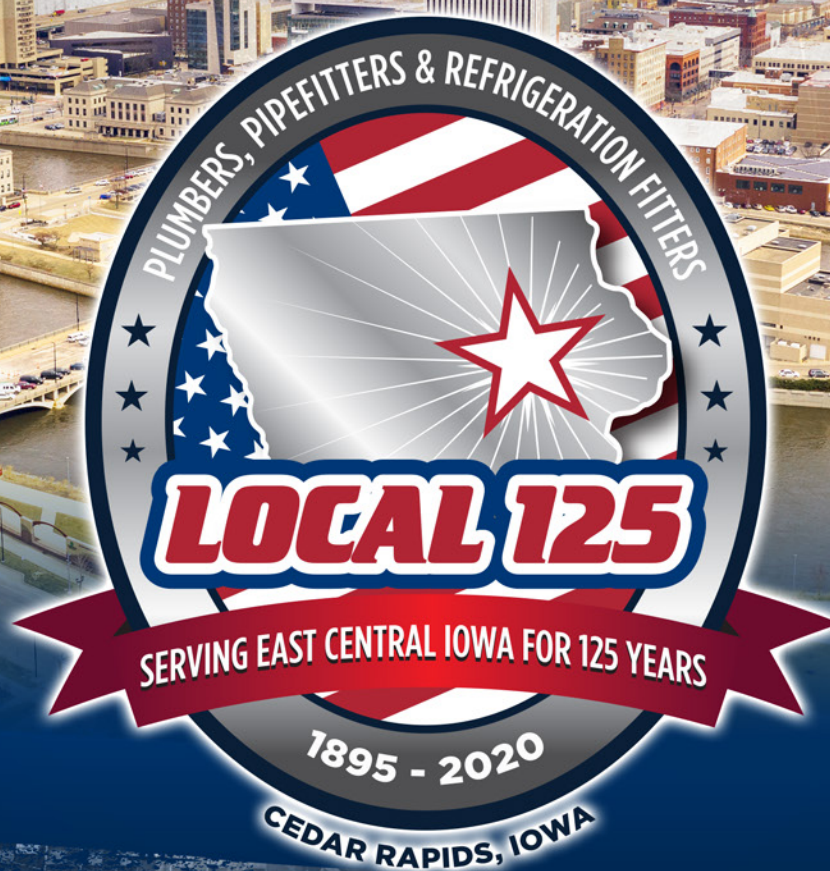


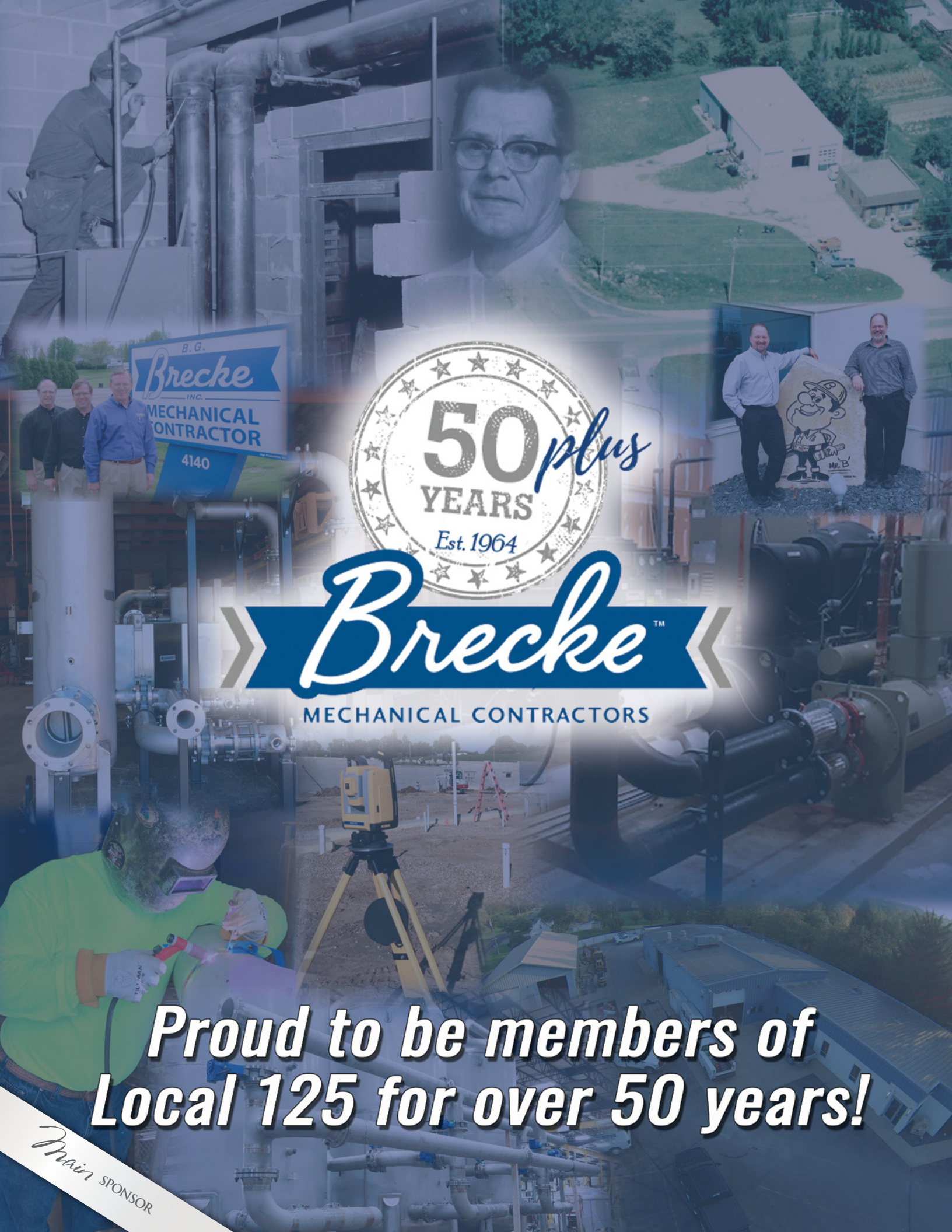
United Association
PLUMBERS & PIPEFITTERS LOCAL NO. 125
East Central Iowa

125-YEAR ANNIVERSARY



COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

1895 - 2020



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TRAINING CLASSES
THE ABILITY TO TRAVEL

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*In recognition and appreciation for
your dedication to the labor movement
we extend our congratulations and best wishes
to the officers and members of*

LOCAL UNION 125

on your

125th ANNIVERSARY

from the

Officers and Staff

of the

United Association
of Journeymen and Apprentices
of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry
of the United States and Canada

*Mark McManus
General President*

*Patrick H. Kellett
General Secretary-Treasurer*

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LOCAL UNION NO. 234**

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PLUMBERS AND PIPEFITTERS
LOCAL UNION NO. 125**

CONGRATULATIONS!



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BUSINESS MANAGER**

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Congratulations Plumbers & Pipefitters Local #125 on your 125th Anniversary of Solidarity and Excellence!!



From the Officers & Members of
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local
#33
Des Moines, Iowa

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★ ★ ★ 1895



2020 ★ ★ ★

TOGETHER, WE MARK A MOMENTOUS MILESTONE DESPITE TRYING TIMES

Brothers, Sisters and Friends:

Since our humble beginnings on June 3, 1895, Plumbers & Pipefitters Local No. 125 has worked tirelessly to achieve 125 years of excellence in the plumbing, HVAC and pipefitting trades. It is with great pride that the officers of Local 125 congratulate our membership on this accomplishment. As the local's business manager, it is truly an honor and privilege to serve the membership and to celebrate this momentous occasion with all of you.

Reaching 125 years is quite an achievement, and our members should be proud of it. Many local unions have come and gone over this time, as Local 125 is now comprised of what once were five different U.A. local unions spread across Eastern Iowa. But from the start, our leaders, staff and members have persevered and helped this union to continue to be successful in the industry.

Our current membership continues to build upon the successes of our past leaders and members, for as I have always said, "If we intend to continue forward as a local union, it is our job to extract the knowledge of this trade from the journeymen we work with and pass it along to the apprentices we have working with us." If we continue to use what we learn, in the classroom, on the jobsite and at the union hall, Plumbers & Pipefitters Local No. 125 will continue to prosper for another 125 years.

There is a certain sense of pride our members should feel every day as they pass by all the facilities we have built and continue to maintain in Eastern Iowa. We can see the evidence of our labor that has and continues to provide comfort, stability and security to our families and the businesses of our communities. Many charities around the area have also been on the receiving end of our members' generosity.

We have not done this all alone; without the genuine relationships we have with our contractor and owner partners, we would not be where we are today. Along the way, co-workers and friends have become family — brothers and sisters who will forever be part of our lives.

As we celebrate this accomplishment, let us remember those who came before us and those who stand beside us, working diligently to lead the path for future generations to continue our great tradition. Also, although the COVID-19 pandemic derailed our celebration, I want to thank everyone who has helped mark our 125-year anniversary, especially during an unprecedented time in the histories of both our nation and our local.

Fraternally yours,

Mike Sadler II, Business Manager/Financial Secretary
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local No. 125



This book was proudly produced by

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THE 125-YEAR HISTORY OF U.A. LOCAL NO. 125

AN ESSENTIAL FIXTURE FOR SUSTAINING EASTERN IOWA

“Local 125 ... proves that there is something to be said about a strong mid-western work ethic.”

– United Association Journal, October 1999



By late September 1900, organized labor had taken hold in Cedar Rapids. Over the previous decade, the strength of union organizations within the city had grown by more than 630 percent, with membership in the various trade unions having increased from just 145 in 1890 to 1069 just a decade later, according to an article in the September 30, 1900, *Cedar Rapids Republican*. What's more, by that time, 15 new local unions had formed over the previous three years in the city – including a plumbers local that numbered 10 members, the newspaper reported.

“The trades unions have made a wonderful growth the past 10 years. Most of the organizations have been formed since 1890, and those which were organized prior to that time have made a great growth,” the article announced. “This is a wonderful showing, and the most gratifying feature of it is that with the increase in the membership of the trades unions there have been no great strikes. Differences between employees and employers

have been amicably adjusted and good feeling has prevailed on both sides.”

Less than five years later on **June 3, 1895**, the United Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada (U.A.) – which had only been founded six years earlier on October 11, 1889 – chartered the Cedar Rapids union plumbers as **U.A. Local No. 125**. With about 13 original members, the local represented the city's plumbers, steamfitters and gasfitters and thrived soon after being established, as declared in the June 1895 U.A. *Journal*:

“The plumbers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, report the condition of their local to be flourishing and their relations with their employers to be of a pleasant nature. There is not one shop in the city with which they are at variance, and they are making matters pleasant for them.”



U.A. Local No. 125 charter, dated June 3, 1895 (duplicate reissued July 9, 1946).

MOVING FORWARD:

QUAKER OATS & 8-HOUR DAYS

Over the next nearly 15 years, Local 125 remained a small and somewhat remote organization, seldom communicating with the U.A. and its sister locals through the *Journal* – and at one point in late 1905 it was several months delinquent on submitting its financial reports to the international office of the union. During that time, the local's membership peaked at 15 plumbers and fitters in mid-1900 and dipped as low as 9 members just a year later in mid-1901.

However, most of those members were kept busy throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s on construction and expansion of the now-iconic Quaker Oats factory in Cedar Rapids for the **American Cereal Company**, which changed its name to **The Quaker Oats Company** in 1901. (Throughout the next 125 years, Local 125 tradespeople would be on-site growing, rebuilding and maintaining the company's facility, most notably under a U.A. National Maintenance Agreement by 1995, while helping it become the largest cereal mill in the world.)

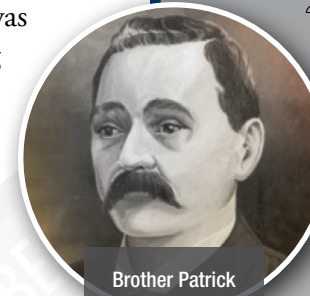
Despite its diminutive stature, into the 20th Century and, more specifically, 1901, Local 125 made steady progress. By June of that year, for example, the local had negotiated for 10-hour workdays, with eight hours on Saturday; time-and-one-half for all overtime; and double time for Sunday work.

Previously, the local's members had worked "all kinds of hours," as one member described their condition, and had no regulations for overtime pay, according to an article in the June 2, 1901, *Republican*. Consequently, the newspaper went on to announce: "They are now thoroughly organized and are beginning to reap the benefits of their efforts in this direction."

Emboldened by those gains, Local 125 voted during its February 12, 1902, regular

U.A. ORGANIZED OVER 130 YEARS AGO

With a general lack of stable, national organizations to represent steamfitters and plumbers at the time, Patrick J. Quinlan, a plumber from Boston, sent a letter to R. A. O'Brien, a plumber in Washington, D.C., on April 25, 1889, proposing the formation of a new, national pipe-trades union. Subsequently, on October 7, 1889, 40 delegates from 23 piping-trades locals in 10 states and the District of Columbia assembled in Washington for a convention.



Brother Patrick J. Quinlan

Four days later, the **United Association of Journeymen Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada (U.A.)** was born on October 11, 1889. The U.A. selected Brother Quinlan as its president, Brother Henry Collins of New York City as its vice president and Brother O'Brien as its secretary-treasurer.

Meanwhile, most steamfitters were attempting to sustain their own national union, the National Association of Steam, Hot Water and Power Piping Fitters and Helpers, that they had formed after breaking away from the violent Knights of Labor organization in 1885, soon after which it would become the International Association (I.A.). For two decades, however, the two piping unions clashed regularly over jurisdiction – before the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) ordered the I.A. to amalgamate into the U.A. in 1912.

The union endured through two world wars and the Great Depression, after which on January 1, 1947, it changed its name to the **United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada**.

membership meeting to request its employing contractors of the **Master Plumbers' Association of Cedar Rapids** to provide the local's journeyman members with 8-hour workdays and a standardized \$3-per-day wage, instead of the current, random \$2.50-to-\$2.75-per-day scale. After the contractors repeatedly refused their demands and countered with a proposal for 9-hour workdays for the coming year and a reduction to 8 hours for the next, the local went on its first significant strike on April 1, 1902, and would remain away from its jobs for the next three weeks.

Local 125 Cedar Rapids
Oct-Nov-Dec 1899
Joe Gracik 75 etc
Chas McHugh 75
Lori Chakimura 75 etc
John Coenen 75
Rudolph Pohl 75
Sid Robinson 75
Ben Williams 75 H
George Loyer 75
Henry Spinter
Ben Hayden 75
Dan McHugh 75 H 31
J.A. Maxim 75
Tom Rody 75
Ed Mc Donald 75
Bert Squidintinied 75
Rob Gibson 75
Joe Topelka 75

Local 125 dues ledger for October-November-December 1899 recorded by Financial Secretary J. A. Maxim.



appointment of **Brother Charles McHugh**, the local's secretary, who was subsequently named to the post.

Announcing the agreement in his report in the June 1902 *Journal*, U.A. General Organizer William J. Spencer declared, "The settlement is a very satisfactory one, and there is general rejoicing in Cedar Rapids over their first victory."

The following year, the pay of some Local 125 members was raised to \$3.25 per day by various contractors. By that time, the union piping tradesmen were also being given double-time for all work done on a Sunday work and each of five holidays: Decoration Day (now Memorial Day), Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving day and Christmas day.

But by May 1903, there was little work for the local's members, and their employers, still irate over the strike a year earlier, were "discriminating against" the membership, according to a letter from the local in that month's *Journal*. The situation had become so dire, in fact, that the local included a "keep away" notice in the letter, warning members of other U.A. locals who were travelling to seek work not to come to Cedar Rapids.

That day during a special meeting of the local, the membership further voted to notify all sister U.A. locals in "large cities close to Cedar Rapids" that it was on strike and ask them to "discourage men from coming to this town."

The two sides settled the strike on April 27 when they agreed to a new contract providing for 8-hour workdays at a minimum wage of \$3 per day for the local's plumbers, steamfitters and gasfitters. Additionally, Local 125 rebuffed the master plumbers' request to back one of their members in his bid to become the Cedar Rapids plumbing inspector and instead supported the

In 1903, the initiation fee for membership into Local 125 was \$20. (In 2020 at the local's 125th anniversary, the fee is \$40.)

As the adverse employment conditions persisted, the local's membership and finances likewise stagnated. On January 1, 1904, for instance, the local only consisted of 14 members and its treasury fund balance was at \$103.90, and a year later on January 1, 1905, the local had only 13 members – even though it had reduced its initiation fee from \$30 to \$10 – and its treasury was down to \$84.09.

POSITIVE ADJUSTMENTS: WAGE WINS & LANDMARK JOBS

Local 125 remained relatively passive throughout nearly the balance of the first decade of the 1900s until it reached a significant new agreement with its contractors in 1909. The contract, which the local and the Master Plumbers of Cedar Rapids executed on April 1 that year, raised journeyman wages to \$4 per day.

Local 125 was one of 10 United Association (U.A.) locals that were original members of the Iowa State Pipe Trades Association when it was formed in 1909. (In 2020 at its 125th anniversary of being chartered by the U.A., Local 125 has been affiliated with the MINK Pipe Trades of U.A. locals in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas, which works to promote and protect the union piping industry.)

Among provisions aimed at protecting the union that were detailed in the contract, master plumbers could not hire plumbers who were not members of the U.A.; each contractor could have an apprentice plumber working for him but had to hire a journeyman first; and contractors could not hire an additional apprentice until it had hired six journeymen. The pact further stipulated that its members would be removed from shops of master plumbers who did not pay the full wage scale and any members who were working for less than \$4 per hour or were not receiving overtime rates would be fined \$25.



Local 125 members and their families attend a picnic outing at Ellis Park in Cedar Rapids in 1908.

Local 125 Union Hall Locations

Union Hall/Federation of Labor Hall
(Various locations in Cedar Rapids)
1895 into 1901

Federation of Labor Hall
126 First Avenue, Cedar Rapids
1901 into 1906

Federation of Labor Hall
107 North Second Street, Cedar Rapids
1906 into 1911

Federation of Labor Hall
510-512 Second Avenue, Cedar Rapids
1911 into 1912

Federation of Labor Hall
316 Second Avenue, Cedar Rapids
1912 into 1913

Federation of Labor Hall
107 First Avenue, Cedar Rapids
1913 into 1919

**Cedar Rapids Labor Temple/
Federation of Labor Hall**
90 First Avenue East, Cedar Rapids
1919 into 1925

Cedar Rapids Labor Temple
107 North Second Street, Cedar Rapids
1925 into 1928

**Cedar Rapids Labor Temple/
Federation of Labor Hall**
90 First Avenue East, Cedar Rapids
1928 into August 1957

**Local 125 Union Office
Room 414, O.R.C.&B. Building**
(Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen)
104 First Avenue East, Cedar Rapids
(Meetings Location: Montrose Hotel)
August 1957 into December 1964
(The O.R.C.&B. Building was torn down
in 1969 to make way for construction of
the new Cedar River Tower.)

Local 125 Union Hall
1839 16th Avenue Southwest, Cedar Rapids
December 1964 to present



The Federation of Labor Hall at 90 First Avenue East in Cedar Rapids (far left with Y.M.C.A. sign), shown circa 1918, served as the Local 125 union hall from 1919 into 1925. (Photo courtesy of The History Center, Linn County Historical Society.)

The following year, Local 125 took **sprinklerfitters** into its organization, after which the local represented plumbers, steamfitters, gasfitters and sprinklerfitters. Just five years later in 1915, however, the U.A. established Road Sprinklerfitters Local No. 669 to represent all sprinklerfitters nationwide. (The road sprinklerfitters – known as such because those working for larger sprinkler companies had to travel from state to state in order to maintain employment installing sprinkler equipment – were taken directly into and held general membership with the U.A. until Local 669 became autonomous in 1972.)

Into and throughout the early- and mid-1910s, Local 125 became and remained a stable and steady organization in a city in which

all of the building trades had become well-organized. As such, soon after the local signed a new agreement with its contractors during the spring of 1913, U.A. General Organizer Frank J. Kennedy even commented in his report in the February 1914 *Journal*, “This local can always be relied upon to be one of the up-to-date and progressive locals of the U.A.”

The local’s progress was in no small way the result of strong plumbing regulations within the City of Cedar Rapids, for which Brother McHugh remained plumbing inspector into the late 1910s. In fact, during its second annual convention held in 1911, the **Iowa State Association of the U.A.** declared during its May 7 session that the city was “in better condition than any other city in the state regarding its plumbing ordinances and sanitary conditions.”

(What’s more, throughout its early existence Local 125 avoided the intense rivalry between the U.A. and the International Association of Steam, Hot Water and Power Piping Fitters {I.A.}, which regularly clashed over jurisdiction, as the latter had not established a local in Cedar Rapids. During its convention held November 28 to December 5, 1910, in St. Louis, the Building Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor {A.F.L.} suspended the I.A. because of “repeated violations of the laws of the Department,” and in 1912, the A.F.L. finally ordered the I.A. to amalgamate into the U.A.)

Originally chartered by the United Association (U.A.) in 1895 to represent “plumbers, steamfitters and gasfitters,” Local 125 began taking in **sprinklerfitters** as members in 1910. However, the U.A. formed **Road Sprinklerfitters Local No. 669** in 1915 to represent all of its sprinklerfitters nationwide – each would hold a general membership in the U.A. as the new local was set up as a division of the international union – and Local 125 returned to representing plumbers, steamfitters and gasfitters only.

(The first U.A. sprinklerfitters agreement with the contractors’ association was a five-year contract that began July 1, 1915, and set wages at \$4 per day – up from \$2 per day – with an adjustment to \$4.50 per day for the last two years. Ultimately, Local 669 became an autonomous local union in 1972.)

By 1918, Local 125 had become part of the **Cedar Rapids Adjustment Plan**, by which all disputes between organized labor in the city and their respective employers must be settled through arbitration. According to provisions of the plan, any disagreement between a local and its employers association that was sent for arbitration was decided upon by a board consisting of three neutral arbiters, two members selected by the union and two members chosen by the employers.

That year, the union plumbers and fitters and its master plumber went before an arbitration board that consisted of Local 125 members **Brother Henry Howke** and **Brother**

“See, that was all steel pipe and everything went to steel and galvanized and then finally copper came in and it was a kinda over galvanized because it was lighter and it went together faster and now you’re to a plastic. Where it used to take two men to pick up a length of four inch pipe, today one guy could pick it up and pick up a length of that there plastic and walk off as if it was like his dinner bucket, see.”

Local 125 Brother Regis E. Day, August 12, 1982

(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

*Brother Day was initiated into Local 125 in 1941 and served as Local 125 Financial Secretary from 1947 into 1957.



The current Local 125 Union Hall at 1839 16th Avenue Southwest in Cedar Rapids, the former Caldwell Sign Company building that the local purchased in November 1964.

The wives of Local 125 members formed U.A. **Ladies' Auxiliary No. 4** in 1913, only the fourth such group to be formed within the union by that time. **Edith Belle Matthews**, the wife of **Brother Milford Matthews**, served as the auxiliary's first president.

Ladies' Auxiliary 4 ceased functioning sometime during the mid-1940s. The wives and girlfriends of Local 125 members later briefly operated **Ladies' Auxiliary No. 130**, which was chartered on June 15, 1962, during the early- and mid-1960s.

William Bues after the local asked for a raise in daily wages from \$5.10 to \$6.50 and half-day Saturdays throughout the year instead of the current five-month arrangement. The employers had countered by asking the local to return to the former system of working all day Saturday all year long instead of seven months and demanding that union steamfitters furnish their own tools up to a certain size.

After two hearings, the arbitration board awarded the local a wage increase of 40 cents per day to \$5.50 – the highest scale paid to a U.A. local in the state – in a new, one-year contract. The arbiters also granted the local the half-day working Saturdays for six months instead of five and rejected the employers' request for steamfitters to supply certain tools on their own.

The local and all U.A. organizations in the state were further buoyed in 1919 by the implementation of a new **Iowa State Plumbing Code**, which in no small way was secured by the Iowa State Association, with which Local 125 had been associated since its founding in 1910. After touring the state and imploring locals in its various cities, including Cedar Rapids, to institute the state code within their jurisdictions, General Organizer Kennedy announced in his report in the November 1919 *Journal*, "I am very glad to report that in every instance, I found our local unions more than



Local 125 crew working for contractor J.W. Darragh on construction of the Hotel Roosevelt in Cedar Rapids on December 22, 1926.

anxious to do their share in securing proper ordinances and amending those that the state code required, and in practically all cases, we have the cooperation of the employers."

About two-thirds of the Local 125 membership went on strike on May 1, 1920, after the local's requests for a raise from \$7 to \$9 per day and several changes to working conditions for its plumbers were rejected by the Master Plumbers' Association of Cedar Rapids. Nearly 45 plumbers and roughly a dozen steamfitters did not report to their jobs after the local voted the night before to strike following the contractors' counter offer of an \$8.50-per-day wage scale and 48-hour workweeks that would include 8-hour Saturdays, whereas the union wanted Saturday afternoons off every week of the year.

The striking steamfitters were employed in various factories around the city. However, several master plumbers who were not members of the association had agreed to pay the \$9 scale

and their employees reported to work that morning, including seven members working for the **Suits Me Plumbing Company** and one member working for **Cyrus Metcalf Jr.**

After nearly six weeks, an arbitration board on June 9 granted the local a raise to \$8.50 per day and the 44-hour workweek that included Saturday afternoons off. Afterwards, General Organizer Kennedy noted in the July 1920 *Journal* that while most of the local's members were employed by members of the Master Plumbers' Association, making it "hard to bring about a satisfactory settlement," ... "After it is all said, and considering what they were up against, it was a victory for the local, as they got rid of some conditions regarding settlement of disputes that have held them back for a number of years."

Subsequently, Local 125 continued to make gains to the point at which by 1923, all plumbing and piping contractors in Cedar Rapids were signatory with the union. That year, the local



Local 125 members and their families attend what would become the local's Annual Picnic on August 3, 1912, which "proved to be a grand success," the local reported in an October 2, 1912, letter to the *United Association Journal*. The picnic featured "games of amusement of all kinds," and every member and his family attended while "the boys that didn't have families had their intended wives."

“When you went in a powerhouse, you know, the asbestos workers was always in there covering the pipe just about as quick as you got ‘em up and got ‘em welded. Sometimes the thing looked like a snowstorm in there, see. Well, you was breathing that, you just didn’t realize what was involved in it. In fact I don’t think they did until about five or six years ago now because when I had a physical down in Texas three years ago everything worked out all right and the doctor said that everything was all right but we found some asbestos in your lungs. And I said, ‘Well, I haven’t been around any asbestos for thirty-five years.’ And he says, ‘It’s there.’ So I guess it will always be there.”

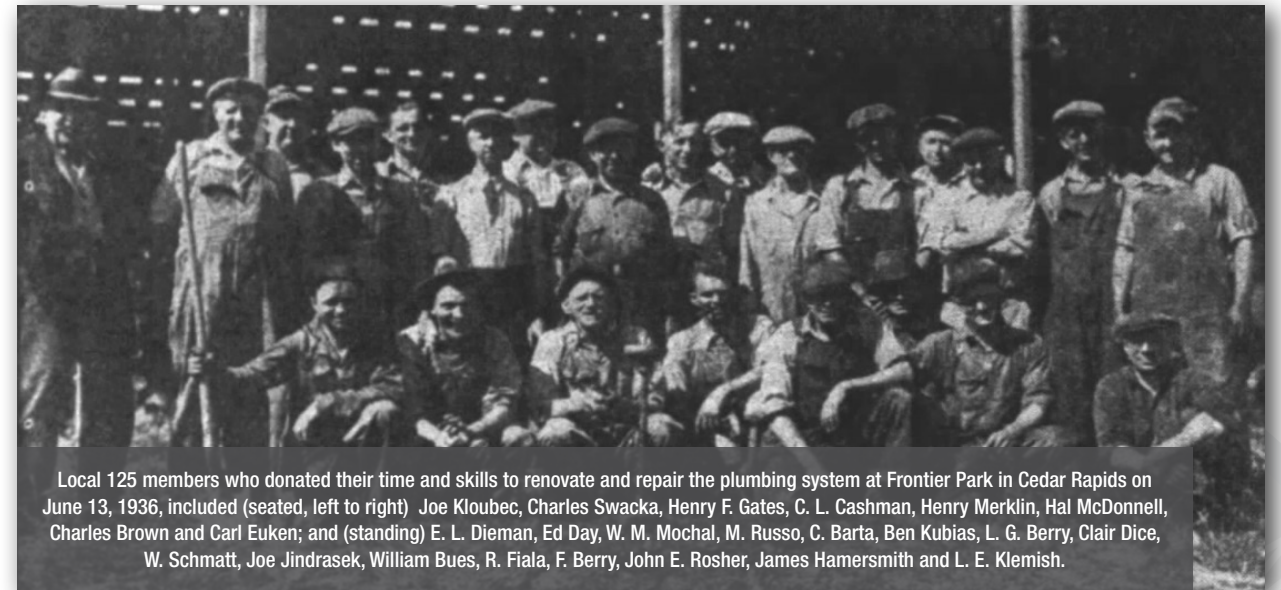
Local 125 Brother Regis E. Day, August 12, 1982
(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

reached a “very satisfactory understanding” in a new agreement that “carried with it a large increase in pay” to \$9 per day (up \$1 as the wage scale had been reduced at one point to \$8 per day), U.A. General Organizer E. B. Fitzgerald reported in the June 1923 *Journal*. Among other things, the contract also included “the breaking away from the Cedar Rapids plan of arbitration, which in itself was a great victory for our local union because this was a very unfair plan of arbitration,” he declared.

Wrapping up his report, General Organizer Fitzgerald further noted, “Local Union 125 is to be congratulated upon the business-like manner in which they conduct their meetings, which speaks for itself.”

The local’s membership also continued to enjoy steady employment throughout the balance of the decade – although like most construction workers at the time, the union piping craftsmen were usually unemployed during the winter months – including work on such major and iconic projects as construction of **The Hotel Roosevelt** in downtown Cedar Rapids in 1926 and 1927. When completed and opened on August 18, 1927, the 12-story, 250-room structure, which included “all mechanical equipment of the latest and highest type,” as the August 14 Cedar Rapids *Gazette* reported, became the city’s premiere hotel. (It was since listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* in 1991 and in 2020 is *The Roosevelt Apartments*.)

Among other larger projects that employed the union plumbers



Local 125 members who donated their time and skills to renovate and repair the plumbing system at Frontier Park in Cedar Rapids on June 13, 1936, included (seated, left to right) Joe Kloubec, Charles Swacka, Henry F. Gates, C. L. Cashman, Henry Merklin, Hal McDonnell, Charles Brown and Carl Euker; and (standing) E. L. Dieman, Ed Day, W. M. Mochal, M. Russo, C. Barta, Ben Kubias, L. G. Berry, Clair Dice, W. Schmatt, Joe Jindrsek, William Bues, R. Fiala, F. Berry, John E. Rosher, James Hamersmith and L. E. Klemish.

and fitters at the time was construction of the **Merchants National Bank Building** in 1925 and 1926, before it was formally opened on October 20 that year.

Meanwhile, about 40 Local 125 plumbers struck on May 1, 1926, after their demands for a \$1 raise from \$9 to \$10 per day were countered by their 17 employers of the Master Plumbers’ Association with an offer to increase the wage scale by 50 cents per day. With nearly 60 percent of the local’s membership working for contractors that were not affiliated with the association and receiving \$10 per day, just four days later the association members relented and granted the \$1 daily increase.

After the union plumbers returned to work on May 5, Master Plumbers’ Association President C. E. Wheatland commented in that day’s *Gazette*, “With 11 employers outside the association already paying the higher wage, there was nothing else we could do.” Consequently, the victory for Local 125 marked an increase of \$3 in its journeymen’s daily wages over just the previous five years.

DEFYING ADVERSITY: THROUGH DEPRESSION & WAR

Construction throughout the State of Iowa was severely affected by the Great Depression, the historic economic and societal catastrophe that began when the U.S. stock market crashed on October 29, 1929 (which came to be known as “Black Tuesday”). In particular, the extreme nationwide collapse brought hard times to U.A. members in Cedar Rapids and across the country as unemployment soared, according to the U.A. International history.

The union’s memoir even notes that the *Journal* ran several issues during the early 1930s that offered advice on how members could make their wages go as far as possible, although much of the focus of the articles was either on calling on the government to take action to help people or on trying to offer some kind of hope and encouragement to the U.A. membership. “Construction all but stopped, and this led to a significant decline in manufacturing,” the U.A. history recounts. “The economies of both (the United States and Canada) spiraled ever downward, until unemployment reached extremely high numbers and workers began to give up altogether.”

The Quaker Oats factory in Cedar Rapids, which was constructed with Local 125 craftsmen, shown circa 1930. (Source: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Theodor Horydczak Collection)



A GOOD NEIGHBOR IN ITS COMMUNITY

Throughout its first 125 years, Local 125 has continuously supported a wide range of charitable organizations and community causes. Over that time, the local and its membership have readily given their time, talents and resources to assist countless causes within the communities they serve, from donating \$10 in 1913 to the *Gillin Fund* for the family of Cedar Rapids police officer Charles P. Gillin, who was killed during an attempted jail break, to giving \$500 to the *United Hospital Campaign* in 1957 to support Mercy and St. Luke's hospitals in Cedar Rapids – and from providing \$5 in 1915 to the Cedar Rapids *Gazette Christmas Tree Fund* to help needy families to raising \$19,608 for the *Muscular Dystrophy Association* in 2002 with other building-trades local unions through a bowl-a-thon – to list just a few examples.

The Local 125 has regularly donated its professional skills to improve the lives of its fellow citizens, working on a myriad of innumerable volunteer projects such as construction of a new home for the *Heath Family*, who had lost three of their four children when fire destroyed their Cedar Rapids home in November 1950. One of Local 125's more-enduring benevolent efforts is *Project Heat's On*, which it began in 1991 with its employers of the Mechanical Contractors' Association to provide low-income elderly and disabled people with free service on the furnaces in their homes.

More recently, Local 125 generosity and compassion have continued to be on display throughout its jurisdiction. In one example, it teamed up with Carpenters Union Local No. 308 in December 2017 to donate \$2,500 to help the families of employees of the former Clarion Hotel and Convention Center in Cedar Rapids celebrate Christmas, as they had not been paid for more than a month. Among the many recurring charitable causes the local maintains in 2020 as it celebrates its 125th anniversary, it sponsors the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders junior ice hockey team of the U.S. Hockey League and supports *Honor Flight*, which helps fund special flights from Cedar Rapids to Washington, D.C., for military veterans, through fundraising motorcycle rides and auctions as part of the Building and Construction Trades Council.



During "Salute the Military" weekend with the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders, a junior ice hockey team in the U.S. Hockey League (U.S.H.L.) that is sponsored by Local 125, the local raised \$10,527.31 for the Freedom Foundation, which helps veterans with day-to-day needs, by selling game jerseys the local designed and auctioned after the RoughRiders' game on November 9, 2019, at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena. Pictured between players during the presentation of the check, which represented more funds than any U.S.H.L. top junior hockey team ever raised in an event, are Jim Neal, a U.S. Navy veteran and vice president of the Freedom Foundation, and his grandson and Local 125 Administrative Assistant Lori Wakefield and three of her granddaughters.

Local 125 **Brother Regis E. Day**, who would not join the local until 1941, recalled in his August 12, 1982, interview for the Iowa Labor History Oral Project that there was no work available to most all of the local's members throughout the earliest years of the Depression, during which time his father, **Brother Edward Day**, was a member of the union. The junior Brother Day even recounted, "There was about three years there that my father never opened a toolbox."

As the escalating effects of the Depression persisted into the early 1930s and the local's contract with the Master Plumbers' Association expired on May 1, 1931, the wage scale for its journeymen was reduced from \$1.25 to \$1.20 per hour a week later. Before reaching that settlement, the local had refused a cut to \$1 per hour that had been proposed by the association, which by that time had come to be known as the **Cedar Rapids Sanitary Club**.

A year later on April 1, 1932, work stopped on all building projects in the city on which members of the 12 unions affiliated with the Cedar Rapids Building Trades Council, which included Local 125, were employed "pending an agreement" between the council and its member employers of the Allied Construction



Local 125 members gather on June 9, 1945, to celebrate the local's 50th anniversary since it was chartered by the United Association on June 3, 1895.

Interests, that day's *Gazette* reported. With construction of jobs such as construction of the new **U.S. Post Office building** halted, at issue was the contractors' insistence on cuts in wage scales for all the trades, including a reduction of 20 cents to \$1 per hour for the union plumbers and steamfitters.

The dispute would not be resolved until the city's plasterers and bricklayers locals signed an agreement with their respective contractors on May 14, which executed all union contracts in the city in accordance with an agreement between the Building Trades Council and the Allied Construction Interests that all contracts were signed before any would go into effect. As such, the Local 125 wage scale was reduced to \$1 per hour, effective April 1, 1932, as part of a new, one-year agreement with its contractors.

Pay for the local's journeyman plumbers and fitters dropped again the following year to 90 cents per hour on May 5, 1933, as the Depression continued to stifle employment. However, the wage scale was increased back up to \$1.20 per hour the next year on June 4, 1934, with the implementation of the new National Recovery Administration code, which was part of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's

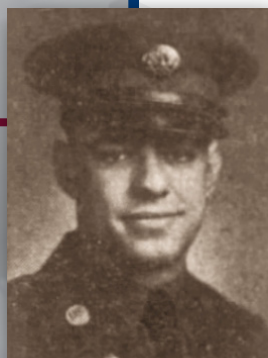
federal New Deal programs to create jobs and combat other consequences of the Depression.

Meanwhile, as its overall international membership had declined and the U.A. held no conventions between 1928 and 1938, "the union held it together," the U.A. history declares. Locally, as government-funded New Deal projects, including the Cedar Rapids postal facility, began having their intended influence, Local 125 was further boosted early in the second half of the 1930s when the city began providing natural-gas service to businesses and homes. "The first that I can remember things looking a little bright was when the natural gas come into the city," Brother Day recalled, "when they was drilling out the burners for the gas stoves and the hot-water heaters and that."

Local 125 member **Brother Preston R. (Pete) Farris**, who served as the local's business agent for more than 13 years, was the first president of the *Iowa State Building and Construction Trades Council* after it was organized in 1938. Brother Farris served in that position for several terms, and he was also vice-president of the Cedar Rapids Building and Construction Trades Council and president of the Cedar Rapids Labor Assembly A.F.L.-C.I.O. before he passed away on July 22, 1969.

MEMBER MADE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE DURING WWII

Of the several Local 125 members who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, **Brother Robert Edmund Erlacher** was killed in action in World War II on October 21, 1943. A plumbing apprentice when he was called to duty with the U.S. Army, Brother Erlacher was 24 years old when he was killed while fighting in Italy and was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart.



Brother Robert E. Erlacher

A private first class, Brother Erlacher was working with the Midwest Pipe and Supply Company when he entered a National Guard unit in September 1940 and was subsequently inducted into the Army. Soon after, he sailed with the first convoy to Northern Ireland in January 1941 and later that year was sent to Algiers, North Africa, where he took part in six major battles in Tunisia before leaving for Italy in September 1943.

While home on furlough, he married his wife, Louise Thompson, on October 16, 1941. He was eventually buried in Cedar Rapids in July 1949.

Brother Erlacher was the son of Local 125 **Brother Joseph Erlacher**, who served as the local's financial secretary from 1917 to 1942.

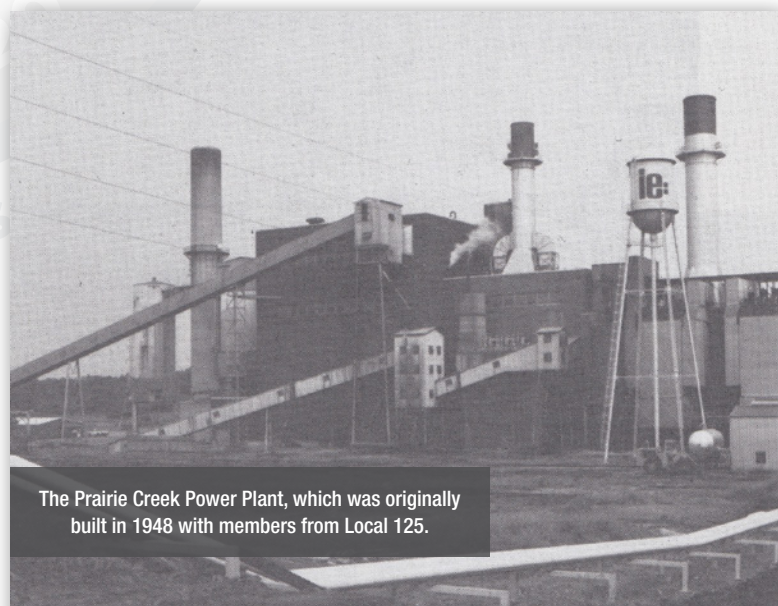
Then on May 18, 1936, many of Local 125's roughly 60 plumbers staged a walkout during which its members did not report for work that morning to protest contractors that did not accept another requested wage increase to \$1.25 per hour. While the remaining plumbers had received the higher wage from their employers and did not stop working, the very next day, the employers of the protesting members conceded and the plumbers returned to their jobs.

As conditions continued to slowly progress, Local 125 enjoyed improved employment in 1936. Ultimately, in fact, as the January 15, 1937, *Gazette* reported following a January 13 meeting of the local, "The plumbers acclaimed the last year the best for their trade since 1929 with prospects bright for work this year."

The local's ensuing three, one-year contracts beginning each May 1 in 1937, 1938 and 1939 sustained the wage rate at \$1.25 per hour for 40-hour workweeks and kept working conditions unchanged. Likewise, apprentice wages during that time were 20 percent of that wage for first-year, 25 percent for second-year, 30 percent for third-year, 50 percent for fourth-year and 60 percent for fifth- and final-year apprentices.

By the late 1930s, as the Great Depression approached its ultimate end, Local 125 members were performing nearly all of the mechanical work at the **University of Iowa** campus in Iowa City, and in particular for the **University of Iowa Hospital**. *(The university and its hospital and medical clinics continue to be a source of employment for the union in 2020, as it has throughout the previous nine decades.)*

Into the 1940s, an influx of work came after the outbreak of World War II in Europe and Asia, which the United States would officially enter following the Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. As the busy wartime economy pulled the nation and unions completely and finally out of the Depression, U.A. membership across North America swelled from 81,000 in 1941 to 210,000 members, many of whom were



The Prairie Creek Power Plant, which was originally built in 1948 with members from Local 125.

working in shipyards, weapons plants, aircraft factories and other facilities to support the war.

Construction and maintenance of the **Iowa Ordnance Plant** near Burlington beginning in 1940 was a primary source of employment for Local 125 members throughout the war. Later renamed the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, the facility began producing ammunition in 1941 and continued to do so until the war ended in September 1945 *(before it resumed manufacturing again in 1949)*.

Also throughout that decade, every plumbing shop in Cedar Rapids was fully union and had generally good relationships with the local, further bolstering its favorable employment conditions. "We took pretty good care of the bosses and the bosses took pretty good care of us," Brother Day remembered. "And besides, all the bosses that was in the plumbers and steamfitters were all ex-journeymen out of your local, and so they knew the language. They knew everything that was going on."

Meanwhile, among numerous actions the local undertook during that time to help ensure its hold on market share within its jurisdiction in and around Cedar Rapids, in July 1945 the local successfully lobbied City Council to halt the city water department's practice of having its employees install water services to larger

U.A. Plumbers and Steamfitters Local No. 483 of Iowa City, which had been organized and chartered in 1909 or 1910, was merged into Local 125 effective May 8, 1946.

private industries. In the immediate wake of that success, the July 26 *Gazette* reported, "(The union) argued that the waterworks had been installing such services for a number of years and that it was irregular for the city to do such work and make charges for same – that it belongs to contracting plumbers."

GREAT STRIDES: EXPANDED WORK & WAGES

The U.A. merged **Local No. 483** of Iowa City into Local 125 on May 8, 1946, increasing the latter's membership and jurisdiction to include the University of Iowa. That year, major projects on which the local's members worked included several jobs at **Coe College** in Cedar Rapids, such as new student housing, although work there was often hampered by a shortage of materials caused by previous war production.

However, on July 1, 1946, Local 125 plumbers and steamfitters did not report for work as they had not received a decision

"I can remember up at St. Luke's Hospital up here, talk about taking pride in your work, I took the sink off of the wall and written in pencil on the wall there was my father's name - Eddy Day and the date that he'd installed it. So when we were down in the basement putting the reduction station in down there, I can remember taking the welder and writing my name with welds on that. Of course, they covered it all up with asbestos. So how do I know maybe ten years my son will be tearing that out. That's the pride you took in your work."

Local 125 Brother Regis E. Day, August 12, 1982
(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

Local 125 LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE YEARS

(The position of business manager did not exist until 1969. The union's three-year cycle of elections started in 1971.)

Business Managers

Paul H. Howke
 1969 into 1976

Carl V. Durbala
 1976 into 1982

Robert D. Havlik
 1982 through 1997

Michael R. Pallesen
 Jan. 14, 1998 to May 1, 1998

Raymond A. Dochterman
 May 1, 1998 to Jan. 1, 2015

Jerry Hobart
 Jan. 1, 2015 to Oct. 9, 2018

Michael E. Sadler II
 Oct. 9, 2018 to present

Presidents

(Unknown or no president before 1901)

Joe Zvasek
 1901

Patrick T. Dunn
 1902 into 1917

(Unknown 1918 to 1932)

Tom Bowker
 1932 through 1934

William A. Schmatt
 1935 through 1936

Rudolph V. Richter
 1937 into 1941

Don Colgan
 1941 into 1943

Henry Howke
 1943 into 1945

Preston R. Farris
 1945 into 1946

Ray Cessford
 1946 into 1949

Harry Cooley
 1949 into 1951

Donald Colgon
 1951

Preston A. Farris
 1951 into 1953

Joe Nemec
 1953 into 1956

A. B. Shakespeare
 1956 into 1960

Carl V. Durbala
 1960 into 1961

Paul H. Howke
 1961 into 1966

Charles F. Baughman
 1966 into 1968

Ray E. Johnson
 1968 into 1971

Everett W. "Mick" Cooley
 1971 into 1974

Richard G. Bachelder
 1974 into 1983

John R. Barger
 1983 into 1992

Roger "Dutch" Dochterman
 1992 through 1994

Larry Benson
 1995 through 1996

Michael Machula
 January 1997 to May 1, 1998

Richard E. Johnston
 May 1, 1998 to Jan. 12, 2000

Michael Machula
 Jan. 12, 2000 to Jan. 17, 2018

George M. Richards
 Jan. 17, 2018 to present

Business Agents

(Unknown or no business agents before 1910)

George Payne
 1910 into 1913

C. B. Kent
 1913 into 1914

George Payne
 1914 through 1917

C. R. Betts
 1918

William A. Clymer
 1919

Henry H. Howke
 1920 through 1924

Guy Coburn
 1925

John Krabacker
 1926 through 1927

Harry Sewell
 1928

D. L. Williams
 1929 through 1937

C. L. Paltinson
 1938

Frank Goerd
 1939

George D. Payne
 1940

D. Fay Merrill
 1941 into 1945

John Evans
 1945 into 1946

William A. Schmatt
 1946 into 1955

Preston R. Farris
 1955 into 1969
(Died in office July 20, 1969)

Everett W. "Mick" Cooley
 1969 into 1970

Richard G. Bachelder
 1970 into 1977

Thomas Peterson
 1977 into 1980

Kay S. Dyal
 1980 into 1983

(No business agent 1983 to 1993)

Raymond A. Dochterman
 Jan. 1993 to May 1, 1998

Robert D. Havlik
 Jan. 1, 1998 into Sept. 2001

Dale Bird
 May 1, 1998 into Sept. 2001

Jim D. Germaine
 Aug. 1, 1998 to Dec. 31, 2007

Steve Price
 May 1, 1998 to Jan. 1, 2012

Raymer J. Brogan
 Sept. 17, 2001 to Jan. 14, 2015

Brian J. Martin
 Sept. 2001 to present

Jerry Hobart
 Jan. 3, 2008 to May 21, 2012

Jim W. Germaine
 July 30, 2012 to Jan. 14, 2015

Patrick A. Ellison
 Jan. 31, 2011 to June 30, 2018

Steven C. Petersen
 Jan. 15, 2015 to present

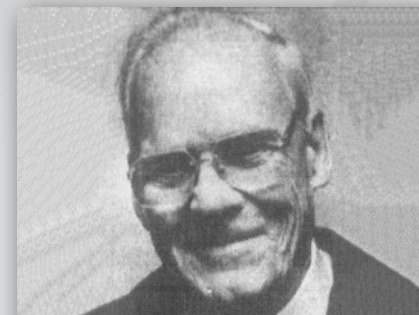
Bruce R. Beckman
 Jan. 15, 2015 to present

Michael E. Sadler II
 Jan. 17, 2018 to Oct. 9, 2018

Jon Lewis
 June 3, 2019 to present



Brother Patrick T. Dunn, who was president of Local 125 from 1902 into 1917, also served as president of the Cedar Rapids Building Trades Council and the city's Federation of Labor before passing away on January 15, 1918, at age 55.



Brother Paul H. Howke, who served as Local 125 president from 1961 to 1966 and business manager from 1969 to 1976, was also a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of World War II and was awarded the Purple Heart after being wounded in action.



Brother Raymond A. Dochterman, who was a Local 125 training instructor and was the local's business manager for nearly 20 years, was also president of the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Building & Construction Trades Council A.F.L.-C.I.O. from 2011 to 2014.

from the federal Wage Adjustment Board on a wage increase from \$1.50 to \$1.75 per hour the union had requested in April and its employers granted that day. While the master plumbers sent telegrams to the board urging it to grant the raise, the local would stage another stoppage beginning August 19 and lasting for a week before the board finally approved the new wage scale.

A year later, the Wage Adjustment Board approved another wage increase to \$1.95 per hour in a new, one-year agreement between the local and the Master Plumbers of Cedar Rapids that was retroactive to May 1, 1947. The local's members stayed away from work for a day after the previous contract expired that day in an effort to persuade the board to render a decision quickly.

Construction of the **Prairie Creek Power Plant** just south of Cedar Rapids beginning in 1948 provided a steady source of employment for many of the local's roughly 125 members over the next two years. Built with funds from a federal Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (R.E.A.) loan to the Central Iowa Power Cooperative, the coal-fired, 44,000-kilowatt generating facility went into operation on May 12, 1950, and was the first R.E.A. facility to be turned over to a private firm, the Iowa Electric Light and Power Company, for management.

On May 1 that year, the local received a 10-cent-per-hour wage increase to \$2.35 per hour in a new, one-year agreement. As work in its jurisdiction remained abundant as the decade progressed, the local gained additional raises in May 1951 to \$2.47 per hour, in January 1952 to \$2.58-1/2 per hour and that May 1 to \$2.65 per hour.

But Local 125 went on strike for 16 days beginning May 1, 1953, after its previous contract expired and the **Cedar Rapids Master Plumbers and Piping Contractors** offered no wage increase while the union's requested a 10-cent-per-hour pay boost in a new



Local 125 member Brother Dean Washburn works on lead drum traps during construction of apartments on Oakland Avenue in Cedar Rapids by the Skogman Construction Company in 1949.

agreement. The local and the employers signed a contract on May 16 that provided for the 10-cent raise to \$2.75 cents per hour for the union journeyman plumbers and steamfitters.

Further wage increases won in contract negotiations into and through the mid-1950s continued to elevate the journeyman scale, first to \$2.82-1/2 per hour on May 1, 1954, and then to \$2.90 per hour the following May 1. However, it took the local a week-long strike beginning May 1, 1956, before contractors awarded it a total 25-cent raise in a one-year contract that provided 15-cents for the first six months and 10 cents for the second half-year to take the local's hourly wage scale for its journeymen to \$3.05.

Away from the negotiating table and out in the field, employment conditions remained strong for the Local 125 membership. In particular during the second half of the decade, many union plumbers and steamfitters were

kept busy on construction of the **Procter & Gamble plant** in Iowa City, which would go on to produce such products as Scope mouthwash, Crest toothpaste and Pert shampoo – and the local would be onsite performing maintenance work at the facility throughout the next 60 years and into its 125th Anniversary in 2020.

Key to construction of the factory were the skills and commitment of the well-trained Local 125 members. As the *U.A. Journal* described in its October 1999 issue, “Given the fact that some of the products manufactured at this facility are for human consumption, perfection in the piping systems is of the utmost importance.”

Meanwhile, the local gained steady and significant pay increases for its members throughout the balance of the 1950s. On May 1, 1957, a new, one-year agreement provided for a 25-cent raise to \$3.30 per hour for Local 125 journeymen; and a May 1, 1958, year-

long contract raised the rate to \$3.45 per hour. To round out the prosperous decade, the local signed a new, two-year pact with the Cedar Rapids Master Plumbers' Association that went into effect May 1, 1959, and added a total of 25 cents to the wage scale, taking it to \$3.70 per hour from May 1, 1960, to May 1, 1961.

SUSTAINED GAINS:

GROWING INTO A NEW HOME

Local 125 plumbers and steamfitters remained busy into and throughout the 1960s as construction within the local's east-central Iowa jurisdiction – which encompassed Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Linn, Johnson, Benton, Jones, Cedar, Iowa and Tama counties and was mostly unionized – stayed strong. During the decade, many of the local's members were regularly employed on a large amount of commercial jobs and on expansion and development of the University of Iowa campus, including construction of its physics and math departments building, as well as the \$4.2-million Phase I classroom building on the **Area Ten Community College** campus in Cedar Rapids in 1968 and 1969.

Likewise, the local's wage scale and working conditions escalated through negotiations for new contracts. A two-year agreement signed with the Master Plumbers' Association on May 5, 1961, following a four-day work stoppage in observance of the union's “no

contract, no work” policy after the previous contract had expired May 1, and subsequent contracts that went into effect in May 1963, May 1964 and May 1967 brought the local's journeyman pay to \$5.25 per hour during the year ending April 30, 1969.

In addition to a total 48-cent increase in pay for the local's roughly 200 members working in 18 shops, the three-year pact signed May 2, 1964, also provided a first-ever “inequity adjustment for foremen,” the *Gazette* reported that day. As such, Local 125 members working as foremen on jobs would be paid a percentage amount above the journeyman rate instead of a fixed amount, the newspaper explained.

The succeeding two-year agreement signed April 19, 1967, with the **Cedar Rapids Association of Plumbing Contractors**, the **Cedar Rapids Chapter of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Iowa** (M.C.A.) and “such employers who shall subsequently become signatory hereto, hereinafter called **‘The Association,’**” provided a total 65-cent wage increase. Although the raise was “considerably less” than the \$1.35-per-hour boost the local had first proposed, as the *Gazette* reported on April 20, the contract included two significant, new fringe benefits paid by the employers: a 20-cent-per-hour-worked contribution into the **U.A. International Health and Welfare Fund** insurance program and a 1-cent-per-hour-worked payment into a new **Education Fund** for the local's apprentice-training program.

“Well, first I think when you come up in a home where your father's been, for instance a plumber in the union, it's something like a religion or something. It just grows with you all the way up. And the same way I suppose with my two sons. A lot of that has brushed off onto them. And I've noticed in my youngest son, the pride that he takes in his work.”

Local 125 Brother Regis E. Day, August 12, 1982
(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

With the expansion of its territory and job opportunities into and throughout the 1960s, Local 125 also experienced a significant growth in its membership, which swiftly climbed to 220 members in May 1963 and some 300 members by May 1967. As such, the local moved into a new and larger union hall of its own in 1964, purchasing the former Caldwell Sign Company building at **1839 16th Avenue Southwest** in Cedar Rapids in October that year to use as its new headquarters and meeting location. (As the local celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2020, it still calls the building “home.”)

The local also remained vigilant in protecting its jurisdiction and the plumbing and piping industry during the decade. In one example of its commitment to high standards, the local vehemently contested proposed amendments to the Cedar Rapids plumbing ordinance in February 1968, directly addressing City Council on February 20 to protest the use of service weight soil pipe and concrete pipe for storm sewer conductors, the February 21 *Gazette* reported.

Among the several members who spoke before the council, pointing out that service weight soil pipe “is not as good as the extra heavy pipe currently being used” and concrete pipe “is not as good as cast iron,” as the newspaper reported,

“Going way back to my dad, I can remember, in other words they lived and talked union because that was their life’s work and they figured that it was their work. And back then, if they went on a job and there was a non-union man on the job, why they threw him and (his) tools off and put a sign up that this was a union job. Of course, then laws come in that prevent them from doing that. But as far as strikes was concerned it’d be two or three days maybe, most generally a chance to go fishing for the boys. But we never carried no picket signs. We held our job on our merit.”

Local 125 Brother Regis E. Day, August 12, 1982
(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

Local 125 **Brother Don Neal** had served on the plumbing study committee that drew up the 1966 plumbing ordinance. He noted that “the amendments contain standards which would lower the standards of the plumbing code,” according to the *Gazette*, and further stated, “There has been a trend toward finding a cheaper way particularly where single-family dwellings are concerned.”

Despite a continued campaign to combat the changes to the regulations, City Council approved the ordinance amending the plumbing code on February 28.

The local also did not back down from safeguarding the organized-labor movement and in early May 1969 demonstrated this when its members would not cross the picket lines of striking union sheet metal workers, carpenters and roofers on building sites throughout the city, even though the plumbers and fitters were also negotiating for a new contract. After six days, Local 125, which was asking for \$1 hourly raises in each year of a two-year pact, ratified a three-year agreement on May 7 that paid its journeymen \$6.85 cents per hour for the final year from May 1, 1971 to April 30, 1972. The contract also raised the employers’ contribution to the U.A. Pension Plan Fund to 30 cents per hour for the second and third years.



Members (left to right) James Hoffman, Cecil Miller, Norm Kirkland, Glen Hieden, Norm Gaffney and Chappie Christensen of U.A. Local No. 384 of Waterloo, Iowa, which would be merged into Local 125 in 1993, picket the construction site of the new St. Francis Hospital on January 20, 1966.

INTERESTS SECURED: ENJOYING MORE GOOD TIMES

Bolstered by booming commercial, industrial and residential construction, Local 125 members enjoyed robust employment conditions in the 1970s, highlighted often by renovation and expansion work at the University of Iowa and the **Veterans Administration hospital** in Iowa City. A key project on which many of the members worked in 1970 was construction of the **Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM) Mill** in Cedar Rapids, which has since been processing corn into various products – and which Local 125 craftspeople would maintain over the next half century into the local’s 125th anniversary year.

Another significant job that provided a large amount of manhours for Local 125 and travelling U.A. plumbers and fitters during the early 1970s was construction of the \$300-million **Duane**

Arnold Nuclear Energy Center just outside of Palo, Iowa, beginning in 1970. When completed in 1974, operation of the only nuclear power plant in the state was taken over by the Iowa Electric Light and Power Company, and the facility became yet another source of consistent maintenance and new-construction work for Local 125 members into 2020.

At the same time, the local’s craftsmen also helped build a new **General Mills** cereal plant in Cedar Rapids and the 21-floor **Iowa Electric (IE) Tower** office building (now the Alliant Energy Tower) in 1971 and 1972 as part of the city’s downtown urban-renewal site. Elsewhere, members also contributed to major expansions of **Mercy Hospital** in Cedar Rapids that added the area’s first trauma center in March 1971 and an eight-story acute-care tower in September of that year (after which three stories were added in 1974).



Local 125 members and guests celebrate during a party on December 4, 1970, marking the local's 75th Anniversary since being chartered by the United Association on June 3, 1895.

Away from the seemingly innumerable jobsites, the local stayed attentive in defending its jurisdictional work and backing the community it serves. In December 1970, for instance, an arbitration board upheld the local's claim that members of Laborers' Union Local No. 43 could not perform specific jobs for the **John M. Gerber Plumbing and Heating Company**, which had a contract with Local 125, involving excavation and installation for sewer and water services, although the National Labor Relations Board (N.L.R.B.) ruled in February 1972 in favor of the laborers.

Then in October 1971, the union filed a letter with the city clerk alleging that sanitary sewers were "being installed inside property lines in Cedar Rapids by unlicensed contractors, in violation of the city's plumbing code," the October 6 *Gazette* reported. In asking that the city "direct its attention to the matter," Local 125 **Business Manager Paul Howke** also stated in the letter, "We feel that rulings contrary to the established city code of the City of Cedar Rapids are a hazard to the health and welfare of the community."

The following May, the local also publicly endorsed a \$5-million airport revenue-bond issue, which would be narrowly defeated in May 23 voting (even though it was supported by 58 percent of voters, as state rules required a 60-percent favorable vote on bonds). While announcing its support of the measure to fund upgrades and expansions to the **Cedar Rapids Airport**, Local 125 **President Mick Cooley** stated in the May 12, 1972, *Gazette*, "The economic life of the city rests on the approval of the bond issue," as he "urged those concerned with the future of the city to come forward and be counted at this crossroad period in the city's economic survival." (*A \$1.5-million tax bond, requiring a tax levy for repayment instead of revenues generated by the airport, would pass in June 1973 and be matched by a federal grant.*)

Local 125 picketed work sites for three weeks beginning May 1, 1972, during contract negotiations, stalling an estimated \$10 million in construction projects that included several major jobs in the city and virtually all home construction, according to the May 18 *Gazette*. While the plumbers and fitters removed the

pickets on May 22 under the stipulation that no one else would perform their work, it was not until June 7 that the local received a one-year contract providing a total 72-cent-per-hour hike in pay and benefits that raised its total journeyman package to \$8.10 per hour over the final six months of the deal. Although its contractors had agreed at that time to an \$8.33 total hourly scale, the federal Wage Stabilization Board ultimately ruled on lowering the rate.

After a one-year contract effective May 1, 1973, increased the total compensation package for the local's 135 plumbers, 111 pipefitters and 34 air-conditioning mechanics to \$8.50 per hour, Local 125 ratified another new contract with the M.C.A. on May 2, 1974, that provided an \$8.90 hourly journeyman wage and 70 cents per hour in health, pension and education benefits. As part of the agreement, Local 125 and the M.C.A. established an **Industry Development Fund** that would be subsidized by both parties and used to promote the union piping industry throughout the local's jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, multiple significant jobs kept members well-employed, including construction of a \$5-million, five-story addition to the large **Life Investors** (now Aegon USA) office building on Edgewood Road in Cedar Rapids in 1974 and 1975. During those years, the local's plumbers and fitters also helped build the new, \$11-million **Roy J. Carver Pavilion** onto the University of Iowa Hospital, which added a trauma and emergency treatment center and nursing units with 96 beds.

Then a new, two-year contract with the M.C.A. that went into effect June 1, 1975, raised the local's journeyman wage scale to \$9.80 per hour the first year and to \$10.80 the second year. The agreement also provided additional employer contributions of 40 cents per hour worked to the union's Health & Welfare Fund, 30 cents per hour to its Pension Fund and 10

cents per hour each to the Education Fund and the Industry Development Fund, for a total wage-fringe package of \$11.70 per hour.

A "marathon bargaining session," as the June 2, 1977, *Gazette* described it, by a joint union-contractor arbitration committee produced a new contract on June 1 after the previous pact expired the day before. The two-year contract raised the local's base pay to \$12.29 per hour and the total pay package to \$13.70 per hour for the second year ending April 30, 1979.

When that contract elapsed, another new pact effective May 1, 1979, raised the journeyman wage scale to \$13.25 per hour the first year and contributions for health insurance to 60 cents per hour, pensions to 70 cents per hour and training and industry promotion to 13 cents per hour each. Another \$1.10 was added to the local's total wage-and-benefits compensation for the second year to push the local's total journeyman compensation from May 1, 1980, to April 30, 1981 to \$15.91 per hour.



Local 125 member Brother Leonard R. "Tuffy" Langswager is honored for his retirement and 19 years of service as the local's financial secretary during a ceremony in 1982. He would pass away in 2002 as a 61-year member of the local.



Local 125 President Richard Bachelder addresses the local's 88th-anniversary banquet at the Hotel Roosevelt in 1983.

Local 125 also kept up its unrelenting efforts to organize and secure its jurisdiction, in one case filing a charge with the N.L.R.B. in June 1979 that accused the Larew Company, a plumbing firm in Iowa City, of unlawfully laying off four employees because of their “activities for and on behalf of the union” while the local was attempting to organize the shop, the June 7 Iowa City Press-Citizen reported. The charges stemmed from a January 22, 1979, union election at Larew Company in which the four since-dismissed employees voted to organize the shop and three voted against, while six ballots, “enough to tip the election either way,” were challenged, according to the newspaper. The two sides ultimately reached a settlement on June 6 whereby the union agreed to drop the charges and Larew agreed to place the four employees on a “preferential hiring list,” the newspaper reported.

OFF-AGAIN, ON-AGAIN: RIDING OUT A ROUGH PATCH

The severe early-1980s economic recession, which affected Iowa and much of the country from early 1980 into 1983, stifled employment opportunities for Local 125 and even forced some of its members to travel to the jurisdictions of other U.A. locals for jobs. As construction remained stagnant and the proliferation of non-union piping workers progressed in the east-central part of the state, sluggish employment for Local 125 would persist throughout much of the decade.

Among the more-notable projects on which the local's members were employed during the initial years of the 1980s were jobs at the University of Iowa Hospital and an extensive remodeling at the **Penick & Ford** cornstarch and corn-syrup plant in Cedar Rapids in 1980, for which union plumbers and

fitters were employed by contractor **Modern Piping**. Members were also able to work on construction of a new alcohol plant at the **ADM Corn Sweeteners** production facility in Cedar Rapids in 1980 and 1981.

Despite the otherwise-precarious employment situation, the local was able to gain a new, one-year contract from its 12 Iowa City and Cedar Rapids mechanical contractors for its nearly 300-strong membership on May 1, 1981. The contract called for a new, hourly base wage of \$15.85 for journeymen and a total increase in pay and benefits of \$1.50 per hour over the previous contract to take the total compensation package to \$17.35 per hour through April 30, 1982.

But that year, it took a two-week strike and an arbitration board's decision following month-long negotiations before Local 125 gained a new contract in June 1982 to replace the since-expired agreement. After the local struck from May 1 to May 15 before voting to return to work while some contractors had advertised in newspaper “want ads” for workers to replace the striking plumbers, the binding arbitration granted the local a \$16.05-per-hour wage rate and slight raises to benefits contributions.

As employment continued to falter, however, the very next year the local accepted a \$2.60 cut to its wages in a new, one-year contract beginning May 1, 1983. The pay reduction, the first in half a century for the local, dropped its base journeyman scale to \$13.45 an hour.

While by early 1984 the local's more than 350 members were employed on projects including a new **Holiday Inn** hotel in Iowa City and several University of Iowa jobs, the plumbers and steamfitters stopped working but did not picket after their previous agreement expired on April 30 while the local negotiated for a new contract with its 24 contractors. Three days later, Local 125 became just the second of more than a dozen building-trades unions to reach a new pact with its respective contractors association, according to the May 4, 1984,

Local 125 members Royal Lambert (left) and William Jablinsky were honored for their 45 years of United Association membership during the local's 88th-anniversary banquet at the Hotel Roosevelt in 1983.



Local 125 members (left to right) Fred Binko, Regis Day, Leonard R. Langwager and William A. Kuda were honored for their 40 years of United Association membership during the local's 88th-anniversary banquet at the Hotel Roosevelt in 1983.

Local 125 established its first local **Pension Plan Fund** for members in its agreement with employing contractors of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Cedar Rapids that went into effect May 1, 1984. Contractors would begin paying 25 cents for each hour worked by Local 125 members into the Pension Fund beginning May 1, 1985.

By that time, the local had already been part of the **United Association National Pension Fund** since 1969, into which contractors paid 75 cents per hour worked with the 1984 contract. Local 125 would begin a **401-K** retirement savings plan for members in 1991.

Gazette, when its signed a two-year agreement with the M.C.A. that day that regained \$2 of the \$2.60 an hour in wages and benefits it had given up a year ago.

The contract called for an immediate wage increase of 75 cents an hour, another 25-cent hike on November 1 and a \$1-per-hour raise added May 1, 1985, bringing the total wage-benefits package to \$17.49 at that time and through April 30, 1986. Most notably, the

contract included a 25-cent-per-hour employer contribution to the new **Local 125 Pension Fund**, which was created to supplement the U.A. International Pension received by Local 125 members.

With that new contract in hand, among the major projects to which the union plumbers and fitters returned was construction of the new **University of Iowa College of Law** building, which would be completed in March 1986, and a new terminal at the Cedar Rapids Airport (which would be renamed The Eastern Iowa Airport in 1997 to reflect its status as a regional airport) that would open in 1986. Meanwhile, increased housing construction and new work maintaining, updating and expanding the Penick & Ford and ADM facilities helped bolster the local's improving – but still sluggish – employment conditions during the mid-1980s.

In hopes of being able to gain more work, the new, one-year contract effective May 1, 1986, was essentially a roll-over of the previous pact

between the local and its employers, with no changes in the wage-benefits package rate. "This agreement is another example of the continuing efforts being made by Local 125 and signatory contractors to provide construction users with stable labor relations and a competitive rate structure," a joint Local 125-M.C.A. statement to the May 9, 1986, *Gazette* explained.

A year later, however, the relation between the local and its contractors took a troubling turn when the two sides could not agree on new contract terms and the local went on strike beginning May 1, 1987. Subsequently, the M.C.A. filed suit against Local 125 in U.S. District Court seeking an order "barring Plumbers Union Local 125 from taking action that would interfere with contractors' employees working on job sites," the May 5 *Gazette* reported.

The lawsuit alleged that the strike was "contrary to terms of a contract the parties entered into May 1, 1984," according to the newspaper. The contractors claimed that after a committee composed of members of both parties voted 3-to-3 on whether to allow a strike, under contract terms the dispute was to go to an industrial relations council for binding arbitration and the union members were obligated under the contract to continue to work. "(Contractors) allege that in spite of that obligation, union members are picketing at numerous work sites and removing members from work sites, thus exerting economic coercion," the newspaper reported.

Also at issue was the number of plumber apprentices, who were paid only a percentage of journeyman wages, that could be hired by contractors. At that time, Local 125 had about 15 apprentices and contractors wanted to expand that number, a proposal the union strongly opposed.



Local 125 retirees (left to right) Jack Bieber, "Doc" Dochterman, Ollie Bourgeois and Ray Burger gather in July 1985.

Although the local's roughly 300 members returned to work May 6, 1987, and the local resumed negotiations with contractors the next day, the union went on strike again on May 13 after rejecting a total \$3.35-per-hour raise in wages and benefits offered in a three-year contract. It would not be until May 27 that the local would ratify a new, three-year contract that gave its journeymen \$1.05 an hour more in wages and fringes the first year and \$1.10 increases in each of the last two years, while also slightly increasing the number of plumber apprentices that contractors could hire.

The agreement would eventually take the journeyman wage scale to \$17.70 per hour from May 1, 1989, to April 30, 1990, and add an additional \$3.02 per hour in benefits contributions – but the local's scale still lagged behind that of other union piping craftspeople. "This first year raise puts us back to where we were in 1982," Local 125 **Business Manager Bob Havlik** told the May 28, 1987, *Gazette* after the contract was signed. "We're still almost \$1 an hour behind the average for Iowa and the surrounding states."



Local 125 retiree Brother Curtis Wilkey (left) is honored during the local's meeting on October 9, 1986, for his 60 years as a United Association member and his 90th birthday as Business Manager Bob Havlik stands by him.

But as employment for the local continued to pick up as the late 1980s progressed, construction of the **ADM Cedar Rapids Power Plant** at its corn-processing mill near the city put more members to work on construction of the facility's three, coal-fired generating units in 1987. (The local would also help add a fourth unit in 1991 and a fifth unit in 1999 and 2000.)

Even with the ADM job, Local 125 experienced unemployment during the height of the construction season in 1987. However, while there was no "boom," that summer the local had its "first good construction season we've had in years," Business Manager Havlik declared in the October 31, 1987, *Gazette*.

What's more, at the time, construction was beginning on a new, \$70-million, biotechnology-products manufacturing plant for **Genencor International** and its associated firms, including **Eastman Kodak Company**, in southwest Cedar Rapids. The large-scale fermentation facility would produce bio-products for industrial applications after it was completed in 1990 with the labor of many Local 125 skilled piping craftspeople.

"I come in in '55 and I went to union meetings and then well, they were pretty long back in them days and I just never came to union meetings. In fact I had never even come around the hall for about eight, nine years. And I said something to one guy and he said, 'Well, there's a union meeting tonight. If you don't like the way the thing's being run get up there and say something.' And I accused it of being nothing but a click. And the more I thought about it, then I decided – so I come up one night and spouted off and nobody crucified me, so then I just got involved again."

Local 125 Brother John R. Barger, August 15, 1991

(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

*Brother Barger was initiated into Local 125 in 1955 and served as Local 125 President from 1983 into 1992.

Local 125 first awarded its **Children of Local 125 Plumbers and Fitters Scholarship** in 1990 to Denise Diane Norris, daughter of member Brother Dwight Norris. In 2020, the local still annually awards scholarships to children of its members.

STRONG AS EVER AT 100: RECOVERING TO NEW HEIGHTS

A promising start of the final decade of the century and the millennium began for Local 125 with a new, three-year contract with the M.C.A. that provided a \$3.13-per-hour package increase that would lift the local's journeyman wage-and-benefits compensation to \$23.85 per hour from May 1, 1992, until the pact expired on April 30, 1993. During that final year, the local's plumbers, fitters and technicians would earn \$22.60 per hour in base wages and additional employer contributions of \$1.30 per hour to the Health & Welfare Fund, \$1.15 per hour to the U.A. Pension Fund, 50 cents per hour to the Local 125 Pension Fund and 15 cents per hour each to the Education Fund and the Industry Development Fund.



Local 125 crew working at the Duane Arnold Energy Center nuclear power plant near Palo, Iowa, in 1990.

During the 1990s, a resurgence of the many grain mills in the local's jurisdiction, including those operated by **Cargill, Diamond V**, General Mills and Quaker Oats; a large amount of maintenance work at the Duane Arnold nuclear power plant and the Procter & Gamble plant in Iowa City; and a surge in industrial and commercial development throughout east-central Iowa contributed to a revival in employment conditions for the local's membership. Early on, construction of the fourth generator at the ADM power plant in 1991 provided another significant source of

jobs – as would construction of a fifth unit in 1999 and 2000, for which an all-union U.A. workforce performed all piping work, including all machining and stress-relieving, using fine-line automatics and thin-wall fusion welding.

A major expansion to the General Mills plant in 1992, which tripled the size of the facility, also employed numerous members from Local 125 and other U.A. tradespeople. When completed, the plant housed the manufacturing of the General Mills line of fruit snacks.

The local's renaissance-of-sorts throughout the decade was further fueled by the mergers of three sister U.A. locals into the Cedar Falls-based local, expanding both its membership and jurisdiction into 25 Iowa counties. **Local No. 384** of Waterloo, Iowa, was amalgamated on January 1, 1993, and five years later, **Local No. 66** of Dubuque, Iowa, and **Local No. 212**

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U.A. **Plumbers and Steamfitters Local No. 384** of Waterloo, Iowa, was merged into Local 125 effective January 1, 1993.

Local 125 Workforce Training PRODUCING THE PIPING INDUSTRY'S MOST SKILLED & PRODUCTIVE CRAFTSPEOPLE



Local 125 Apprentice and Journeyman Training Center at 5101 J Street Southwest in Cedar Rapids, which the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee opened in September 2005.

A special feature of the Local 125 Apprentice and Journeyman Training Center is the 23 tons of limestone used to create its attractive front façade, which was paid for by a \$160,000 gift from the estate of the late Brother Roger "Dutch" Dochterman, a former apprenticeship coordinator and past president of Local 125. A classroom in the center was named in honor of Brother Dochterman, who died in 2002 of asbestosis, an occupational illness he contracted during his years of working around asbestos in plumbing and pipefitting. His son, Local 125 Business Manager Raymond A. Dochterman, said that his father requested that proceeds from a legal settlement with the asbestos industry go to the union "that had given him such a good life."

Apprenticeship is a time-honored method of educating new plumbers and pipefitters entering the industry that has helped ensure Local 125 can provide its employers with fully qualified piping professionals. Over the course of 125 years, the local and its employing contractors have partnered to greatly enhance and vastly improve its apprentice-training system, allowing the union to grow and improve its workforce.

While Local 125 has instituted apprentice training — with which apprentices new to the industry work side-by-side with experienced journeyman union members on jobsites to learn the plumbing and fitting trades while also earning a wage — the local first began operating a training facility in Cedar Rapids on May 8, 1947. (The local had already asked the Cedar Rapids School District that April to establish an "adult education course in acetylene welding," for which the local itself could immediately supply 30 men — about half of whom were "G.I. (former soldiers back from World War II) apprentices who have no other way to learn the trade," Local 125 Business Agent W. A. Schmatt told the school board on April 7, according to an article in the next day's Cedar Rapids Gazette.)

By that time, the union and its contractors had already formed a Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (J.A.T.C.) of equal representation from both sides to oversee and develop the training of apprentices. As the committee advanced the local's five-year training program during the 1950s and 1960s, classes were held at Jefferson High School in Cedar Rapids to augment lab and on-the-job training. During that period of apprenticeship, trainees were required to receive 800 hours of class instruction, with at least four hours each week for 40 weeks per year.

Local 125 retired member Brother John Bavger, when interviewed for the Iowa Labor History Oral Project in August 1991, recalled that beginning in 1955, he attended school two nights each week for three hours a night (from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.)

for 24 weeks a year during his five-year apprenticeship. "They had a guy from the city, a city engineer, teaching that which was more book work than anything," he said. "Then on Monday night, they had a plumbing inspector. When I first started it was Leonard Berry and it was more lead wiping, which is a thing of the past now."

When the local purchased the building at 1839 16th Avenue Southwest in Cedar Rapids to serve as its union hall, it used the facility for class instruction and provided hands-on lab training in the building next door. Then in 1977, to further advance its training programs, the J.A.T.C. opened a modern training center in a building at 205 50th Avenue Southwest in Cedar Rapids.

As the Local 125 training continued to progress, into the year 2000 the J.A.T.C. was spending \$1.3 million per year to provide education for its Eastern Iowa members in an effort to stay on the cutting edge of the piping industry. Additionally, with training growing more complex, the J.A.T.C. consolidated its training for most of Eastern Iowa in the center in Cedar Rapids, which previously had only served a handful of counties.

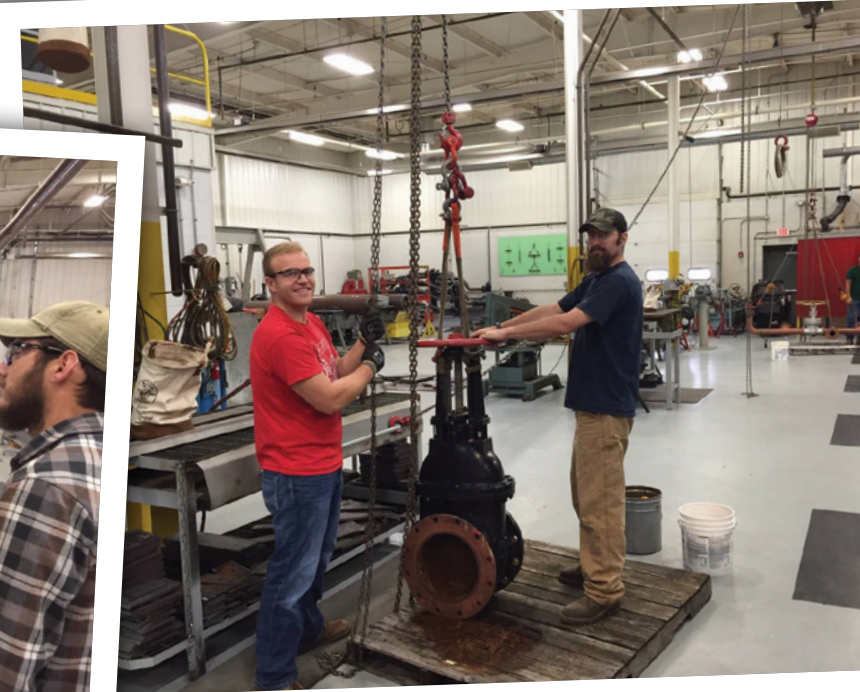
Within the center by that time, classrooms featured training simulators covered with circuits, switches and valves, as well as rows of networked computers and computerized orbital welding machines; and training rooms housed welding booths and racks of massive valves and rows of sinks, toilets and other plumbing fixtures on movable platforms. With these tools,

students were also learning to control building management systems remotely from laptop computers and use CAD/CAM computer software to design piping systems, in addition to learning a range of other industry techniques, from how to install ground-source heat pumps to the safe distribution of medical gases in hospitals and steam through power plants.

By then, completing an apprenticeship required 1,200 hours of time spent learning in the classroom, with 40 hours of classroom training every two months for five years — and apprentices could not only receive training for a plumbing or mechanical license but could be certified in an assortment of specialties, including refrigeration, medical gases, chloro-fluorocarbons, backflow and six types of welding as well. Apprentices were also still being paid while they learned (as they always have been and still are in 2020), and in 2002, for example, during which about 180 apprentices were enrolled in the training program, they started out making about \$11.26 per hour — 40 percent of the union-scale wage for a journeyman. As always, the apprentices receive regular pay increases before being paid the journeyman scale upon successfully completing the apprenticeship.



Training in the Local 125 Training Center welding shop.



Local 125 Workforce Training PRODUCING THE PIPING INDUSTRY'S MOST SKILLED & PRODUCTIVE CRAFTSPEOPLE



Training in the Local 125 Training Center outdoor yard.

NEW CENTER DISPLAYS LOCAL 125'S COMMITMENT TO TRAINING & UNION

In 2004, Local 125 spent \$4 million to purchase and renovate the former Farner-Bocken distribution warehouse at 5101 J Street Southwest in Cedar Rapids in order to convert it into the high-tech, state-of-the-art **Local 125 Apprentice and Journeyman Training Center**, for which the local and J.A.T.C. held a grand opening on September 29, 2005. With about 200 apprentices in its training program at that time, the Local 125 membership paid for the entire facility.

The 50,000-square-foot center, which is more than four times larger than the previous training facility, would provide union plumbers throughout Eastern Iowa with expanded hands-on-training opportunities in ever-evolving plumbing technologies, as most of the additional space is used for hands-on education. Centrally located in Cedar Rapids to serve an area from Tama, Iowa, to the Mississippi River and Missouri to Minnesota, the

training facility features a welding shop that offers a complete power-piping curriculum and food-grade automatic welding; a refrigeration lab; the **Plumbers Training Technology Center** located on the same campus; a computer lab with distance learning capabilities; and conference facilities.

The training center would also constantly be used for upgrade training for journeyman plumber, fitter and technician members of Local 125 so that they are up-to-date on the most current industry technologies.

In 2020 as Local 125 marks its 125th anniversary, its apprenticeship program has progressed and evolved into a five-year curriculum requiring 1,700 hours of on-the-job training and 240 to 280 hours of related technical and theoretical instruction per year, in which apprentices learn to master a broad range of skills, from powerhouse piping to refrigeration. Apprentices, which continue to number about 200, work for a contractor initially at 40 percent of the journeyman wage scale and receive pay increases of 5 percent every six months, and they are provided with health insurance and two pension plans that are paid by the employers.



Local 125 Apprentice and Journeyman Training Center training areas.



Local 125 celebrated its 100th Anniversary since being chartered by the United Association on June 3, 1895, with a dinner/dance and awards banquet at the Collins Plaza Hotel in Cedar Rapids on Friday, May 12, 1995.

of Burlington, Iowa, with its large industrial base, were both merged into Local 125 in 1998, although many of the Local 212 membership did not support the merger.

Regardless, the members of each merged local joined an organization that, in addition to the many benefits it provided, in 1991 established a 401-K retirement savings plan program for its membership. Two years later on May 1, 1993, the local ratified a new, three-year contract with its two dozen M.C.A. contractors that provided for a 3-percent increase in the local's wage-and-benefits package in each year of the agreement, bringing the journeyman base rate to \$22.45 per hour and benefits contributions to \$3.92 per hour from May 1, 1995, to April 30, 1996.

During that period, Local 125 celebrated its 100th anniversary, which also marked a time at which its membership had doubled over the previous 27 years as the result of competent leadership, aggressive contractors and its talented and hard-working members. Four years later, the October 1999 U.A. *Journal* even reflected on the local's first 100 years:

"For the past century, (Local 125) has helped build its city into the thriving town it is today, without making a fuss, without much ado. The members of this local do what they do because they know how to do it well, not to mention that they take serious pride in their work."

Another three-year contract went into effect May 1, 1996, and immediately raised the local's journeyman wage to \$23.15 per hour for the

first six months and hourly contributions for health insurance to \$1.85, the U.A. pension to \$1.45, the local pension to 50 cents, training to 19 cents and industry promotion to 26 cents. Over its final six months, the agreement gave journeymen \$25.05 in base pay and raised the contributions for health insurance to \$2.05 per hour and the U.A. pension to \$1.95 per hour to bring the local's total wage-and-benefits package for journeymen to \$30 per hour through April 30, 1999.

Meanwhile, employment was being further augmented in 1997 by work under a U.A. National Industrial Maintenance Agreement at the **Cedar River Paper Company**, which at the time was the largest paper recycling facility in the world. When the plant was built in 1995 and expanded in the spring of 1997, Local 125 members installed the facility's steam and process piping for the municipal water, sewer and power systems, which they also continued to service and maintain two years later and into the future.

Stable work for the local also continued during the 1990s at the University of Iowa and its hospital, where union plumbers, fitters and technicians performed nearly all of the new and maintenance mechanical work – as they had since the late 1930s. With about 60 U.A. members working throughout the hospital and its clinics, Local 125 craftspeople also built its new **biology research center** in 1999 and 2000.

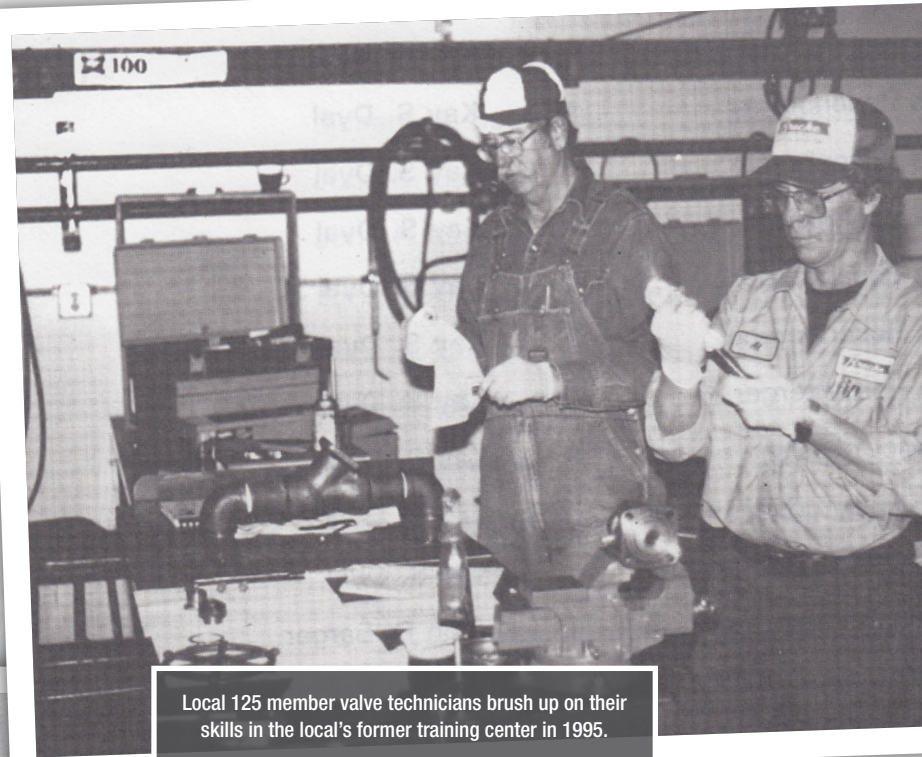
By the final year of the decade, the consolidation of the Waterloo, Dubuque Burlington U.A. locals into Local 125 had allowed the local to allocate officers to

U.A. Plumbers and Steamfitters Local No. 66 of Dubuque, Iowa, which had been organized and chartered in 1889, and U.A. Plumbers and Steamfitters Local No. 212 of Burlington, Iowa, were both merged into Local 125 in 1998.

organizing efforts aimed at gaining membership and employing signatory contractors. The local had also instituted a more proactive approach to securing work for its members by utilizing several U.A. national agreements with national contractors' associations – allowing the local's craftspeople to perform maintenance under the U.A. National Industrial Maintenance Agreement at facilities such as Procter & Gamble, which regularly employed about 30 members in 1999; Quaker Oats, commonly employing about a dozen members throughout that year; and A.D.M., whose maintenance team was over 70 U.A. members strong at the close of the decade.

Before the 1990s concluded, Local 125 and its M.C.A. contractors negotiated another new, three-year contract that went into effect May 1, 1999, and would carry the local into the new 2000 millennium. In a first for the local, the contract assigned separate

wage scales to three different areas of the local's jurisdiction to be more competitive in each respective region. For **Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, Tama, Buchanan, Black Hawk, Grundy, Hardin, Bremer, Butler, Chickasaw and Howard counties**, the contract set the journeyman total wage-and-benefits package at



Local 125 member valve technicians brush up on their skills in the local's former training center in 1995.



Local 125 members take part in a backflow training class at the local's former training center at 205 50th Avenue Southwest in Cedar Rapids in 1995.

\$34.13 per hour for the final year ending April 30, 2002; for **Allamakee, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette and Winnesheik counties**, the journeyman package was set at \$31.03 per hour for the final year; and for **Lee, Des Moines, Henry, Louisa and Washington counties**, the package for construction work was set at \$32.46 per hour for the final year of the contract.

Notably, in the latter region including Lee and four other counties, the local and its

Local 125 45-year members (front row, left to right) Paul Heitzman, Don Herr, Sam McCumpsey, Robert Benzer, Harold Raudabaugh, Dean Washburn and Dean Reifenthal; and (back row) Edward Dingle, William Barger, Don Washburn, Richard Lynch and William Morio were honored during the local's 100th-anniversary celebration on May 12, 1995.



contractors established a distinct, reduced **Maintenance and Service-Repair wage** to gain more of that type of work in that area. The contract subsequently set the journeyman base wage rate for maintenance work in that region at \$22.49 per hour for the final year, compared to \$25.43 per hour for building and construction work.

IN DISASTER'S WAKE: **COMMUNITY, LOCAL RESCUED**

Robust construction and, subsequently, strong employment and steady growth continued for Local 125 into the new "Y2K" millennium. Even a nationwide economic downturn during the early 2000s did not initially slow the local – and organized labor in general – as maintenance work helped sustain the building trades and particularly its union plumbers, fitters and technicians.

"We have missed the backlash of the recession, but it's due to the maintenance work we have," **Business Manager Raymond Dochterman** explained in the January 6, 2002, *Gazette*, while he also noted that "maintenance never stops in plumbing, heating, cooling and refrigeration, even in a bad economy." Case in point, among numerous other locations, the local



Local 125 55-year members Royal Lambert (left) and Edwin Larson were honored during the local's 100th-anniversary celebration at the Collins Plaza in Cedar Rapids on May 12, 1995.



Officials (left to right) Larry Benson, Local 125 president; James E. Gain, U.A. District 4 vice president; Robert W. Baynes, administrative assistant to the U.A. international president; Ray Dochterman, Local 125 business agent; Robert Havlik, Local 125 business manager; and Joseph L. Sposita, U.A. international representative, attend the Local 125 100th-anniversary celebration on May 12, 1995.



Local 125 members work on the biochemical plant project at the Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM) mill in Cedar Rapids in 1998.

continuously had an active maintenance and upgrade crew at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant into and throughout the 2000s.

The local and its construction-trades partners further benefited during the initial years of the new millennium from **Cedar Rapids Public Schools** modernization projects, construction of a new baseball stadium in the city and a program to upgrade the city's public swimming pools. Local 125 members helped build the new, \$16.5-million, 6,000-seat **Veterans Memorial Stadium**, home of the minor-league baseball Cedar Rapids Kernels, from June 2001 until it opened in April 2002.

The following month, the local and its contractors executed a new, three-year working agreement on May 1, 2002, that raised wages





The Local 125 Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee training center staff in 2000: (left to right) Larry Germaine, welding instructor; Chip Davis, science and math instructor; Jim Rashid, refrigeration instructor; Mike Machula, training coordinator; and Joe Rodenkirk, welding instructor.

and benefits across the local's jurisdiction by a total of \$4.35 per hour. As such, for the final year of the pact, the local's journeymen in its three separate wage-designated regions earned total hourly compensation packages of \$38.48 (Benton, etc. counties), \$35.38 (Allamakee, etc. counties) and \$36.81 (Lee, etc. counties), respectively, from May 1, 2004, through April 30, 2005, when the contract expired. In the region including Lee and four other counties, the Maintenance and Service-Repair base wage was set at \$25.09 per hour for the final year, compared to \$28.03 per hour for construction work.

But as the recession lingered into 2003, Local 125 employment began to bear the weight of the sluggish construction market. "Obviously, it's a repressed economy, and we're in bad need of jobs," Business Manager Dochterman, who was also president of the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City Building Trades Council, stated in the March 20, 2003, *Gazette*.

In response to that challenge, the local once again was proactive in efforts to provide for its membership, as it always has been. For instance, in early 2003 the local joined the building trades to support the proposed

"I know when I started residential plumbing, you'd go into the house and when you cut in all your openings it was a brace and a bit and a keyhole saw and then they come along and they've got electric saws, electric hole saws. Yeah, it's changed quite a bit, it really has, from the old days. It's still work, but I mean it's not near as hard on a guy I don't think. Now you go out on your heavier work they've got these lifts, one man lifts and you can drive around, you feel a lot safer out there, at least I do."

Local 125 Brother John R. Barger, August 15, 1991
(Iowa Labor History Oral Project, Iowa Federation of Labor)

\$154-million RiverRun redevelopment project in Cedar Rapids and helped fund a public-relations campaign supporting the local tax option needed for the project, although the measure failed in a June vote.

Undeterred, the local in 2003 purchased the former Farner-Bocken distribution warehouse at 5101 J Street Southwest in Cedar Rapids to serve as its new apprentice and journeyman-upgrade training facility. Through the ultramodern **Local 125 Apprentice and Journeyman Training Center**, the local would better prepare its membership so that its workforce could be even more marketable for its employing contractors, enabling them to gain more work.

That year and into 2005, among some larger projects in its jurisdiction, Local 125 members helped build the **Carver Biomedical Research Building** on the University of Iowa health sciences campus. The \$43-million addition to

the Carver College of Medicine was built to accommodate the study of molecules, proteins and biological structures on five floors of research laboratory space.

But the local's membership of about 1,100 plumbers and fitters working in 114 east-central Iowa-based businesses went on strike May 1, 2007, after their contract expired and their employers rejected the union's proposals for a new agreement – although the union did not picket or attempt to shut down large projects and some members remained on the job. The striking union members returned to work after the local and its three separate employer bargaining groups, representing the M.C.A. of Iowa, Mechanical Contractors Industry Development and independent contractors, approved a new, three-year deal on May 8 that provided modest wage improvements and addressed concerns about healthcare insurance and pensions.



Local 125 members (left to right) Dave Melsha, Larry Germaine, Dave McMahon, Tory Jarchow, Greg Greene, Mike Hartl, Sam Koch, Dan Heitzman, Justin Johnson, Ben Kriz, Pat Hurt, Craig Van Weelden and Joe Rodenkirk take part in a welding and piping-layout class at the local's training center on November 30, 2001.

The so-called “Great Recession” of 2007 and 2008, a period of marked economic decline around the nation and the world, initially added to Local 125’s ongoing distressed employment. However, in the aftermath of the **Iowa Flood of 2008**, which swamped most of the eastern portion of the state and especially Cedar Rapids and Iowa City after most rivers in the region overflowed beginning around June 8, 2008, and ending about July 1 (the result of a record-setting wet spring throughout the state), created a large amount of reconstruction work for the area’s building trades, including the union plumbers and fitters.

Often called “Iowa’s Katrina” in reference to the devastating Hurricane Katrina that caused \$125 billion in damage in August 2005 in and around the City of New Orleans (although no deaths attributed to the Iowa flooding as had been with the hurricane), the flood caused \$6 billion in total damage, which was greater than anticipated in Cedar Rapids. Subsequently, an abundance of work in eastern Iowa in the

aftermath of the flooding provided many of Local 125’s members with relatively steady manhours – and even put some of its retired members back to work on home-repair projects – relieving the local from the effects of the recession on its employment.

In the midst of the reconstruction, Local 125 strongly supported requiring contractors working on city repair projects after the 2008 flood to pay **prevailing wages** (union wages for comparable private sector work) to their construction employees. After initial reluctance, Cedar Rapids Mayor Ron Corbett also became a proponent of contractors paying the prevailing wage, and he joined Business Manager Dochterman and union building-trades workers at the local’s training center on March 3, 2010, in a rally backing prevailing-wage rates for workers on the city’s large flood-recovery construction projects, such as the library, central fire station, Paramount Theatre, Veterans Memorial Building, old federal courthouse and an Animal Care and Control facility.



Local 125 retirees (front row, left to right) Larry Benson, Darrell Sanford, Jim Toms, Bill Kindl and Tom Rosenberger; and (back row) Bill Reyhons, Carl Durbala, Marv Stallman, Dennis Washburn, Vance Gregerson and Glenn Suchomel are some of the many retirees who worked on more than 200 damaged homes in Eastern Iowa after The Flood of 2008. Not pictured among others who also worked on the homes are retirees Mike Prouty, Keith Young, Dean Dennis, Jim Adair, John Waldrep and Ray Travis.

The Flood of 2008 RETIREES ASSIST IN DISASTER’S WAKE

A group of Local 125 retirees helped repair more than 2000 flood-damaged homes during the massive reconstruction and recovery following the historic Flood of 2008, which swamped much of Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Eastern Iowa between June 8 and July 1 that year. In recognition of their contributions, the Local 125 retirees received the **Governor’s Volunteer Award** from Iowa Governor Chester J. Culver on July 22, 2010.

As word spread after the flooding subsided that many homeowners who had not received sufficient insurance or government aid to hire a contractor were in need, more and more retirees joined the volunteer effort. Cedar Rapids City Council subsequently approved of the metro area licensing board recertifying the retirees.

Meanwhile, Local 125 supplied the retirees with tools and a materials allowance to assist with the work, and the local also organized a night shift of active members who volunteered for flood repair work after their day jobs.

REFLECTING ITS LEGACY: RESILIENT TOWARDS 125TH YEAR

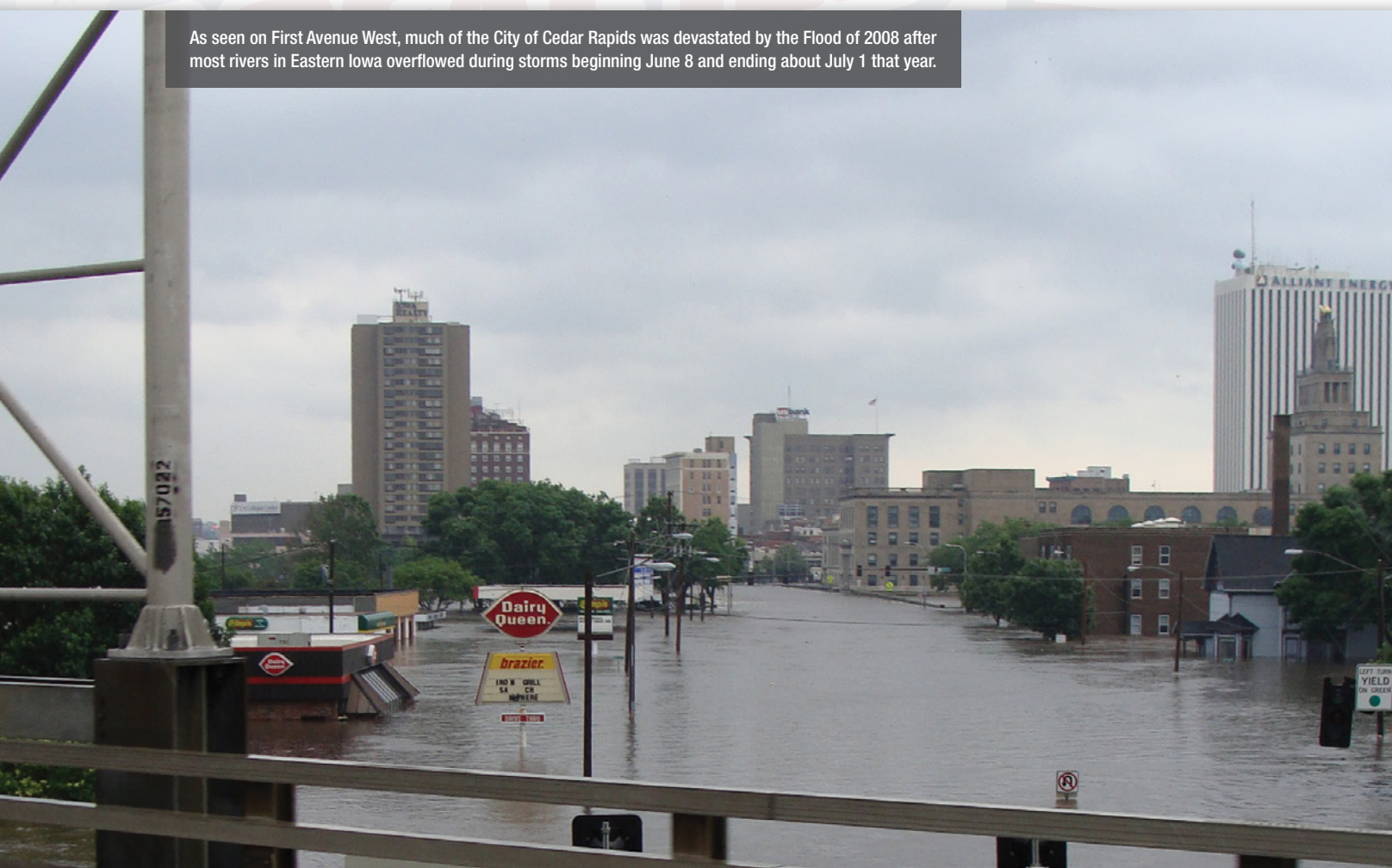
Local 125 celebrated along with other building-trades unions in Linn County when county supervisors unanimously voted on February 22, 2010, to adopt a union-friendly **project labor agreement** (P.L.A.) that would govern the construction of a new community services building. The agreement required the contractor who builds the \$12.5-million Linn County Community Services/Options of Linn County facility in Cedar Rapids to pay union wages and hire a certain number of workers through local unions, while in exchange, labor leaders agreed to a no-strike clause in the contract.

With most major upcoming building projects in the area government-funded, the local and other unions had lobbied for months for the county to utilize P.L.A.s, which facilitate on-

time and on-budget completion of a project by requiring contractors and workers to follow several stipulations. The community services building P.L.A., which Business Manager Dochterman negotiated with Linn County supervisors, was a first for the county and was followed by two other P.L.A.s on county flood-recovery projects, according to the February 23, 2010, *Gazette*.

Meanwhile, work rebuilding from the Flood of 2008 “bolstered the Cedar Rapids construction economy,” according to an article in the December 3, 2010, *Gazette*, while spawning five Linn County projects that fell under P.L.A.s, including the community services center, renovation of the Jean Oxley Linn County Public Service Center and construction of the \$3.7-million **Juvenile Justice Center** and a new federal courthouse. As a result, the Cedar Rapids area saw a significant growth in construction work from October 2009 through October 2010 – during

As seen on First Avenue West, much of the City of Cedar Rapids was devastated by the Flood of 2008 after most rivers in Eastern Iowa overflowed during storms beginning June 8 and ending about July 1 that year.



Local 125 members (left to right) Eric Helms and Chris McAfee and contractor Joe Schmidt, a former Local 125 member, work on a boiler project for St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids in 2010.



which a 16th-highest-in-the-nation 400 construction jobs were added in Cedar Rapids, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – helping to support Local 125 employment. “We’ve got almost two-and-a-half years in the rearview mirror after a major disaster, and we still have yet to fix the majority of that (flood damage),” Business Manager Dochterman told the newspaper.

During that time, Local 125 was also able to negotiate a new, two-year agreement that ran from June 1, 2010, through April 30, 2012, and immediately raised journeyman base wages to \$34.49 per hour for Benton, etc. counties; \$29.33 per hour for Allamakee, etc. counties; and \$32.82 per hour for construction and \$28.68 for maintenance in Lee, etc. counties. Total benefits contributions during the two-year pact were eventually increased across the jurisdiction to \$12.55 per hour, including \$6.06 per hour for the Health and Welfare Fund and \$5.39 per hour in total payments to the local’s two pensions.

As the decade progressed towards the local’s 125th anniversary year of 2020, its membership enjoyed steady employment in the ever-evolving east-central Iowa construction industry – from

a major maintenance and refueling shutdown at the Duane Arnold Nuclear Energy Center in 2012, which put about 150 Local 125 members to work, to construction of the \$3-billion **Iowa Fertilizer Plant** in 2016 and 2017 in Lee County, which employed 950 U.A. members (900 of whom were travelers from 106 other locals). Other key projects that the local’s plumbers and fitters helped build during that time were the new **Cedar Rapids City Hall**, which was relocated into the former U.S. Federal Building in 2012 after its previous home in the Veterans Memorial Building on May’s Island was flooded in 2008; and the already-iconic University of Iowa **Stead Family Children’s Hospital**, which opened in 2017 and overlooks the university’s Kinnick Stadium.

By the local’s 125th anniversary charter date on June 3, 2020, its members were enjoying the benefits of an historic, four-year agreement it had signed with the Cedar Rapids, Dubuque and Southeast Iowa area chapters of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Iowa – a contract that is a true testament of the many gains the local has made throughout its history with its contractors, its industry and even the communities it serves. The pact, which went

Local 125 members (left to right) Mark Brannaman, Eric Helms, Henry Smith, Bill Ruhs and Josh Grissom break while working on a boiler project for St. Luke's Hospital in 2010.



Local 125 members participate in the Cedar Rapids St. Patrick's Day parade in 2015.



Local 125 50-year members honored during a pin ceremony in 2015.



Local 125 55-year members honored during a pin ceremony in 2015.



Local 125 60-year members honored during a pin ceremony in 2015.

into effect May 1, 2017, and extends through April 30, 2021, raised wages for the final (and current) year beginning May 1, 2020, to \$38.79 per hour for Benton, etc. counties; \$33.63 per hour for Allamakee, etc. counties; and \$37.12 per hour for construction and \$35.05 for maintenance in Lee, etc. counties with total benefits contributions across the jurisdiction of \$18.93 per hour, including \$10.86 per hour for the Health and Welfare Fund.

Local 125 apprentices under the agreement are paid 40 percent of the journeyman scale, plus the health insurance and two pension plans. With every six months of on-the-job training and classroom work, they receive pay increases of an additional 5 percent. (At 2019 rates, apprentices started at \$15.26 per hour in pay, with \$1.91 raises every six months and health insurance and pensions paid by their employers.)

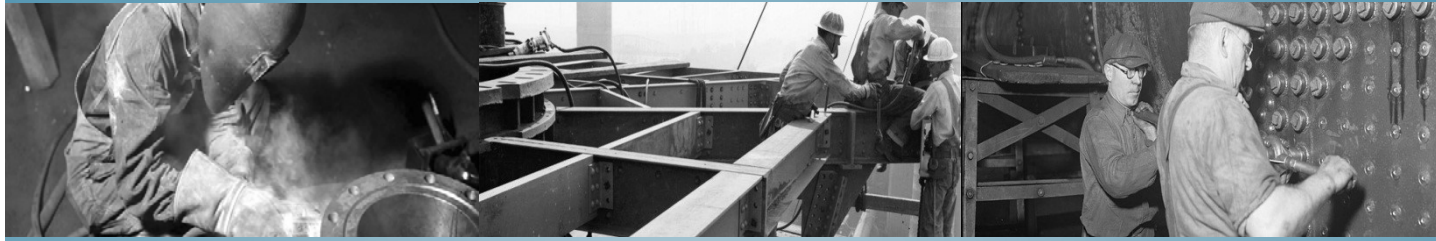
The local's 125th year was dramatically altered, however, by the **Coronavirus (COVID-19) worldwide pandemic** that began in early 2020 and forced the local to cancel what was sure to have been a memorable 125th-anniversary celebration event. While 2020 became a different kind of year as the pandemic changed almost every aspect of life for the local's members, it was very important to its leadership that this history book was produced to commemorate the milestone achievement of the proud local union.

At 125 years, Local 125 can look back on a legacy of achievement that has greatly impacted many of its current standards, including the 8-hour workday, the 5-day workweek, jobsite safety, healthcare insurance and retirement pensions. Indeed, Local 125's presence can also be felt across the State of Iowa, as it has developed into a steadfast fixture in communities and the construction industry through diligence, quality training, effective negotiations and unquestioned teamwork, to which the U.A. further paid tribute in its October 1999 *Journal* with praise that still holds true in 2020:

"This local is proud of its rich past but at the same time is eyeing the future. While remembering the hard work that got them where they are today, Local 125 members are ready and willing to do everything necessary to secure a strong future for tomorrow."



The Iowa Fertilizer Plant built by Local 125 and other U.A. members in Lee County, under construction before and in operation after its completion in 2017. (Photos courtesy of The Weitz Company architectural/engineering/construction firm.)



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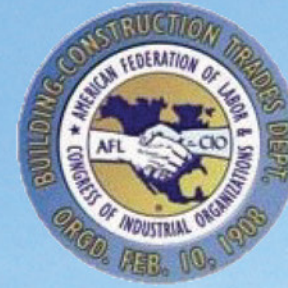
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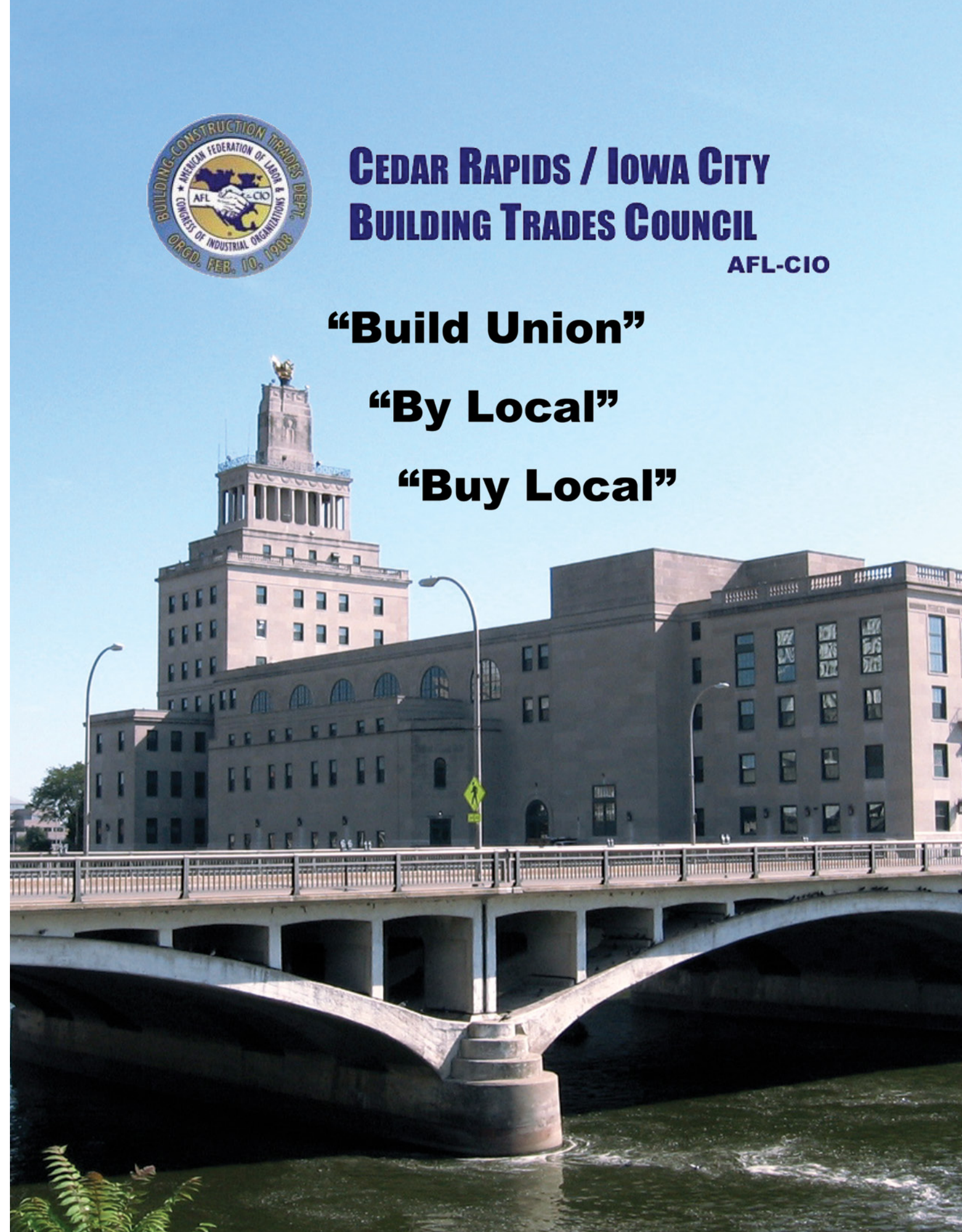
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Brian J. Nichols
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Steve Newsome: BUSINESS AGENT

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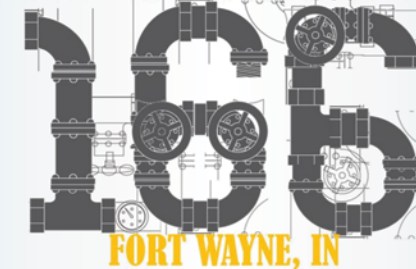


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**Lester Zimmerman
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**Robert Raatz
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From the
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BUSINESS MANAGER,
FINANCIAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

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Attorneys at Law

MATT PETRZELKA
mpetrzelka@petrzelkabreitbach.com

JOHN BREITBACH
jbreitbach@petrzelkabreitbach.com

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Plumbers Local 12 Boston

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Richard D. Carter - Training Coordinator
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Frank Amato - Recruitment Specialist

LOCAL 12
PLUMBERS & GASFITTERS
BOSTON

Happy Anniversary
Local #125 - 125 Years!



From ~ Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 25
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309-788-4569

Matthew T. Lienen, Business Manager/FST

Bill Allison, Business Agent
Gary Beer, Business Agent
Dave Keefer, Business Agent
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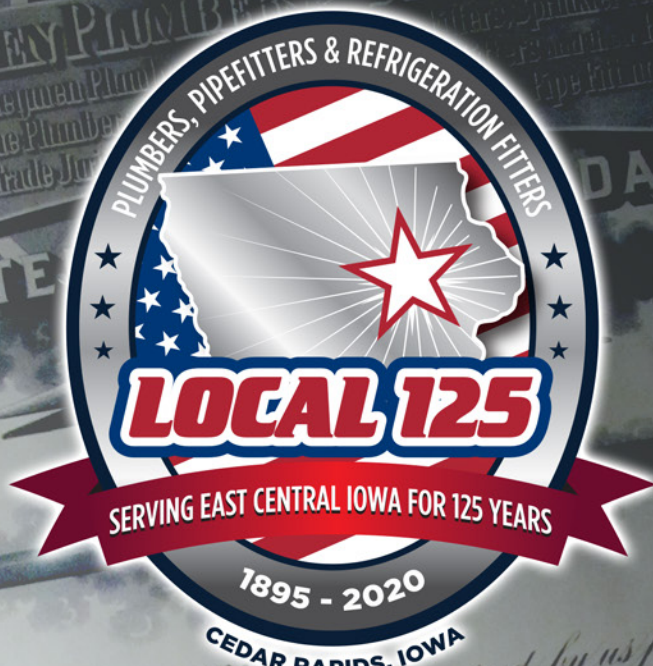
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 Whereas, A petition in due form has been received by us praying that a charter be granted to the Plumbers, Steam Fitters, Gas Fitters, and Apprentices located at Cedar Rapids and Iowa City, Iowa
NOW KNOW YE
 That acting under authority of the UNITED ASSOCIATION, Journeyman Plumbers and Steam Fitters OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.
 We direct this Warrant and Charter to be issued to the LOCAL UNION No. 125 on this third (3rd) day of June 1895.
 The privileges as are prescribed in the laws and usages of the Association and the members thereof are strictly enjoined to bear constantly in mind and always practice the cardinal principles of the Association: **BENEVOLENCE AND PROTECTION.**
FIDELITY.
 The UNITED ASSOCIATION, hereby do suspend or reclaim this Warrant and Charter and to annul the rights and privileges therein conferred, for any neglect or refusal to perform the duties required by the laws and usages of the Association as adopted and promulgated by the UNITED ASSOCIATION, or by any of its Officers acting under legally invested Authority.
 In Witness Whereof, this Warrant and Charter has been signed by the Officers of the United Association and the Seal of said Association has been affixed this 3rd day of June, 1895.
 John S. Kelley