

UNITED ASSOCIATION  
LOCAL 246  
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

LEADING CENTRAL VALLEY'S PIPING INDUSTRY FOR 125 YEARS  
PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS & HVAC TECHS  
Est. 1901  
**UA LOCAL 246**  
125th Anniversary  
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

125 YEAR  
COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY  
1901 - 2026

UNITED ASSOCIATION LOCAL NO. 246 - 125 YEAR COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY



**UNITED ASSOCIATION LOCAL NO. 246  
PLUMBERS, FITTERS, WELDERS, PIPELINERS & HVACR TECHNICIANS**

**125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION GALA  
"DENIM & DIAMONDS"**

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

**Table Mountain Casino Resort  
777 Jackpot Lane, Friant, California**

Cocktail & Hors D'oeuvres Reception .....	5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Program and Presentation .....	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Dinner (Buffet) .....	7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Music, Dancing & Raffles .....	8:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.

## CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF STRENGTH, SKILL & BROTHERHOOD

I am humbled to be serving as business manager of Local 246 as we celebrate its extraordinary milestone – 125 years since our Local was proudly chartered on April 13, 1901.

What began as a small group of dedicated plumbers has grown into a strong and diverse organization of approximately 660 highly skilled men and women united by a shared purpose: to uphold the highest standards of our trades and improve the lives of working people and the communities we serve.

As a combination Local, we represent a wide range of expertise, including H.V.A.C.R. service, pipefitting, plumbing, welding and pipelining. Our strength lies not only in the diversity of our crafts but in the unity of our membership. Each member contributes to a proud tradition of excellence, professionalism and solidarity that has defined us for more than a century.

Our roots run deep, tracing back to the founding of the United Association in 1889. Since then, generations of skilled tradespeople have carried forward a legacy built on hard work, determination and an unwavering commitment to one another. What truly sets us apart is our dedication to training and retraining – ensuring that every member has access to the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in an ever-evolving industry.

As we celebrate this 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we honor the sacrifices and hardships endured by the founding members of Local 246. Their vision and perseverance laid the foundation for the opportunities we enjoy today. They fought not only for fair wages and safer working conditions but for dignity, respect and a better future for all working families.

Their legacy lives on in each of us. It is reflected in the pride we take in our work, the support we offer one another and the impact we continue to make in our communities.

As we look to the future, we do so with gratitude for those who came before us and confidence in the generations that will follow. Together, we will continue to build, serve and lead – just as we have for the past 125 years.

Here's to our history, our membership, and the bright future ahead.

**Happy 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to Local 246.**

Robert Topete, Business Manager  
U.A. Local No. 246 - Fresno, CA



Local 246 members working on the renovation of the B.F. Sisk Courthouse in Fresno in 2010. Pictured left to right: Robert Topete (General Foreman of the job and current Local 246 Business Manager), Marcelo Mercado, Sal Carmona, Frank Flores (current Exam Board Officer), and Danny Wright (previous Local 246 Business Manager).

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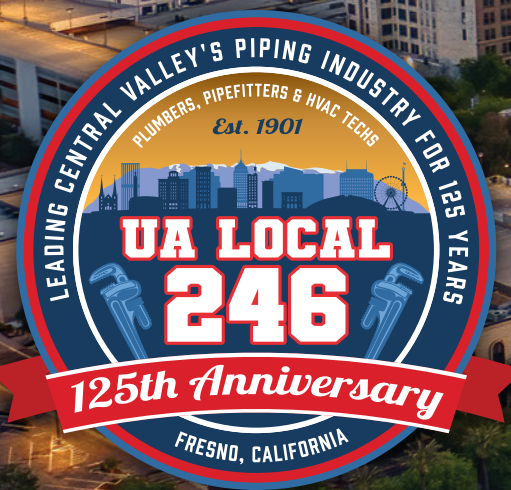
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*The 125-Year History of U.A. Local No. 246, Fresno*

# A CENTURY SERVING AND ITS PIPE

# CENTRAL CALIFORNIA NG INDUSTRY



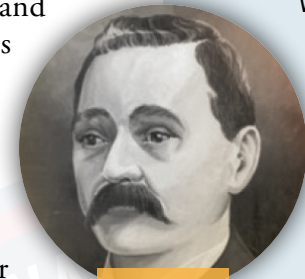
At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the City of Fresno in the Central San Joaquin Valley of California was continuing its evolution as a major agricultural center, propelled by 1901 with the consolidation of transit lines going into and out of the city and the continued extension of its irrigation systems. The city was also expanding into a bustling epicenter, with its downtown structures and residential areas also continuing to grow that year.

Founded shortly before in October 1889, the United Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada (the "U.A." – which would change its name to the current United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada on January 1, 1947) recognized the need for plumbers and steamfitters in the rapidly developing Greater Fresno region to be organized into a union local. As such, soon after the U.A. Executive Board approved an application from 10 men in the city for a local, the union chartered plumbers, steamfitters and gasfitters **Local No. 246** in Fresno on **April 13, 1901**, to represent a jurisdiction covering the city and all of the surrounding Fresno, Madera, Kings and Tulare counties.



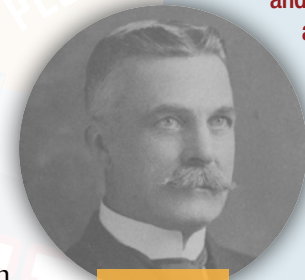
## ESTABLISHING THE LOCAL, ADVANCING ITS INFLUENCE

The fledgling Local 246 wasted little time working to establish itself and improve and protect conditions for its members. For instance, just two months after it was organized, the local gained a new, increased wage scale for its journeyman plumbers and steamfitters of \$3.50 per day and “helpers” (or apprentices) of \$2.50 per day for reduced 8-hour-long workdays, with time-and-a-half pay for overtime on weeknights and double-time pay for overtime on Sundays – both of which were firsts for the city’s plumbers and fitters.



Patrick J. Quinlan

Then, when employing contractor The Barrett-Hicks Company refused to pay the new scale for the new hours, the local went on strike against the firm beginning June 24, 1901. The plumbing shop’s seven union members would return to work shortly after when the company reached an agreement with the local.



Richard A. O'Brien

Local 246 also led the effort to establish the new **Fresno Building and Construction Trades Council** with the city’s other craft locals, which they founded during a meeting on July 29, 1901, to mutually help strengthen the union building trades in the city. With Local 246 representatives **Brother George Hinnes** and **Brother G. W. Prentice** in attendance, the council adopted resolutions “to set forth” the aims and objectives of the newly formed organization” and agreed to meet the following week to adopt a constitution and elect permanent officers.

Less than two years later in late February 1903, the local demanded an increase in its wage scale and its members again walked off their jobs when the employing contractors of the Master Plumbers Association refused. However, they returned to work in early March

## U.A. ORGANIZED OVER 136 YEARS AGO

With a general lack of stable, national organizations representing 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.

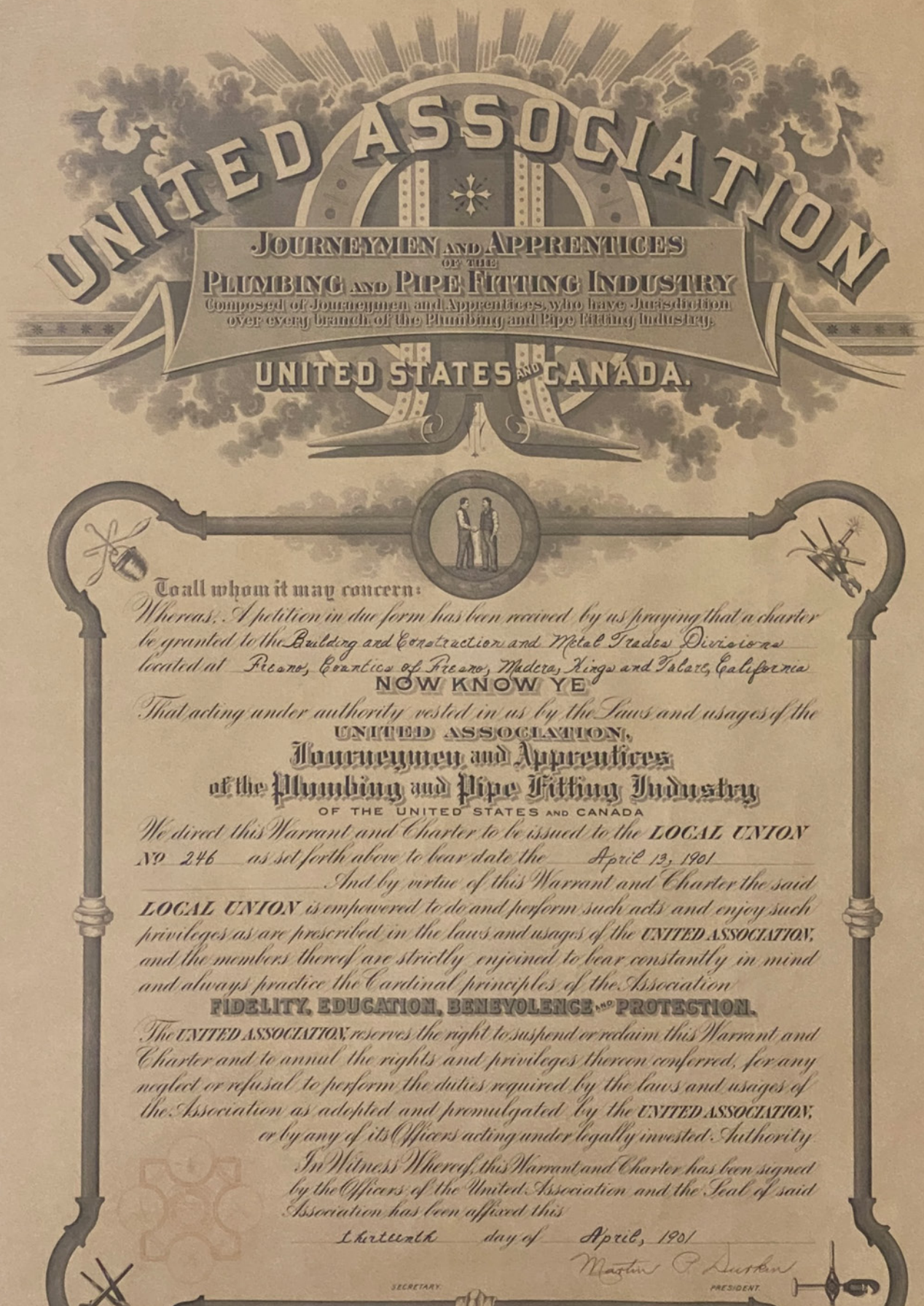
Four days later, the **United Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada** (U.A.) was born on October 11, 1889. The U.A. selected Brother Quinlan as its president, Brother Henry Collins of New York City as its vice president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

after the employers agreed to pay the \$4 per day the union was seeking.

Later that summer, however, the Local 246 membership again refused to work beginning August 13, 1903, when the City of Fresno administration appointed a plumbers inspection committee to examine and test all journeyman plumbers, as required by the city,



The U.A. Local No. 246 charter (re-issued on October 31, 1952, to designate the territorial jurisdiction of the City of Fresno and Fresno, Madera, Kings and Tulare counties in California), dated April 13, 1901, and signed by U.A. General President Martin P. Durkin and General Secretary Edward J. Hilllock. The local's original charter was signed by then-General President John S. Kelly and then-General Secretary L. W. Tilden.

## LOCAL 246 CHARTER MEMBERS

These 10 plumbers signed the application for a charter from the United Association for a local union in Fresno, which the U.A. granted on April 13, 1901, as Local No. 246.

<b>Sam Berla</b>	<b>Alex M. Forrest</b>
<b>E. Brood</b>	<b>Alonzo W. Gearhart</b>
<b>Edward J. Corbett</b>	<b>J. A. McDonald</b>
<b>James E. Cusick</b>	<b>Bernard A. Newman</b>
<b>William H. Dalzell</b>	<b>James H. Puntice</b>

but did not name any representatives from the union to the committee. An article in the August 23 *Fresno Morning Republican* newspaper explained, "(The union plumbers) contended on their part that journeymen plumbers only were competent to judge of a man's fitness to do sanitary plumbing ... and "that the master plumbers were not all journeymen in the craft, that even if they were, the natural antipathy that exists between an employer and his employes would cause them to 'hand the union men a bunch.'"

During the walkout, when master plumbers attempted to perform work that was to be done by Local 246 members, other building trades craftsmen refused to work alongside them. After more than a week, the local's journeymen ended the walkout on August 22 after the city and the contractors agreed to place union journeymen on the inspection committee, which administered "the examination required by law," as the newspaper also described, "and those of them who succeed in passing it will begin their daily-bread battle with the pipe tongs."

Out in the field, among the many jobs on which Local 246 members were working during that time in and around the developing Fresno area was construction of the **Forsyth Block buildings**. The large group of four-story business structures provided steady workhours for the local's roughly 25 members

until they were completed in 1905 (after which a fire completely destroyed them in 1921.)

With the local continuing to make gains and ample work available within its jurisdiction, following a trip to Fresno and visit with Local 246, U.A. General Organizer William J. Spencer was able to report in the September 1903 issue of the *U.A. Journal*, the union's monthly member publication, "I found a strictly up-to-date and businesslike local. The trade conditions are good and all men are working."

Another strike by Local 246 during that period, instigated primarily over apprentice issues, was resolved February 15, 1904, when the local signed a new work agreement with the Master Plumbers Association after the Building Trades Council threatened to order a general strike unless the masters settled with the plumbers' union. "Neither side can claim

a decisive victory in the strike," the next day's *Morning Republican* reported, "for the article which was signed last night is a compromise."

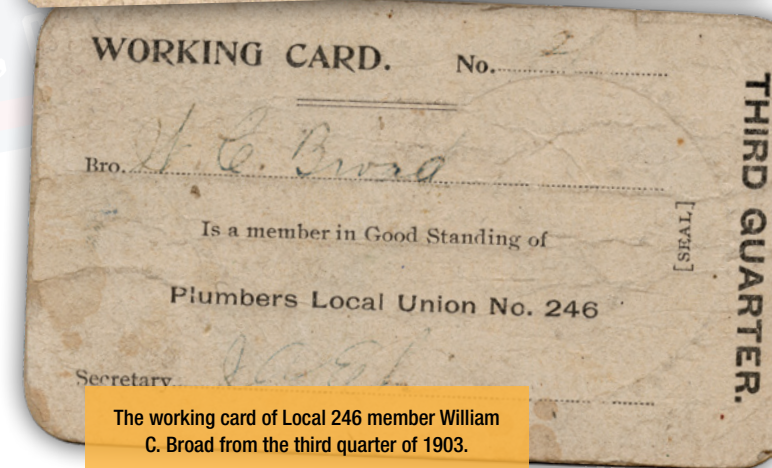
Among the contract's most-notable provisions, it dictated that "apprentices shall be under the absolute control of the United Association of Journeymen Plumber, Gas and Steam Fitters Local Union No. 246." It further set qualifications for new apprentices that included an apprentice "must be a boy of at least 16 years of age," "must have a good common school education," "must be fairly bright and intelligent" and "must serve at least four years in apprenticeship and one year as a junior under instruction."

Despite the local's membership agreeing on several occasions to hold its journeyman wage rate at \$4 per day through 1904 and into 1905, on February 5 of that year the master plumbers locked out all the local's members from their jobsites after the union plumbers refused to work on non-union projects when ordered by their employers. "The union men declare that they will never give in," that day's *Morning*

Very shortly after it was established in April 1901, Local 246 took an active role in the formation of the **Fresno Building and Construction Trades Council** just three months later during a meeting on July 29 of that year, with Local 246 delegates **Brother George Hennes** and **Brother G. W. Prentice** in attendance. The following week, council delegates gathered again to adopt a constitution and elect permanent officers.

*Republican* announced. "The masters aver that they will move not one inch from their position. Thus is the war on."

As the newspaper reported on February 10, orders for plumbing were "piling up in the supply houses" while the masters were "not able to furnish the men to do the work." The attempt by the employers to implant "open-shop," non-union conditions in Fresno were only temporarily halted with a verbal agreement that the union plumbers would go back to work on February 24, as the back-and-forth between Local 246 and the Master Plumbers Association continued while the two sides failed to sign a mutual work agreement.



The working card of Local 246 member William C. Broad from the third quarter of 1903.



Delegates of the fifth annual U.A. California State Association convention, held in Fresno from January 12 to 14, 1912, attend a banquet hosted by Local 246.



## LOCAL 246 MEETING LOCATIONS & UNION HALLS

(All locations are in Fresno.)

<None Listed>

1901 – 1904

### Fresno Union Labor Hall

1123 K Street

1904 – 1910

### Fresno Labor Temple

1139 I Street

1910 – 1920

### Plumbers Union Hall

1917 Tuolumne Street

1920 – 1929

### Moose Temple Building

705 Broadway Street

1929 – 1932

### Holland Building

2133 Fresno Street

1932 – 1939

### Fresno Labor Temple

1035 Broadway

1939 – 1952

### Building Trades Temple

631 Kearney Boulevard

1952 – 1969

### Fresno Central Labor Council Hall

4831 East Shields Avenue

1969 – 1975

### Local 246 Offices

295 North Fresno Street

1975 – 1983

(Meetings)

### Fresno Labor Center

5228 East Pine Street

1975 – 1979

(Meetings)

### Laborers Union Hall

5431 East Hedges Avenue

1979 – 1983

### Fresno Central Labor Council Hall

4831 East Shields Avenue

1983 – 1994

### Local 246 Union Hall

1303 North Rabe Avenue

1994 – current

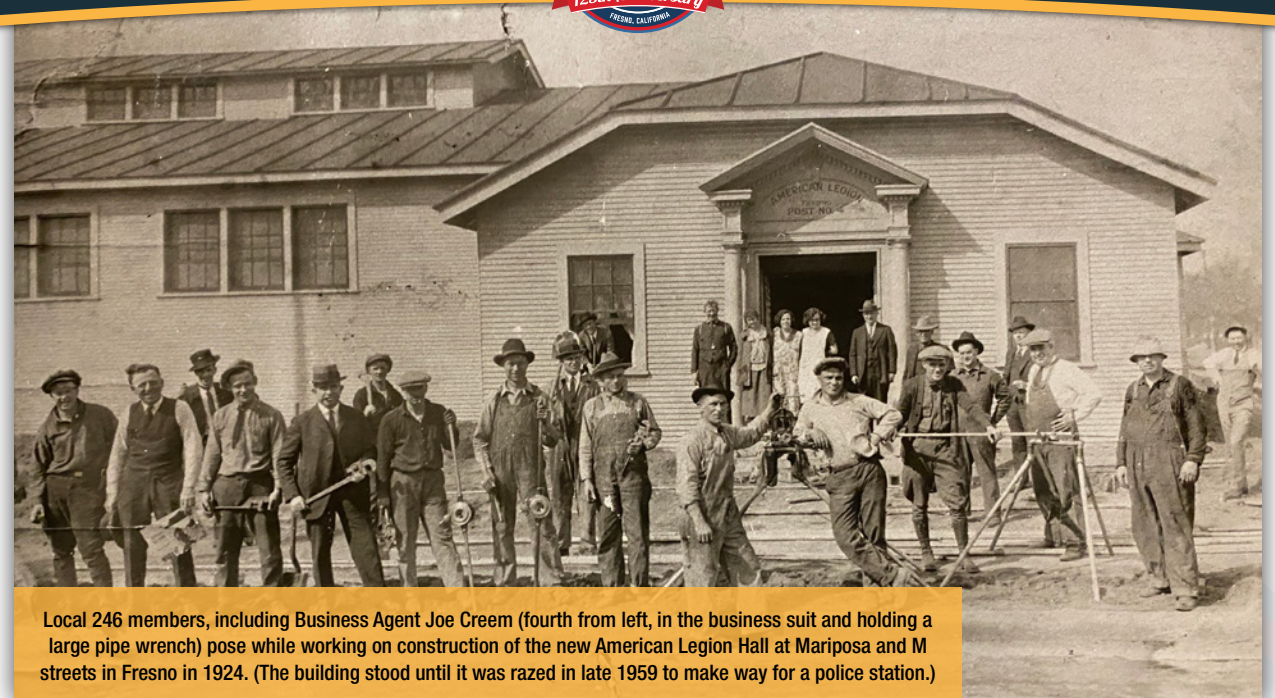
## GROWING WITH ITS CITY, COUNTERING CHALLENGES

While Local 246 remained undaunted and continued to push for and promote organized labor for the piping industry across its Fresno-based jurisdiction, all plumbers working in the city were members of the local by 1911. Wielding its new-found and well-earned strength, on June 7 of that year the local went on strike for two weeks before the Master Plumbers Association submitted to its demand for an increase to its journeyman wage scale from \$5 to \$5.50 per day for a five-and-a-half-day workweek in a new work agreement.

U.A. General Organizer Thomas B. Clark was then able to report in the April 1912 *Journal* after visiting Local 246:

*“We all take our hats off to the Fresno union; they have the trade well in hand and the employers work hand in hand with the journeymen, a practical cooperation that pays both sides.”*

Nearly five years later, the organizer was likewise able to announce in the January 1917 *Journal* that the local “is getting on fine under



Local 246 members, including Business Agent Joe Creem (fourth from left, in the business suit and holding a large pipe wrench) pose while working on construction of the new American Legion Hall at Mariposa and M streets in Fresno in 1924. (The building stood until it was razed in late 1959 to make way for a police station.)

the agreement now in force with the Master Plumbers.” His praise continued before the end of the year when he reported in that December’s *Journal* after visiting Local 246 again, “This is one of our very good local unions in California. ... I found a fine feeling of good fellowship and mutual cooperation existing, and that is the way to get results.”

With a membership of 45 journeyman plumbers, fitters and apprentices and under the leadership of **Business Agent Joseph Creem**, Local 246 in February 1918 was able to “convince” the Pacific Gas & Electric Company to employ members on a new gas plant it was building in Fresno. Construction of the seven-and-a-half-acre facility, which cost \$500,000 (equivalent to about \$13 million in 2026) and had become necessary because of the city’s growth, included installation of a modern 15,000-gallon tank; 16-, 12- and 10-inch pipe mains; and a state-of-the-art, 450-horsepower boiler.

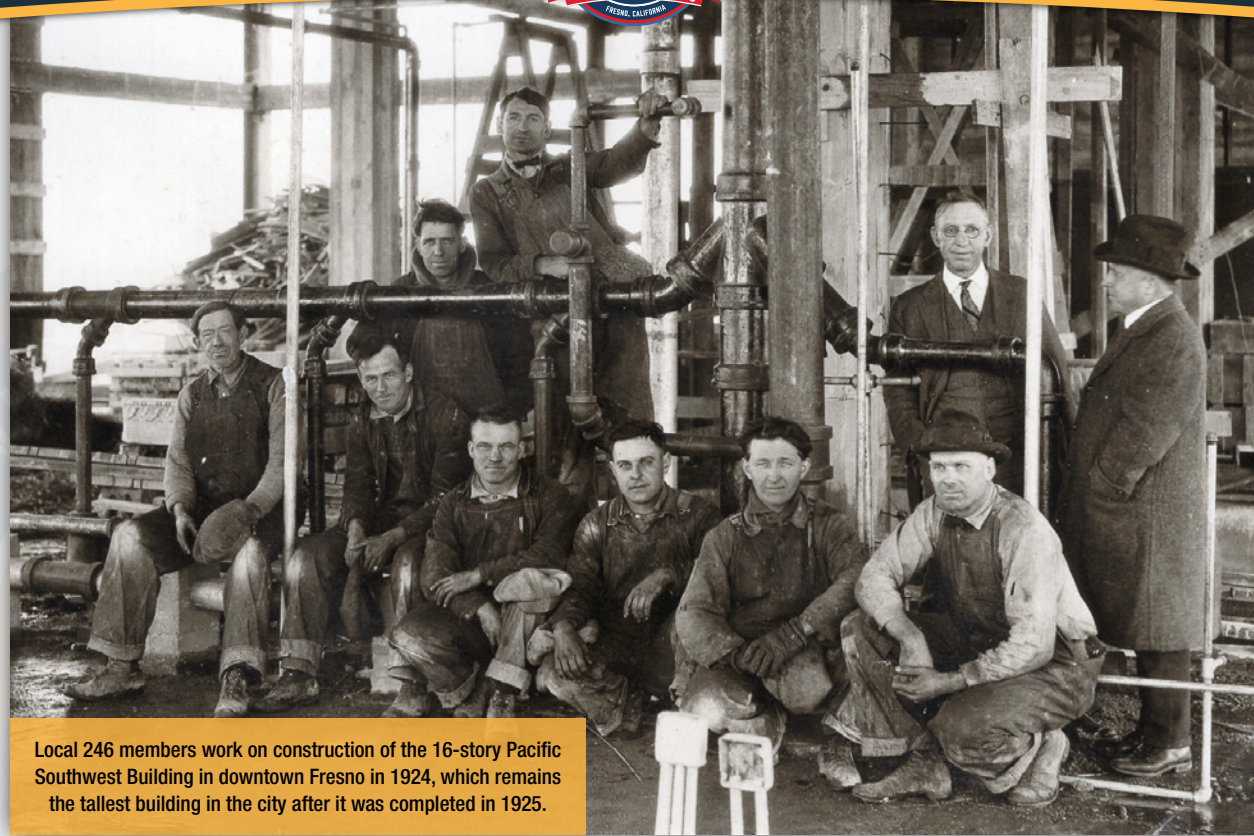
Work conditions within its jurisdiction remained favorable the following year as well. Subsequently, Local 246 gained a new wage scale for its journeymen of \$9.25 per day that year.

As the local’s prosperous situation persisted into the next decade, in 1921 the Fresno Building and Construction Trades Council further advanced all organized labor in the city when it reached an agreement with the Fresno Builders’ Exchange, a group of construction firms, that stipulated the city’s construction industry would operate under union conditions, ensuring labor “peace” for the foreseeable future. As that provision remained intact, U.A. State of California Association Organizer F. M. Van Norman announced in the December 1922 *Journal*, “Fresno, as usual, is enjoying the best of conditions in their jurisdiction, with a demand for mechanics.”

However, Central California’s agricultural sector, which was the backbone of Fresno’s economy, experienced severe hardships throughout the balance of the 1920s that began when farm prices dropped because of over-production following the end of World War I in 1918. As a result of the ensuing economic depression in and around Fresno, into 1923 and throughout the following years, many Local 246 members were forced to travel to the jurisdictions of other U.A. locals around the state for employment.



The current Local 246 Union Hall on North Rabe Avenue.



Local 246 members work on construction of the 16-story Pacific Southwest Building in downtown Fresno in 1924, which remains the tallest building in the city after it was completed in 1925.

But a good number of members were able to remain home while working on construction of the grand **Pacific Southwest Building** beginning in downtown Fresno in 1923. After the 16-story office building was completed using design and technology that were ahead of their time and opened in January 1925, it has remained the tallest building between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Regardless, the depressed conditions remained for the local, with U.A. General Organizer Jason H. Sheehe even reporting in the March 1925 *Journal* following a visit to Fresno, “I regret to say that this section is extremely dull, principally due to the depressed conditions to the raisin market, and it looks extremely doubtful for an early resumption of the building industry for some time.”

While a strong union environment stayed in place, the ongoing scarcity in building employment in the local’s territory persisted. As such, the local’s wage scale was likewise constrained, remaining at \$9.25 per day into July 1929.

When work volume at long last allowed the local to demand a \$1-per-day pay increase early that month but its employing shops refused the raise, the local’s membership walked off their jobs on July 5. After only a few days, the Master Plumbers conceded and granted the local a new journeyman wage scale of \$10.25 per day, or \$1.28-1/8 per hour, for eight-hour workdays to end the tumultuous decade (which, ironically, elsewhere around the United States had come to be known as the “Roaring Twenties” because of its dramatic prosperity and cultural change).

## PERSEVERING THROUGH HISTORIC MISERY & WAR

After the nationwide opulence of the 1920s gave way to the destitution of the Great Depression, the historic, decade-long economic and human calamity that began when the U.S. stock market crashed on October 29, 1929 (history’s “Black Tuesday”), Local 246 struggled along with the City of Fresno throughout much of the 1930s. As the Depression wore on, the besieged agricultural



The Pacific Southwest Building under construction in 1924 and shortly after it was completed the following year. (Pop Laval photos courtesy of the Pacific Southwest Building with permission of the Pop Laval Foundation.)

hub was heavily impacted by poverty and the influx of rural families who migrated west from the “Dust Bowl,” the U.S. Great Plains after severe drought had rendered it a virtual desert, to seek work in the Central Valley.

Consequently, unemployment among Local 246 members, as with other U.A. locals across the country, inflated during the Depression. “Construction all but stopped, and this led to a significant decline in manufacturing,” the official 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 local’s membership accordingly dwindled during the first half of the 1930s down to 50 total members, including 5 apprentices, in June 1931 and then down to 36 total members, including just one apprentice, in June 1932. During that period as regular workhours remained scarce, in early April 1932 the local’s plumbers and fitters followed the city’s other building trades and voluntarily accepted a 20-percent cut to their wages from \$10.25 down to \$8.50 per day in an attempt to stimulate employment.

Meanwhile, as the U.A. history notes, 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 hope and encouragement to the U.A. membership. But as its overall international membership declined and the U.A. held no conventions between 1928 and 1938, “the union held it together,” the history states.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s federal “New Deal” programs, instituted from 1933 through 1938 to generate construction and civic-improvement jobs throughout the country, provided some relief with projects in



The group that negotiated the first Local 246 Pension Plan in 1955 through the local's collective-bargaining agreement with employers consisted of (left to right, seated) U.A. Local 607 Business Manager Grant Haglund, Local 246 Business Manager Paul L. Reeves, Local 246 members George Conlisk and Joseph H. Miller, and two unknown participants; and (standing) attorney P. H. McCarthy Jr., employer Trustee J. M. Lyles, U.A. Local 492 Business Manager Thomas J. Mohan, employee Trustee Wesley J. Newman; employer Trustee Eric Johnson; insurance company representative Dick Gardner; U.A. Local 437 Business Manager R. L. Cloward, employee Trustee Shelton Lewis, and employer Trustee Howard Ringrose.

and around Fresno that included construction of the Fresno Veterans Memorial Auditorium that was completed in December 1929; the city's water tower; Chandler Field/Fresno Municipal Airport that opened in 1937; and a new main post office for the city in 1939. Additionally, labor-friendly federal legislation such as the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931, which gave workers prevailing wages when employed on public-works projects, and the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which guaranteed employees the right to organize and bargain collectively, further provided a measure of relief for unions including Local 246.

Construction of the New Deal-financed **Friant Dam** on the San Joaquin River beginning in 1937 as part of a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation project to provide irrigation water to the southern San Joaquin Valley employed many union plumbers and fitters before it was completed in 1942. The union building trades did not initially work on the concrete gravity dam until they filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Labor about "flagrant violations of wage scales" as non-union workers were being paid below-scale wages, after which

their open-shop contractors were removed and replaced by union-signatory firms, including Local 246 employers.

Work on the Friant Dam then escalated to a point at which the U.A., with the approval of Local 246, chartered pipefitters **Local No. 246-B** on September 28, 1940, for the many union members employed on pipe work on the dam. (Local 246-B essentially faded away after the dam was completed, as there are no records of the local returning its charter and the last cash sheet submitted by the local to the U.A. was dated May 31, 1942.)

With the Great Depression having ended for all intents and purposes by late 1939 after what would become another world war that was already underway in Europe and Asia spurred military construction in the United States to support the country's allies, England and France, employment picked up for Local 246. As a result, by June 1941 the local had 102 total members, including four apprentices.

The key project on which the local's members were working that year was construction of the new **Lemoore Army Airfield** in Lemoore,

## LOCAL 246 LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

Local 246 employed its first full-time business manager, **Brother James F. Peyton**, in 1955, before which part-time business agents and presidents (and, very early on, the business agent of the Fresno Building and Contracting Trades Council) handled the business and organizing affairs of the local. At that same time, the local combined its offices of business manager and financial secretary with Brother Peyton's election to those positions.

### Business Manager/ Financial Secretaries

**James Frank Peyton**  
1955 – 1961

**Bruce M. Chapman**  
1961 – 1962

**Martin L. Sondergaard**  
1962 – 1967

**Cledus T. O'Brien**  
1967

**Bruce M. Chapman**  
1967 – 1973

**Martin L. Sondergaard**  
1973 – 1982

**Robert D. Markus**  
1983 – 1986

**Robert D. Ward**  
1986 – 1998

**Earl R. "Bob" Jennings**  
1998 – 2013

**Danny R. Wright**  
2013 – 2025

**Robert Topete**  
2025 – current

### Financial Secretaries

<None>  
1901 – 1903

**Robert H. Ellithorpe**  
1903 – 1904

**C. H. Cox**  
1904

**A. W. Bering**  
1904 – 1905

**G. T. Ellithorpe**  
1905 – 1906

**Joseph R. LeBlanc**  
1906 – 1913

**George R. Evans**  
1913 – 1916

**Joseph J. Creem**  
1916 – 1933

**J. Gerdes**  
1934 – 1938

**F. M. Fiske**  
1938 – 1941

**Paul L. Reeves**  
1941 – 1955

### Business Agents

<None>  
1901 – 1914

**P. A. Mehlhorn**  
1914

**Ed Golden**  
1914 – 1916

**Joseph J. Creem**  
1916 – 1931

<None>  
1931 – 1938

**F. M. Fiske**  
1938 – 1939

**Joseph J. Creem**  
1939 – 1941

**Paul L. Reeves**  
1941 – 1955

**John R. Hill**  
1955 – 1960

**Bruce M. Chapman**  
1960 – 1961

**Cledus T. O'Brien**  
1961 – 1968

<None>  
1969 – 1979

**Bruce M. Chapman**  
1980 – 1983

**Cledus T. O'Brien**  
1983 – 1987

**Frank Lapomardo**  
1983 – 1992

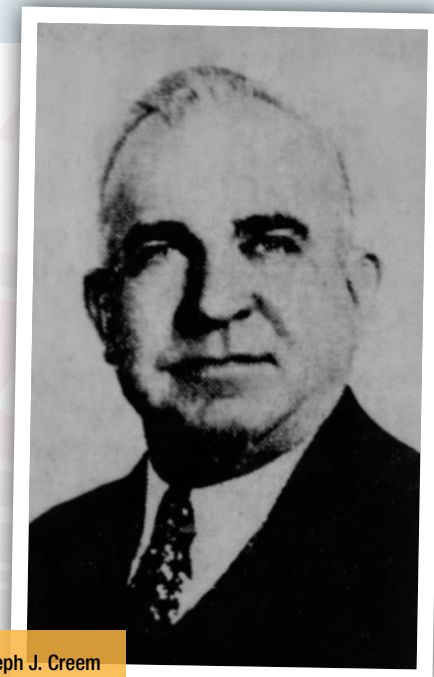
**Robert E. Dupree**  
1992 – 2001

**Thomas H. Avila**  
2001 – 2016

**Brandon S. Lovenburg**  
2016 – current

California, for use by the Army Air Force's Western Flying Training Command as a processing and training field. When it was completed, workers had erected a gas station with 10 gas tanks, a motor repair shop, a fire station, cadet quarters, warehouses, officer quarters, a mess hall, a utilities shop, a chapel, classrooms, a water reservoir and water well, taxiways, a runway, a landing field and two hangars. (The airfield would be deactivated in September 1945 after the war ended.)

After the United States entered World War II following the Imperial Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, Fresno's industry converted to serve the war effort to become a crucial hub



Joseph J. Creem

Local 246 established the **Local 246 Pension Plan** fringe benefit in 1955 through its collectively bargained Master Labor Agreement with the Mechanical Contractors Association (M.C.A.) of Central California to provide employer-funded retirement benefits for its members, with employing contractors originally contributing 10 cents per hour worked by members into the plan's fund. Since that time, the local has joined the **Pipe Trades District Council No. 36 Pension Plan**.



Local 246 retirees George Conlisk, 75 (seated left), one of the local's first members when he joined Local 246 right after it was chartered in 1901, and Joe Miller, 77 (seated right), who was a union plumber since 1896, were the first to receive checks from Local 246 Pension Plan when they received their retirement payments in 1955. Standing are Harold Bertram, management chairman of the Valley Group Pipe Trades Trust fund; and Local 216 Business Manager Paul Reeves, the trust's union representative.

for agricultural production to feed troops, alongside military training and limited manufacturing, all of which provided Local 246 members with increased employment. As the global conflict likewise stimulated strong economic recovery throughout the United States, U.A. membership across North America grew substantially from 81,000 in 1941 to 210,000 members, many of whom built and expanded the shipyards, weapons plants, aircraft factories and other facilities that supported the war effort on behalf of the U.S.-led Allies.

The abundance of work made available by the war hastened the local's growth throughout the historically destructive global conflict, and at one point in 1943 it had grown to 157 members. By the end of the war on September 2, 1945, with the surrender of Japan after Nazi Germany had capitulated earlier that year on May 8, the local had expanded to more than 200 members.

Initially lackluster construction work following the war, slowed primarily by a lack of materials, would ultimately give way to a post-war boom throughout the Local 246 jurisdiction. Further cultivating its standing as a leading agricultural center, Fresno experienced significant development after World War II, with post-war expansion of its neighborhoods, improved transportation links and a bustling downtown anchored by the rail depot.

A range of key projects that employed the local's members during the second half of the 1940s including construction of several hydroelectric power plants along the San Joaquin River and its tributaries near Fresno, such as the third phase of the **Big Creek Hydroelectric Project** that had initially been started in 1911. As part of its gradual expansion to its present size (with its last powerhouse going online in 1987), throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s many union plumbers and fitters helped erect the station's **Powerhouse No. 3** (beginning in 1948) and its Redinger Dam and **Powerhouse No. 4** (beginning in 1949).

Elsewhere, additional major jobs on which Local 246 plumbers and fitters worked during the balance of the 1940s included construction of the **Pine Flat Dam**, a concrete gravity structure on the Kings River just east of Fresno. Impounding Pine Flat Lake, the dam provided flood control, irrigation and hydroelectric power generation after it was completed in 1954.

The U.A. also during that time assigned **pipeline work** for the central and northern

sections of California to Local 246 and **Local No. 342** of Oakland after the union had deemed the two locals "in the best position to handle pipeline work and enter into agreement with pipeline contractors." Subsequently, in late 1948, the U.A. and Locals 246 and 342 signed an agreement with the Pipeline Contractors of Northern and Southern California as part of a state-wide pipeline agreement.

## GAINING MOMENTUM, NEW BENEFITS & WORK

Local 246 and its now more-than 400 members gained a new work contract with the **Mechanical Contractors Council of Central California** (M.C.C.C.C.) that went into effect on January 29, 1951, with a 12-1/2-cent per-hour journeyman wage increase to \$2.75 per hour. Arguably the most significant feature of that agreement was the establishment of a first-ever **Local 246 Health and Welfare Plan**, which would provide employer-funded healthcare insurance to the local's members and was initially subsidized by a 7-1/2-cent per-hour worked contribution by contractors when it went into effect on August 1, 1951.



Local 246 retirees (left to right, seated) Merle Waltman, 59 years of U.A. membership; Roy Randall, 54 years; and Frank Creve, 37 years; and (standing) Thomas Crillione, retired U.A. General Organizer Archie Virtue, Al Dupzyk, Chris Fries and Theodore Leone Sr. pose while attending the local's 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration dinner-dance at Del Webb's Towne House in Fresno in 1966.

With its first fringe benefit in hand, the local would grow and secure additional benefits throughout the 1950s as postwar years of prosperity brought new construction to the Fresno area. As such, the local expanded during the decade to a total membership of more than 550 journeymen and apprentices.

But first, Local 246 and eight other California-based U.A. locals took contractors to federal court in June 1952 for their failure to pay into their respective new health-and-welfare fringe-benefit plans. Ultimately, the court ruled in favor of the locals, and Local 246 employers were made to make payments dating back to January 1, 1952, totaling about \$180,000 into the local's fund.

Employment remained strong that year as well, with the local reporting during its August 1952 general membership meeting, "The work situation was very favorable (and) all members wishing to work are working." That year, a new work agreement boosted the local's journeyman wage scale by 25 cents to \$3 per hour and employer contributions into the Health and Welfare Plan by 2-1/2 cents to 10 cents per hour.

However, the following year the local went on strike beginning July 1, 1953, against the Associated Plumbing Contractors of Central California, who had not signed a new wage and benefits work agreement that had been negotiated by a committee of all U.A. locals in Central California and the Associated General Contractors. While Local 246 contractors had instead expressed a desire to negotiate with the local alone for its four-county jurisdiction, the strike ended one month later when the Associated Plumbing Contractors signed a contract that provided the local's journeymen with a wage increase to \$3.12-1/2 per hour and a benefit increase to 12-1/2-cents per hour for the Health and Welfare Plan.

The local's 37 signatory contractors then agreed in April 1954 to continue that most-



Local 246 constructs its new (and current) Union Hall and Training Center on North Rabe Avenue in the Las Palmas Industrial Park in east Fresno in 1994. The local moved into the new facility during the fall of that year.

recent agreement for that year and also contribute 10 cents per hour worked into each the new **Labor-Management Group Fund**, to help promote better relations between the two groups, and a new pension fringe benefit to provide the local's members with retirement subsidies. The **Local 246 Pension Plan** would go into effect that following year with available payments ranging from \$30 to \$100 per month, after which retirees **Brother George Conlisk** and **Brother Joe Miller** would be the first to receive retirement payments from the plan later that same year.

The local's member plumbers, fitters and apprentices also remained mostly busy with work throughout the second half of the 1950s, supported by Fresno's ongoing development and rapid modernization. Punctuated by major infrastructure projects that reshaped the city, with key developments including the construction of Highway 99, the relocation of Fresno State College, now **California State University, Fresno** (U.C.S.F., but known as "Fresno State"), and the growth of new residential suburbs, the union piping craftsmen had access to steady sources of workhours during that period.

Before the decade was out, Local 246 also gained a new, first-ever three-year-long work agreement with the M.C.C.C.C. that was negotiated by **Pipe Trades District Council No. 36**, which had been formed with the union's seven Central California locals in 1955, and went into effect on July 1, 1959. The pact provided annual wage increases of 20 cents the first year and 25 cents each of the following years beginning on July 1, 1960 and 1961, raising the scale to \$4.05 per hour for the final year, as well as continuing fringe-benefit contributions.

Greater Fresno continued to experience rapid growth in the 1960s, primarily as the result of ongoing expansion of its agricultural industry, with the city's population increasing by almost 50 percent during the decade to nearly 200,000 residents. With the concurrent growth of the

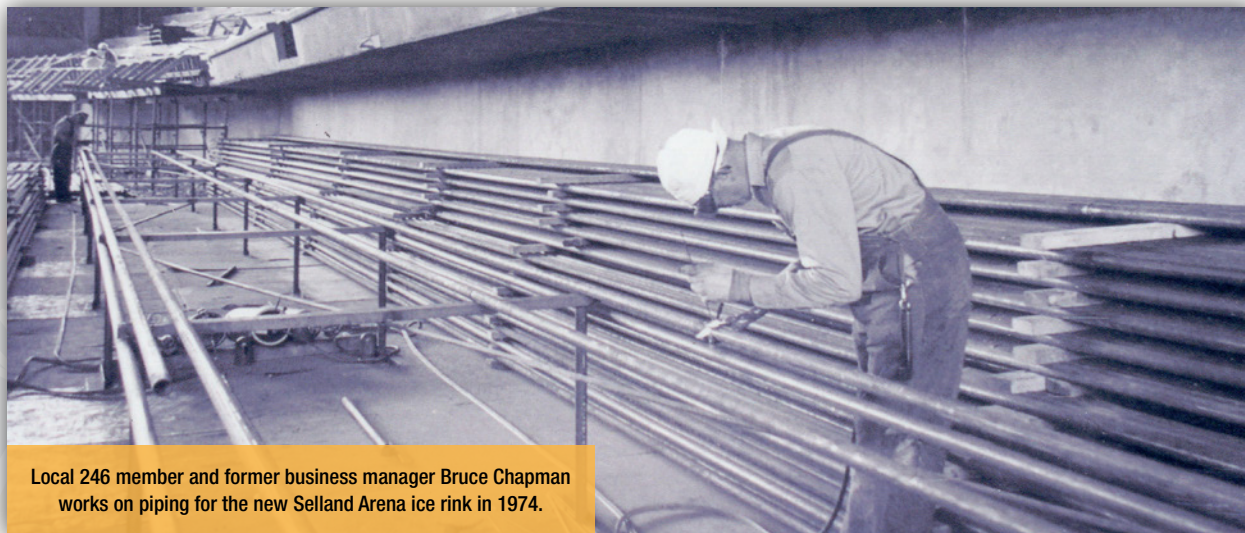
Local 246 was one of the original U.A. locals to be chartered together as **U.A. Pipe Trades District Council No. 36** on May 27, 1955, to serve Northern California. Other charter locals were No. 492 of Stockton, No. 607 of Chico, No. 437 of Modesto, No. 365 of Santa Cruz, No. 662 of Redding and No. 503 of Salinas. In 2026, District Council 36 represents Local 246 and other central-California locals No. 62 of Monterey-Santa Cruz, No. 228 of Marysville and No. 442 of Stockton.

city's infrastructure and downtown area and the construction of new neighborhoods, shopping centers and schools in its suburbs, Local 246 continued to enjoy strong employment conditions well into the second half of the decade – during which its membership grew from a total of 607 members, including 64 apprentices, in June 1960 to 663 total members, including 73 apprentices, in June 1965.

Major industrial projects on which the local's members worked during that time included construction of a **Spreckels Sugar Company** plant near Mendota, California, in 1963. After "Factory No. 4" was put online, it was the largest sugar-beet refinery in the United States and was the last such facility to be erected in California.

Members also helped build the new **B. F. Sisk Courthouse** federal building in downtown Fresno in 1967. The five-story, 192,000-square-foot reinforced concrete structure originally housed eight federal courtrooms and justice agencies (before being vacated around 2005 and later renovated with Local 246 members to become a state superior court facility).

By that year, with the abundance of work in its jurisdiction, Local 246 was hosting a large number of traveling U.A. members from other locals who were employed within the Fresno local's territory. But before the end of 1967, work began to subside throughout the region, and by the end of the decade as construction continued to dwindle, the city's building trades had averaged unemployment of up to



Local 246 member and former business manager Bruce Chapman works on piping for the new Selland Arena ice rink in 1974.

40 percent over the previous three years – with joblessness among the Local 246 membership reaching 50 percent at times.

## FIGHTING BACK AGAINST ECONOMY & NON-UNION

After the Local 246 roster had dropped to 572 total members consisting of journeyman plumbers and fitters and 72 apprentices in June 1970 in the wake of the jurisdiction's waning construction, the economy of Fresno regained traction in the 1970s as it rapidly transitioned into a growing regional hub, driven by the industrialization of agriculture, significant population growth and the acceleration of suburban sprawl. Concurrently, the local's employment conditions improved throughout the decade – during which the U.A. reassigned its craft designation from “plumbers and steamfitters” to “plumbers and pipefitters” in 1972 – and, simultaneously, the local's membership again increased.

Lifted and sustained by several large projects such as the construction of a \$10-million (about \$61 million in 2026), 670,000-square-foot **Contadina** brand tomato-processing plant for the Carnation Company in the Hanford Industrial Park in 1975 and 1976, which was later operated by Del Monte Foods, Local 246 members and some travelers again

enjoyed strong employment throughout the region. Before the end of the decade, as work remained steady when not robust for the most part, in December 1979 the local reached a total membership of 707 plumbers, pipefitters and (93) apprentices.

But building-trades unions in Fresno during the 1980s operated within a challenging environment, facing rising non-union, open-shop competition like other regions in California. Overall, Fresno was part of a broader shift in the California construction industry, in which unions faced difficulties retaining residential and some commercial projects following a severe nationwide economic recession in 1981 and 1982.

With roughly one-third of its membership out of work at one point in February 1981 as a result of the poor economy stifling construction, many of the local's members were forced to travel outside of their jurisdiction for employment during much of the decade. The local's total membership also plunged from 731 total members, including 86 apprentices, in December 1980 to 607 total members, including just 37 apprentices, in June 1987.

The few projects on which member plumbers and fitters who remained within the Fresno area worked during that time were

The United Association chartered “**plumbers, steamfitters and gasfitters**” Local 246 on April 13, 1901, and the union replaced the local's steamfitters and gasfitters trade jurisdictions with “**pipefitters**” in February 1972.

arguably headed by the ongoing construction of the **Helms Pumped Storage Power Plant** hydroelectric facility for Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) just east of the city that had been started in 1977. Able to generate more than 1,200 megawatts of power after it was completed in June 1984, the facility would help stabilize the region's power grid during periods of peak demand for electricity.

Located in an immense, carved-out granite cavern deep within California's Sierra Nevada mountains and on the North Fork of the Kings River, Helms was a marvel of modern engineering with its ability to move millions of gallons of water between its two interconnected reservoirs to generate power. The pumped-storage hydroelectric method that operates its three massive generators by transporting the water between the upper and lower reservoirs – both back and forth – was an innovation that was decades ahead of its time.

But the harsh economic conditions were further compounded by an ongoing increase of non-union and in-plant personnel performing a majority of the construction work in the local's jurisdiction. Consequently, workhours for all U.A. locals in District Council 36 whose members worked for firms of the M.C.C.C.C. continued to decline into 1983.

Regardless, the Local 246 membership voted against a March 1983 request from the contractors for “relief” from the local's upcoming wage-scale increases of \$1.50 per hour that July 1 and 75 cents per hour on

January 1, 1984, “to gain back the work lost to the non-union.” Instead, the local – as well as all other council locals – offered only to extend the current contract, which provided a base journeyman wage of \$22.03 per hour, including \$1.50 per hour that would go into the local's Vacation Fund, from July 1 through December 31, 1983, and hourly benefit contributions from employers of \$2.73 for health and welfare, \$2.86 for pensions, 21 cents for training, 15 cents for an Industry Fund to promote union labor and 6 cents for the local's Hiring Hall administration.

That total wage-and-benefits package of \$28.04 per hour was increased with the January 1, 1984, 75-cent raise, after which the extension of that work agreement kept the local's total journeyman compensation at \$28.09 per hour into 1985. When three of the contractors refused the extension while insisting on wage cuts, Local 246 briefly went on strike against them beginning July 1, 1984, to continue the previous contract that expired that day with no pay increase.

Meanwhile, with the union's market share of residential plumbing work in Greater Fresno having plummeted from 95 percent in 1950 to 30 percent in 1970 and to 7-1/2



Local 246 President and Organizer John Hollis (left), contractor Tom Hurst (center) and Local 246 Business Manager Robert Ward view documents in the Plans Room of the local's Union Hall in 1997.

Local 246 member **Sister Jo Ann Skadden** became the first female member of the local after she completed its four-year apprenticeship program in 1983, after which she held a building-trades journeyman card as a refrigeration pipefitter.

percent in 1983, early that year the district council and the M.C.C.C.C. put in place a new **Residential Agreement**. The contract's reduced wage scale specifically for housing construction targeted regaining that work for the union plumbing industry.

The shortage of work and decrease in membership and workhours also negatively affected the finances of Local 246, whose expenditures had surpassed its income from members' dues by April 1, 1983. "To cover expenses," beginning that day the local increased its working dues from 1-1/4 percent to 1-1/2 percent of wages earned and its monthly dues from \$13 to \$18 per member.

Still, the local announced in the June 21, 1985, issue of its member newsletter, "The growing non-union problem is the most serious problem affecting members of Local 246. The non-union element is growing larger every day."

Indeed Local 246 was approaching dire straits when new **Business Manager Bob Ward** assumed office in 1986, with many members out of work and very little money in the local's treasury for even the most basic programs. But slow recoveries by the local and the area construction industry that began at that time would usher the local through the balance of the decade.

Construction of the **John S. Eastwood Power Station** at Shaver Lake some 40 miles northeast of Fresno as part of the **Balsam Meadows Hydroelectric Plant**, the fourth phase of Southern California Edison's ongoing Big Creek Hydroelectric Project, provided an

influx of much-needed workhours for Local 246 members, who played an integral role in the station being successfully brought online in 1988. After working four-day shifts of 10 hours per day and often at 1,000 feet below ground on what would be the largest powerhouse in Big Creek, with a generating capacity of 200 megawatts, the union plumbers and fitters were commended by Southern California Edison for superior craftsmanship and outstanding performance upon completion of the enormous project.

Built at the outlet of the diversion tunnel from Huntington to Shaver Lake and located 1,100 feet deep in an artificial cavern carved into solid granite, the Eastwood Power Station differed from the other powerhouses in Big Creek as it is a pumped-storage operation. During times of low demand, the station draws water from Shaver Lake up to the Balsam Meadows Forebay reservoir located on the top of a nearby mountain, from which its generators are operated.

A major wave of jail construction in the Fresno area during the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, beginning with **Avenal State Prison** that opened in January 1987, provided another steady stream of work for the local. Its union plumbers and pipefitters worked on all of the half-dozen detention facilities built in their jurisdiction during that period, including the **Fresno County Main Jail** that opened in 1989 and the **North Annex Jail** that opened in 1993.

As employment continued to improve, *The Fresno Bee* was able to report in its September 5, 1989, issue, "For the first time in several years, the annual Labor Day picnic in Fresno marked a day of celebration and high hopes, not a reminder of hard times for organized labor." Local 246 member and picnic participant **Brother Roger Selsor** even told the newspaper, "These past few years are the farthest we've gotten away from strong organized labor, but I think it's coming back stronger than ever."

In fact, the hard times actually forced the general membership of unions, including Local 246, to become more involved in their locals' activities and local and national politics. While at the Labor Day picnic, Local 246 member Brother John Hollis further explained about the local in *The Bee*, "It's gone back to the grass roots."

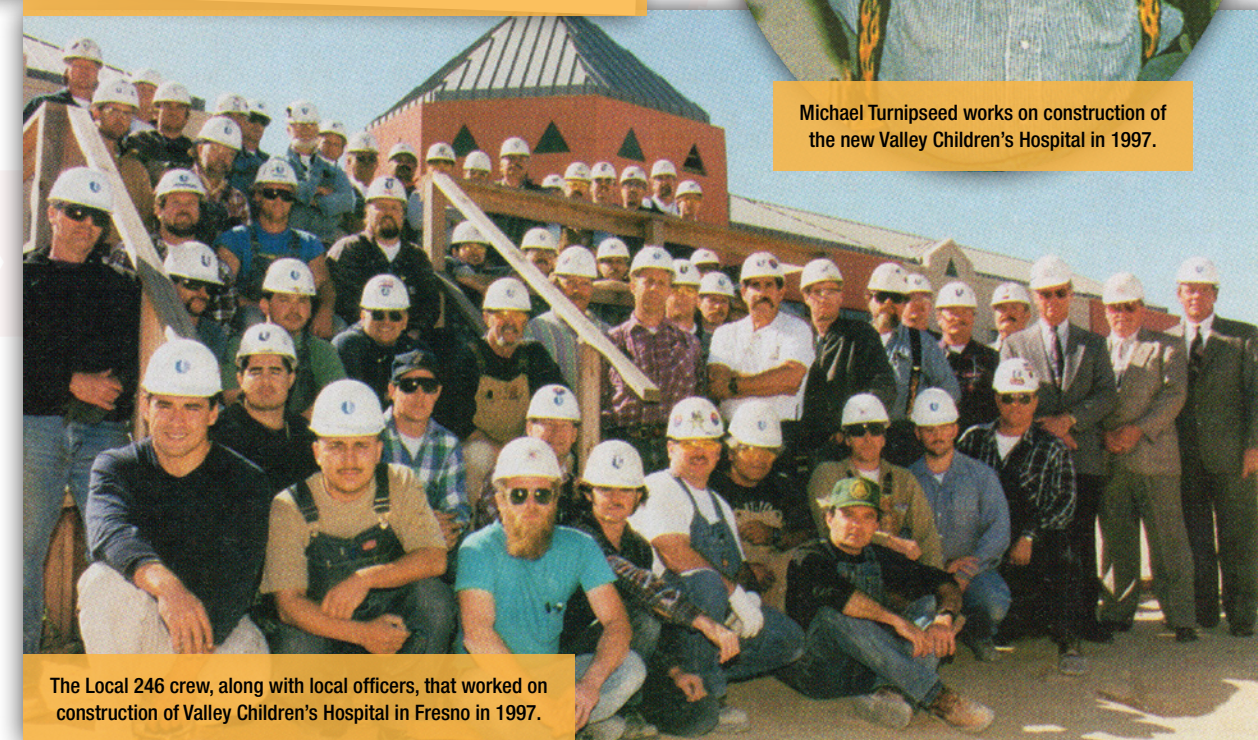
The local punctuated the end of the 1980s and the growing optimism within the union piping industry, as well as the area's construction industry in general, by purchasing property in May 1989 on which it planned to build its future union hall and training facility. The local was able to pay \$100,000 in cash for the tract on North Rabe Avenue in the Las Palmas Industrial Park in east Fresno.



Local 246 member journeyman Phil Jeremiah and apprentice Abel Salazar on construction of the new Valley Children's Hospital in 1997.



Michael Turnipseed works on construction of the new Valley Children's Hospital in 1997.



The Local 246 crew, along with local officers, that worked on construction of Valley Children's Hospital in Fresno in 1997.

## BUILDING A NEW HOME, FLOURISHING WITH 'Y2K'

A decade of highs and lows for Local 246, the 1990s was categorically highlighted for the local by the construction of its new **Local 246 Union Hall** and adjoining **Fresno Area Pipe Trades Training Center** in 1994 on the land at 1303 North Rabe Avenue it had bought in 1989. The local moved into the 18,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility in the fall of 1994, by which time it had fully paid for its \$1.5-million new home.

The 169-bed **Kaiser Permanente Fresno Medical Center** was among projects in the local's jurisdiction on which its members were working during that time. The facility's medical offices opened in 1994, followed by its hospital and emergency department in 1995.

But throughout the mid-1990s, regular steady employment often eluded the local's membership as non-union and out-of-state workers continued to infiltrate jobs in the area, such as construction of the Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility, one of the biggest projects in the history of the City of Fresno, while union plumbers and fitters were traveling for work. What's more,

by 1995 the local had no plumbers working in the housing sector, whereas not long before upwards of 130 of its members were employed in residential construction.

When work for the local's membership eventually picked up in the second half of the decade with a significant number of new projects in the jurisdiction, many of its members were employed on construction of the new, \$177-million, state-of-the-art **Valley Children's Hospital** in Madera, California, beginning in 1996. Local 246 mechanics who helped build the facility, designed to ease some of the fear that children tend to feel about hospitals, installed systems – including all medical gas and ventilation – that enabled doctors and nurses to provide the very best care possible in a setting that would be soothing and cheerful when the hospital opened in July 1998.

Elsewhere, among additional major jobs employing the local's plumbers and fitters was construction of a major distribution and e-commerce fulfillment hub in Fresno for the Gap clothing and accessories retailer in Fresno. The nearly 1-million-square-foot facility was completed in 1999.

The ups and downs of the construction industry in the local's jurisdiction and the

ongoing incursion of non-union labor still took its toll on the local, however, across the decade. As a result, its membership dropped from 663 total members, including 54 apprentices, in June 1991 to 564 total members, including 42 apprentices, in December 1999.

The new Y2K (Year 2000) millennium provided renewed optimism for the local and the union construction industry with ongoing strong employment opportunities. As it continued to gain momentum, the local celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> charter anniversary with a dinner-dance on May 12, 2001, at Tornino's Banquets in Fresno, by which time its membership of about 600 plumbers, fitters and apprentices were again at the forefront of the piping industry while working on projects that involved fiber-optics, high-purity thermal fusion used in the computer-chip industry and the orbital welding of stainless and carbon steel.

A constant, substantial amount of work, including several sizable projects, allowed the local to maintain a membership of around 600 members throughout the decade. Early on, among those jobs was construction of the **Hanford Energy Park Peaker Plant**, a 95-megawatt natural-gas fired, simple-cycle peaking facility located near the City of Hanford in Kings County that began commercial operation on September 3, 2001.

The local was also able to gain a new, five-year-long Master Labor Agreement with the M.C.C.C.C. that was negotiated through District Council 36 and went into effect October 1, 2021, with a journeyman wage-and-benefits package of \$39.95 per hour over its first three months. The contract then provided incremental six-month increases for pay and healthcare, pension, training and industry-support benefits totaling \$6.50 per hour throughout its term, ending September 30, 2026.

With the large amount of work throughout the local's jurisdiction continuing, by 2002 it was hosting travelers from other locals to help

During a period when the U.A. was consolidating its locals around the country in order to strengthen the union's presence and desired to reduce the number of locals in Northern California from 11 to five, on July 21, 1999, **Local 246 members voted, 42-to-0, to be merged into Local No. 393** of San Jose, along with Local No. 62 of Monterey-Santa Cruz. *(The local chose to be merged rather than consolidated because with a merger, the local would have more control over the process.)* However, shortly after, the U.A. put mergers and consolidations on hold, and as of 2026, all three locals still exist and remain independent.

fill the abundance of available manhours. A large amount of that work was provided by construction of the 750,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art **Leprino Foods mozzarella plant** in Lemoore, California, that began production in 2003 as one of the world's largest cheese factories. *(In early 2026, the company began the process of closing the plant.)*

After the start of construction on the **Save Mart Center**, a multi-purpose arena on the campus of Fresno State Local, 246 Business Agent Tom Avila was able to announce in the local's August 1, 2002, newsletter, "The manpower in Local 246 is still going strong." With the skills of the local's craftspeople leading the way, the \$103-million (\$180 million in 2025) venue opened in November 2003 to host sports and entertainment events, including Fresno State Bulldogs athletics teams, with a maximum capacity of 18,000 attendees for concerts.

Other key jobs that employed union plumbers and fitters during the first half of the decade included construction of the six-story **I.R.S. Compliance Services Building** in Fresno completed in 2003; the **Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino** in Coarsegold, California, opened in 2003; the **Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research** opened in April 2005; the **Coalinga State Hospital** at Pleasant Valley

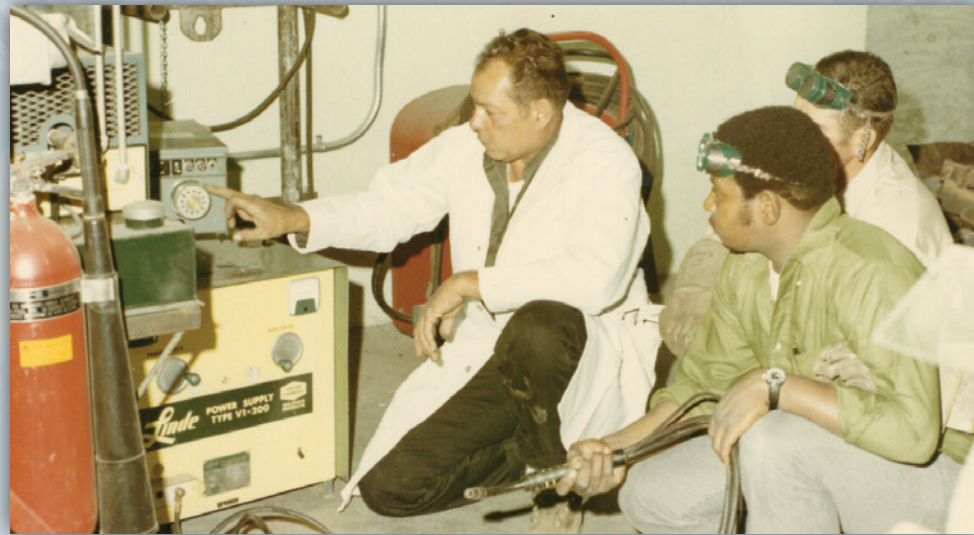


Local 246 member Eddie Chavira works on construction of the new Sunnyside High School in Fresno in 1999.



# Local 246 Member Training EDUCATING INDUSTRY-BE

# ST PIPING CRAFTSPEOPLE



with 13 registered apprentices attending. The apprentices were required to attend the two-hour classes for two nights each week to supplement their on-the-job training while working during the day.

The Tuesday classes consisted of blueprint reading and scale drawing in connection with plumbing, heating and ventilating; shop sketching; actual shop layout processes; and checking material

quantities. The Friday classes consisted of mathematics, including the various divisions of arithmetic, area and volume measure and trade methods of estimating – while “penmanship and spelling (were) included.”

In 1942, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards approved the **Fresno Area Plumbers, Pipe and Refrigeration Fitters Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee** (J.A.T.C.), the successor of the Local 246 and Master Plumbers conference board, to train apprentices for the piping industry. The J.A.T.C. likewise consisted of an equal number of delegates from management representing

Local 246 has trained new recruits to become highly skilled plumbers and pipefitters through the time-honored system of apprenticeship, through which apprentices learn the trade while working on jobsites with experienced journeymen, ever since it was chartered on April 13, 1901. But it was not until December 1937 that the local formally established a structured apprenticeship training program after it and the Fresno Master Plumbers Association had established the **Plumbers Joint Conference Board** to create and oversee the program.

The board initially consisted of three representatives from both the Master Plumbers Association and Local 246. It arranged that first training program with the Fresno City School District – and invited journeyman plumbers of the local to participate as well – while providing the training and education at no cost to apprentices, as the Local 246 continues to do in 2026.

Classes were held on Tuesday and Friday nights, with the first class being held on **January 4, 1938**,



Local 246 proudly hosted the **U.A. 2022 Regional Apprentice Contest** at its training center.

the Mechanical Contractors Association of Central California and labor representing Local 246.

After hosting its training in various locations, including the **Ironworkers Local 155 Training Center** in Fresno for a lengthy period of time, in the fall of 1994 Local 246 and the J.A.T.C. moved the training program into the new, state-of-the-art **Fresno Area Pipe Trades Training Center** on North Rabe Avenue in the Las Palmas Industrial Park in east Fresno, next to the local's new Union Hall. The facility contained large, spacious section for hands-on classes in welding, soldering, instrumentation, plastic fusion, rigging, refrigeration and just about every other skill required of U.A. craftspeople on the job; modern classrooms with closed-circuit televisions, computers for mastering CAD drawing; and mock-ups of boards found in refrigeration, ventilating, heating and air conditioning systems.

Local 246 paid off its new facility in full in just three years. The local then constructed an addition to the training center in 2007.

The Local 246 and J.A.T.C. training program has also continually developed into the five-year, State of California Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Department certified program it has become in 2026 as the local celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> charter anniversary. During their five-year apprenticeships, apprentices are still supervised and trained on the job while attending classroom instruction two nights each week in a selected trade while they are paid a percentage of the journeyman wage scale and receive regular pay increases as they advance in the level of training – while continuing to remain free of charge for apprentices.

Upon completion of their apprenticeships, students graduate to journeyman status and receive state and government licensing in their respective piping trade with the specialized training they received in welding, plumbing, pipefitting and refrigeration. Furthermore, the U.A. has partnered with Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to award graduates with 45 college credits upon completion of the program.

Journeyman of Local 246 are also offered regular opportunities to upgrade their skills and knowledge with continuing-education courses provided at the Fresno Area Pipe Trades Training Center. With continuous training, the

local's members can stay current on constantly changing technology in plumbing, pipefitting, H.V.A.C. (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) service, welding, medical gas and other aspects of their trade.



The Fresno Area Pipe Trades Training Center.



## Local 246 In The Community

### MEMBERSHIP SERVES OTHERS

Across 125 years, Local 246 have established a long history of volunteering for and contributing to a wide range of charitable and community projects, efforts and organizations. Throughout the years, those many, varied benevolent endeavors have included the **Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation**, **United Way** and **Honor Flight**, a national organization that transports American veterans to Washington, D.C., to honor and celebrate them for their service and sacrifices.

One particular charitable project that was markedly special to the local and its members was the **University of Hope** project, the California State University Fresno/Clovis chapter of Habitat for Humanity. University of Hope helped put families earning a substandard income into a home they could afford, with the construction management and engineering students from California State University Fresno providing volunteers, along with members from Local 246 generously providing their skilled labor and supervision to help complete the plumbing for the projects.

Local 246 started working with Habitat for Humanity in 1992 when they were building a home sponsored by local women's organizations that had women doing the labor. Among many other projects, local members in 2003 also volunteered their time to work on the plumbing and H.V.A.C. for the **Clovis Boys and Girls Club** – more than half a decade after members had joined all the union construction trades in volunteering to build the Boys Club in Fresno in the 1950s.

State Prison completed in September 2005; the **Fresno State Science II Building** completed in 2005; and the **Malaga Hybrid Energy Center** 96-megawatt, natural gas-fired peaker plant in Fresno County that began operations in 2005. Also, Local 246 members worked on the new, nine-story **Robert E. Coyle United States Courthouse** in downtown Fresno dedicated in 2005 to replace the B.F. Sisk Courthouse, and many were at the **Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility** following its 2004 opening to replace equipment that was not working properly.

Employment slackened briefly at the beginning of the second half of the decade as those projects and others were completed or neared completion and larger projects in the local's jurisdiction were slow to begin. But as new jobs broke, workhours again swelled among the local's members, who were employed during that time on projects such as construction of the **Pacific Ethanol Plant** in Madera that could produce 40-million gallons of low-carbon renewable fuel ethanol per year after it was completed in 2006 (but in 2026 now only serves as a renewable fuels terminal).

Among the other work performed by the local's membership during that time, its craftspeople also applied their skills to help

construct the Sierra View District Hospital's outpatient **Sierra View Chronic Dialysis Center** opened in 2007; and the **Community Regional Medical Center Trauma Center** in Fresno completed in 2007, after which it has operated as the only "Level I" trauma center between Los Angeles and Sacramento. Elsewhere, many union piping professionals provided workhours for the completion of the **Calgren Renewable Fuels Ethanol Plant** in Pixley, California, which began production in 2008 and can annually produce 55 million gallons of fuel alcohol and 400,000 tons of animal feed; the 11-story, 174-hotel-room **Picayune Tower** addition to the Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino that opened in August 2008; and a large expansion to the Leprino Foods plant in Lemoore that was completed in 2008.

### RECOVERING ONCE AGAIN ON THE STRENGTH OF ITS SKILLS

The harsh "Great Recession" from 2007 through 2009 that at the time was the most severe financial downturn since the Great Depression had a lengthy damaging impact on Fresno, which was impacted for the following decade by a massive collapse in its housing market and significant employment losses. Likewise, Local 246 was eventually impacted by the recession, which greatly slowed construction within its jurisdiction.

"There has not been much change since last month," Local 246 **Business Agent Thomas Avila** reported in the September 2009 issue of the local's newsletter as the effects of the faltering economy persisted, "except the out-of-work list is growing."

By that time, much of the major work that had sustained the local was finished or nearing completion, including several pipeline and compressor projects, as well as construction of the **Panoche Energy Center**, a natural gas-fired power plant in Fresno with a total generating

capacity of 432 megawatts after it became operational in July 2009. Other notable jobs employing the local's members during that period included construction of the modern, 186-patient **Mercy Medical Center Merced** in Merced, California, that would open in August 2010; renovations to the B.F. Sisk Courthouse to transform it into an up-to-date facility for the **Superior Court of California, County of Fresno**, that would be completed in November 2010; and a major expansion to the **Clovis Community Hospital** in Clovis, California, that would be completed in 2010 as part of a multi-phase project would grow the facility, into a 352-bed acute-care medical center by 2016.

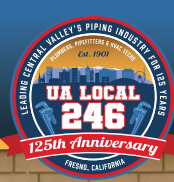
But in the aftermath of the recession, construction work and employment conditions for Local 246 remained sluggish into and throughout the early 2010s. Hemorrhaging financially as workhours continued to shrink while major building projects in the jurisdiction were put on hold or outright cancelled, the local took steps to counter the losses, including cutting the hours of its staff, including its business manager and business agent, by 20 percent beginning May 1, 2011.

"This, along with some other cost cutting, will enable us to stop the bleeding and increase our general fund," **Business Manager Bob Jennings** wrote in an open letter to the membership. "These temporary cuts have become necessary. These measures will allow us to prepare for the worst. We will be able to build a nice cushion so that if the worst-case scenario happens, we'll have time to plan rather than just react."

After twice extending the five-year Master Labor Agreement signed in October 2001 to remain in place through September 30, 2011, a new, one-year work contract with the Mechanical Contractors Council of Central California went into effect the next day – even though the economics in Central California had made for difficult negotiations that had



The Local 246 team of (left to right, front row) David Del Toro, Mike Cooper, Tom Avila, Ken Bottoms, Donovan Mayhue and Phil Jeremiah; and (back row) Jon Trueblood, Dave Eberle, Mark Cooper, Gene Teague, Chet Jump, Victor Lara, Jim Thomas, Jere Wilkins, Mike Houston, Bob Jennings, Harry Jones, Randy Anderson, Rick Swenson, Russell Yockey, Dennis Wofford, Ronnie Cooper and Jim Hutchison raised money for the United Way of Fresno County in "The Aircraft Pull" on October 15, 2003, by pulling a 145,000-pound Boeing 727 cargo plane, finishing in third place for the "Fastest Pull."



Local 246 retirees and officers Roger Landucci, Joe Raco, Ed Cordova, Bob Pinion, Jason Tompkins, Ray Lawson, Tony Flores, Tim Melrose, Bill Fay, Doug Phillips, Garvin Lane, Russ Yockey, Vic Horner, Bob Horton, Brad Horner, Al Torres, Steve Kregal, Arthur Anderson, Josh Escobar, Mark Loggains, Jonhenry Lopez, Guy Camini, Avedis Matewosian, Stan Holt, Brandon Lovenburg, Leon Looper, Willie Long and Robert Topete attend the local's 2025 annual Christmas retirees luncheon meeting.

begun in August. But after the two sides reached agreement, the local did not have to move money off paychecks to fund the Health and Welfare Plan, it was able to maintain its 7-cents-per-hour pension credit for 2012 and it gained language changes that would help to increase market share – prompting Business Manager Jennings to write afterwards to the membership, “Considering the economic times we're living in, we did pretty well.”

Financially, the new agreement provided an immediate 62-cent-per-hour increase to employer contributions for the local's healthcare benefit on October 1, 2011. It then called for additional 62-cent increases for the Health and Welfare Plan on January 1, 2012, and again on July 1 of that year.

While the local's membership had dipped to 562 total members, including 57 apprentices, at one point in December 2011, after work in its jurisdiction began to recover and accelerate in 2012 and beyond, the local's membership throughout the remainder of the decade remained about or above 600 total members. The improving employment conditions also allowed Business Manager Jennings to declare in the local's December 2012 newsletter, “The job picture for the new year looks to be the brightest it has been for a long time.”

In another sign of the recovering times, a new M.L.A. with the contractors' council that was in effect for three years from October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2014, provided

significantly better financial gains than the previous contract. In addition to base wage increases totaling \$4, the agreement also improved fringe-benefit contributions.

A slowly growing list of key projects regularly employed Local 246 members during much of the second half of the 2010s. Those included oil field maintenance and construction work in Kern and Fresno counties under a five-year, labor-beneficial Project Labor Agreement (P.L.A.) beginning in 2015 for the California Resources Corporation energy management company, which came at the tail end of a boom of activity in the area's oil fields that was driven by interest in the Monterey Shale formation and the use of new hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) technologies to remove gas and oil and created a large amount of work for the local's members.

After a brief lull in work in 2018, the decade ended with strong employment for the local's members as larger projects in and around Fresno progressed, putting many union plumbers and fitters to work at the time. Those jobs included work at the **Central California Women's Facility** state prison in Chowchilla and the **California State Prison and the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility** in Corcoran, and construction of the \$100-million, 300-bed **Fresno County West Annex Jail** that would be completed in 2024 (after a three-year delay primarily caused by issues with the State Fire Marshal) and the **Sanger Education Complex** for the Sanger Unified School District in Fresno that would

be completed in January 2021 as the first of two phases of the junior high school campus.

## PERSEVERING TO 125<sup>TH</sup> AND LOOKING FORWARD

The global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that struck the United States in January 2020 and lingered into 2023, by which time it had claimed the lives of more than 1 million Americans, impacted Local 246 and its membership in numerous ways. Throughout much of the early stages of the pandemic, jobsites were closed or limited and the local curbed access to its offices, hall and training facility while canceling meetings, events and training classes while the local practiced and encouraged social distancing, the use of masks and other prescribed measures on jobsites and at its union hall to help stop the spread of the disease.

Meanwhile, the local and the U.A. worked to alleviate the impact of this pandemic on their members, including providing membership-dues relief for members with low workhours. Then on July 15, 2020, the local held its first in-person union meeting since the outbreak of the virus while strictly enforcing the use of face masks and social distancing for attendees.

But overall, 2020 was busy for the local as by year's end its total workhours had increased over the previous year. Local 246 **Business Agent Brandon Lovenburg** even reported in the local's July 2020 newsletter, “Things have definitely taken a turn for the better in regard to work in our area. June was probably the busiest month for dispatching since we had the boom in the oil fields a few years back.”

While contractors had been laying off members more than they were hiring them at one point early in the pandemic, ultimately the union plumbers and fitters were deemed “essential workers” by the state and were, therefore, permitted to work on jobsites under certain safety measures. Among the “essential”

Local 246 celebrated its **100<sup>th</sup> charter anniversary** with a dinner-dance on May 12, 2001, at the (now-former) Tornino's Banquets event venue on North Blackstone Avenue in Fresno.

and government prevailing-wage construction projects on which the local's members were active during that time was construction of the new **Table Mountain Casino Resort** just north of Fresno in Friant and Fresno State's new **Resnick Student Union** that both would be completed in 2022 and an 18-day maintenance shutdown at the Helms Power Plant, although pipeline work was unsettled as PG&E and the State of California were still deciphering what was and wasn't essential work.

More essential jobs for the local and even some traveling U.A. members during 2020 also came from construction of the five-story, 144-bed patient tower expansion at Clovis Community Medical Center that was completed in 2022; and the start of work on the largest terminal expansion in **Fresno Yosemite International Airport** (FAT) history as part of its \$150-million “FATForward” program to add a new concourse that would be completed in December 2025. The relative abundance of employment during the deadly pandemic compelled **Business Manager Danny Wright** to write in the local's August 2020 newsletter, “Locally, we have been fortunate to stay essential, safely employ most of our members and reciprocate travel opportunities to some of the locals that have helped us in the past.”

As COVID persisted into and throughout 2021, that year the local's workhour totals strengthened its District Council 36 defined benefit and contribution funds for healthcare and pensions, while the local and the Building Trades Council were able to negotiate several P.L.A.s for projects that included the airport expansion's parking structure; several bio-fuel projects including the **Lakeside Pipeline**

Local 246 proudly provides a pathway to the middle class through programs such as **Veterans in Piping** and **Women in Trades**, along with ongoing partnerships with pre-apprenticeship programs and high school outreach initiatives throughout its jurisdiction. These efforts continue to open doors for veterans, women and the next generation of skilled workers, equipping them with the tools to build successful careers and support their families.

project in Hanford developed by Maas Energy Works to purify dairy-farm manure-derived biogas; and construction of **Juan Felipe Herrera Elementary School** for the Fresno Unified School District; as well as a citywide P.L.A. with the City of Fresno.

The local and District Council 36 were able to secure a three-year extension of their M.L.A. with the Mechanical Contractors Council of Central California that went into effect on October 1, 2021. Before it expired on September 30, 2024, the contract provided the local's journeyman members with total wage-and-benefit increases of \$3.10 per hour for the first year, \$3.30 for the second year and \$3.50 for the third year.

But before 2021 ended, the steady work the local had been experiencing slowed considerably. Perhaps most notable, many workhours were lost as the planned construction of the new **North Fork Mono Casino & Resort** in Madera, for which the Fresno Build and Construction Trades Council had gained a P.L.A. back in the mid-2000s, remained stalled because of ongoing legal issues between the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, who own the project, and the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians, who operate the casino resort in Coarsegold, that would continue for the next three years and beyond.

Employment conditions remained sluggish into the second half of 2022, while pipeline work had not reached the levels the local had hoped for during that time. Meanwhile, steady

service work in the **H.V.A.C.R.** (heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration) sector began to sustain the local's workhours and would remain busy throughout the balance of the year and 2023 – during which upwards of 30 percent of the local's members were employed on service work at times – while construction stayed slow.

During the year 2024, the local's more than 640 member plumbers, fitters, service workers and apprentices tallied solid workhours despite the lack of a significant number of large construction projects in its jurisdiction. Instead, the consistent employment was again at least partially attributed to service work for H.V.A.C.R. and plumbing.

But in the fall of that year, after nearly 20 years of anticipation, construction work on the North Fork Mono Casino began after a groundbreaking ceremony on September 7, 2024, putting many Local 246 members to work on the project. The long-awaited source of work would be short-lived, however, when it was again paused after a court ruled in December 2025 that approvals used to build the casino were no longer valid, idling local craftspeople once again.

The local gained its current M.L.A. after negotiations between District Council 36 and the M.C.C.C.C. produced the new, four-year work contract that went into effect on October 1, 2024, and is in force through September 30, 2028. The agreement put in place a total increase in wages and benefits of \$15.65 per hour during its life through incremental six-month raises each January 1 and July 1.

Then in 2025, during which current **Business Manager Robert Topete** succeeded Brother Wright to lead the local, construction work and employment increased, boosted by work on the casino in Madera, school projects for the Fresno Unified School District during that summer and construction of a major F-35 jet-fighter maintenance hangar and modern, high-

tech barracks at **Naval Air Station Lemoore**. What's more, the district council ratified a new **California Shortline Agreement** for pipeline work that is in effect from May 1, 2025, through April 30, 2026, with a general wage increase of 3 percent across the board.

After lengthy negotiations, Local 246 and its sister U.A. locals also gained a new Northern California Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Agreement that went into effect February 1, 2026, with some important improvements for members. Those advances include total wage-and-benefits increases of \$1.50 per hour in both 2026 and 2027 for servicemen and tradesmen.

The year and months leading up to Local 246's 125<sup>th</sup> charter anniversary on April 13, 2026, were once again filled with hardship and achievement for the local and its more than 650-strong membership. While 2025 tested the local, the year also strengthened it and ultimately moved the local and its membership forward.

“Like any meaningful progress, it came with challenges – but those challenges brought

valuable lessons that sharpened our focus and reinforced our commitment to doing things the right way.” Business Manager Topete reflected in the local's January 2026 newsletter. “Through perseverance, accountability and teamwork, we continued to build on the strong foundation that defines Local 246.”

As such, Local 246 continues to set the standard for the piping trades industry in its jurisdiction and remains a respected leader. Encouraged by its advancements and progress, such as a City of Fresno P.L.A. extension, and with its funds in strong condition, the local celebrates another milestone committed to being good stewards of its resources and thinking “outside the box” for the betterment of the local.

Looking ahead, Local 246 will continue to organize and push compliance to keep competition honest while working to gain more market share throughout its territory. Undoubtedly, Local 246 journeymen and apprentices will remain the foundation of the construction industry in the Central San Joaquin Valley of Central California – and beyond. ●



The Local 246 sign in front of its Union Hall was installed after the facility was built in 1994.

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United Association Local No. 246

*On your 125th Anniversary Celebration!*

We commend your dedication to protecting the rights and benefits of your members and their families, and we wish you continued success in all your efforts.



From the Officers and Members of the  
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Steven B McCall – Business Manager

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from the Officers, Members and Staff  
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UA Local 467  
San Mateo County, CA

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Business Manager

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# CONGRATULATIONS UA LOCAL 246 ON YOUR 125TH ANNIVERSARY



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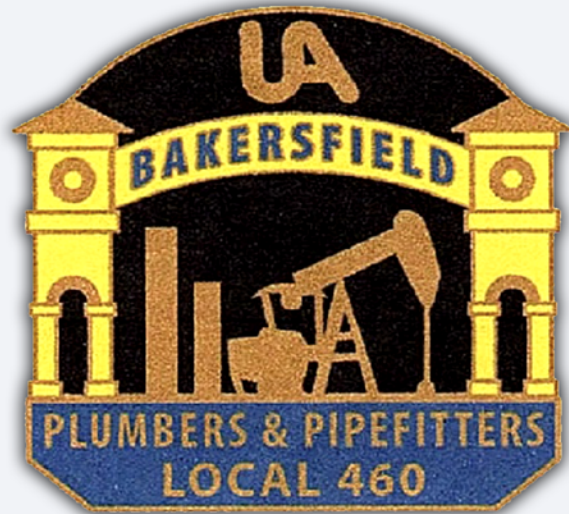
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## **Congratulations UA No. 246 On Your 125th Anniversary Celebration!**

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Business Manager

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On reaching an incredible  
milestone of 125 years  
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Here's to many more years of  
excellence and service.

*The General Officers  
of the United Association  
Congratulate the Members of  
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& HVACR Technicians of Local 246  
on Their 125th Anniversary.*

Mark McManus  
*General President*

Derrick Kualapai  
*General Secretary-Treasurer*

Michael A. Pleasant  
*Assistant General President*



**Congratulations to the Officers and Members  
of Plumbers, Fitters, Welders, Pipeliners & HVACR Technicians  
Local No. 246 as you celebrate 125 Years**

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Business Manager

**Freddy Delligatti**  
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*Congratulations to our friends at Local 246 for 125 years of service  
to the membership, the community, and the United Association.*



**Broc Buczolich**  
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Congratulations to  
**UA Local 246**

on your 125th Year Anniversary!



Cheers to many more years!  
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**UA LOCAL 38**

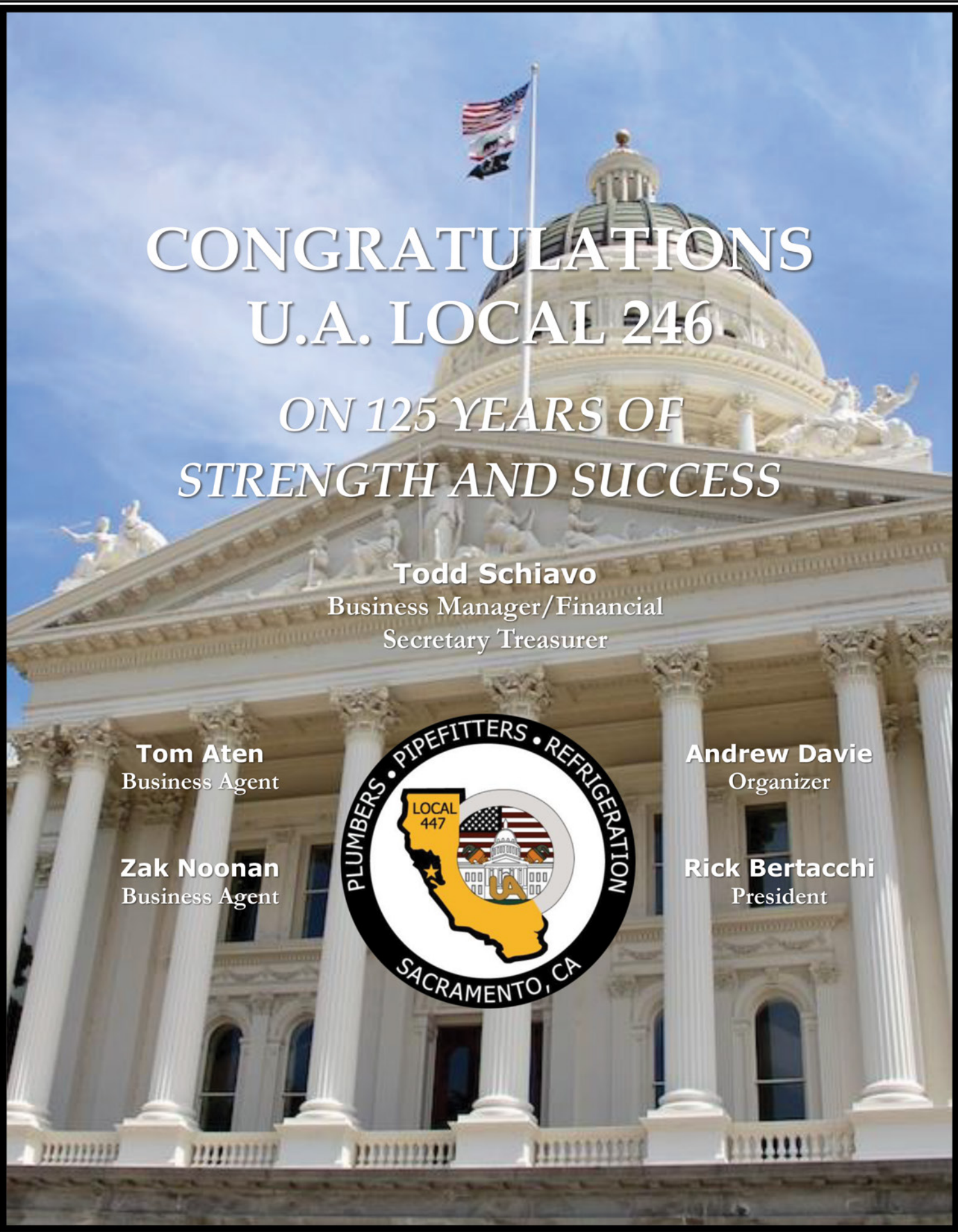
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UA Local 246  
on their  
125th Anniversary

*Larry Mazzola Jr.*

Business Manager/  
Financial Secretary-Treasurer



**CONGRATULATIONS  
U.A. LOCAL 246  
ON 125 YEARS OF  
STRENGTH AND SUCCESS**

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Business Agent



**Andrew Davie**  
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**CONGRATULATIONS  
ON YOUR  
ANNIVERSARY**

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**The Officers and Members of Local 669**

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Business Manager

**KRISTOPHER D. WINGET**  
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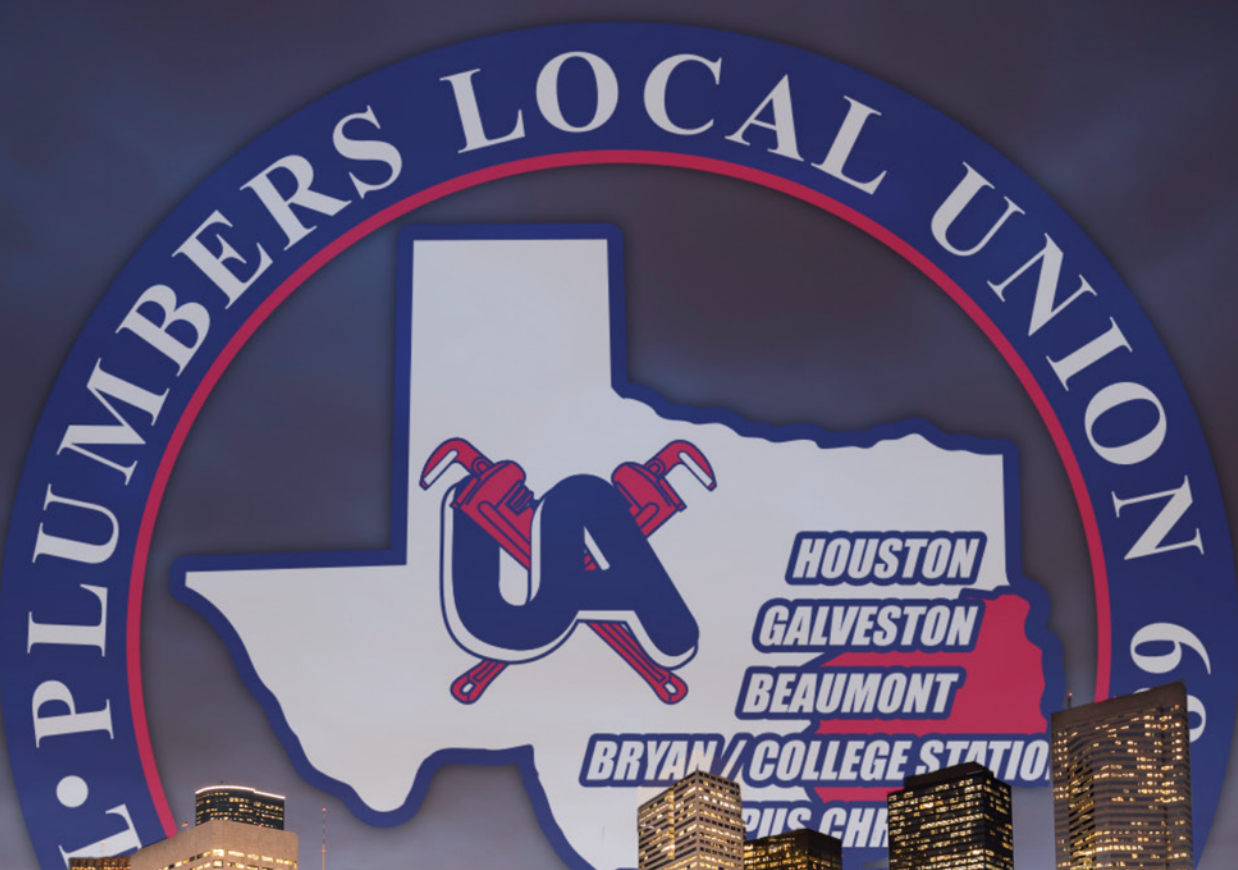
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ON YOUR 125TH ANNIVERSARY

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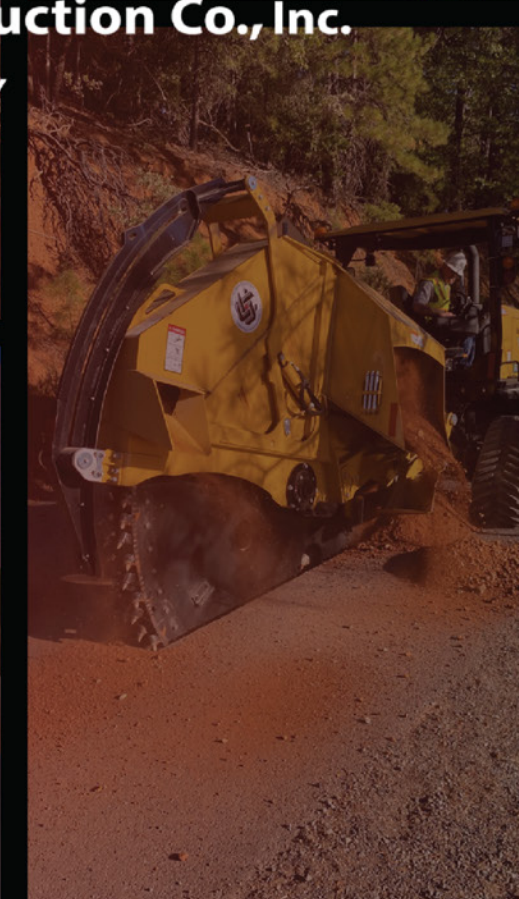
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**UA LOCAL 246**  
**HAPPY 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY!**

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR MANY,  
MANY YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE  
TO YOUR COMMUNITY, FRESNO AND  
SURROUNDING COUNTIES!

From the Officers and Members of  
UA Local 159



Nick Goodwin - Business Manager  
Jason Lester - Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Martinez, California

# ***Congratulations on 125 Years***

***Plumbers & Steamfitters  
Local Union 52***



*Montgomery, Alabama  
(334) 272-9500*

*John Paul Smith, Business Manager  
Ian Cooper, Business Agent*



**Plumbers, Pipefitters &  
Mechanical Equipment Service  
Local Union 392  
Cincinnati, Ohio**

**Business Manager**  
Chris Webster

**Financial Secretary**  
Jeff Kirby

**Business Agents**  
Bob Baker    Jim Harris  
Tim O'Hearn    Mike Craig

# **Congratulations on your 125th Anniversary Local 246**

From the Officers, Members and Staff of  
**Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 91**  
Birmingham, Alabama



**Claude T. Pierce, Jr.**  
Business Manager

**Chris Bell**  
Business Agent



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CONTACT US

Congratulations on Your 125-Year Anniversary!



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CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Serving plumbers since 1959 when my father started the company, and myself since 1994.

Patrick Islip, C.P.A.

islip.net



Mid Valley Building & Construction Trades Council

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IUEC LOCAL 8  
SAN FRANCISCO

PROUDLY JOINS

UA LOCAL 246

IN CELEBRATION OF

125 YEARS  
OF UNION STRENGTH  
& TRADITION!

Matt Russo  
Business Manager

Greg Hardeman  
Business Representative

Bill Chisholm  
Business Representative

Local 8 Officers  
President  
Jake E Leonard, IV

Vice President  
Mike Millard

Secretary-Treasurer  
Matt Doran

Trustees  
Joel Roberts  
Joe Shade  
Pete Tanzillo

Warden  
Koa Sibley

Ryan Lange  
Business Representative

Markus Alvarez  
Organizer

Executive Board  
Frankie Ford  
Robert Frye  
Nick Hess

Amy Kayes  
Jared Leonard  
Darryl Rice  
Robert Suarez  
Alex Thomson

CONGRATULATIONS  
UA LOCAL 246



125 YEARS  
OF  
EXCELLENCE

Celebrating 125 years of strength, skill, and solidarity in the pipe trades.

From apprentices to journeymen, your work continues to build and power our communities.



Chartered in 1901, UA Local 246 has proudly represented plumbers, pipefitters, welders, and HVACR technicians across the Central Valley—setting the standard for training, craftsmanship, and union pride.

Here's to the next 125 years of union strength.

In Solidarity.

Teamsters Local 431



United Association of Plumbers Pipefitters & HVAC Techs

Congratulations to UA Local 246 on your 125th Anniversary from all the Members and Officers of Local 123 in Tampa, FL!!

# PIPEFITTERS LOCAL 208

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CECIL COURTNEY, BUSINESS MANAGER  
JOE PENETON, BUSINESS AGENT  
SERGIO CORDOVA, BUSINESS AGENT  
JOE MARTINEZ, BUSINESS AGENT  
JUAN HERNANDEZ, BUSINESS AGENT

## Congratulations UA Local 246 on your 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!



From your friends at  
**Plumbers &  
Pipefitters  
UA Local 23**

4525 Boeing Drive  
Rockford, IL 61109  
(815)397-0350

**Randy Allen • Business Manager  
Ryan Marshall • Business Agent  
Ryan Tracey • Business Agent / Organizer**



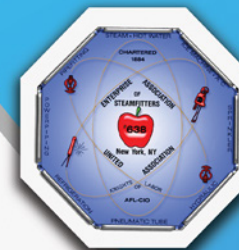
## Congratulations to U.A. Local 246

125-Year Anniversary Celebration  
Best Wishes for Continued Success



[www.Local533.com](http://www.Local533.com)

## ENTERPRISE ASSOCIATION OF STEAMFITTERS LOCAL UNION 638



Organized 1884

Robert J. Bartels, Jr.  
Business Manager

Brian R. Kearney, Jr.  
President

Patrick S. Daly  
Financial Secretary Treasurer

Tim Sullivan  
Vice President

Business Agents

Sean Dolan, Vincent Gaynor, Ray Goger,  
Brian Hunt, Cliff Johnsen, Dave Johnson,  
Michael Koebel, Charles Pellegrino, Janet Powers

Organizers

Johny Martincic, Julio Reinoso

## Congratulations Local 246



**NORWALK, OH**

*Wishing you continued success!*  
Officers, members and staff Local 42  
Dino Camera      Brian Vanderpool  
Business Mgr./FST      Business Agent



**We Salute Your 125 Years,  
Local 246!**

**The Officers and Members of U.A. Local 43**  
Proudly serving the Tennessee Valley since August 25, 1890

[ualocal43.org](http://ualocal43.org)

Congratulations to the  
UA Local 246 on Celebrating  
125 Outstanding Years!

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moment of pride and a tribute to the  
generations of hardworking members  
who stood together to build a legacy.

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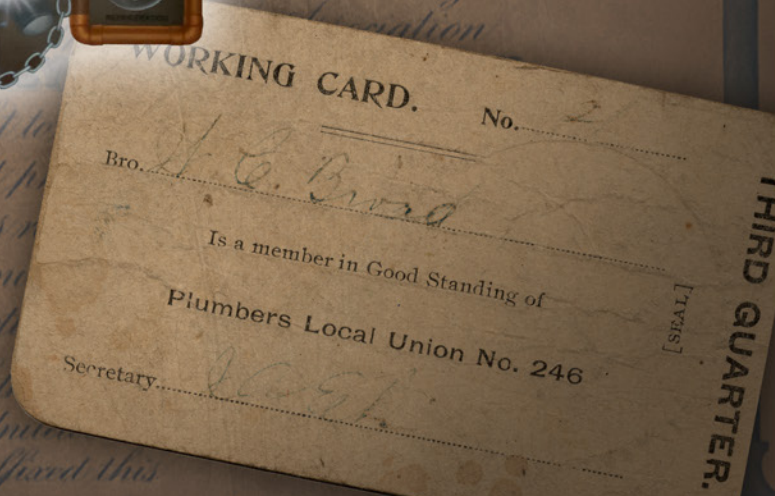
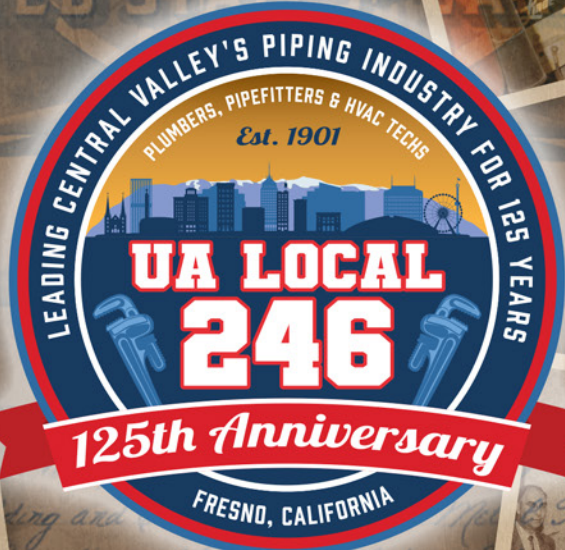
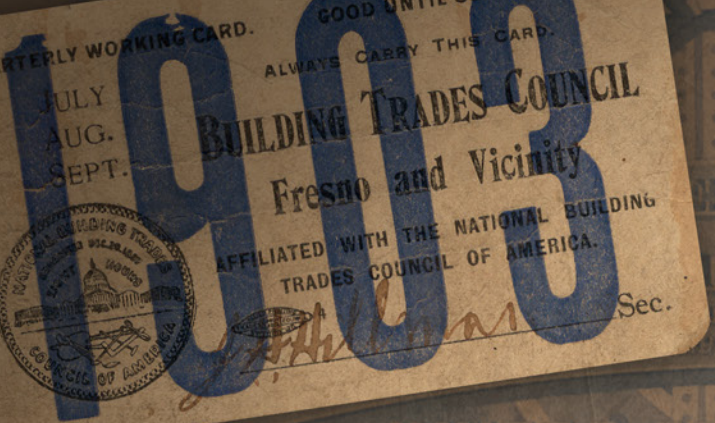


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UNITED ASSOCIATION LOCAL NO. 246 - 125 YEAR COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY