



*100th* Anniversary  
Celebration

100  
100

1914 ANNIVERSARY 2014

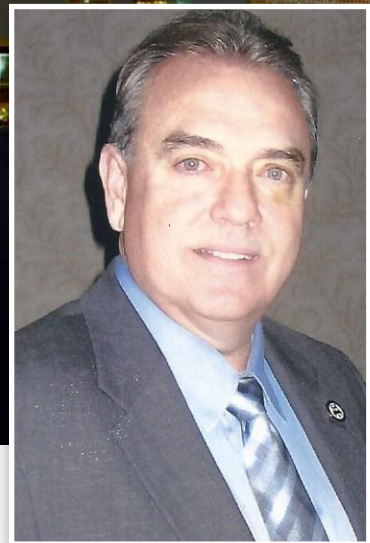
*Pipefitters Local 636*

★ *Detroit* ★



1914 - 2014

*Commemorative*  
PROGRAM & HISTORY



On behalf of the officers and members of Pipefitters, Steamfitters, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Service Local Union 636, we welcome you to the City of Detroit and thank you for attending our 100th Anniversary celebration event.

Local 636 is proud to be in the United Association and appreciates all it has done for us the past 100 years. We realize the importance of the UA's role moving forward, to ensure the protection of our jurisdiction and security for our members.

As we celebrate our centennial, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the accomplishments of the members who created a legacy of instilling character and Brotherhood that kept our local vital, relevant and the leaders in the Construction Industry for the past 100 years.

This celebration of our heritage provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tell the story of Local 636. The story of brothers and sisters who maintained "pride in workmanship and the commitment to continuous education for all members" as their motto. We must remain diligent in the efforts that will ensure the next generation will be even stronger than the previous.

As we celebrate our milestone, remember the members that carried us to this point and the importance for future generations to continue our great tradition.

Thanks to the members, active and retired, and our working partners and friends for participating to make this anniversary a special occasion.

Respectfully and Fraternally,

Frank Wiechert

Business Manager, U.A. Local 636

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## Local 636 Centennial Dinner Invocation

Lord God,

**T**hroughout history you have been mankind's rock and foundation,  
and because of this, we have come to know your tender mercy and unfailing strength,  
as our own trials and tribulations have allowed us witness.

We ask for the ability to continue with unabated courage,  
the work before us in the preservation and promotion of our local union.

We ask for the memories to remain of our members who have passed,  
that their efforts in the building and success of our brotherhood,  
from the fledgling organization known as IA Steamfitters Local 8,  
to the century of UA affiliation as Local 636 we have today,  
will encourage us to honor their legacies.

We ask for the continued safety and health of our families and loved ones,  
our fellow workers, and all those who rely on us.

We ask for the knowledge and manual skills you have granted us,  
to be used for the betterment of advancing our craft,  
while allowing us to improve the stability of the society we service.

We ask for the peaceful return of our veterans to our shores,  
and thank them for their service to our country.

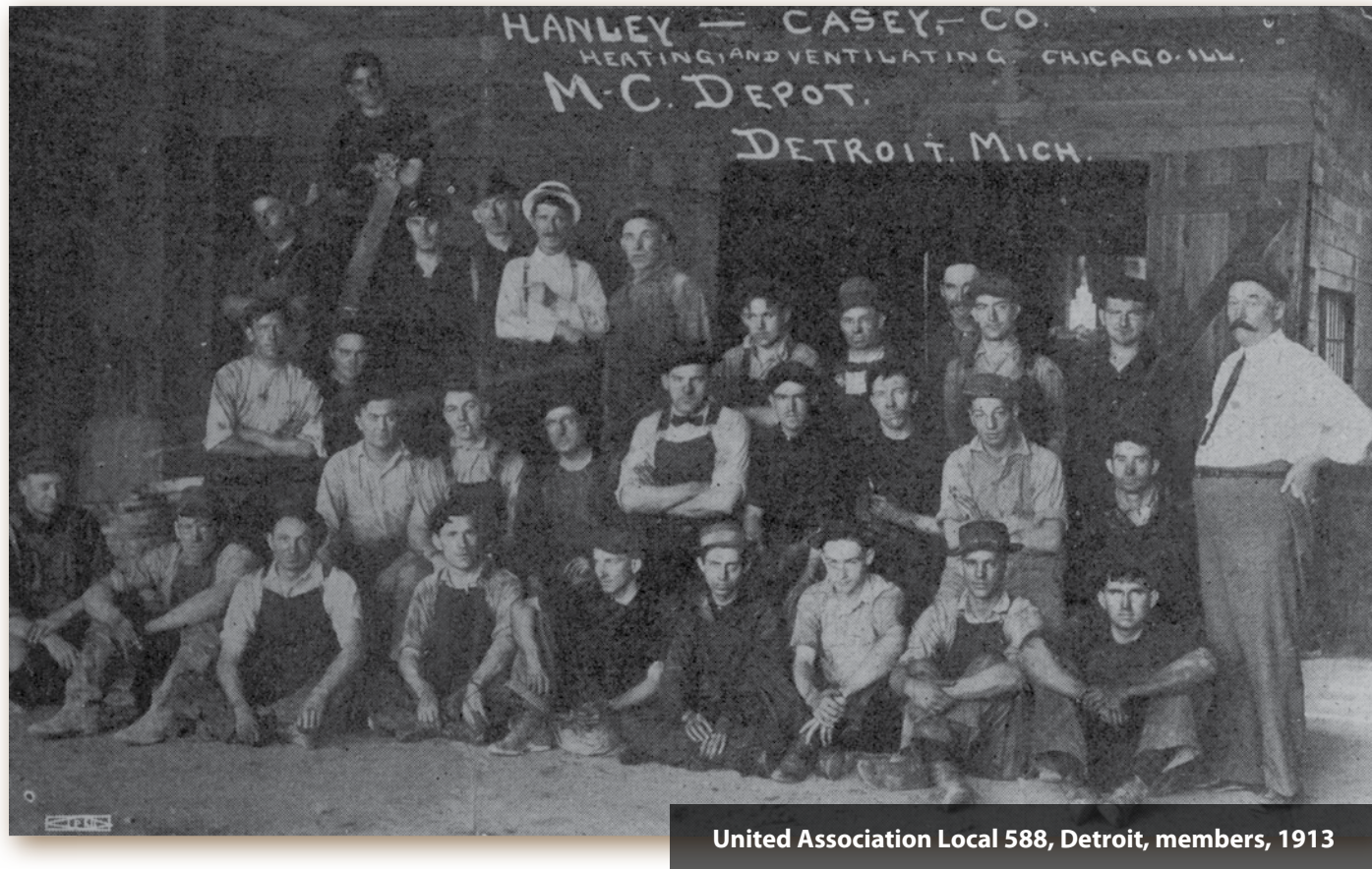
Let us help them to find a better America,  
one that respects their commitment to our nation.

We ask for compassion and dignity for those less fortunate than ourselves,  
that we may be charitable stewards of the abundance of blessings you have given us.

We give thanks and praise to you for the opportunity to share this special time  
with those in attendance here tonight.

For these pleas, and all others in our own hearts,  
we ask this in your name Lord God, Amen.

*President C. William Helwig II*



United Association Local 588, Detroit, members, 1913

Although chartered on March 17, 1914, to serve the steamfitting industry in Detroit, United Association Local No. 636 was truly the product of volatile events and conditions within the unionized pipe-trades industry that pre-dated the local's formation. Indeed, it was an intense rivalry between the United Association (U.A.), which was created in 1889, and the older National Association, which changed its name to the International Association of Steam and Hot Water Fitters and Helpers (I.A.) in 1905, that directly led to the founding of Local 636.

At that time, while the I.A. was comprised primarily of pipefitters, the U.A. was dominated by plumbers, gasfitters and sprinklerfitters, and the two groups waged bitter disputes primarily over the issue of work jurisdiction. However, in 1912, the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.), recognizing that jurisdiction of work was the foundation of its existence, ruled that a single union would represent all of the pipe trades, and the I.A. somewhat reluctantly agreed to merge into the U.A.

But I.A. Steamfitters Local 8 in Detroit was not so easily convinced and refused to abide by the decision. Its charter was revoked by the A.F.L. and, subsequently, the U.A. chartered its own Steamfitters and Helpers Local 588 in Detroit in January 1913. At that point, U.A. Local 588, I.A. Local 8 and U.A. Local 98, a straight plumbers local, all co-existed in the city.

U.A. General Organizer E.W. Leonard reported in the June 1913 *Plumbers', United Association Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal*, the union's monthly member publication, that he had traveled to Detroit on April 22 "with a sincere ambition to secure the amalgamation of the I.A. Fitters with the U.A. Fitters' Local." He described the events leading up to his visit:

“Two days prior to my arrival, however, the committee of U.A. and I.A. who had been meeting for the purpose of consummating some kind of an agreement, became deadlocked because the International Association wanted all of

*the officers and seemed to be particularly desirous of eliminating the U.A. Fitters' business agent, namely Brother (Andrew) McEntee. Neither side would give away <sic> on this particular proposition with the result that some special effort had to be made to try and open negotiations.”*

Once in Detroit, Leonard was not permitted into a Local 8 meeting and afterwards learned that the local's officers "had voted to call all negotiations off and hold no further meetings with the U.A."

The situation soon escalated, with I.A. Business Agent James Carty (who would later become the first business agent of Local 636) having Local 588 members discharged from a power-heating job at the Henkle Flour Mills under a steamfitting contractor named English. When the employer discovered that Carty had lied to him and that Local 588 was "in a position to furnish competent mechanics, he declared his intention to employ only those who were connected with the United Association," according to Leonard.

But the crisis did not dissolve and, instead, continued to intensify, as Leonard went on to describe in his report:

“In a few days, steamfitters from the U.A. proceeded to carry out the orders of Mr. English and they found on their arrival at the job that Business Agent Carty with others had intruded and seemed to be intent on doing bodily harm if possible.

“(Carty) continued to molest our members by his presence all day long and tried to scare them by occasionally showing something sticking out of his right hand back pocket, but that was all Carty could do. The next day, the job went on successfully and has continued to do so ever since with members of the United Association.”

## From the U.A.'s History ESTABLISHING UNIONIZED PIPING

The first lasting plumbing and piping unions in the United States were formed beginning in 1879 when plumbers created locals in New York, St. Louis, Chicago, San Francisco, Providence, Cincinnati and Washington. By 1882, both plumbers and steamfitters had established locals in New York City, and several pipe unions from New York City held a conference in 1884, during which they establish the first national pipe trades association, the National Association of Plumbers, Steamfitters and Gas Fitters.

In June 1888, steamfitters from many cities, but mainly Chicago and New York, met and created the National Association of Steam and Hot Water Fitters and Helpers of America (N.A.). In October the next year, independent unions, the N.A. and unions still affiliated with the Knights of Labor met in Washington, D.C., to unify the piping trades, and on October 7, they founded the United Association.

During the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) convention in 1905, a charter was granted to the remaining N.A. group, which by then had changed its name to the International Association of Steam, Hot Water and Power Pipe Fitters and Helpers (I.A.). While the I.A. was comprised primarily of pipefitters, the United Association was dominated by plumbers, gasfitters and sprinklerfitters; in 1912, the I.A. agreed to merge into the U.A.

Today, the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States, Canada and Australia represents approximately 370,000 plumbers, pipefitters, sprinklerfitters and service technicians in North America and Australia.



About a week later, Carty had an injunction issued against Local 588, restraining business agent McEntee, Leonard and others from interfering with the I.A. local and its members. In his appeal for a permanent injunction and restraining order, Carty said McEntee and Leonard “had brought into the City of Detroit gangs of gunmen (and) that he was in fear something would happen to him,” Leonard reported. Carty also stated in the complaint that the U.A. officials were “typical of everything but that which represented good citizenship and decency,” according to Leonard.

Later in the August 1913 *Journal*, U.A. General Organizer Frank J. Kennedy gave a similarly foreboding account of his June 17 visit to the city:

“I was at Detroit endeavoring to bring about (the) amalgamation of Local 588 and No. 8 of the International Association. I remained there long enough to discover it was quite impossible to bring the two organizations together at this time. What was satisfactory to one seemed to be just what the other did not want.”

The following year, the U.A. formed an amalgamation committee in an attempt to end the “dual unionism,” with each local, including Plumbers Local 98, meeting on the issue at the direction of the U.A. Subsequently, Detroit Steamfitters Protective Association Local 636 was chartered after lengthy and “spirited” negotiations between I.A. Local 8 and U.A. Local 588 resulted in the merging of the two – Kennedy explaining in the May 1914 *Journal* that “several days were spent here in arranging many little details incident to the carrying out of the amalgamation plan as agreed to.”

After all was said and done, 138 members of the I.A. joined Local 636 on March 17, according to Kennedy (although U.A. cash receipt records show 142 men paid the \$1 initial fee that day). They were obligated into the U.A. at the Plasterers’ Hall on Cass Avenue; Carty and Harry Olive of Local 588 were named business agents of the new local.

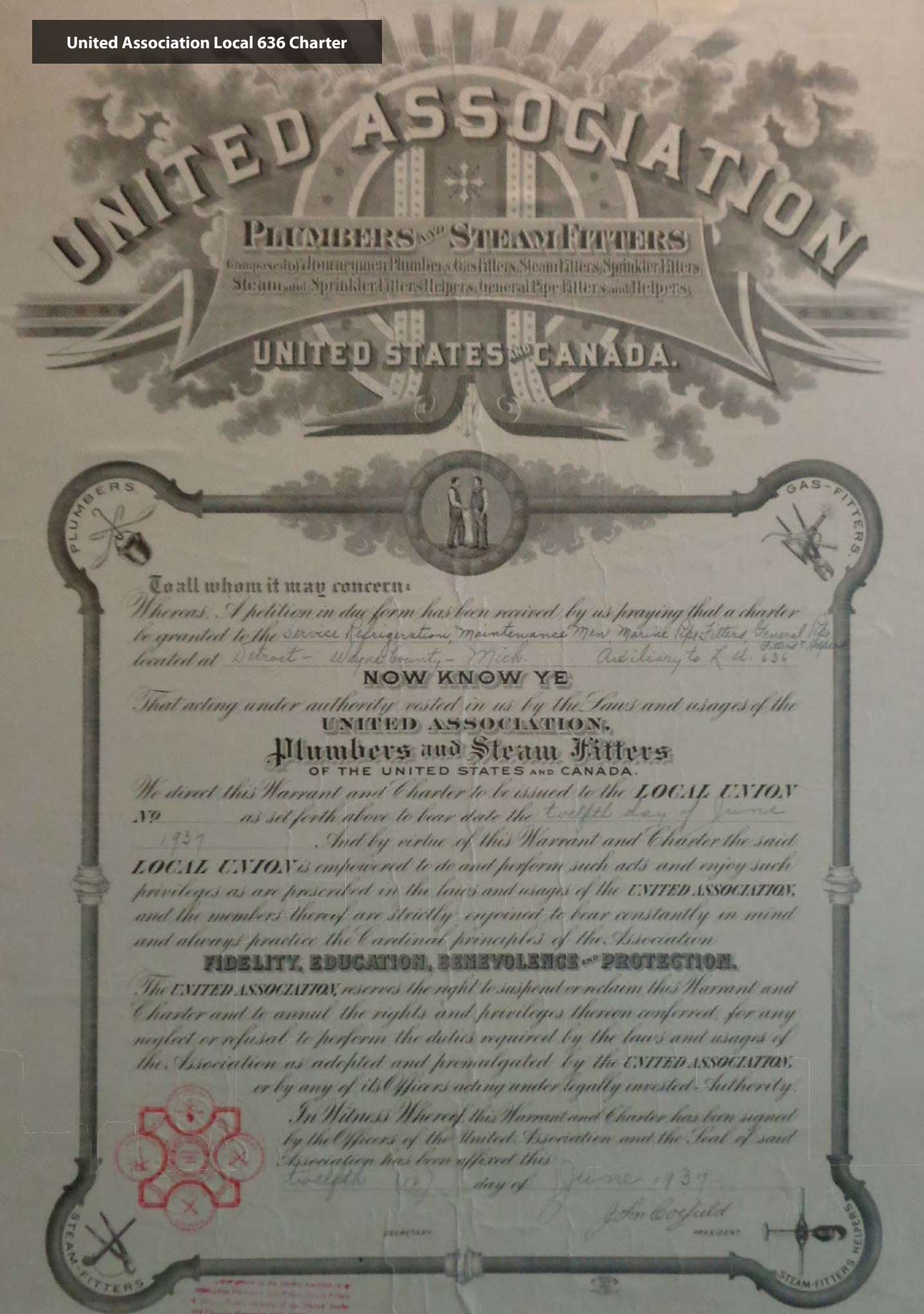
In accordance with the plan of amalgamation, the steamfitters’ helpers retained the charter of their former local as their own U.A. entity – Steamfitters’ Helpers Local 588 of Detroit.

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U.A. Local 636 and Local 588 members at Stroh’s Brewery, 1914



United Association Local 636 Charter



“This has been a happy ending of a long and bitter struggle for both locals,” Kennedy wrote, “and the prediction of the entire labor movement of the city is that nothing can prevent our local unions from now on of making greater progress and putting Detroit among the best organized cities, so far as our crafts are concerned.”

The organizer went on to express his gratitude to each local’s committee for their respective roles in the process, recognizing from Local 588, Business Agent Olive, Frank Curry, Al McCracken, Frank Cline and Harry Dalton; from Local 8, Business Agent Carty, J.W. Moore, R.L. McBrearty, W. Peters and George Baurger; and from Local 98, Business Agent John Cooke, Otto Deunske, J.Gildo, J.A. Grier, W.G. McKaig and Samuel Lees.

In particular, Kennedy pointed out that the union was indebted to Cooke “for the good work he had done in helping to bring about the desired results.” However, the amalgamation agreement, which also stipulated work jurisdictions between the new local and Local 98, would soon after prove a source of great contention between the two Detroit U.A. groups.

## BUILDING UP CONDITIONS & MEMBERSHIP

Having overcome the tribulations of the merger, Local 636 and Helpers Local 588 were doing “considerable work” throughout the city by August that first year, Kennedy reported in the October 1914 *Journal*. In fact, shortly after the amalgamation agreement went into effect, the U.A. organizer crowed in a July 1914 account of his June 12 trip to Detroit:

“Let me say that our plumbers and steamfitters enjoy better conditions and are the only ones that are working under an agreement that is in the Building Trades Department, and we are not in need of organization

*anywhere near as much as the balance of the trades.”*

Some of the more prominent projects on which the steamfitters and helpers were working at the time included the Stroh’s Brewery and the new, 16-story, 800-room Detroit Statler Hotel on Washington Boulevard.

But in August, Local 588 went out on strike because the city’s employers would not acknowledge the helpers local. The executive board of Local 636 worked to bring about a settlement, “but very little was accomplished owing to the very arbitrary and unreasonable stand of the employers, which was that they absolutely refused to recognize the Helpers’ Local,” Kennedy wrote in the October *Journal*.

The situation continued into April 1915, although some of the contractors were employing union helpers, Kennedy reported in the June *Journal*—while also ominously noting that the Local 636 agreement with its employers did not mention the recognition of helpers.

During the following year, Local 636 and Local 98 also found themselves striking several jobs “for the enforcement of the card,” U.A. General Organizer John W. Bruce announced in the November 1916 *Journal*. Meanwhile, the city’s Building Trades Council also issued a decree to strike “all jobs where unfair conditions prevailed” – and the local was striking throughout October with all of the building trades against nonunion contractors in the city.

The principal issue facing Local 636 at the time was that the city’s employers association was determined that all work in Detroit would be done under open-shop conditions, and they were therefore trying to “force fair contractors to fight us,” Bruce proclaimed. Regardless, the organizer also found Local 636 “going along in good shape and, if all the locals in the building trades had been as consistent in their work as locals 636 and 98, Detroit would not be in the position they are today.”

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## United Association Locals 98 & 636 EARLY ON, AN UNEASY FRIENDSHIP

Enjoying a partnership that has been – most often – mutually beneficial and affable for 100 years now, the relationship between U.A. Plumbing Local 98 and U.A. Pipefitters Local 636 has been punctuated over the decades by multiple joint efforts to improve and protect the union and the piping industry. Perhaps most notably, this alliance has produced what has become the industry’s most highly regarded training program, beginning with joint apprentice-education endeavors in the 1920s.

In fact, there might be no Local 636 had it not been for the efforts of Local 98 over 100 years ago. The campaign to join International Association Local 8 and United Association Local 588 into a single steamfitters local for Detroit (which would eventually result in the formation of Local 636 in 1914) was driven by discussions that included jurisdictional negotiations with Local 98.

Founded in September 1892, “The Plumbers’ Association of Detroit” during only its third meeting, held September 15, passed a motion to join “The United Plumbers’ Association.” The first official meeting of U.A. Plumbers Local Union No. 98 was held in January 1894, with 16 of a total 31 members present.

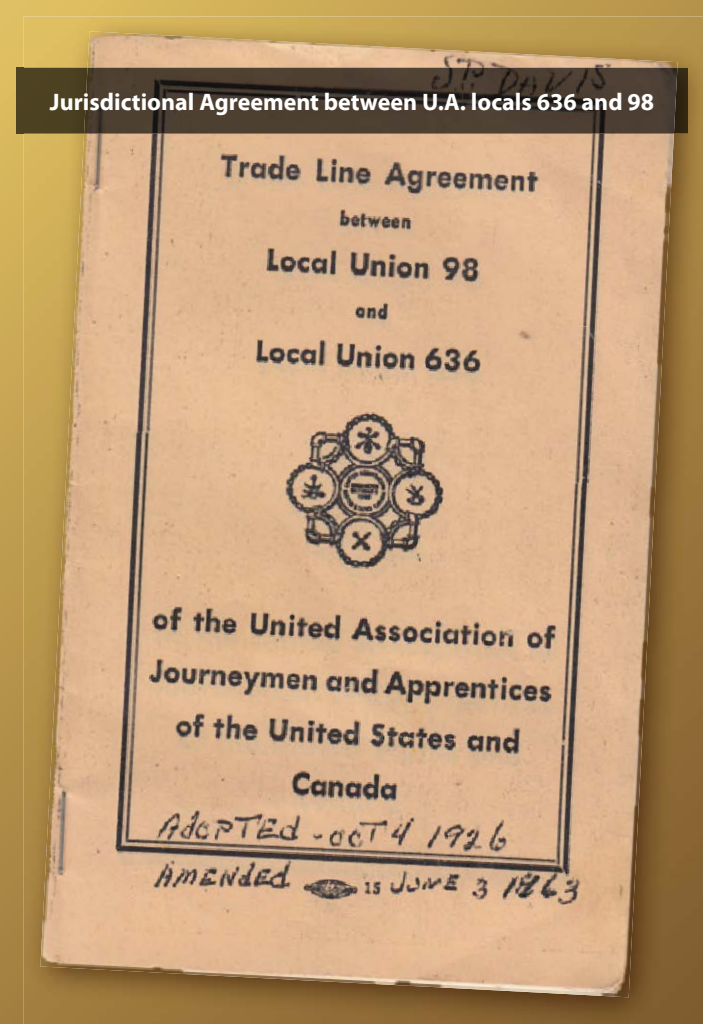
Indeed, Local 98 played no small role in the creation of Local 636 with the 1914 agreement that brought locals 8 and 588 together. However, with jurisdictional contentions unresolved despite being outlined in the pact, Local 98 Business Agent George Masterson declared in a April 1, 1920, letter addressed to the officers and members of Local 636 that the 1914 agreement was void.

“Last week, another instance arose where the Steamfitter <sic> insisted on taking advantage of the broad interpretation that may be placed on certain clauses in this agreement and instructed their members to do certain work that has always been conceded to the Plumbers (running water pipes),” Masterson wrote. “Taking all things into consideration, L.U. 98 feels justified in declaring this agreement at an end.”

Local 98 then attempted to gain possession of steamfitters’ work contained in the 1914 agreement, even though in 1921, the U.A. General Executive Board declared that the local must abide by the agreement, according to an April 3, 1951, report to a board investigating jurisdictional claims made by Local 98 on March 22 of that year.

This “state of affairs” continued until 1937, the report says, but from that year through 1947, the locals “did work in harmony without any trade-line jurisdictional disputes whatsoever.” However, in 1948, Local 98 started “to change the lines of demarcation that had been in existence between the two locals relative to our established jurisdiction of work,” according to the report.

Local 98 Business Manager Joseph Perry and Business Manager William Kelley of Local 636 traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with Gen. Pres. Peter T. Schoemann in early 1963 and discuss the locals’ “long-standing disagreements.” By June, the locals had amended their 1922 Trade Line Agreement to create a revised jurisdictional work arrangement that remains the only one of its kind in the entire U.A.; one of its provisions states, “Both Local Unions sincerely agree to respect and recognize the work jurisdiction of both locals.”





Local 636 members, Cadillac Motor plant, 1919

Continued from page 21

The next year, the local sent two delegates to the U.A. convention, marking the first time an official from Local 636 attended.

A new agreement followed on May 1, 1918, increasing wages to 90 cents per hour. Soon after, one of the more substantial jobs on which Local 636 members could be found was the Cadillac motor factory in Detroit.

The local also endeavored to relieve its helpers of their difficulties, and on December 1, 1918, members of Local 588 merged into Local 636. The word “helpers” was also added to the charter, as instructed by U.A. General Secretary Thomas E. Burke in a letter from the General Office dated August 9, 1918.

The next year’s state convention of the U.A. Michigan State Association, held June 7, 1919, officially included Local 636. Most notably, the association at the time was trying to secure the passage of a steamfitters license law in the state legislature.

With locals 636 and 98 negotiating for \$10 per day the following spring, their members walked off their jobs on May 1, 1920, and were having some success in securing their demands, as Kennedy reported in the June *Journal*: “They are very busy these days signing up employers who have decided to run their own business regardless of what the Employers’ Association may think.”

But the local and its business agent, John Webb, along with Local 98, were still battling the open shops into October of that first year of the new decade, Kennedy wrote in the November *Journal*. He went on to outline the fray in no uncertain terms:

“A most wonderful fight has been made by our locals and when our employers discovered they were not getting very far with their un-American plan they applied for an injunction to the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Michigan, not only

*against our two locals and the United Association, but the entire building trades locals of Detroit, the Detroit Federation of Labor and its labor paper. The temporary injunction granted seeks to prohibit everyone mentioned from doing anything but breathing.”*

In the end, the Building Trades Council hired a lawyer to fight the restraining order.

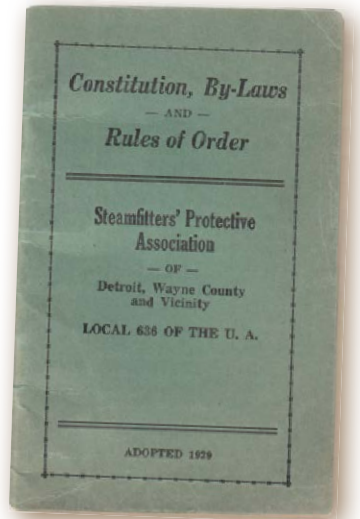
Regardless, during the balance of the 1920s, the local’s condition – and that of the organized pipe trades in general – would remain promising. In 1923, Local 636 was able to inform U.A. General Organizer Richard P. Walsh that “the outlook is very much better than it has been for years.” Local 98 Business Agent George Masterton even told Walsh he was confident that “the tenacity of our membership in holding out in Detroit against almost insurmountable odds during the hard times of the past few years have <sic> discourage the enthusiasm amongst our enemies.”

Also that year, Local 636 members were working on a new Ford plant under construction; in May, a steamfitting firm had attempted to do the work with nonunion men, but after an “adjusting of the conditions,” Local 636 men were put to work there, organizer Bruce reported in the June 1923 *Journal*.

More good news came from the local’s agreement committee at that time, too. It had met with the local’s employers and was able to secure a proposition for an increase in wages of 10 cents per hour, raising the local’s rate to \$1.10.

At the mid-point of the decade, Walsh was able to describe the “wonderful improvement” that had taken place in the local’s working conditions “and in their affairs in general within the last couple of years.” He also noted that while he was in Detroit, he met with the local’s employers and “found them all friendly disposed towards No. 636 and desirous of cooperating in every way with the local to advance the possibilities of the industry, which are many.”

The U.A. organizer was still able to express in the January 1929 *Journal* that “business conditions have been fair in Detroit this season.” While Local 636 had been involved in a controversy with the Sheet Metal Workers over the hanging of Columbia Units for heating purposes in various sites, it was successful in having the work turned over by the contractors to its U.A. members.



Just as encouraging that final year of the 1920s, membership in Local 636 reached over 400 fitters and helpers. (On a national level, the U.A. also had moved into the forefront of the American labor movement by this time, having created of a formal five-year apprenticeship program and grown in membership to 60,000 by the year 1929.)

## GROWTH THROUGH DEPRESSION, WAR

Immediately following the stock market crash of October 1929 that would lead to The Great Depression of the 1930s, Local 636 continued to hold its own and nurture its trade. The local even announced in early 1930 that there would be a meeting between its officers and nonunion shop owners “in an honest endeavor to bring about improvement in industry.”

Also continuing to improve itself from within, Local 636 that year discontinued its practice of using its waiting list, which U.A. General Organizer George W. Strom proclaimed in the August 1930 *Journal* was “destroying their local union.”

But soon after, Local 636 would fall in line with the national trend as construction virtually

## Cooling Hudson's LOCAL 636 HELPS MAKE HISTORY

In 1924, United Association Local 636 member pipefitters installed three, 195-ton Carrier centrifugal chillers in the J.L. Hudson Company in Detroit, which at the time was the tallest department store in the world and the city's largest. With these units, Hudson's became the first air-conditioned department store in the country.

Shoppers were "greatly pleased and intrigued" by the air conditioned store and "air conditioning became a marketing tool for many retail businesses," according to Carrier Co. literature. Officially classified as comfort air conditioning, company head Willis Carrier noted, the installation was also designed "to meet an emergency as temperatures soared on basement bargain days – and people fainted."

During World War II, the U.S. government borrowed one of Hudson's giant air conditioning units to cool a nearby defense plant, in which temperature control was critical to manufacturing, according to *Hudson's: Detroit's Legendary Department Store*.

Hudson's Department Store  
(photo courtesy of The Windsor Star)



came to a standstill. Overall U.A. membership dropped to less than 35,000 and the union held no conventions between 1928 and 1938 as The Depression took a heavy toll on the organization as a whole.

In September 1930, Local 636 membership was at 391, but a steep decline would bottom out in June of 1933 when the local's membership dipped to 92. (By the end of the decade, however, it was over 300 again as the nation geared up for war.)

Undaunted, the local continued its efforts to unionize construction work in and around Detroit, including work on three different breweries – with which Local 636 apparently at one time had good relations. In late 1932 and early 1933, the local even agreed to place pickets on each of the breweries, Strom reported in the May 1933 *Journal*, "until they recognized the necessity of going along with the organization that did so much toward restoring the brewery industry (following prohibition)."

Though trudging through the 1930s along with most other industries, Masterton, who had become an international general organizer, was still able to write in the February 1938 *Journal* that Local 636 was making excellent progress "despite the complexity of problems existing in the automobile industry." (This would be a recurring theme at times; in early 1946, for example, the local was especially affected by strikes in the Detroit automobile sector.)

By September of that year, Local 636, along with Local 98 and the Detroit Building Trades Council, had entered into what would be a short-lived voluntary trade agreement (commonly recognized as a "bid to depositary") with their contractors. However, the city prosecutor's office would declare that the agreement was illegal and the locals must desist from using it, Strom reported in the *Journal*. The Master Plumbers' Association also eventually agreed that it would comply with the district attorney's opinion to discontinue the voluntary trade agreement.



Local 636 baseball team, 1930s

As with many other trades, it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" that helped get the U.A. back up on its feet. Through the program's Public Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration, the U.A. helped build dams, roads, schools, public buildings and housing projects – which put its members back to work.

With a second World War on the horizon, U.A. membership reached 81,000 by 1941, and during the war, that number climbed to 210,000 as members were put to work in shipyards, weapons plants, aircraft factories and other facilities. Also contributing to the union's comeback was the development of national agreements between the U.A. and large, national contractors, including the landmark UA-NCA (National Constructors Association) National Construction Agreement, which was signed in 1941.

### 1932

**United Association Local 104 of Mt. Clemens, Michigan, was amalgamated into U.A. locals 636 and 98 on August 17, 1932.** The plumber and steamfitter local had been chartered by the U.A. on November 23, 1923.

Beginning as early as 1940, Local 636 members also were working on various jobs relative to the country's defense program. It also accepted an agreement that year that carried with it an increase in wages of \$1 per day, effective June 1.

In early 1941, the local's representatives met with their counterparts of the Teamsters union "and reached a satisfactory understanding that the pipe shop in all of the warehouses shall come under the jurisdiction of the United Association," Strom reported in the May *Journal*. Meanwhile, the Local 636 assisted the Teamsters in their efforts to secure

an agreement with the lumber dealers.

Into 1942 and, for the most part, throughout the war years, Local 636 improved its lot – so much so, apparently, that it was truly taking hold throughout Detroit. Masterton, who had by this time risen to general president of the U.A., even wrote in the August 1942 *Journal*, “While in that city, I ... was more than happy to hear of the progress being made in the city whose proud boast at one time was ‘that it was open shop.’”

Jobs being manned by Local 636 in 1942 also included a large housing job and an addition to the Ford Rogue plant.

As the war drew to a close, the local continued – as it always had and would – to protect its jurisdictional work. In particular at the time, a machine had been invented to cut circular holes in cement slabs and, because of a clause in the specifications providing that the general contractor could cut all openings for the various trades, a common laborer had been put on the machine and had started to cut holes for the steamfitter on one particular job, General Organizer Leslie E. Dilg explained in the August 1945 *Journal*. After

## 1948

**United Association Auxiliary Local 636, representing service refrigeration maintenance men, marine pipefitters, general pipefitters and helpers, was merged into its parent Local 636 on April 1, 1948.** With the merger, auxiliary members’ per capita was paid through March 31, 1948.

The auxiliary local, which had been chartered by the U.A. on June 12, 1937, had sought a separate charter in 1938. “However, my investigation discloses that the pipefitters mentioned can best be served under the guidance of Local 636, at least for the present,” U.A. General Organizer George W. Strom declared in the June 1938 U.A. Journal.

“considerable argument on the job,” the work was turned over to the U.A. members because of a building trades decision rendered on May 5, 1926, that provided that “plumbers and steamfitters shall

## 1932

**United Association Local 789 of Pontiac, Michigan, was amalgamated into U.A. locals 636 and 98 on November 7, 1932.** The plumber, steamfitter and steamfitter helper local had been chartered by the U.A. on August 2, 1919, and records show the U.A. was discussing its possible amalgamation as early as September 1930.

A few years after the official merger, as U.A. General Organizer Frank J. Kennedy reported in the June 14, 1937, U.A. Journal, “... we have agreed Local 636 ... is to open their charter for a period of thirty (30) days, up to and including July 15, and permit all expelled members of old Local 789 ... to again become members of their Local 636 ... the year’s back dues to be waived.” Thirteen men from Pontiac were taken into Local 636 on July 2, 1937, during a special meeting, cash receipt records showing they paid a \$3 initiation fee and \$2 in dues.

have jurisdiction to do cutting where required for the installation of their respective work,” he wrote.

Throughout the remainder of the decade, Local 636 would battle for its work jurisdiction. Dilg described in the February 1948 *Journal* a dispute with the millwrights over the setting of pumps on the Semmett Solvay plant in Wyandotte. The Building and Construction Trades Department decided in the end that members of the U.A. would set and level the pumps, and the aligning of the shafting and connecting of the coupling between the pumps and the motors would be done by the millwrights after the piping had been connected.

Also in early 1948, a dispute arose with iron workers on a job in Bay City over jurisdiction for the installation of large circulating pumps on the job site. Then in the summer of 1949, Local 636 members working at the Austin Fields Compressor Station near Big Rapids encountered problems with other trades over which part of the work each would perform on construction of the compressors, which were connected to large, natural-gas transportation lines, Dilg reported in the September *Journal*.

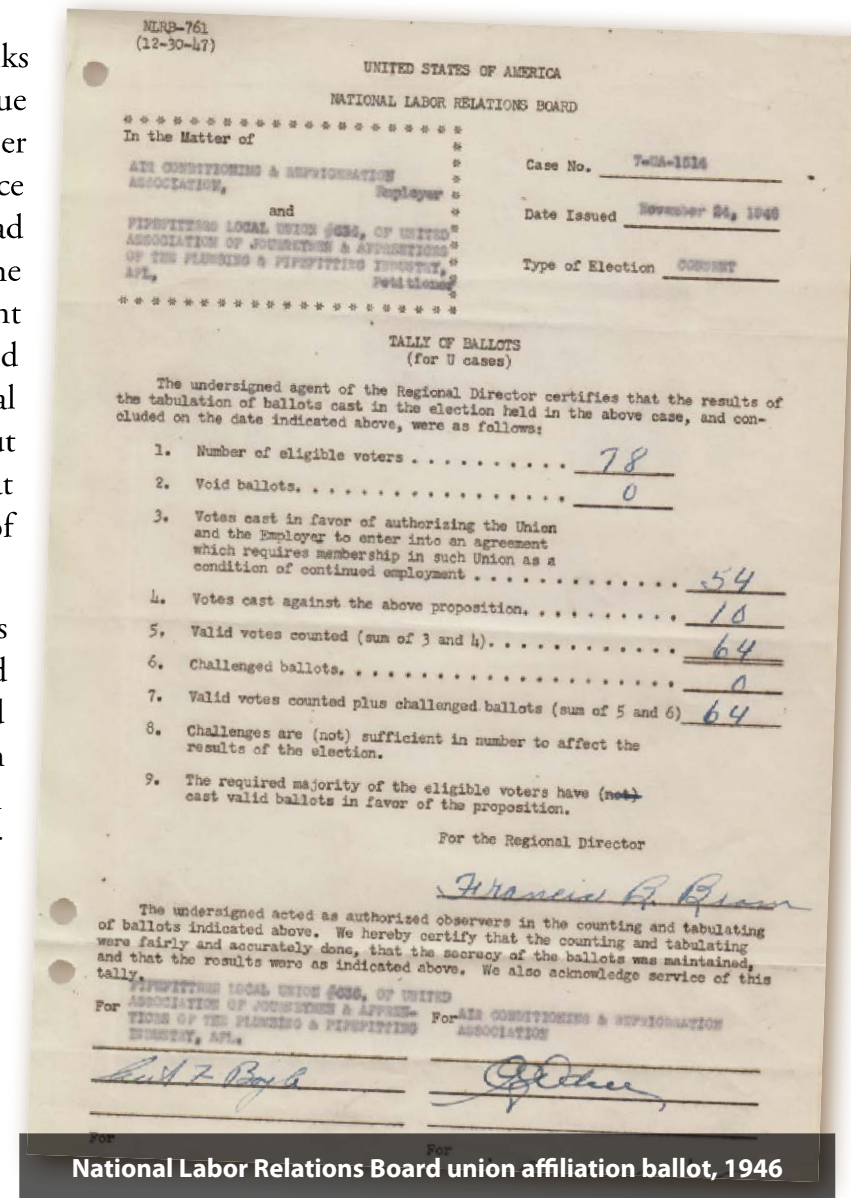
A dispute with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) local union over

the installation of oil burners, storage tanks and piping at a factory followed. That issue prompted Dilg to note in the November 1949 *Journal*, “This was another instance where another international union had been certified as the bargaining agent by the National Labor Relations Board to represent the workers engaged in the installation and servicing of oil burners.” Subsequently, Local 636 met with I.B.E.W. representatives, but they could not reach an understanding “that would eliminate the friction in this part of the pipe-fitting industry.”

The local’s persistence in expanding its classification into refrigeration also would pay off. Back in early 1946, it had requested assistance from the international office with organizing the refrigeration industry in Detroit. Two years later, members of the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Association “voted to authorize Pipefitters Local 663 ... to make an agreement” with the association “requiring membership in the organization as a condition of employment ...,” the National Labor Relations Board’s Certificate of Results of Union Authorization Election of December 3, 1948, read.

*(Two decades later, Local 636 Business Manager William Kelley would announce in a notice to employers of the local’s refrigeration members that the total amount of vacation and holiday provided to employees in the local’s air conditioning and refrigeration division in 1967 amounted to \$75,800. “I think all in the industry can feel justly proud,” Kelley wrote, “for not only have your employees and our members benefited but we have added substantially to the well-being of the economy in our area.”)*

Throughout the 1940s, Local 636 worked to enter into agreements with larger companies in Detroit, such as the R.C. Mahon Co., which designed,



manufactured and installed industrial equipment such as industrial spray booths, industrial washing equipment and industrial drying equipment on a national basis. The local also was successful, for example, in organizing the remainder of the “miscellaneous shop employees of The Grover Co., which designed and engineered and installed pneumatic tube-type conveyor systems on a national basis,” General Organizer J.J. McCartin reported in the September 1946 *Journal*.

Intent on building its membership, too, the local during 1946 offered to waive its initiation fee for members of the Teamsters union who joined Local 636, per a letter of October 7, 1946.

Later that year, Local 636 asked the International



Office if it could apply for a “Combination Union Charter,” according to a December 4 letter from Local 636 Secretary B.J. McGuire. On May 14, 1948, per a letter of re-issuance for a combination charter from the U.A. International office, the local’s name was changed from Steamfitters Protective Association to Pipefitters Local No. 636.

## EXPANDING ON ITS SUCCESSES

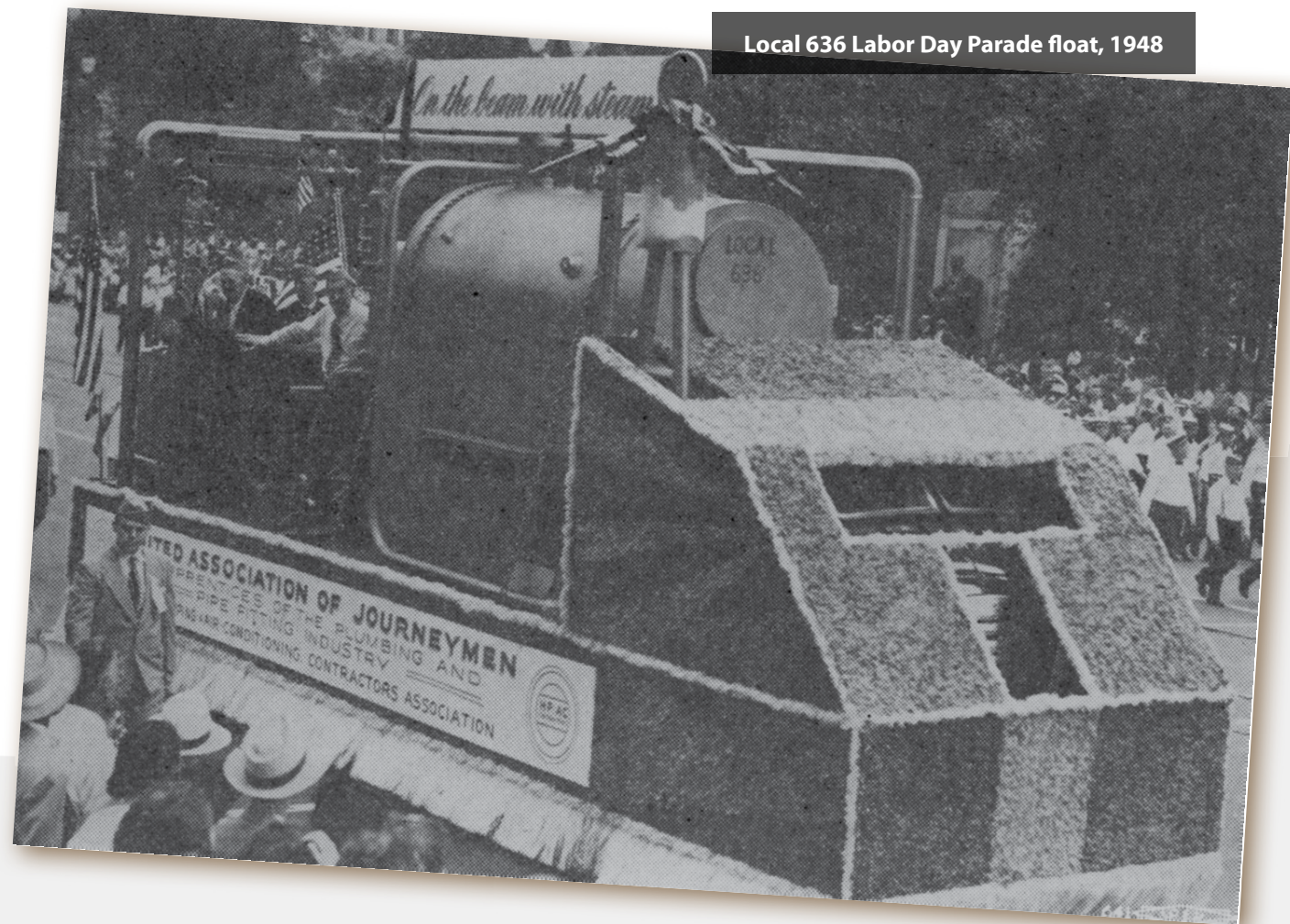
Into and throughout the 1950s and beyond, Local 636 continued to build on its relationship with the Heating, Piping and Air Conditioning Contractors Association of Detroit, whose members were the local’s primary employers. Following a dinner meeting between the two groups in November 1952, attended by officials of the local as well as a representative of the U.A.

International Office, Ben H. Blom, a general organizer, commented in his December report to the *Journal*:

“Meetings of this kind where the everyday problems of our industry are jointly discussed are very beneficial to both the employers and our general membership, and brings about a good relationship that is so vital to our industry.”

By 1950, the local’s membership had grown to almost 1,300, well up from just over 300 before the war only a decade before. It would continue to add members throughout the decade, reaching 1,665 by September 1960.

And there was plenty of work – as well as jurisdictional disputes – to be had. A new power-generation station in Detroit started up by March 1950, for which Local 636 and Local 98 had to have a separation of work settlement through the Pipe



Local 636 Labor Day Parade float, 1948

Trades District Council of Detroit. (At the same time, the two locals and the council also worked on an agreement for the installation of other types of equipment in connection with oil refineries and chemical plants, according to General Organizer John J. McCartin in the March 1950 *Journal*).

The local needed men “for two or three weeks” later that year, General Organizer Dilg revealed in the September 1950 *Journal*, and “an understanding has been worked out between these local unions when men are needed for short periods of time, no permit fees of any kind being assessed, that the right to work is terminated when local men are available.” But disputes with the boilermakers continued at a refinery job for the Socony-Vacuum Oil Co. in Trenton, Michigan, though the trades eventually arrived at a settlement.

The following year, McCartin visited with the local and Business Manager John Williams, who was “seeking information as to the jurisdiction of work that properly belonged to members of the United Association, and particularly his local union, in connection with the building of blast furnaces, coke ovens and their byproduct plants and equipment,” McCartin reported in the May 1951 *Journal*. In fact, an agreement with the Boilermakers International covering that work had been in place, establishing that it was to be performed by members of the U.A.

But questions about jurisdiction between the two trades arose again in late 1952. This time around, the inquiries involved the installation of certain piping and equipment in the power plant under construction for the City of Detroit, a large blast furnace at the Great Lakes Corp. plant in

Wyandotte, Michigan, and the installation of several large calciners at the Wyandotte Chemical Corp., General Organizer Ben H. Blom reported in the December 1952 *Journal*.

Conflict with the ironworkers also persisted, most notably over the unloading and setting of completed compressors on various jobsites; it was finally agreed that members of the U.A. would perform the work, Dilg announced in February 1951. But later that year and into the next, Local 636 members at a Great Lakes Steel Co. job were again in disagreement with the ironworkers, this time over the unloading and setting of completed pumps, which Dilg summarized in the January 1952 *Journal*: “It was impossible to reach an understanding due to the claims of the ironworkers and it was necessary to utilize other means to secure the work that rightfully belongs to the United Association.”

Local 636 members at that time were also working at Goebbels Brewery, where they installed a conveyor system “that was interesting because it was a piping installation with a continuous conveyor system inside it carrying the spent grain to a large disposal hopper,” Dilg described. Meanwhile, the pipefitters were also employed on an oil refinery in Trenton, Michigan, where they had just completed the installation of a T.C.C. oil cracking unit for the C.F. Braun Co.

By mid-1951, Local 636 was attempting to organize the refrigeration industry into the U.A.; the local had sent a petition to the National Labor Relations Board for certification election in a number of refrigeration shops in Detroit, according to Dilg in the October 1951 *Journal*.



Wayne State University expansion project, 1952

## Patrick V. McNamara

### PIPEFITTER GOES TO WASHINGTON

*“My vocation has been the construction industry, and my avocation has been the labor movement.”*

U.S. Sen. Patrick V. McNamara

In 1954, United Association Pipefitters Local 636 President Patrick V. McNamara won a seat in the U.S. Senate and would go on to serve a dynamic 11-year term in office until he passed away on April 30, 1966.

McNamara, born in North Weymouth, Massachusetts, learned the pipefitting trade at Fore River Apprentice School in Quincy, Massachusetts, and began working as a pipefitter at the Fore River Shipyard in 1916 for 9 cents an hour. He moved to Detroit in 1921 and soon after joined Local 636, working as foreman for the Grinnell Co. before serving as job superintendent for the R.L. Spitzley Co. from 1922 to 1926 and as a general superintendent for the H. Kelly Co. from 1926 to 1930.

In 1937, he was elected president of Local 636, a position he held until 1955. He also served as vice-president of the Detroit chapter of the American Federation of Labor from 1939 to 1945.

In 1946, McNamara made his first venture into politics with a successful campaign for an unexpired term on the Detroit City Council, serving until 1947. From 1949 to 1955, he was a member of the Detroit Board of Education.

As a U.S. senator elected in 1954, McNamara pushed toward final action on numerous pieces of legislation that benefited the labor movement. Following his death, U.A. General Organizer Wendell Straight wrote of him in the August 1966 Journal, “We of labor lost one of the best friends we ever had in the Senate ... the results of his work on behalf of labor will endure throughout time.”

As one of its “Champions of Aging,” the AARP encapsulated McNamara’s legislative career and contributions in a 2013 article:

*McNamara, who represented his state from 1955 right up until his death, was born to Irish American immigrants and never abandoned humble working-class values that included a reverence for elders and a deep concern for their welfare.*



Campaign poster, 1962

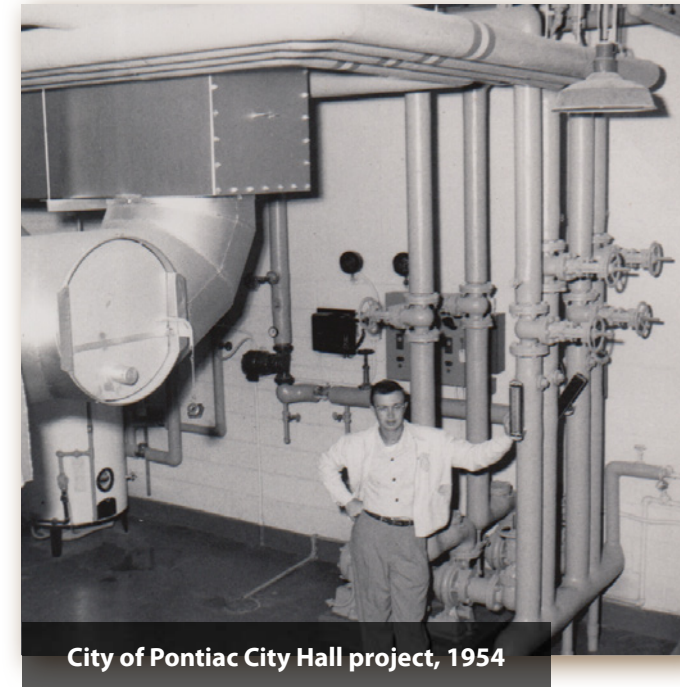
*In the Senate, McNamara drew on his real-world experience to become an influential authority in such areas as highway programs, education and labor-management relations. But the rights and welfare of older Americans turned out to be the area in which “Senator Pat” had the biggest impact.*

The Patrick V. McNamara Federal Building on Michigan Avenue in downtown Detroit was named in honor of the senator when it opened in 1976. Designed in the Brutalist style of reinforced concrete with repeating motifs, the building features nearly 1-million square feet of space and occupies a full city block.



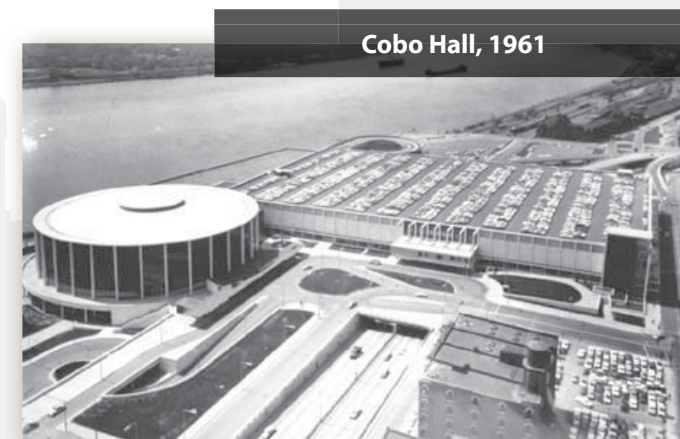
McNamara and The Kennedys, circa 1962

Continued from page 30



Not to be outdone, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) Union Local 58 petitioned the regional office of the National Labor Relations Board that year for an election at James & Roach Co., a refrigeration and air-conditioning contractor – which was granted. Local 636 had signed an agreement with James & Roach covering the men who were installing the company’s equipment, Williams wrote in a May 22 telegram to the U.A. International Office, noting that Local 58 was questioning the U.A.’s “right of jurisdiction.”

Undeterred as always, Local 636 continued to forge ahead and by October 1951 had purchased a new building, moving from 3840 Grand River Avenue to 6515 Grand River Avenue. “The building is well suited to the needs of the organization and is certainly an asset,” Dilg wrote.



Cobo Hall, 1961

(By 1955, the local would move to another new headquarters at 2988 East Grand Boulevard.)

In between enjoying time playing on the local’s baseball and bowling teams, among other activities, projects for Local 636 members in 1952 included a new Ford-Mercury-Lincoln plant near Wayne, Michigan, where they were installing large, gas-fired unit heaters. The fitters were also at work on new coke oven installation for the Wilputte Coke Over Corp. in the Detroit area by the end of the year.

The local then extended its hand to its members’ families, providing them with hospitalization insurance beginning May 1, 1952, the *Building Tradesman* announced on April 25.

Over the balance of the decade, Local 636 workers put their skills to use on significant projects such as the Mackinac oil line under Anderson Brothers and The Conyes Co. starting May 1, 1953; the installation of steam coils in 1955 for Peters-Dalton Inc., which manufactured and installed large ovens for drying paint on automobiles; and the River Rogue plant, a new, three-unit, steam-power facility erected for the Detroit Edison Co. by United Engineering & Constructors Inc. in 1956. Members also worked in 1958 on the sewage disposal plant at Warren, Michigan, done by the C&C Construction Co. and the Plymouth Motor Car Co. plant in Detroit, installing piping.

A significant and far-reaching development of the time came about as the result of negotiations for a labor-agreement in 1956, during which Local 636 and Local 98 and the Detroit Association of Plumbing Contractors and the Mechanical Contractors Association agreed to create a Pension Program for plumbers and pipefitters in the Detroit area. Contributions by the employers to the Pension Fund began July 1, 1956, at the rate of 5 cents per hour. *(As Local 636 turned 100 years old in February 2014, its pension was a dual plan consisting of “defined contributions” and “defined benefits.”)*

One of the more prominent jobs on which Local 636 fitters worked during this period was the construction of the \$56 million Cobo Hall civic center at Jefferson and Washington avenues in downtown Detroit under mechanical contractor Stanley Carter Co. One of the nation's first large convention centers, it featured 1.3 million total square feet of space when completed in 1959.

Detroit. The spurt continued for the next 10 years.

To begin that ensuing decade, the members of Local 636 ratified a new, two-year contract with the Metropolitan Detroit Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association by an "overwhelming margin," the *Building Tradesman* reported on June 5, 1970. The new agreement provided a package totaling \$2.10 spread over two years; \$1.10 was



Beaumont Medical Office, 1956



effective retroactive to June 1 with an additional \$1 forthcoming on June 1, 1971; 70 cents was added to the pay envelope, bringing the journeyman's basic wage to \$7.60 per hour plus benefits; 20 cents per hour had been allotted to vacation pay, insurance had been upped by 10 cents and pensions also had been increased by 10 cents.



Royal Oak High School project, 1956

By 1960, the local was representing over 1,660 journeymen and apprentices. Nearly 10 years later, as the decade was coming to a close, Local 636 had over 2,000 members.

In the early '60s, projects on which they were employed included the Detroit-Edison powerhouse in Marine City, Michigan, in 1960 and the Great Lakes Steel Co. plant, where a waste heat boiler was erected in 1962 by Babcock and Wilcox – and where there was a dispute over work assignments with the boilermakers.

Among many other projects, in 1964, members were working at the Chrysler-Sterling plant, and in 1966, they were installing coal piping at a lime kiln in Detroit.

The local's growth also facilitated a July 1968 move from its East Grand Boulevard location to new headquarters at 16856 Meyers Road in

A record number of apprentices – 139 in all – graduated from the Detroit Pipe Trades Apprenticeship Program in April 1970, including 33 Local 636 pipefitters. U.A. Assistant General President Martin J. Ward told the graduates during their celebration banquet that the U.A. had signed agreements with companies constructing housing and plumbing in factories, "and as a result of these agreements, all work will be done by U.A. members."

Indeed, it was the beginning of a time of substantial expansion for the local, kindled when pipefitters of U.A. Local 777 in Port Huron, Michigan, were merged into Local 636 on December 1, 1972. The following year, membership crested over 2,300 and would remain above that mark for much of the decade and into 1980; by July 1974, the local's membership even included over 260 apprentices.

Truly highlighting the decade out in the field was the transformation of the Ford Motor Co.'s Wayne assembly plant in early 1974. As part of the company's "nationwide conversion program to economy cars," the facility was switched over to producing Ford's Maverick automobile in record-setting time – "It was an industrial miracle," Lee Iacocca, President of Ford, exclaimed.

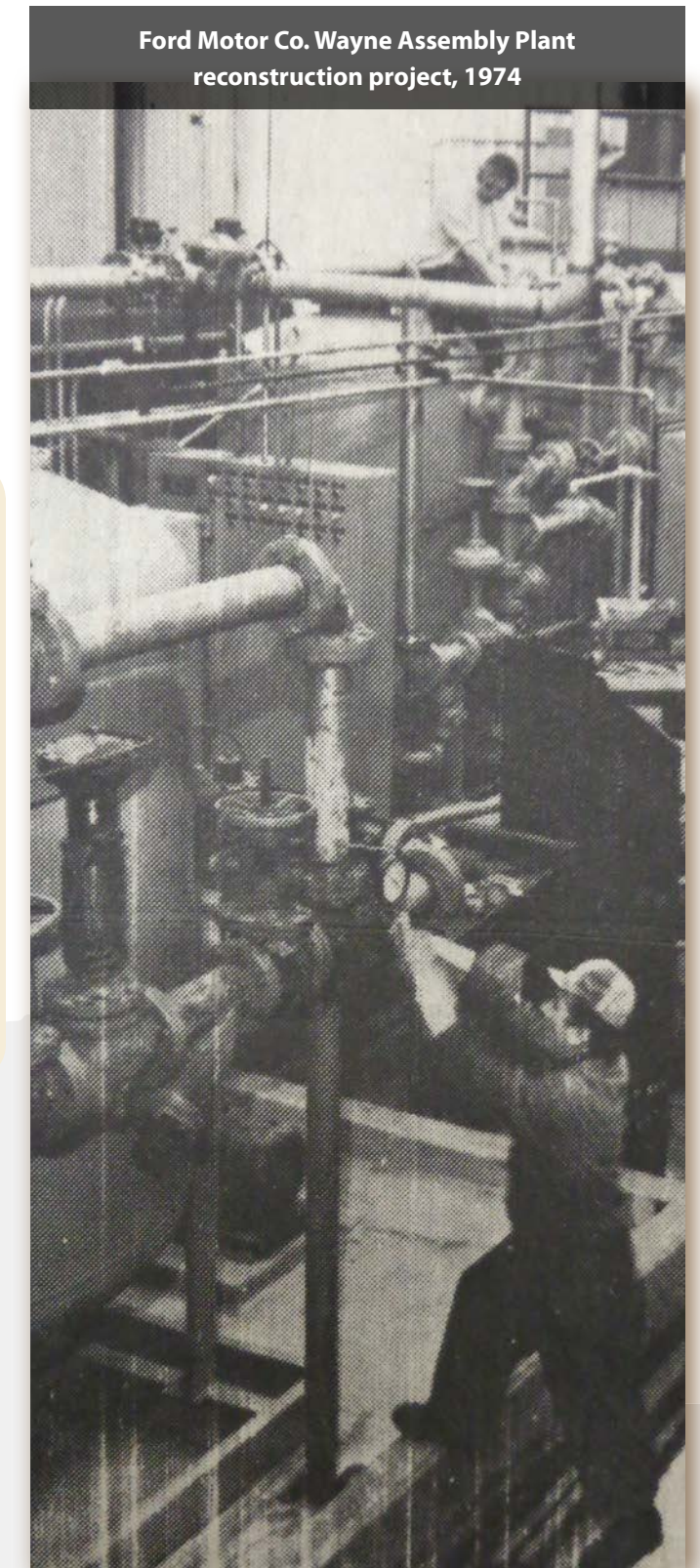
Over 2,000 building-trades workers, including members of Local 636, rebuilt what amounted to a brand-new plant of nearly 2 million square feet in 51 days, "a feat that would normally take car manufacturers about 16 weeks to complete," according to the March 1 *Building Tradesman*.

Later that year, however, Local 636 members were working on a day-to-day basis without a contract after multi-trades bargaining labor agreements, including those for 33 locals in the greater Detroit area, expired on May 31, the *Building Tradesman* reported on June 7. The fitters continued to work until they were locked out by some employers on July 31.

Bargaining sessions were held only on June 8 and 28 following the contract expiration, but they only resulted in the union filing an unfair labor practice

charge against the employers with the N.L.R.B. on July 29. At the time of the lockout, pipefitters also began selective picketing "against those employers who terminated the employment of pipefitters," according to the *Building Tradesman*.

Continued on page 37



Ford Motor Co. Wayne Assembly Plant reconstruction project, 1974

# Local 636 Apprentice and Upgrade Education

## 'PROVIDING THE BEST IN TRAINING'

**1936**

Pipefitters Local 636 begins first organized Apprenticeship Training; Ed Burns is hired as instructor.

**1937**

Local 636's present plan for apprentice training is instituted.

**1957**

Local 636 apprentice Lawrence Hollyer Sr. wins U.A. National Apprentice Pipefitting Contest.

**1960**

Richard Brennan is hired as a pipefitter instructor in March; William Giroux is hired as head instructor in May.

**1964**

Local 636 apprentice Donald Komraus wins the U.A. National Apprentice Pipefitting Contest.

**1966**

Apprentice School begins Local 636 service training.

**February 22, 1967**

Joint Apprenticeship Committee responds to letter from Detroit Public Schools inquiring about plans for the committee to increase the number of "non-white" participants in the trade; the committee agrees to send a letter informing Detroit Public Schools that "the new class of plumber apprentices will consist of four non-white and 31 white."

**1967**

Fred Juilliard is hired to teach welding; James McCabe is made head instructor.

**1970**

William Giroux is rehired as Director of Training on April 1.

The first apprenticeship training program for the United Association's plumbing and pipefitting industry in Detroit was established in 1924 in cooperation with the city's Board of Education. This arrangement continued until the latter part of 1928, when, due to "unavoidable circumstances," it was discontinued.

Late that year, labor and industry, with the guidance of the Federal Committee for Apprentice Training, formulated the beginning of U.A. Local 636's present plan for apprentice training, the **Pipefitting Industry Apprenticeship Program**, which was eventually put into effect in September 1937. Initially, only Boiler Codes were

A fee receipt for attending steamfitting apprentice classes in 1964.

REGISTRATION PERIOD		CLASS MEETS				SUBJECT	TOTAL HOURS	FEE
FROM	TO	TIME	DAY	DAILY-D	ROOM NO.			
8/14/64	11/21/64			7:30			37	92.
<small>TO STUDENT—If you discontinue any subject during the registration period you may be eligible for a refund. Delay in requesting refund reduces the amount refundable.</small>							NON-RESIDENT CHARGE	Per Hr.
<small>Form 0522—(11-61, 33R)</small>							Material Fee	TOTAL

taught to 50 apprentices in each the plumbing and pipefitting classes held in a one-room building trades school on Sixth and Abbott streets; but the United Association soon after authorized the organization and training of welders and the refrigeration service fields.

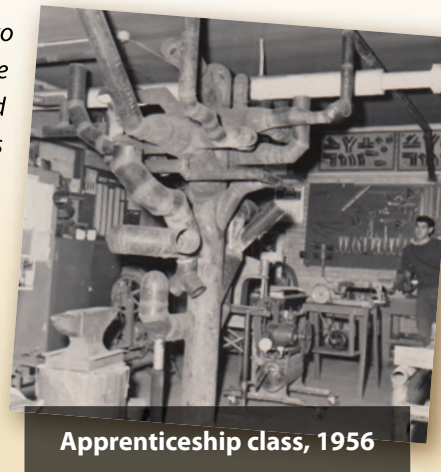
By October 1954, the piping trades had created the **Pipefitting Industry Joint Apprenticeship Committee**, which consisted of members from Local 636, U.A. Plumbers Local 98, the Detroit Master Plumbers Association and the "Heating & Piping" contractors' group.

The program for the Detroit Plumbers and Pipefitters Joint Apprentice Graduation Exercises and Banquet held on April 19, 1958, gave a brief account of the history of the apprenticeship:



Apprentices, 1954

"From a meager beginning of two instructors and 100 apprentices, despite the fact the program has been disrupted twice since it was established 21 years ago, first by World War II and again by the Korean conflict, it has steadily grown. Today it has four instructors and over 350 apprentices and is recognized as one of the outstanding apprentice training programs in the country."

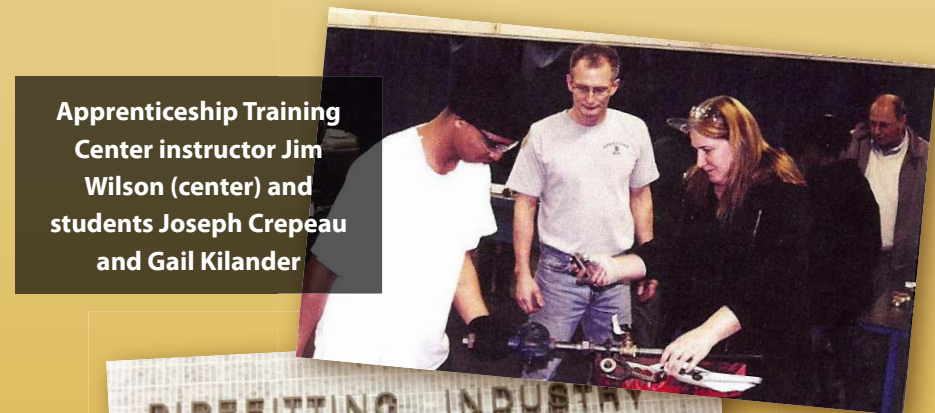


Apprenticeship class, 1956

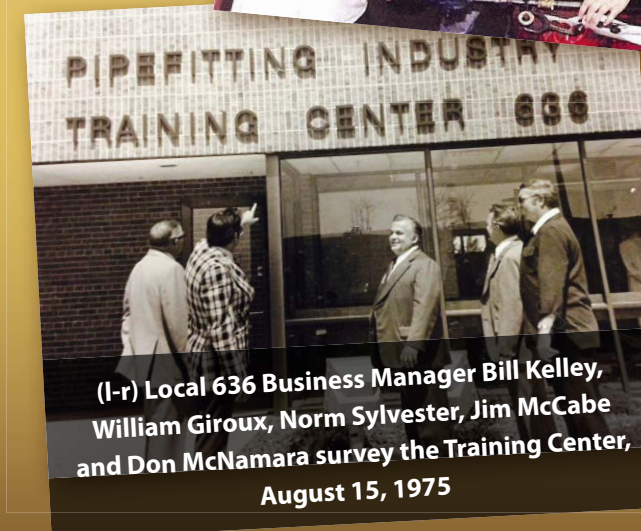
Through 1968, only steamfitting and welding were taught at the school. That year, the J.A.T.C. hired a refrigeration instructor to begin training apprentices in refrigeration and service work, a curriculum that has developed over the years. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, control systems were brought into prominence; training manuals published by the U.A. were brought into the program in the 1990s; and in 1995, programs for large chillers and absorbers were added.

On August 15, 1975, the **Detroit Pipefitting Industry Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee** (J.A.T.C.) dedicated a 27,000-square-foot Pipefitting Industry Training Center in Troy, Michigan. It was built and has been maintained by the Pipefitting Industry Building Trust Fund, with the United Association assisting with some furnishings and equipment from the National Contractors Association Training Trust Fund.

Today, as Local 636 celebrates its 100th anniversary, the Pipefitting Industry Training Committee has a fully intergraded service program with an HVACR (heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration) core. A 13,000-square-foot addition was built onto the training center just for this purpose.



Apprenticeship Training Center instructor Jim Wilson (center) and students Joseph Crepeau and Gail Kilander



(l-r) Local 636 Business Manager Bill Kelley, William Giroux, Norm Sylvester, Jim McCabe and Don McNamara survey the Training Center, August 15, 1975

**1971**

Local 636 apprentice John Teslak wins the U.A. National Apprentice Pipefitting Contest.

**1972**

Local 636 apprentice Michael Dubey wins the U.A. National Apprentice Pipefitting Contest.

**1972**

Affirmative Action plan of the Detroit Pipefitting Industry J.A.T.C. is accepted by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training.

**1973**

Apprentice program in February reaches the largest number of participants in Local 636 history with 304 apprentices (34 of which are minorities).

**1973**

J.A.T.C. agrees to meet a 25-percent minority commitment for five years.

**August 15, 1975**

New training center opens in Troy.

**1983**

Apprenticeship school is closed for three months to build up funds.

**1984**

Apprenticeship is down to 45 apprentices, the lowest enrollment since the 1930s.

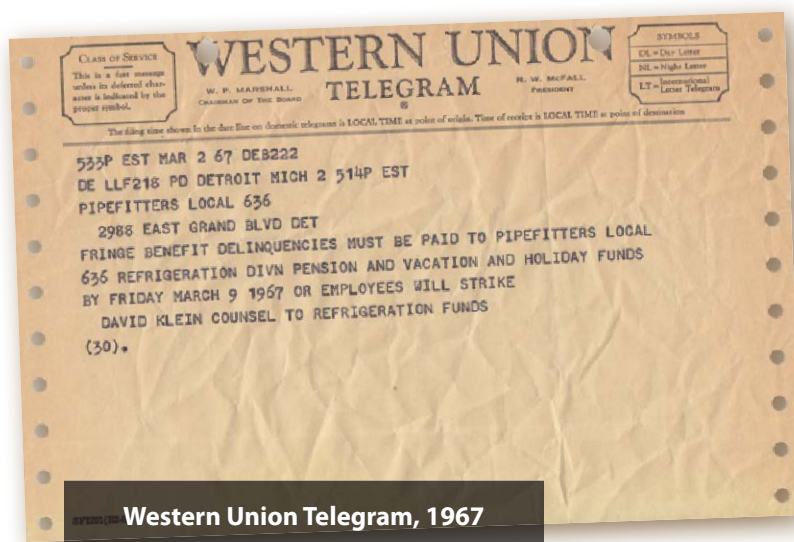
**1990**

Larry Giroux is hired to replace Dan Roman as Director of Training (and is still in that position as Local 636 turns 100 years old.)

**2002**

A service-training addition to the Pipefitting Industry Training Center building is completed.

But the local voted in early September to ratify a new, two-year contract calling for an intermediate hourly pay increase of 90 cents and an 85-cent increase the following June. It was forced to once again protect its jurisdictional work, however, as one issue – maintenance of temporary heating systems at new construction sites, which historically had been done by pipefitters – still divided the union and the Metropolitan Detroit Plumbing Contractors Association, the *Building Tradesman* reported on September 6.



Western Union Telegram, 1967

A panel was appointed to arbitrate the dispute a week later. Business Manager William Kelley emphasized that the major issue blocking an early settlement was not an economic one, stating in the newspaper, “As far as the local is concerned, it was only one issue and that was the insistence of employer negotiators to eliminate from the former contract the language under which our people maintain temporary heat systems on new construction projects.”

To begin the next year, effective January 1, 1975, all eligible members and their dependents were covered by a prescription drug program from the local. There was a \$2 deductible amount on each prescription purchased on or after that date.

It was also during the Kelley administration in 1977 that the title and duties of secretary-treasurer became part of the assistant business manager position. The



Michigan Bell Telephone building project, 1971

business manager had been elected a vice-president for the U.A., an assignment that often took him away from the office, and so Assistant Business Manager Don McNamara’s position came to include the job of secretary-treasurer.

Helping to round out the decade on a positive note, the Local 636 baseball team won the first Detroit Pipe Trades Baseball Tournament, which was sponsored by Sprinklerfitters Local 704 in 1978.

What’s more, the local was “very busy” in 1978 and 1979, according to Joe Bourgeois, a Local 636 journeyman at the time (who, as the local reached its 100th anniversary, had been serving as the local’s assistant business manager/secretary-treasurer since

## 1972

**United Association Local 777 of Port Huron, Michigan, was merged into U.A. locals 636 and 98 on December 1, 1972.** The plumber and pipefitter local had originally been chartered by the U.A. on March 1, 1941, as a plumber, steamfitter and apprentice local.

An inter-office memorandum of the U.A. dated January 5, 1973, stated that any assets and liabilities of Local 777 would be divided equally between locals 636 and 98. It also noted that the locals would “assume jurisdiction of the geographical territory policed by Local 777.”



Shell Oil picket, Kalkaska, circa 1970

January 2004). Most notably, dozens of members were employed building the \$57-million Joe Lewis Arena in downtown Detroit, the home of the Detroit Red Wings of the National Hockey League when it was completed in 1979.

## REVITALIZED FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

Local 636 experienced some very difficult times and a steadily slow decline in membership beginning in the early 1980s, with poor employment prevalent throughout 1980 and 1981. By October 1989, membership would dip below 2,100.

Construction of the new General Motors (GM) Orion assembly plant, which was underway in late 1979 and commenced production on December 1, 1983, “helped a little,” Bourgeois recalled.

GM also started building an identical plant in 1981 at Detroit/Hamtramck to assemble new Cadillac automobiles, with up to 350 Local 636 members employed at the facility during construction. Work began with the building of a new power plant for the factory, which started operations in 1985 in “Poletown.” (*The 362-acre site on which the plant was built was home to a large Polish community that was part of an area referred to as “Poletown.”*)

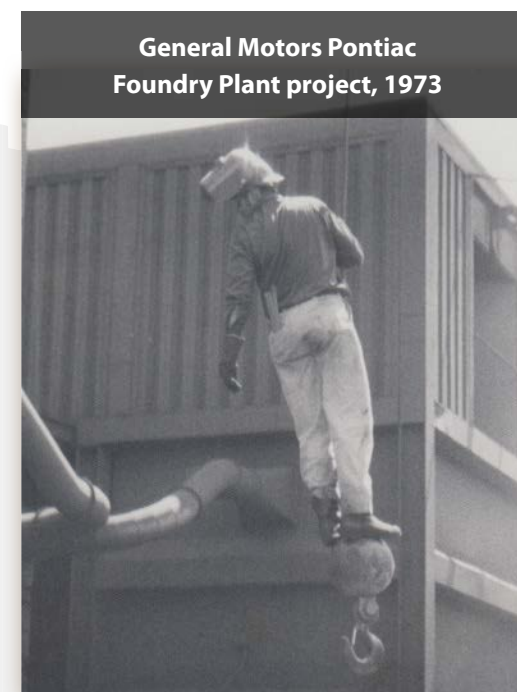
Though struggling otherwise, in 1982 the membership still passed an authorization vote

“by an overwhelming majority” to strike “should negotiations come to an impasse,” the *Building Tradesman* reported on May 23. Two days later, no progress on a new contract was made during a special meeting between the local’s negotiating committee and contractors – and the local continued to work under the old contract while negotiations dragged into June.

Meanwhile, other trades were on strike and affecting Local 636 jobs, including at the Belle River power house, which had laid off all of the local’s members working there, according to the June 11 *Building Tradesman*.

Into and through the second half of the 1980s, there was always at least a “small” out-of-work list at the local, Tom Devlin, a business agent at the time who would later serve as the local’s business manager, recalled.

In 1985, a company from Chicago, Ford Rouge Galvanizer (later called Double Eagle Galvanizer), and its contractor, Foster, came to town as part of a joint effort named Foster/Motor City to construct a \$130 million galvanizing plant at Ford’s Rouge Steel Works south of Detroit in one year – effectively clearing the Local 636 bench as the job peaked at 600 members. (*Ford nearly closed*



General Motors Pontiac Foundry Plant project, 1973



1983 strike; (l-r) Don Samborski, Charlie Pappas and Bill Rouseau

repairing blast furnaces, so the local never faced a “do or die situation,” Devlin recalled. The local also had a solid General Fund, helping to keep it afloat, and when it was in need of money, “the members were there to help keep us going,” Devlin remembered.

The emergence of the 1990s was a stark contrast to the decade before, as local and national economies not only recovered but flourished – and, truth be told, the political climate changed dramatically as labor-friendly Democrats took over more legislative positions locally and nationally, including the White House.

Local 636 also was revitalized and experienced a boom moving forward in the decade, according to Devlin, with plentiful work at jobsites such as the Chrysler Jefferson Assembly plant from 1991 to 1993 and multiple school and commercial projects. “As we got into the ‘90s, things started going great,” he reminisced. “Our guys were making a lot of money, and the General Fund was healthy.”

As a result of the turnaround, Devlin estimated that up to 500 U.A. travelers were also working in the local’s jurisdiction during the early 1990s.

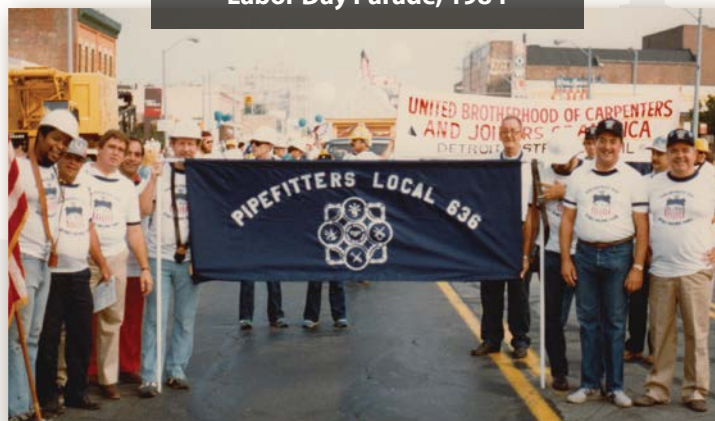
In 1996, GM bought the Detroit Renaissance Center from Ford and completely renovated the complex to serve as its world headquarters. The five-year project, which included relocating the main chiller plant underground, employed a large number of Local 636 fitters.

*Rouge Steel in 1983, but it won contract concessions from the United Auto Workers union and decided to stay in the steel business, according to an Associated Press article.)* Also helping employment was a Detroit Resource Recovery plant project on which up to 200 members worked beginning in 1986 and through 1987. The plant was built to burn refuse of all forms – “The equivalent to building a powerhouse for the pipefitter,” Bourgeois said. Both shifts exceeded manpower by as much as four times estimates, he recalled, because of the narrow timeline for completion.

But for most all of that stretch of time and certainly afterwards, the local struggled for work as regional and national economies suffered – and especially the energy industry. As a result, no power houses or oil refineries – the local’s “bread and butter” that regularly employed a large part of its membership – were being built and fitters were left seeking work elsewhere, often to limited avail.

Once again, however, Local 636 persevered. It found work for members when it could, particularly maintenance jobs in automobile factories and in steel mills

Helping to extend the local’s good times into the latter half of the decade, a union “stripping” campaign – through which union organizers attempted to lure the most experienced workers away from nonunion shops, putting a crimp



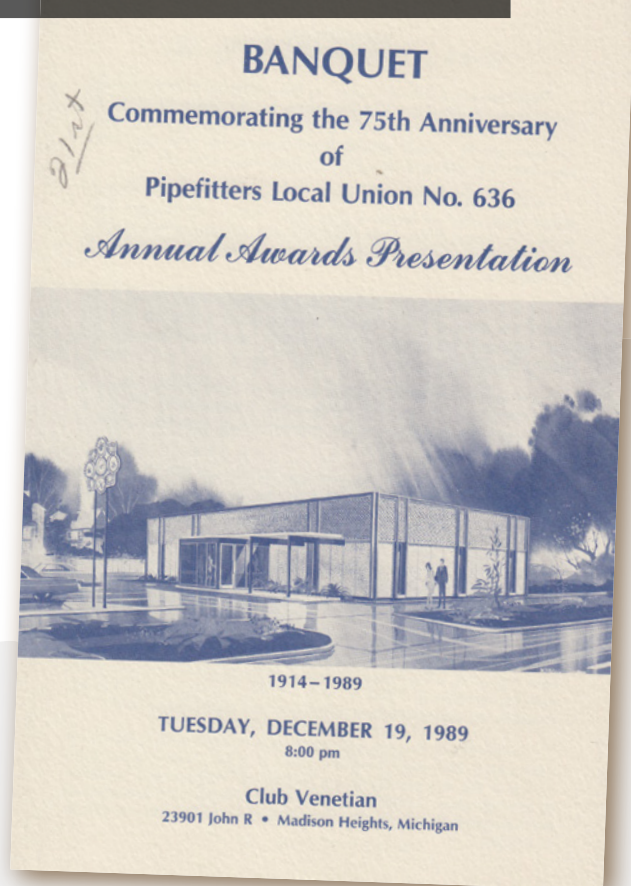
Labor Day Parade, 1984

in their ability to bid for work and especially larger jobs – worked “extremely well,” the *Building Tradesman* reported on April 28, 2000. Local 636 Business Manager Jim Lapham said Local 636 brought in more than 200 new members and signed 15 to 20 nonunion contractors over the previous few years through stripping.

Declining membership had continued a downward trend into the 1990s before bottoming out at around 1,940 journeyworkers and only 40 apprentices in March 1996. But the renewed organizing and recruiting effort reversed the waning numbers, and by October 1999, membership was over 2,300 again, including over 220 apprentices.

“We’ve had a lot of success with stripping,” Lapham, who credited the efforts of organizers/agents Joe Andrews and Greg Sievert, told the newspaper. “We shut down Aaron Mechanical’s entire service department about nine months ago because we took all their guys. That really hurts the contractor until they scream ‘uncle’ and want sit down and get an agreement with us.”

**Local 636 75th Anniversary Program**



## “THE ROUGE” AND LOCAL 636

Under construction beginning in 1917, the Ford Motor Co. River Rouge automobile factory complex located in Dearborn along the Rouge River has always been a source of employment for U.A. Local 636 members.

When completed in 1928, The Rouge had become the largest integrated factory in the world. Today, the site is home to Ford’s Rouge Center, an industrial park that includes six Ford factories on 600 acres of land, as well as steelmaking operations run by Severstal North America.

It remains Ford Motor Co’s largest single industrial complex, employing about 6,000 people.

Pictured here are Local 636 members working on the Ford Rouge C Furnace on October 11, 1996. Top photo are (l-r) Foreman Gordy Cassel, John Horning, Scott Glasgow, Mark Hitchcock; bottom photo are Cassel and Hitchcock.





Comerica Park

A new Political Action Fund set up at the local during the 1990s would also help it more actively support labor-friendly politicians and legislation.

As the 1990s progressed, an effort to revitalize the City of Detroit began in earnest, and Local 636 was square in the middle of it. Looking back, a February 2003 *Journal* article mused:

“Today, the Motor City is undergoing a renaissance, and the United Association is playing an important role in that rebirth. U.A. members with locals 636, 98 and 704, as well as travelers from across the country, have been very busy in the city for the past few years.”

Two new professional sports stadiums were at the center of the downtown revitalization plan for Detroit. Local 636 members were on hand to help make the baseball Tigers’ Comerica Park and the football Lions’ Ford Field realities beginning when they broke ground in 1997 and 1999, respectively.

With a seating capacity of approximately 40,000, the \$260 million Comerica Park was officially under construction beginning October 29, 1997, and was opened to the public in 2000. Prime mechanical contractor for the project was Pace Mechanical Services of Westland, Michigan, which maintained an average of 50 tradespersons on the site, split between pipefitters of Local 636 and plumbers of Local 98, according to a September

## New Union Hall LOCAL 636 HOME ‘A GOOD FIT’

When United Association Local 636 broke ground on December 13, 1999, for its new, \$2.5 million union hall at 30100 Northwestern Highway in Farmington Hills – where it resides as the local turns 100 years old in 2014 – it was looking forward to being in a more central location with much more space to take care of its business. At the time, the local numbered more than 2,500 members.

“The new building will give us a lot more room, and we really need it,” Business Manager Jim Lapham told *The Building Tradesman* in a December 24 article. “Not only for daily business in the office, but for things like meetings with contractors, negotiations and blood drives. Getting to this point has been a long process, but it will be worth it for our membership.”

Less than a year later, the local held a grand-opening ceremony on October 20, 2000, for the 10,200-square-foot facility, which was more than three times the size of its former building on Meyers Road in Detroit. U.A. General President Martin Maddaloni was on hand at the dedication and commented, “Congratulations on a beautiful facility. It takes strong leadership and commitment by the members to attain such a fine facility.”

The architectural planner/construction manager for the building was Allen and Laux.

12, 2000, article in *The Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration NEWS*, the HVACR contractor’s weekly newsmagazine.

Most of the stadium is supplied by eight air-handling units, five of which are constant-volume units while the rest are VAV (variable air volume) units, the *NEWS* outlined. Suites and concession areas are served by some 200 water-source heat pumps, and during the heating season, heat is added to the system by 10 Patterson-Kelley modular boilers, which also supply heating water to the air handlers and the domestic water heater.

Next, the 65,000-seat, \$300-million Ford Field, for which ground was broken on Nov. 16, 1999, was actually two projects being handled simultaneously, as described in the *Building Tradesman* on July 20, 2001. In addition to the stadium, the renovation of the 80-year-old Hudson’s warehouse would form the south wall of Ford Field and house luxury suites, press boxes, restaurants, food courts, lounge areas, banquet facilities and retail and office space once completed in July 2002.



Compuware Headquarters project, circa 2000

## In The Community LOCAL 636 GIVES BACK

Since its founding, U.A. Local 636 has been a good neighbor throughout its Detroit community. Coming to the aid of worthy causes through various member contributions of time and skill has been a fundamental value for the local over the past 100 years.

Recent history alone illustrates the local’s propensity to help where ever and when ever help is needed. In January 2001, for example, finances at the Wellness House, Michigan’s first provider of housing for AIDS patients, got a little better thanks to the generosity of Local 636 members, who passed a hat at an awards banquet and donated \$650 to the charity.

Later that same year, the local’s members completed upgrading the 75-year-old mechanical systems at Detroit’s St. Patrick’s Senior Center, which took nearly four years, hundreds of hours of volunteer labor and thousands of dollars in supplies. When the project was finished in July, journeymen pipefitter Mike Pitts summed up the local’s commitment to helping others in the *Building Tradesman*:

“We’re pretty fortunate, we have a good job and earn good money. There are a lot of less-fortunate people out there, and the people at St. Pat’s do a great job of helping them out. This is our way of giving something back to the community.”

One of the local’s legacies was its involvement with the now-defunct “Heat’s On/Water’s Off” annual program, through which volunteers from several pipe trades locals and their affiliated contractors gave their time to perform pre-winter repairs on heating and plumbing in the homes of needy people. In October 2002 alone (the 11th year of the program), 232 volunteer trades workers serviced more than 100 homes. Local 636 continued to participate in “Heat’s On/Water’s Off” until it was terminated several years ago.





# FORD FIELD



Ford Field, 2001

2000, a letter to Greater Detroit Building Trades Council Secretary-Treasurer Patrick Devlin from the site manager praised the union safety record as “exceptional” and noted that the productivity rate of the workforce was “outstanding.” At that time, the local’s members were also working

on \$850 million in various new construction at the Detroit Medical Center; two upgrades at the Detroit Zoo that included the \$13.6 million “Arctic Ring of Life” interactive facility; and the renovation of one of downtown Detroit’s most visible landmarks, the 23-story skyscraper at 1001 Woodward Plaza.

But it was also an uncertain time in the construction trades with the fall-off in Detroit’s key auto industry, the *Building Tradesman* reported in its July 6, 2001, issue. Local 636 Business Manager Jim Lapham even commented that the situation “is killing us,” noting that approximately 150 fitters were unemployed at the time largely as a result of lost jobs in Detroit’s auto plants.

The following year, rising healthcare costs also began to take a toll on the local not long after it switched to a “self-insured plan” to help keep expenses down. Lapham told the September 27, 2002, *Building Tradesman* that the first warning shot about higher costs came several months before from management trustees of the local’s health and welfare fund, who were proposing that the local’s retirees pay for more of their own coverage.

Hundreds of U.A. members, including Local 636 fitters, worked hard to make the stadium a reality, the *Journal* reported in February 2000, installing fixtures, fire protection equipment, HVAC, refrigeration and piping systems, beverage lines, field drainage, plumbing and equipment, and more.

Local 636 members were also involved at the time on construction of the new Compuware headquarters building, which many believe was a major catalyst for revitalizing the Detroit downtown. Work on the \$340-million, 15-story structure began in 2000 and was completed in 2003.

In the new millennium, Local 636 continued to grow as its members could be found working on many of the prominent new structures contributing to the revitalization of Detroit. Membership surpassed 2,400 in March 2001 and 2,500 by January 2004 before stabilizing over the next decade between 2,300 and 2,400.

Earlier during the decade, Local 636 members participated in the Marathon Ashland Alky 2000 Turnaround Project – and after it was completed in

“Up until recently that hasn’t been an issue, but now it is,” Lapham said, “We’ve been struggling for a year and a half now with our costs, and that’s why we went to a self-insured plan. There’s no question that costs are going up, and we’re going to have to find a solution.”

Those setbacks notwithstanding, Local 636 did have members working at the time on Metro Airport’s new Midfield Terminal, a mile-long, 122-gate, \$1.2 billion addition to the airport that opened in 2002.

The local’s willingness to fight remained as well, as illustrated when it endured a six-day strike after failing to reach a collective bargaining agreement with the Mechanical Contractors Association on July 12, 2006. But the two sides were able to reach a favorable agreement – money for the two-year contract was not the stumbling block; instead, it was MCA’s insistence on the “introduction of low-paid, low-skilled helpers on the job, at a ratio that was unacceptable to the Local 636 Negotiating Committee,” the July 21 *Building Tradesman* reported.

As the local approached its 100th anniversary, its fitters were still working on many of the primary projects going up in and around Detroit, including the Detroit Medical Center’s new Heart Hospital starting in January 2012. The \$78-million, five-story hospital building was scheduled to open in 2014.



## U.A. LOCAL 636 BUSINESS AGENTS/ BUSINESS MANAGERS

### Business Agents

- Harry Olive and James Carty - May 1914 through July 1914
- Charles M. Hall - August 1914 through July 1915
- James Carty - August 1915 through July 1919
- John Webb - August 1919 through July 1921
- Robert Mullen - August 1921 through July 1923
- Robert Wright - August 1923 through July 1928
- Edward Thal - August 1928 through May 1937
- George Dean - June 1937 through July 1938
- Thomas McNamara - July 1937 through April 1942
- Frank J. Reid - May 1942 through January 1943
- Edward Sheldon - February 1943 through August 1944
- Thomas McNamara - February 1943 through July 1946

### Business Managers

- John F. Williams - August 1946 through January 1951
- Thomas F. McNamara - January 1951 through May 1956
- Tim McCarthy - April 1956 through 1960
- William B. Kelley - 1961 through 1979
- Don McNamara - 1980 through March 1988
- Douglas Keller - March 1988 through September 1995
- James J. Lapham - September 1995 through 2003
- Thomas E. Devlin - 2004 through 2006
- Frank Wiechert - 2007 through present

## Building an Embassy

### TRAVELING TO WAR-TORN IRAQ

Members of United Association Local 636 were part of a contingent of building tradesmen from Michigan who traveled to Baghdad, Iraq, in 2007 to help construct a \$592 million U.S. embassy complex. The local's journeymen included (pictured) Nick Tacolla, piping foreman Bill Packer, Vince Brinker, Stephan Goudy and Eric Bondy.

*The Building Tradesman* reported on the entire project in its May 25, 2007, issue:

*Many of the Michigan Hardhats arrived in Baghdad last Thanksgiving weekend as part of a contingent that's constructing the secrecy-shrouded U.S. embassy in the "Green Zone," a three-mile-long, half-mile-wide cordoned-off area that houses the major base of coalition military operations in Iraq.*

*The U.S. embassy is moving toward completion, and Michigan tradespeople had a lot to do with its construction. According to union construction workers we talked to, about half of the 70 tradespeople remaining on the job as of mid-May were union Hardhats from Michigan – and the percentage was even higher several months ago.*



# UNIONHISTORIES

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1914 - 2014

*100th* Anniversary  
Celebration