

PLUMBER, PIPEFITTERS, HVACR TECHNICIANS

LOCAL NO. 146

UNITED ASSOCIATION

**LOCAL
146**

FT. WORTH

TEXAS

EST. NOVEMBER 1, 1895



125TH-ANNIVERSARY

COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY



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In Arkansas, U.A. Local 100 serves and represents the piping industry in Miller County.

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146

125TH ANNIVERSARY

A History of Highs and Lows Prepared Local 146 for Its Future

Brother and Sisters,

United Association Plumbers and Steamfitters Local No. 146 was established in 1895 with the primary purpose of ensuring its members are represented so they receive fair wages, benefits, training, and suitable working conditions.



The local continues to remain strong throughout years of extreme adversity, such as the Great Depression, wars and a worldwide pandemic illness, along with years of great prosperity.

Local 146 members are not just great plumbers, pipefitters, welders and HVAC employees, but we have a solidarity of brothers and sisters in this industry as we strive to support and serve our signatory contractors.

I am extremely honored to be a part of Local 146 and this trade since I was six years old. My step-father, oldest son and son-in-law are all members of the local, so it is a family tradition.

We have weathered years of difficulty and years of success but remain strong. I hope you enjoy reading about the history of U.A. Local 146 – and help us to continue the traditions for another 125 years.

Fraternally,

Wayne Duncan, Business Manager
United Association Local No. 146, Fort Worth

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History of U.A. Local No. 146

Building on a 125-Year Dedication to North Texas

At home Sun.Eve. Fort Worth, Texas
2819 Jennings Ave.
Sept.26th.1954

Mr.J.E.Hatcher Secty.Treas.

Dear Sir and Good Brother:

Sixty four years is a long time to serve at anything, but I never tired of my trade, and have had many friends during these long years. Local Union No.146 has come a long way since I was first admitted in June 1898 and some times we did not have sufficient members to transact our business, but we continued to grow, and to day our wage scale is greater by the day, than we received by the week during the horse and buggy days.

As you know, I have been in many locals, but No.146 is my home town now, and my favorite Local Union, and it affords me much pleasure in being accepted a life member and "Ward" of No.146.

Fraternally yours

A.D.Chandler
A.D. Chandler

Excerpt from actual letter written by Brother A. D. "Tommy" Chandler to U.A. Local No. 146 Financial Secretary-Treasurer Jerry E. Hatcher on September 26, 1954, after Brother Chandler received his U.A. Gold Membership card on Labor Day 1954 to mark the 64th anniversary of his initiation into the union initially as a member of Local No. 158 of Cripple Creek, Colorado.



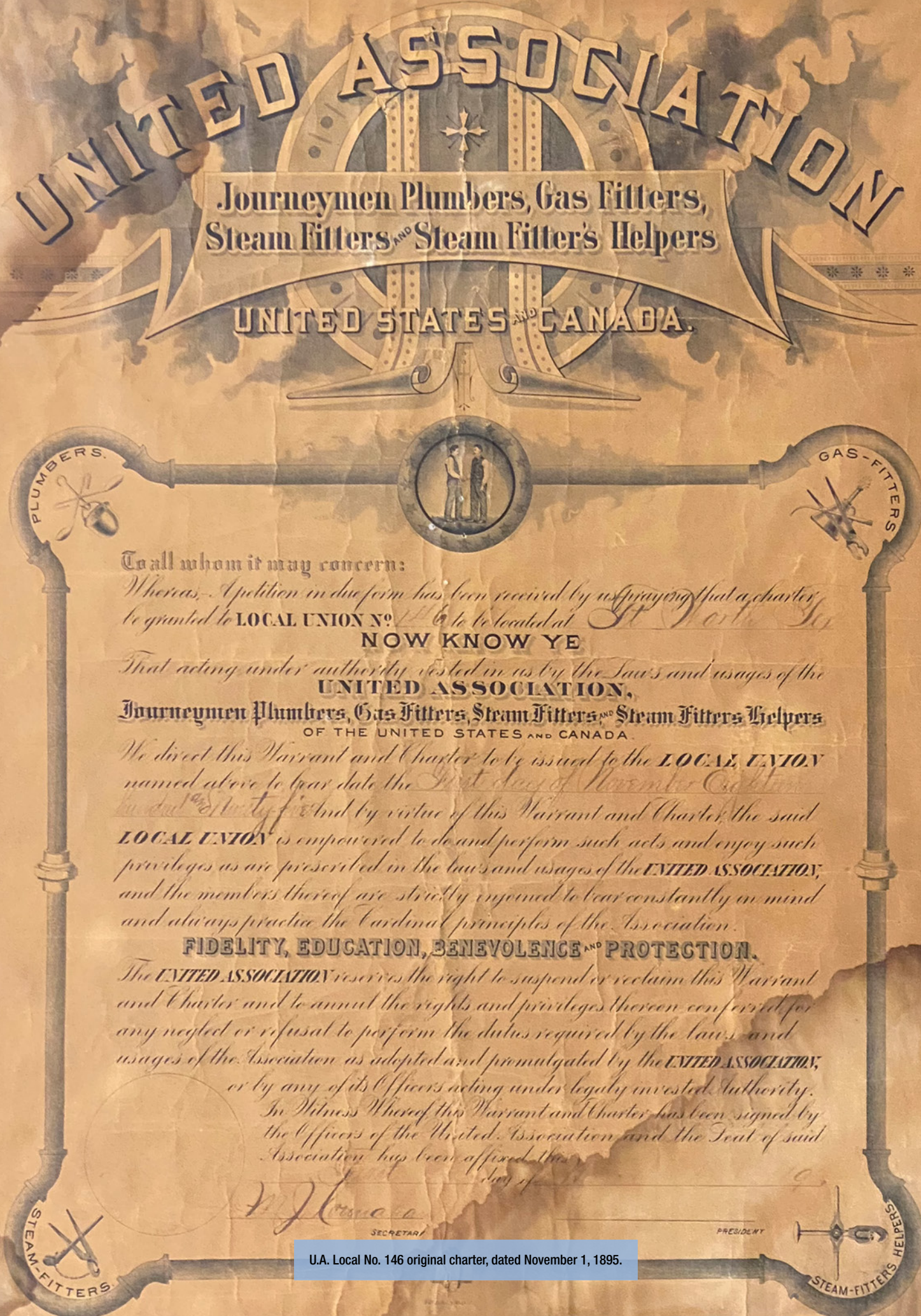
Very shortly after it was established in May 1895 as the first organized group of piping-industry tradesmen in the city, the **Plumbers, Gasfitters, Steamfitters and Steamfitters' Helpers' Union of Fort Worth** later that same year either was disbanded or was absorbed by the United Association of Journeymen Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada. Founded in 1889 as the predecessor of today's United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada (U.A.), the original United Association then chartered plumbers and steamfitters **Local No. 146** in Fort Worth on **November 1, 1895**.

With an initial membership of 11 tradesmen, including **President William H. Merrill**, who had also served in that position for the predecessor Union of Fort Worth, Local 146

initially met weekly every Tuesday at the Stationary Engineers Local No. 5 Hall in the Board of Trade Building at Seventh and Houston streets. But by 1901, the local had only grown to 15 members who for the previous couple of years had been meeting twice per month at the Board of Trade Building.

Regardless, the small local went on strike against its employing "master plumbers" beginning January 1, 1901, after the contractors refused to sign a new agreement that had been offered by the union three months earlier. The proposed contract would have raised its member journeyman-plumbers wage rate 50 cents to \$4 per day and set working hours at 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a one-hour break from Noon to 1 p.m.

After the Local 146 membership rejected a contract offer on January 2, the plumbers and house electrical linemen, who had also went



U.A. Local No. 146 original charter, dated November 1, 1895.

out on strike the first of the year, organized a cooperative plumbing establishment, which they had “decided was the best way to make their former employers come to terms and also to make certain that no citizens suffered for want of needed plumbing on account of the strike,” the *Fort Worth Record and Register* reported on January 15, 1901. As the strike dragged on, the local also voted on January 17 to ask for “financial aid” from the other I.B.E.W. locals in the State of Texas.

In mid-February, the two sides submitted their agreement negotiations to a newly formed arbitration board that had been created by the Building Trades Council, of which the local was a part, and the contractors’ Builders Club of Fort Worth. While the board’s first-ever arbitration hearing, which was held in City Hall on February 18, was “exhaustive,” according to a report in the July 16, 1901, *Record and Register*, the board granted the \$4 daily wage scale and 8-hour workdays to the local.

Noting that arbitrated disputes in years past had largely gone in favor of the contractors, Local 146 **Secretary-Treasurer William E. Thacher** later announced in the April 1901 U.A. *Journal* magazine, “After being out for seven weeks ... we were awarded a very satisfactory decision. Of course we lost some few points, but taking it all in all we consider it quite a victory, especially as some of the shops declared they would close up before they would pay \$4 per day.”

Later that month, Local 146 also joined its sister locals in forming the **Texas State Association** of the U.A. during a convention held on April 19, 1901, in San Antonio. Brother Thacher, attending as the local’s delegate, was elected the new organization’s secretary-treasurer.

Giving his report on conditions of his local to convention delegates that day, Brother Thacher

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.

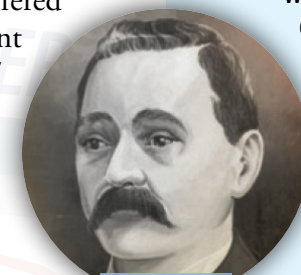
Four days later, the **United Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters’ Helpers of the United States and Canada** (U.A.) was born on October 11, 1889. The U.A. selected Brother Quinlan as its president, Brother Henry Collins of New York City as its vice president 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 in 1888, 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.

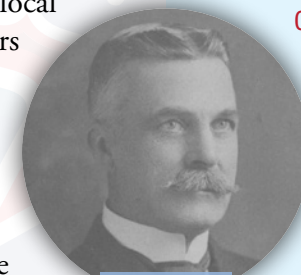
The union endured through two world wars and the Great Depression, after which on January 1, 1947, it changed its name to the **United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada**.

announced the local’s \$4 scale and 8-hour workday and declared, “All competent men are in the union, all first-class shops are fair and state of trade very good.”

But as difficulties between organized labor and its employers in Fort Worth escalated as the year progressed, Local 146 staged a one-day strike on July 12, 1901, in support of the city’s laborers local union, which had received



Patrick J. Quinlan



Richard A. O'Brien

First Officers of Local 146

After Local 146 was chartered by the United Association on November 1, 1895, its first slate of officers consisted of:

President William H. Merrill

Vice-President Wilburn P. Harrison

Recording Secretary Frank Bulgin

Secretary-Treasurer Frank L. Stearns

an unfavorable decision from the arbitration board while it was embroiled in a protracted strike against its contractors. Honoring its own arbitration result from February, the plumbers only stayed off their jobs for the single day – but after the Building Trades Council refused to support the laborers or the action by the plumbers, Local 146 withdrew from the council later that month.

MAKING A LEAP FORWARD ALONGSIDE ITS HOMETOWN

The fortunes of Local 146 – along with those of Fort Worth – changed dramatically beginning in 1902 when Swift; Armour; and Libby, McNeill & Libby erected and opened meat-packing factories in the city, around which several allied industries grew during the ensuing decade. As a result, Fort Worth's population grew by 174.7 percent between 1900 and 1910, when more than 73,000 residents called it home.

As the city it served flourished, Local 146 membership likewise increased during the decade, although that progress was slowed at times. Early on, the local grew from 15 members in 1902 who met every other Thursday at the Powell Building on Main Street in Fort Worth to 20 members in 1904 who met the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at the new **Labor Temple** – which the Fort Worth Trades Assembly, with which Local 146 was affiliated, had established on July 4, 1903, in Ellis Hall at 309 Throckmorton Street.

(The Fort Worth Star-Telegram described the opening of the facility in a July 5 article: “The place of most activity yesterday was at Ellis Hall, where at 11 o'clock there was a celebration which included the ‘tapping of a keg.’ The northern end of the building upstairs has been taken in charge by the various labor organizations of the city. It is to be known as the Labor Temple.”)

Local 146 and the “master plumbers” that employed its members reached agreement on a new, one-year contract on October 3, 1904, that provided the union journeyman plumbers with a \$4.50-per-hour wage they had requested during negotiations. The pact also set a journeyman-to-apprentice ratio that could be employed on jobs at 4-to-1, which the union had also sought. After the two sides signed the contract, Brother Thacher, who served as the local's negotiating committee chairman, stated in the October 4 *Star-Telegram* that Local 146 was “well satisfied with the new contract and that the utmost harmony had prevailed at all the meetings.” He further noted, “Both sides made concessions, and the agreement was thus reached.”

Conversely, two years later, six Local 146 members went on strike against the Van Zandt Heating and Plumbing Company beginning June 1, 1906, after the master plumber was the only one of the local's four contractors to reject the union's demand, which it first made on May 1, for a wage-scale increase from \$4.50 to \$5-per-day for its journeymen. In response to the walkout, Company office John Van Zandt announced in that day's *Star-Telegram*. “We are willing to pay some of them \$5 per day, as some of them are worth that amount, but others are not worth it and we refuse to pay it. We have concluded arrangements with non-union plumbers for all help needed, and we will proceed with our business as heretofore.”

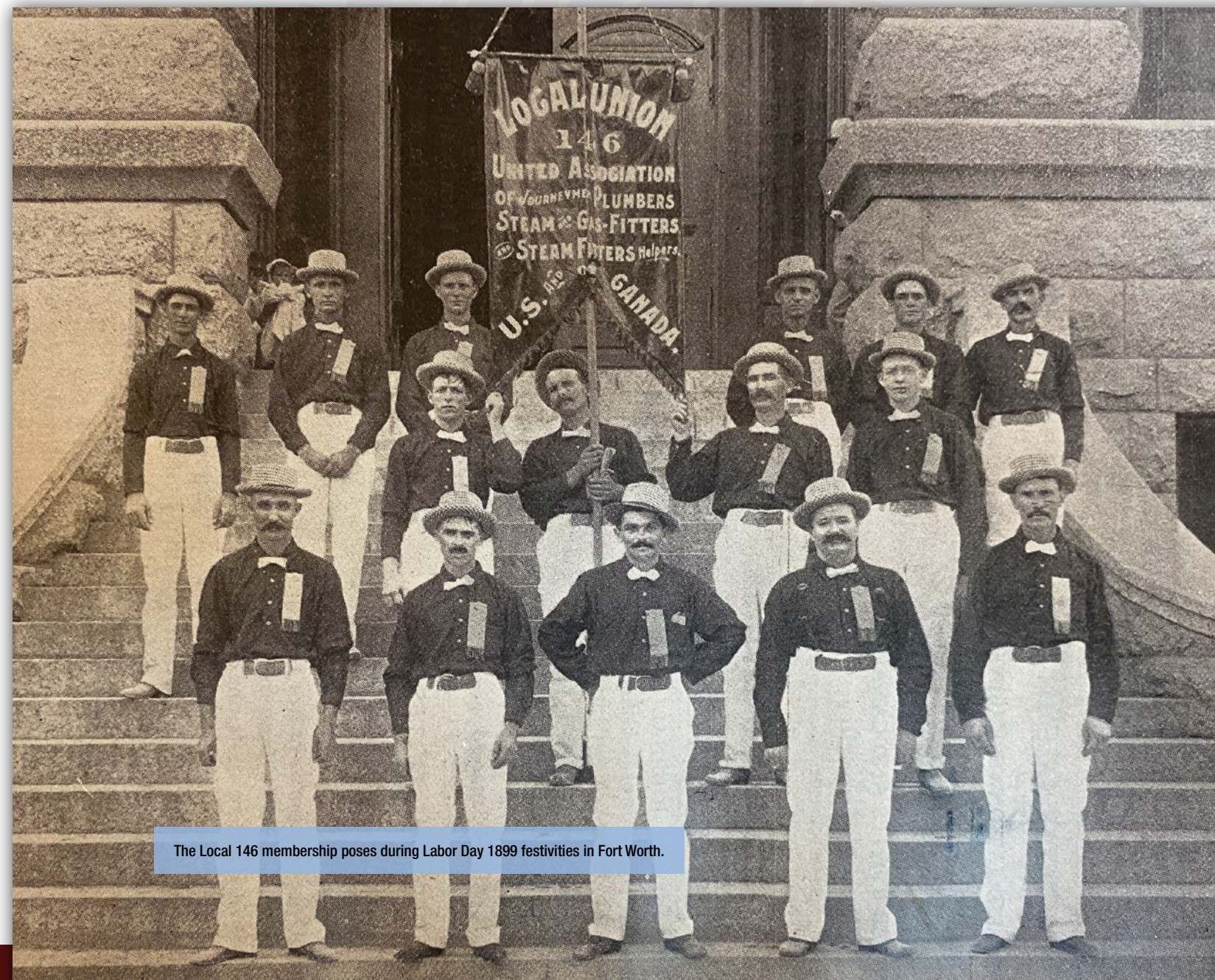
Local 146 **President Edward J. Keras** subsequently called the contractor's statement a “mere bluff” in a letter in the June 4 *Record*

and Register. “Labor is too scarce at present to pick up 20 plumbers, which he could use at this time,” Brother Keras continued. “As for our men who walked out Friday morning, they are not going back for the old scale of wages as there is work for them elsewhere.”

What's more, the local assessed each of its working members 50 cents per day for a defense fund “to take care of those who may be out as a result of the walkout.” The union also made other funds available for use by the striking members.

But ultimately, the contractor spurned the union and continued to employ non-union plumbers, after which more firms in the city followed suit and hired non-union workers. With former Local 146 officer and U.A. general vice-president Thacher even working by 1907 for the “unfair” non-union Van Zandt Heating and Plumbing, U.A. General Organizer Edward W. Leonard was compelled to report in the February 1908 *Journal*, “Conditions of Local 146 are not of the best.”

Throughout that year, the local was also obliged to regularly post “KEEP AWAY”



The Local 146 membership poses during Labor Day 1899 festivities in Fort Worth.

notices in the union's publication, informing potential travelers from sister U.A. locals who were seeking work outside of their home locals' respective jurisdictions that no union positions were available in Fort Worth.

With two major construction projects underway within the Local 146 jurisdiction in 1909, the local and the U.A. stepped up their efforts that year to halt the union's slide and improve its condition in and around Fort Worth. To those ends, U.A. General Organizer William Lynn joined Local 146 **President William B. Smith** in meetings with the three non-union contractors in the town in September of that year. Subsequently, two of the firms "were inclined to clean up their shops and enter into a working agreement," Organizer Lynn reported in the November 1909 *Journal*, while one of those contractors which had just closed the plumbing contract on one of the new large jobs, pledged that "his shop will be straightened up before that job was started."

Additionally, during the local's regular meeting held on September 20, it initiated some of the men that had been working in the two shops. The local and Organizer Lynn also appointed a committee that would "make an active campaign against" the non-union shops and "meet with other conditions as they arise," he reported.

The local further adopted a plan to put a business agent in the field who would work between Fort Worth and Dallas. With a new plumbing ordinance also in force that was recently revised by President Smith (who was also the city's plumbing inspector) to comply with the state plumbing law that Local 146 member **Brother G. Edward Allgaier** had been instrumental in passing, Organizer Lynn expounded in his report, "With this committee to handle these shops and a business agent in the field, Local 146 will have complete control of conditions in their city."

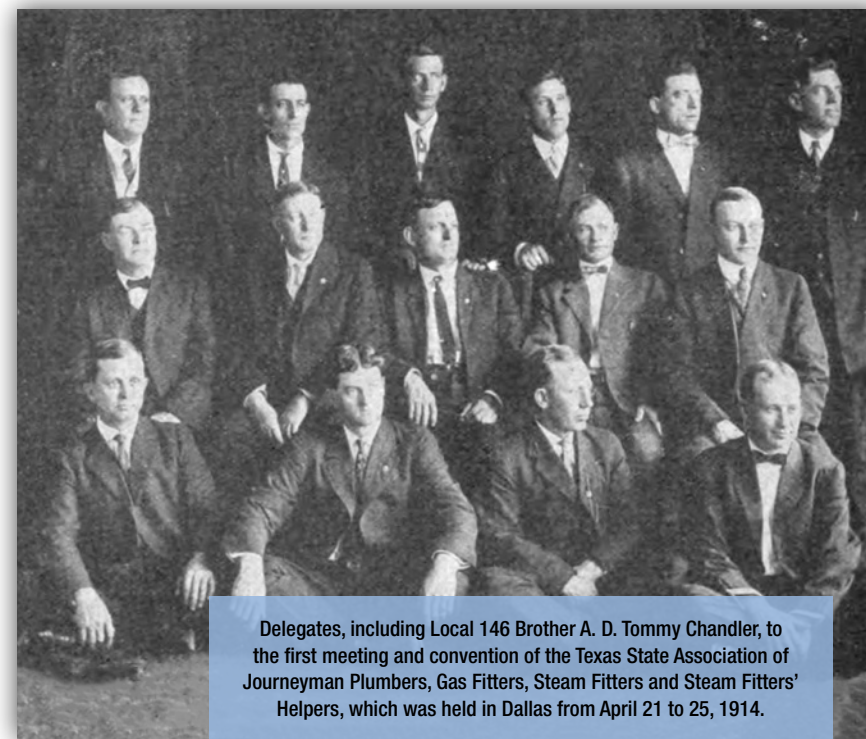
Indeed, the local's membership was fully employed throughout the balance of the year and the decade. What's more, into 1910 the local doubled in size over the previous year to 35 members.

WAGING A 'PERSISTENT FIGHT' TO MAKE ADDITIONAL INROADS

Like Fort Worth, Local 146 responded to additional impetus for growth during the 1910s that saw the city swell to more than 105,000 residents and the local expand to more than 70 members by 1920. Among the primary stimuli of that development was the entry of the United States into World War I in 1917, during which Fort Worth became a substantial military base almost overnight with the establishment of **U.S. Army Camp Bowie** on the western edge of the city and three training airfields within 14 miles of its limits.

Additionally, the "Ranger Oil Boom" that began in October 1917 after oil was discovered at a well in the town about 100 miles west of Fort Worth resulted in scores of oil companies moving to the city and hundreds of other companies being established in and around it. With the discovery of other oil fields nearby, Fort Worth soon after became the center of one of the richest oil-producing regions in the world.

Before those new sources of employment for Local 146 members emerged, however, the local struggled during the initial years of the decade – by which time it was holding its regular meetings in the new Labor Temple at 211 East 2nd Street in Fort Worth. As two large non-union contractors and multiple small non-union shops presented regular challenges for the local during that time, U.A. General Organizer Frank J. Kennedy noted in the July 1911 *Journal*, "Local No. 146 has had a hard battle in maintaining conditions and should be congratulated and encouraged in the persistent fight they have made."



Delegates, including Local 146 Brother A. D. Tommy Chandler, to the first meeting and convention of the Texas State Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers, which was held in Dallas from April 21 to 25, 1914.

Regardless, the local continued to make inroads, highlighted at the time by the local's first-ever three-year contract with the master plumbers that provided a wage raise for its journeymen of 50 cents to \$5.50 per day beginning January 1, 1912, and \$6 per day for each of the ensuing years to the end of 1914. The agreement also stipulated that plumbing firms in the city would be "closed shops" and employ only union members.

Although the local gained another new agreement with contractors in 1915, employment in its jurisdiction for much of that year was "very dull," as U.A. General Organizer Jason H. Sheehe described it in his report in the December 1915 *Journal*. But as construction work in the area picked up the following year, during which the local's membership fell at one point to 54 plumbers and steamfitters, U.A. General Organizer John H. Ryan was able to announce in the November 1916 *Journal* after a visit to Fort Worth, "I found (Local 146) was in good condition. Plenty of work now ... and all men working. Another old-time local

Local Helped Start State U.A. Organization – Twice

The seven U.A. locals in the "Lone Star State," including Local 146, held the first-ever convention of the **Texas State Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers** in Houston on April 19, 1901. Local 146 **Brother William E. Thacher** was among the representatives from all the locals who were in attendance.

During the meeting, the delegates selected officers for the ensuing term, including Brother Thacher as secretary-treasurer, and adopted numerous resolutions, such as "favoring and providing a way of raising and maintaining a fund to aid sister unions in time of trouble" and "favoring an act to create the office of state inspector of plumbing." However, that original Texas State Association was disbanded sometime in 1904.

A decade later, Local 146 was again present for and active in the formation of a new Texas State Association, for which an initial convention was held April 21 to 25, 1914, in Dallas. Among the association's new officers elected during the second day of the conference was Local 146 **Brother A. D. Tommy Chandler** as first vice-president, while issues discussed by delegates included revising the State Plumbing Law.

The Texas State Association has since been incorporated into the **Southwest Pipe Trades Association**, which was also chartered by the U.A. in 1914 to represent the interests of its locals and Mechanical Contractors Association of America contractors in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. Together, both groups work to promote and advance the union pipe-trades industry by increasing market share, recruiting new members and addressing issues important to the industry, such as fighting so-called "right-to-work," the misclassification of employees and supporting prevailing wages and workers' compensation.

with good conditions and a live plumbing inspector who treats all alike, still fighting to better their conditions and will get them if they are to be gotten."

With construction and expansion of Camp Bowie well underway and employing Local 146 members in 1917 and 1918, the local's members enjoyed steady employment. But

before year's end, after work at the camp and on other projects decreased, the local's constantly fluctuating condition again diminished, leaving **Business Manager William A. Broyles** to report in the December 1, 1918, *Star-Telegram*, "At present there are plenty of plumbers idle, and they are only too willing to do their share of work, if they can find it."

But as development in and around Fort Worth escalated, employment again picked up and remained strong throughout 1919, during which the local signed another new working agreement with contractors, enabling Brother Broyles to announce in the February 27, 1919, *Record-Telegram* that "very few plumbers or pipefitters are out of employment." In fact, the city's accelerated growth helped provide work for all of the local's members to the point that the business manager reported in the July 13 *Star-Telegram* that "the demand for plumbers ... out exceeds the supply." In that advantageous environment, the local also rapidly gained new members, pushing its roster to 75 union plumbers.

THROUGH ROARING HEIGHTS & HISTORICALLY GREAT LOWS

“Matters were running along smoothly in Fort Worth,” U.A. General Organizer Thomas B. Clark proclaimed in his report in the November 1920 *Journal* as Local 146 continued to progress during the initial years of the “Roaring Twenties” (so-called as a nod to the decade’s surging economy and mass consumerism in the United States following a recession in 1920).

Early in 1922, however, work for the union’s plumbers in and around Fort Worth became slack as construction slowed and non-union



Local 146 Brother William A. Broyles, shown in 1919, who served as business manager of the local from 1917 until his death on March 9, 1939.

pipng-trades concerns became more active within the local’s jurisdiction. To help counteract that adverse surge, on March 25 of that year the local voluntarily took a pay reduction of \$1 from \$10 per day to \$9 per day in its journeyman plumbers’ wage scale, effective April 1, in an attempt to gain more jobs for its contractors.

As a result, while two of the local’s larger employers “strayed from the straight-and-narrow path” and became open, non-union shops, as U.A. General Organizer E. B. Fitzgerald described in his report in the July 1922 *Journal*, he was also able to declare, “Our members here have been very successful in warding off the open shop.” Taking stock of the local, Brother Fitzgerald went on to announce, “All of our members in Fort Worth are working, and considering all and all, we have not fared badly by any means.”

The local continued to thrive throughout the following two years, near the end of which Brother Fitzgerald reported in the December 1924 *Journal*, “While in Fort Worth, I had the pleasure of calling upon several of our employers ... and I find the conditions that now exist in Fort Worth are very favorable.” He further predicted that “from the present outlook, the future holds much prosperity for the membership of this local union.”

The following year, the local also reaffiliated with the **Fort Worth Building and Construction Trades Council** after attendees passed a motion to do so during the local’s May 25, 1925, regular membership meeting.

With the local’s beneficial situation persisting, in 1926 the wage scale for its journeyman plumbers and steamfitters reached \$12 per day (or \$1.50 per hour for 8-hour workdays) in a contract with its employing

Local 146 Union Halls And Meeting Locations

(All locations are in Fort Worth.)

Board of Trade Building
Seventh and Houston streets
1895 into 1901

Powell Building
210 Main Street
1901 into 1902

Labor Temple
1409 Main Street
1902 into 1903

Labor Temple
306-1/2 Throckmorton Street
1903-1926

Labor Temple
401-1/2 Calhoun
1926-1934

Carpenters' Hall/Labor Temple
1502-1/2 Main Street
1934 into 1936

Labor Temple
302-1/2 Main Street
1936 - 1937

Bricklayers' Hall
506-1/2 Main Street
1937 - 1938

Electricians' Hall/Labor Temple
211-1/2 West 13th Street
1938-1941

Plumbers' Hall
1408-1/2 Houston Street
1941 into 1952

Local 146 Union Hall
2640 East Lancaster Avenue
1952 into 2012

Local 146 Union Hall
9920 White Settlement Road
2012 to current



The Local 146 Union Hall at 2640 East Lancaster Avenue in Fort Worth, shown in December 1952, shortly after it was opened. (Photo courtesy of Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.)

master plumbers. By that time, the local’s members were also receiving double-time pay for overtime work on Saturday afternoons, Sundays and legal holidays.

Conditions were further boosted in the late 1920s by a “building boom” that, as the book *The New Frontier: A Contemporary History of Fort Worth & Tarrant County* asserts, was fostered by Fort Worth’s Five-Year Work Program, for which “far-sighted businessmen and politicians in the late Twenties had convinced voters to pass \$100 million worth of bond issues to finance roads and bridges and erect new public-use buildings to replace facilities the city had outgrown.” With an additional \$50-million share from a state improvement program financing more construction, Fort Worth led all Texas cities in new building in 1929 and 1930, according to *The New Frontier*.



The Board of Trade Building in Fort Worth, in which Local 146 held its membership meetings from 1895 into 1901. (Photo courtesy of W.D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc., Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.)

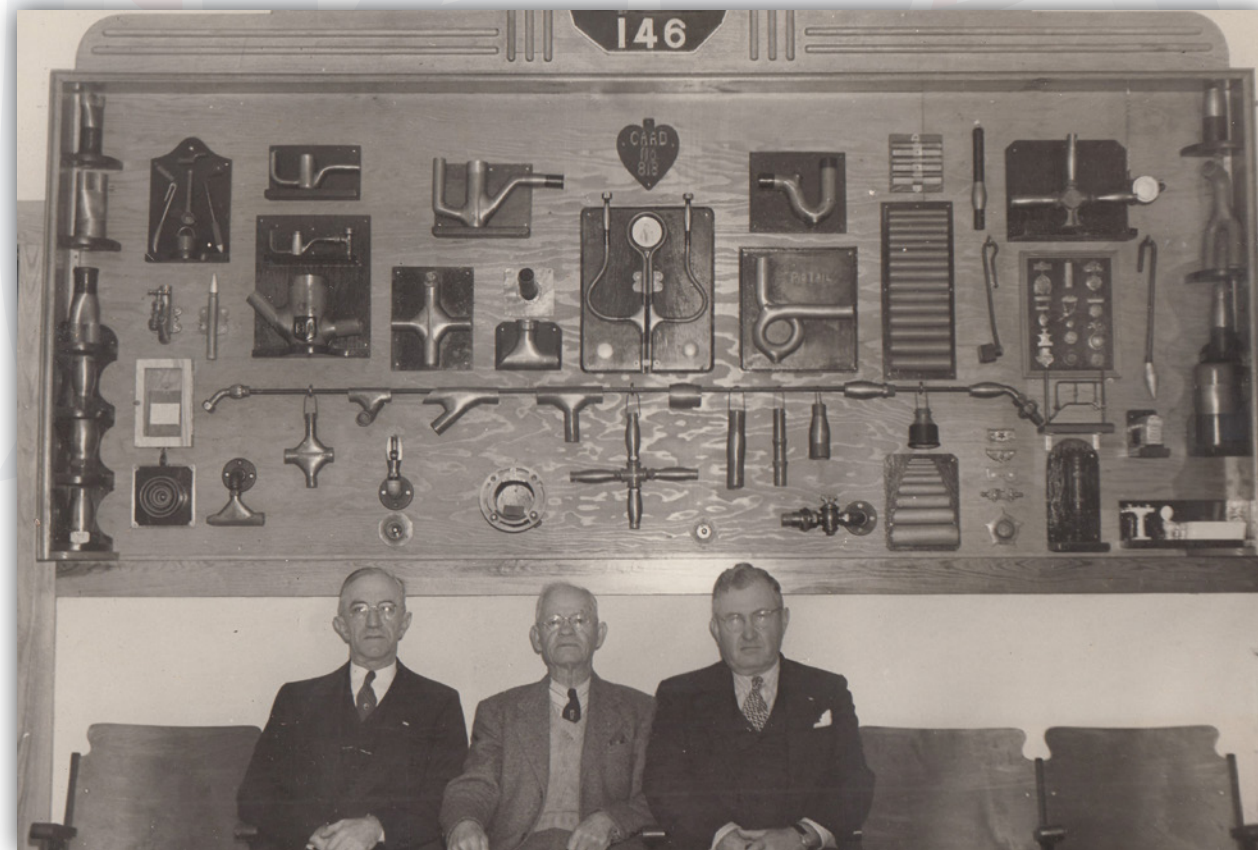
Accordingly, employment in the city and of Local 146 members were not initially impacted by the Great Depression, the historic, nationwide economic and societal disaster that began following the U.S. stock market crash on October 29, 1929, (history's "Black Tuesday") and lingered into the late 1930s. To the contrary, while national unemployment surpassed 10 percent in 1930 before peaking at around 25 percent in 1933, Fort Worth's increased construction and railroad traffic, oil production and cattle and poultry industries were "stabilizing" influences for its workforce during the first year of the decade, articles in the *Record-Telegram* and *Star-Telegram* pointed out.

Work for the city's union plumbers was relatively stable into 1930 – when Business Manager Broyles was even able to report during Local 146's January 31 regular

membership meeting, "All men working" – and throughout that year.

But elsewhere, the nationwide financial collapse brought hard times to U.A. members across the country as unemployment among its ranks soared. "Construction all but stopped, and this led to a significant decline in manufacturing," the U.A. International 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 *Journal* ran several issues during the early 1930s that offered advice on how members could make their wages stretch as far as possible, but much of the focus of its articles was either on calling on the government to take

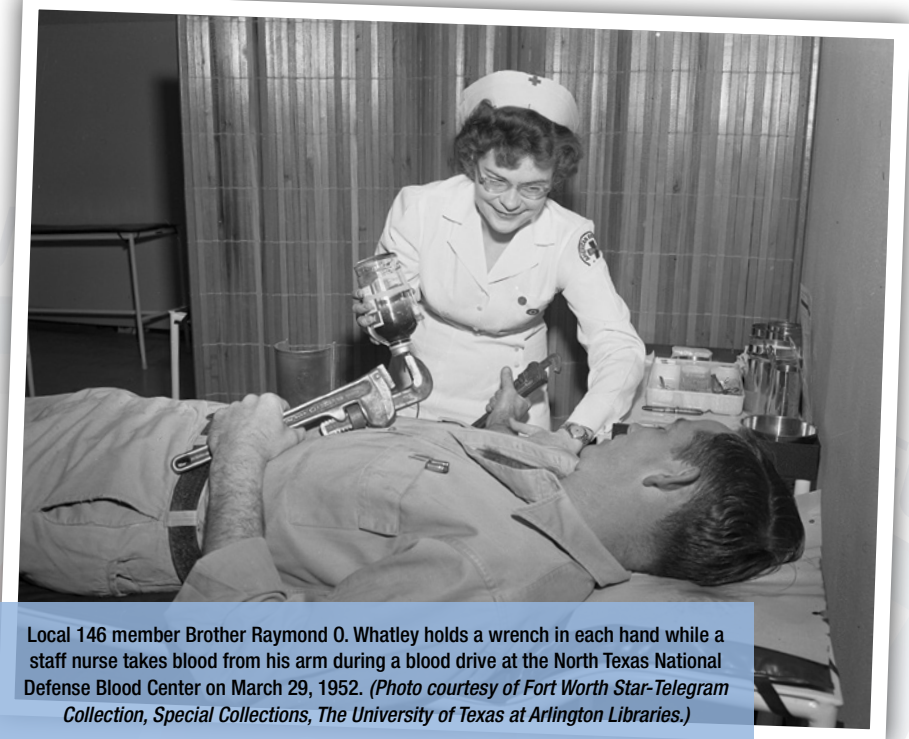


Local 146 retiree and former business manager Brother A. D. Tommy Chandler (center) and Business Manager Joe H. Lahey (right) sit with United Association Organizer Ed Switalski beneath a piping display in the local's union hall sometime during the late 1940s or early 1950s. (The display still hangs in the local's union hall as it celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2020.)

action to help people or on trying to offer some hope and encouragement to the U.A. membership. Meanwhile, as its overall international membership declined and the U.A. held no conventions between 1928 and 1938, "the union held it together," the U.A. history declares.

Even as its membership began to feel the impact of surging unemployment as it crept into the Fort Worth area, Local 146 was initially able to offer a measure of assistance. By 1931, the local had given loans of \$12 each to up to 14 of its members, and during its general membership meeting that January, the local began providing loans of \$50 and also voted to make \$500 available for additional financial assistance to members.

While the economic turmoil soon after caught up to the local and its city, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's federal "New Deal" programs to create jobs and reverse the effects of the Great Depression provided needed relief to the U.A. membership, as well as the country. Among numerous job-creating projects financed by the legislation's agencies that put union tradesmen to work in the Local 146 jurisdiction was Fort Worth's Frontier Centennial in 1936, new city hall in 1938 and new main public library in 1939; Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum in 1936; John Peter Smith City-County Hospital in 1939; buildings at North Texas Agricultural College (now the University of Texas at Arlington); several public-housing projects; and multiple new school buildings including five monumental senior high schools: Amon Carter-Riverside, Arlington Heights, I. M. Terrell, North Side and Polytechnic.



Local 146 member Brother Raymond O. Whatley holds a wrench in each hand while a staff nurse takes blood from his arm during a blood drive at the North Texas National Defense Blood Center on March 29, 1952. (Photo courtesy of Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.)

During that time, the local also established **Gasfitters Auxiliary Local No. 146** when it organized employees of Lone Star Gas Company in Fort Worth on April 8, 1937, after the firm discharged 26 union plumbers a week earlier. The new group, along with workers who had been organized into International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers' Local No. 859, soon after went on strike for contracts that recognized the union representation for workers, which the company granted on April 16, 1937.

HELPING WIN ANOTHER WAR AND RAISE UP ITS MEMBERS

As Local 146 and its city, state and country were finally emerging from the desolation of the Great Depression during the late 1930s, the local's longtime business manager and financial secretary Brother Broyles, who had served in those positions since 1917, passed away while still in office on March 9, 1939, at age 58 after a brief illness. Two weeks later on March 24, the local's membership elected **Brother Edward A.**

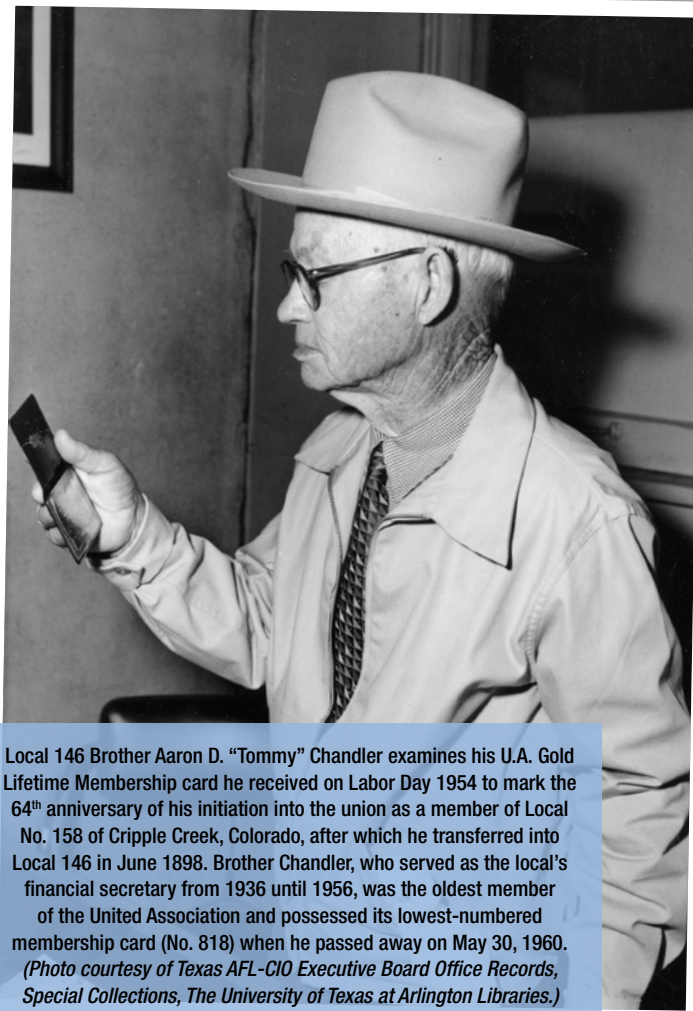
Smith, who had been a plumber in Fort Worth since 1902, as its next business manager.

With its headquarters by that time at the Labor Temple at 211-1/2 West Thirteenth Street and the Depression winding down as it entered the 1940s, the local gained a new agreement with its employing contractors that restored its wage rate to the early-1930s level of \$12 per day for journeyman plumbers and steamfitters for 1941. The two-year pact also provided a \$13-per-day pay scale for its second year beginning December 14, 1941.

Also by then, U.A. locals nationwide were being employed on an influx of work that resulted from the outbreak of World War II in Europe and Asia, which the United States officially entered on the side of the Allies, who were already fighting Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, following the Japanese attack on U.S. Naval Base Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. As the busy wartime economy pulled the nation and unions completely out of the Great Depression, U.A. membership across North America swelled from 81,000 in 1941 to 210,000 members, many of whom worked in shipyards, weapons plants, aircraft factories and other facilities to support the war.

The “dramatic increase in construction work” that “continued undiminished throughout the first half of the decade,” as local historian Dr. George Green described, put Local 146 members to work at defense plants in the Fort Worth area that built jeeps, tanks, planes and military parts. “Almost all the construction work in the 1940s was done by union members,” according to Dr. Green, “and there was a relatively harmonious environment enjoyed by labor and management, though there were still some jurisdictional fights.”

Among the significant military construction projects in North Texas on which union plumbers and steamfitters worked were major airfields and air bases built in Fort Worth, as



Local 146 Brother Aaron D. “Tommy” Chandler examines his U.A. Gold Lifetime Membership card he received on Labor Day 1954 to mark the 64th anniversary of his initiation into the union as a member of Local No. 158 of Cripple Creek, Colorado, after which he transferred into Local 146 in June 1898. Brother Chandler, who served as the local’s financial secretary from 1936 until 1956, was the oldest member of the United Association and possessed its lowest-numbered membership card (No. 818) when he passed away on May 30, 1960. (Photo courtesy of Texas AFL-CIO Executive Board Office Records, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.)

well as Dallas, Mineral Wells, Waco, Abilene and Wichita Falls. The members of Local 146 also helped build Army training and encampment facilities at Fort Worth; many additional auxiliary airfields throughout the area; and several new industrial plants that would produce military materiel.

In particular, the local’s members and other union building tradesmen erected the massive, **Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Plant No. 4** B-24 bomber production facility at Fort Worth, which included installing sewer piping under new runways being constructed as late as April 1945. Once the plant was initially completed, thousands of workers went to the city beginning in the spring of 1941 to work in the factory.

While also constructing the new **Will Rogers Memorial War Training School** at the Will Rogers Coliseum in Fort Worth, where Consolidated Vultee (which is now Lockheed) would school up to 1,600 employees – many of whom were women who joined the workforce after men deployed to the war’s battlefields – in making parts for bombers and other aircraft, Local 146 plumbers stayed off the job beginning October 12, 1942, to protest the use of non-union carpenters on the project. Four days later, the union members returned to the job on October 16 after the “problems involved have been settled,” Local 146 **Business Manager Joe Lahey** announced in that day’s *Star-Telegram*.

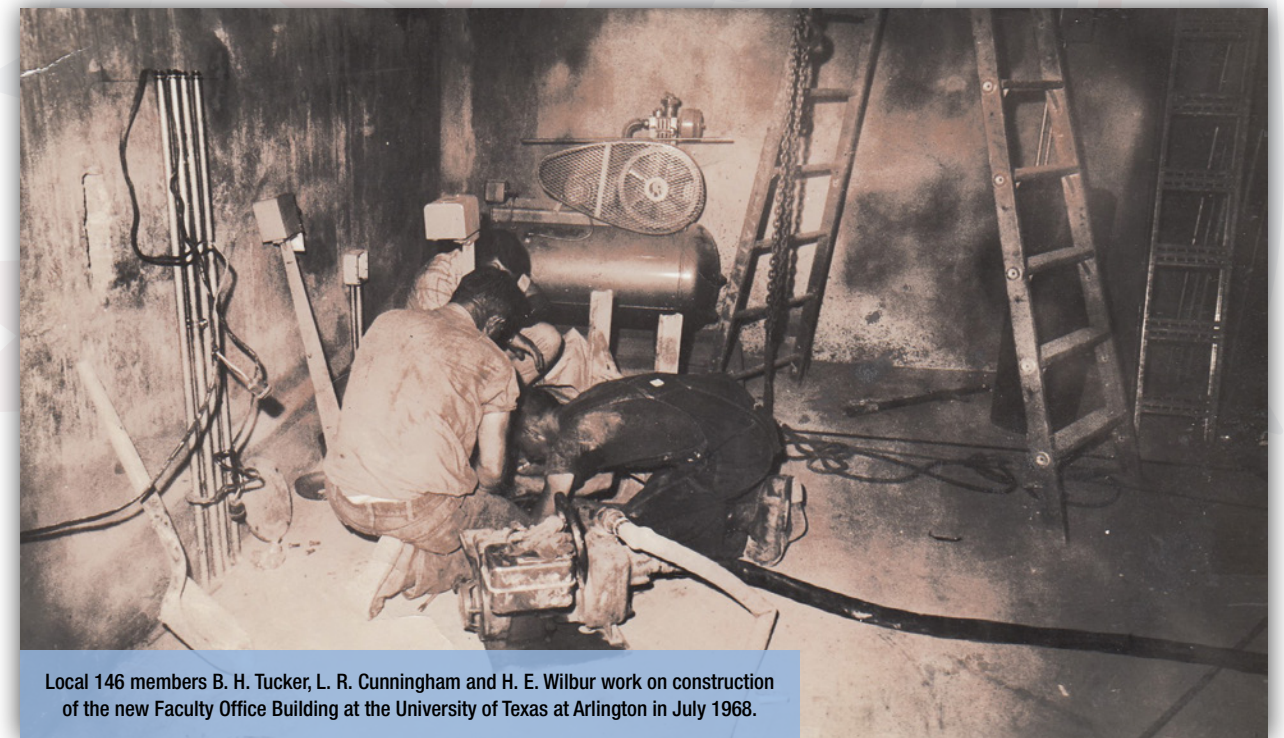
After World War II ended with the surrender of Nazi Germany on May 7, 1945, and the Japanese Empire on September 2 to the Allies, the Fort Worth Building and Construction Trades Council, of which Local 146 was a member, and the Fort Worth Chapter of Associated General Contractors (A.G.C.), with which the local’s employing contractors were affiliated, enjoyed an amicable working

relationship throughout the second half of the decade, helping to keep Local 146 members employed. What’s more, by 1948 when Fort Worth was in the midst of another construction “boom,” a large number of union plumbers and steamfitters were employed on numerous jobs that included major expansions at Boswell Dairies and department stores for retailers such as R. E. Cox and Leonard Brothers.

During that time, Local 146 voted on December 4, 1948, to renew its working agreement with contractors for a \$2.25-per-hour (or \$18-per-day) wage scale, which would carry the local through the remainder of the decade before the contract expired on December 31, 1949.

A NEW HOME OF ITS OWN AMID STRIKES AND GAINS

A new decade began for Local 146 and its 400 members with a new, collectively bargained agreement, which the local reached with the Associated Plumbing Contractors on December 28, 1950, that



Local 146 members B. H. Tucker, L. R. Cunningham and H. E. Wilbur work on construction of the new Faculty Office Building at the University of Texas at Arlington in July 1968.

provided a 25-cent raise – the first in two years for the local – for journeymen to \$2.50 per hour beginning January 1, 1951. Another new pact increased the scale to \$2.62-1/2 per hour for all of 1952 before expiring on December 31 of that year.

Out in the field meanwhile, among projects employing Local 146 plumbers and steamfitters was construction of the North Main Power Plant with its steam-powered turbine generator for the Texas Electric Service Company in 1951 and 1952. By that time and throughout the decade, the local's plumbers, steamfitters and pipeline welders were engaged primarily on large construction projects in its jurisdiction as a majority of the plumbing shops that were serving homeowners and homebuilders in the area were non-union.

Also in 1952, during which the local reached a membership of nearly 600 plumbers, fitters and apprentices as the result of continued rapid development within North Texas, the local built the first-ever headquarters of its own, into which it moved on September 29, 1952. The \$70,000, 7,250-square-foot, two-story **Local 146 Union Hall** at 2640 East Lancaster Avenue in Fort Worth, which was erected by the Childs Construction Company, contained two offices,

a meeting hall for up to 350 occupants and a recreation area and classrooms for the local's apprentice school in the basement.

The following year, however, the local's roughly 700 members went on strike beginning August 15, 1953, after the Fort Worth Associated Mechanical Contractors rejected the union's request for a 25-cent hourly pay hike to \$3, double-time pay for overtime and 7-cents-per-mile travel reimbursement for journeymen working outside the City of Fort Worth. The union plumbers and steamfitters ended their walkout and returned to work on August 28 after the two sides re-opened negotiations for a new contract that day, after which they reached accord on an agreement that would ultimately provide a \$2.90-per-hour wage for journeymen through July 31, 1955.

But after that contract expired on August 1 of that year and its contractors refused its request for a \$3.25-per-hour wage in a new, one-year contract, Local 146 struck again that day.



Local 146 Brother Joe Lahey, pictured here on January 10, 1946, while serving as president of the Fort Worth Trades Assembly. (Photo courtesy of Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.)

Member Was a Top U.A. Officer

After serving as Local 146 business manager from 1941 to 1953 and as a second and third international vice president of the United Association (U.A.), **Brother Joseph H. "Joe" Lahey** was promoted to the position of first vice president in December 1952. The advance came when U.S. President-Elect Dwight Eisenhower named U.A. General President Martin P. Durkin as secretary of labor and First Vice-President Peter Schoeman was subsequently named general president of the U.A.

A veteran of World War I, Brother Lahey was initiated into Local 146 in 1914 and also served as president of the Fort Worth Trades Assembly. He passed away while still in office as first vice president on July 21, 1965, after falling ill at his home at age 70.



Local 146 members (left to right) C. A. McCarver, J. E. Shores, B. J. Gorman, B.H. Tucker and L. R. Cunningham work in the mechanical room of the new Business-Life Science Building being constructed at the University of Texas at Arlington in February 1969.

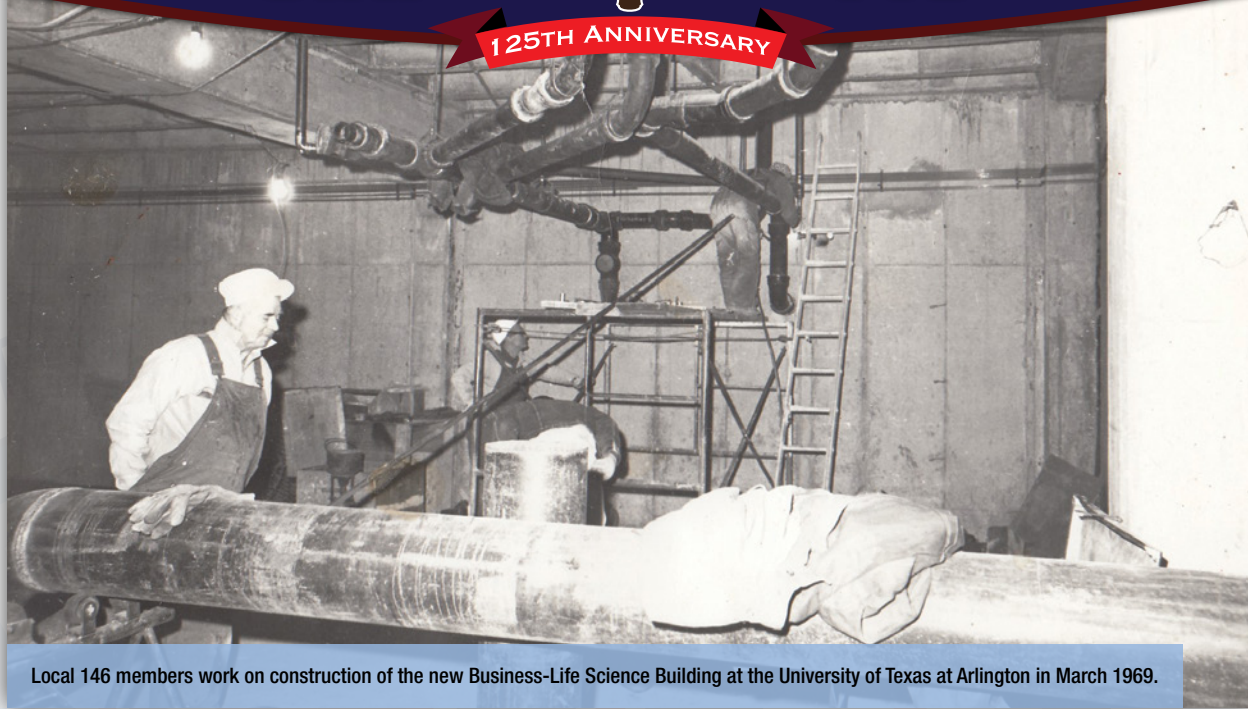
During the contentious work stoppage, Local 146 **Business Agent Marvin E. Youngblood** responded in the August 2 *Star-Telegram* that an offer of a 2-1/2-cent hourly raise from the contractors association was "an insult to the plumbers" before the two sides settled on August 10 on a one-year contract that gave plumbers a pay scale of \$3 per hour retroactive to August 1 and a scale of \$3.02-1/2 effective October 1, 1955.

Perhaps a more significant gain for the local was a clause in the agreement that called for contractors to contribute 1 cent per hour worked by the local's members into a **Training Fund** that helped finance the local's apprentice program and school. Previously, the Associated Mechanical Contractors was setting aside one-tenth of 1 percent of gross journeymen's earnings and Local 146 was paying half the costs of all apprenticeship activities.

During the second half of the decade, Local 146 members continued to work on numerous large projects that included the new **Continental National Bank Building**, which when completed in 1957 was the tallest

building in Fort Worth until the completion of The Fort Worth Tower in 1974 (after which the Continental Building was abandoned in 1990 then demolished in 2006). The local's tradesmen also helped build a new hospital at **Carswell Air Force Base**, an addition to Texas Christian University's **Amon Carter Stadium** and the **Eagle Mountain Power Plant**, a steam-powered generating station at Eagle Mountain Lake just northwest of Fort Worth being erected for the Texas Electric Services Company.

Those jobs and others came to a halt, however, when nearly 540 union plumbers and steamfitters of Local 146 did not report for work on July 25, 1956, to enforce their demand for a new, two-year contract from the Associated Mechanical Contractors that would contain an immediate 12-1/2-cent raise and three incremental increases of 10 cents over the two-year period. After working without a contract since the previous agreement expired on June 30, the local subsequently remained on strike for nearly 40 days until the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service helped negotiate a new contract that the two sides signed on August 21. The two-year pact provided raises of 15-cents



Local 146 members work on construction of the new Business-Life Science Building at the University of Texas at Arlington in March 1969.

retroactive to July 1; 5 cents on January 1, 1957; 10 cents on July 1, 1957; and 5 cents on January 1, 1958, before expiring on June 30, 1958, by which time the local's journeyman wage reached \$3.37-1/2 per hour.

Two years later, more-amicable negotiations between the local and its contractors, conducted under federal-mediation supervision, resulted in an agreement being signed by both sides just before the previous contract expired at midnight on June 30. The new, two-year agreement included hourly pay raises of 7-1/2 cents on July 1 and 5 cents on January 1, 1959, that increased the local's scale to \$3.50 per hour over the final six months of the pact.

Having grown over that time to about 1,000 member plumbers and steamfitters serving the northern Texas counties of Tarrant, Johnson, Denton, Wise, Parker, Hood, Erath, Palo Pinto and Comanche, Local 146 and the Associated Mechanical Contractors reached a two-year agreement on June 27, 1959, that gave the union tradesmen a total, incremental 25-cent-per-hour pay increase that would take its hourly journeyman pay to \$3.75 beginning January 1, 1961. The increase was a compromise reached after the union had entered negotiations seeking a 50-cent boost while the contractors

"sought to hold the line at the present pay" of \$3.50 per hour, according to an article in the June 27 *Star-Telegram*.

But before the decade was out, on October 16, 1959, a jury found Charles Ray Armstrong guilty of embezzling funds from Local 146 during a period between 1952 and 1958 while he was serving as the local's bookkeeper. While he was sentenced to three years in prison specifically for embezzling \$108 from the local, the next day's *Star-Telegram* reported that Armstrong faced six other indictments charging him with embezzlement after an audit of the local's books "showed a shortage of \$32,250 had accumulated between September 1952 and July 31, 1958."

A ROLLERCOASTER DECADE OF CONTRACT, BENEFIT FIRSTS

True to the tumultuous 1960s, which was marked by its anti-establishment counterculture movement, the Vietnam War and the assassinations of U.S. President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and civil-rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, Local 146 likewise experienced internal turmoil at the onset of the decade. From the onset, the local experienced financial difficulties resulting from

the theft of its funds by its former bookkeeper to the point at which it had to withdraw from the **Tarrant County Central Labor Council** on February 17, 1960, after the council increased assessments on members of its affiliated locals (although the local would re-affiliate with the council in December 1966).

The local's election of officers that year also turned out to be a source of drama when its seat for business manager went to a runoff following initial voting. After an election judge checked member votes from the July 2 runoff three times, Brother Youngblood was declared the winner by a single vote, 96 to 95, over incumbent **Business Manager Walter L. Lewis**, who had held the post since 1957.

Then Local 146 went on strike for 23 days beginning August 21, 1961, before agreeing on a new contract with the Associated Mechanical Contractors of Fort Worth on September 13 that the membership approved the following day. The three-year pact would eventually increase its journeyman wage scale to \$4.05

per hour on July 1, 1963, with raises of 7-1/2 cents retroactive to July 1; 5 cents on January 1, 1962; another 5 cents on January 1, 1963; and 12-1/2 cents on July 1, 1963.

Notably, the contract also established a first-ever **Health and Welfare Fund** to provide healthcare insurance for its nearly 400 members. With the fringe benefit, beginning July 1, 1962, contractors would pay 10 cents per hour worked by members into the fund, which would be administered by a joint committee from the local and the contractors association.

Last-minute negotiations between Local 146 and contractors averted a work stoppage before that contract expired when the two parties agreed to a new, two-year contract on June 30, 1964, "only hours ahead of the midnight expiration date of the old contract," after which the local had threatened to go on strike, the *Star-Telegram* reported the following day. Among other features, the agreement instituted the new, first-ever **Local No. 146 Pension Plan** retirement benefit for the local's



Local 146 continuous members gathered during the local's Christmas party on December 19, 1981: (left to right, front row) Eugene McGlothlin and R. B. Hutchison; (second row) Ernest Boswell Sr., James Singleton, Jesse Cowan Jr., Al Bates, Les Arnold, Duke Wellington, Bobby Jack Watson, Noel Weaver, Ted Benton, Dale Perry and John Bamber; (third row) Marvin Youngblood, Red Riley, T. E. Seelinger, Jack Grizzle, Leo Evans, Billy Cebell, Louie McFarland, Charlie Garner, Horace Head, Tony Guardalabene, Paul Farmer and Walter Wade; (fourth row) James Dunaway, Ben Phillips, Tommy Gray, Lawrence Slayton, Walter Lewis, Tom Reynolds, M. T. Harlee, Bill Whitlock, Ernie Wilbur, Vic Weir, Harp Walters and Frank Atkins; and (fifth row) Charlie Stewart, Loyd Allen, Tony Dickey, Bullet LeFan, Milton Trojan, Rufus Murphree, Sam McDonald, Joe Lazo, Ray Lantz, Roland Stubblefield and Herman Peoples.



Local 146 members, retirees and guests enjoy the local's 100th anniversary dinner-dance celebration in 1995.

members, which would initially be funded by a 7-1/2-cent-per-hour-worked contribution from contractors beginning January 1, 1965.

The contract overall resulted in 35 cents more in pay and benefits for the union plumbers and pipefitters (the local having been redesignated by this time from "steamfitters" to "pipefitters"), with 10 cents added immediately to the wage scale. Along with healthcare and pension contributions, it further added another 10 cents to either wages or the pension fund on July 1, 1965, and an additional 7-1/2 cents for wages on January 1, 1965.

A 14-day strike beginning July 1, 1966, by the Local 146 membership, which by that time had expanded back up to about 600 plumbers and pipefitters, resulted in another new, two-year agreement that immediately raised the local's journeyman wage rate from \$4.22-1/2 to \$4.50 an hour. While holding Health and Welfare Fund contributions at 10 cents per hour and Pension Plan contributions at 17-1/2 cents per hour for the duration of the deal, three additional incremental raises boosted the wage scale to \$5 per hour beginning January 1, 1968, for its final six months.

That contract further set up the **Fort Worth Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry Fund**, a joint labor-management tool to bolster the union piping industry's participation in civic projects, upgrade industry standards and improve the union's image. The fund was initially financed with employer contributions of 2-cent-per-hour-worked by the local's journeymen and apprentices.

Meanwhile, construction within the local's jurisdiction in the mid- and late-1960s, particularly in the City of Fort Worth, proceeded at a rapid pace with new office buildings and cultural projects, which provided ample manhours for the local's members – and even resulted in a shortage of plumbers in the area by 1969. Major jobs that kept members busy during that time included construction of the \$16-million **Tarrant County Convention Center** (now the Fort Worth Convention Center) in the city's Sundance Square beginning in January 1966 until it was completed in September 1968; expansion of the South Campus of **Tarrant County Junior College** (now Tarrant County College); and construction of the 10-story **Mallick Tower** high-rise office building in downtown Fort Worth in 1968.

The local and the Mechanical Contractors Association also built the new **Fort Worth Plumbers and Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship Training Center** on Anglin Road for their apprentice training program beginning in January 1969. Opened that April, the facility's construction was financed with 2 cents of the contractors' contribution of 5 cents per hour worked by Local 146 members into the Training Fund that had been designated in the most recent contract between the union and the contractors association.

CLASHES AND CONCESSIONS TO BENEFIT ITS MEMBERSHIP

One of only three unions in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Denton area that did not participate in a multi-craft agreement negotiated in March 1971 that gave 25 other locals a \$1.40-per-hour total pay increase over a 22-month period, according to an article in that year's June 29 *Star-Telegram*, Local 146 was compelled yet again to go on strike after its contract with the North Texas Contractors Association expired on June 30 and no new contract had been signed. As the walkout commenced, "government projects ground to a halt (including the new **Fort Worth City Hall** that would be completed later that year), along with bank buildings and entertainment projects" on which the local's plumbers and pipefitters had been working, the newspaper later reported on August 19.

It was not until September 4 that the local's membership approved a new agreement, by a 25-to-1 margin, that would ultimately provide it with salary increases totaling \$1.40 per hour over the 22-month life of the contract, raising its wage scale to \$7.40 per hour and employers' healthcare, retirement, training and industry fund contributions \$1.12 per hour. The members of sister **U.A. Local No. 100** of Dallas also approved the joint agreement between both locals and about 90 contractors of the contractors association.

Continuing to benefit from work on larger projects in the area such as a \$52.2-million, 400,000-square-foot addition to the **Miller Brewing Company** plant in Fort Worth and construction of the **Fort Worth State School for Mental Health and Mental Retardation** in

1974 and 1975, the local also gained another new contract that ultimately pushed its wage scale to \$8 per hour beginning May 1, 1974. By that time, the local was also receiving hourly fringe-benefit contributions from contractors of 38 cents for health and welfare, 90 cents for pensions and 8 cents for training.

A three-month-long strike that began May 1, 1975, slowed those jobs and others being manned by many of the local's 600 members, including expansions and upgrades to the **John Peter Smith Hospital** in Fort Worth and Tarrant County Junior College's Northwest Campus, while negotiations with the North Texas Contractors Association for a new contract stalled. "They wanted to do away with our pension program, our health insurance and our double-time and time-and-a-half," Local 146 **Business Manager Nelson B. Fortner** declared in that day's *Star-Telegram*. "We have 85 people on pensions, and they just wanted to cut it out. We're not going to let them take advantage of these old folks."

Unlike most other unions, Local 146 and Local 100 again did not sign onto the multiple-



Newly elected Local 146 Business Manager Del Heiliger (right) presents Brother Tony Dickey with a United Association watch during a party held in his honor on July 28, 1998, after Brother Dickey retired on August 1 after serving as the local's business manager for the previous nine years.



Local 146 Business Manager Del Heiliger (center) stands with new journeymen (left to right) Joel Roemisch, Jimmy Lee, Robert Willette, Cody Webb and Edward Hicks after they graduated from the local's apprentice training program and display their completion certificates in 2000.

craft negotiations with the contractors association until August 7, 1975, instead holding out for a higher pay scale they had been demanding. After a federal mediator entered the contract talks, the two plumbers and fitters locals agreed to a three-year contract that gave their journeymen a total \$2.40-per-hour raise, which the Local 146 membership ratified on August 11. Subsequently, for the third and final year of the agreement that would expire on April 30, 1978, according to an article in the May 2, 1977, *Star-Telegram*, the plumbers and fitters received the largest salary boost of all the building trades, with their base wage rate rising 70 cents from \$9.53 to \$10.23 per hour and their total hourly rate including fringe benefits increasing from \$11 to \$11.80.

Even before that contract ended – in sharp contrast to previous contract negotiations that had produced two strikes during the decade – Local 146 and Local 100 agreed to a new, three-year contract on December 5, 1977, that contractors said “will encourage construction in North Texas,” that day’s *Star-Telegram* reported. The agreement with the North Texas Contractors Association, which Fort Worth

plumbers and pipefitters approved by a 2-to-1 margin and would go into effect on May 1, 1978, retained existing wages for the first year and called for cost-of-living adjustments for the next two years.

As building in the Fort Worth area began to significantly increase during the late 1970s, union-signatory contractors benefitted from the willingness of Local 146 and other unions to hold down their wages in an effort to encourage more commercial construction such as offices, apartment complexes and other commercial space, most of which was performed by organized trades (in contrast to residential construction that almost totally utilized non-union labor). Local 146 **President Nelson Portner** even remarked in the November 21, 1978, *Star-Telegram* on the unions freezing their pay scales, “It puts the Fort Worth contractors in a better competitive position.”

The resultant large amount of construction work in the Fort Worth area during the late 1970s, which involved new industrial, commercial and downtown high-rises, produced an historic number of manhours for the local’s membership. Projects that employed

significant numbers of members included expansions, upgrades and maintenance to multiple plants in the local’s jurisdiction, such as **General Dynamics Plant No. 4** (the former Consolidated Vultee facility that Lockheed would purchase in 1993 and is now Air Force Plant No. 4), where groundbreaking F-16 fighter jets were produced beginning in the late 1970s and into 2017; the **ConAgra Foods** bean-processing plant in Fort Worth; and the Miller Brewery.

CREATING A SKYLINE, THEN TARGETING ITS OWN REVIVAL

Scores of Local 146 members helped erect several significant structures in downtown Fort Worth during the early 1980s, such as the 33-story **Wells Fargo Tower** that was completed in 1982 as the city’s tallest building, the 40-floor **Burnett Plaza** that became the city’s tallest building when completed in 1983 and the twin 38-story **City Center Towers Complex** that was completed in 1984. Elsewhere, projects that utilized numerous members included the **Aerospatiale Helicopter Corporation** Grand Prairie manufacturing facility that opened in 1980.

But employment dropped dramatically after the last of the major jobs ended and the decade’s nationwide poor economy and growing anti-union sentiment took hold in the Local 146 jurisdiction. As such, in 1984 the local took a cut in its wages in a new, two-year contract with the North Texas Contractors Association to help its contractors gain projects, which dropped its base journeyman scale from \$17.66 to \$13.50 per hour beginning June 1, 1984. The agreement then raised the hourly wage to \$14.23 on May 1, 1985, and \$14.50 on November 1, while it also kept fringe-benefit contributions unchanged throughout the two years at 91 cents per hour for the Health and Welfare Fund, \$1 per hour for the Pension Plan, 12 cents per hour for the Training Fund and 4 cents per hour for the Industry Fund.

Into the second half of the 1980s, the local’s concessions began to help it recover from its depressed period by creating opportunities for manhours on larger projects secured by its contractors. Among those was construction of a **National Semiconductor** factory in Arlington for which ground had been broken in 1981 before the 250,000-square-foot building was put on hold until January 1984, after which it was completed in June 1985 to produce silicon wafers that would be cut into silicon computer chips. (National Semiconductor would close the plant in 2009 amid slumping sales brought on by a global economic downturn.)

As the latter portion of the decade progressed, the local also started gravitating away from a “hiring hall” through which the local assigned workers to jobs based on a chronological list and instead became a “call-by-name hall” through which employers could request certain members, which helped the local obtain more employment with contractors. Among the jobs on which Local 146 members worked during the time was a power plant constructed in 1986 at the campus of the General Dynamics plant.

Wages for the local’s membership recovered somewhat as well during the late 1980s, with its base journeyman scale set at \$15.52 per hour beginning May 1, 1987. After being reduced again on May 1, 1988, to \$15.35 for the following year, the wage was increased to \$15.52 on May 1, 1989, and then \$15.78 on November 1, 1989, for the next six months. Concurrently, hourly fringe-benefit contributions remained the same throughout that time at 91 cents for healthcare, \$1 for pensions, 12 cents for training and 4 cents per marketing.

The local also continued to target jobs with its Industry Fund to obtain work, gaining targeted projects that included a job at the **IBM** facilities in Fort Worth in 1988. Among other large industrial development, union plumbers and fitters also helped construct the new **Fort Worth Alliance Airport** from July 1988 to December

1989, when it opened as the second-largest airport facility in North Texas behind only Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and as “the world’s first purely industrial airport.”

REJUVENATED SALARY LEVELS AND HEIGHTENED MANHOURS

The Local 146 wage scale continued to fluctuate during the early 1990s, with base journeyman increasing to \$16.02 per hour on May 1, 1990, and \$16.48 per hour on November 1, 1990, before being reduced to \$16.24 per hour on January 1, 1991, for the final six months of the local’s existing contract. The local’s total wage-and-benefits package during that time increased to \$18.21 per hour May 1, 1990, and then to \$18.67 per hour on November 1, 1990, where it remained for the final eight months of the agreement.

Then a new, three-year contract with the North Texas Contractors Association that began on June 1, 1992, contained no base wage increases throughout the time before it expired on April 30, 1995.

As work steadily picked up during the second half of the decade after the previous contract expired, however, the local and its contractors reached agreement on another three-year deal that went into effect on May 1, 1996, and provided increases in pay for each year. The contract raised the base journeyman hourly rate to \$17.98, \$18.48 and 18.98, respectively, on May 1 of 1996, 1997 and 1998, while increasing the total pay package including fringe benefits on those dates to \$20.87, \$21.42 and 21.92 per hour, respectively.

Meanwhile, a flurry of new projects in the Fort Worth area helped fuel the local’s increasing manhours during that time, including expansion of a plant operated by **Alcon**, an American-Swiss medical company specializing in eye care products, in 1995. “There’s so much work, in fact, that area contractors are now worried about maintaining an adequate

supply of tradespeople to do it all,” an article in the April 05, 1996, *Star-Telegram* reported – while also noting that when the economy slowed down in the late 1980s and the number of construction jobs dwindled, many veteran tradespeople chose to retire or to move on to new careers.

With employment conditions remaining steady, Local 146 received a new, three-year contract that went into effect on May 1, 1999, with a new base pay of \$19.83 per hour and a total package rate, including \$1.60 for healthcare and \$1.15 for pensions, or \$23.07 per hour. One year later, the contract called for a \$20.28-per-hour base wage and \$23.77-per-hour total package on May 1, 2000, after which it provided for a \$20.43-per-hour wage and \$24.42-per-hour package on May 1, 2021, for the ensuing final year.

Before the close of the decade, the century and the millennium, work on which Local 146 members were employed included construction of a new body shop at the **General Motors** automobile factory in Arlington, where union pipe-trades labor had not been used in decades. To the contrary, the \$450-million, 750,000-square-foot body shop, which would open in September 2000 to produce full-size trucks and SUVs, provided hundreds of union tradespeople with jobs during and after its construction, as Local 146 members remained at the plant performing maintenance, retooling and upgrade work. “We did such a good job,” Local 146 retiree and former business manager **Brother Tom Parrott** later recalled in 2021, “we just stayed.”

TAKING ON NEW CHALLENGES INTO ITS 125TH YEAR OF SERVICE

The dawn of the new “Y2K” millennium was the beginning of a two-decade period of mostly steady and at-times abundant work before a worldwide pandemic stifled Local 146 beginning in early 2020,



Local 146 apprentices are shown after being initiated into the local and its training program in September 2008.

just as it was preparing to mark the 125th anniversary since receiving its charter from the United Association later that year.

But first, while battling through relatively sluggish employment during the early years of the 2000s as a recession in 2001 hindered construction, projects on which Local 146 members worked included the new **Terminal D** at the **Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport**, which was used for international flights after it opened in 2005. Senior Vice President Mark Kelly of Dynamic Systems, the contractor on the job, later remarked about the terminal in the January 2016 *Journal*, “It’s the crown jewel of the airport – a very successful project for Dynamic Systems, Local 100, Local 146 and the Dallas/Fort Worth community.”

The local and the North Texas Contractors Association also agreed to a new, four-year contract that began on May 1, 2002, and ran until April 30, 2006. The pact set the local’s new journeyman wage rate at \$21.43 per hour and its full pay package at \$25.52 per hour for the first year, and eventually raised the base pay through cost-of-living adjustments to \$21.76

per hour plus an additional \$5.66 per hour for benefits beginning May 1, 2005, for the final year of the contract.

Through that contract, the local initiated a **Market Recovery Program** on May 1, 2002, to help its contractors regain work that had been going to non-union employers by subsidizing wages for key projects. The effort was initially funded through weekly payroll contributions by the local’s members of 43 cents from journeymen, 30 cents from fourth- and fifth-year apprentices, 45 cents from job foremen and 51 cents for general foremen (while first-, second- and third-year apprentices were excluded). Each succeeding May 1, or “applicable wage-rate change date thereafter,” the amount deducted would be 2 percent of each employee’s base wage rate.

Employment of Local 146 plumbers and pipefitters remained steady for the most part from 2004 through 2013, despite the so-called “Great Recession” having produced a marked economic decline throughout the nation from late 2007 into 2009. Notably, it was during that period that union labor including the local’s

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One of Oldest Apprentice Programs in Fort Worth **Educating a World-Class**

"We live in a complex society with complex problems, and by the time an apprentice finishes his five-year training program, he has a pretty good 'college education,' even though he doesn't hold a degree. He learns a skill that has been handed down through experience. ... We realized many years ago the importance of education."

— Training Coordinator Alfred L. Bates, Fort Worth Plumbers and Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 4, 1967)

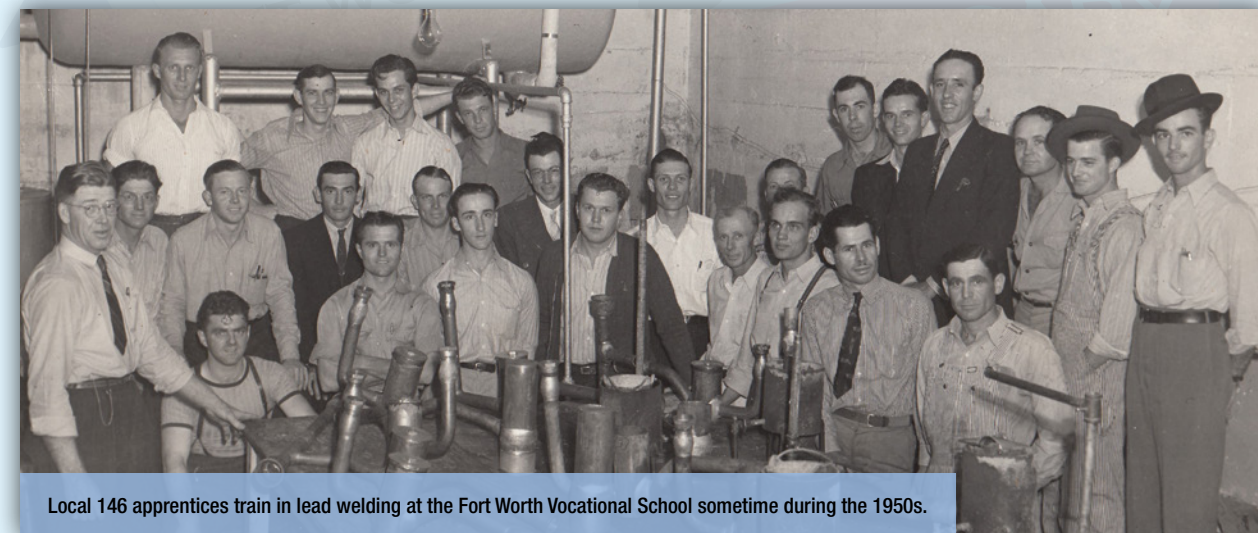
Since its inception in 1895, Local 146 has utilized a program of apprenticeship to prepare its apprentices or "junior plumbers" who are entering the piping trades to become skilled journeyman plumbers and pipefitters. Through apprenticeship, trainees are tutored on job sites under seasoned, experienced journeymen while they are paid a percentage of the journeyman wage on a sliding scale based on their years within the training program.

During the 1920s, Local 146 became one of the first unions in Fort Worth to institute a formal, structured apprentice training program when in 1926 the local and its contractors with the Master Plumbers Association included in their working agreement an article that stipulated, "All persons joining this local must serve at least four years apprenticeship as plumber or steamfitter." Then on February 19, 1928, representatives from the local, the master plumbers and **Fort Worth Vocational High School** met and completed a plan "for the introduction of a course in apprentice plumbing in Fort Worth as outlined by the trade extension bureau of the National Association of Master Plumbers."

The curriculum was subsequently approved by the Fort Worth Board of Education, after which classes for Local 146 apprentices were held at the vocational school for four hours each week for no less than 36 weeks each of the four-year apprenticeship, while apprentices continued to receive on-the-job training. The program was administered by the Board of Education with the cooperation of the newly formed **Joint Apprenticeship Commission** consisting of four representatives each from Local 146 and the Master Plumbers Association.

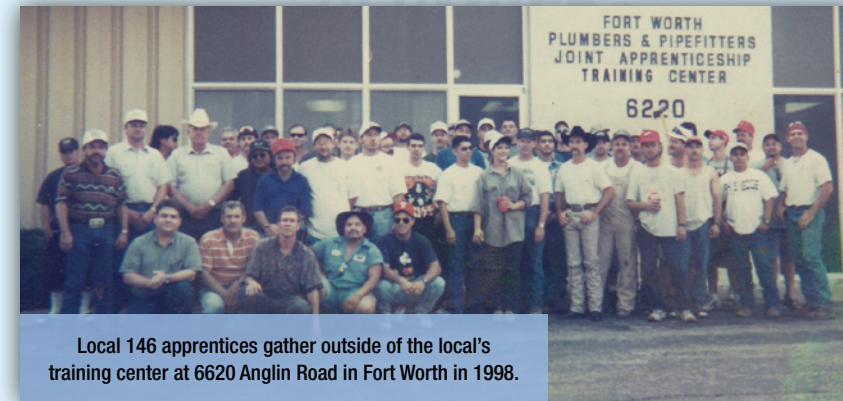
By the 1950s, the local's apprenticeship training had expanded to a five-year program with classes held at the local's union hall on Houston Street and was being managed and funded by the **Fort Worth Plumbers and Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee** (J.A.T.C.) of four members each from the local and the Associated Mechanical Contractors of Fort Worth. The training was by then also sponsored by Fort Worth public schools and the Bureau of Apprentice Training of the U.S. Department of Labor.

In 1952, the local moved into a new union hall on East Lancaster Avenue, where some training classes were held



Local 146 apprentices train in lead welding at the Fort Worth Vocational School sometime during the 1950s.

Pipe-Trades Workforce



Local 146 apprentices gather outside of the local's training center at 6620 Anglin Road in Fort Worth in 1998.

trade" for 243 hours per year before graduating to journeyman status. By that time, new apprentices were being paid 53 percent of the Local 146 journeyman's wage of \$4.75 per hour plus benefits and fifth-year apprentices were earning 85 percent of that salary.

As the training program continued to improve and expand, in 1969 the J.A.T.C. built the new **Fort Worth Plumbers and Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship Training Center** at 6220 Anglin Road, which was

in the basement, in addition to the vocational high school, for the next 17 years.

To further bolster its program, in February 1957 the J.A.T.C. hired as its first full-time training coordinator **Brother Marvin Youngblood**, who stepped down as business manager of the local to accept the new position. That year, the J.A.T.C. also expanded its journeyman-level training and upgrade courses offered to Local 146 plumbers and pipefitters.

"Rapid technological advances mean an increasing opportunity for promoting intensive training as a means of augmenting the skilled labor supply," Brother Youngblood, who in his new capacity was in charge of the training of apprentices and journeymen for the plumbing industry in the Fort Worth area, stated at the time. "For a long time now, we have been concerned with a prospective shortage of skilled manpower, and under the program now being adopted, we hope to more fully utilize individual talents and abilities."

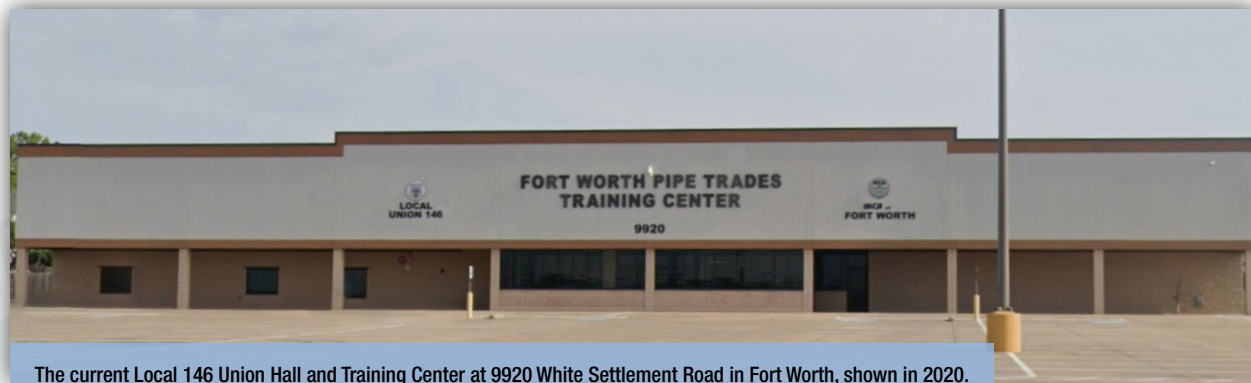
Shortly after, in 1958 the J.A.T.C. adopted a new set of standards for its apprentice training. Among the requirements, apprentices would have to complete five years and 10,000 total hours of plumbing- and pipefitting-trade employment and attend "school classes in subjects related to the

financed with 2 cents of the contractors' contribution of 5 cents per hour worked by Local 146 members into the local's Training Fund, which was provided in the contract effected between the union and the Mechanical Contractors Association the previous July. After breaking ground for the \$185,000 facility on January 12, the J.A.T.C. opened the 10,160-square-foot training center, in which it consolidated all of its training classes, in late April of that year.

Local 146 merged its union hall and offices and the J.A.T.C. training facilities into one location in 2012 when it moved into its new headquarters at 9920 White Settlement Road. Since that time, the **Fort Worth Pipe Trades Training Center** has continued to host the J.A.T.C. training programs, which consist of "earn-while-you-learn" apprenticeships and journeyman upgrade education to keep Local 146 members up to date with the industry's latest techniques and technologies.



Local 146 apprentices display their completion certificates after graduating from the local's training program in 2008.



The current Local 146 Union Hall and Training Center at 9920 White Settlement Road in Fort Worth, shown in 2020.

members performed a large amount of repair work on the new, \$1.3-billion **Dallas Cowboys Stadium** (now AT&T Stadium) after non-union labor initially built the retractable-roof facility in Arlington before it was completed in May 2009.

Work picked back up that year and remained steady throughout 2013 while the local's members were employed on numerous industrial and commercial projects both inside and outside of its jurisdiction. Those jobs included a **Texas Instruments** facility within the Dallas-based Local 100 jurisdiction and the \$534-million **Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center** at Fort Hood, Texas, under U.A. Plumbers and Pipefitters Local No. 529 in 2012 and 2013.

However, residential work in its own area continued to elude the Fort Worth local.

But the Local 146 wage scale was increased to \$25.51 per hour in base pay and \$32.42 per hour for its total wage-and-benefits package on May 1, 2009. One year later on May 1, 2010, base pay was raised to \$26.01 per hour and the package to \$33.02 per hour, after which annual increases continued until the local's base wage reached \$27.13 per hour and its total wage-and-benefits package reached \$35.13 per hour on May 1, 2013, for the following year.

During that time, after six decades in the same location, the local moved its offices and union hall from their longtime place on East

Lancaster Avenue and its training center into a new facility at **9920 White Settlement Road** in Fort Worth. For its new headquarters, the local had purchased and completely renovated a former Nelson's IGA grocery store.

Favorable employment conditions and stable work for the local's members from 2015 through 2018 included a host of industrial and commercial projects, in addition to work at two of the major universities within the region, the **University of Texas at Arlington** and the **University of Texas at Dallas**. Members also worked on complete renovations of the 1970s-era **Terminal B** and **Terminal E** of the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, both of which were four-year projects before being completed in late 2017.

Sadly, a downturn in construction in North Texas in 2019 was immediately followed by the onset of the lethal coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that struck the United States beginning in January 2020. Statewide and national responses to the outbreak included prohibition and cancellation of large-scale gatherings, stay-at-home orders and school closures.

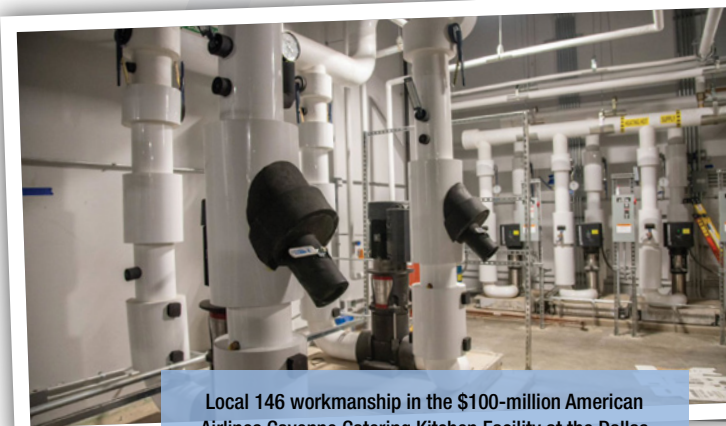
For Local 146, the pandemic brought significant change for its more than 460 members, including retirees and about 100 apprentices, such as canceled union meetings and training sessions; the postponement of some jobs on which they had been employed; social-distancing and virus-testing on jobsites; and online and virtual schoolwork for

apprentices. The pandemic also forced the local to cancel its 125th-anniversary celebration event it had planned for 2020.

Regardless, Local 146 and its officers looked to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic just as the local had conquered a myriad of challenges throughout its 125 years of serving the plumbing and piping needs of the Greater Fort Worth Area and its membership as a whole. To those ends, the local has remained dedicated to providing tradesmen and tradeswomen with high-quality training and representation in contract negotiations and on jobsites, which are enhanced through the local's affiliations with the U.A. and the **Southwest Pipe Trades Association**, a professional organization of U.A. locals and Mechanical Contractors Association member firms in the region that was founded in 1914. As such, Local 146 has been and continues to be able to fight for better working conditions, pay and benefits and, as a result, improve the standard of living of its members. ♦



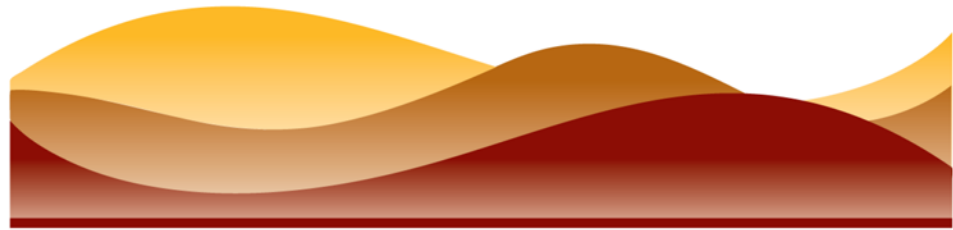
Local 146 craftsmanship at the McCommas Bluff landfill gas processing plant in Dallas, the third largest landfill gas operation in the United States.



Local 146 workmanship in the \$100-million American Airlines Cayenne Catering Kitchen Facility at the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport.



Local 146 handiwork at the Dannon yogurt production plant in Fort Worth.



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Organizers
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Matt Patrick
Andrea Delagarza
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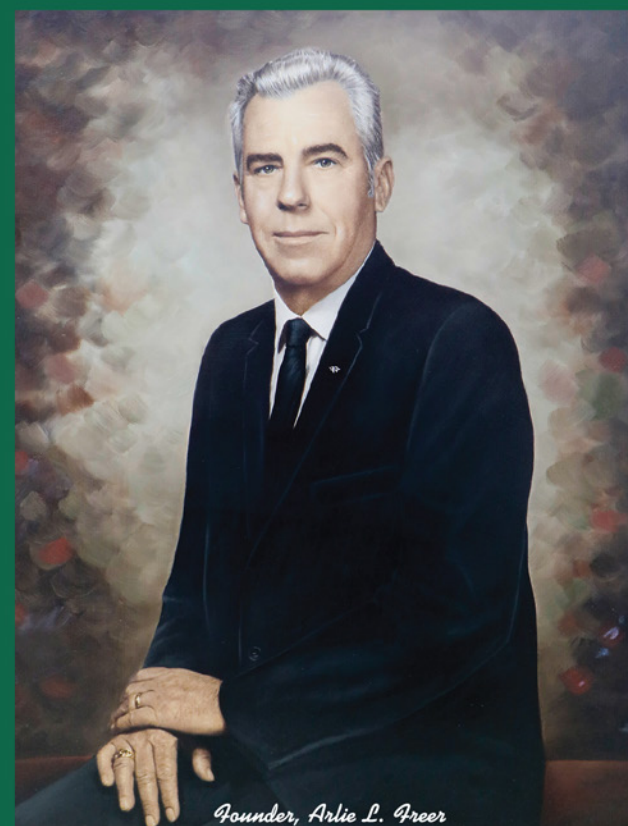
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The Officers and Members
of UA Local 38
Salute
UA Local 146
on their
125th Anniversary

Larry Mazzola Jr.
Larry Mazzola Jr.
Business Manager/
Financial Secretary-Treasurer



CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL 146
ON 125 YEARS OF STRENGTH AND SUCCESS

Rick Bertacchi
President

Todd Schiavo
Bus. Mgr./Fin. Sec. & Treas

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Gary Cartwright
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Business Agent

Larry Brouk
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Congratulations
UA Local 146
on your 125th
anniversary!!




Congratulations
LOCAL 146
125 YEARS AND COUNTING



Ronald R. Rosser
Business Manager

John J. Sabathe
President

United Association of Plumbers, Pipefitters,
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Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters,
Steam Fitters AND Steam Fitter's Helpers

UNITED STATES AND CANADA



To all whom it may
Whereas, Application was
be granted to LOCAL UNION

praying that a charter
be granted to the

That acting under authority vested in us by the Laws and usages of the
UNITED ASSOCIATION,
Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters AND Steam Fitters Helpers
OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

We direct this Warrant and Charter to be issued to the **LOCAL UNION**
named above to be dated the **First of November** 1895
LOCAL UNION is empowered to do and perform all such acts and enjoy such
privileges as are prescribed in the laws and usages of the **UNITED ASSOCIATION,**
and the members thereof to be and to remain faithfully in mind
and always practice the Cardinal principles of the Association.

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