

75TH *Anniversary Celebration*

Laborers' Local 57



LiUNA!

Commemorative Program & History



Thank You!

**Heavy and Highway Contractors
Utility Contractors
Private Industry Companies**

**Laborers' Local 57 Thanks
All of our Employing
Heavy and Highway Contractors,
Utility Contractors and
Private Industry Companies ...**

**After 75 Years, all the names of our dedicated employers
are too long to list, but Local 57 is grateful to each of you
for the strong working relationship we have forged and
for the support you have given the local and its members.**

We wish each of you continued success in the future!

Celebrating The Liberties Provided by Our Local for 75 Years



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Just a few blocks from our Union Hall stands one of the most important buildings in United States history, Independence Hall. Nowhere has the struggle for independence, freedom of choice, economic equality, workers' rights and the first independent Labor Unions been stronger than in Philadelphia.

Our International Union was chartered in Washington in 1903. Several Laborers locals evolved and merged into Laborers' Local 57, chartered July 26, 1939. Emerging from the Great Depression, we were on our way to serving the baby-boomers after World War II. The construction boom that would expand our city and the five-county area was led by Local 57, with the construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Schuylkill Expressway, Walt Whitman Bridge, Interstate 95, Vine Street Expressway and the Blue Route.

Our quarries and asphalt plants have been staffed exclusively by Local 57 members to the present day. The same is true for our private-industry companies, spread across the entire Philadelphia region.

Our membership surpassed 6,000 members of all races and ages, men and women all committed to the struggles Local 57 was working to overcome. The Civil Rights Era found Local 57 involved in the March on Washington. From that time on, Local 57 became a driving force in the political landscape, pressing on to ensure our membership was fully represented at all levels of government.

The success that we enjoy today comes from the strong foundation our Forefathers put in place since the very beginning. In May 1959, just 20 years into our journey, the Laborers' District Council, Heavy and Highway Health and Welfare Fund was established. Shortly thereafter, the Construction Industry Pension Fund began providing benefits for a retirement with dignity and respect that comes only from being a member of a union organization. A thriving Utility and Private Industry Division had Local 57 forming our own Industrial Pension Plan, which serves our members and members from our Sister locals 332, 413 and 135.

Today, we remain active in city, state and national politics, ever mindful of the forces that try to erode our quality of life. To be a member, a worker among workers, a part of something much larger than oneself, a part of the spirit of this great Union, is something I am so grateful to be a part of. My life has been so full because of Local 57. I thank you for letting me serve the local as Business Manager.

God bless you and I wish you 75 more years of prosperity.

Fraternally,

Walt Higgins

Business Manager

This book was proudly produced by

UNIONHISTORIES
Preserving the Proud Stories of Local Unions
unionhistories.com

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Walt Higgins, Local 57 Business Manager
Esteban Vera Jr., Local 57 Recording Secretary

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The City of Brotherly Love's Foundation for 75 Years

The History of Laborers' Local No. 57, Philadelphia and Vicinity



"It is important to know the history of this organization. When this organization was started, it was started like any other immigration group. It started with Italians and Irish. Then the transformation came from the south. A lot of brothers migrated from the south to the north. ... Each group comes for a reason and does certain things for that time. ... These guys ... did a fantastic job. They took us from contracts where they were getting a cent and a half to what we have today. They worked hard. Our package today is about \$43 an hour."

Business Manager Rich McCurdy's comments during Laborers' Local 57 regular meeting, February 13, 2008

Laborers work for Henkels & McCoy landscaping and roads contractor, circa 1928 through 1940. (Bob Black, right photo, started with Henkels & McCoy almost at its beginning in 1924 and served the company until 1964.)

A pair of Laborers work on an old sewer at Filbert Street on the northeast corner of Broad Street Station in Philadelphia in February 1926. (Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org, a project of the Philadelphia Department of Records.)

Within the "Cradle of Liberty," Laborers' Local 57's own birthplace was, for all intents and purposes, the Bricklayers' Hall at 707 North Broad Street in Philadelphia. It was there where Material Yard Laborers' Local No. 1134 and Street and Road Pavers' and Laborers' Local No. 1042 held a special joint meeting on March 27, 1939, to discuss and move forward on consolidating the two International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers groups.

During the meeting, acting chairman Luther R. Fouche, secretary-treasurer of Local 1134, pointed out that the advantages of amalgamating the two locals included increasing opportunities for members of both locals and “the numerical strength” it would create. He also noted that a single local would increase revenue, “creating a treasury large enough to allow an increase in organizational work.”

Perhaps most importantly, amalgamation would produce a “much more union-like feeling between Brothers working on different classes of work, (and) the tendency to bring forth a more harmonious relationship that is so necessary for any organization to progress,” Fouche stated.

After additional members of both locals

International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers organized and chartered **Material Yard Laborers’ Local No. 1134** on July 2, 1937, and **Street and Road Pavers’ and Laborers’ Local No. 1042** on September 21, 1937.

(Formed in April 1903, the International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers union officially changed its name to **Laborers’ International Union of North America – LIUNA** – in 1965 to better reflect the continual expansion of the union beyond the construction field.)



Laborers work on a road project on Broad Street South at South Penn Square in Philadelphia in December 1928.

(Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org, a project of the Philadelphia Department of Records.)



Laborers work for Henkels & McCoy landscaping and roads contractor, circa 1928 through 1940.

spoke “very much in favor of the two locals being combined into one,” according to the meeting minutes, the chairman declared a motion was in order. Harry Williams of Local 1042 then motioned that locals 1134 and 1042 be amalgamated, which was seconded by Jessie Cedrone of Local 1042.

A standing vote was then taken, and the proposal to join locals 1134 and 1042 into a single local carried unanimously, with about 300 members from both locals casting their individual lots.

Local 1134 member John Ragen soon after motioned that a constitution submitted by the International be adopted with minor changes; Arthur Tompkins of Local 1042 seconded that motion and a standing vote again was unanimously in favor. Modifications to the constitution included combining the offices of financial secretary and treasurer into one office, secretary-treasurer, and giving that position increased responsibilities “by giving that office charge of the seal, books, monies, correspondence and property of the local.”

The meeting’s acting recording secretary, Carlton Beasley of Local 1042, wrote Laborers’ General President Joseph V. Moreschi on April 3 to inform him of the actions taken by the two locals. Within the letter, Beasley requested that if a new charter would be issued, the local would like some mention made of “mill” laborers in the new chartered

Charter

Granted to Dan Vincent,
Arthur Earl, John Burns,
William E. Smith, Joseph Bruce,
Will Clark, John Novotny,
John Conn, Charlie Bracy,

Harry Williams,
Philip Marotta, Manuel Marshall,
Vincenzo Marotta, Logan Brown,
Simon Goldwin, Dock Woodruff,
Tony Papaneri, Walter Sebbs.

And to their successors legally elected, to constitute a Union, to be known as

Construction and General Laborers'

Local Union No. 57 to be located in Philadelphia, & Vic. Penna. for the purpose of effecting a thorough organization of the Calling, and the said Union being duly formed, is hereby authorized and empowered to initiate into the Union any person or persons duly proposed and approved according to the Constitution of the International Union and to enact By-Laws for the government of their Union as prescribed by the International Union.

Provided, Always, that the said Union does and continues to conform to the Constitution of the International Union; and provided, also, that the said Local Union remains in the City of Philadelphia, Penna. and not removed therefrom without the consent of the International Union and in default thereof, or any part, this Charter may be suspended or taken away by the decision of the International Union, and should the said Local Union No. 57 be dissolved, or forfeit this Charter, then all books and papers of said Union shall become the property of the International Union.

In Witness Whereof, this 26th day of July A. D., 1939 we have hereunto subscribed our names and affixed the seal of the International Hod Carriers', Building and Common Laborers' Union of America.

Issued amalgamating L-1134
Organized July 2, 1937 and
L-1042 Organized Sept. 21, 1937.



Joseph Moreschi
General President
A. Persion
Gen'l Secretary-Treasurer

Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

name and the number of the local to only contain two digits.

He closed the letter by appealing to Moreschi: “In as much, membership as a whole has approved the aforementioned items, it is the sincere hope your immediate approval will be forthcoming.”

It was not until January 12 of the following year that the charter for Local No. 57 was issued under the date of July 26, 1939, amalgamating locals 1134 and 1042. The new local would cover roads, bridges, viaducts, sewers, material yards, millers and factory workers; the International Office soon after sent 1,374 dues books to the local for the amalgamated membership.

The local's official name was then emblazoned

Names on Laborers' Local 57 Charter Application

(In the order they were listed on the application.)

Dan Vincent

Arthur Earl

John Burns

William E. Smith

Joseph Bruce

Will Clark

John Novotny

John Conn

Charlie Bracy

Harry Williams

Philip Marotta

Manuel Marshall

Simon Goldwin

Dock Woodruff

Tony Papaneri

Walter Gebbs

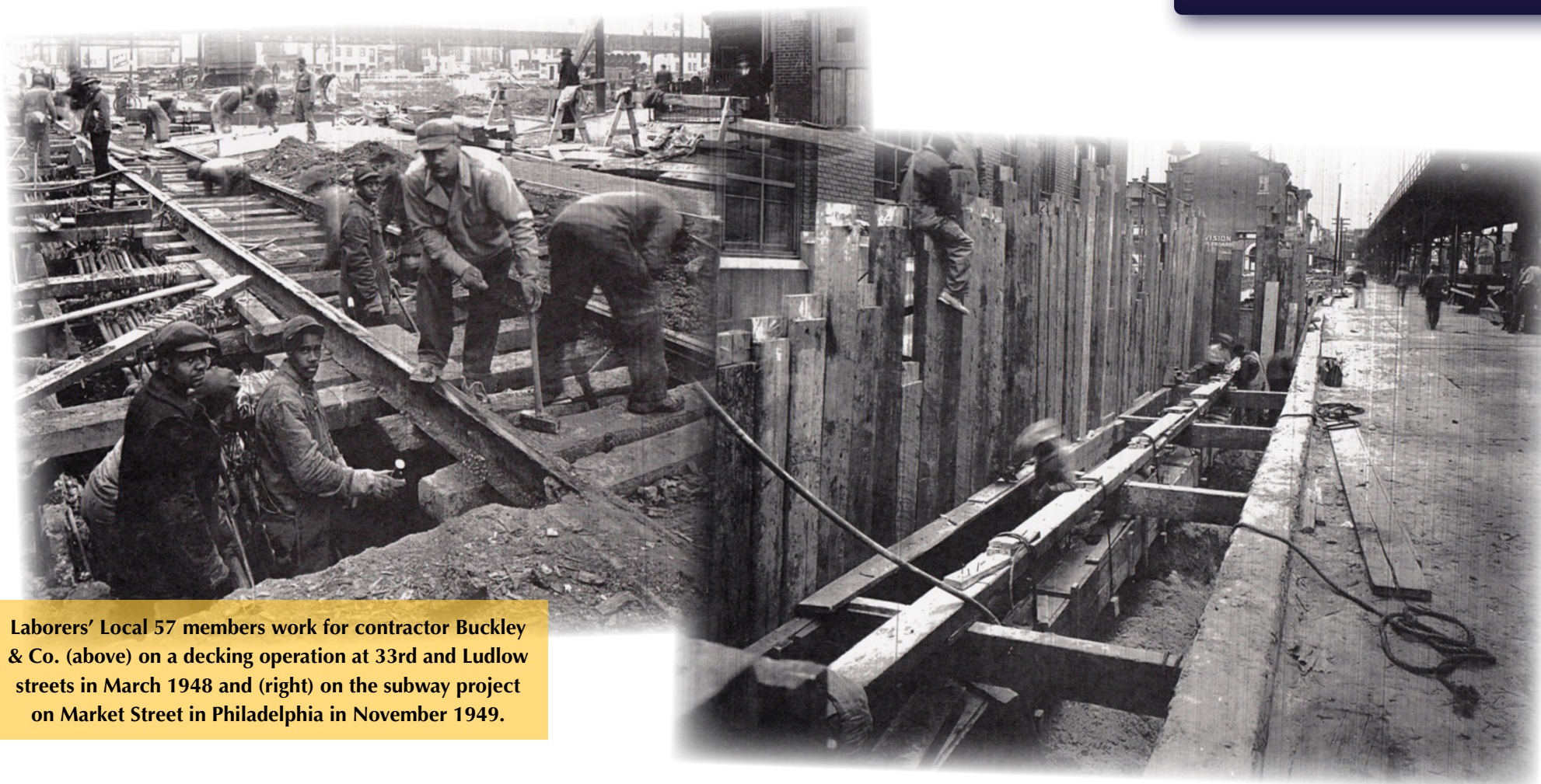
into its new seal (though abbreviated) as “Local Union 57, Construction & General Laborers, Philadelphia and Vicinity, Pennsylvania.” Initially holding its union meetings in the Bricklayers’ Hall, the local established its headquarters at 1367 Ridge Avenue, the former home of its predecessors (where it would remain until late 1999.)

Taking Large Strides Early On

By all accounts, Local 57 got off to a promising start; General President Moreschi even mentioned in a February 7, 1940, letter to the local's secretary, Cliff Rivers, “your local seems to be progressing quite nicely.” Later that year, discussions during the local's November 13 meeting at one point focused on “the increased amount of business of the local” and “the increase in the number of contacts that is made thereby in any growing organization”

Perhaps also recognizing the advantages of a united laborers establishment, shortly after Local 57 was chartered, **Quarry Workers and Laborers' Local 1250** reached out to Local 57 and proposed an amalgamation with it – although the proposition was not without its detractors. Local 2150 President Nunziato Martinelli, in fact, did not accept a motion of amalgamation during the local's October 27, 1940, meeting, stating that “there is no reason why we should amalgamate with Local 57,” according to meeting minutes.

But a vote by the Local 1250 membership that evening was in favor of the move, 36 to 29, and Local 57 members voted on November 13 to accept the amalgamation. Shortly after, 268 members of Local 1250 transferred into Local 57 on December 11, pushing its membership to nearly 2,500



Laborers' Local 57 members work for contractor Buckley & Co. (above) on a decking operation at 33rd and Ludlow streets in March 1948 and (right) on the subway project on Market Street in Philadelphia in November 1949.



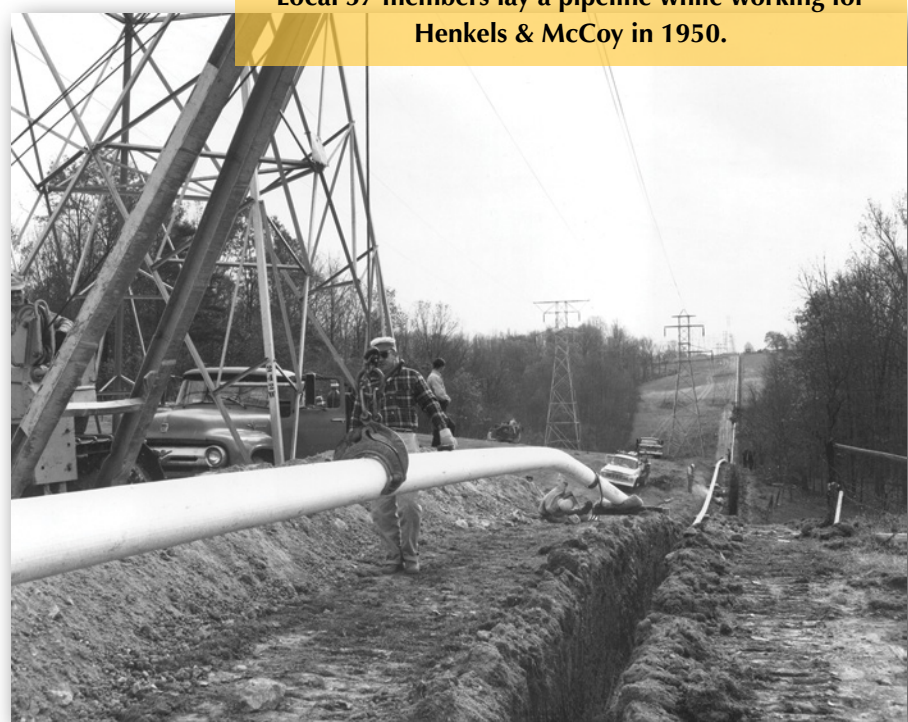
while taking on all liabilities and assets of Local 1250 – including payments of an automobile it had recently purchased.

Local 57's initial years were not without their difficulties, too. In particular, a jurisdictional dispute between the local and Laborers' Local 135 of Norristown, Pennsylvania, over the policing of material yards, factories, street, road and sewer work "in the vicinity of Local 135" lingered for several years.

The Laborers' Philadelphia District Council on August 26, 1941, rendered a decision in favor of Local 57, recommending that it continue to oversee those classes of work within the territory. However, Local 135 appealed the verdict and a representative of the International Office on March 3, 1942, ruled on specific jurisdictional borders. The amendment read, in part, "When work is actually performed on Route 202 between the intersections of Germantown Pike and Route 202 and 309 and 202, said work shall be the jurisdiction of Local 135, and on work actually performed on Route



A Local 57 line crew working with Henkels & McCoy take a break in 1949.



Local 57 members lay a pipeline while working for Henkels & McCoy in 1950.

Original Laborers' Local 57 Officers

President Albert DeVicci
Vice President Carlton Beasley
Recording Secretary Joseph Krainz
Secretary-Treasurer Luther R. Fouche
Business Agent Cliff Rivers
Business Agent Alexander Nadwodny

202, North from the intersection of 309 and 202, shall be the jurisdiction of local 57."

But that decision was amended on December 18, 1946, because "the territorial lines which were set forth in the 1942 decision were inadequate," Local 135 Business Representative Martin Banks wrote in an August 30, 1956, letter to Laborers' International Vice President Patrick Waldron (the International representative who made the March 3, 1942, judgment).

Then in September 1948, Laborers' Local 420 squared off with Local 57 over jurisdiction of compressed and open-air caisson and subway work in and around Philadelphia. General President Moreschi stepped in, and in a September 24 letter advised Local 57 that its charter did not include those types of work and, therefore, "the policing and patrolling of this work in the Philadelphia area should be done by Local 420"

Local 57 members were also busy with numerous large road, sewer-line, blacktop

Local 57 laborers perform road and rail work at the corner of 12th and Jefferson streets in Philadelphia in September 1951. (Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org, a project of the Philadelphia Department of Records.)



and concrete projects all around Philadelphia throughout the decades.

With the opening of the **Pennsylvania Turnpike** in October 1940, members were provided with another source of steady employment (which remains through today). While the mainline turnpike was finished in 1956 with the completion of the Delaware River Bridge, improvements continued to be made to the road, including the rebuilding of the original section to modern standards, widening portions of the turnpike to six lanes, and adding interchanges.

Into the 1950s, work was plentiful and the local was involved in several large projects in and around Philadelphia, including construction of the **Walt Whitman Bridge** beginning in 1953. The suspension bridge spanning the Delaware River from Philadelphia to Gloucester City, New Jersey, opened to traffic on May 16, 1957.

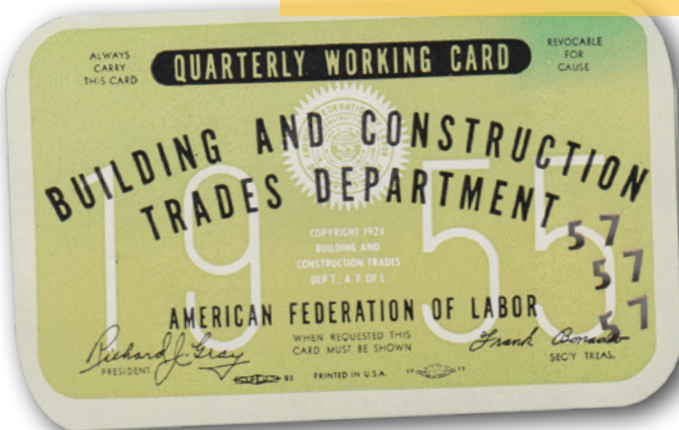
Meanwhile during the early 1950s, a new agreement with contractors that would expire in April 1955 set hourly wages for the local's members at \$2.25 per hour for powder men; \$2.07-1/2 for labor foremen; \$2.37-1/2 for miners and blasters; \$2.25 for



Laborers' Local 57 members work for contractor Buckley & Co. (top) on a stairway entrance at 36th and Sansom streets and (bottom) laying public utility lines along 36th Street in Philadelphia in November 1954.



Local 57 work card, 1955



Walt Whitman Bridge



A Part of National History

Local 57 Members Assist with Franklin House Excavation

When the Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia performed an archeological dig at the site of the Benjamin Franklin House beginning in 1953, the excavation took place with the assistance of Laborers' Local 57 members.

In March 2010, bloggers who were detailing the park's archeological research discovered a letter that lists the names of the four Local 57 men who assisted National Parks Service Archaeologist Paul J.F. Schumacher in locating and identifying the Franklin mansion ruins: **Willie Ransom, Odell Sample, George David and Wilson Bachus.**

In a March 28, 2010, entry, the blog, "Digging In The Archives," details the content of the letter – which also summarizes the wages for the field crew:

The role these men played in the excavation was explained by a contract typed on onion skin paper found in the files alongside the 1956 report. Entitled, "Estimate for Excavation of Benjamin Franklin's Court to locate and record all walls which may give us clues as to the location of Benjamin Franklin's home" (Schumacher 1953a), this document also provided the pay scale for ... "6 laborers ... if at union wages ... \$1.75 per hour" – along with a recommendation for employing workers from Local 57, the Laborer's International Union, which is a construction and industry or building trades union (Schumacher 1953a:1). Schumacher's field notes (1953b), also stored in the Archives, report on the first day of excavation (in May 1953) that four laborers were hired from the union at this pay.

According to the blog, "the archaeological labor wage paid to Ransom and the others was \$1 higher than the then-current minimum wage." It also notes that photographs revealed that the members of the field crew "who relocated the Franklin house ruins were African American – something not commonly known today."



Laborers' Local 57 members work during the Benjamin Franklin House excavation at the National Historical Park in Philadelphia in 1953, helping to clean the cellar floor and excavate the south and east wall trenches. (Photo courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.)

underpinning more than 8 feet to the men working at the bottom; \$2.10 for wagon drill operators; and \$1.95 for most all other work performed by laborers.

Over the next several years, Local 57 continued to grow, its membership expanding to about 5,000 by 1955 and peaking at almost 6,000 in 1957. The local was even signing up employees at companies varying from pickle factories to scrap yards – and Local 57 had become an opportunity for the black community to find employment in a time of great discrimination, as nearly 80 percent of its membership was black.

That growth and that of its fellow locals in the District Council of Philadelphia allowed for the creation of the Laborers' District Council, Heavy and Highway Health and Welfare Fund in 1959 and, soon after, the Construction Industry Pension Fund. The local also then established its Industrial Pension Plan for its Utility and Private Industry Division members and those from its sister locals 135, 332 in Philadelphia and 413 in Chester, Pennsylvania.



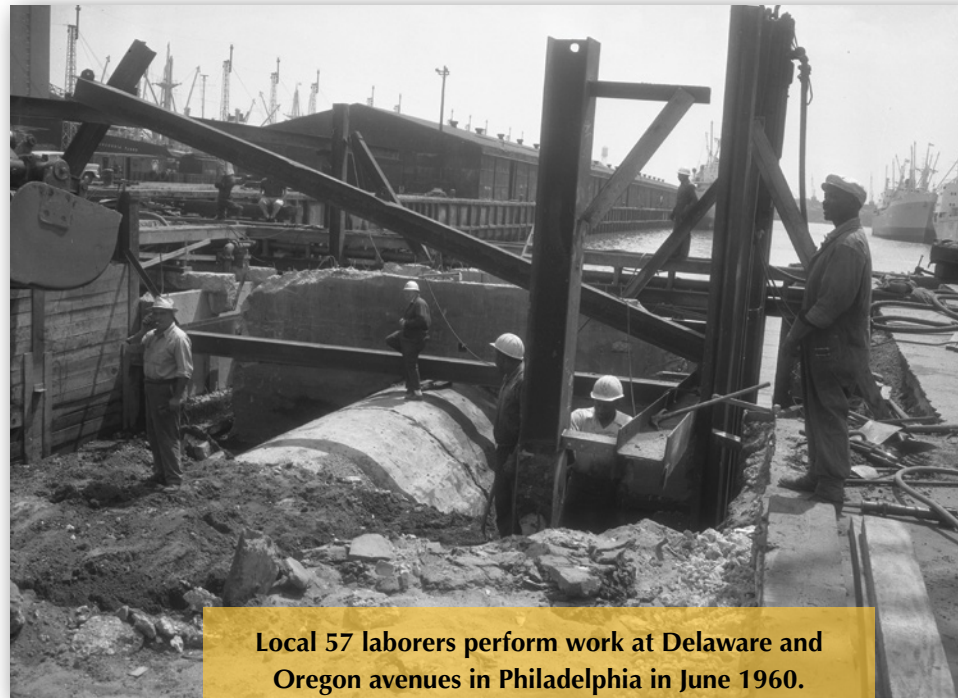
Advancing a Renewed Local

With only seven members by the outset of the 1960s, **Granite Paving and Block Cutters' Local 1052** was unable to function and was working within Local 57's jurisdiction because there was little to no block-cutting work available. Chartered in 1939, the local primarily cut and trimmed Belgium blocks for streets – a job that was essentially eliminated over time, leaving what was left of its peak 80 members to perform street and road work before they were transferred into Local 57 in September 1960.

Local 57 itself was "revitalized" as the decade progressed, primarily under the leadership of new Business Manager Benny Irvin – the local's first black leader when he was elected to the position in June 1966.

After about a year at the helm, Irvin announced in the first edition of the local's new newsletter, "Local 57 News" – the product of his administration's promise to keep members better informed at all times – that "this local union has been going forward at a rate of progress that is far in excess of what we expected when we were elected." However, he also acknowledged that there were "a lot fences to mend and a lot of improvements to make."

Seemingly beginning those improvements with wages, the local's leadership negotiated some of the highest pay increases in the history of Local 57 and in the history of the labor movement in Philadelphia. For the first time, members received additional pay for



Local 57 laborers perform work at Delaware and Oregon avenues in Philadelphia in June 1960.

(Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org, a project of the Philadelphia Department of Records.)

The Legacy of 'Benny' Irvin

Longtime Business Manager was First Black Leader

"This dedicated champion of labor, in addition to his outstanding leadership credentials on behalf of Laborers' Local 57, has spent most of his adult life working for his fellow man."

From Benjamin T. Irvin Memorial Service Obituary, December 15, 1990

Benjamin T. Irvin first became associated with the labor movement in 1942 at age 20 when he got a job digging a channel in the Delaware River and signed up with Laborers' Local 57. In 1963, he was appointed an organizer for the local.

Irvin became the local's first black business manager when he was elected to the position in 1966, and would also serve as president of the 10,000-member Laborers District Council of Philadelphia.

After he passed away on December 7, 1990, at age 68 while still serving as the local's business manager, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* eulogized him in a December 12 article:

In 1966, long before the Rainbow Coalition, Benjamin T. "Benny" Irvin put together a unique slate of candidates for the union election at Laborers Local 57.

Mr. Irvin, an African American, ran for the top job of business manager on a ticket that included a white, a Latino and a woman. He and his slate won that election.

Mr. Irvin went on to win eight more elections and become a powerful union leader respected by the rank and file and management.

"He was a man of his word," said John R. Smith Jr., general manager of the Contractors Association of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Mr. Smith often sat across the bargaining table from Mr. Irvin, haggling over contracts for laborers who worked on reconstruction of the Vine and Schuylkill Expressways.

"In any kind of a dispute, win or lose, he had the

ability to reduce the thing to a business decision, and not anything personal," Smith said.

"I grew up in South Philadelphia, around Fourth and Lombard Streets, and used to have to battle the rats for my supper," Mr. Irvin wrote in a Daily News guest column in 1975.

"My family hardly had a penny and I didn't get much to eat – forget a decent education," he wrote. "To most Philadelphians, I was nothing but a 'colored kid' with a dim future. But I still had a real hunger; a hunger to live something resembling a productive life."

Throughout his life, Mr. Irvin did not feel bound by tradition. He backed Arlen Specter, a Republican, for district attorney and U.S. senator. He visited Israel for a month in 1973, and the next year, was the guest of honor at a State of Israel Bonds dinner.

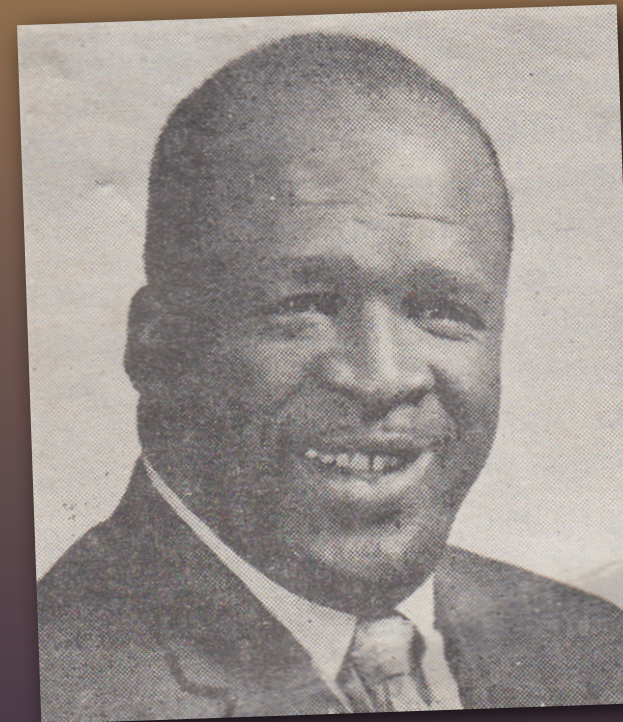
"He was a man before his time," said Paulette Johnson, a former secretary-treasurer of Local 57 who worked with Mr. Irvin for 18 years. "He was

the first union official who put a woman on the slate, and in this industry that's rare."

In the Daily News column, Mr. Irvin talked about the 5,000 laborers he represented

"They do these jobs, as menial as they may seem to you, with a healthy measure of pride. ...

"When they go home on a Friday night, they feel like life is something worth holding on to. And when they feel like that, Ben Irvin feels like he's really alive."



certain classifications and a 90-cent per-hour increase across the board.

All of the contracts included substantial increases in fringe benefits, such as health and welfare and vacations. The new agreements, for example, covered all members and their dependents with hospitalization paid by the employers, and some contracts lowered the requirements for four weeks of vacation to 16 years of service.

Meanwhile, Local 57 also increased benefit payments to members on its Industrial Pension Plan; expanded its educational program to provide paid training for construction workers; and established a fund to provide a college scholarship to a member's child. The local further started a training program for stewards on April 12, 1967, which included instruction in understanding contracts, filing grievances, processing grievances, protecting the local's jurisdiction and how to most effectively service the needs of a member who has a grievance.

At the time, the local was also working on establishing a diagnostic clinic for members and a credit union.

Along the way in a September 3, 1966, *Philadelphia Tribune* article, Irvin described the new feeling in the local:

"It's like being born all over again or like a brand new local. Everyone, members, stewards, office personnel and business agents all feel the new spirit of the local."

"We won back the local for the members. Since then, we have been able to do the things for them that they are entitled to have done for them."

"The employers now know, when they sit

Local 57 offices and union hall at 1367 Ridge Avenue, 1960s



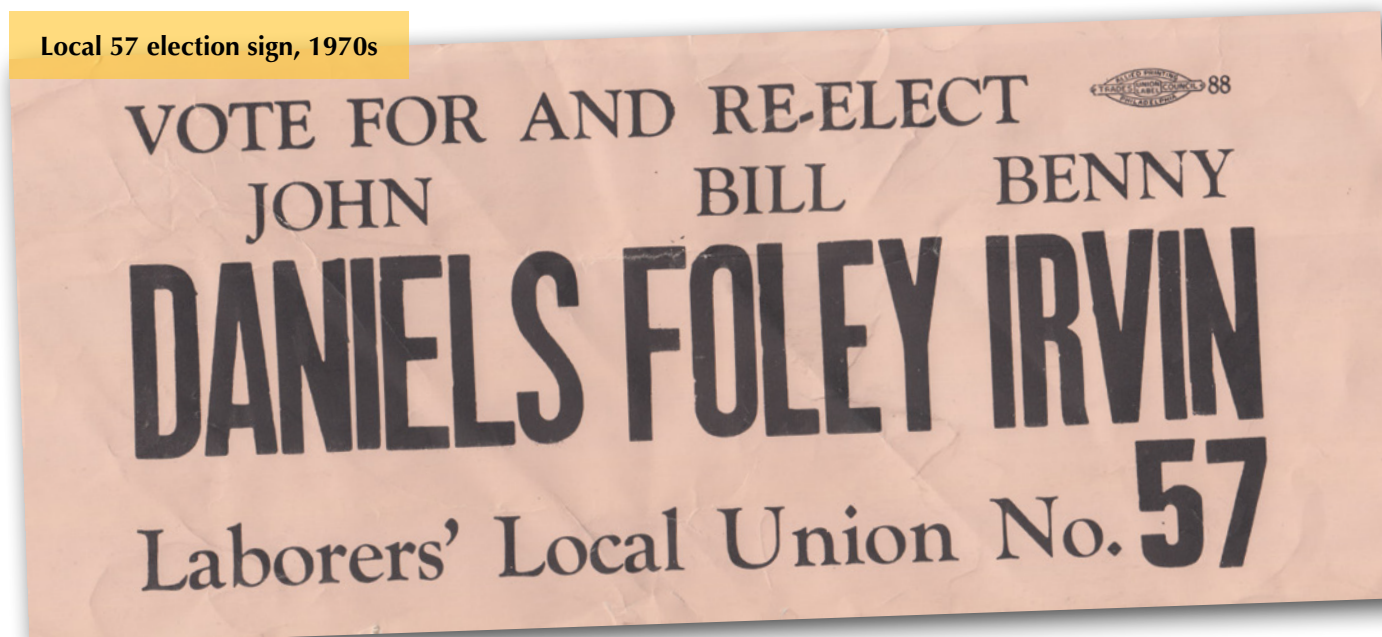
Local 57 members work on the road at 8th and Market streets in Philadelphia in September 1967.
(Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org, a project of the Philadelphia Department of Records.)

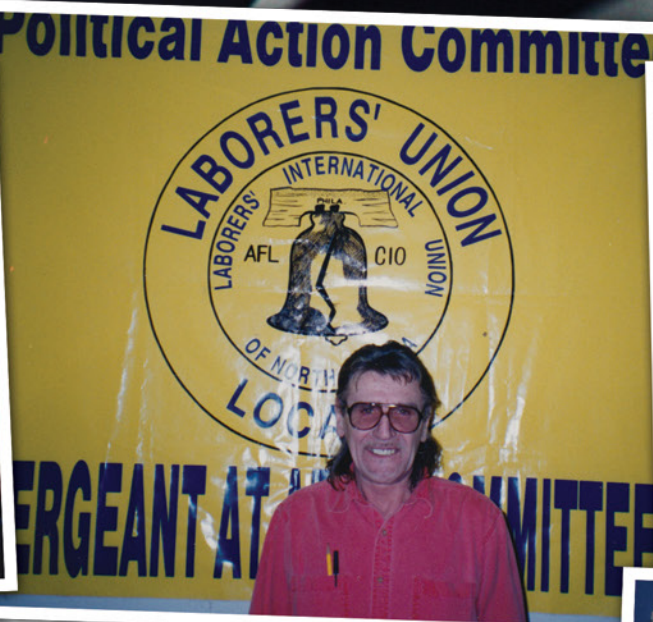
at the bargaining table with us, that we mean business and that we will not settle for second-class rates or second-class contracts."

Of course, issues remained – jurisdictional disputes, in particular. Notably, work-oversight disagreements arose between Laborers' locals 57, 332 and 420 in 1967 on a Sears & Roebuck job at Adams Avenue and Roosevelt Boulevard, on which the International ruled that the "so-called tunnel would be the work of Local 57" and Local 420 would handle caissons.

Additional disputes arose between locals 57 and 420 later that year on the subway work being performed at 15th and Market streets and on 8th Street, for which the International decided that "policing of open cut work shall be the jurisdiction of Local Union 57." Again in 1971, Local 420 requested a decision on a

Local 57 election sign, 1970s





jurisdictional dispute involving the South Broad Street extension of the subway project, and again the ruling favored Local 57.

During this period, the International investigated the need to merge Local 420 into Local 57 – and found that the amalgamation should occur. However, the District Council of Philadelphia recommended that the merger not take place, and on August 27, 1968, the International halted the merger proceedings.

Local 57 remained vigilant in protecting its membership from any outside influences; in one example, the local in 1969 struck against Jay-Hawk Construction Co. for using non-union employees at the Philadelphia Naval Yard, crippling production there by 80 percent before the National Labor Relations Board issued an injunction in October of that year charging the local with an unfair labor practice. Local 57 was expanding its organization at the time, too, even signing contracts that year with the likes of J. Dolan Lumber Co., Odd Fellows' Cemetery Co., Keystone Clay Products, Strescon Industries, Mount Lawn Cemetery-Lincoln Memorial Park, Mount Vernon Cemetery and Miller & Sons Paving.

The local also formed its **Utilities Division** late in the 1960s as many members by then were involved in gas and electric construction and maintenance.

Fighting Through Hard Times

Overall, work was extremely slow in the early 1970s for Local 57, as the construction industry – and particularly heavy and highway – in Philadelphia lagged and the local was even forced into a wage freeze in 1973. A relative construction boom beginning about



Philadelphia, 1974

Advancing The Industry through LECET

As part of the **Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust (LECET)** Philadelphia, Local 57 works with sister locals 135, 332 and 413 and their signatory contractors to address issues of importance. Foremost in LECET's mission is helping the locals and their employing contractors secure jobs.

LECET Philadelphia works with leading industry organizations "to ensure that the voice of labor-management is heard by policy-makers on issues of concern." The organization also helps to promote the image of the laborers' union through multiple marketing channels, and LECET's reports and market analyses help laborers and their signatory contractors stay current in the industry.

1975 buoyed the local and the city, and Local 57 thrived again with heavy and highway, bridge, tunnel and road work.

The local also organized many of the numerous plants that were operating in the city during that period, including asphalt plants and employers such as A.C. Price, which coated pipes for underground pipelines.

However, in stark contrast to the latter half of the 1970s, Local 57 – and the nation – suffered through a recession and a corresponding period of stifling unemployment during the first years of the 1980s. Consequently, by early 1982, 20 percent of Local 57 was out of work.

In that climate, the local and the building trades in general were squeezed into making concessions so that their contractors could win work. For example, on a project on Interstate-95, called "B-12," all trades pledged to work at a set rate for the life of the job "to help combat the non-union contractors who also bid on the job," Business Manager Irvin explained during the local's January 13, 1982, meeting. With that compliance from its workforce, union contractor Tel-Stock was low bidder on the \$13 million project.

Local 57 did continue to work to make gains for its membership, too. In one example, it reached a utility agreement that included a 25-cent increase that was put into the training fund as of January 1, 1982.

In another instance in February, the local negotiated an agreement with its sheet metal companies, Acme, Adelta and Southwark. While the companies wanted to take away two weeks of vacation, three holidays, Blue Cross and Blue Shield coverage and "a lot of other fringe benefits we have accumulated over the years," the local stood firm. After two weeks



Benjamin Franklin Bridge

of negotiations with Federal mediation, the local was able to get a three-year agreement with no increase in the first year, a 25-cent boost in pay for the second year and 25 cents more in the third year – while not losing any of the existing fringe benefits.

Laborers were also on strike for two weeks at a \$13 million filter plant job on Wearsheaf Lane at the time, as a non-union contractor was working on the job along with the local's four union contractors.

During his address to the local on May 12, 1982, Irvin warned of non-union contractors infiltrating the City of Philadelphia, as a good deal of work was to be going out for bid in 1982 and 1983.

Once-loyal contractor Neshaminy went non-union during this period, soon after winning four jobs in the Philadelphia area worth about \$50 million – while the building trades unsuccessfully picketed one of them on Roosevelt Boulevard in spring 1982. In another sign of the times, longtime Local 57 employer Adelta Manufacturing Co. went out

Laborers' Local 57 Officers

Presidents

Albert DeVicci, 1939-1948 (at least)
(1948-1956 undocumented)
 James Johnson, 1956-1962
 James Daniels, 1962-1983
 George Wright, 1983-1991
 Nathaniel Thompson, 1991-1993
 Arthur Rowland, 1993-1996
 Mike Daniels, 1996-2010
 Stanley Sanders, 2010-present

Business Agents/Managers

Cliff Rivers, Alexander Nadwodny, 1939-1940
 Alexander Nadwodny, 1940-1948 (at least)
(1948-1955 undocumented)
 Floyd Griffin, 1955-1957
 Louis Day, 1957-1960
 Thomas Day, 1960-1966
 Benjamin Irvin, 1966-1990
 Allen Love, 1991-1993
 Richard McCurdy Jr., 1993-2009
 Walt Higgins, 2009-present

Secretary-Treasurers

Luther R. Fouche, 1939-1940 (at least)
(1940-1951 undocumented)
 Floyd Griffin, 1951-1957
 Al Love, 1957-1959
 Louis Day, 1959-1964
 William Foley, 1964-1986
 Ruben H. McIntyre, 1986-1987
 Paulette Johnson, 1987-1990
 Arthur Rowland, 1990-1991
 Thomas Reynolds, 1991-1993
 Frank Amabile, 1993-1995
 Mike R. Carfagno, 1995-present

of business, costing 60 people their jobs.

Regardless, the local was working hard to help establish the District Council's training program in a new building in West Whiteland Township, despite some protests from residents and community leaders. Irvin even proclaimed on March 10, 1982, "We are very much into the training program; it is a very big thing. Sometimes you wonder what the final outcome will be. It is big because a lot of money is involved, because it is new and because this first class."

The local was also able to negotiate an historic new Heavy & Highway agreement effective May 1, 1983, when the former contract expired. With it, the local received a total package of \$1.30 increase the first year and \$1.40 increase the second year – the highest wage increase the local had ever received.

The agreement also included a wage increase of 75 cents per hour and a pension increase of 25 cents per hour the first year; contributions to a new legal fund for members; a 10-cent-per-hour increase to the Health and Welfare Fund; and 25-cent-per-hour wage increases for foremen, who had not received an increase since about 1963.

But work in construction remained scarce, with jobs few and far between – and construction of the Center City Commuter Tunnel completed by October 1983. However, a union contractor, Mergentime, did win the job to complete I-95 in Center City (connecting the interstate to the airport) with a low bid of \$31 million. By the beginning of 1984, the local also had a road job on Vine Street; an \$11 million track-repair job on the Benjamin Franklin Bridge (performed jointly

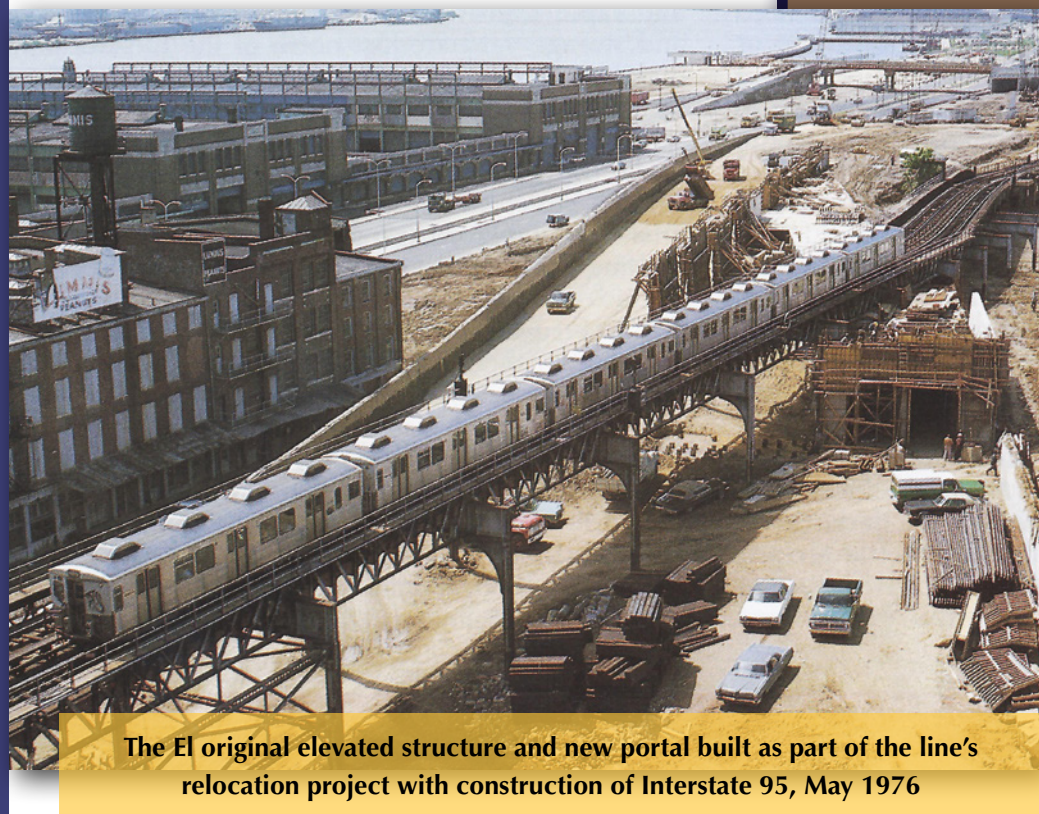
with Local 172 of Trenton); and a big sewage job on Aramingo Avenue.

Refusing to yield, the local held firm against undercurrents by the Contractors Association that it would take back the increases negotiated in May and against

Keeping Philly Moving on 'The El'

Opened November 4, 1922, the Market-Frankford elevated rapid transit line – or the “El” or “Blue Line” – through Philadelphia has also provided a steady source of employment for Local 57 membership. Ongoing expansion and upgrades over the years have been completed with labor from the local.

Most recently, the El's Frankford side was reconstructed from its Frankford Transportation Center to the 2nd Street portal between 1988 to 2003. In 2003, the Bridge-Pratt terminal was replaced with the new Frankford Transportation Center. Between 1999 and 2009, the Market Street Elevated between the 69th Street Transportation Center and the 44th Street portal was completely replaced.



The El original elevated structure and new portal built as part of the line's relocation project with construction of Interstate 95, May 1976

providing blanket concessions on wage rates to all contractors for certain jobs.

Through to the end of the decade, Local 57 continued to stand strong with an eye to the future. During that time, the local also began working on the \$53 million “Blue Route” project that, when finished in 1991, completed the Interstate 476 auxiliary highway, the primary north-south interstate corridor through eastern Pennsylvania. (The 20-mile Mid-County Expressway, or “Blue Route,” runs through the counties of Delaware and Montgomery.)

Then in late 1989, Congress passed a grant

A District Training Center for 57's Members

Ultra-Modern Facility in Exton helps Ensure Laborers are At Their Best

Even before it began its official apprentice training program, Laborers' Local 57 would send its members to training schools all around the City of Philadelphia to help give them the knowledge they needed to do their jobs properly and safely. It is a long-standing commitment to providing its membership with the skills and certifications required of qualified, union construction-craft laborers.

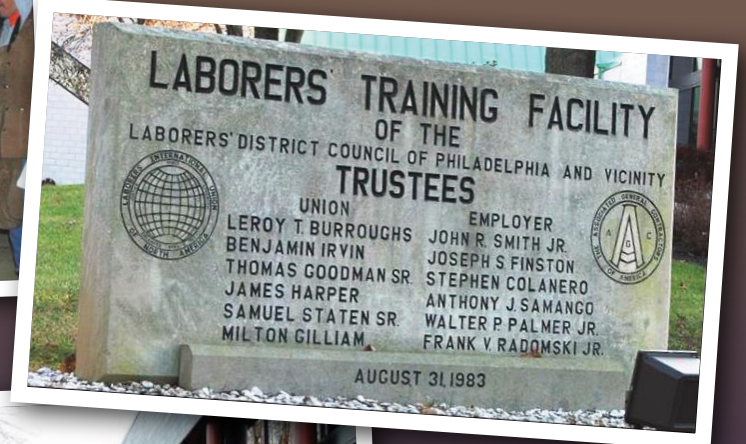
To that end, the local was heavily involved in the founding of the Laborers' District Council Education and Training Center in 1982 in Exton – and has been a leading partner in the operation and maintenance of the center.

T.N. Ward Co. built the \$5 million, state-of-the-art facility; groundbreaking took place in 1984 and the facility was completed the following year. Since

then, the training center has been providing training at all skill levels, including ongoing education, at its full-service campus that features a contemporary instructional facility complete with lodging, a cafeteria, a computer lab and a fitness center.

Situated on 88 acres, the center's classrooms include smart boards, internet service, integrated audio systems and collapsible walls that allow easy training-room expansion. The site can also accommodate on-line instruction and video-conferencing.

Certified instructors conduct classes and actively engage members. Outdoor and indoor training settings, set up to simulate on-the-job applications, enhance the learning environment and advance participants' access to knowledge and skills that can be readily applied to a work site.



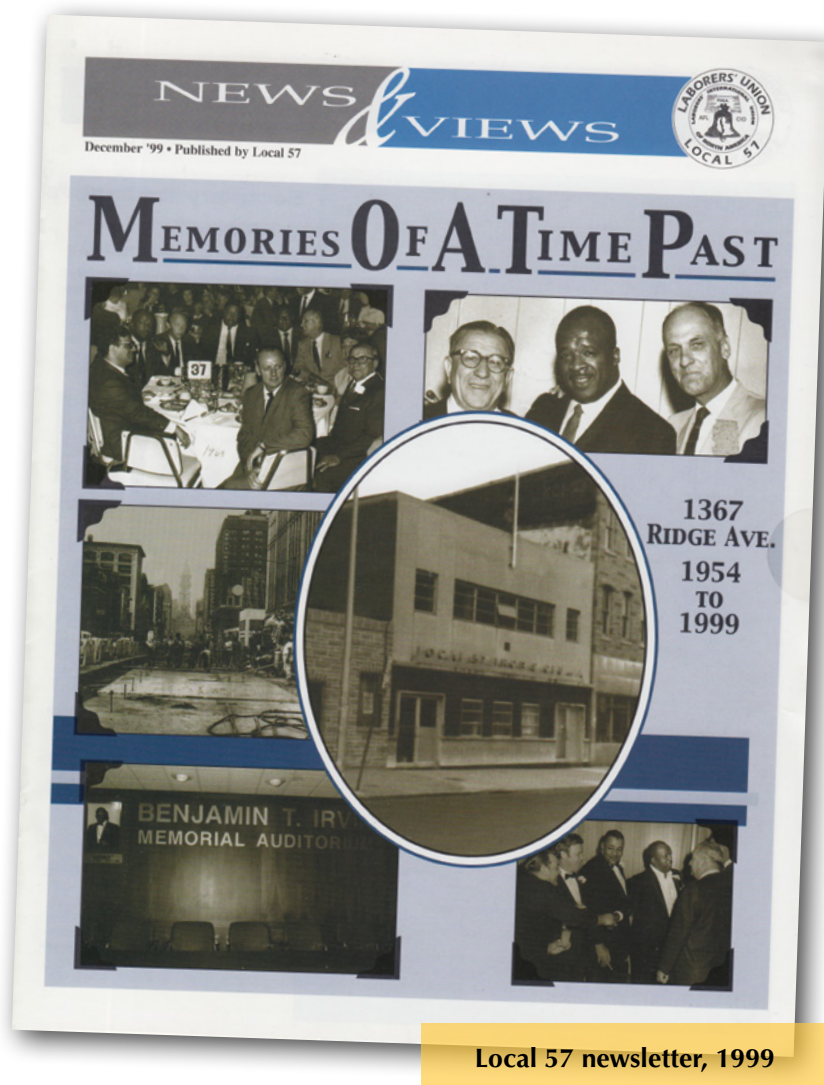
for the Environmental Protection Agency to fund a multi-billion-dollar program to clean up the nation's hazardous waste sites, under a plan to spend \$10 billion per year well into the 21st century. "This is going to be our number-one workforce so we'll have to go to school and prepare for this new work," Irvin declared before sending out a stern, blanket warning:

"If you want to be part of the 57 team, they go to school to learn and better yourself for the '90s."

Into a New Millennium ...

In 1995, Local 57 formed a Labor-Management Resolution Committee at Southwark Sheet Metal Manufacturing Co. in Philadelphia, which had 300 members working for it in 1990, to "bridge the employee-employer communications gap." The committee included three union stewards and five employees from different company departments who were local members. The group, which rotated membership every four months to allow all employees to serve, met with the employer each month to address concerns affecting labor and management.

The committee proved valuable when Southwark proposed changing work starting times from 8 a.m. to 7 a.m., an article in the November 30, 1998, *Philadelphia Inquirer* detailed. In response, the panel identified employees who had childcare responsibilities that would keep them from starting earlier, and management reviewed, case-by-case, requests to remain on the 8 a.m. schedule, approving all such requests "after committee



Local 57 newsletter, 1999

A Dedicated Member of the Community

Since its inception, Laborers' Local 57 has been involved in helping its community and neighbors whenever it can – and especially in times of need. Some of the many programs in which the local is and has been involved over the years includes the American Cancer Society annual Bike-A-Thon and the annual City-to-Shore 150-mile Bike-A-Thon to benefit the Multiple Sclerosis Society – with the local's tireless biking "Team 57" taking part in each of those and other events.

Local 57 also has given and continues to give back to the community through countless other efforts, including walking for and donating to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation; collecting funds for DAD's (Dollars Against Diabetes) Day (for which Former Recording Secretary Fran Foley was chairperson for multiple years); donating to the Red Cross Hurricane Sandy Relief Disaster Relief Fund; supporting the The Samuel Staten Sr. Charitable Trust (formerly Laborers' District Council Charity Fund of the Metropolitan Area of Philadelphia and Vicinity); assisting in many ways with the March of Dimes (including for the past several years setting up and taking down the operational infrastructure for the organization's 5K fundraising race through the City of Philadelphia) ... and the list goes on.

Many Local 57 members over the years have also been singled out for their charitable work. Recently, former Business Manager Rich McCurdy, Former President Mike Daniels and current Business Manager Walt Higgins have been honored by the March of Dimes.



members made sure employees understood the reasons for starting earlier," the *Inquirer* reported.

Three years after it formed the resolution committee, Local 57 received the State of Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Labor-Management Cooperation.

In 1999, the local also established resolution committees with Acme Manufacturing, where almost 200 members worked, and Thompson Mahogany's Lumberyard, which immediately resulted in a paved work area and improvements to the facility's lunchroom.

It was that kind of forward thinking – along with its steadfast commitment to training – that carried the local towards and into Y2K.

While membership was dwindling as technology and advancements in the industry continued to cut into the need for manpower on construction jobs, the union strengthened as the 1990s progressed.

Business Manager Richard McCurdy reported in his address to the local's December 14, 1994, regular meeting, "The current work situation is very positive," and he stated, "I believe it has been a plus year

compared to the last three or four years that we have gone through." During this time, he



was also able to report that the local's plants, yards and quarries were busy and some were working overtime; five new heavy-and-highway contracts had been signed in a four-week period in October 1994; and a pipeline job in Quakertown that employed 35 members was so successful that the company, Delta Gulf, was "looking forward to working with Local 57" on a future project.

The news was the same the following year, as McCurdy announced in January, "For this time of year, compared to the last three years, we are doing better." Helping to sustain the local, union contractors were consistently picking up small projects, while work on The El, Walt Whitman Bridge and Avenue of the Arts projects were "all going well," the business manager reported in May. A promising list of projects from the Contractors Association in June contained mostly water main reconstruction and main relay work in the city.

In 1996, among other "good news," the Naval Yard continued a project under Foster Wheeler to remove hazardous materials as the U.S. Navy had ceased operations there – using Local 57 members who were trained to handle the haz-mat work. (The City of Philadelphia took over the land in 2000, renaming it The Navy Yard, to develop it into an industrial park.)

In December 1999, the business manager was able to report the local's Private Industry Division was busy and working overtime; many companies were working overtime and would continue

'A Farewell Salute to 1367 Ridge Avenue'

"Members like Midnight, Cherokee, Bubbles, Amos, Jeremiah, Gater, Redtop, Dough Pop, Dead Eye, Clyde, Killer, Morini and Wes could tell stories that would make us laugh so hard that the entire laborers' trailer would actually rock back-and-forth. Not just good memories, but great ones!"

(From Business Manager Richard A. McCurdy Jr.'s column in the December 1999 issue of the Local 57 newsletter, "News & Views," in which he reflected on the local's former home as it was preparing to move that month into its new offices and hall at 500-506 North 6th Street.)

Ribbon-cutting ceremony for Local 57's new offices and hall at 500-506 North 6th Street, June 2000



to do so into the New Year; the Utility Division was busy; and the Heavy and Highway Division was "extremely" busy.

To top off the decade, the local moved into its new, ultra-modern, office-and-meeting-hall building at 500-506 North 6th Street at the end of 1999, leaving its former location at 1367 Ridge Avenue, where it has been headquartered since 1954.

In his message to members in the December 1999 issue of the Local 57 newsletter, "News & Views," McCurdy signed off on the departing millennium with a highly optimistic and promising look into the next one:

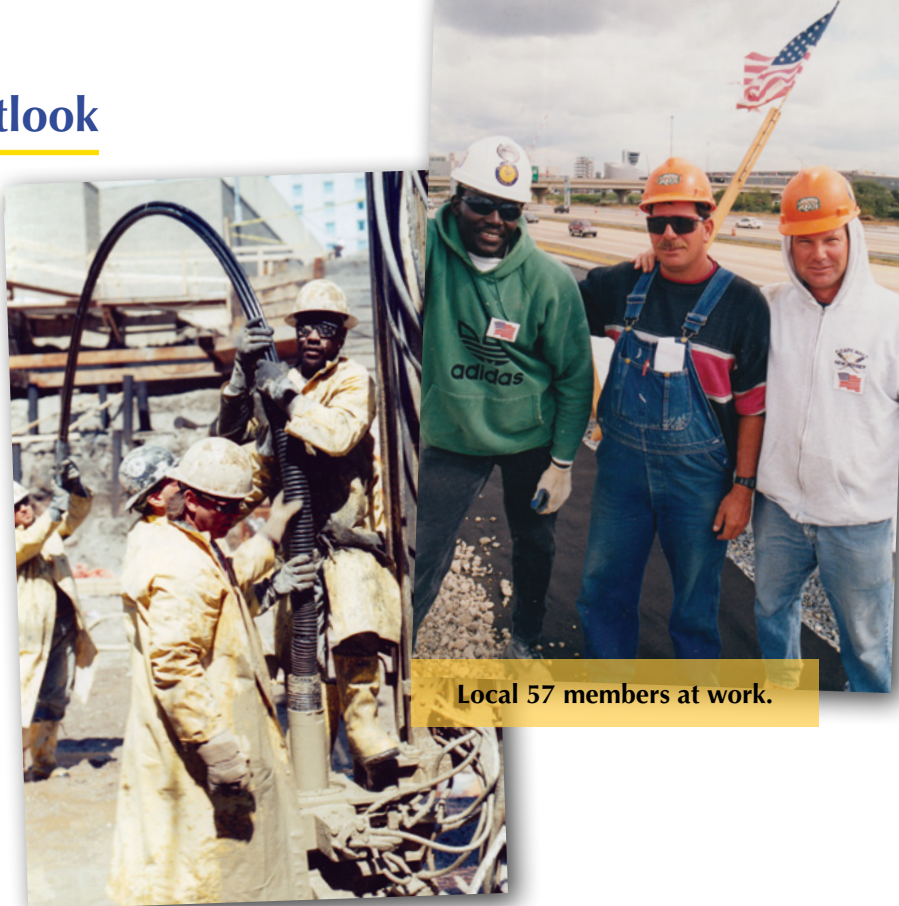
"The year 2000 is right around the corner. New millennium, new building and a bright innovative future lie ahead for this organization. This new building will benefit generations of Local 57 members to come by providing a solid foundation for this organization. Innovative programs such as our apprenticeship program, pin pointing, organizing campaigns, LECET, political action, resolution committees and scholarship programs will help secure a bright future for this membership well into the future."

... With an Encouraging Outlook

On the strength of those programs and its committed leadership and membership, reports throughout the first decade of the millennium regularly highlighted that the local's divisions and members were usually busy with work. Those efforts also helped sustain the local during very challenging years leading up to its 75th anniversary in 2014, including state-wide attacks such as "Right to Work" legislation and local assaults again unions in general from entities including City Council.

From 2008 through 2010, during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, the Laborers' District Council of Philadelphia and Local 57 took very proactive steps to safeguard the financial strength of all of its benefit funds. By doing so, each of the funds remained financially sound – and able to continue providing the benefits that only come with being a union member.

At 75 years in 2014, Local 57 is one of four local unions that comprise The Laborers' District Council of Philadelphia and Vicinity. The majority of the local's members work in the Heavy and Highway Construction Division and the Utility Division employees comprise the second-largest group of laborers from the local's membership. Local 57's Private Industry Division is by far the most diverse group and reaches over the entire 5-county area covered by the local, including manufacturing, recycling facilities, quarries and other construction-related companies.



Local 57 members at work.



The Pennsylvania Turnpike bridge over the Schuylkill River

'Proud' to Provide College Scholarships

When Local 57 held its first Scholarship Fund Dinner Dance on May 21, 2004, the fund in the previous five years had already awarded over 20 scholarships to deserving young men and women.

In the First Annual Dinner Dance program, the Scholarship Fund Committee wrote:

"We are very proud to be able to assist sons, daughters and grandchildren of laborers in attaining their dream of a college education."

Since then, the Local 57 Scholarship Fund has helped multiple children of the local's members attend college by providing them with need- and merit-based scholarships. In 2010 alone, for example, the local gave away \$56,000 in scholarships in a ceremony held the day after Thanksgiving.

As Local 57 celebrates its 75th anniversary, Business Manager Walt Higgins reflects how he would like to list everyone who devoted their heart and soul to the local in this program book, "but we would need another book," he says.

"To each and every member whose work ethic and dedication has earned us the reputation we have today, we thank you. To all of those Brothers and Sisters who have lost their lives on the job, we will never forget you, God bless you. To all those who have served Local 57 from 1939 on, we remember your strength and courage."

"The foundation laid is still strong. Thank you for the inspiration and all the memories. From all of us in the current administration, we thank you for your support – especially during the past six years, which have dealt us some of the most challenging times since the Great Depression."

"Today, our union is still strong, diverse and ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Thank you for your dedication, enthusiasm and that spirit that is unmistakably Local 57."













