IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

1901 - 2026

Topping Out Sponsor

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IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8

125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION DINNER-DANCE

Saturday, July 25, 2026
5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Italian Community Center
631 E. Chicago Street, Milwaukee

Cocktail Reception	5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Seating & Welcome	6:00 – 6:15 p.m.
Dinner	6:15 – 7:15 p.m.
Remarks, Presentations, Raffles	7:15 – 8:00 p.m.
Music, Dancing, Celebrating	8:00 – 11:00 p.m.

This book was proudly produced by
UNION HISTORIES™
Preserving the Proud Stories of Local Unions
unionhistories.com

Head Historian: Calvin Jefferson
Research Assistant & Proofreader: Ann Wilkins Jefferson
Art Direction: Andy Taucher
Layout & Design: Steven Demanett

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International Association of Ironworkers, International Office

Milwaukee Public Library, Special Collections

TOGETHER, OUR DETERMINATION AND SACRIFICES BUILT LOCAL 8'S LEGACY AND READIED ITS FUTURE

For 125 years, Ironworkers Local 8 has stood as a testament to the strength of skilled hands, determined hearts and an unbreakable brotherhood. Today, as we celebrate this remarkable milestone, we do so with profound gratitude for every member, retiree, family member, contractor and friend who has been part of this incredible journey.

Our story did not begin with us, nor will it end with us. We are merely the current custodians of a legacy that was built by generations of proud ironworkers who came before us. They endured economic hardship, dangerous working conditions, uncertain times and personal sacrifice so that future generations would have the opportunity to earn a fair wage, receive quality benefits and provide a better life for their families. Their courage and commitment to one another transformed Ironworkers Local 8 into one of the most respected locals in our International Union.

Every officer who accepted the responsibility of leadership, every apprentice who chose to learn the trade, every journeyman who passed down their knowledge and every retiree who devoted a lifetime to this organization helped write another chapter in our history. We stand on their shoulders, and we will forever be grateful for the foundation they built.

Across Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the fingerprints of Ironworkers Local 8 can be found on projects that have defined our region and inspired generations. From the towering spans of the Mackinac Bridge to the construction of Miller Park and Lambeau Field, from the mines to the paper mills, power plants, manufacturing facilities, hospitals, schools, bridges, highways and countless pieces of critical infrastructure, our members have built far more than steel. They have built communities. They have built opportunities. They have helped build America.

Yet as we celebrate these achievements, we must also remember that our history has been marked by sacrifice. We must honor every member who left for work but never returned home. Their names are forever woven into the fabric of this local. Their sacrifice reminds us that every safety rule, every properly planned lift, every moment of looking out for one another is more than a policy, it is a promise. A promise that every ironworker deserves to return safely to the people who love them.

We also recognize that the strength of this organization has always extended beyond the jobsite. Behind every ironworker stands a family that has shared in the sacrifices this profession demands. To our spouses, children, parents and loved ones, thank you for your unwavering support, your patience and your countless sacrifices. You have been the silent strength behind every successful career and every milestone we celebrate today.

As we begin our next chapter, let us remain committed to mentoring those who follow us. Let us continue embracing innovation without abandoning the traditions that define us. Let us protect the values of integrity, craftsmanship, pride and brotherhood that have guided Local 8 since its beginning. The responsibility to preserve this legacy now belongs to each of us.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for blessing Ironworkers Local 8 throughout these past 125 years. Thank You for the men and women who built this great organization through hard work, sacrifice and unwavering faith in one another. Watch over every member as they leave their homes each day to earn an honest living. Protect them physically from injury, strengthen them mentally and emotionally through life's burdens, and remind them that they are never alone.

Bless our retirees who paved the way before us and our apprentices who represent the future of this proud trade.

Lord, place Your loving hand upon every family that supports our members, granting them peace, health and comfort. Bless our signatory contractors with wisdom, opportunity and continued prosperity so they may continue providing meaningful careers for generations of ironworkers yet to come. Help us remain united through every challenge, humble in every success and faithful stewards of the legacy entrusted to us.

May we never forget where we came from. May we always honor those who came before us.

And by Your grace, may Ironworkers Local 8 continue building skylines, strengthening communities, and changing lives for another 125 years.

God bless our members, our families, our contractors, and God bless Ironworkers Local 8.

Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Charlie Falkner

Charlie Falkner, Business Manager/Financial Secretary
Ironworkers Local No. 8

The History of International Association Of Ironworkers Local No. 8, Milwaukee

EXCELLENCE IN WORKMANSHIP FOR 125 YEARS

ERECTING EASTERN WISCONSIN & MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA

CHARTERED FEBRUARY 1, 1901
IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8
125th Anniversary
MILWAUKEE, WI

"The growing need for organization among the men working on the construction of buildings and bridges crystallized June 26, 1896, when the Housesmiths and Bridgemen's Union No. 8 of Milwaukee was formed at a meeting in Seamen's Hall."

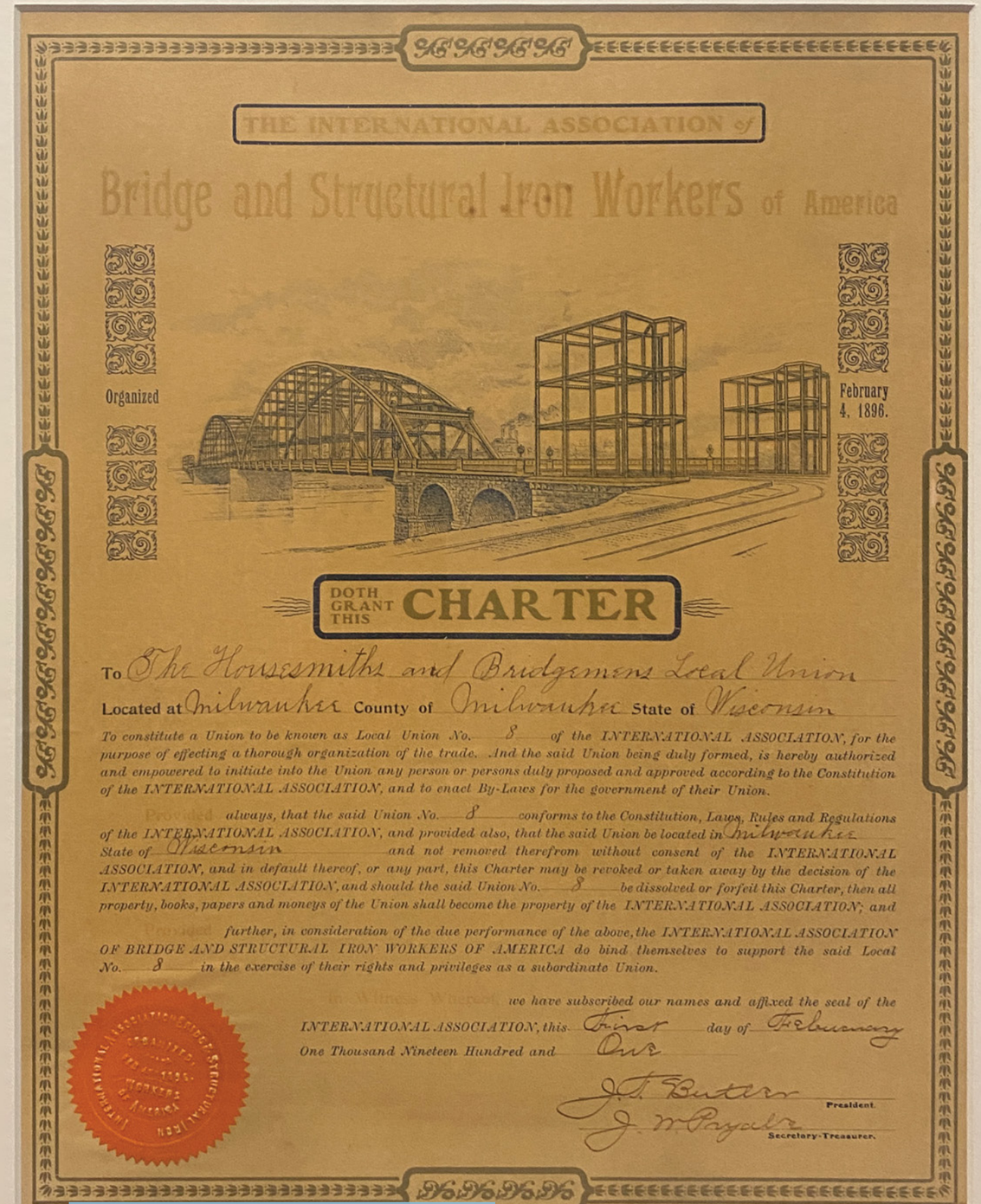
– *Milwaukee Leader*, September 5, 1925

Ironworkers in the City of Milwaukee were organized to some degree as early as 1890 in an independent union – although it was not affiliated with either the Knights of Labor or the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.), the two dominant national confederations of labor unions in the United States at the time. However, that local union was short-lived and was defunct by all accounts by 1894.

Two years later, shortly after a group of independent locals from around the United States formed the **National Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America** during a conference held February 4 to 7, 1896, A.F.L. General Organizer Frank J. Weber (who at the time was known as the "Dean of the Wisconsin labor movement") reorganized ironworkers in and around Milwaukee. Subsequently, the National Association issued those 16 ironworkers a charter on **June 26, 1896**, as **"Housesmiths and Bridgemen's" Local No. 8**.

(As steel had virtually replaced wood and stone as the primary load-carrying material in the construction of bridges and buildings by the 1890s, bridge carpenters became "bridgemen" and blacksmiths became "housesmiths" and "architectural ironworkers" as the change in structural materials required a new set of skills for those craftsmen.)

The fledgling local soon elected its first slate of officers, which was led by **President James T. Harvey**. But initially, the local faced numerous difficulties, as wages were low, from 17-1/2 to 25 cents per hour; workdays were long at 10 hours per day; and hostile employers did everything in their power to suppress the union ironworkers, while those efforts of the National Association of Erectors and Employers were especially malicious.



THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION of

Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America

Organized

February 4, 1896.

DOTH GRANT THIS **CHARTER**

To The Housesmiths and Bridgemens Local Union

Located at Milwaukee County of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin

To constitute a Union to be known as Local Union No. 8 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.

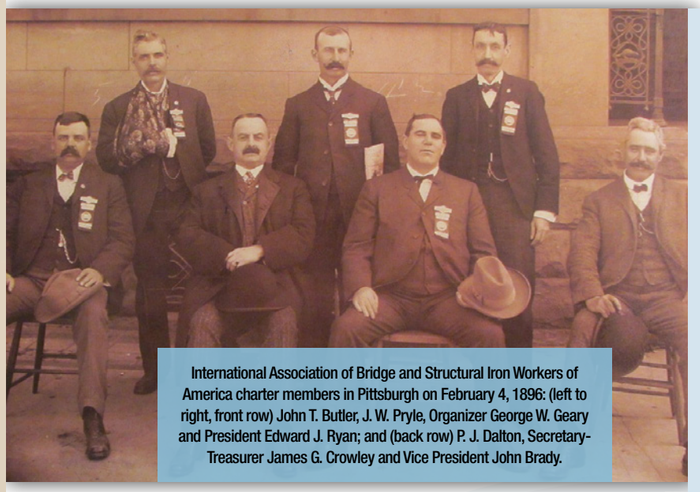
Provided always, that the said Union No. 8 conforms to the Constitution, Laws, Rules and Regulations of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, and provided also, that the said Union be located in Milwaukee State of Wisconsin and not removed therefrom without consent of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, and in default 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. 8 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 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. 8 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 First day of February One Thousand Nineteen Hundred and One

J. T. Butler
President.

J. W. Pryal
Secretary-Treasurer.

Ironworkers Local 8 charter issued February 1, 1901, and signed by International Association General President John T. Butler (who served in that position from 1899 to 1901) and Secretary James W. Pryal.



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. Pryle, 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.

Local 8, determined to persevere, instead was able to establish the eight-hour day through a May 1, 1897, work agreement with its employing contractors, which also called for a minimum wage of 25 cents per hour and time-and-one-half for all work in excess of eight hours. Ultimately, after three years of opposition, the local finally won over all the resistive iron-fabricating and -erecting firms within the local's jurisdiction in and around Milwaukee.

During that time as the local made slow but steady progress, an article in the May 18, 1898, issue of *The Milwaukee Journal* newspaper even reported:

> ***"The structural iron workers' union is making great endeavors to further its organization and have demanded that a number of smaller shops become union shops."***

After the turn of the century, the delegates of the National Association during its convention from October 22 to 26, 1900, voted to change the union's name to the **International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America** in anticipation of organizing locals in Canada. It then re-issued charters to its locals across the country, rechartering Housesmiths and Bridgemen's Local 8 in Milwaukee on **February 1, 1901**.

INTERNATIONAL IRONWORKERS UNION WAS ESTABLISHED 130 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.

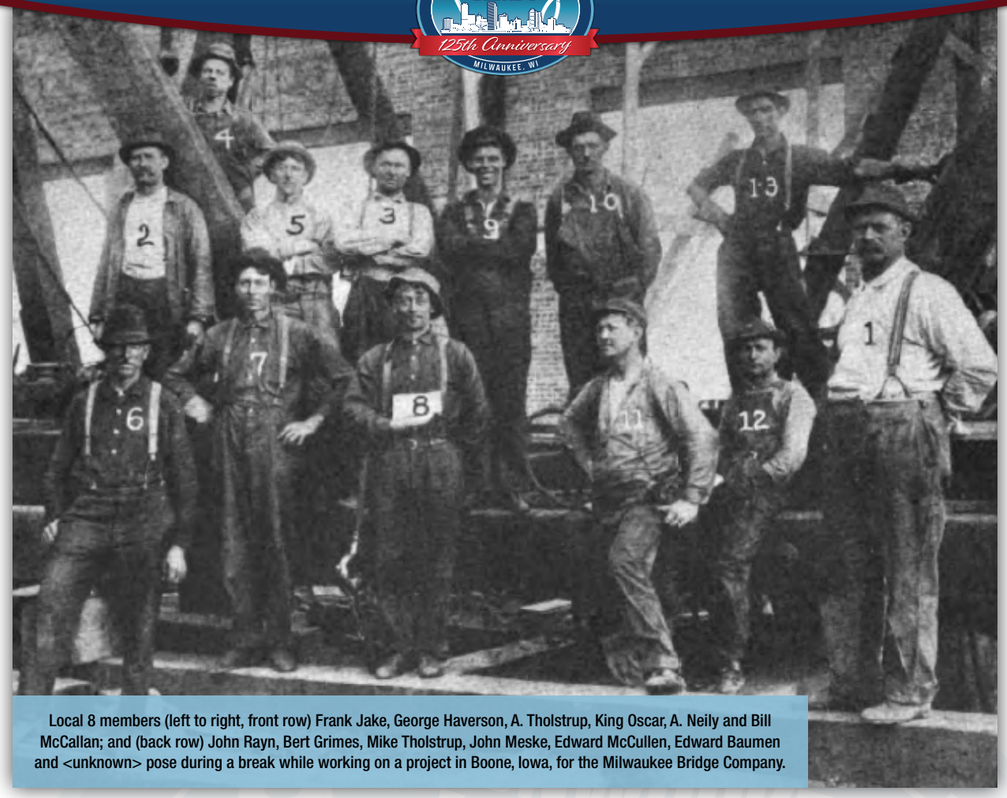
During its early years, Local 8 and Milwaukee hosted two International Association of Ironworkers conventions from September 15 through 22, 1902, and September 18 through 25, 1911, respectively. Following the first convention held in the local's city (whose breweries were famous by that time), the union' *Bridgemen's Magazine* reported on the relatively non-combative proceedings among delegates in contrast to the previous convention in Boston (known as "Beantown" because of the colonial-era popularity of Boston baked beans – a local dish slow-cooked with molasses) while quipping, "It would seem that Milwaukee beer is much more conducive to the transacting of business than are baked beans."

BATTLING TO PROSPER, GROW DESPITE FIERCE OPPOSITION

As the population of Milwaukee grew from 204,000 in 1890 to 374,000 in 1910, resulting in escalated new construction, the ironworkers of Local 8 built the modern infrastructure of Milwaukee in the first decades of the 20th century – from the bridges spanning the Milwaukee and Kinnickinnic rivers to the viaducts over the Menomonee Valley, and from the beer breweries, animal-skin leather tanneries and various manufacturing plants to schools, theaters and department stores that sprung up as the city expanded. The local's members also traveled across Eastern Wisconsin to erect bridges in locations such as Oshkosh and Manitowoc and coal-mines in Sheboygan.

Local 8 officials in 1905 are (in no corresponding order) T. H. Kolas, trustee; J. R. Kolas, recording secretary; J. Hoffman, treasurer; J. Dougherty, trustee; Jason Green, executive board member; Rob Christie, executive board member; J. Christie, vice president; Joe Burns, executive board member; J. Fleming, second vice president; and William W. Reddin, president and business agent.

Throughout the local's early years, during which time the International Association (I.A.) reassigned its locals, including Local 8, from "housesmiths and bridgemen" to "structural and ornamental ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen," members built the Water Street, Michigan Street, Wells Street and Kilbourn Avenue bascule bridges in downtown Milwaukee and the Bartlett Street and Holton Street bridges as well as many others. Union ironworkers also erected many of the factories that made Milwaukee an industrial power, including those for heavy machinery manufacturers **Pawling and Harnischfeger**, **Allis Chalmers**, **International Harvester** and **Falk Corporation**.



Local 8 members (left to right, front row) Frank Jake, George Haverson, A. Tholstrup, King Oscar, A. Neily and Bill McCallan; and (back row) John Rayn, Bert Grimes, Mike Tholstrup, John Meske, Edward McCullen, Edward Baumen and <unknown> pose during a break while working on a project in Boone, Iowa, for the Milwaukee Bridge Company.

The city's many brewers also kept Local 8 members employed, as the **Pabst Brewing Company** constructed a new building in 1900, the **Schlitz Brewing Company** built two plants the following year and others such as the **Blatz Brewing Company**, the **Carlin Brewing Company** and the **Miller Brewing Company** were expanding at the time as well. Local 8 **Secretary Adam Sladky** was even able to announce in a letter from "the famous beer city local" in the December 1901 *Bridgemen's Magazine*, the monthly I.A. publication:

> ***"The Brewers Association are doing their share of building to their plants and keep us busy. They are the life of the iron craft."***

Elsewhere, among several other significant projects on which the local's ironworkers worked in 1902 was construction of a large **West Side Works** gas plant for the Milwaukee Gas Light Company, which super-heated coal in furnaces to convert it into gas used for lighting and heating the city; and the new **Grand Avenue Bridge** in Milwaukee for the Starkey Dredge Dock & Bridge Company, a pioneering movable bridge that was among the first "simple-trunnion" bascule bridges using a massive pivot axle to let the span swing upward for river traffic. With strong employment conditions in the local's jurisdiction continuing, Local 8 **Corresponding Secretary Frank Rathke** declared in the December 1902 issue of *The Bridgemen's Magazine*, "In the vicinity of this Dutch town there is a great demand for bridgemen, which I think is good news to the whole International organization."

Even when those and other larger jobs were completed or nearing completion and work

LOCAL 8 OFFICES, HALLS AND MEETING LOCATIONS

(All locations are in Milwaukee.)

Seaman's Hall
187 East Water Street
1901

Rohlinger's Hall
413 East Water Street
1901 – 1904

Federated Trades Council Hall
318 State Street
1904 – 1911

Milwaukee Labor Temple*
Brisbane Hall
528 Chestnut Street
1911 – 1919

Milwaukee Labor Temple*
Brisbane Hall
528 Chestnut Street
536 Juneau Avenue
Meetings: Lipp's Hall
Third and Prairie Streets
1919 – 1936

Local 8 Offices
Dorsen Building
2218 North Third Street
1936 – 1938

Local 8 Offices
Metropolitan Block Building
1012 North Third Street
1938 – 1940

Local 8 Offices
Metropolitan Block Building
1012 North Third Street
Meetings: Sokol Hall
1307 West Walnut Street
1940 – 1952

Local 8 Offices
Metropolitan Block Building
1012 North Third Street
Meetings: Milwaukee Hall
812 West State Street
1952 – 1953

Local 8 Offices
Metropolitan Block Building
1012 North Third Street
Meetings: Labor Temple
1801 North Third Street
1953 – 1962

Local 8 Union Hall
6225 West Bluemound Road
1962 – 1979

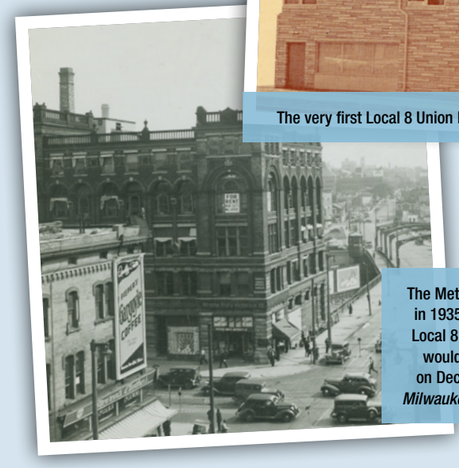
Local 8 Union Hall
12034 West Adler Lane
1979 – current

Local 8 established its Fox Valley Office in 1987 in Appleton, which is now located in Neenah, Wisconsin, and its Upper Peninsula Office in 1994 in Marquette, Michigan, to serve those areas after they were added to the local's jurisdiction.

**The Milwaukee Labor Temple was built in 1910 by the Federated Trades Council and various labor unions. The name of the street on which it was located was changed from "Chestnut" to "Juneau" in 1927.*

The Milwaukee Labor Temple/Brisbane Hall (shown here sometime in the 1920s or 1930s) at 528 Chestnut Street and later at 536 West Juneau Avenue after the street name was changed in 1927, in which Local 8 had its offices from 1911 into 1936, was also home to several other trade unions. *(Photo courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library, Special Collections.)*

The very first Local 8 Union Hall at 6225 West Bluemound Road.

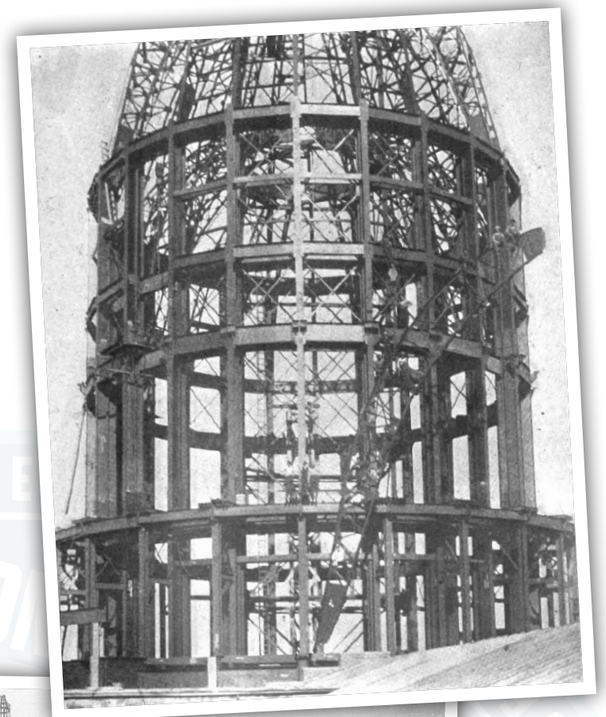


The Metropolitan Block Building (shown here in 1935) in downtown Milwaukee, in which Local 8 had its offices from 1938 into 1962, would be completely destroyed by a fire on December 20, 1975. *(Photo courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library, Special Collections.)*

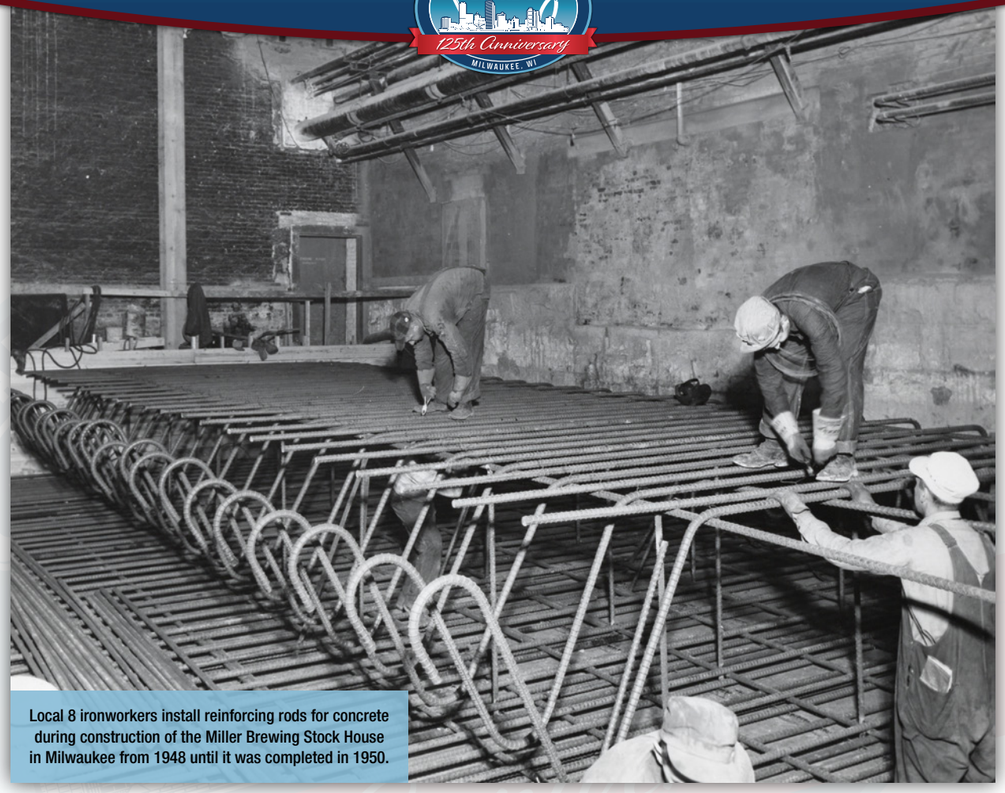
inevitably slowed, as it did by early 1904, work in the area's breweries helped the local maintain employment of its membership. Numerous members erected a powerhouse for Blatz that year, for instance, while others also worked on a job for the **American Malting Company**.

The following year, the Local 8 membership elected **Brother William E. "Bill" Reddin** as their president and business agent, after which the local would make substantial financial and organizational gains under his leadership until his death in 1933. During his tenure, Brother Reddin helped increase the local's membership to more than 250 ironworkers; expand its geographic jurisdiction beyond Milwaukee's city limits to encompass nearly half of the State of Wisconsin; and cultivate cooperative relationships with other unions.

As business agent, Brother Reddin also led the local's efforts against the union-busting tactics of groups such as the National Erectors



Local 8 ironworkers erect the new (and current) Wisconsin State Capitol and its dome in Madison in 1911. *(Photos from the Wisconsin Historical Society.)*



Local 8 ironworkers install reinforcing rods for concrete during construction of the Miller Brewing Stock House in Milwaukee from 1948 until it was completed in 1950.

Association. Founded in 1905, the association, which represented many of the largest companies in the country including American Bridge and U.S. Steel, worked relentlessly against unions, blocking organizing drives, locking out union men and crushing strikes in order to promote non-union "open-shop" conditions.

But by 1907, Local 8 had grown to such an extent that it was able to inaugurate a **sick, accident and death-benefit policy** for its members that over the ensuing years paid out thousands of dollars in benefits. Then in 1910, the local established a **Pension Fund** that would pay retirement benefits to members – which, like the local's other benefits, was funded through members' union dues.

Out in the field, among another surge of construction work in the local's territory, during the second half of the decade its ironworkers played a crucial role in the construction of the **Sixth Street Viaduct** in Milwaukee, the first that would connect the south side to the center of the city when it was completed. A massive undertaking, construction of the long, elevated bridge took several years and provided steady work for many of the local's members.

Also during that period, many members were involved in rebuilding the **Wisconsin State Capitol** building in Madison after it had been mostly destroyed by a fire on February 26, 1904. After the expansive construction began in 1906, the union ironworkers would erect the new (and current) Capitol, including its iconic dome, until it was completed in 1917.

Under the favorable conditions of the late 1910s, Local 8 continued to prosper and flourish. As such, during the year beginning June 30, 1909, and concluding July 1, 1910, it averaged a total membership of 189 ironworkers.

However, the local continued to face challenges as anti-union pushback festered, including among the brewers, who even attempted at times to manipulate and shortchange union workers. In one instance in 1911, when the Brewers Association refused to renew a blanket agreement with the Building Trades Council, preferring instead to negotiate contracts with individual locals, beginning May 16 the trades, including Local 8, waged a successful 11-day strike against the breweries before the two sides adopted a new general agreement that was satisfactory to all trades.

What's more, in the aftermath of a nationwide bombing campaign countering anti-union activism – but only targeting buildings and machinery – that culminated with the unplanned killings of 21 people in the October 1, 1910, dynamiting of *The Los Angeles Times* building (*Times* owner Harrison Gray Otis was an outspoken opponent of unions), among the 33 I.A. officers and members charged in connection with the incident was Business Manager Reddin. Found guilty of transporting explosives and sentenced to three years in jail, after an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was denied, Brother Reddin ultimately served two years and three months at Leavenworth prison.

Members of Local 8 continuously rallied around their leader, as they were convinced of his integrity. Upon his return to Milwaukee in 1916, a crowd of supporters greeted Brother Reddin and the local and the Milwaukee Building Trades Council held a public reception to celebrate, after which he was re-elected to office and went on to serve as business manager until passing away 17 years later.

Work remained abundant throughout the 1910s, for the most part, and the local's ironworkers were able to sustain stable workhours as their numbers slowly

LOCAL 8 LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE YEARS

After Local 8 was re-chartered in 1901, it was initially headed by a parttime president, Brother John Duhig, until the local elected a combined parttime president/business agent in October 1902. During that time, Brother B. J. McCoy served as the local's first financial secretary from 1902 into 1905.

That year, the local's membership elected a combined business representative/financial secretary, which would become business manager/financial secretary in 1966. The two positions remain combined as one office in 2026 as Local 8 celebrates its 125th charter anniversary.

President/Business Agents

Joseph Brett
1902 – 1904

George Kilbertus
1904 – 1905

Business Representative/Financial Secretaries

William E. Reddin
1905 – 1914

John Wallace
1914 – 1915

Joseph F. Burns
1915 – 1917

William E. Reddin
1917 – 1933

Joseph F. Burns
1933 – 1936

Herbert J. Mueller
1936 – 1950

Robert J. Pilot
1951 – 1952

Herbert J. Mueller
1952 – 1959

Earl Spicer
1960 – 1966

Business Manager/Financial Secretaries

Robert C. Zimmermann
1966 – 1971

Earl Spicer
1971 – 1978

Russell C. Pride
1978 – 1986

Robert C. Zimmerman
1986 – 1990

Brent Emons
1990 – 1993

Randall Smith
1993 – 1996

Brent Emons
1996 – 2002

James M. Jorgensen
2002 – 2008

Brent Emons
2008 – 2009

Colin Teska
2009 – 2012

Glenn Flaherty
2012 – 2014

Tony Mayrhofer
2014 – 2023

Charlie Falkner
2023 – current

Local 8 Brother William E. Reddin

LOCAL 8 JOURNEYMEN'S WAGES AND BENEFITS, DECADE-TO-DECADE

1901
Base Journeyman Wages: 37-1/2 cents per hour
Benefits Contributions: <none>
Total Compensation Package: 37-1/2 cents per hour

1910
Base Journeyman Wages: 56-1/4 cents per hour
Benefits Contributions: <none>
Total Compensation Package: 56-1/4 cents per hour

1920
Base Journeyman Wages: $1.00 per hour
Benefits Contributions: <none>
Total Compensation Package: $1.00 per hour

1930
Base Journeyman Wages: $1.20 per hour
Benefits Contributions: <none>
Total Compensation Package: $1.20 per hour

1940
Base Journeyman Wages: $1.37-1/2 per hour
Benefits Contributions: <none>
Total Compensation Package: $1.37-1/2 per hour

1950
Base Journeyman Wages: $2.05 per hour
Benefits Contributions: <none>
Total Compensation Package: $2.05 per hour

1960
Base Journeyman Wages: $3.54 per hour
Benefits Contributions: 17 cents per hour
Total Compensation Package: $3.71 per hour

1970
Base Journeyman Wages: $6.06 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: 80 cents per hour
Total Compensation Package: $6.86 per hour

1980
Base Journeyman Wages: $11.36 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $3.51 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $14.87 per hour

1990
Base Journeyman Wages: $18.37 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $6.65 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $25.02 per hour

2000
Base Journeyman Wages: $24.19 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $9.78 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $33.97 per hour

2010 (South – Milwaukee)
Base Journeyman Wages: $30.51 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $20.34 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $50.85 per hour

2020 (South – Milwaukee)
Base Journeyman Wages: $39.11 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $27.87 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $66.98 per hour

2026 (South – Milwaukee)
Base Journeyman Wages: $47.52 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $34.19 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $81.71 per hour

2026 (North – Green Bay)
Base Journeyman Wages: $44.66 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $33.95 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $78.61 per hour

2026 (Upper Peninsula – Marquette, Industrial)
Base Journeyman Wages: $41.05 per hour
Fringe Benefits Contributions: $34.26 per hour
Total Compensation Package: $75.31 per hour

**Local 8 implemented three different zones for work-agreement negotiations and their respective wage scales – South, North and Upper Peninsula – in the early 2000s to provide contractors with regional flexibility with wages based on cost-of-living throughout the local's jurisdiction.*

but steadily increased. Key projects erected by members included construction of the new **Milwaukee Labor Temple** at Sixth and Chestnut streets – which would house the local's offices after it was completed in 1911 for the next 25 years – that involved a large amount of reinforced-concrete work.

With favorable conditions continuing, the March 12, 1913, issue of the *Milwaukee Leader* newspaper announced in a report on the local's meeting the previous evening, "The spirit among the members of this organization is excellent, giving the lie to agents of the erectors association, who have stated that the union would soon go out of business."

Jobs on which the local's members were employed into the following year included erecting the new **Buffalo Street double-leaf bascule bridge** across the Milwaukee river. As always, the breweries provided workhours into the second half of the decade, including installation of 70 new glass-enameled tanks beginning in 1914.

Additionally, as Brother Sladky described in the April 1914 *Bridgemen's Magazine*, "There are other numerous small jobs going on with plenty of men to do them. No matter how small, nothing gets away – members of Local No. 8 are always on the job."

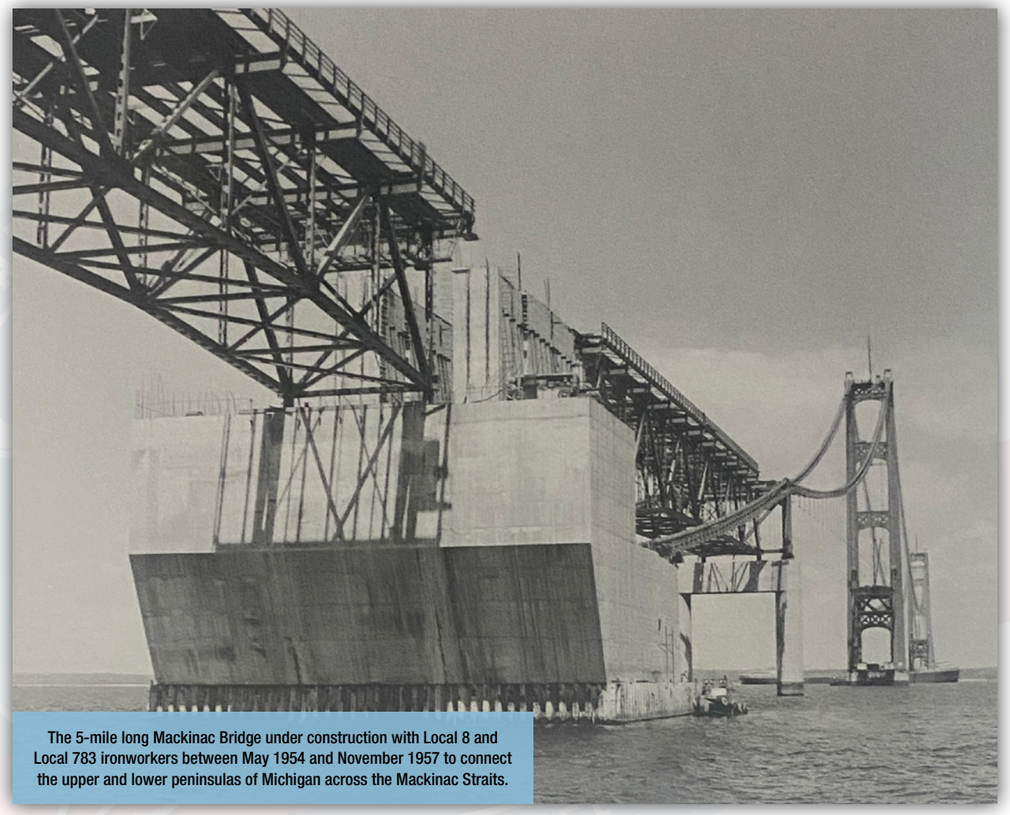
Setbacks also continued for the local, however, as in one particular instance after the local signed a new, three-year agreement in 1913 with the Milwaukee Erectors Association that called for a wage increase to 62-1/2 cents per hour on July 1 and an increase to 65 cents in July 1914 that would continue for two years. When some contractors refused to honor the second wage increase, the local went on strike for three months, but in the end Local 8 conceded defeat and reluctantly returned to work at the lower rate.

'ROARING' IN THE 1920S THEN SURVIVING INFAMOUS TRAGEDY

As Local 8 and the entire country entered the "Roaring Twenties," the vibrant 1920s decade of widespread economic prosperity and extreme cultural changes, Milwaukee's union ironworkers continued to thrive, and as such by 1921 they were being paid **$1 per hour** – a considerable wage at the time. Despite prohibition, the nationwide ban on alcoholic beverages levied by the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that severely curbed all work at the city's breweries from 1920 through 1933, the local's members remained well-employed throughout the decade while Milwaukee's economy boomed as a global manufacturing center for heavy machinery, auto frames, motorcycles, enamelware and more.

The abundance of work throughout Wisconsin during that time induced the International Association to organize a local for

The General Mitchell Field airport (which would become Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport) terminal being erected by Local 8 ironworkers in 1954 and 1955 for its opening on July 20 of that year.



The 5-mile long Mackinac Bridge under construction with Local 8 and Local 783 ironworkers between May 1954 and November 1957 to connect the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan across the Mackinac Straits.

ironworkers in and around Madison and give it that portion of Local 8's expansive, 46-county jurisdiction. Subsequently, the union chartered **Local No. 383** on August 17, 1923, in the state's capital city.

For Local 8, strong employment conditions persisted and its wage scales continued to increase through collective bargaining for new work agreements with its employing contractors. As a result, the local's journeyman ironworkers' pay jumped to $1.12-1/2 per hour in 1925 and then again to $1.20 per hour in 1927 – by which time the local's membership had also increased to more than 460 ironworkers and apprentices.

Before the end of the decade, among the scores of significant jobs being erected by Local 8 members were the 4,000-foot-long, steel and concrete **16th Street Viaduct** in 1928 and 1929 (which would come to be known as the James E. Groppi Unity Bridge in 1988 to commemorate the historic civil-rights march that occurred there in 1967), as well as the **27th Street Viaduct**. Members during that time also worked on construction of the new **Public Safety Building** on West State Street; the new **Milwaukee County Dispensary and Emergency Hospital** on the city's far west side that provided the first full-scale, publicly funded healthcare available to all residents when opened in 1929; and the now-iconic, 11-story **Milwaukee County Courthouse** that would be completed in 1931 (and decades later be listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

Meanwhile, with employment among the local's membership soaring, **Recording Secretary G. J. Weckman** reported in the August 1928 *Bridgemen's Magazine*, "Local No. 8 seems to be undergoing an 'era' of prosperity at present. ... There seems to be plenty of work coming our way but very little for the non-union men so to say."

The decade-long Great Depression, the most catastrophic economic decline ever experienced by the industrialized world that began when the U.S. stock market crashed on October 29, 1929, eventually put an emphatic pause on Local 8's prosperity as construction in Milwaukee almost immediately and completely vanished. Less than one year into the historic disaster, Business Agent Reddin reported in the August 1930 *Bridgemen's Magazine*:

"Work is at a standstill. We do not want members to come here under a false impression, thinking they will be able to get work. Most of the large projects are practically completed. At the present time, we have a number of members unemployed. ... Stay away unless you can afford to take a compulsory vacation."

Initially, however, the Depression had little impact on the employment of union ironworkers around the country, as from July 1, 1929, to June 30, 1930, the I.A. added 3,440 new members to its ranks. What's more, while other international unions experienced wage reductions of up to 50 percent, the average wage reduction for ironworkers locals was 15.9

Local 8 Business Representative Herbert J. Mueller (far left) hands the first pension checks issued in the Milwaukee building and construction trades industry on June 4, 1960, to Local 8 retirees (left to right) Thomas Reddin, Wesley Linley, Paul Tesch and Arthur Engbring after the employer-funded Milwaukee Building Trades Pension Fund was started the previous year as a fringe benefit for union construction workers, including Local 8 ironworkers.

percent, according to the I.A.'s *Informal History of the Ironworker* that appeared in parts in 1971 and 1972 *Bridgemen's Magazines*.

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," the I.A. history states, and the union lost almost 50 percent of its paid membership nationwide during that time. From 1930 to 1935, Local 8's membership likewise significantly decreased, while the local also accepted its first cut in wages to levels from a decade earlier when on April 10, 1932, it agreed to a reduction in its scale from $1.20 to $1.05 per hour for its ironworkers and down to 90 cents per hour for its reinforcing rodmen.

Despite the heavy toll on the I.A. and its members, nearly every ironworkers local remained intact during the Depression as I.A. officers "were leaders in 'New Deal' (federal assistance) efforts to get labor back on its feet again," as the I.A. history notes. Indeed, the labor-friendly reforms of the U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt administration'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.

The legislation's Public Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration provided employment opportunities for Local 8 members as it funneled billions of federal dollars to states and localities for work-relief efforts. In one particular example in

Local 8 ironworkers erect apparatus for the new iron-ore pelletizing plant being built at the Groveland Mine in Republic, Michigan, in 1963.

Local 8 members participate in a First Aid class at the local's Ironworkers Training Center in 1979.

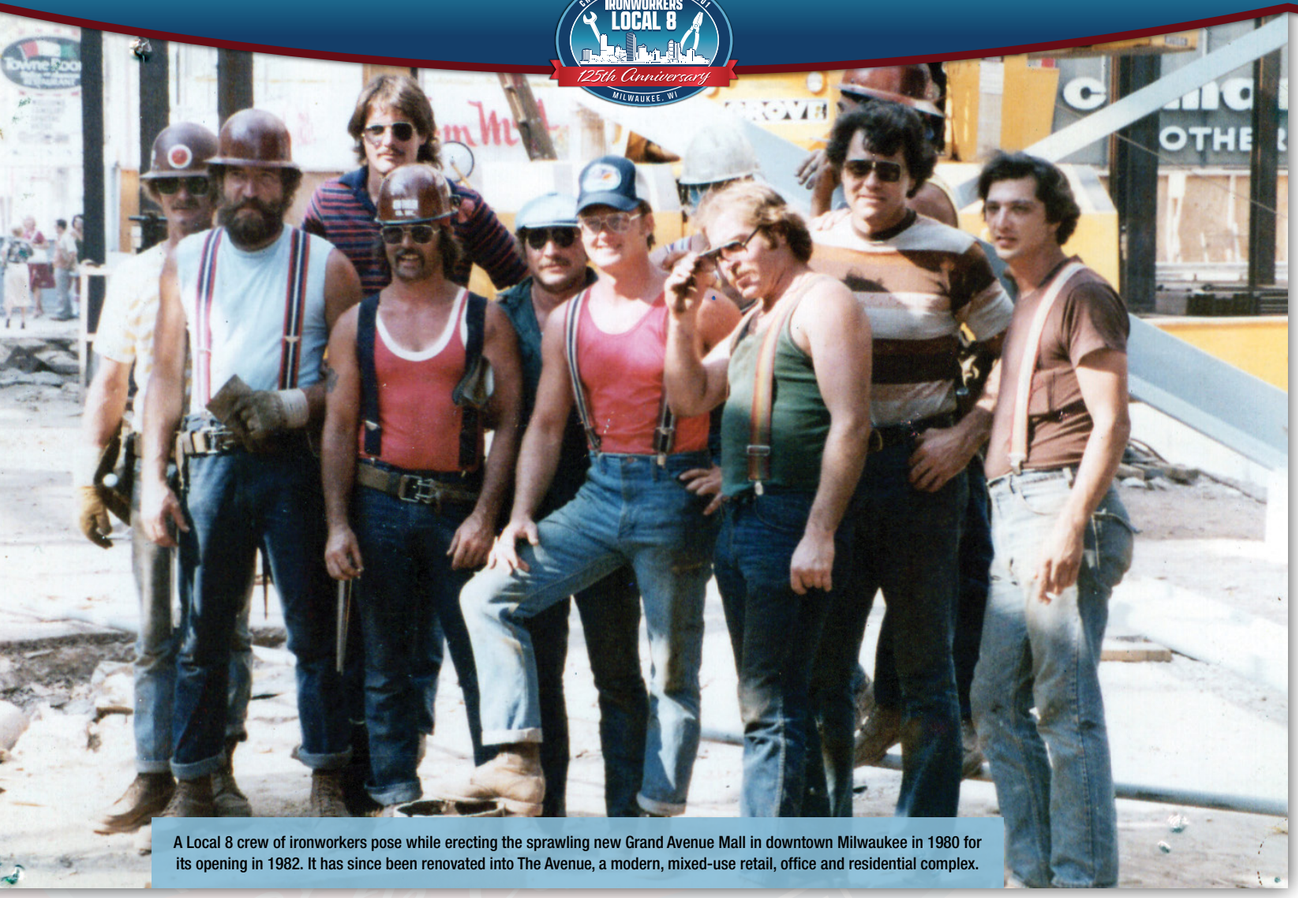
Milwaukee, that funding provided work to members for almost a year on construction of the massive **Linnwood Avenue Water Treatment Plant** along the city's lakefront – while the purification facility also improved the quality of Milwaukee's drinking water after it was completed in 1938.

Adding to the relief for ironworkers across the country, during the early 1930s the I.A. 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 per week so that those employers "could compete with unfair contractors."

The "second phase" of the New Deal, which President Roosevelt launched in 1935, also 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.

Local 8's fortunes were also tested with the unexpected turnover of its leadership while in the throes of the Great Depression, as Business Agent Reddin suddenly passed away from an illness in 1933. He was succeeded by **Brother Joseph F. Burns** for nearly two years, after which **Brother Herbert J. "Turk" Mueller** was elected business manager in 1935.

But Local 8 weathered the extraordinarily difficult times of the 1930s. Under the leadership of Business Manager Mueller, who quickly



A Local 8 crew of ironworkers pose while erecting the sprawling new Grand Avenue Mall in downtown Milwaukee in 1980 for its opening in 1982. It has since been renovated into The Avenue, a modern, mixed-use retail, office and residential complex.

became known for his direct negotiating style and with the exception of a two-year term in the 1950s would head the local until retiring in 1960, Local 8 would begin to not only recover but make notable progress again as it entered the next decade.

WINNING A WORLD WAR AND CONTINUING TO MAKE GAINS

By 1941, Local 8 had gained gradual increases in wages from the Building Trades Employers Association as the effects of the Great Depression subsided and **World War II** was underway in Europe and Asia since 1939. The local's work agreement with its employing contractors set wages in 1941 for structural and ornamental ironworkers at $1.50 per hour and for reinforcing rodmen at $1.37-1/2 per hour.

Meanwhile, with the United States beginning to build up its military defense industries to support the Britain-led Allies who were already fighting the conflict overseas against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, Milwaukee was becoming a major contributor to the "Arsenal of Democracy" (the slogan coined by President Roosevelt in his promise to supply military weapons and equipment to the allies). The conversion of the city's manufacturing plants from peacetime to wartime production provided many Local 8 ironworkers, as well as other construction tradesmen, with steady work erecting new additions, generating stations, conveyor systems and storage facilities, as well as installing heavy equipment, at the factories of Allis-Chalmers, A.O. Smith, Cutler-Hammer, Ampco Metal, Bucyrus-Erie, Globe Union, Nordberg, Ladish, J.I. Case, Massey-Harris and other companies.

Defense work and related employment increased rapidly after the United States officially entered the fight following the Japanese surprise attack on the U.S. Naval Station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and Milwaukee's factories continued to provide critical military supplies throughout the war. As Local 8 ironworkers continued to contribute their skills on the homefront, many also worked in Eastern Wisconsin's shipyards helping to build and repair tugboats, freighters and even mine-sweepers, while their skills as riggers were especially valued in the yards, where large lifts of materials were common.

But while union ironworkers experienced escalating employment as the war generated industrial and infrastructure construction, pay rates remained relatively stagnant through the war years as they were controlled by U.S. government policies imposed by the Labor Department's Wage Stabilization Board. As such, Local 8 received just one wage increase of 7 cents per hour in 1944 that raised the pay for its ironworkers to $1.57-1/2 per hour and its rodmen to $1.43-3/4 per hour.

Strong employment conditions for Local 8 ironworkers remained after the war ended with the surrenders of Germany on May 7, 1945, and Japan that August 15 to the Allies as Milwaukee became known as the "Machine Shop of the World" after its factories shifted back from producing wartime materiel to supplying an immense national building boom. Indeed, with construction soaring as the city's industries expanded to build the machines that rebuilt America, including Allis-Chalmers, Bucyrus-Erie and A.O. Smith, the local's members were put to work in even greater numbers throughout the second half of the 1940s and into the 1950s.

Wages likewise escalated, with the local and its 750 members gaining a new work agreement

Local 8 new journeyperson Sister Sue Klonkowski, one of the first female patternmaking apprentices in the nation, is shown shortly after she graduated from her apprenticeship program on November 9, 1981, with (1eft to right) Gil Eickhorst, vice president of industrial relations; Charles Corcoran, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training representative; and Charles T. Nye, administrator of the Wisconsin Division of Apprenticeship and Training.

with the Building Trades Employers' Association on May 4, 1946, that increased ironworkers' pay to $1.70 per hour and rodmen's pay to $1.56-1/4 per hour. Business Manager Mueller also announced in an article in the next day's *Milwaukee Journal* that the local had received "100-percent cooperation from the contractors in securing approval for the increases" from the Wage Stabilization Board.

Before the end of the decade, the wages of the local's ironworkers and rodmen were returned to equal levels. As the 1940s closed after their pay consistently rose over the previous few years, all members were then earning $2.35 per hour.

Among the many major projects on which Local 8 members worked during that time was construction of the 14-story Research Tower at the **Johnson Wax Headquarters** of household goods company S. C. Johnson & Son in Racine, Wisconsin, that was completed in November 1950; and the now-famous **Miller Brewing Block House** built between 1948 and 1950. The latter's towering, modern brick storage facility was dedicated as part of the brewer's massive, multi-year modernization project to expand aging and storage capacity.

SURGING WITH NEW BENEFITS, 'MIGHTY MAC' AND NEW LOCAL

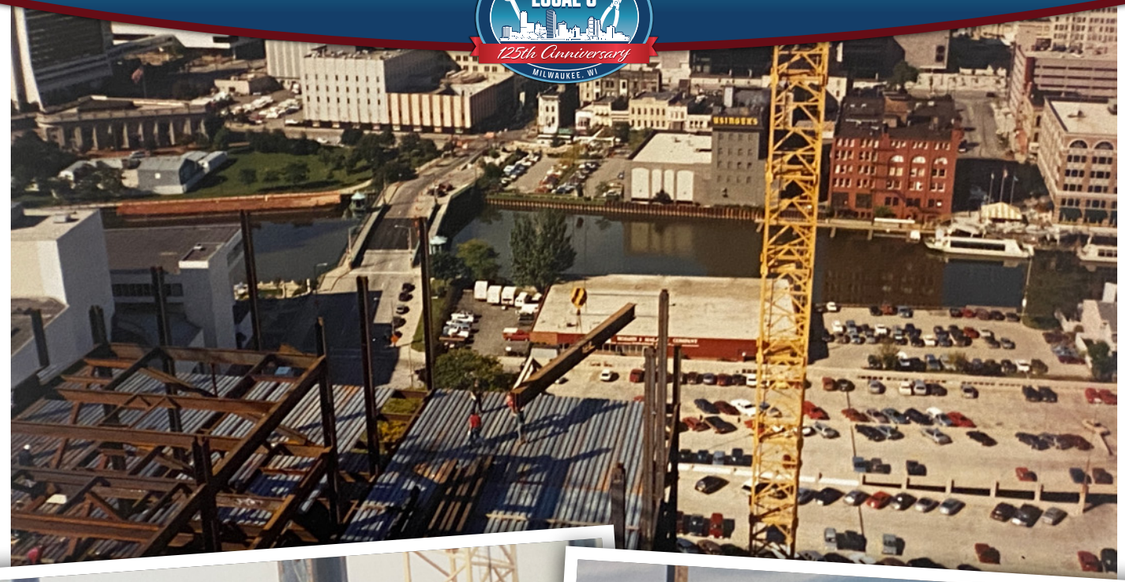
Local 8 made landmark gains at the bargaining table throughout the 1950s, during which its membership soared to more than 500 ironworkers. But while new work agreements with its employing contractors, who were by then organized into the Building Trades Employers Association (B.T.E.A.) of Milwaukee, provided increases in wages and first-ever employer-funded fringe benefits, they at times did not come without an occasional fight.

Perhaps most notably at first, when the B.T.E.A. refused to grant the local a 15-cent hourly wage increase and a new healthcare benefit as part of a new contract in 1952, the ironworkers joined other Milwaukee Building Trades Council locals that were also seeking pay raises and paid healthcare insurance in a month-long strike against the association beginning April 16, 1952. Along with the city's locals of union operating engineers, laborers, cement finishers and truck drivers locals, Local 8 won a 9-1/2-cent-per-hour pay raise and a new **Health and Welfare Fund** that went into effect September 1, 1952, with employer contributions of 5-cent-per-hour worked by the local's members and included general medical, hospitalization and disability coverage.

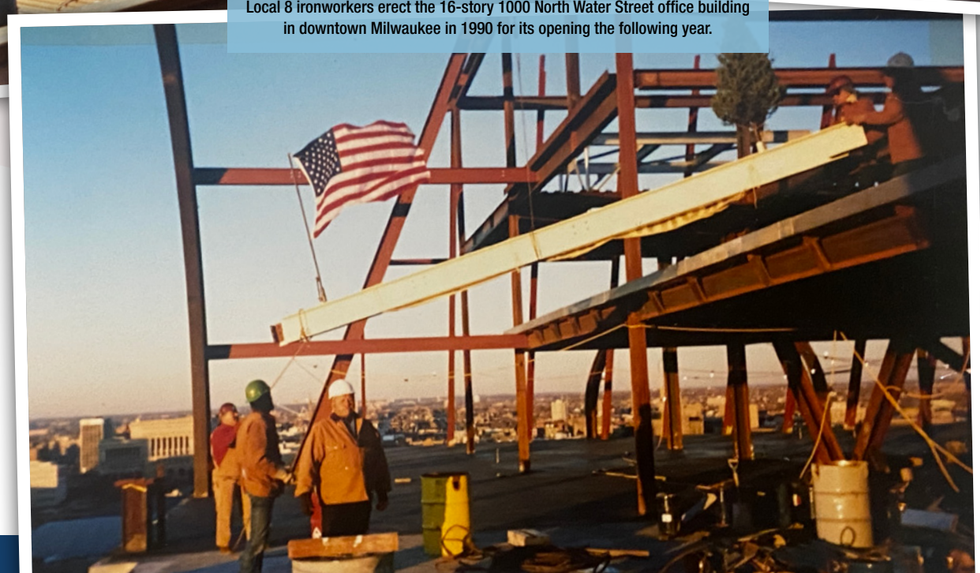
Subsequent negotiated contracts with the B.T.E.A. eventually boosted the local's wage scale for its ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen to $3.47 per hour and employer contributions to its healthcare fund to 7 cents per hour in their one-year work agreement ratified in August 1958. However, while the local had been lobbying for a new retirement benefit, the contractors would not include it in a contract.

But the following year, Local 8 and its more than 1,000 members joined with the other locals of the Building Trades Council to form the **Building Trades United Pension Trust**

Local 8 ironworkers erect the new Bradley Center multi-purpose arena in downtown Milwaukee in 1987 for its opening in October of the following year. The facility would be closed and demolished in 2019.



Local 8 ironworkers erect the 16-story 1000 North Water Street office building in downtown Milwaukee in 1990 for its opening the following year.

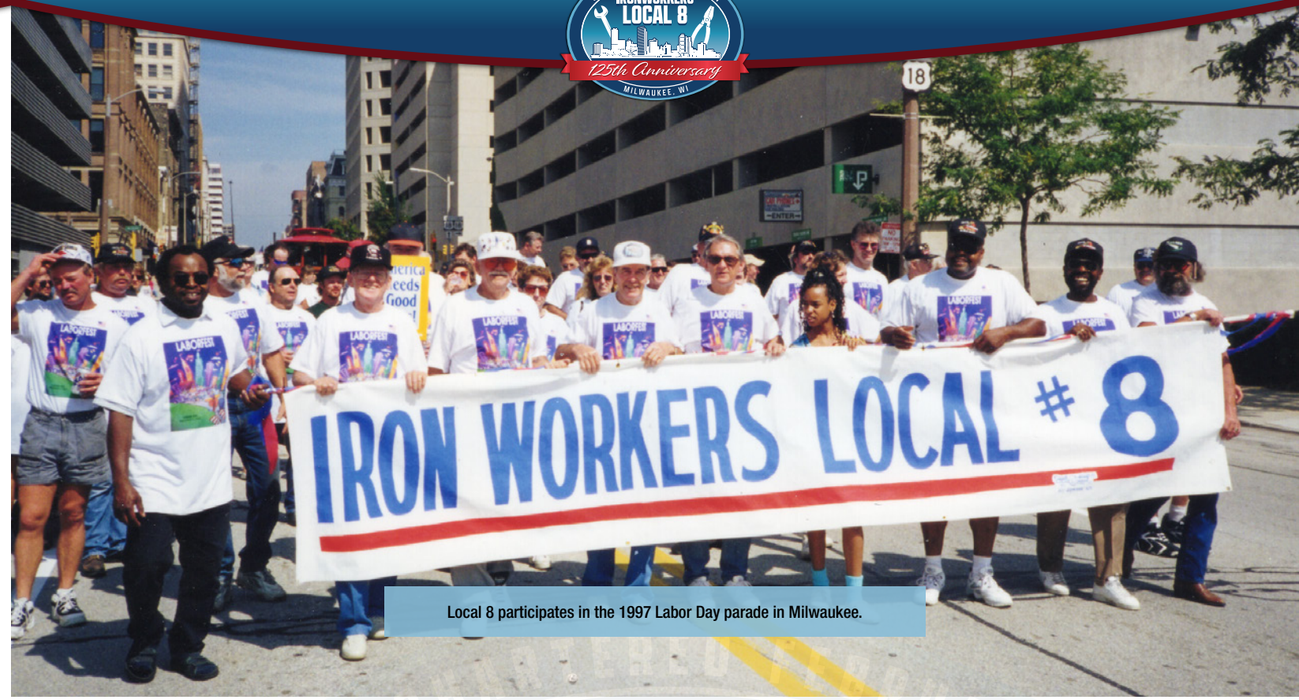


Fund – Milwaukee and Vicinity, which was subsequently negotiated into contracts that went into effect on June 1, 1959, with employer contributions of 10 cents per hour worked by the local's members. The first payments made from the construction-industry retirement-benefits fund would be distributed to Local 8 retirees in June 1960 – at which time the pension plan covered 18,000 workers and already had $2.2 million in assets.

Meanwhile, back in October 1950 an ongoing abundance of major work throughout the Local 8 jurisdiction essentially commenced with the start of construction on the new, 36,000-capacity **Milwaukee County Stadium** sports facility park that enticed Major League Baseball's Boston Braves franchise to relocate to Milwaukee for the 1953 season after the stadium was completed that year after being slowed by steel shortages caused by the Korean War. While the Green Back Packers of the National Football League also played some of its home games in the stadium, after the Braves left the city after its 1965 season, the Seattle Pilots baseball team would relocate to the stadium in 1970 and become the Milwaukee Brewers.

A major source of workhours was also inaugurated in 1951 with the start of work on the **Oak Creek Power Plant**, a four-unit coal-fired electrical power station located on Lake Michigan in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, whose first generator would go online in 1953. With Local 8 members erecting the plant's steel and installing its reinforcing iron, its fourth generator would go online in 1958 to bring the facility's total power output to 500,000 kilowatts (after which four more generating units would be added in the 1960s and Oak Creek's original four generators would be retired in the 1980s.)

Local 8 ironworkers work on the major life-extension and renovation project on Units 1 through 4 of the Port Washington Generating Station in Wisconsin in 1991.



Local 8 participates in the 1997 Labor Day parade in Milwaukee.

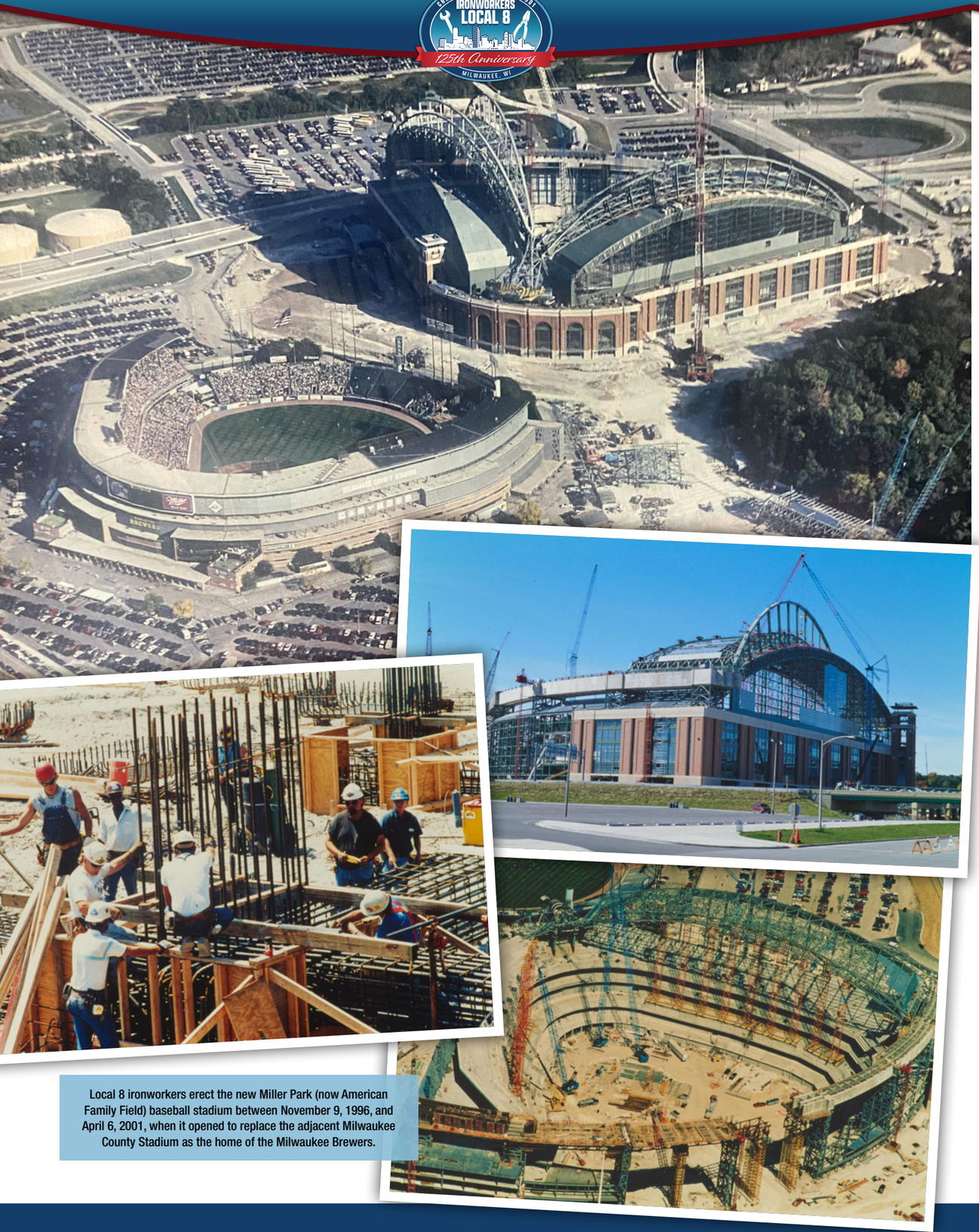
Elsewhere, the local's ironworkers erected the new (and a current) terminal at **General Mitchell Field** airport, which would become General Mitchell International Airport before being renamed in 2019 as **Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport**. Opened on July 20, 1955, the terminal, named for Milwaukee native U.S. Army General Billy Mitchell, who is often regarded as the father of the United States Air Force, featured one of the nation's first two-level concourse designs to separate arriving and departing passengers.

In that same decade, scores of Local 8 members had the honor of erecting the new, now-legendary **City Stadium** in Green Bay beginning in October 1956 to be the home stadium of the Packers. Opened on September 29, 1957, as the first stadium ever constructed exclusively for an N.F.L. franchise, it would be renamed in August 1965 as **Lambeau Field** to honor the Packers' founder and long-time head coach Earl "Curly" Lambeau.

Just across the street, union ironworkers also built the new, 5,248-seat, multi-purpose **Brown County Veterans Memorial Arena**. After opening in 1958, the facility hosted a range of legendary music and sporting events before being demolished in 2019.

All the while, a multitude of Local 8 members were working with hundreds of International Association ironworkers of other locals beginning in May 1954 to erect one of the modern wonders of the world: the **Mackinac Bridge** connecting the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan across the Mackinac Straits. After opening on November 1, 1957, following three-and-a-half years of work, the 5-mile-long suspension bridge, dubbed "Mighty Mac," stands as one of the proudest accomplishments of Local 8 and ironworkers everywhere.

Indeed, the finished product of the ironworkers – who drilled more than 4.8 million steel rivets and fastened more than one million steel bolts in erecting the bridge – and other trades workers was impressive: the bridge's steel superstructure is 3.6 miles long, its north and south towers rise 552 feet above the water and the tower piers extend as far as 210 feet below water. Altogether, Mighty Mac consists of 931,000



Local 8 ironworkers erect the new Miller Park (now American Family Field) baseball stadium between November 9, 1996, and April 6, 2001, when it opened to replace the adjacent Milwaukee County Stadium as the home of the Milwaukee Brewers.

tons of concrete, 71,300 tons of structural steel and almost 12,000 tons of cable wire that would stretch for 42,000 miles.

Construction of the Mackinac Bridge also convinced the I.A. to establish a new local to represent the union's members in the Upper Peninsula, which at the time was served by several different locals. Subsequently, the union chartered **Ironworkers Local No. 783** in Marquette on November 23, 1957, after which it would oversee its jurisdiction for the next 37 years before the I.A. merged it into Local 8 in 1994 to strengthen the union's present throughout the region.

Adding to the employment euphoria of the period, in 1956 the U.S. Congress passed the **Interstate Highway Act**, establishing the wide-ranging Interstate system. Over the next 13 years, more than $30 billion was funneled into highway and bridge construction around the country, including Wisconsin, in which Local 8 ironworkers helped build much of the "I" system.

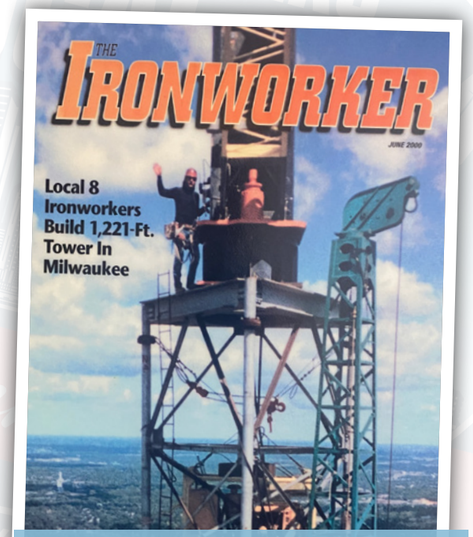
But at the State A.F.L.-C.I.O. Building Trades Conference in 1959, Business Manager Mueller blasted the "big four" highway construction unions – the carpenters, Teamsters, laborers and operating engineers – for bargaining for what he called "lousy" wage rates for workers employed on interstate jobs. Brother Mueller and his successor, **Brother Earl "Red" Spicer**, fought continuously to see that all bridge and structural work on the new highways was done by qualified ironworkers who were paid proper wages.

DRIVING FORWARD THROUGH HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE DECADES

Surpassing a membership of 1,000 structural ironworkers and reinforcing roadmen throughout 22 Eastern Wisconsin counties during the 1960s, Local 8 also grew its journeyman wage scale to $3.67 per hour at the beginning of the decade to $6.06 per hour by 1970 through collective-bargaining negotiations with the Allied Construction Employers Association. In doing so, the local also worked to successfully bolster its members' healthcare and pension benefits throughout that period.

With its membership expanding and its finances sound, after having rented space for its offices and meetings during the previous six decades, the local was able to realize one of its landmark accomplishments in 1962 when it purchased the first-ever building it owned to serve as the new **Local 8 Union Hall**. The local would go on to maintain its headquarters at the facility at 6225 West Bluemound Road in Milwaukee for the next 17 years.

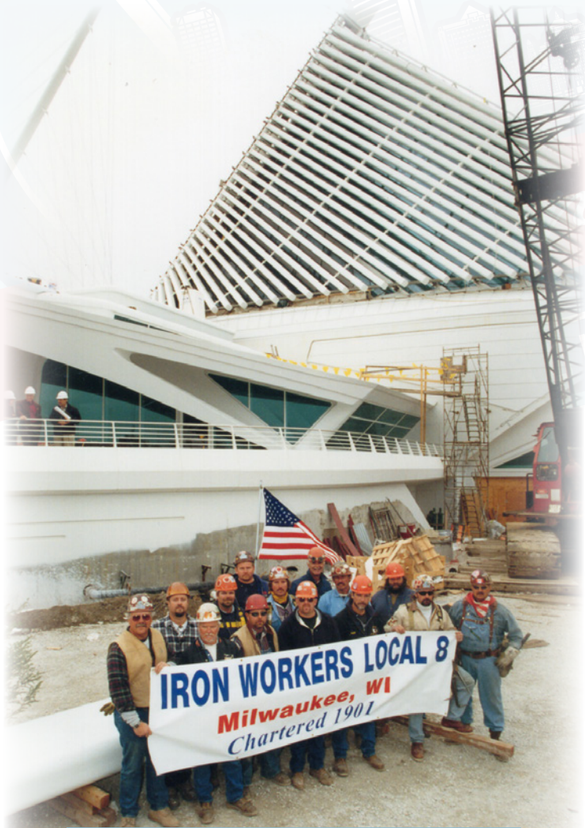
Supporting its growing membership's employment out in the field during the 1960s was a large amount of work erecting and expanding the numerous paper mills and power plants in the local's jurisdiction, including construction of the Wisconsin Electric Power



Local 8 is featured on the cover of the June 2000 issue of the International Association of Ironworkers Journal publication for its work erecting a 1,221-foot-tall television and communication tower in Milwaukee earlier that year.

Company's new **Point Beach Nuclear Plant** beginning in July 1967 with its Unit 1 reactor and generator and then its Unit 2 in July 1968. After they were operational in December 1970 and October 1972, respectively, the International Association recognized the local's work at the plant as the union's **"Rigging Job of the Year"** after members lifted a 60-foot-long, 260-ton nuclear reactor vessel 55-feet high before lowering it and placing it laterally through a 28-foot-by-30-foot opening into its containment shell.

(Since that time, Wisconsin Electric Power Company became We Energies, a subsidiary of Wisconsin Energy Corporation. Point Beach Nuclear Plant is currently owned and operated by NextEra Energy.)



Local 8 ironworkers pose while working on final construction of the new and now-iconic Quadracci Pavilion sculptural addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum that opened in 2001.

Ongoing work building the interstate freeways in the Milwaukee area also provided large amounts of workhours to Local 8 members. Those projects were highlighted for the local's members with work on the colossal **Marquette Interchange** downtown junction of Interstate-43 and Interstate-94 that was completed and opened to traffic in 1968.

It was during that time of prosperity and strong employment conditions that Local 8 instituted the position of business manager/financial secretary in 1966, with **Brother Robert C. Zimmermann** being elected to the office that year. The local also assigned two business agents to assist the business manager in his duty of patrolling the local's jurisdiction, with **Brother Russell Pride** and **Brother Peter Succa** initially serving in those positions.

Flexing its new-found strength, the local called off a threatened strike when it came to terms with the employers association on July 24 of that year for a new, two-year work agreement that called for total wage increases that would raise the local's base journeyman scale from $4.41 to $5.31 per hour before ending on May 31, 1968. The contract, which was retroactive to June 1, 1966, also provided for employer hourly contributions of 20 cents for the Health and Welfare Fund, 15 cents for the Pension Fund and an additional 15 cents for a new **Vacation Fund** for members (which would remain operational for the next 20 years until being dissolved in the 1980s).

Additionally, along with constant technological advancements in equipment including the vastly improved capacities of hydraulic cranes, the increased use and application of metal-curtainwall and precast-concrete panel construction for large commercial buildings had by that time further enhanced employment opportunities for union ironworkers. As such, Business Manager Zimmerman was able to announce in an article in the April 29, 1967, issue of *The Milwaukee Sentinel* newspaper that the local was in its "third fantastic year without any lay-offs all year."

Further propped up by the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by the U.S. Congress in 1970, as the agency's mission was to establish and enforce standards for safety and health in all areas of work would greatly extend into the iron-erecting industry, throughout the ensuing decade Local 8 ironworkers would assemble some of the most iconic and vital projects ever constructed in Eastern Wisconsin. Among those, the local's members erected more than 18,000 tons of steel for the new **Harbor Bridge** (now the Daniel Hoan Memorial Bridge after one of Milwaukee's longest-serving mayors) connecting Interstate-794 in the city's downtown area to the Lake Freeway across the Milwaukee River inlet when it was completed in 1977 (after long delays caused by freeway opposition led to the partially finished structure to be dubbed "The Bridge to Nowhere").

Then beginning in April 1971, construction started on the new, 42-story **First Wisconsin Center** skyscraper in downtown Milwaukee with Local 8 ironworkers erecting its steel skeleton, which featured a specialized trussed-tube system engineered primarily for its exterior perimeter frame and diagonal bracing to withstand Milwaukee's strong Lake Michigan winds. After members "topped out" the frame with its final 20-foot iron beam on August 29, 1972, and ultimately placed 13,000 tons of iron for the office tower, now named U.S. Bank Center, it would be – and remains – the tallest building in the State of Wisconsin when it was completed and opened in September 1973.

Meanwhile, a new, two-year work agreement with the Allied Construction Employers Association that boosted the local's journeyman wage rate from $7.71 to $8.06 per hour the first year and $8.41 per hour the second year also

Local 8 members in the local's Fox Valley area pose after receiving their individual International Association of Ironworkers "Years of Service" awards and pins from Local 8 Business Manager Tony Mayrhofer (third from left).

Local 8 ironworkers break for a photo while erecting the 32-story Northwestern Mutual Tower and Commons, the largest office building in Wisconsin, in downtown Milwaukee in 2016 for its opening in August the following year.

established a new **Apprenticeship Training Fund** for the local. With the contract, along with contributions for healthcare, retirement and vacations, employers would also subsidize the training of the local's apprentices with the additional 11-cent-per-hour benefit.

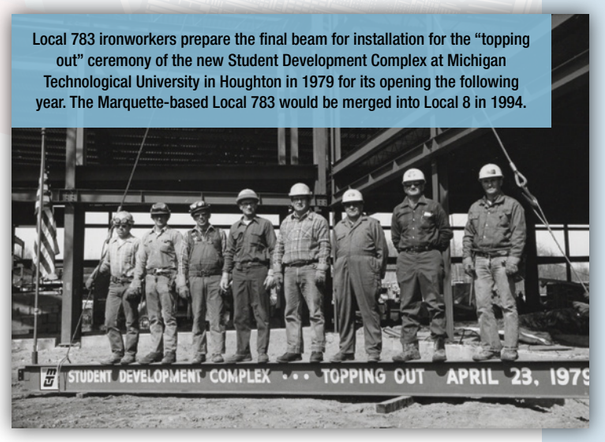
To further advance its apprentice-training program, in 1975 Local 8 and its contractors, through their **Ironworkers Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee** (J.A.T.C.), purchased a property on Adler Lane in the West Allis suburb of Milwaukee to host training. After remodeling the facility, the J.A.T.C. opened the first-ever **Milwaukee Area Ironworkers Training Center** later that year.

Back out in the field, work and employment conditions flourished in the 1970s with construction of the new **Pleasant Prairie Power Plant**, a 1.2-gigawatt coal-fired electrical station in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, beginning by 1976 that would provide much-needed baseload electricity to the Wisconsin Electric power grid as one of the state's largest generating facilities. Many Local 8 members helped erect the plant's two generating units before they were commissioned in 1980 and 1985, respectively (and have since been retired in 2018).

Even though employment in the local's jurisdiction began to slow somewhat during the second half of the 1970s, power plant, brewery and paper-mill work in particular continued to provide the local's membership with workhours. With new paper-making technology prompting companies to update their massive facilities, later in the decade union ironworkers erected the most notable large paper mill built in Wisconsin, the **Consolidated Papers B-64 paper machine complex** in Biron, Wisconsin, which officially began producing high-quality coated publication paper in 1979.

As always, bridge work also employed members during that time, including construction of the **Tower Drive Bridge** in Green Bay beginning in 1978. Now the Leo Frigo Memorial Bridge, the 1.2-mile span would begin carrying Interstate-43 over the Fox River when it opened to traffic in 1981.

Local 8 also closed out the lucrative decade with a new, three-year work agreement with the Eastern Wisconsin Erectors Association in 1978 that provided its 1,250 members with modest raises that ultimately increased wages for ironworkers and rodmen to $12.06 per hour in 1980 but called for substantially higher hourly contributions of $1.30 for the Health and Welfare Fund, $1 for the Pension Fund and $1.21 for the Vacation Fund. Additionally, recently elected Business Manager Pride led an effort to establish an annuity fund for members, the **Union Individual Account Retirement Fund**, that began June 5, 1978, and would prove to be a flexible, major supplement to their pensions.



Local 783 ironworkers prepare the final beam for installation for the "topping out" ceremony of the new Student Development Complex at Michigan Technological University in Houghton in 1979 for its opening the following year. The Marquette-based Local 783 would be merged into Local 8 in 1994.

After it was briefly affiliated with the Ironworkers District Council of Chicago and Vicinity, Local 8 has been an original affiliate local of the Ironworkers District Council of the North Central States since it was formed in 1976. The district council represents and supports International Association of Ironworkers locals in Nebraska, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan in various activities such as recruiting, organizing and collective bargaining for work agreements.

MERGER EXPANDED LOCAL 8 INTO MICHIGAN'S 'UPPER PENINSULA'

Almost immediately following the completion of construction of the five-mile-long Mackinac Bridge that connected the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan across the Mackinac Straits when it was opened on November 1, 1957, the International Association (I.A.) of Ironworkers formed and chartered Local No. 783 in the "Upper Peninsula" (U.P.) on November 23, 1957. Before and during the 3-1/2-year construction project to erect the suspension bridge, jurisdiction of ironworkers in the U.P. was divided between Local 8, which controlled its two southern counties; Ironworkers Local No. 563 of Duluth, which controlled its western half; and Ironworkers Local No. 25, Local No. 340 and Local No. 426, which together controlled its eastern counties – while several other counties were "open" territory.

I.A. General Organizer Robert V. Poole, who was tasked with overseeing the interests of all ironworkers employed on the bridge, had concluded while observing the vast construction project that the U.P. should be united under the jurisdiction of one local. While it took some time before Local 563 conceded its jurisdiction to Local 783 and a national economic recession in the late 1950s curbed construction jobs and challenged the financial viability of the fledgling unit, Local 783 survived those lean times and went on to represent its ironworking members for the next 37 years.

Among the significant projects on which Local 783 were employed throughout its U.P. territory during its existence were power plants at Escanaba, Presque Isle and L'Anse; the Kinross and K.I. Sawyer U.S. Air Force bases; the Houghton, Menomonie and International bridges; the Kinross, Baraga and Munising prisons; and Lake View Arena and General Hospital in Marquette. They also worked on the Soo Locks in Sault St. Marie and many of the paper mills, such as those operated by Mead and Champion, and mines, such as the White Pine copper and Groveland iron ore mines.

However, as the result of a combination of factors that included the union's drive to combine locals into single, larger units to project more power, the I.A. merged Local 783 into Local 8 in 1994, adding an additional 225 members to the Milwaukee-based local and expanding its jurisdictional territory into Michigan.

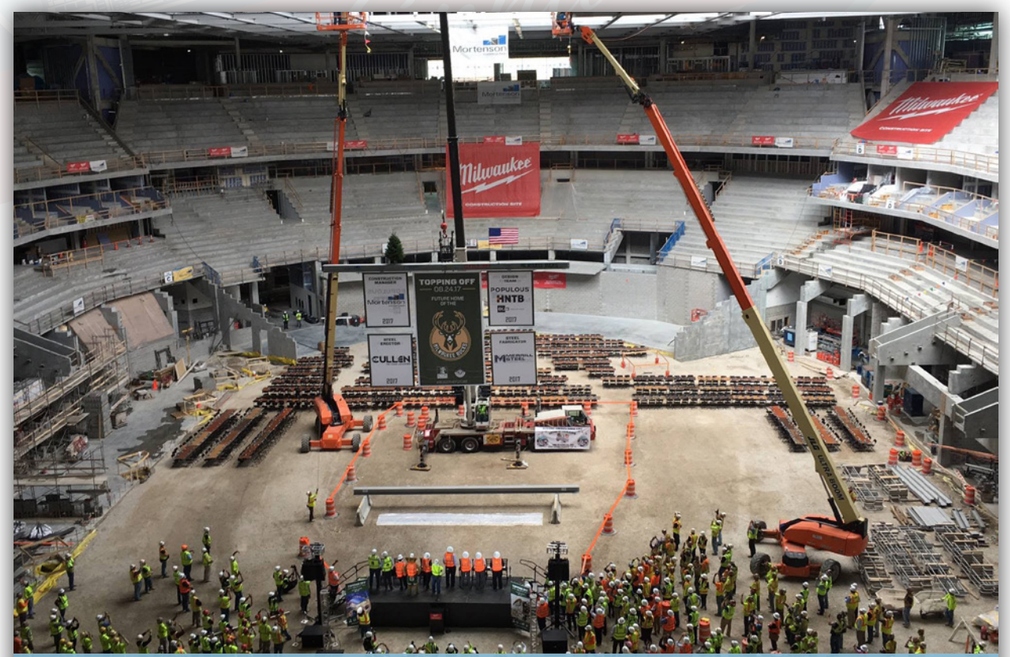
A NEW HALL, TOUGH TIMES AND HEARTBREAKING LOSSES

In 1979, The Ironworkers J.A.T.C. transferred the deed to its Adler Lane property to the Joint Apprenticeship and Advanced Journeyman Training Trust Fund, which in turn sold half of the property to Local 8. By that time, the local had outgrown its union hall on West Bluemound Road and its officers had been planning to move the local's offices and meeting space into a larger facility, while careful financial management and planning had enabled the local to make such a significant investment in its future.

The local held a grand opening for its new **Local 8 Union Hall** at **12034 West Adler Lane** in November 1980. It has since remodeled the facility in which it still maintains its headquarters and meeting hall as it celebrates its 125th charter anniversary in 2026.

But over the course of the first half of the 1980s and into the second half of the decade, Local 8 and its membership endured a long recession during which the construction industry was relatively stagnant. Western Wisconsin and other regions of the nation's "Rust Belt" of heavily industrialized northern Midwest cities and towns also experienced mass factory closures during that period as manufacturing suffered under major economic transitions triggered by cheaper imports and factory relocations overseas, further diminishing employment opportunities for the union ironworkers.

Regardless, Local 8 still successfully negotiated consistent wage and benefit increases in its work agreements with the Allied Construction Employers Association and the Eastern Wisconsin Erectors Association across the 1980s. To begin with, a new two-year contract that provided wage and benefit



During a "topping out" ceremony, Local 8 ironworkers place the final steel beam on construction of the new Fiserv Forum multi-purpose arena in downtown Milwaukee that would open in 2017 as the home of the Milwaukee Bucks of the National Basketball Association.

increases of $2.30 per hour on June 1, 1981, and $1.75 June 1, 1982, raised the local's journeyman ironworker and reinforcing-rodmen total compensation package to **$19.27 per hour** in 1982.

Ensuing agreements would eventually set the ironworker and rodman base wage scale at $18.37 per hour in 1989. They would also increase fringe benefits to $2.45 per hour for the Health and Welfare Fund, $1.35 per hour for the Pension Fund, $2.60 per hour for the Annuity Fund and 25 cents per hour for the Training Fund – giving the local's journeymen a total pay package of **$25.02 per hour** before the end of the decade.

And while traveling to the jurisdictions of other locals for work – or **"booming"** – became more prevalent among the Local 8 membership as employment conditions in Eastern Wisconsin remained poor, the local championed **"reciprocity,"** through which the benefits contributions earned by a traveling member would not be paid into the funds of the I.A. local is whose territory the member was working but instead would be paid into Local 8's funds. Local 8 would continue to respect and advocate for reciprocity, an issue the I.A. would ultimately support through a set of reciprocal agreements.

In the field, workhours that were available to the local's members within its jurisdiction were bolstered by increased construction and capital investment in Wisconsin's paper mills. Driven by new technology, new products and pollution laws, the work focused primarily on overhauling existing facilities, upgrading expansive papermaking machines and building new environmental treatment systems to meet regulations.

Then, as construction was recuperating with a slowly improving economy in the second half of the 1980s, a brief construction "boom" produced numerous larger projects that provided steady employment for the local's membership, including erecting the new **Bradley Center** multi-purpose arena in downtown Milwaukee beginning in October 1986. When completed and opened in October 1988, the 18,000-seat facility would be the home court of the Milwaukee Bucks of the National Basketball Association and host countless concerts and events (until it was closed and demolished in 2019).

Before the end of the decade, however, although other key jobs included construction of the 16-story **1000 North Water Street** high-rise office building in downtown Milwaukee that was completed in 1991, the local's market share on smaller projects within the construction industry had diminished to less than 50 percent and its membership stood at fewer than 600 ironworkers and apprentices. In response, in 1989 the local's members approved the creation of a **Defense Fund** for organizing that would focus on market recovery and be subsidized by contributions from the membership's own workhours.

As employment conditions stabilized during the early 1990s and Local 8 gave more attention to organizing, it was able to boost its membership numbers back above 1,000 by 1994. That year, the I.A. also merged Local 783 into Local 8 – with the former' approval – because the Upper Peninsula local had only a small number of members – less than 225 – which made it difficult to establish adequate benefits and programs for its membership and stave off non-union escalation into its territory.

Because both locals shared a common base of contractors and worked on similar projects for the paper and mining industries, with Wisconsin ironworkers having worked in Upper Michigan and their northern brothers having worked on jobs in Wisconsin, the merger was mostly considered a success. "We always had a good relationship with Local 8," former **Local 783 Business Manager John LaVallee** later explained. "Members of both

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Local 8 Apprentice & Member Training

EDUCATING ITS INDUSTRY-BEST WORKFORCE OF IRONWORKERS

"Success of the apprenticeship program has been due to the fine cooperation between the Ironworkers and Management over the years."

– Ironworkers Local 8 Yearbook, 1958

During the first half of the 1900s, prospective future ironworkers in the Milwaukee area who were seeking to enter the trade would obtain a work permit from Local 8, which he (there were no women in the trade at the time) provided to a union-signatory contractor who was willing to take on an apprentice trainee. As an apprentice, that "permit worker" would work alongside veteran ironworkers on jobsites to learn the trade while being paid half of the local's journeyman wage scale.

Seeing to better train and prepare apprentices to become journeyman ironworkers, in the mid-1950s Local 8 and its employing contractors established the Milwaukee Area Ironworkers Joint Apprenticeship Committee, made up of an equal number of representatives from the local and the contractors, to develop and administer a formal apprentice-training program. Instituted in 1955 with an inaugural class of apprentices, the J.A.C. graduated its first class of nine new journeymen ironworkers on December 2, 1958, after each had worked at least 4,500 hours "in a satisfactory manner" and passed an aptitude test and interview.

In the early 1970s, when updated laws stipulated that new apprentices were indentured through the State of Wisconsin rather than individual contractors, the J.A.C. increased the amount of time and training required by apprentices to achieve journeyman status to at least three years and at least 6,000 hours of on-the-job training and about 400 hours of related class curriculum and hands-on instruction. During that time, classes were being held at the Waukesha County Technical while apprentices in the northern area of the local's Eastern Wisconsin jurisdiction attended Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute in Green Bay.

The current Local 8 Training Center on West Adler Lane in Milwaukee shown sometime after it was opened in 1975.

The program's core curriculum, taught by longtime journeyman ironworkers, was based on three major units: structural ironwork, reinforcing-rod work and rigging. Classes include welding and related job skills as well as safety training as mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

To further enhance, expand and improve the J.A.C. training, the Local 8 two-year work agreement that it negotiated with the Allied Construction Employers Association and went into effect in July 1972 established an Apprenticeship Training Fund as a fringe benefit for the local's membership. The contract initially called for employers of Local 8 ironworkers to contribute 11 cents per hour worked by members into the fund – and in 2026 as the local celebrates its 125th charter anniversary, contributions into the Local 8 Joint Apprenticeship and Advanced Journeymen Training Trust Fund are $1.35 per hour for apprentice training and 50 cents per hour for journeyman upgrade training.

The first Local 8/J.A.C. apprenticeship coordinator was Brother Richard "Dick" Eyestone, who remained in the position until 1976.

Local 8 then purchased a property on West Adler Road in Milwaukee in 1975 that it would remodel for training. The facility has since been modernized several times over with classrooms, labs, outdoor apparatus and welding facilities into state-of-the-art Milwaukee Area Ironworkers Training Center.

In 2026, Ironworkers Local 8 and the renamed Ironworkers Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (J.A.T.C.) provide a structured and comprehensive four-year, "earn while you learn" union training program, which includes comprehensive safety training, that ensures apprentices master every aspect of the trade, from welding and rigging to structural steel erection. As such, the J.A.T.C. apprenticeship program produces highly skilled journeymen ironworkers through hands-on field training and classroom instruction while providing apprentices with wages and full benefits including healthcare and retirement pensions.

The J.A.T.C. also offers advanced training programs to help Local 8 journeyman ironworkers remain up-to-date with the latest industry methods and advancements. Those programs include specialized technique, operation and fabrication courses; leadership training; and certification programs through which members can obtain industry-recognized certifications to enhance their credentials.

The very first Local 8 indentured graduating apprentices under the Milwaukee Area Ironworkers Joint Apprenticeship Committee training program after it was established in 1955 were brothers Jerrold C. Allen, Byron Aprill, Harvey Bentrup, Harry Boguslawski, Peter Brongield, Raymond C. De Vriendt, Robert Hahm, Dale Manchester and Allen Wolter, who were honored during a graduation ceremony on December 2, 1958, at the John Ernst Café in Milwaukee.

Local 8 opened its new Northern Area Training Center in Marquette in October 2024 to serve its apprentices and members in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The first building-trades training facility in the area at the time after two years of construction, the $5.5-million, 15,000-square-foot center would provide hands-on training in multiple fields such as welding, air arching, mass timber and structural mock-ups.

locals shared a strong work ethic, too, so it seemed like a good fit, and I think it has been."

To keep its momentum, the following year the local established the position of fulltime organizer. It then hired **Brother Dan Cole** to serve as its first organizer, soon after which it hired two more organizers to recruit non-union workers and contractors.

Meanwhile during that time and throughout the balance of the 1990s, the 20th Century and the millennium, the local's ironworkers continued to erect the infrastructure and edifices of its communities. Those included larger projects such as expansion of the **Wisconsin Tissue Mills** in Menasha in 1990 that increased its production capacity by 70 percent; a major building addition to **Waukesha Memorial Hospital** in 1994 that included a new office structure for physicians; replacement of the 70-year-old **North Avenue Viaduct** crossing the Milwaukee River in 1991; and erecting buildings on the campuses of the **University of Wisconsin**, **Michigan Technological University** in Houghton, **Alverno College** in Milwaukee and **Lawrence University** in Appleton, Wisconsin.

The local's ironworkers beginning in November 1996 also worked on one of the crown jewels of its projects to date: construction of the new, modern **Miller Park** retractable-roof baseball stadium to replace Milwaukee County Stadium as the home field of the Brewers. One of the largest construction projects in Wisconsin history, the park was erected next to the older stadium and would feature North America's only fan-shaped convertible roof.

But tragically, the large crane being used to lift pieces of the stadium's roof into place collapsed on July 14, 1999, killing Local 8 ironworkers **Brother William DeGrave**, **Brother Jerome Starr** and **Brother Jeffrey Wischer**. With new safety measures in place and the local afterward fully in charge of its work, union ironworkers went on to complete construction of the stadium, now called American Family Field since 2021, for the 2001 baseball season in homage to their fallen brothers.

Local 8 apprentice Sister Robin Johnson was the first female member of the International Association of Ironworkers to lose her life while on a job when on September 24, 1996, the mother of two fell 37 feet from the roof base of a building in the LakeView Corporate Park in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, on which she was working. In the wake of the death of Sister Johnson, who at the time was one of only three female members of the 750-member Local 8, and the deaths of other ironworkers while on the job, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) improved construction-work safety rules and laws that addressed several issues including the wearing of safety harnesses.

FLOURISHING NEW MILLENNIUM CHECKED BY ECONOMY, LAWS

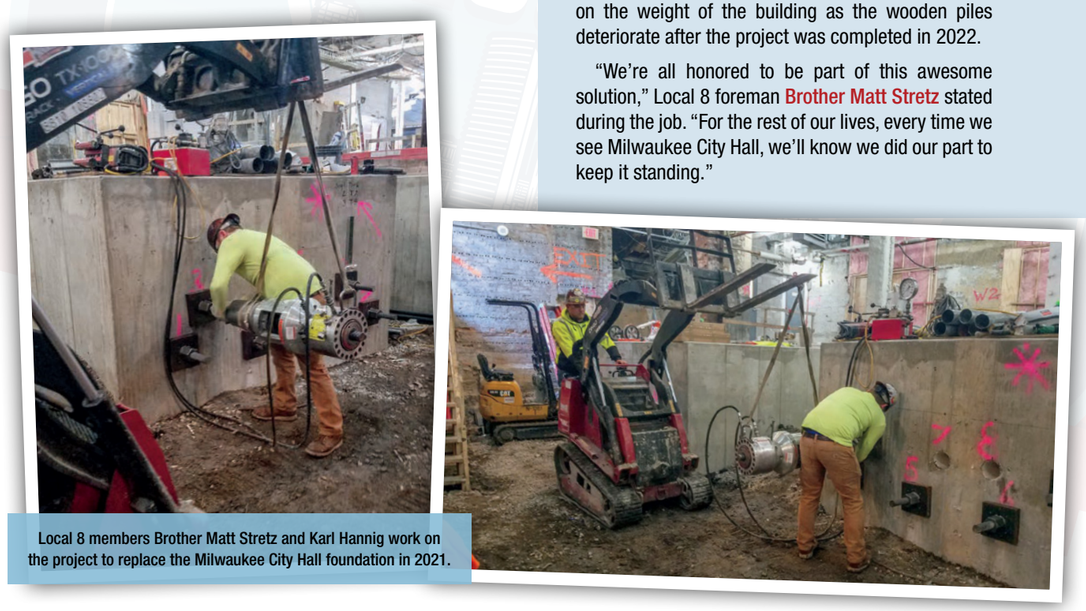
Local 8 entered the new "Y2K" with member ironworkers and reinforcing rodmen employed on an extensive, 20-year maintenance and refurbishment project for the 40-year-old Mackinac Bridge that began in 1999 and would replace the traveler system under its roadway and repair its super- and sub-structures. Other members were working on the completion of Miller Park and an array of other jobs throughout Eastern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

At the local's 100th charter anniversary in 2001, it had an active membership of about 950 ironworkers and apprentices as its stepped-up organizing efforts had been producing results. What's more, members were earning a wage rate and benefits package far beyond those from a century ago.

By that time, the local and the **Allied Construction Employers Association of Milwaukee**, the **Eastern Wisconsin Erectors Association** and the **Fox Valley Erectors Association** had established distinct wage rates for different geographical zones to more-closely align with each area's economy. As such, total wage-and-benefits packages for the local's journeymen southeast Wisconsin $36.97 per hour in June 2001, $35.16 per hour for those in northeast Wisconsin and $32.84 per hour for those in Upper Michigan.

Concurrently, mounting construction work and strengthening employment conditions that were beginning to provide members with robust workhours again, in addition to its organizing efforts, had enabled the local to also increase its number of signatory contractors and apprentices as well. As a result, by 2001 its training program had grown from 12 ironworker trainees in 1995 to about 180 apprentices just six years later.

Among the increasing work, the local's craftsmen erected the already-iconic **Quadracci Pavilion** addition to the landmark **Milwaukee Art Museum** beginning in 2000. Opened the following year, construction of the unique structure, which houses a grand reception hall, an auditorium and a large exhibition space,



Local 8 members Brother Matt Stretz and Karl Hannig work on the project to replace the Milwaukee City Hall foundation in 2021.

LOCAL 8 AWARDED FOR CITY HALL REVITALIZATION

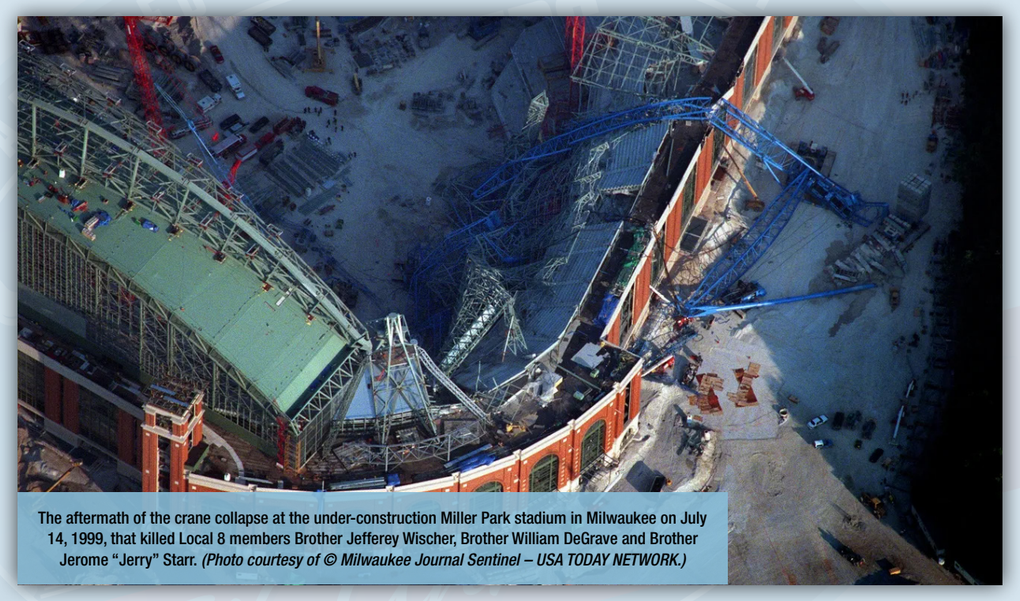
Completed in 1895, Milwaukee City Hall was, at the time, the world's largest occupied building, and the 50,000-ton architectural marvel would go on to dominate the city's skyline for decades. However, by 2015 the hall's foundation, which was placed on nearly 2,500 white-pine piles when it was built on what had been swampland, was severely sinking as the wooden supports were deteriorating, resulting in differential settling that threatened the building's structural integrity.

That year, skilled Local 8 union ironworkers working for MKE Iron Erector began replacing the failing timbers with concrete and iron through a novel "passive-load transfer" plan devised by an architectural team to stop the sinking. Never attempted before in North America, the unique, complex process first had workers remove the building's basement floor and then drive steel "micropiles" up to 100 feet into the earth.

After the micropiles were installed, the ironworkers fabricated an iron-rebar cage around each of the nearly 2,500 existing wooden supports to be encased in concrete. Once the new concrete support was set, specially certified ironworkers installed horizontal weight-bearing tension bars at the base, after which they stressed the bars to over 75 tons of pressure using a jack, allowing the new foundations to take on the weight of the building as the wooden piles deteriorate after the project was completed in 2022.

"We're all honored to be part of this awesome solution," Local 8 foreman Brother Matt Stretz stated during the job. "For the rest of our lives, every time we see Milwaukee City Hall, we'll know we did our part to keep it standing."

'Miller Park Heroes'
LOCAL 8 MEMBERS PERISHED IN STADIUM TRAGEDY



The aftermath of the crane collapse at the under-construction Miller Park stadium in Milwaukee on July 14, 1999, that killed Local 8 members Brother Jefferey Wischer, Brother William DeGrave and Brother Jerome "Jerry" Starr. *(Photo courtesy of © Milwaukee Journal Sentinel – USA TODAY NETWORK.)*

Three Local 8 members – Brother Jefferey Wischer, Brother William DeGrave and Brother Jerome "Jerry" Starr – lost their lives when a crane nicknamed "Big Blue" collapsed at approximately 5:12 on the evening of July 14, 1999, while lifting a section of the retractable roof onto what would become the new Miller Park baseball stadium for the Milwaukee Brewers when it opened in 2001. The stadium project, which would include installing a retractable roof on the park, was the result of many years of lobbying by the Milwaukee building trades, including Local 8, after which all the construction unions of the city signed a project-labor agreement for the work.

Construction on the stadium began with groundbreaking on November 9, 1996. Nearly three years later on the day of the accident, Brother Starr was a steward and Brother Wischer and Brother DeGrave were both foremen on the project when they were 300 feet in the air in another crane's basket monitoring "Big Blue" as it performed the lift when it collapsed and hit their basket.

Following the tragedy, Local 8's focus turned to the families of the deceased brothers as well as safety on the incomplete jobsite. In doing so, the local insisted that its ironworkers would not return to the project until it was given the authority to make decisions on the site regarding its work, which was granted by the Stadium Board.

Although some ironworkers struggled with returning to the job, Local 8 and the other building-trades unions believed that the best way to honor the fallen "Miller Park Heroes" was to complete the project. With another crane that was bigger than "Big Blue," work was accelerated and a "topping off" ceremony during which the final piece of steel was placed was attended by more than 4,000 spectators.

The retractable-roof stadium, now known as American Family Field, was completed and officially opened on April 6, 2001, with a regular-season game between the Brewers and the Cincinnati Reds. Afterward, Local 8 Business Manager Brent Emons declared, "It is a shining example of what the ironworkers and other building trades and a very supportive community can achieve when we work together."

Local 8 and the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council most recently honored Brother Wischer, Brother DeGrave and Brother Starr on the 25th anniversary of the tragedy with a ceremony and tailgate before the Brewers game on July 14, 2024, after which Business Manager Charlie Falkner threw the ceremonial first pitch of the game.

In preparation for the celebration of the lives of the three "Miller Park Heroes," retired Business Manager Emons recalled, "Me and Jerry (Starr) served our apprenticeships together in the 1970s, and we worked together. He left for a few years and came back right before the Miller Park project. When I was at the Pleasant Prairie Power Plant project, he was an apprentice. I didn't work with Jeff (Wischer), but I worked with his father, Rollie, and his brother, Dale. His father helped me out a lot when I was an apprentice. And after Bill (DeGrave) became a journeyman, he and I worked together on a big project. I went out with Bill a few times for drinks after work, and same with Jerry.

"They were all good men."

The Workers Walkway outside Miller Park (now American Family Field) with the "Teamwork" tribute plaque and statue to Local 8 Ironworkers Brother Jeffrey Wischer, Brother William DeGrave and Brother Jerome "Jerry" Starr.

challenged the skills of the ironworkers on a daily basis with its atypical frame that have both structural steel and poured-in-place beams and columns pitched at various degrees.

Elsewhere within the local's jurisdiction, a significant redevelopment of Lambeau Field beginning in 2001 also employed many Local 8 members. When completed in 2003, the project had added an upper concourse around the original stadium, widened the lower concourse, built new luxury suites and club seating and constructed an expansive, year-round atrium containing the Packers Pro Shop, Hall of Fame and event spaces.

As a robust economy helped provide Local 8 with consistently full employment into the mid-2000s, by July 2006 the local was also hosting about 200 boomers from other I.A. locals in other states to handle the overabundance of work its 950 members could not staff. Those jobs included erecting and repairing bridges, roadways, power plants and each of a glut of downtown condominium buildings going up at the time – for which the local's rodmen were setting all of the reinforcing work for concrete construction.

In additional to several other road projects from the Illinois border into northern Michigan, many union ironworkers and rodmen were working on the **Marquette Interchange project** in downtown Milwaukee, a $810-million, multi-year reconstruction of the freeway system connecting Interstate-43, Interstate-94 and Interstate-794 that began in 2004. The largest construction project in state history at the time, the total rebuild of the original 1960s interchange required more than 38,000 tons of structural and reinforcing steel and approximately 152,500 cubic yards of structural concrete

Local 8 celebrated its 100th anniversary since being chartered by the International Association of Ironworkers with a dinner-dance and awards banquet at the Olympia Resort in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, on June 9, 2001.

before it was completed in August 2008 on time and under budget.

In upper Michigan, Local 8 members built the new 11-story hotel tower for the **Island Resort & Casino** in Harris that opened in April 2007. They also erected several new hospitals and schools and constructed additions to various existing ones in the territory.

Other key projects in the local's southern territory during that thriving period further included reconstruction and restoration of the 1924-built **State Street Bridge** in Milwaukee that was completed in 2007. A 350-member crew was also assigned to Oak Creek Generating Site, where We Energies began construction on the $2.2-billion **Elm Road Generation Station** and its two large coal-fired generating units in June 2005, which would go online in February 2010 and 2011, respectively.

Surveying the local's bustling jurisdiction, Local 8 **Business Manager James "Jimbo" Jorgensen** even declared in the July 26, 2006, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*:

"These are the best times since at least Miller Park (construction) in the '90s. It might be the best in our 105-year history."

However, Local 8's prosperous conditions were eventually interrupted by the Great Recession, a period of severe economic decline from late-2007 to mid-2009 that at the time was considered the most severe financial collapse since the Great Depression of the 1930s. As work and employment subsequently slowed, the local's workhours decreased significantly before the end of the decade, although employment remained steady in the **iron, copper and nickel mines** of the Upper Peninsula.

Emerging from the effects of the recession, Local 8 members again began working on a growing number of new major projects throughout their jurisdiction. Those included erecting the new, state-of-the-art **Ascension Columbia-St. Mary's Hospital** on the east side of Milwaukee that opened in October 2010 to consolidate services from older campuses and serve as a major hospital for the area.

But in 2011, Local 8 and unions in all industries around the state were called to action to fight Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's "Budget Repair Bill," officially known as Act 10, that included provisions to strip most public-sector workers of collective-bargaining rights beyond base wages. Responding in kind, in mid-February many ironworkers actively joined massive protests and a 17-day occupation of the State Capitol, during which the demonstrations of up to 185,000 union members and supporters were so large that they brought national attention to the fight over union rights.

Locally, Local 8 **Business Managers Colin Teska** and its business agents committed long, extra hours to coordinate the response from Eastern Wisconsin's ironworkers. Members also made additional vital contributions by setting up websites, interacting on social media and communicating with ironworkers from all over the country to organize support for the protests against the anti-union legislation.

Although Act 10 was passed into law, severely damaging the work standards of public employees, the historic protests energized the labor movement. What's more, years of ensuing legal challenges eventually led to a Dane County circuit court overturning the law in late 2024 as unconstitutional, but it remains active in 2026 as the court ruling goes through appeals.

The ironworkers and the state's building trades were made to rally again just four years later in February 2015 when so-called "right to work" legislation was introduced in the state legislature. Despite a large protest at the Capitol on February 28, the bill was narrowly passed into law in March, putting into place anti-union provisions stipulating that employees are not required to join unions and pay union fees in organized workplaces.

CONTINUING ITS EXTRAORDINARY LEGACY TO 125TH ANNIVERSARY

With another metro-Milwaukee building boom in high gear, Local 8 union ironworkers and rodmen were kept busy during the mid-2010s and the second half of the decade. The surge of work concentrated in the city's downtown Milwaukee featured major new corporate office, entertainment and residential developments.

At the center of those projects was construction of the 32-story **Northwestern Mutual Tower and Commons** high-rise office building beginning in 2015. A project labor agreement, initiated by owner Northwestern Mutual financial services and mutual life insurance company, was signed by the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council for the work to ensure the entire project was a union job.

Ironworkers erected 7,500 tons of steel in its structural framework and installed 3,609 curtain-wall panels before the skyscraper was completed and opened in August 2017 as the second tallest and, with over 1-million square feet of space, the largest building in Wisconsin. Local 8 focused on providing safety training for its members working on the job, with additional and special classes that included special rigging and signaling training, traffic flagger safety and swing-stage operation and safety classes.

The local's members also constructed the new **Fiserv Forum**, a $524-million, 714,000-square-foot multi-purpose arena in downtown Milwaukee beginning in 2016, performing all aspects of ironwork on the project – rebar, structural, precast concrete, ornamental, miscellaneous metals, curtain wall and glass. Opened on August 26, 2018, after ironworkers had topped off its structural frame with the last of nine 200- to 300-foot-long steel roof trusses on August 24 the previous year, the venue serves as the home for the Milwaukee Bucks and hosts a range of sports and entertainment events.

Even after those prominent additions to the city were completed, Local 8 members were provided with strong sources of workhours by another wave of construction and redevelopment that began before the end of the decade and continued into the 2020s. With more than $5 billion in projects that would

Local 8 participates in the 2025 Labor Day parade in Milwaukee.

again reshape the downtown skyline, expand the city's entertainment districts, add thousands of new housing units and modernize vital infrastructure, union ironworkers continued to enjoy healthy employment conditions.

But the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which first appeared in the United States in early 2020 year and would claim the lives of more than 1-million Americans over the next three years, suddenly slowed Local 8 as construction jobs were halted or severely diminished to help stop the spread of the disease. To best protect the health of its members and staff and their families, the local canceled meetings and training; practiced social distancing at its union hall and training facility; and also ensured that active jobsites were safe so that members could continue to work on key projects for which they were deemed "essential workers."

The solid employment returned as the pandemic slowly regressed, and the local regained more employment opportunities as the decade progressed while by 2022 its market share of the ironworking industry was back to 90 percent. Among the extended list of projects on which members worked throughout the first half of the 2020s were major expansions to the **Aurora BayCare Medical Center** in Green Bay, which includes a new surgery center scheduled to open in 2027; and the 100-foot-tall, globe-shaped **Foxconn High Performance Computing Data Center** in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin, that serves as a central control hub for the electronic manufacturer's technology campus.

Elsewhere, the local's members erected the **Agricultural Maritime Export Facility Port** in Milwaukee, which earned an International Association's award, and **The Couture** 44-story luxury apartment high-rise in the city's downtown, which that stands as the tallest residential building in the state and received a "2023 Project of the Year" for reinforcing-rod work. Union ironworkers were further kept busy on a range of other jobs such as construction of the expansive **Komatsu Mining Corporation South Harbor Campus** headquarters and manufacturing facility in Milwaukee's Harbor District that opened in June 2022; the **Ascent** 25-story mass-timber skyscraper that was certified as the world's tallest mass-timber hybrid structure when it was completed in that year; and the ongoing **Interstate-94 East-West Expansion** extensive highway and bridge reconstruction project spanning multiple miles through Milwaukee County and scheduled to be finished around 2033.

Local 8 also built and opened its new, $5.5-million **Northern Area Training Center** in Marquette in October 2024 to serve its apprentices and members in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, while undertaking major renovations at its Milwaukee Union Hall as well. The local that year also marked the 25-year anniversary of the tragedy at Miller Park with an event during a Brewers game at the stadium that became the annual **"Union Day"** at the park.

Leading up to the local's 125th charter anniversary in 2026, Local 8 experienced an unprecedented amount of work throughout its jurisdiction that has grown its membership back above 1,000 craftspeople, including about 250 apprentices, while it hosted upwards of 300 traveling boomers from other ironworkers locals at times. Keeping them all well-employed were projects that included the monumental new, $1-billion **Microsoft Data Center** in Mount Pleasant and its three-story central utility cooling plant; the historical 10-year, $3-billion **Soo Locks Projects** with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a 1,200-foot-long lock to replace the aging Davis and Sabin locks on the St. Marys River at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, to help ensure that Great Lakes freighters can safely pass between Lake Superior and the lower lakes; and major infrastructure work in the Fox Valley – the fast-growing region in east-central Wisconsin centered along the lower Fox River.

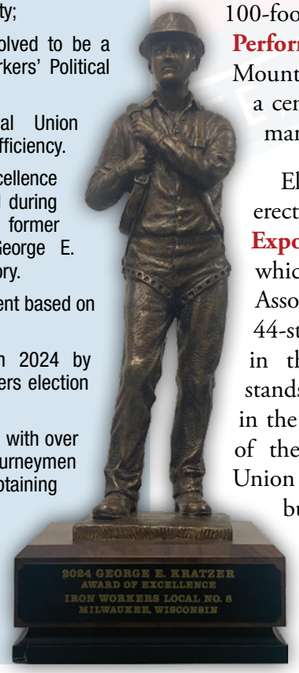
With a jurisdiction that covers a total of 37 counties across Eastern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Local 8 at 125 years has continued a tradition of hard work and high skill in the iron-erecting industry while also securing benefits and advances in working conditions over the years that have been gained through the concerted efforts of the officers and members of the local. Standing together as one united local, it will carry that legacy forward as it continues to safely and professionally erect the vital infrastructure and skylines of its communities throughout its future. •

LOCAL 8 RECEIVED 2024 KRATZER AWARD

Local 8 received the 2024 George E. Kratzer Acknowledgement of Excellence for exceeding the standards in all the categories of the International Association of Ironworkers/IMPACT (Ironworker Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust) "Key Performance Indicators" (K.P.I.). The Ironworkers established K.P.I. in 2007 to combat loss of membership and market share, and in doing so it developed an organization-wide strategic plan to establish accountability at every level of the union.

The K.P.I. measure a local union's ability in four areas to

- provide its membership with the highest standard of Apprenticeship, Training & Safety;
- have in place a strategic organizing plan with corresponding action to increase Organizing & Union Density;
- have its membership informed and involved to be a strong and positive force in the Ironworkers' Political Action & Public Perception; and
- maintain, improve and secure Local Union Operations, ensuring accountability and efficiency.
- The Kratzer Acknowledgement of Excellence replaced the union's Golden Eagle Award during its 43rd Convention in 2016 to honor former International General Vice President George E. Kratzer's work and pay tribute to his memory.
- Local 8 was awarded the acknowledgement based on it receiving recognition for:
- Political Action & Public Perception in 2024 by supporting the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and Ironworkers election program by assigning release staff;
- Apprenticeship, Training & Safety in 2020 with over 25 percent of its apprenticeship and journeymen upgrade fund that pays ironworkers for obtaining 12 hours of upgrade training annually;
- Organizing and Union Density in 2019 by gaining over 5 percent of membership through organizing; and
- Local Union Operations in 2018.



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For 125 years, the professional ironworkers of Ironworkers Local 8 have shaped our region, from the bridges that connect our communities to the skylines that define them. Red Cedar Steel is incredibly proud of our long-standing partnership with Local 8, and we congratulate them on this historic anniversary milestone.

Thank you for your proud heritage, your unwavering dedication to training the next generation, and your continued partnership in helping us build Wisconsin.

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CONGRATULATIONS IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8

PROUDLY WORKING TOGETHER FOR OVER 120 YEARS!

Terrance E. McGowan
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CONGRATULATIONS

IRON WORKERS LOCAL 8

CELEBRATING

125 YEARS

OF STRENGTH. PRIDE. BROTHERHOOD.
BUILDING OUR COMMUNITIES.
BUILDING OUR FUTURE.

Iron Workers Local 25 proudly congratulates Iron Workers Local 8 of Milwaukee on the occasion of your *125th Anniversary.*

We honor your remarkable achievement and your proud legacy of building Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula.

Fraternally,
IRON WORKERS LOCAL 25

IRON WORKERS
25

STRONGER TOGETHER. ★ BUILT ON IRON. ★ UNITED FOREVER.

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CONGRATULATIONS ON 125 YEARS LOCAL 8!

CHARTERED FEBRUARY 1, 1901
IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8
125th Anniversary
MILWAUKEE, WI

IRONWORKERS DISTRICT COUNCIL OF THE NORTH CENTRAL STATES

PRESIDENT, MIKE BAKER

LOCAL 8 MILWAUKEE, WI	LOCAL 21 OMAHA, NE	LOCAL 67 DES MOINES, IA
LOCAL 89 CEDAR RAPIDS, IA	LOCAL 383 MADISON, WI	LOCAL 512 ST PAUL, MN

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IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

ON YOUR

125TH ANNIVERSARY

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8 BRIDGE, STRUCTURAL, ORNAMENTAL AND REINFORCING MILWAUKEE, WI

1901 2026

125 YEARS OF STRENGTH ★ SKILL ★ SOLIDARITY

Thank you for 125 years of building Milwaukee and beyond with unmatched craftsmanship, pride and dedication. Your commitment to safety, excellence and brotherhood continues to build a stronger future for all.

HERE'S TO THE NEXT 125 YEARS!

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Proud to support Ironworkers Local 8

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IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8
ON 125 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

For 125 years, the skilled men and women of Ironworkers Local 8 have shaped Wisconsin's skyline through unmatched craftsmanship, unwavering dedication, and the strength of union solidarity.

Your legacy stands as a testament to the enduring impact of Local 8 and our region's building trades—proving that Wisconsin has always been, and will continue to be, union strong.

Congratulations on 125 years of excellence!

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ON THE CELEBRATION OF YOUR
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125 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP
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1901 125th Anniversary 2026
EST. JUNE 24, 1901
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CONGRATULATIONS
ON 125 YEARS

From projects that shape the skyline to smaller jobs that carry a big impact, our roots here run deep, and so does our commitment to this city.

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THANK YOU FOR
125 YEARS
OF BUILDING WISCONSIN.

For 125 years, the members of Ironworkers Local 8 have helped shape the skylines, bridges, schools, hospitals, businesses and communities that make Wisconsin a great place to live and work.

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Thank you for 125 years of dedication, skill and service.

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Here's to 125 years more!

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FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT I.B.E.W. LOCAL UNION 494

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 125-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

IBEW Local 494 Est. 1906 Milwaukee, WI Electrical Workers

Thank you, Local 8, for 125 years of leadership, dedication and building a stronger future for your members and communities.

Here's to many more years of success!

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Congratulations Ironworkers Local 8 on Your 125th Anniversary!

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BRIDGE, STRUCTURAL, ORNAMENTAL AND REINFORCING IRON WORKERS

From Your Brothers and Sisters of the
Ironworkers District Council of Chicago & Vicinity

Affiliated Ironworkers Locals
1, 63, 111, 112, 136, 380, 395, 444, 498, 853

Did you know ... LOCAL 8 WAS AFFILIATED WITH THE D.C. OF CHICAGO & VICINITY IN THE 1960s AND EARLY 1970S? IT'S TRUE!

1901 2026

CONGRATULATIONS IRON WORKERS LOCAL 8

125th ANNIVERSARY

125 Years of Strength, Unity & Pride

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James P. Mahoney
General Secretary

David Beard
General Treasurer

Joseph J Hunt
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Eric Dean
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Michael Baker, 1st General Vice President
Kendall Martin, 2nd General Vice President
Gregory "Jack" Jarrell, 3rd General Vice President
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James Gardiner, 5th General Vice President
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Congrats on 125 Years!

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Congratulations to our Brothers and Sisters of Ironworkers Local 8 on your 125th Anniversary

William D. Hayes
FS-T/Business Manager

Roderick Jerome Ahlers III
President

Daniel Byrnes Jr
Recording Secretary

Executive Board
Joseph Farrell, Thomas Foley Jr, Thomas Morro, Thomas Wilson & Scott Zaleski

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OF LOCAL 263
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TO LOCAL 8!

CONGRATULATIONS ON 125 YEARS!!!!

FROM EVERYONE AT IRON WORKERS LOCAL 383

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Est. 1923
MADISON, WISCONSIN

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MICHAEL DUNCAN – PRESIDENT/BUSINESS AGENT

ADAM MAVES – VICE PRESIDENT/BUSINESS AGENT

DUWAYNE KNOBLOCH – BUSINESS AGENT/ORGANIZER

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IRONWORKERS

Local 396

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IRONWORKERS LOCAL 40

CONGRATULATIONS TO IRON WORKERS LOCAL 8 ON CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY!

DANIEL DOYLE

BUSINESS MANAGER - FINANCIAL SEC / TREASURER

www.ironworkers40.org

Congratulations

Local 8

Congrats on 125 years of brotherhood, craftsmanship, and building the future together!

Ironworkers Local 5

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BUSINESS AGENT
DAVE MURRAY

BUSINESS AGENT/POLITICAL DIRECTOR
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LARRY MCNIFF
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JASON BUTZ

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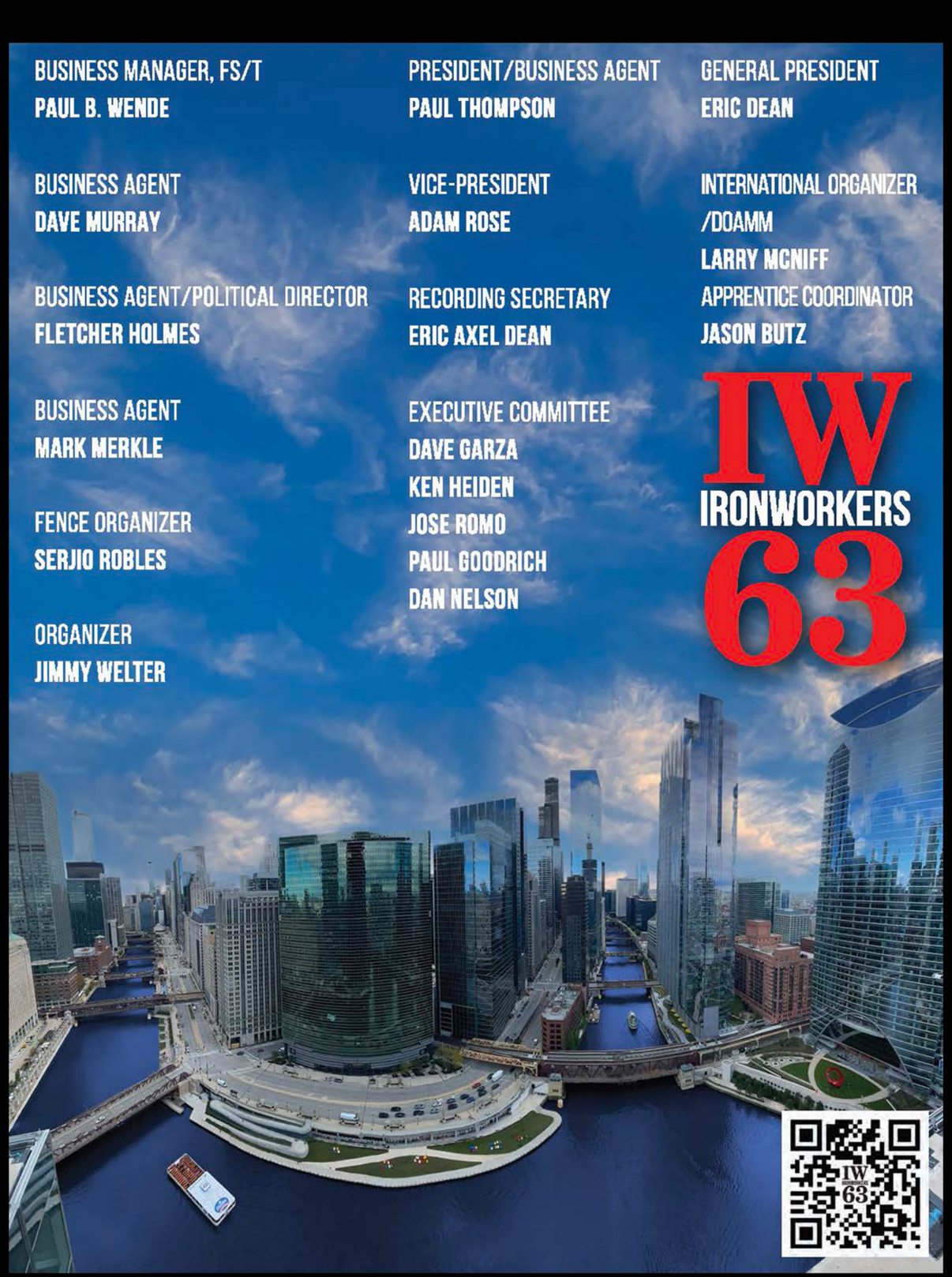
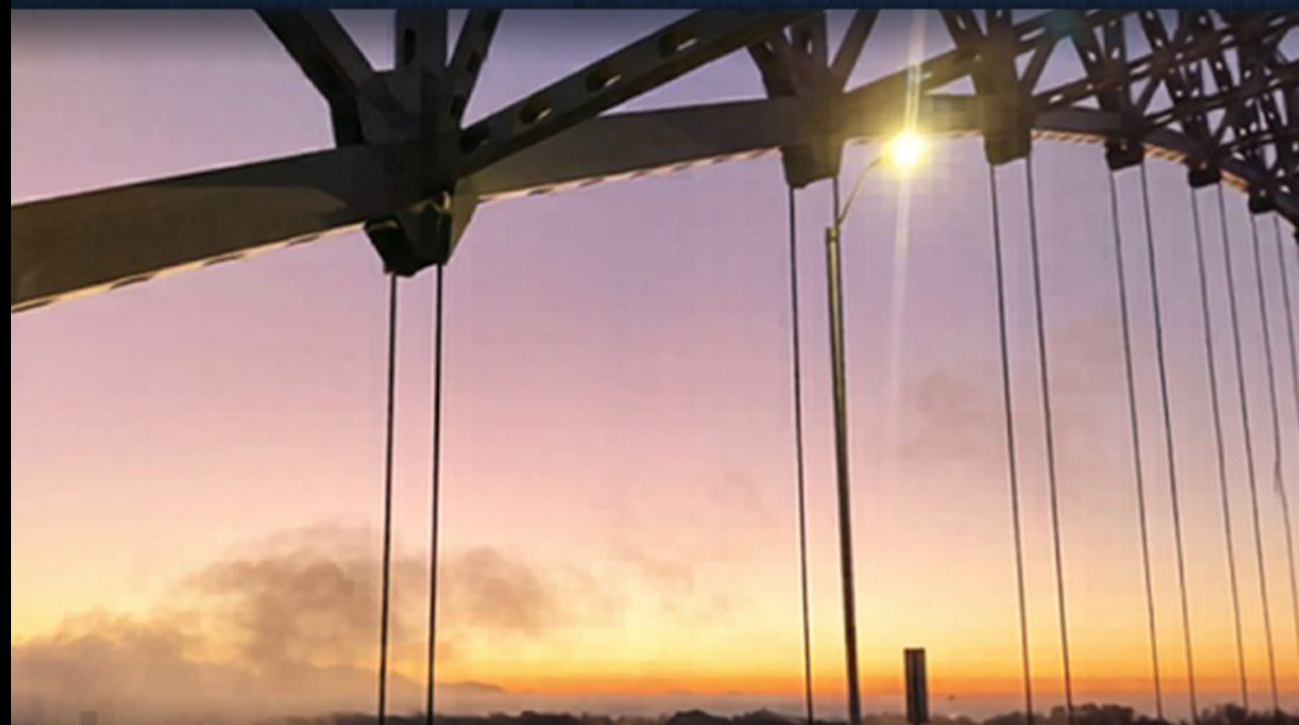
IRONWORKERS
63



Iron Workers Local 70
Bridging Past & Future



Congratulations and Best Wishes
To the Officers and Members
of
Ironworkers Local Union No. 8
On your 125th Anniversary

From the Members, Officers,
Executive Committee and Staff
Of

IRON WORKERS LOCAL 700
ESTABLISHED 1946

Windsor, Ontario
Grant McCarthy, President
Randy Dare, Business Manager/Financial Secretary
David Carder, Business Agent
Ron Dow, Recording Secretary

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FROM YOUR MORE THAN 1,000 UNION BROTHER & SISTER IRONWORKERS OF LOCAL 75

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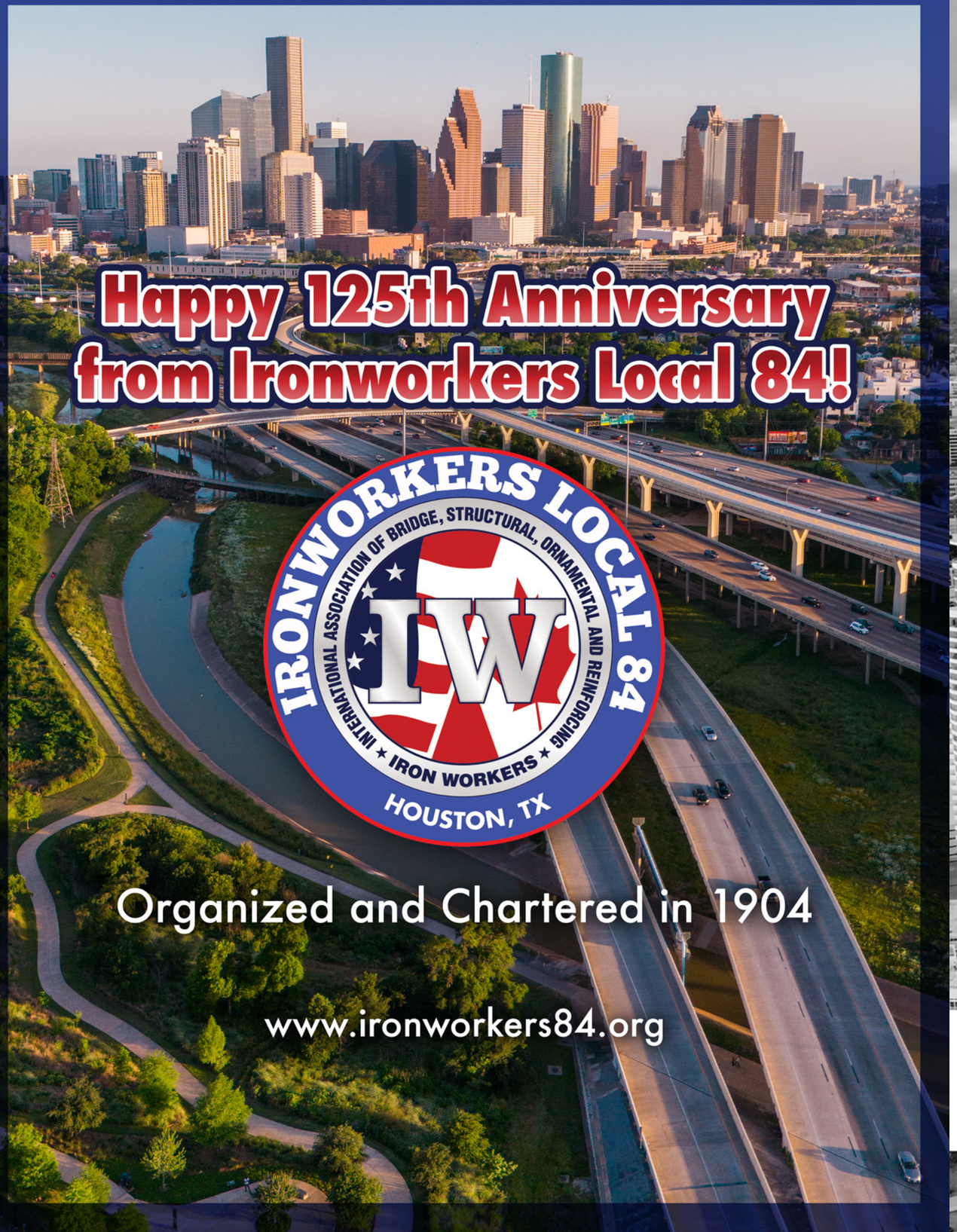

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CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

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1901 — **Ironworkers Local 8 Founded**

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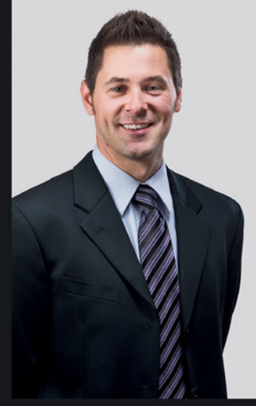
2026 — **125th Anniversary Celebrating Together**



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Jeremy Kane
Agent & Vice President

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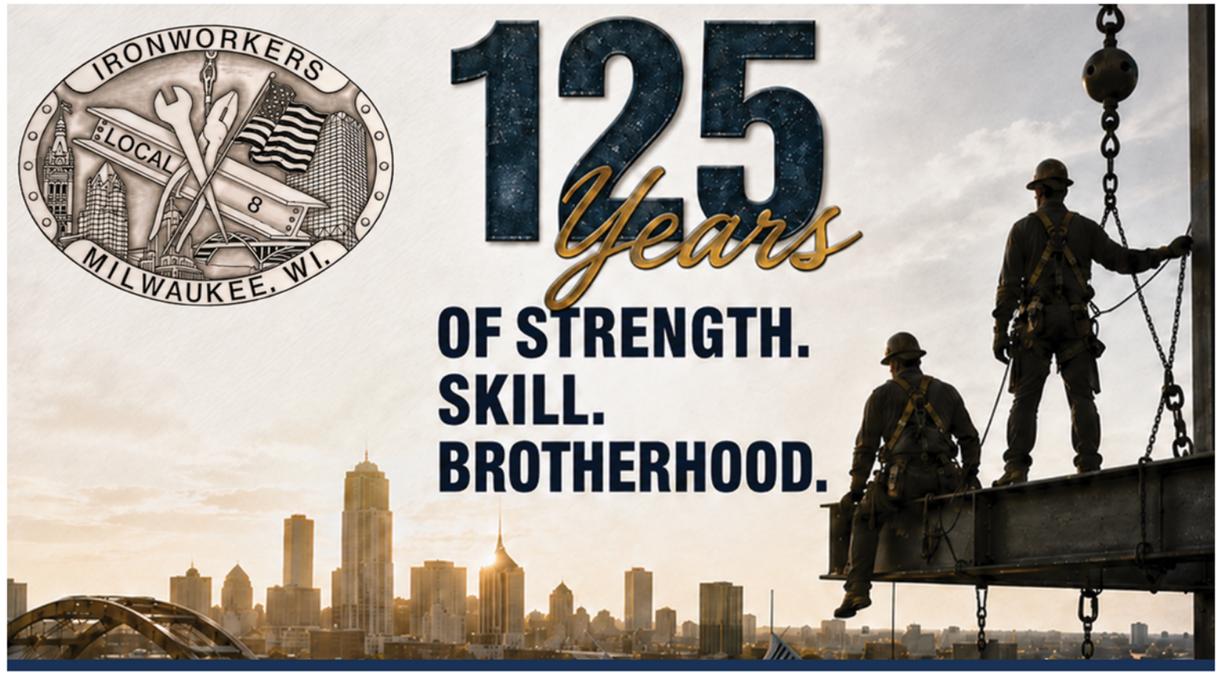

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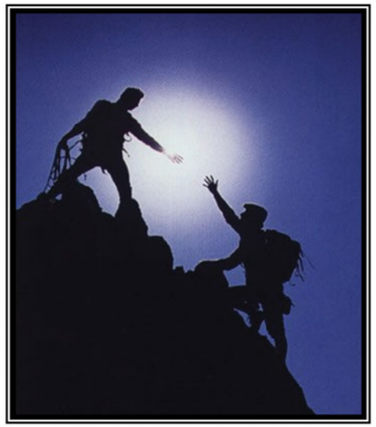

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Proud to put the people we serve first

And proud to support the vision of Ironworkers Local 8

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IRON WORKERS LOCAL 395

Happy 125th Anniversary to Ironworkers Local 8!

In Solidarity,
Iron Workers Local 395

YOU BUILD IT, WE PROTECT IT

PROUD UNION TRADES STANDING TOGETHER FOR GENERATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS ON 125 YEARS!

IUPAT DC7 WISCONSIN & UPPER PENINSULA

CONGRATULATIONS
from the Officers and Members

IRON WORKERS
LOCAL 550 CANTON

Sean Diekmann
Business Manager / FST

Gary Felgenhauer
President/Business Agent

Chad Jordan
Vice President

Shawn McCartney
Recording Secretary

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BRIDGE STRUCTURAL ORNAMENTAL AND REINFORCING IRON WORKERS

Local 89

HAPPY 125TH ANNIVERSARY, IRON WORKERS LOCAL 8!

FROM YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER IRON WORKERS IN CEDAR RAPIDS AND NORTH-EASTERN IOWA

CHARTERED JUNE 12, 1905

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Reinhart congratulates Ironworkers Local 8 on their 125th anniversary

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Happy 125th Anniversary Local 8!

IRONWORKERS LOCAL 8 MILWAUKEE, WI.

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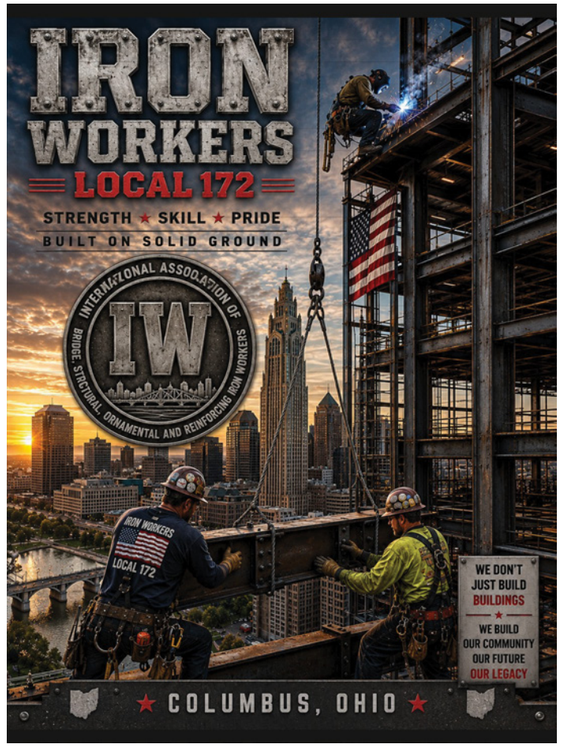

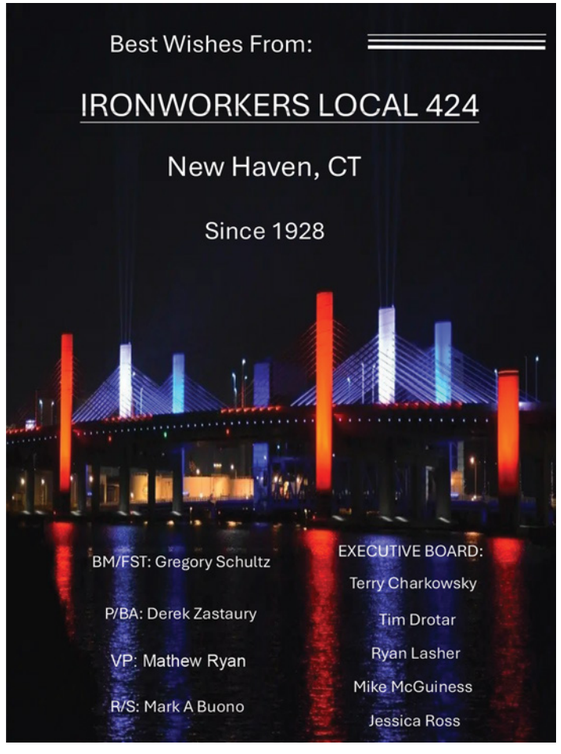
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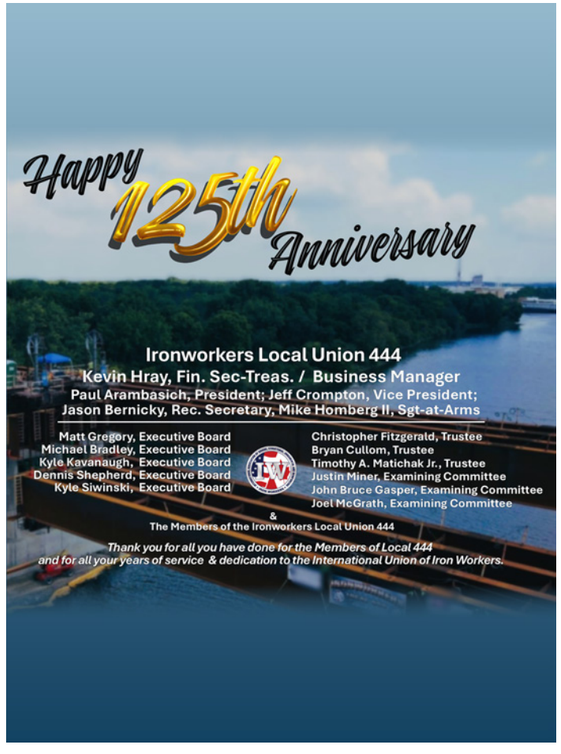
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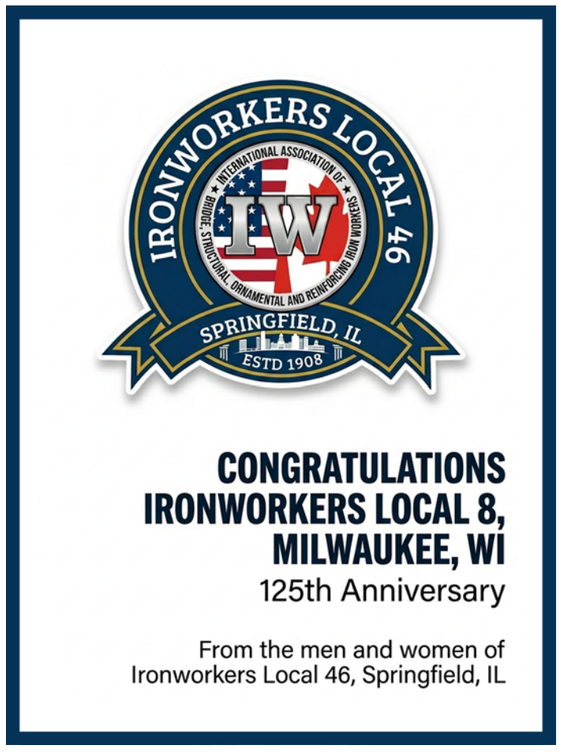
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