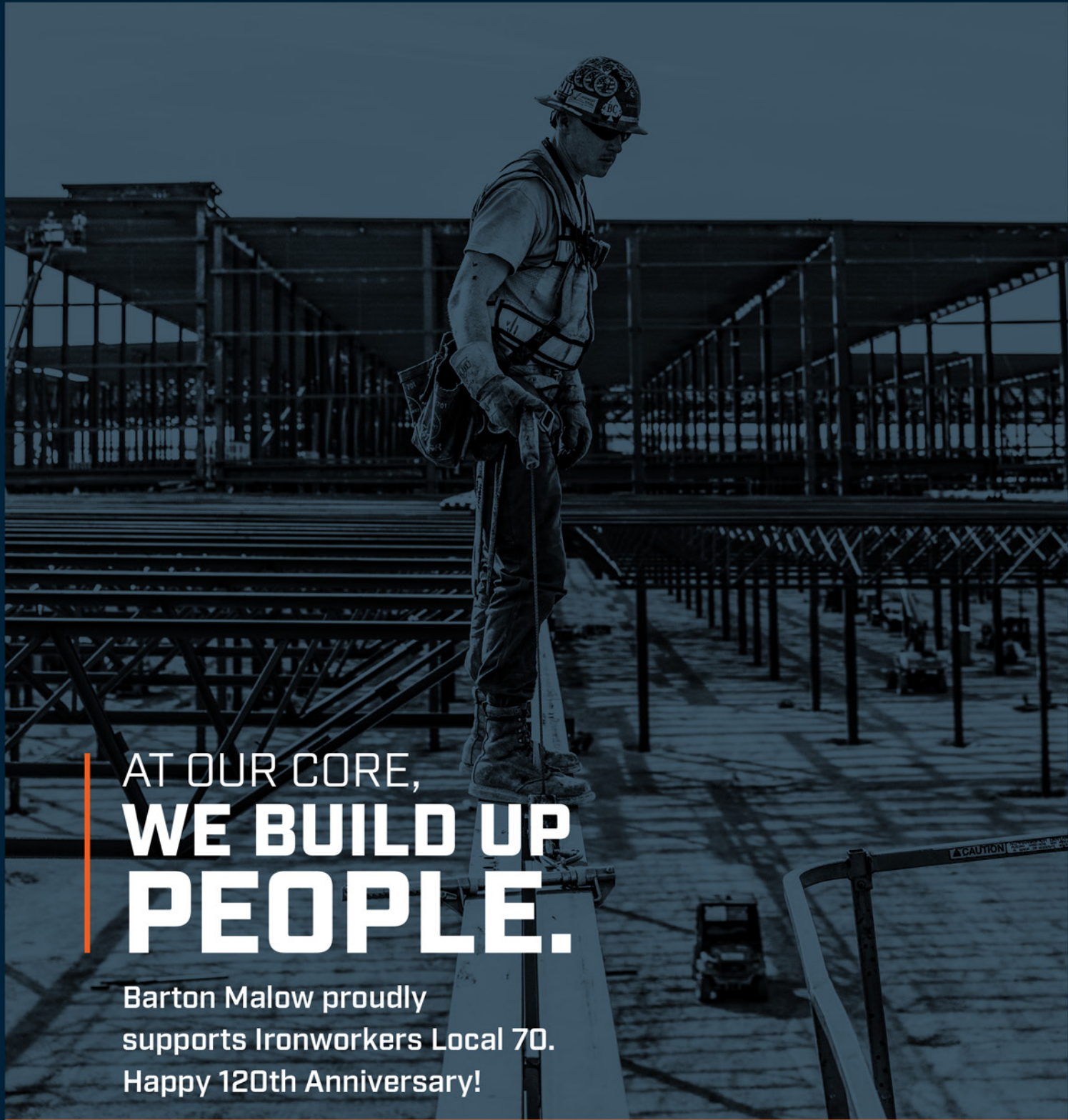


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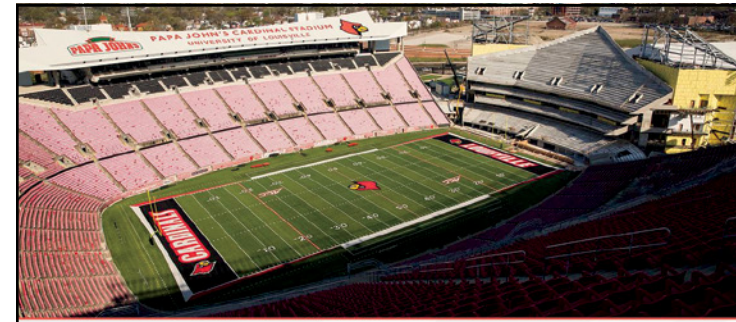
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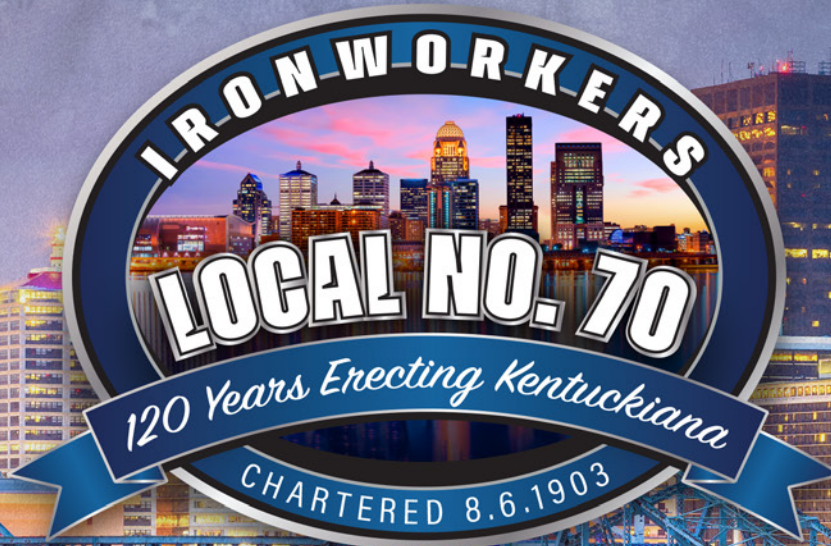
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