

**International Union of Operating Engineers**  
**LOCAL NO. 841**



*100th Anniversary*

COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

**2021**



# CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL 841 AND BEST WISHES

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Members & Staff On 100 years Strong!

*Best wishes for the next 100!!*

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Business Manager Bret Scaggs, Executive Board, Members & Staff

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# Local 841 100 Year Anniversary



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**100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

## **OUR HISTORY OF DEDICATION HAS SAFEGUARDED AMERICA'S 'CROSSROADS'**

July 2021 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of I.U.O.E. Local 841. Upon this historic event, we can look back with pride on our service to West-Central Indiana and East-Central Illinois. Our skilled and dedicated members have played an important role in building the "Crossroads of America." Our hoisting, portable, and stationary engineers built, maintained and operated the vast infrastructure and industrial and commercial facilities of this region. We are proud of the part our members have played in safely and efficiently building the highways and byways that mark the intersection of our great nation.

The Local 841 of today would not exist without the Local 841 of yesterday and years past. For 100 years, our members have shown a commitment to being the most skilled and well-trained workforce around. We owe a debt of gratitude to the members who first organized the local along with those who have since kept it functioning and growing, decade after decade, through innumerable hardships and changes in methods and technology.

After a century of highs and lows, Local 841 is now a highly progressive trade union that represents heavy equipment operators in the construction and aggregate industries, as well as certain municipal and clerical employees. More than ever, the goal of our union is to ensure fair and adequate working conditions for the members our local represents, because now as much as ever, we believe in the rights of workers to expect a fair day's pay for a day's work.

Looking at our history and the many projects on which our membership has worked, Local 841 has proven time and again that our skilled union labor – which is supported by a world-class training program and a state-of-art training facility – is the most efficient workforce and also provides a safer work environment on jobsites. As such, the local has been able to provide a quality of life to our members that is above average throughout the course of their employment, as well as during their retirement years.

More than anything, as we celebrate 100 years of Local 841, this is a time during which we must remember all of those members who came before us, those past members who believed in the union way and sacrificed and fought when they had to so that our local could endure. And endure it has!

Congratulations, Local 841. Here's to our next 100 years of unwavering service and commitment to our union and its causes, our employers and their well-being, and our communities, and their continued prosperity.

Fraternally,

Tom Ridge, Business Manager  
I.U.O.E. Local No. 841



This book was proudly produced by

**UNION HISTORIES™**  
*Preserving the Proud Stories of Local Unions*  
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# THE FIRST CENTURY OF I.U.O.E. LOCAL No. 841 A PILLAR IN WEST-C EAST-CENTRAL ILLIN

# ENTRAL INDIANA & OIS FOR 100 YEARS 1921 - 2021

*“As Local No. 841 progressed in the construction stage of building the highways, shrines, churches and industrial development, it also developed as an organization. The workingmen of this region realized what true unionism could do for them, not only as a means of higher pay and better conditions, but as a united fellowship aiding each other and the industry they represented, a program beneficial to all.”*

*— I.U.O.E. Local 841 President Orell B. Soucie 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Program, 1951*



A May 15, 1921, letter from officers of International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers (I.U.S.O.E.) stationary **Local No. 243** of Terre Haute, Indiana, to the union's international office officially set the wheels in motion for organizing a hoisting-and-portable engineers local in the city. The correspondence from Local 234 **President Irvin Hayworth** and **Secretary Charles M. Swain** to General Secretary-Treasurer Herman M. Comerford of the I.U.S.O.E. — which would be renamed International Union of Operating Engineers (I.U.O.E.) on July 1, 1928 — requested the union issue a charter for “a local of hoisting and portable engineers at this place” and included the names of seven proposed initial members, along with a money order for the \$10 charter fee.

*(Chartered by the I.U.S.O.E. in late 1903, Local 243 was comprised of stationary engineers who operated and maintained static power and mechanical plants in larger buildings and factories in and around Terre Haute. However,*

*the local would be disbanded sometime during the late 1920s.)*

The union approved a charter on **July 12, 1921**, for “mixed” hoisting- and portable-engineers **Local No. 841** in Terre Haute with seven charter members. I.U.S.O.E. General President Arthur M. Huddell signed the local's ratified application.

While the charter members and other engineers had been holding meetings in anticipation of being accepted into the I.U.S.O.E., they met and were formally organized as Local 841 on July 27. The membership duly elected the local's first officers, led by **President B. James Mollet**, who were sworn in by Local 243 Secretary Swain. Afterward, Brother Hayworth, the former Local 243 president who had been selected recording secretary of the new local, wrote a letter to Editor Dave Evans that appeared in the October 1921 issue of *The International Steam Engineer*, the union's official publication, stating:

*Continued after next spread.*



# ORIGINS OF THE I.U.O.E.

With dreadful conditions plaguing the steam-engineering industry in the United States during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a single portable and 10 stationary engineers from across the country assembled in Chicago on December 7, 1896, to make plans for organizing all of the nation's steam engineers into a single, nationwide union. After those 11 men petitioned the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) convention the following week for a national charter for a union of steam engineers, the group met again on December 18, 1896, to prepare the charter application and elect temporary officers, who were headed by President Charles J. DeLong of Chicago.

The A.F.L. would grant a charter to the National Union of Steam Engineers (N.U.S.E.) on May 7, 1897. (The common denominator among the three trades constituting the new engineers' union – portable, hoisting and stationary – was the steam engine; therefore, the name was chosen simply because steam was practically the only source of power at that time and was utilized almost exclusively by all of the union's membership.) The N.U.S.E. then held its first convention on August 9, 10 and 11, 1897, in St. Louis, during which the union chose its first elected officers, who were headed by President Frank Bowker of Boston.

Before the end of 1897, the first Canadian locals joined the union, prompting the union to change its name to the International Union of Steam Engineers of America. Shortly after, its General Executive Board shortened that to the International Union of Steam Engineers.

With the increase in the use of the internal-combustion engines and electric motors, hydraulic machinery and refrigerating systems, as well as steam boilers and engines, the types of work performed by the union's growing membership were changing as members' roles became more diverse and more construction workers came into the organization. Accordingly, during its 1912 convention, the union amended its name to the International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers – the "operating" added to the title as a catchall for operators of non-steam-powered machinery.

As advancements continued to alter most all of its industry and members were working almost exclusively with internal combustion engines, electric motors, hydraulic machinery and refrigerating systems, on July 1, 1928, the union dropped "steam" from its name and became the International Union of Operating Engineers (I.U.O.E.). What's more, as the organization progressed, it had attracted workers from the public sector, making it a truly diverse trade union.

In 2021, the I.U.O.E. remains a diversified trade organization that represents operating engineers working as heavy equipment operators, mechanics and surveyors in the construction industry and stationary engineers who work in operations and maintenance in building and industrial complexes. The union also represents nurses and other health-industry workers, public employees in a wide variety of occupations, and a number of job classifications in the petrochemical industry.



Attendees of the first convention of the National Union of Steam Engineers, which would eventually be re-named the International Union of Operating Engineers, held in August 1897. (Their identities were not recorded for the photograph.)



## "To Whom It May Concern, Greeting:

**"Whereas,** a petition has been received praying that a Charter be granted for the formation of a Local Union of the International Union of Operating Engineers to be located at *Terre Haute, Indiana* with the following Territorial Jurisdiction: *Boone, Clay, Daviess, Fountain, Greene, Hendricks, Knox, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Owen, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, Vigo and Warren Counties, Indiana, and Champaign, Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Edwards, Effingham, Ford, Iroquois, Jasper, Lawrence, Macon, Madison, Miami, Morgan, Newton, Pike, Randolph, Shelby, Wayne and Vermillion Counties, Illinois.* The International Union of Operating Engineers hereby retains the right to amend, restrict or enlarge said territorial jurisdiction:

**"Know Ye,** that acting under the authority vested in us by the Constitution and Laws of our International Union, we desire and cause this Charter to be issued for the institution of a Local Union to be known as

*Hoisting & Portable*

Local Union No. 841 : with the following Craft Jurisdiction:

*Hoisting & Portable as stipulated in Subsection (b), Section I of Article XIII of the Constitution*

The International Union of Operating Engineers hereby retaining the right to amend, restrict or enlarge said craft jurisdiction; and to bear date of *November 1, 2009* and by virtue of this Charter to do and perform such acts as are prescribed in the Constitution, Laws and Rules of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

**"The International Union** hereby declares its right to suspend or revoke this Charter for any neglect or refusal to perform the duties required by the Constitution and Laws of this organization; and should the aforesaid Local Union be dissolved or forfeit this Charter, then all property, books, papers and monies shall be transferred to the General Office of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

**"In Witness Whereof,** we do now cause our Signatures and the General Seal of the INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS to be affixed hereto.



International Union of Operating Engineers

*James J. Aiklin*  
 GENERAL PRESIDENT  
*Christopher J. Harley*  
 GENERAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

*This charter replaces charters issued and dated July 12, 1921 and December 31, 1938.*





## LOCAL 841 CHARTER MEMBERS

These seven men signed the I.U.O.E. charter application for Local 841 in March 1921:

Harry Depray  
Charles Dunbar  
Basil J. Hixon  
Harry A. McGee  
B. James Mollette  
George Store  
Charles Wright

*"We would be pleased, Brother Evans, if you would insert this in the journal so that other locals will know that we have organized and stand ready to assist them at all times."*

During its first meeting, the Local 841 members also voted to meet on the first and third Monday of each month, although they also decided to accept an offer from **Brother Elmer A. Sellers** to use his home on Beech Street for gatherings "until (the) local became better financial(ly) able to rent a hall," meeting minutes report. Just a couple of weeks later during Local 841's August 10 meeting, Local 243 granted its fledgling sister local use of a small room in the **Knights of Pythias Hall** on South 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Terre Haute in which to meet, while asking the hoisting and portable engineers "to pay what they thought would be right" for rent. Local 841 would continue to hold its membership meetings in the hall for the next decade.

Meanwhile, as the local focused on growing its numbers, during a meeting on August 1, 1921, its members approved a measure that instituted a \$1 fine against "all members who are absent from any meeting" over the next six months, unless they were sick or working out of town. The membership also approved a motion to provide the local's Business Agent, **Brother Charles Dunbar**, with "the amount

of money necessary" to join the Terre Haute Building Trades Council.

Three weeks later, members reported to the local during its August 24, 1921, general meeting that "things are going good" on their jobs, according to meeting minutes. However, Brother Dunbar also reported that one contractor in the city, Heinie & Son, remained "unfair" to the local and would not employ its union members.

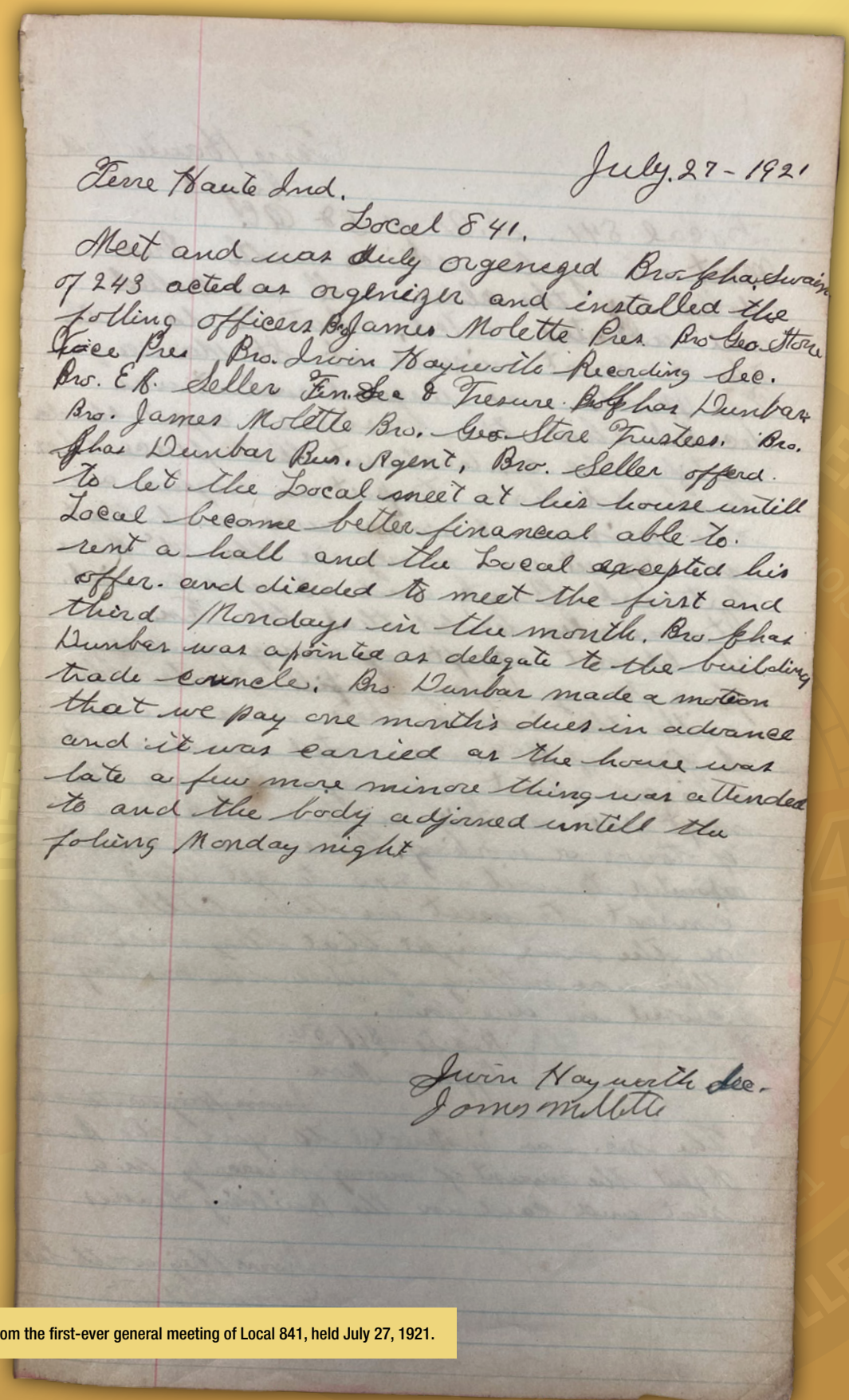
What's more, the local was engaged in a jurisdictional dispute with the carpenters union over engine repairs. During that meeting, the local instructed its delegate to the Building Trades Council to "notify the carpenters to leave engines alone and not to work on them in any way."

As Local 841 worked to establish itself over the next few years, during its January 15, 1924, general meeting the membership approved a motion to raise the wages of its operators for the coming year. Subsequently, they voted to charge contractors \$1.15 per hour for time operating single-drum-engine machinery and \$1.25 per hour for time on machines with two-drum engines and other certain equipment such as steam shovels.

But despite its encouraging beginnings, like many I.U.O.E. locals around the country during the 1920s, Local 841 throughout the second half of the decade faced growing anti-union sentiment and essentially existed in name only. It did show signs of life, however, during its March 13, 1929, meeting when the membership voted to launch a "membership drive" and open its charter for 60 days to take in new members for a \$25 initiation fee.

## THE REBIRTH OF LOCAL 841

The Great Depression, the worldwide economic collapse that proliferated when the U.S. stock market crashed in October 1929 and lasted throughout the



Minutes from the first-ever general meeting of Local 841, held July 27, 1921.



## LOCAL 841 UNION HALLS/OFFICES

During its first meeting after receiving its charter from the International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers (the previous name of the I.U.O.E.), held July 27, 1921, Local 841 member Brother Elmer A. Sellers offered to have the local hold subsequent meetings in his house at 1427 Beech Street. The local began renting space in the Knights of Pythias Hall within the next few weeks.

### Knights of Pythias Hall

121 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
 August 1921 into 1931

### Terre Haute Labor Temple

201-203 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street

### Local 841 Offices

130 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
 1931 into March 1937

### Terre Haute Labor Temple

201-203 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street

### Local 841 Offices

428-1/2 Ohio Street  
 March 1937 into January 1940

### Odd Fellows Hall

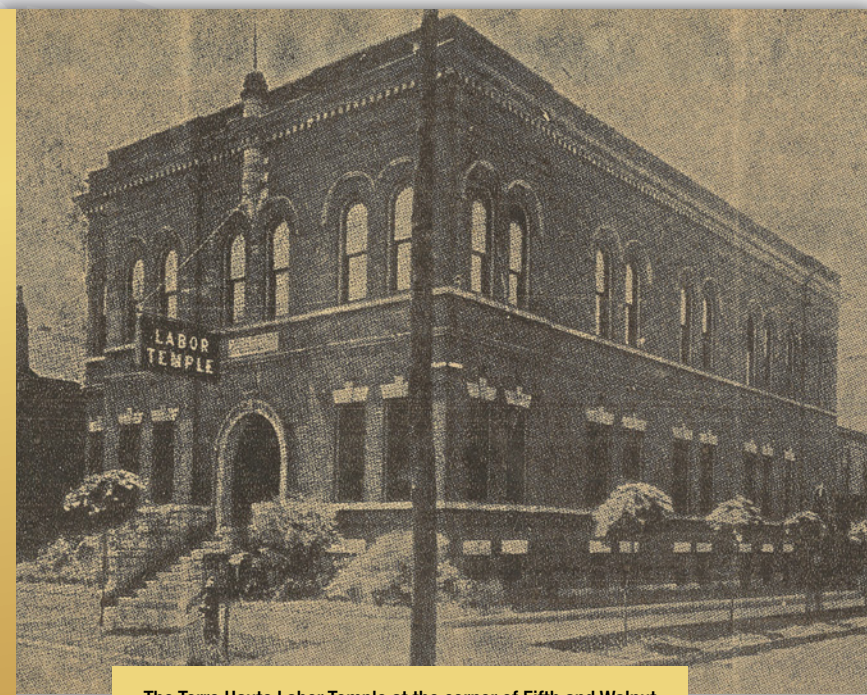
20-22 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
 January 1940 into November 1956

### Local 841 Headquarters

301 Margaret Avenue  
 November 1956 into December 1972

### Local 841 Headquarters

6801 South U.S. Route 41  
 December 1972 to present



The Terre Haute Labor Temple at the corner of Fifth and Walnut streets in Terre Haute, in which Local 841 held its meetings from 1931 into January 1940. The building was originally built as the Phoenix Club in 1905 before it was occupied by craft unions beginning in 1923 until it was razed in 1991. (Property of Vigo County Historical Museum; Tribune Star photograph.)

1930s, put an additional extraordinary strain on the already struggling Local 841, as it did with many local unions around the United States. As the historic catastrophe persisted into a new decade, at one point during 1931 the local consisted of only four dues-paying members.

That year, **Brother Orell B. Soucie** transferred his membership from Local No. 150 in Chicago and became affiliated with Local 841. A member of the I.U.O.E. since June 1928, when he joined Local No. 802 in Joliet, Illinois, while employed as a crane, shovel and dragline operator, he had relocated into Local 150 the following year.

In November 1931, Brother Soucie became president and business representative of Local 841 and almost immediately set out to reorganize the local in and around Terre Haute, although the fiscally strapped local would often not be able to pay him for his efforts. What's more, an entry in the minutes of an April 14,

1932, general meeting gives some indication of the daunting task ahead:

*“Again a few of the faithful got together to compare notes and comment on the slow progress being made in bringing about better conditions. There being so few of us that was doing (sic) anything, that there was little to talk about.”*

By that time, Local 841 was chartered to represent stationary as well as hoisting and portable engineers within its jurisdiction. Because there was not much construction work at that time as a result of the economic depression and no road work or quarries were organized in Indiana, Brother Soucie initially concentrated on organizing stationary engineers working in the many plants in Terre Haute, including breweries and ice, packing and dairy factories, as well as several hotels.

As a result, at one point in 1932, most of the local's members were stationary engineers while it had only three total hoisting and portable members.

While the local was beginning to make progress, in June 1933 the U.S. Congress passed the **National Industrial Recovery Act**, which in part protected collective-bargaining rights for unions and set parameters to regulate industry for fair wages and prices, as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "**New Deal**" legislative program to help the nation recover from the Great Depression. Subsequently, over the next two years, Local 841 reached agreements on numerous contracts with different plants in the city that gave their engineers and apprentices considerable wage increases and improvements to working conditions.

The Recovery Act also established the Public Works Administration, an employment program for federally funded projects, and the Roosevelt government in November 1933

also created the Civil Works Administration, whose mission was to rapidly create mostly manual-labor construction jobs. But with the subsequent influx of new work, including construction of the **Federal Building** in Terre Haute that would house the U.S. Post Office and Court House when completed in 1935, Local 841 initially did not have enough construction engineers who could operate machinery on those jobs. In response, President Soucie placed stationary engineers on equipment and stayed with them until they were capable of operating the machines.

*(The National Industrial Recovery Act would be declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1935 and was permanently suspended. The Civil Works Administration was replaced by the Works Progress Administration in 1935.)*

Meanwhile, Brother Soucie himself worked on construction jobs under the Civil Works Administration, which usually required 30 hours per week on the job and paid \$1.25 per hour. He also continued to recruit engineers into the local after working hours – and sometimes late into the night.

Previously working only under written agreements associated with the New Deal, Local 841 signed its **first working contract** with the building contractors of Terre Haute in 1934. Having had no written contracts with those employers until that time, the local led the way for other building-trades unions to sign collective-bargaining agreements with their contractors that year and over the coming years.

With many more New Deal projects also underway through the mid-1930s, Local 841 members were building many of the roads and general construction projects new to the Terre Haute area. Concurrently realizing the importance of training its members, it was during that time that the local established an **apprenticeship training program** whereby a "junior" member was gradually shown the intricate methods of operating different types



The Knights of Pythias Temple at 121 South Eighth Street in Terre Haute (shown circa 1909 during which it first opened), in which Local 841 held its meetings from 1921 into 1931. The building was razed in 1974. (Image courtesy of John Becker and the Vigo County Public Library Archives.)





of construction equipment. President Soucie personally supervised the local's apprenticeship department, knowing that eventually those members would have to assume major roles in the local's ability to supply skilled operators to its employers.

In the meantime, Local 841 continued to gain prominence among the construction unions in Illinois and Indiana. Subsequently, in 1936 Brother Soucie was appointed vice president of the State Building Trades Council in Indiana, which enabled him to gain many advantages for the members of Local 841. In 1936, for instance, the hoisting and portable engineers successfully reached another milestone when it signed its **first highway agreement** with the Indiana Highway Contractors after Brother Soucie convinced those contractors that teaming with a labor organization would bring about standardized wages that would result in fair, competitive bidding on building projects.

"Many contractors today admit that they opposed Mr. Soucie in his efforts but realize that his idea was beneficial to all," the local's Anniversary Committee later wrote in 1951 in a program celebrating Brother Soucie's 20<sup>th</sup> year as president of Local 841, "and that he demonstrated great executive ability in carrying out a fair working arrangement for all concerned."

As had become common within the I.U.O.E., as Local 841 grew in size and jurisdiction, it then established a subdivision local for its junior- and apprentice-engineer members, who did not have the same standing within the local as its senior journeyman members. The branch was chartered by the union as **Local No. 841-A** on June 1, 1936.

## SPLIT BY INTERNAL TURMOIL

I.U.O.E. General President John Possehl described an amicable initial relationship between the stationary- and operating-engineer members of Local 841 in an August

17, 1936, letter he wrote to American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) President William Green. "Agreements were entered into with various employers, strikes through the economic strength of the organization were successfully entered into, wages were raised for the stationary or plant operating engineers," he wrote, "and there was no complaint in the beginning as to the wages of the business representative."

However, President Possehl had written the correspondence in response to a growing rift within the local between its two trade factions, which had started more than a year before when stationary members, who by that time were outnumbered by operating members, refused to abide by majority votes. The dispute escalated when the stationary members decided to drop out of Local 841 and refused to pay union dues, and afterward had their employers cancel their contracts with the local and instead make agreements with individual employees. Subsequently, on September 21, 1935, the I.U.O.E. also suspended all stationary members who had withdrawn from Local 841, including former officers Brother Hayworth and **Treasurer Clarence R. Powers**, "because of their refusal to comply with the instructions of the general president, as well as for negligence of duty."

Meanwhile, the local's stationary members claimed the local's finances were not being properly maintained and President/Business Agent Soucie was misappropriating funds. In a July 31, 1936, letter to A.F.L. President Green, suspended stationary engineer **Brother Carl L. Sudbrink** relayed that an accountant found that between March 12, 1934, and September 1, 1935, the local was unable to account for \$741.20 in initiation fees and that Brother Soucie's "excessive claims of expenditures run as high as \$82.50 per month."

Brother Sudbrink further maintained that "owing to the high salary and expenses of (Brother

*Continued after next page.*



## LOCAL 841 LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE YEARS

During Local 841's first meeting after being chartered by the I.U.O.E., held July 27, 1921, the membership selected the following members as the local's first-ever officers. (The position of "business manager," who would run the daily administration of the local, was not designated until 1938.)

**President B. James Mollette**  
**Vice-President George Store**  
**Recording Secretary Irvin Hayworth**

**Financial Secretary & Treasurer Elmer A. Sellers**  
**Business Agent Charles Dunbar**

### PRESIDENTS

**B. James Mollette**  
1921 into 1924

**Irvin Hayworth**  
1924 into 1928

**Arthur S. Coker**  
1928 into 1930

**Irvin Hayworth**  
1930 into 1931

**Orell B. "Duke" Soucie**  
1931 into 1955

**George Bright**  
1955 into 1958

**Gilbert Bosworth**  
1958 into 1962

**Edgar T. Frye**  
1962 into 1968

**Joe D. Pirtle**  
1968 into 1983

**Billy Paul Pierson**  
1983 into 1984

**James Coleman**  
1984 into 1994

**Michael G. Frederick**  
1994 into 2001

**Blaine Davidson**  
2001 into 2005

**Thomas Ridge**  
2005 to present

### BUSINESS MANAGERS

**Orell B. "Duke" Soucie**  
January 1, 1938 into 1955

**Ralph Cassidy**  
1955 into 1958

**Joe Pierson**  
1958 into 1960

**Gilbert Bosworth**  
1960 into 1970

**Joe D. Pirtle**  
1970 into 1983

**Billy Paul Pierson**  
1983 into 1992

**Blaine Davidson**  
1992 into 2009

**Thomas Ridge**  
2009 to present



Orell B. Soucie



Ralph Cassidy



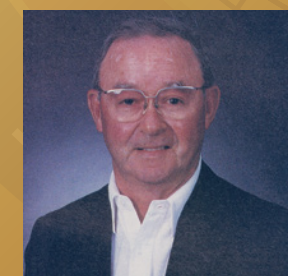
Joe Pierson



Gilbert Bosworth



Joe D. Pirtle



Billy Paul Pierson



Blaine Davidson



Thomas Ridge





## LOCAL 841 BRANCH LOCALS

### Local 841

#### Journeyman Engineers

All members employed in building, heavy & highway, utilities, pipelines and railroads.

### Local 841-A

#### Registered Apprentices

Chartered July 1, 1970, for all members who meet the definition of Registered Apprentice.

### Local 841-B

#### Pits and Quarries

Covers all members who are employed in pits and quarries; mines; permanent plants; and similar industries.

### Local 841-C

#### Municipalities, Secretaries, etc.

Covers municipalities, secretaries, factories and all other entities outside the construction industry.

(Local 841-B was originally chartered on June 9, 1937, with seven members who were employees of the Home Packing & Ice Company and evolved into covering engineers, oilers and helpers employed in permanent sand and gravel pits and material

yards before its current designation. Local 841-C was originally chartered on December 1, 1941, with 22 members who were employees of the France Stone Company and evolved into covering all rock quarries before its current designation.)

*The I.U.O.E. chartered "branches" of its locals as a means of providing representation to apprentices and workers who are not operating engineers. Some locals of the International Union of Steam Engineers (one of the previous names of the I.U.O.E.) were already utilizing "subordinate" branch locals to organize firemen – or apprentices – who fired and maintained the engines of the machines being operated by journeyman engineers as early as 1906. Soon after, locals also formed branches for engineers performing lower-paying "street- and general-construction work."*

*Parent locals primarily organized branches early on in order to control the entry of potentially competitive workers into the union and, as a result, the wage scales of journeyman engineers. Ultimately, the union made its practice of utilizing branch locals official when it integrated measures for the system into its constitution during the early 1920s, by which time the branch-local system was essentially serving as a de-facto apprenticeship program. As such, the branch locals were afforded representation and many of the same rights and privileges of any local, although the branches were supervised by their respective parent locals.*

Soucie), the treasury was always depleted and bills could not be paid, even though the dues per member were \$4 per month." In response to the high dues, according to the letter, the local's membership had voted in August 1935 "by a large majority" to cut them to \$2.50 per month. When Brother Soucie threatened to resign as business agent if the dues were reduced, the members voted to accept his resignation, according to Brother Sudbrink.

He further asserted that during the local's next meeting, I.U.O.E. District Organizer William J. Stuhr handed out letters of dismissal to the local's entire staff of officers, after which he and Brother Soucie reappointed all new officers. The pair then removed the Local 841 charter from its hall, Brother Sudbrink claimed, and proceeded to hold meetings on a different night without notifying the membership of the change.

"The reason we can get no settlement or a fair chance to settle from the International is that Mr. Stuhr has made several trips to the home office and painted the picture that we

are Reds, Communists and troublemakers," Brother Sudbrink declared in his letter. "The real truth in the matter is that both Mr. Stuhr and Mr. Soucie are racketeers who have picked upon the engineers union to make easy money and anyone who does not submit to their bulldozing is out."

As the controversy heightened, by that time Local 841's stationary engineers had asked for a separate charter from the I.U.O.E. and submitted an application for a new local that contained 13 members in good standing, 40 suspended members and five new applicants. But on January 16, 1936, the union's General Executive Board summarily denied the request, in large part, since Local 841 had not requested the separation and because "there is already a local union established in Terre Haute, Indiana, which has been assigned stationary jurisdiction, namely, Local Union No. 841."

But by late July 1936, the union had become increasingly more aware that the dispute was endangering the jobs of at least 60 members

employed at various plants in Terre Haute, including those of the Terre Haute Pure Milk & Ice Cream Company; Hulman & Company wholesale grocers and food packers; and the Terre Haute Brewing Company. Additionally, it had become evident that a mixed charter could not function within the Local 841 jurisdiction.

Ultimately, Local 841 and President Soucie agreed by September 1936 that a separate, stationary local should be established in Terre Haute, provided "that they undo these things they had done, pay themselves up and the suspension would be removed," as General President Possehl wrote to A.F.L. President Green. Among the provisions laid out in an August 18, 1936, agreement between the local and its suspended stationary engineers, the barred members agreed to pay their owed dues to Local 841 at a rate of \$2.50 per month from September 1, 1935, to September 1, 1936, and the local agreed to immediately reinstate all members who paid their indebtedness.

Soon after, seven official would-be charter members signed a new application to the I.U.O.E. for a local "with jurisdiction over all stationary plants in Terre Haute." With Local 841's approval, the I.U.O.E. granted a stationary-engineers charter for **Local No. 764** on September 2, 1936, to represent members throughout Vigo County.

Early the following month, I.U.O.E. international representatives Trustee John P. Coyne and District Organizer Stuhr met with committees from Local 841 and Local 764 to address finances that were still being held by Local 841's former treasurer Brother Powers, who had transferred into Local 764. Ultimately, Local 841 agreed "for the purpose of creating harmony and to assist Local 764 to organize the stationary engineers of Terre Haute and vicinity" to waive the collection of \$103 from its ex-treasurer, Trustee Coyne reported in an October 8 letter to General President Possehl. He further noted that Local 841 would release

Brother Powers "from any and all obligations" after he turned over the books and records of the office of treasurer to the local.

"The spirit exhibited by the members of the committees representing these two local unions, while bitter at times, appeared to have finally concluded in an understanding whereby peace and harmony will prevail in Terre Haute," Trustee Coyne also wrote to General President Possehl after noting that the stationary engineers would pay \$49.64 to the operating engineers. "I think this trouble in Terre Haute has finally reached a settlement."

(Less than three decades later, Local 764 would be suspended by the union on June 1, 1974, as the need for stationary engineers in the area and, therefore, the local's membership waned.)

## OPERATORS MOVE FORWARD

With the stationary-engineers controversy behind it and employment picking up as New Deal projects continued to provide construction work, hoisting- and portable-engineers Local 841 held its **first-ever annual dinner** on October 24, 1936, at the Terre Haute House. Declared an "event of fraternal importance" in that November's issue of *The International Engineer*, the banquet was attended by General President Possehl and General Secretary-Treasurer Frank A. Fitzgerald.

As its relatively good fortunes continued during the final years of the Great Depression, Local 841 established its **first independently owned headquarters** on Ohio Street in Terre Haute in March 1937. Shortly after moving into its new offices from its former location on South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, where it had shared a joint office with a local of the laborers' union, Local 841 even hired a secretary.

The local also continued to grow its membership, and in one particular instance was called upon to take in stationary engineers







working for the Home Packing & Ice Company plant in Terre Haute. Most of those men, however, were former members who had left the local during the stationary engineers' coup and had refused to reenter under terms of the reconciliation agreement under which Local 764 was formed.

Regardless, Local 841 and the I.U.O.E. organized the employees into a second subdivision local for engineers working at Home Packing and Ice. The branch was chartered by the union as **Local No. 841-B** on June 9, 1937.

Another first for Local 841 came with the new year when its increasing membership held an election on January 1, 1938, and voted Brother Soucie as its **first business manager**. Members also elected him president and **Brother Ralph B. Cassidy** as the local's secretary.

Later that year, Business Manager Soucie, realizing that the local's own auditors were not qualified, hired a certified public accountant to properly examine its financial books. "This was the beginning of an era that has put confidence in our ranks and has been the guarantee that the records and the finances were being properly kept and were accounted for in the right manner," Local 841 Secretary Cassidy later wrote in 1951.

Then, as its membership and territorial jurisdiction kept expanding, in May 1938 the local opened a district office in **Danville, Illinois**. The local also appointed **Brother Oscar L. Ferrebee** to supervise the Danville region, in which he was instrumental in organizing its engineers into the union over the ensuing years.

Among the major projects on which Local 841 members worked during the final years of the 1930s, many were employed on construction of a **levee system along the Wabash River** in Knox County, Indiana, developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers beginning in August

1938. In particular, the local furnished the skilled operators who were qualified to run a "Walking Dragline" excavator, one of the few times such a machine had been used in the region, to install the flood-control system for the Wabash River Valley.

At the international level during that period, the I.U.O.E. implemented several important changes for the betterment of the union's entire membership. Those improvements included granting territorial jurisdiction to each local, allowing locals to elect officers for periods of one to four years, and enacting provisions to protect the interests of locals and their memberships during strikes and lockouts.

As such, the I.U.O.E. reissued Local 841 a new charter on **December 31, 1938**. While it was still designated a hosting and portable local, the international union assigned jurisdiction to Local 841 that covered 17 counties in the State of Indiana and 19 counties in the State of Illinois – territory the local had been covering to obtain agreements with contractors doing highway and building work.

Members of the newly re-chartered Local 841 played a key role in building the new, \$3-million **U.S. Federal Penitentiary** in Terre Haute, a Public Works Administration project, after a contract for its construction was awarded in February 1939. The local's members participated in the land clearing, grading and general construction of the institution before it was completed in 1940.

Many of the local's members were also kept busy during the building seasons of those years constructing highways and bridges over the Wabash River and working on various types of general construction.

Elsewhere, I.U.O.E. **Local No. 592** of the City of Champaign, Illinois, had been placed under the direct supervision of the general president since May 29, 1939, "for their failure to function according to the Constitution and

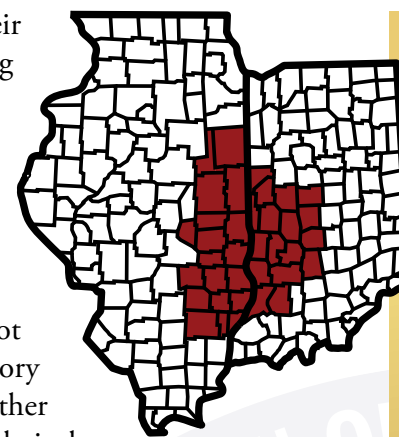
to properly protect their jurisdiction," according to minutes of the I.U.O.E. General Executive Board meetings of January 16 to February 10. What's more, because the local could not expand since its territory was surrounded by other locals and its relatively small membership "could not provide proper income by the payment of sufficient dues that would warrant and permit the employment of a paid business representative," the board decreed that the local could not "serve the best interests of the International Union."

The General Executive Board subsequently ordered Local 592 to consolidate into Local 841 and that its territory and members be transferred into the Terre Haute-based local. The board further instructed Local 841 to assign a business representative to the Champaign area "to properly police the work and give service to the members of Local Union No. 592," after which the Champaign local was officially merged into Local 841 on June 30, 1939.

## GROWTH IN PEACE, WAR

By the 1940s, the continued progress of Local 841 once again facilitated the need for it to move its offices into a larger space. In January 1940, the local signed a lease for six rooms in the **Odd Fellows Hall** in downtown Terre Haute, where it would remain for more than 16 years.

At the same time, the local was seeking to establish another sub-location in the southern part of its territory, which was not very well-organized. In July 1940, Business Manager Soucie assigned **Brother Henry H. Highfill** as business representative for the area and



## LOCAL 841

### TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION

When the I.U.O.E. reissued Local 841 a charter on December 31, 1938, the local was assigned official jurisdiction over 17 counties in west-central Indiana and 19 counties in east-central Illinois. The local maintains those same counties in 2021.

#### Illinois Counties

Champaign  
Clark  
Clay  
Coles  
Crawford  
Cumberland  
Douglas  
Edgar  
Edwards  
Effingham  
Ford  
Iroquois  
Jasper  
Lawrence  
Moultrie  
Richland  
Vermillion  
Wabash  
Wayne

#### Indiana Counties

Boone  
Clay  
Davies  
Fountain  
Greene  
Hendricks  
Knox  
Monroe  
Montgomery  
Morgan  
Owen  
Parke  
Putnam  
Sullivan  
Vermillion  
Vigo  
Warren

set up an office in **Vincennes, Indiana**, which "has proved a wise move on his part," Secretary Cassidy reflected in 1951, "and the membership that has been served out of that office has proved it to be so."

In 1940 and into 1941, the local's members were employed on a large number of private- and public-funded construction projects, including installation of Terre Haute's new, \$1-million, storm-water drainage system, a tunneling operation 40 feet below street level through the sandy soil of the Wabash River Valley. When completed, the project gave Terre Haute one of the most modern storm-water sewers in the nation.

The local's membership and trade jurisdiction increased notably again when in late 1941 it



organized 22 employees of the France Stone Company and its two quarries in Greencastle and Spencer, Indiana. The new members were chartered by the I.U.O.E. on December 1 of that year as **Local No. 841-C** for branch engineers employed as quarry workers.

But just six days later, the United States was suddenly thrust into World War II when the Japanese Empire's Navy air forces attacked the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. The following day, the United States declared war on Japan, after which Germany and the United States declared war on each other on December 11.

During its general membership meeting on December 14, 1941, Local 841 passed a resolution concurring with President Roosevelt's actions in declaring war on the two axis powers. The declaration further decreed:

*"That the International Union of Operating Engineers Local No. 841 agrees to back the National Plan of Defense and will place all new applications for operating engineers working on defense work in our branch local with lower initiation fees and dues."*

With the vast national defense program extending into the Terre Haute region, Business Manager Soucie and a group of leaders from the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce exerted their influence in Washington, D.C., and brought the massive **Wabash River Ordnance Works** to the territory. Later renamed the Newport Chemical Depot, the plant was built with Local 841 operating engineers beginning January 12, 1942, to produce the explosive RDX.

Throughout the rapid effort to produce wartime material, Business Manager Soucie and Local 841 knew that the essential objective in the erection of ordnance plants was speed, and the operating engineers of Local 841 would

have to play a major role in their development. As such, during the early years of the war, the local's members also helped construct the **Vigo Ordnance Plant** in Honey Creek Township, which began producing conventional explosives and munitions on February 18, 1942; and the **Terre Haute Ordnance Depot** from June 4 to December 4, 1942, which served primarily as a warehouse complex.

As the war program expanded, Local 841 also established an office in Clinton, Indiana, and moved Brother Ferreeb from Danville to that new bureau in 1942. **Brother Orville E. Rhode** was then appointed business representative to carry out the functions of the Danville office.

Beginning in June 1942, Local 841 members carved out **George Field** and its four main runways and four auxiliary fields near Lawrenceville, Illinois, to be used as an advanced pilot-training school for the U.S. Army Air Corps. In doing so, the local's operating engineers manned large bulldozers to rip up soil; a large grader that scraped the width of a roadway and handled several yards of earth at a time; derricks that swung smokestacks into place and handled other high-line liftings; shovels that did the work of dozens of men in moving earth; and ditch-diggers that quickly turned-out ditches.

Throughout the war, the local's officers and members led the fight on the homefront to supply skilled operating engineers to military projects, but the local never staged a work stoppage on any of those jobs. What's more, many of the local's members served on battlefields around the world, while the local was further pressed to replenish that manpower while also instilling in new members the spirit of unionism and a staunch dedication to the I.U.O.E. and Local 841.

Following the end of the global conflict in November 1945, the local could look back on a wartime record of unquestionable patriotism and determination, about which the local's



Seated at the head table during a banquet held in 1946 to honor Local 841 President Orell B. Soucie and his 15 years of service as head of the local are (left to right) Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce member Joseph Quinn; Chamber of Commerce Chairman Speed Shideler; Local 841 Vice President H. H. Highfill; I.U.O.E. General Secretary-Treasurer Frank A. Fitzgerald; President Soucie; Terre Haute Mayor Vern McMillan; I.U.O.E. Second Vice-President Anthony Inham; I.U.O.E. International Representative William J. Stuhr; State of Indiana Director of Labor Charles Kerns; State of Illinois Director of Labor Bob Gordon; and Indiana Federation of Labor Secretary John Acker.

1951 anniversary-celebration program makes special note:

*"It is an enviable record that Local No. 841 has gained by the manhours, skilled craftsmanship and the tons of sweat to bring about victory."*

Local 841's strength and influence advanced steadily during the second half of the 1940s as employment remained strong while the country and the local's jurisdiction enjoyed an economic

and cultural boom in the aftermath of the war years. Among the major projects on which the local's engineers were employed during that period was the beginning of construction of the four-generating-unit, coal-fired **Eagle Valley Power Plant** near Martinsville, Indiana, that would begin producing power in 1951. Burgeoning road and bridge construction, including **Indiana State Route 59** and the 1,250-foot **Montezuma Bridge** carrying U.S. Route 36 over the Wabash River that was completed in 1949, likewise provided the local's members with abundant man hours.



## GAINFUL PERIOD TAINTED

Into the 1950s, Local 841 hoisting and portable engineers remained busy on projects throughout its district, including the Eagle Valley Power Plant (which would be completed in 1956) and renovations to the Wabash River Ordnance Works. During the first years of the decade, members also worked on construction of the new, \$50-million, coal-fired **Wabash River Generating Station** north of Terre Haute in Fayette Township, whose first of six units would go online in 1953 before the plant was fully complete in 1968.

Wages for the local's operating engineers were also beginning to escalate in contracts between the union and its employing contractors. In 1951, the top wage scale being paid to members was \$2.77-1/2 per hour for operating three-drum machines such as power cranes, draglines, derricks and shovels, and \$2.65 per hour for operating two-drum machines.

It was also during the first half of the 1950s when Local 841 established its first fringe-benefit for members on July 1, 1954, after it negotiated a **Health & Welfare Fund** into its



Local 841 members excavate with modern, new diesel-powered tractors during construction of Route 40 west of Terre Haute in 1951. Pictured top, Local 841 President Orell B. Soucie (far right) speaks with A. J. McKay, vice president of the S.J. Groves Construction Company, which employed the local's members on the project.

collectively bargained contract with contractors. The insurance benefit was initially funded with a 7-1/2-cent-per-hour contribution from the local's employers for each hour worked by its members.

But Local 841 also faced several challenges during that period. In one such trial, 15 union crane operators on the Wabash River power-plant project walked off their jobs on March 11, 1952, during a jurisdictional dispute with members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers over which union would perform particular portions of the work. Business Manager Soucie ordered the members back to work on March 13 because the stoppage was not authorized by the I.U.O.E., after which a settlement was brokered between the two unions.

Violent – but ultimately beneficial – labor strife involving Local 841 erupted later that year when a strike at the **Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company pilot plant** on East Wabash Avenue in Terre Haute “flared into open warfare,” as the July 28, 1952, *Terre Haute Tribune* reported. That morning, striking production employees who were members of Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.)-affiliated United Auto Workers (U.A.W.) Local No. 1164 clashed with rival A.F.L.-associated members who had recently left the U.A.W. and joined Local 841 as they attempted to enter the plant to resume work. (*The A.F.L. and C.I.O. would be at odds until the two organizations merged in December 1955.*)

## A CARING PARTNER IN ITS COMMUNITY

“We are going to help children and families,” Local 841 Business Manager Blaine Davidson declared in the May 2004 issue of the local's newsletter. “Hopefully, this will change the mind of the parents and the general public, and they will see Local 841 members are generous people and not thugs as the news media makes labor out to be.”

To those ends, throughout its first 100 years, Local 841 and its membership together have supported a wide range of charitable associations and causes, including many programs that aid children, such as *Shop with a Cop*; various police and military organizations and benefits; and the *Cancer Society*. Whenever they are able, the local's officers and members have given their time, skills and resources to assist countless causes within the communities they serve.



Local 841 officials, including Business Manager Manager Orell B. Soucie (center), present an iron lung to St. Anthony Hospital in Terre Haute in 1953.

One of the community groups the local was supporting at the time Business Manager Davidson made his announcement was the *Girl Scouts*. In particular, the local's volunteers through its apprenticeship and training program that year moved the dirt at the site of the Girl Scouts' new building in Terre Haute.

Those projects and more have continued a long history of benevolent involvement by the local, which has included donating iron lungs to *Clay County Hospital* in Brazil, Indiana, and *St. Anthony Hospital* in Terre Haute in 1953. “Words cannot express our appreciation for the thoughtfulness of you and your members of the engineers local in presenting to St. Anthony Hospital the iron lung for the welfare of the people living in this vicinity,” Sister M. Ludolph, director of St. Anthony Hospital, told Local 841 Business Manager Orell B. Soucie after receiving the gift.

Among innumerable other volunteer efforts, for example, 30 years later the local's operating engineers provided equipment and manpower to help construct new trails, bridges, landscaping and a new parking lot for *Camp New Hope* near Mattoon, Illinois. The nonprofit facility conducts various recreational programs, including summer camps, for people with developmental disabilities.

At the time, Allis-Chalmers was erecting a \$10-million plant in Terre Haute to build compressors for J-65 turbojet engines for the U.S. Air Force under the largest contract ever let by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. Meanwhile, nearby interurban car barns had been converted into a pilot plant to train employees while the main plant was being constructed. According to an article in the January 26, 2008, *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, “The impact of 700 busy construction workers and 430 Allis-Chalmers



employees who transformed the car barns into a thriving defense plant was a tremendous boost to the economy.”

After U.A.W. Local 1164 went on strike on May 7, 1952, construction of the main plant was halted on June 20. The Air Force subsequently set July 8 as the deadline for the resumption of work, according to the newspaper.

“Dissident members of Local 1164” then joined Local 841, and on the morning of July 28, about 250 members of the local from throughout its jurisdiction “formed a ‘flying wedge’ at the picket line guarding the gate at Allis-Chalmers’ East Wabash pilot plant,” the article recounted. “Blocking traffic on U.S. Highway 40, the attack force broke through to allow five autos carrying 34 A.F.L. workers to enter the plant.”

During the ensuing fighting, seven men were stabbed or cut by flying glass, several were beaten and two were arrested, the July 28, 1952, *Tribune* reported. The injured included **Brother John Martin** of Local 841, who was taken to the hospital in critical condition with a punctured lung after being stabbed, but he later recovered.

The 2008 *Tribune-Star* article noted that the incident “seemed to expedite settlement,” and the strike was resolved on August 20, 1952. By December 1, manufacturing operations were underway at the main Terre Haute plant. (While there were no further labor problems, the Allis-Chalmers plant closed during the summer of 1962 “for economic reasons,” according to the newspaper.)

Two years later, Local 841 was faced with a grievous internal crisis when Brother Soucie – who had led the local’s rejuvenation over the previous 23 years as well as its forces during the conflict at Allis-Chalmers in 1952 – was charged with labor racketeering for a fourth time in four months. The latest indictment, handed down on July 3, 1954, accused him,

**Business Agent Orville Rhodes** and Brother Highfill, who was then the local’s secretary-treasurer, with “conspiring to obstruct interstate commerce by attempting to extort \$9,200 from the Rieth-Riley Construction Company of Goshen, Indiana, during 1951 and 1952 and the first part of 1953.”

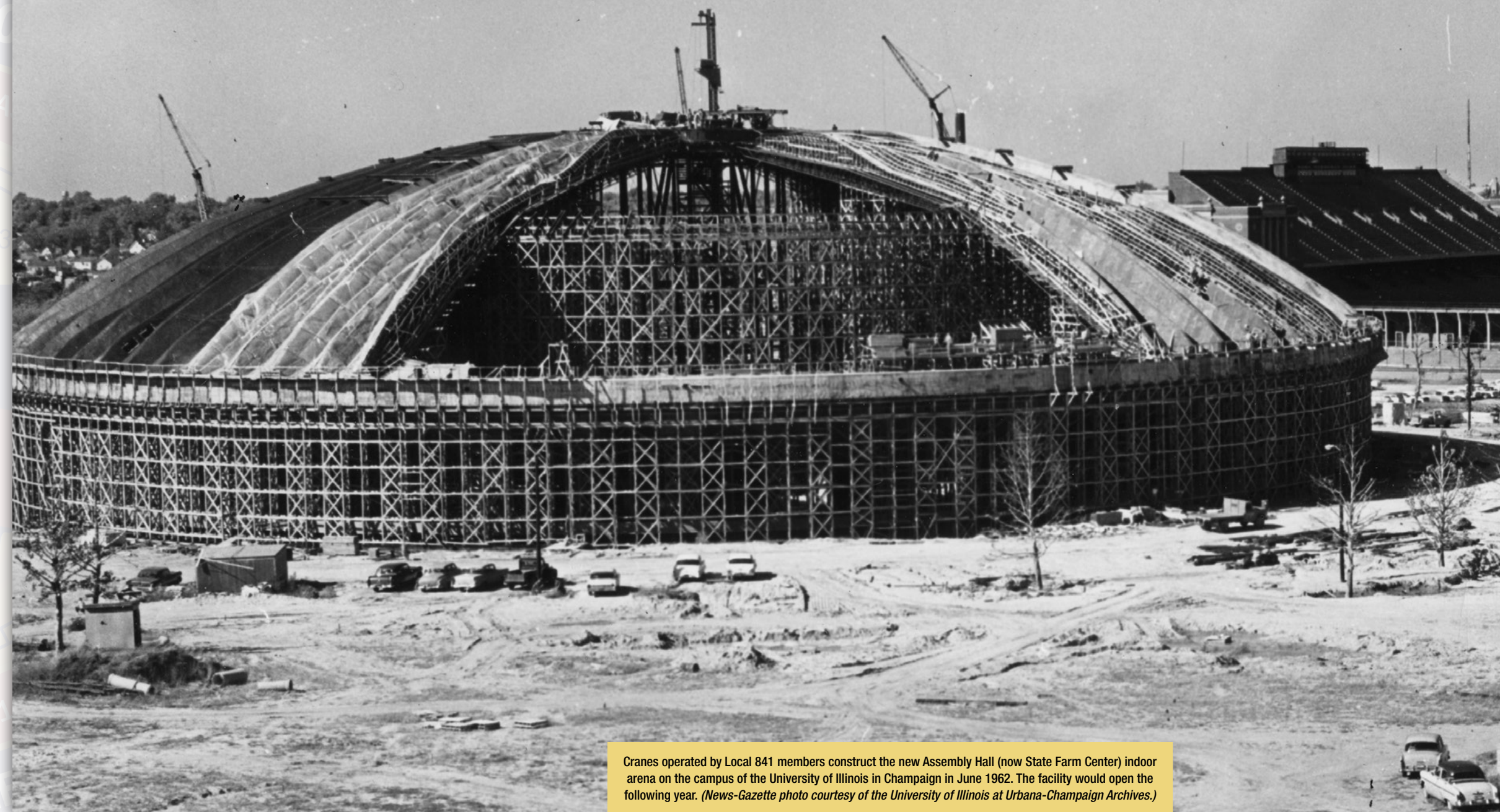
In particular, according to the March 28, 1955, *Tribune*, the officers “promised smooth

relations on a road-building project in Illinois.” The U.S. district attorney also informed the District Court judge that “the attempts to get the extortion money were accompanied by threats of strikes and violence.”

Brother Soucie resigned as business manager and president of Local 841 before the end of 1954 as he awaited trial on the fourth indictment. On February 1, 1955, Brother

Cassidy took over the position of business manager and **Brother George Bright** was named president of the local.

On January 25, 1955, Soucie pleaded guilty to a charge of labor racketeering and was sentenced on March 28, 1955, to five years in prison and was fined \$10,000. Highfill and Rhodes were both fined \$3,000 and placed on probation for five years.



Cranes operated by Local 841 members construct the new Assembly Hall (now State Farm Center) indoor arena on the campus of the University of Illinois in Champaign in June 1962. The facility would open the following year. (News-Gazette photo courtesy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.)





Local 841 member Brother Pud Saunders moves an 80-foot-long, 24-inch pipe on a job in Mattoon, Illinois, sometime during the early- or mid-1960s.

## NEW HOME, HIGHWAYS

Now under the leadership of Business Manager Cassidy and putting the transgressions of its former officers behind it, the more-than-1,600-member Local 841 began the second half of the 1950s with a new contract with the **Associated Building Contractors of Terre Haute**. The agreement went into effect during the spring of 1955 and provided a 5-cent-per-hour across-the-board wage increase for all of the local's trade classifications (following negotiations in early January that were led by former Business Manager Soucie).

Then, after planning as far back as November 1954, the local broke ground on March 1, 1956, on a new, modern headquarters building on seven acres on the south side of Terre Haute at **301 Margaret Avenue**. Dedicated on November 23 of that year, the building, which was designed specifically for union activity and had a meeting hall with seating capacity of 400, an executive board and conference room and a massive bronze seal of the I.U.O.E. laid in the terrazzo floor of its lobby, cost \$314,833 to construct and furnish.

Out in the field, Local 841 hoisting and portable engineers remained busy throughout the balance of the decade on numerous jobs throughout the local's jurisdiction, including construction of the Indiana-Michigan Electric Company's \$55-million **Breed Power Plant** near Fairbanks, Indiana. Much to the advantage of the operating engineers and other building-trades craftsmen, the **Central Wabash Valley Building and Construction Trades Council** and the company negotiated a labor-friendly project agreement for the work, which guaranteed the unions would not strike while their members were employed on the project.

When dedicated in October 1960, the 496-megawatt power station housed the largest, supercritical coal-fired generator in the world. However, construction of the plant was temporarily slowed beginning April 3, 1959, when about 50 Local 841 members stayed off the job until the local and the project's general contractor reached a new, three-year contract agreement that provided hourly pay raises, after which the engineers returned to work on April 8. *(Taken over by American Electric Power, the plant was closed in 1994 and demolished in 2007.)*

But Local 841 enjoyed a significant windfall beginning in the late 1950s and throughout the early 1960s during the height of construction of the interstate highway system. During that time, many of the local's hoisting and portable operating engineers were put to work on building parts of U.S. **Interstate 70, Interstate 74** and **Interstate 69** through western Indiana and eastern Illinois.

With **Brother Gilbert Bosworth** taking over as Local 841 business manager in 1960 from **Brother Joe Pierson**, who served in the position for two years, the local would experience an extended period of stability. Business Manager Bosworth would lead Local 841 throughout the 1960s, during which the local steadily grew

along with its manhours, in large measure as a result of abundant road construction.

As highway work continued to regularly employ scores of the local's operators for the duration of the decade, elsewhere members worked on projects that included building the \$8.4-million **Assembly Hall** (now State Farm Center) on the campus of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana beginning in May 1959. Many Local 841 operators participated in excavating and erecting the "saucer-shaped," multi-purpose arena, which included constructing a 110-foot temporary steel shoring tower for construction of its concrete dome and operating two Sprawler cranes that handled a major portion of the concrete work. The



Local 841 members working for Denton Construction Company build a segment of the new Interstate-70 highway beneath the Harmony Road (now North County Road 200 East) overpass southeast of Brazil, Indiana, in August 1968



facility, which would primarily host university and high school sporting events, concerts and other entertainment, was completed in March 1963 with no lost-time construction accidents.

During the second half of the 1960s, Local 841 members also played a major role in bringing Terre Haute's **Southwest Area Urban Renewal Project** to fruition by the end of 1968. Many union operating engineers worked on construction of the city's effort to renovate and rejuvenate its South Third Street area by replacing abandoned houses and vacant lots with modern apartment complexes, hotels and retail outlets, which "succeeded beyond the greatest expectations of its supporters," according to an article in the July 14, 1968, *Tribune*.

With the urban-renewal project complete and Interstate 70 passing through Vigo County and along the southern border of Terre Haute, the city's downtown section dramatically transformed before the end of

the decade – a change brought about in large part through Local 841's participation in those projects and others.

Meanwhile, to better serve its members, Local 841 constructed a new **Health and Welfare building** in 1968 at 525 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Terre Haute, in which the administrative functions of the local's Health and Welfare Fund would be handled.

### AN EVENTFUL DECADE

Employment conditions remained strong for Local 841 hoisting and portable engineers throughout much of the 1970s, during which **Brother Joe D. Pirtle** served as business manager and president of the local for the entire decade. With highway work continuing to provide substantial man hours for the local's members, many also worked on several major projects in the local's jurisdiction, including construction of a pair of electric-generating powerhouses.



A Local 841 crew, including Brother Roy G. Haddon, transports an earth-moving "belly" scraper in 1968.



Local 841 member Brother Ike Wilkinson operates a tower crane during construction of the new Greene County General Hospital in Linton, Indiana, in October 1971. The hospital opened in April 1974.

What's more, the local began a new, formal apprentice training program in 1970 to bolster the ranks of its skilled craftsmen. The I.U.O.E. subsequently granted Local 841 a branch-local charter for **Registered Apprentice Engineers** on July 1 that year.

The local's membership and territory also grew shortly after when the I.U.O.E. amalgamated Bloomington, Indiana-based **Local No. 850** into Local 841 on September 1, 1970. Originally chartered on October 9, 1933, and then reinstated on September 18, 1934, after its charter had been revoked earlier that year, Local 850's hoisting and portable members were employed in the stone mills in the state's Lawrence and Monroe counties.

While Local 841 members were working on projects that included installing sewers throughout Terre Haute, remodeling Bloomington Hospital and constructing Bloomington High School North and a parking garage at Indiana University Bloomington, the local went on strike against the Associated Building Contractors of Terre Haute on April 7, 1971, when the two groups could not reach agreement on a new contract. Initially during negotiations, the local was seeking an 18-percent wage increase for its engineers while contractors were only offering to raise their scale by 6 percent.

By April 10, no contract had been negotiated despite the two sides being just 10 cents apart on





Local 841 Brother Harold Garrett (second from left) receives his apprenticeship graduation certificates as a member of the local's first apprenticeship-program graduating class from (left to right) Business Manager Joe Pirtle, Business Representative Bob Moore and I.U.O.E. Research and Education Department Director Reece Hammond on January 25, 1974.

a new wage scale, and about 70 percent of the local's members had returned to their jobs after individual contractors signed pacts with the union, according to that day's *Tribune*. The local had come to terms with its Indiana highway and utility contractors and its Illinois building contractors on new, three-year contracts, before ending its two-week strike in its Indiana construction jurisdiction on April 29 following settlement on a new, three-year agreement.

A month later on June 3, Local 841 was part of a new building-trades-wide agreement on residential construction that created a **Coordinated Residential Organizing Program**. Among several criteria intended to boost union employment on housing work, the six construction-craft unions signatory to the pact, including Local 841, agreed to create a "residential classification" of workers who would

be paid at 70 percent of current journeyman wage scales for non-residential construction. That day's *Tribune* further reported, "The representatives of the participating organizations anticipate that this action will provide the incentive to stimulate adequate housing starts in the area to meet existing demands as well as provide additional units to attract new industries to the area and encourage existing firms to expand locally, thereby ensuring a healthy growth rate for the community."

The local also struck against the Indiana Highway Constructors in April 1972 when negotiations with the employers and four statewide I.U.O.E. locals, including Local 841, reached an impasse. After the Terre Haute-based operating engineers attempted to pull out of negotiations and attain interim agreements with individual contractors and then stopped

working on all highway-construction projects in its south-central Indiana territory, the locals and contractors worked out a new three-year agreement on March 22 that was retroactive to January 1, 1972.

The following year, work began on construction of the Central Illinois Public Service Company's new **Newton Power Station**, which would employ more than 100 operating engineers at times before the plant's first generating unit went online and its 1,800-acre, man-made lake was completed in 1977. Construction of a second generator would continue to employ Local 841 members until it was finished in 1982 – marking the close of a 12-year construction program at the site that supplied much of the Local 841 membership with stable man hours.

During the mid-1970s, other projects on which Local 841 members worked included ongoing road work; construction of the new, 152-unit **Garfield Towers** senior-citizen complex in Terre Haute; and new construction and a large amount of maintenance work at Marathon Petroleum Corporation's **Robinson Refinery** in Crawford County, Illinois. (Upgrade outages, maintenance and repair work at the refinery would be a stable source of work for the local's engineers throughout much of the ensuing decades.) Elsewhere, along with an abundance of smaller jobs, Local 841 union operating engineers at that time worked on jobs within its Illinois territory such as construction at the Victor Gasket and the Union Carbide plants in Robinson; a new county road from Teutopolis Northwest to Interstate 57 and I-70; a sewer plant in Watson; two factories, a new John Deere building and expansion of the sewer and water plants in Flora, and in Fairfield, a new shopping center and federally funded housing.

Construction of Hoosier Energy's new, \$580-million **Merom Generating Station** between Merom and Sullivan, Indiana, on the

Wabash River began in November 1977 and would furnish Local 841 members with more man hours. Like the Breed Power Plant built two decades before, the two-unit, 1,080-total-megawatt, coal-fired Merom plant was built under a project-labor agreement between the power company and the Central Wabash Valley Building and Construction Trades Council, which favored union employment and prohibited wildcat strikes. With Local 841 skilled labor, its "Unit 2" generator would be placed in operation in February 1982 and its "Unit 1" generator would be completed in September 1983.

## ENDURING HARD TIMES

The late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s were primarily marked by poor national and local economies, punctuated by a severe economic recession from 1980 into 1983, that curtailed construction work and, therefore, impeded employment for Local 841. With the bulk of road work and most of the new powerhouses in the local's area completed, for several years little major construction was available to regularly employ the local's members.

What's more, an anti-union political climate that pervaded the 1980s further impeded the progress of organized-labor unions, including Local 841, by making it more difficult for them to bargain contracts and sustain prevailing wages – further stunting employment and growth.

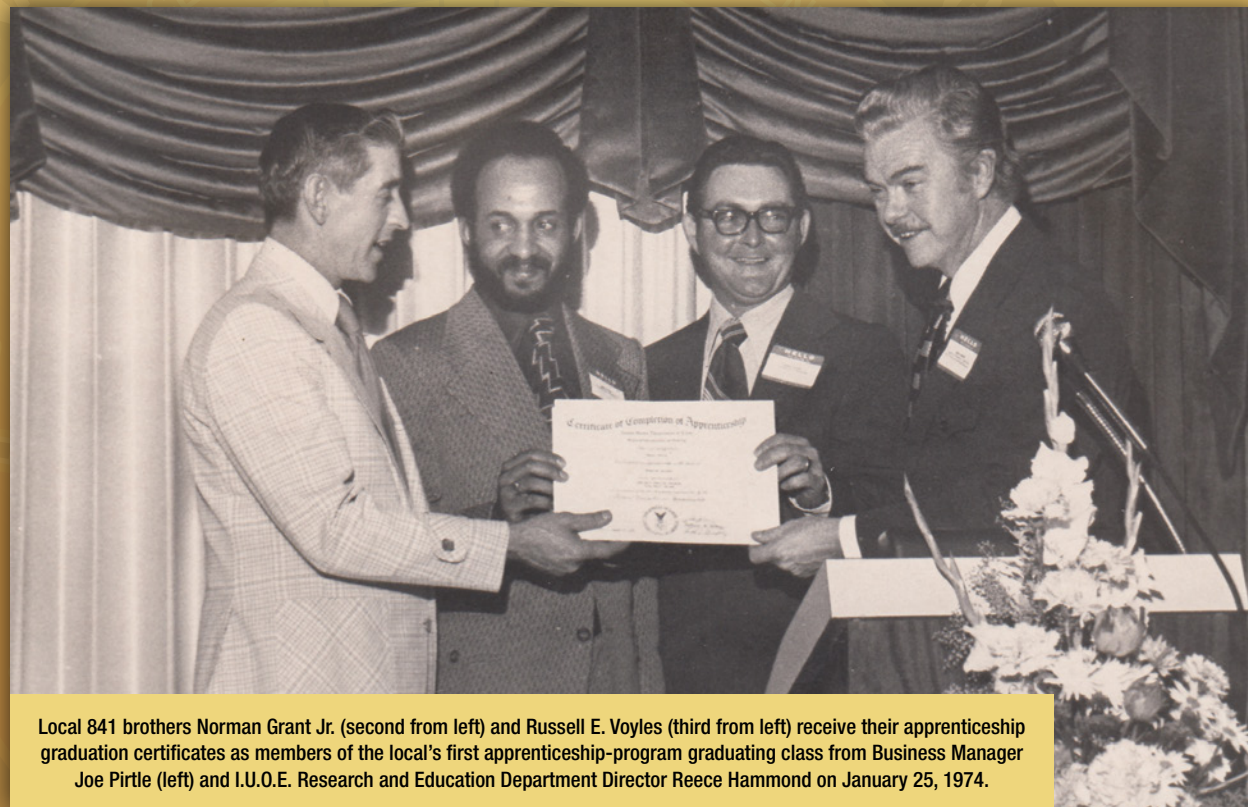
Meanwhile, **Brother Billy Paul Pierson** took over as business manager of Local 841 on January 1, 1983.

Four years later in June 1987, as the local was finally clawing its way out of the depressed period, Business Manager Pierson started the local's **Qualified Savings Plan**, which would become one of the most worthwhile and rewarding benefits provided to the local's membership. A supplemental retirement fund for Local 841 members into which contractors



## APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING

# A STEADFAST DEDICATION TO EDUCATING MEMBERS



Local 841 brothers Norman Grant Jr. (second from left) and Russell E. Voyles (third from left) receive their apprenticeship graduation certificates as members of the local's first apprenticeship-program graduating class from Business Manager Joe Pirtle (left) and I.U.O.E. Research and Education Department Director Reece Hammond on January 25, 1974.

Throughout the past century since it was chartered in 1921, Local 841 has prioritized training of its apprentices to become journeyman operating engineers. Through apprenticeships, in which apprentices new to the industry work side-by-side with experienced journeyman members on jobsites to learn the trade while earning a wage, the local has been able to provide its employers with fully qualified engineers throughout its existence.

It was not until the early 1930s that the local established a formal apprenticeship training program — as opposed to junior members simply going to work on various jobsites — whereby apprentices (more commonly known as "oilers" at the time as oiling machines was their initial primary function) were gradually shown the intricate methods of operating different types of construction equipment. Local 841 President Orell B. Soucie realized the importance of the program and personally supervised the local's apprenticeship department during that time.

Over the following three-plus decades, Local 841 steadily enhanced and improved its apprentice-training system, allowing the organization to grow and improve its workforce.



Local 841 members participating in a crane-safety class at the local's union hall in Terre Haute in March 1994.

Then on October 1, 1968, the local established the Local 841 Apprenticeship & Training Trust Fund in order to better finance and, therefore, develop and expand its training. The fund was initially financed with contributions from the local's employing contractors of 5-cents-per-hour worked by Local 841 members.

By that time, the local was also part of the Indiana Highway Construction Joint Apprenticeship Committee, along with other I.U.O.E. locals throughout the state and their employing contractors of the Indiana Highway Constructors. The committee was established to train operating engineers in the state's heavy and highway industry.

Local 841 then received its Apprenticeship Charter from the I.U.O.E. in 1970. Two years afterward in 1972, the Training Trust Fund leased 5 acres on South 25<sup>th</sup> Street in Terre Haute on which it established its first Local 841 Training Center.

Two years later on January 25, 1974, the fund's apprenticeship-training program graduated its first class of apprentices to

### LOCAL 841

#### TRAINING COORDINATORS

**Robert Moore**  
1970 – 1977

**Billy Paul Pierson**  
1977 – 1983

**Robert Green**  
1983 – 1984

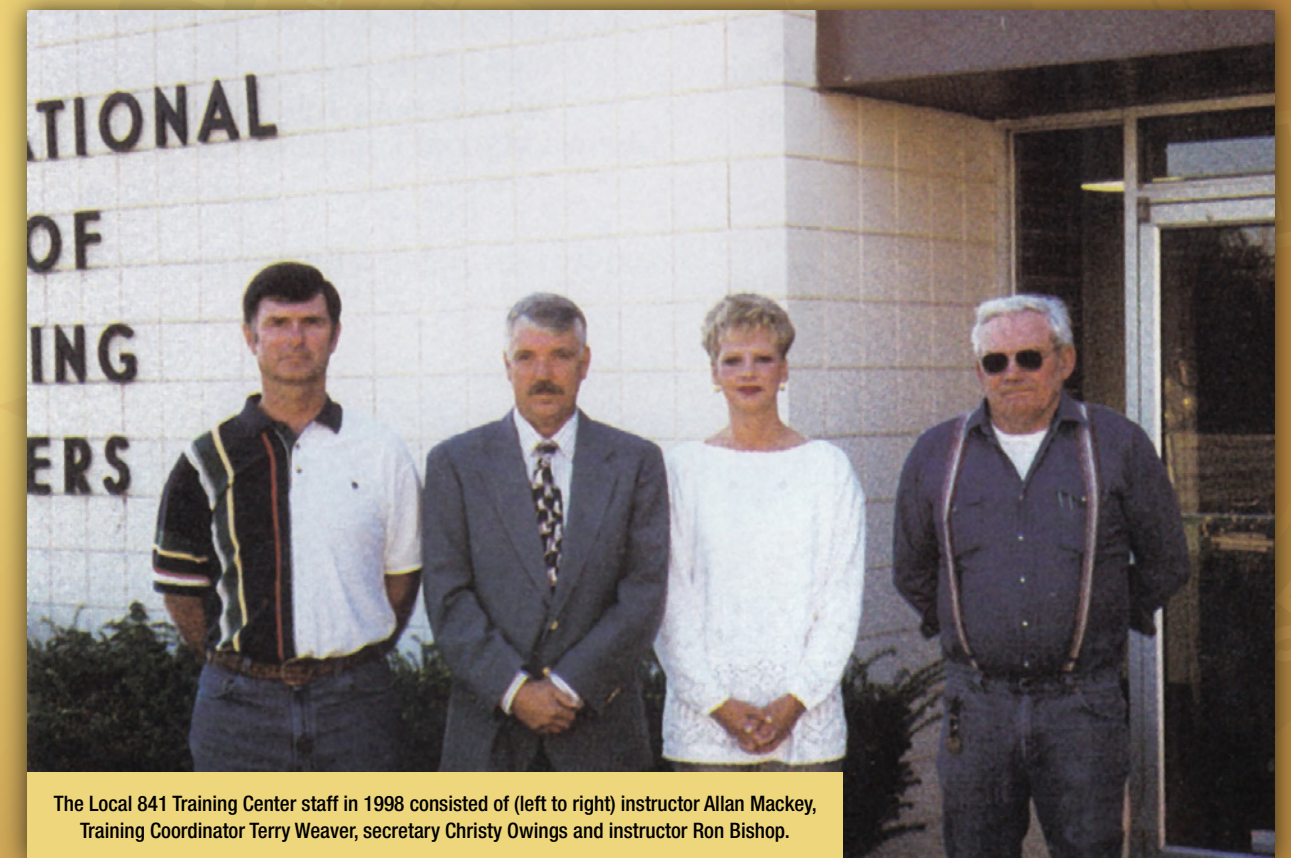
**Gene Scully**  
1984 – 1990

**Matthew Criss**  
1991 – 1995

**Scott Thilmony**  
1996 – 1998

**Terry Weaver**  
1998 – 2011

**Bill Sharp**  
2011 – present



The Local 841 Training Center staff in 1998 consisted of (left to right) instructor Allan Mackey, Training Coordinator Terry Weaver, secretary Christy Owings and instructor Ron Bishop.



## APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING

# A STEADFAST DEDICATION

journeyman level after those 16 graduates completed 6,000 hours of on-the-job training and required classroom and lab work.

As the training program continued to develop, in 1992 it upgraded by adding an instructor in first aid and CPR and also constructed a hazardous-materials (Hazmat) decontamination area at its training site. The following year, the program began renting modern equipment and formed new upgrade-training classes for the local's experienced journeyman engineers to keep them up to date on the industry's most current technologies and methods.



Local 841 training took another leap forward in August 1995 when the local purchased 282 acres of land and in 1997 relocated its training center to the property, located at 2034 West 1800 S. in Universal, Indiana, which would also be utilized for heavy-equipment training of apprentice and journeyman members to upgrade their skills. Then in early 2011 the training program broke ground on a 300-by-130-foot indoor training arena that was completed that November, and in 2020 the local bought an additional, adjacent 118 acres to further expand the training center.

Meanwhile, by 2013, Local 841 and its contractors were already spending nearly \$1-million each year on training of the local's membership, with the trust fund receiving contributions of 80-cents-per-hour worked by each member to finance the training. By that time, the local's apprentices were enrolled in a four-year training program that required 4,000 hours of work.

"Our members are dedicated to training and spend a lot of time to be highly trained," Business Manager Tom Ridge declared in the February 25, 2013, Star-Tribune newspaper. At that time, the local had 2,400 members in Indiana and Illinois, including about 120 apprentices, and had been adding 10 to 30 new apprentices each year.



# TO EDUCATING MEMBERS

## FIRST GRADUATING APPRENTICESHIP CLASS

These 16 apprentices were the first to graduate the Local 841 Apprenticeship & Training Trust Fund apprenticeship-training program and received their journeyman certificates on January 25, 1974.

**Peter Alagna**  
**Harold Brucker**  
**Marc Downs**  
**Gary Eichelberger**  
**Harold Garrett**  
**Norman Grant Jr.**  
**Charles P. Hanley**  
**Glen E. Hays**

**Jimmy Kelly**  
**Larry Lee Leitch**  
**Rick Nichols**  
**Stephen Shawler**  
**Jerry Tague**  
**James Terrell**  
**Russell E. Voyles**  
**Steven Woods**

Leading up to the local's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021, Local 841 and the Apprenticeship & Training Trust Fund trained an average of 125 apprentices and 400 journey-workers each year at their state-of-art training facility. Training continues to consist of a combination of classroom work and operating the roughly 45 pieces of heavy equipment the center utilizes for field instruction. Instructors at the site are all operating engineers and teach the fundamentals of operating and maintaining heavy equipment, including bulldozers, cranes, excavators, asphalt and concrete paving equipment.

Apprentices also learn welding, grade stakes, GPS, rigging and signal safety and operations. With the training provided by the local, they can earn certifications from Ivy Tech Community College and an associate degree in applied science.

Journeyman-upgrade training provided by Local 841 includes certifications on cranes and forklifts; hazmat; Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) certifications; and CPR and first aid.



The Local 841 Training Center campus in Universal, Indiana.



## SECRETARY MANAGED OFFICE FOR ALMOST THREE DECADES

For 42-1/2 years, Marilyn Bryan was an integral part of the Local 841 administration and its operations. Perhaps most notably, over her final nearly 28 years with the local, Marilyn served as its head secretary until she retired on January 1, 2011.

Marilyn began working for Local 841 in July 1968 with its Health and Welfare office before she was moved to its Apprenticeship and Training Fund office in June 1970, where she worked until 1983. She was then moved into the local's main office as its head secretary and would go on to serve in that position under four different business managers.

"Marilyn has gone through some hard times during the transition periods with the business managers, but she has managed to be very professional with her job at all times," Business Manager Blaine Davidson wrote in the November 1992 issue of the local's newsletter. "She has worked many long hours to see that the job was done when it was needed."

Among the many duties she performed, Marilyn saw to it that all agreements were opened in a timely fashion; certified wages with the states and the federal government for prevailing wages; assisted members in completing pension applications; and assisted with financial reports and materials needed for the local's Executive Board. She was also involved in union elections committees, orchestrated banquets for members' service awards and oversaw all of the local's bookkeeping.



Longtime Local 841 head secretary Marilyn Bryan at work in 1994.

was able to put much of its 1,800-strong membership to work as the highways and powerhouses they had built over the previous decades needed updating and modernization.

As the local became busy once more and continued to grow again, that year employment was strong in locations around its jurisdiction. "We have had better work than anticipated," new **Business Manager Blaine Davidson**, who succeeded Brother Pierson earlier that year, even reported in the November 1992 issue of the local's new newsletter (the second-ever issue). "We in Local 841 should feel fortunate that we have the work that we do."

In Illinois' Champaign County, for instance, beginning with a renovation of **Memorial Stadium** at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, members worked on three sizable building jobs on the school's campus. Elsewhere in the county, widening of I-74 by the local's operating engineers was in its third and final year, and a project at the Marathon Refinery being worked under the international

pay a specified rate on hours worked by the members and then that money is invested, the Qualified Savings Plan Trust helps the local ensure its members are able to enjoy retirement and maintain a decent standard of living without worrying about their retirement income. In June 2021 – 38 years after it was established – the value of the trust fund's assets was more than \$126 million.

With the economy improving, construction and strong employment conditions began to return to the Local 841 jurisdiction in earnest in the early 1990s, and work for the local's members would remain stable throughout the balance of the decade. By 1992, the local

union's National Maintenance Agreement was employing more members. At the same time, in Iroquois County, Local 841 members were working on two major resurfacing projects and five bridges that were under construction.

Early in 1993, Local 841 negotiated and its membership ratified by an overwhelming majority three major contracts – **Illinois Construction, Indiana Building and Indiana Highway and Utility** – as well as several permanent plant agreements. The local was able to gain concessions in the contracts after its business agents and members spent many hours on picket lines, while contractors were unsuccessful in several attempts to set up Local 841 for charges with the National Labor Relations Board during negotiations.

That spring and into the summer, employment for the local's members remained ample throughout the territory, including jobs

on pipeline, road, bridge and building work. Some of the major projects to which the local's operating engineers provided their skilled craftsmanship during that period included reconstruction of U.S. Route 41 south of Terre Haute and I-70 east of the city; work on a sewage treatment plant and sewer lines in West Terre Haute; and overlay of State Route 246 in southern Vigo County and State Route 67 in Greene, Owen and Morgan counties in Indiana.

## FUELING THE RECOVERY

After the building trades reached a project agreement with Destec Energy for its **Wabash River Coal Gasification Repowering Project** at the Wabash River Generating Station in November 1992, guaranteeing the work would be done at full wage scales and with all union contractors, dozens of Local 841 members helped build



Local 841 delegates to the I.U.O.E. 34<sup>th</sup> Convention held in Chicago from April 5 to 8, 1993, were (front row, left to right) Jim Coleman, N. Budd Coutts, Frank Hanley and Blaine Davidson; and (back row) Howard Mills, Mike Frederick and Jim Fox.





Local 841 members Brother Fred Ellis, Brother Rick Boes and Brother Gearld Brown man a picket line against a non-union contractor building a bridge and performing road work on a U.S. Route 41 project at the bottom of Allendale Hill in Terre Haute during the spring of 1993.

the revolutionary project from July 1993 to November 1995. When completed and online, the 260-megawatt retrofit to the plant's Unit 1 was one of only two demonstrations of advanced integrated gasification combined cycle (I.G.C.C.) technology in the United States.

Local 841 had about 45 of its operators on the project at one point during the summer of 1994, at which time it was just more than half complete. A year and a half later, with the labor of those members and others, the repowering facility replaced the conventional pulverized-coal power plant that went online in 1953 with a natural- and synthetic-gas-powered generator that converts coal into synthetic gas (or "syngas").

Simultaneously, work throughout the local's jurisdiction was "going very well," as **Business Representative Tom Taylor** described conditions in his Danville area in the local's July-August 1993 newsletter. There, road and

bridge work were making strong progress, including a bridge over the Wabash River at Independence, Indiana, and one of the local's contractors had secured work on the CCL Custom Manufacturing consumer-products plant in Danville that was just beginning.

During the summer of 1994, employment again picked up and remained strong through the fall with jobs including abundant road projects such as U.S. Route 41 and I-70 in Vigo and Clay counties and State Route 59 in Brazil, Indiana. In the Bloomington area, union contractors had the lion's share of jobs, which included many road projects; restoration of the landmark Showers Brothers Furniture Company Building for city, county and private offices; renovation of the Indiana University School of Music's **Simon Music Center** to house recital halls, a library, classrooms and offices; and the addition of a gym and two classrooms onto Martinsville High School.

New contracts between the local and its trade contractors that went into effect April 1, 1996, also bolstered Local 841 member wages and fringe-benefits for the second half of the decade, with total benefit compensation for all three groups for healthcare, pensions, qualified savings and the training fund initially increased to \$6.95 per hour. The Indiana Highway & Utility agreement initially raised "Group A" operator wages to \$19.75 per hour and "Group B" wages to \$13.50 per hour; the Indiana Building agreement initially raised

"Class 1" wages to \$20.05 per hour and "Class 2" wages to \$12.90 per hour; and the Illinois Construction agreement initially raised "Class 1" wages to \$20.25 per hour and "Class 2" wages to \$13.10 per hour.

For its third year beginning April 1, 1998, the contract increased the total contributions into members' benefits to \$7.25 per hour. During that year, the Indiana Highway & Utility agreement raised "Group A" operator wages to \$21.00 per hour and "Group B"



Local 841 members working at the Charleston Stone Company quarry Pit No. 1 during the summer of 1994 included (front row, left to right) John McConkey, Ralph Bloxom and Greg Coffey; and (second row) Gerry Koester, Mike Clapp, Bob Millage, Tony Comstock, Vic Hargis, Charles Johnson, Bob Hudson, Gary McKinney and Willie Comstock.



Local 841 members working at the Charleston Stone Pit No. 2 during the summer of 1994 included (front row, left to right) Randy Comstock, Roland Bennett, Charlie Strader and Gary McKinney; and (second row) Gary Stone, Jay Tarble, Steve Lamb, Dale Nees, Larry Emberton, Steve Biggs, Jim Johnson, Harold Cole, Kevin Bennett and Everett Finney.





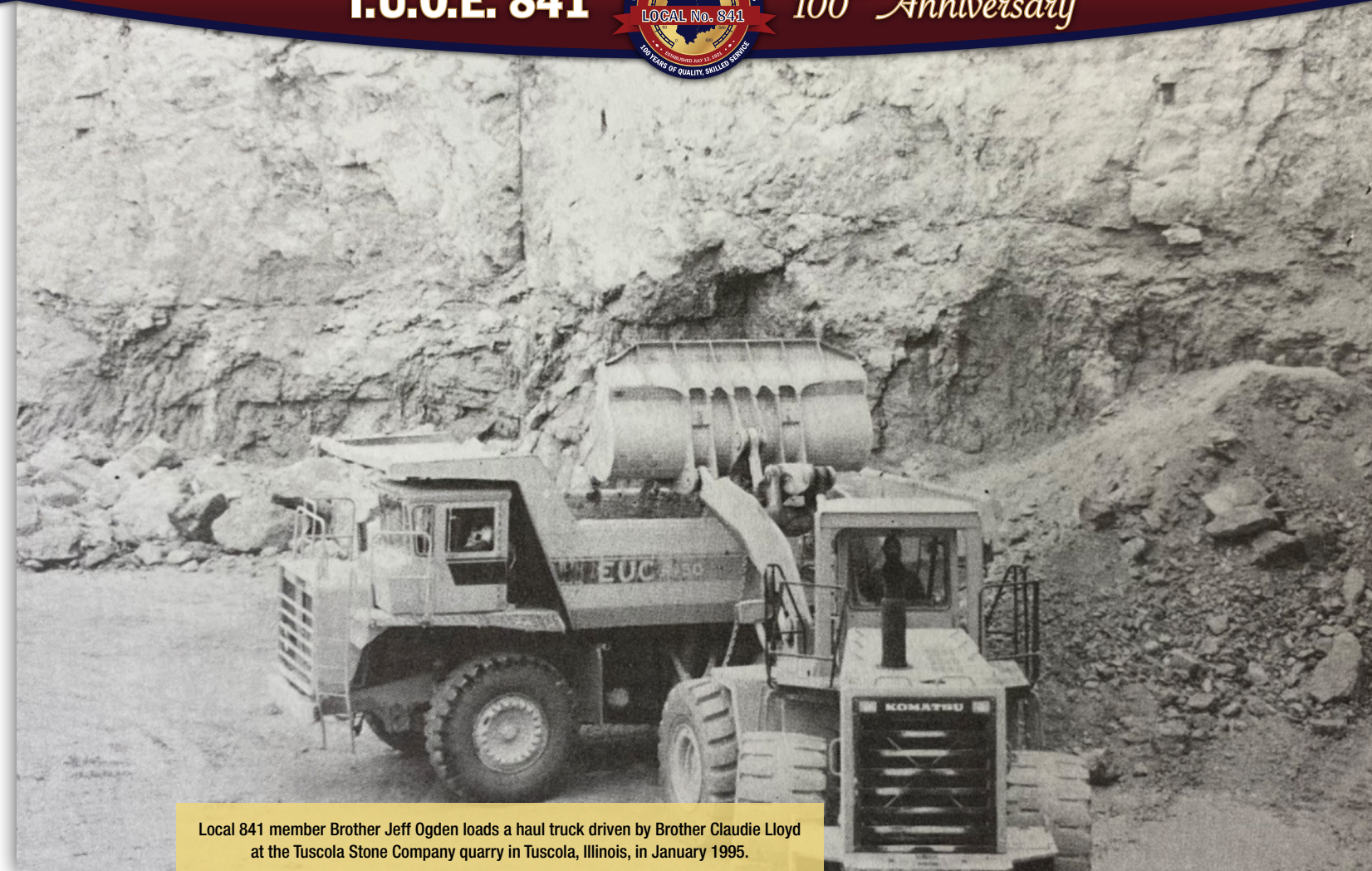
wages to \$14.75 per hour; the Indiana Building agreement initially raised “Class 1” wages to \$21.35 per hour and “Class 2” wages to \$14.20 per hour; and the Illinois Construction agreement initially raised “Class 1” wages to \$22.05 per hour and “Class 2” wages to \$14.65 per hour.

Meanwhile during the summer of 1996, work for Local 841 was “the best we have seen in several years,” Business Manager Davidson declared in the local’s September 1996 newsletter.

The favorable employment conditions carried through the remainder of the decade – when weather permitted. Among the many jobsites on which Local 841 members were found in 1998 were South Knox Elementary School and Route 50 paving in Knox County; paving State Road 58 in Sullivan County and construction of the new **Sullivan County Community Hospital** for its opening in July 1999; and construction of the **Grain Processing Corporation** plant in



Local 841 members work on construction of the 260-megawatt Coal Gasification Repowering Project at the Wabash River Power Station near Terre Haute in 1994, one of the first demonstrations of coal gasification to produce electricity after operational startup in November 1995.



Local 841 member Brother Jeff Ogden loads a haul truck driven by Brother Claudie Lloyd at the Tuscola Stone Company quarry in Tuscola, Illinois, in January 1995.

Washington, Indiana, which would produce a variety of corn-based products for worldwide distribution after it opened later that year.

In 1999, the man hours worked by Local 841 members increased over the previous year and the local had more operators working in November – when work was normally slow – than it had working in July. The ample number of projects on which Local 841 operating engineers worked that year included a \$30-million addition to the **Daviess Community Hospital** in Washington; construction of the new **Wheatland (Indiana) Generating Station**, a peaking plant that would generally only run when power demands are high; work on Central Elementary School in Sullivan County; and many road-resurfacing projects.

What’s more, all of the local’s main construction agreements had been settled by



Local 841 Business Manager Billy Paul Pierson (left) stands with his son, Brother Pat Pierson, who joined the local in 1980 and retired in 2011, during an event at the local’s union hall in 1998.



that time with substantial increases. The Illinois agreement, which was settled the previous year, had four years remaining and both Indiana agreements had five years remaining.

Reviewing the prosperous year in the local's December 1999 newsletter, Business Manager Davidson reported:

*"This has been a good year. ... Before the end of the year, the local union treasury is up the highest since I've been on staff. The Health and Welfare (Fund) is in the best shape it has been in years. The Apprenticeship and*

*Training (program) is teaching more classes and getting more equipment and teaching aides to make our membership the most skilled it can be. Also, the building of new classrooms and offices on site is a plus."*

### RIDING HIGH INTO 'Y2K'

Much of the first decade of the new 2000 ("Y2K") millennium was a boon for Local 841 and its members. Construction of multiple large warehouses throughout the jurisdiction and especially in



Local 841 retired members Brother Fred Sullivan (left) and Brother William Gray (right) sit with Business Manager Blaine Davidson (center) and President Mike Frederick (standing) after receiving their awards for 50 years of service to the I.U.O.E. in 1999.



Local 841 member Brother Roy G. Haddon operates a crane during construction of a petroleum tank farm in Wheatland, Indiana, in 1999.

mid-state Indiana, such as facilities for UPS and Federal Express, and consistent road work helped keep employment strong for the local.

During the year 2000 alone, Local 841 total man hours were up again for the second-straight year, boosted by the Wheatland Generating Station project; a turn-around at the Marathon Refinery for large-scale maintenance; and construction of the **Lawrence Correctional Center** prison in Sumner, Illinois, that would open in November 2001. Even late in the year, when road work is usually slack, asphalt work for two of the local's contractors, Ambraw Asphalt in Illinois and Rogers Group in Indiana, picked up and added employment opportunities.

Although Local 841 employment started slowly in 2002 because of poor weather, the local ended up having "one of the best years in the history of Local 841," Business Manager Davidson announced in the December 2002 newsletter. Projects that contributed to







Local 841 pickets against a non-union contractor working on a project in Ridge Farm, Illinois, in July 2000.

the local's positive conditions included the Thornhill bridge in the Danville area, State Road 63 in western Indiana and, notably, construction of the **Newport Chemical Agent Disposal Facility** for destroying chemical agents at the Newport Chemical Depot (formerly the Wabash River Ordnance Works), which would be completed in June 2003.

The Marathon Refinery job alone employed about 198 operating engineers at one point in 2002 – a significant change from a few years earlier when Marathon used non-union labor and none of the local's members were on its projects. "The local owes a great deal of credit to our members who worked to show Marathon that our operators were more skilled and were certified," Brother Davidson added. "We also owe White Construction our gratitude for working to get all of the equipment manned with operating engineers."

Robust employment persisted throughout the balance of the first half of the decade and 2006, which the business manager asserted in that November-December's newsletter was "one of the busiest years we've had that I can remember." The local's mounting work included a \$3.5-million renovation of the Memorial Stadium press box and construction of a new bridge on the south end of Danville in 2003, for which several Local 841-signatory contractors had different sections of the project and employed many members at times, and numerous highway projects in the Terre Haute area in 2004.

That March, the local settled new Indiana Highway and Utility and Indiana Building agreements with its contractors following long and at-times difficult negotiations that had the local poised to strike when the previous contracts expired on April 1. While some of its employers did not want to give the local the

same percentage raise that had been given to I.U.O.E. Local No. 181 in that southern-Indiana local's new contracts because Local 841's total wage-and-benefits pay package was already higher, in the end, Local 841 received the same percentage increase.

The following year, while there were no larger projects in the Terre Haute area, several of the local's contractors such as Dennis Trucking, S&G Excavating, White, Manley, S T Construction, Plant Brothers and Feutz Contractors had numerous jobs in the area that kept several member operators working throughout the construction season. In particular,



Brother Michael G. Frederick was president of Local 841 when he was killed in a car accident on August 14, 2001, at age 53. A veteran of the Vietnam War, during which he served with the U.S. Army 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division ("Screaming Eagles") and earned a Bronze Star for meritorious service, Brother Frederick joined the union when he returned from the war in December 1968. He would go on to serve the local as a business agent from 1985 until his death; its treasurer from 1989 into 1994; and its president from 1994 until his death. (Top) Brother Frederick is pictured in 2000 working in his office at the Local 841 union hall in Vincennes with a little help from his granddaughter, Jalyn. (Bottom) Brother Frederick sits on the far right of the back row with a work crew during a project at the Merom (Indiana) Generating Station.





Local 841 retired member Brother Joe Kazakevich receives his award for 60 years of service to the I.U.O.E. from Business Manager Blaine Davidson in 2003.

the initial phases of construction of **Indiana State Road 641**, a \$150-million bypass around Terre Haute connecting U.S. Route 41 in the south and I-70 in the north, provided gainful employment for several operating engineers. The project would work many of the local's members before it was fully completed in January 2017.

Local 841 prospects were further enhanced in 2005 when the State of Indiana launched its **"Major Moves"** transportation plan. The effort "to significantly improve and expand Indiana's highway infrastructure" would provide almost \$850-million worth of road work in the local's jurisdiction alone, augmenting the local's highway work in Indiana for the coming decade.

Meanwhile, the power plants in the local's jurisdiction were showing their age, and by 2006 they were undergoing a large amount of maintenance work and upgrades that provided



A training class at the Local 841 training center in 2003.

a great deal of work for Local 841 members. In particular, National Maintenance Agreement work taking place at the powerhouses consumed the local's members who were National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) certified.

Also that year, work across the Northern half of the local's northern jurisdiction was "excellent," while Terre Haute and Vincennes "had quite a bit of work," as Local 841 **President Tom Ridge** described conditions in the November-December 2006 newsletter.

By year's end, although membership numbers had only slightly increased over the previous 12 years, the local's total man hours worked rose from about 1.2 million in 1994 to more than 2 million in 2006. What's more, the local's fringe-benefit funds – those for its Qualified Savings Plan, Health and Welfare and Central Pension – were all financially sound.



After receiving his award for 65 years of service to the I.U.O.E., Local 841 retired member Brother Keith Monroe (seated) poses with Business Manager Blaine Davidson (left) and I.U.O.E. Regional Director Mike Wall in 2006.



Local 841 members, including tower-crane operators Brother Mike Wombles and Brother Steve Keenan, work on the massive renovation, known as the "Illinois Renaissance," of Memorial Stadium on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2006. The project began late that year and was completed just days before the university's 2008 football season began.



## FOCUSED ON ORGANIZING

*“Training and organizing are the only two ways to keep our union strong. We have to have our members trained to handle any and all jobs in our area, and we have to go after the non-union shops and organize. We need to organize these contractors to survive and to keep the share of the market we have now and increase it.”*

— Local 841 Business Manager Davidson,  
June-July 2006 Newsletter

To help continue its progress and ensure its future, Local 841 hired a full-time organizer in 2006 with the help of a grant from the I.U.O.E. international office that would pay half of the organizer's salary. In the position, **Brother Josh Chambers** was primarily tasked with signing non-union, open-shop contractors to a Local 841 collective-bargaining agreement, while also recruiting new operating engineers into the local. (Brother Chambers would eventually go to work for the I.U.O.E. international office as a representative for the union's north-central region in 2014.)

By December of that year, the organizing campaign had already persuaded several contractors to sign with the local. In addition, Brother Chambers' efforts had put a couple other contractors out of business by attracting operators from those companies and having them join the union.

Employment for Local 841 members in 2007 was a mixed bag, however, with its Oakwood, Illinois, office very busy all year but regular work for members out of its Terre Haute and Vincennes offices inconsistent. Employment was good in the local's eastern counties in Indiana but slow again in central and southern Illinois, while Terre Haute had several sewer and street-rehabilitation jobs and Vincennes held its own with several small projects. However, the local's work situation was impeded most of the year by a lack of state-funded projects, and especially asphalt work.

Commencement of construction on a pipeline that would run through the central-Illinois territory of **I.U.O.E. Local No. 965**



Local 841 members work on a pipeline project in 2007.



Local 841 member Brother John Pirtle, takes a break from work on an Interstate-69 project near its intersection with Route 231 south of Bloomfield, Indiana, in October 2011.

and into Local 841's jurisdiction from Douglas County in Illinois to the Indiana state line employed more than 100 operating engineers from Local 841 at times in 2007 and 2008. Additionally, over that period, there was a record amount of pipeline work in the Local 841 jurisdiction, which benefited many of its members, as well as its finances.

The local, which has historically handled a large amount of work at the University of Illinois, had also been profiting from the school's massive **“Illinois Renaissance”** renovation of Memorial Stadium that began in late 2006. With the help of union operating engineers, the \$100-million project improved the facility's concourse areas on all four sides and connected them all the way around the stadium; built a 5,000-seat structure on its north end; and moved the existing scoreboard and video screen to the south end zone before completion days before the 2008 college-football season.



Local 841 retired member Brother Bert Utt (right) receives his award for 70 years of service to the I.U.O.E. from Business Manager Tom Ridge in 2013.





Posing with a grader during a building project in Plainfield, Indiana, in 2018 are (left to right) contractor Billy Poindexter and Local 841 members Brother Roy G. Haddon; his son, Brother Larry Haddon, and grandson, Brother Jerrod Haddon; and Business Manager Tom Ridge.

During contract negotiations in March the following year, the local agreed to start a **Target Fund** to help its contractors compete with non-union contractors on private projects and public work that required prevailing wages. The membership, which was overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal, voted to increase its working dues to 3.5 percent of gross pay to finance the fund starting June 1, 2009. From that time through August 2009, Local 841 committed almost \$300,000 for 36,000 man hours of work through the fund, which supplemented workers' wages so that contractors could submit lower bids on jobs.

However, it was a difficult year financially for the local and its roughly 2,300 members, with national unemployment at a 26-year high at 9.7 percent and both Indiana (10.6 percent) and Illinois (10.1 percent) being two of 15 states with unemployment over 10 percent. Although Local 841 unemployment was between 5 percent and 7 percent that summer and much better than the rates of most of its sister I.U.O.E. locals, many of its members experienced hardships as the result of a lack of steady work.

During its September 2009 meeting, in fact, the local's Executive Board decided that, because the local had a record year in 2008 and many of its members were having a difficult 2009, members would not have to pay union dues for one month.

### LOOKING UP TOWARD 100

After 17 years leading Local 841, Brother Davidson retired in 2009 and was succeeded as business manager by President Ridge, who initially faced much of the poor employment conditions as his predecessor. Less than a year after the leadership transition, on March 1, 2010, more than 440 members were not working, about which Business Manager Ridge wrote in the local's March-April 2010 newsletter, "Nobody who works here has ever seen the list that large before."

Employment for the local's members continued to fluctuate throughout the following year, with its Oakwood and Vincennes regions often having an abundance of work while the Terre Haute area was relatively lethargic. With **wind-farm construction** in northern Illinois and an



Local 841 members work on construction of the new Indiana University Health Bloomington Hospital in April 2019 for its scheduled opening in late 2021.



I-69 project in Daviess and Greene counties in Indiana, the trend continued into 2012.

Ground-breaking in 2013 on a new, natural-gas-fueled **Eagle Valley Generating Station** in Martinsville for the Indianapolis Power & Light Company to replace its existing, 64-year-old, coal-fired power plant there continued an upward trend of improved employment for Local 841. At one time during construction, 52 of the local's operators were on the jobsite throughout both work shifts before the facility was completed and online in 2017. Connected to two interstate natural gas pipelines, the 671-megawatt plant is one of the cleanest, most-efficient thermal power plants built in Indiana, according to the company.

Local 841 members lay a 108-inch pipe off Perry Road north of Martinsville, Indiana, for the Interstate-69 construction project during the summer of 2020.



As the nation also continued to recover from a years-long recession, there was a “decent amount of work” for the local's approximately 2,400 members in 2013, highlighted by I-69 construction in Greene and Monroe counties in Indiana that would extend over a two-year period. Reflecting on those conditions, Business Manger Ridge reasoned in the local's March-April 2013 newsletter:

*“Saying that we are going to have ‘decent’ work again this year may not sound very exciting, but when you consider the poor U.S. economy over the last five or six years, the dire financial problems for the State of Illinois, and the strong anti-union sentiment of the politicians in Indiana, we have been very fortunate.”*

By September 2014, Local 841 had a record amount of work on its books – however, excessive rainfall curtailed the ability of members to take full advantage of it.

But employment greatly improved in 2015, during which the local constantly experienced a shortage of NCCCO-certified operating engineers as a result of the mounting workload. That year, the \$117-million **Terre**



Local 841 members work on the Interstate-69 construction project north of Martinsville, Indiana, on a foggy morning during the summer of 2020.

**Haute Wastewater Treatment Plant** upgrade project was among the more-significant projects that employed members in Indiana, while in Illinois, one of the bigger jobs that provided manhours was the new **Paris High School** in Edgar County. In large part because of the escalating work Local 841 had that year, before year's end it was in sound financial condition with about an 18-month reserve of cash.

Members continued to work on major infrastructure projects in 2016 that included the new I-69 section between Evansville and Indianapolis and the Route-641 bypass. Widening Margaret Avenue in Terre Haute, upgrading the city's wastewater treatment plant, upgrading combined-sewer overflow in Clinton and work at the Merom and **Edwardsport (Indiana) Station** powerhouses – the latter of which is a 618-megawatt I.G.C.C. facility that went online in 2013 to replace the former coal-burning plant there – were among the other jobs that also employed union operators that year.

Like 2017, the local in 2018 manned a larger amount of work in Indiana while employment was relatively light in Illinois. Private construction in Indiana continued to provide significant manhours, and a new 10-cent-per-gallon statewide gas tax helped keep road work robust. Conversely, work in Illinois suffered while continued political gridlock stifled road and infrastructure funding.

But by that time, the local's reputation for having a highly skilled membership had allowed it to negotiate wage-and-benefits packages in Indiana and Illinois that exceeded \$50 and \$60 per hour, respectively. During a special meeting in April 2018, Local 841 ratified a new, five-year Indiana Highway and Utility Agreement with annual total hourly wage-and-benefit raises of \$1.50, \$1.50, \$1.60, \$1.60 and \$1.65; and a new, three-year Indiana Building Agreement with yearly hourly total-package raises of \$1.30, \$1.35 and \$1.40, while NCCCO-certified operators



A Local 841 crew removes a cell tower near Martinsville, Indiana, in March 2021 to make way for construction of Interstate 69 through the area.

were to receive an additional 50-cent premium for operating all cranes.

Then during the local's January 7, 2019, general meeting, its membership unanimously ratified a new, three-year Illinois Construction Agreement with annual total wage-and-benefit increases of \$1.50 for the first year and \$1.60 for each of the next two years.

After members voted on distributing its new increases between benefits and paychecks on each of its contracts that year, the base wage (not including benefit contributions) in its Indiana Highway Agreement was set at



\$33.15 per hour, the base wage in its Indiana Building Agreement was set at \$31.85 per hour and the base wage in its Illinois Construction Agreement was set at \$41.65 per hour.

Throughout the final years of the 2010s, Local 841 membership numbers leveled off but its overall manhours rose as work picked up with increased construction in its jurisdiction. Among the primary projects on which members worked during that period was construction of 26 miles of I-69 in the Martinsville area; a large maintenance and upgrade outage at Marathon Refinery in spring 2019; the **Harvest Ridge wind farm** in Douglas County; and a large amount of work at **Indiana State University** in Terre Haute, which has traditionally provided the local with steady employment.

Like much of the nation, however, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacted Local 841 and its members in 2020 and into 2021, although construction work in the local's

jurisdiction remained relatively steady and its more-than-2,300-strong membership did not experience a significant loss of employment. What's more, the local enrolled a large number of apprentices in early 2021 to help prepare for an expected increase in future manpower needs as the economies of Indiana, Illinois and the country recover from the pandemic.

At the 100-year mark since receiving its initial charter, Local 841 continues to represent union operating engineers and other industry-related workers in 17 counties in west-central Indiana and 19 counties in east-central Illinois. As such, members utilize the local as a referral hall for hire by the local's signatory contractors through the local's main office in Terre Haute and branch offices located in Oakwood and Vincennes. Benefits enjoyed by the local's members that have been secured over the years through collective bargaining between the union and its employers include group health



The Local 841 union hall and office on South U.S. Route 41 in Terre Haute, where the local's headquarters has been located since 1972.



Local 841 member operators Frank Molt and Caleb McElravy work on construction of a new Interstate-74 bridge in Champaign, Illinois, on July 8, 2021.

insurance including a health-reimbursement-arrangement plan and a prescription-drug plan; pension plan; an annuity fund; and educational scholarships.

All of which have Local 841 primed for success as it embarks on its next century of serving its membership, its contractors and its communities. ♦

*"It is noteworthy that in periods of crisis, other organizations have been literally mowed down and swept out of existence, but Local 841 has manifested and proved its powers of resistance, stability and permanency ...."*

— I.U.O.E. Local 841 President Orell B. Soucie  
20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Program, 1951







I.U.O.E. Local No. 841

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At Local 841's 100th Anniversary

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 Scott Ridge..... Assistant to Business Manager/Attorney  
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Best wishes and continued success to

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On your 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Congratulations on all your accomplishments



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*Commemorates*

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INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS  
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of  
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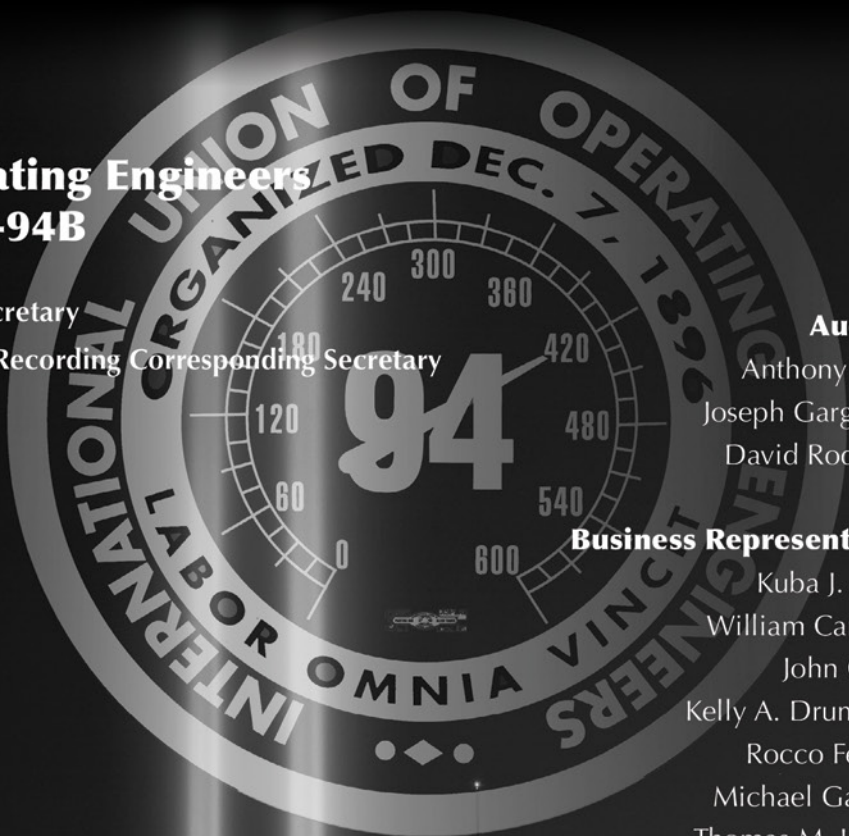
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