

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS LOCAL NO. 5  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



125th Anniversary  
Commemorative History



INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS LOCAL NO. 5 - 125 YEARS COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY





## PAST PRESIDENT, OTHER LOCAL 5 MEMBERS CUT THE PATH TO THE UNION BENEFITS WE NOW ENJOY

Brothers and Sisters, Families and Friends of Local 5:

Welcome to the 125th Anniversary Celebration of I.U.E.C. Local 5 in Philadelphia. Together, we celebrate this great achievement, a testimony to the power of the International Union of Elevator Constructors and the Labor Movement.



The members and retirees of Local 5 are proud to call the City of Philadelphia, the birthplace of the United States of America, our home. The members and officers, past and present, take great pride in bringing the revolutionary spirit of our nation's forefathers to the Labor Movement and the I.U.E.C. That fighting spirit has been instilled in us since the great Frank Feeney, as I.U.E.C. president, protected our union against a takeover bid by the machinists' union on the floor of the A.F.L. Convention held in Philadelphia in 1914. The conviction that President Feeney drew upon then lives on in the members and officers of Local 5 today.

I am sure that Brother Feeney and all our past officers would be very proud to know that Local 5 and the I.U.E.C. continue to progress and thrive today.

As we celebrate this milestone, please remember the members, officers and their families that have gone before us. Think about the hardships they endured and the picket lines they walked for the betterment of our union. They fought for higher wages, healthcare, pensions, shorter hours and safer working conditions. As we move forward, we must continue to stand together to protect these benefits and conditions we enjoy today.

Thank you for being a part of this celebration with all of us in Local 5.

In solidarity,



Joe Williams, Business Manager, Local 5, I.U.E.C.

### ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS LOCAL NO. 5 125-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**Saturday, May 3, 2025**  
**6:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.**

**Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing**  
201 South Christopher Columbus Boulevard, Philadelphia

- Registration and Cocktail Reception ..... 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Seated Dinner, Presentation, Music ..... 7:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.
- After-Party..... 11:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.

This book was proudly produced by

**UNION HISTORIES™**  
Preserving the Proud Stories of Local Unions  
[unionhistories.com](http://unionhistories.com)

Local 5 and Union Histories give special thanks to the I.U.E.C. International Office for its contributions to the history contained within this book.

Head Historian: Calvin Jefferson  
Research Assistant & Proofreader: Ann Wilkins Jefferson  
Art Direction: Andy Taucher  
Layout & Design: Steven Demanett



The History of Elevator Constructors Local No. 5

# ELEVATING GREATER PHILADELPHIA FOR 125 YEARS

*“The object of the Association is to encourage an apprenticeship system and a higher standard of skill; to cultivate a feeling of friendship among the craft; to assist each other to secure employment; to reduce the hours of labor; to secure adequate pay for work; to furnish aid in case of accident and death; and by legal and proper means, to elevate the condition of all our members and improve the trade.”*

I.U.E.C. Local No. 5 Constitution, 1901



More than half a century after powered elevators first appeared in U.S. factories and hotels during the 1840s, a group of elevator constructors in Philadelphia organized themselves and came together on December 28, 1899, to form the self-named **United Association of Elevator Men**. Among other actions that evening, the new union set its initiation fee at \$1 (“subject to change by the Association”) and dues at 15 cents per week, and it formed committees to visit the elevator companies in the city to inform them and their employees about the association.

The independent union officially gathered again on **January 10, 1900**. Initially holding its meetings at the homes of its roughly two-dozen members, it next met at the home of

Brother Joseph Giberson, a meeting that 14 total members attended, and during that time the group renamed themselves the **Elevator Erectors Union of Philadelphia**.

Later that year, at some point the union went on strike against the elevator contractors in the city in an effort to secure a working contract with those employers. Ultimately, the **Elevator Constructors’ Association of Philadelphia**, which represented the contractors, signed an agreement with the union on December 19, 1900, that stipulated it was “understood that all men now on strike be re-instated and put to work and that the men will report to duty at once.”

Like other elevator-constructors local unions in cities across the country at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE I.U.E.C.

**"They were unanimous in their resolve and solidarity."**

– From "History of the I.U.E.C.," 2001

Eleven men representing six unaffiliated elevator-constructor local unions from Boston and five other cities met on July 15, 1901, at the Griswold Hotel in Pittsburgh to bring together the various independent locals across the country into one national union. That very day, those delegates, who included **Brother Walter McIntire** and **Brother Frank P. Moxon** of Boston, officially formed the **National Union of Elevator Constructors**, and by July 18, they had also adopted the new union's bylaws and elected its first slate of officers, including **President F. W. Doyle** of St. Louis.

Just two years later in 1903, the union became the **International Union of Elevator Constructors** (I.U.E.C.) after it committed money to the Ottawa Defense Fund on behalf of striking constructors in Canada, who joined the union afterwards.

Although an agreement between the I.U.E.C. and the elevator manufacturers that stated only the union would construct elevators was recognized when the American Federation of Labor granted the I.U.E.C. a charter in June 1903, contentious jurisdictional disputes with other trade unions persisted throughout the following decades. Most notably at first, ongoing clashes with the Association of Mechanics were not resolved until 1914 at the A.F.L. National Convention. Then in 1920, the elevator contractors again successfully protected their jurisdiction over electrical work on elevator construction from a major challenge by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Then in 1922, the I.U.E.C. and its employers signed their first national agreement. Known as the **Atlantic City Agreement** after the city in which it was agreed upon, it set a wage scale for elevator constructors based on those of the seven primary trades in the building industry: bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters, electricians, sheet metal workers, plumbers, steamfitters and ironworkers.

Among the countless benefits the union would go on to attain for its membership, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it worked with elevator manufacturers to put a plan in place to create more work to counter the rampant unemployment of the membership across the country. As part of the strategy, the manufacturers made agreements with building owners by which repair work on elevators would be handled through the installing company, while the I.U.E.C. accepted a reduction in wages for the new maintenance work, which created a large number of new jobs.

Seven decades later when the I.U.E.C. marked its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July 2001, it was more than 25,000 members strong. As the union's centennial history states:

**"There could be no skyscrapers without elevators. Technology created the need, and members of the I.U.E.C. filled that need, becoming the most qualified and trained constructors of elevators in the world. This need for qualified elevator constructors to make higher rises possible gave the I.U.E.C. its strength."**

(Abridged from "History of the I.U.E.C.")

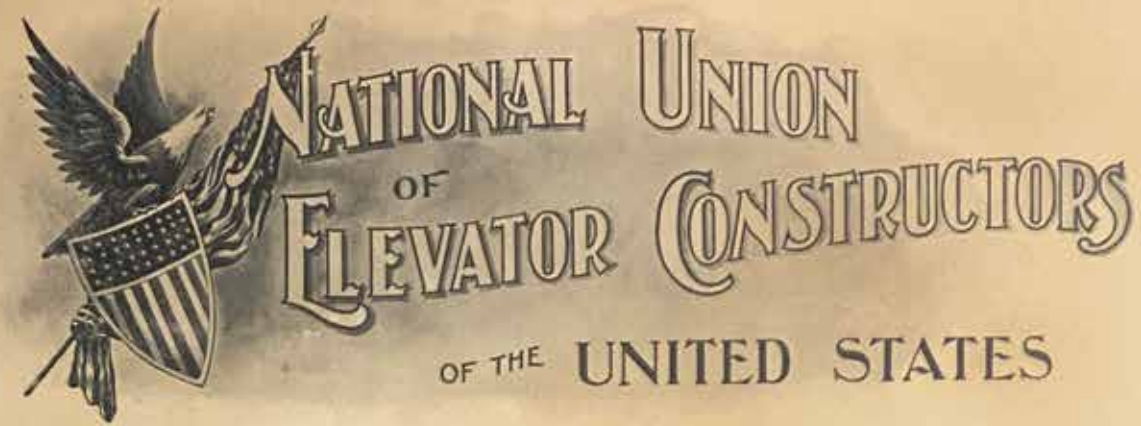
Century, however, the Elevator Erectors Union of Philadelphia was an independent local with no national-union affiliation. But by that time, elevator constructors in various locations realized they needed to organize nationally to gain the strength and representation necessary for each of them to prosper – if not just survive.



First I.U.E.C. General President F. W. Doyle

Subsequently, 11 men from six local unions around the country, including Elevator Erectors Union of Philadelphia members **Brother Giberson** and **Brother William Young**, met in Pittsburgh on July 15, 1901, and on July 18 formed the **National Union of Elevator Constructors** (N.U.E.C.) – which soon after became the **International Union of Elevator Constructors** (I.U.E.C.) in 1903. "It had taken just three days to form an organization which would promote and protect the interests of thousands of elevator constructors across America then and now," the *History of the I.U.E.C.* recounted 100 years later.

During the three-day conference, the six local unions in attendance each applied for a charter with the new national body and paid the \$5 charter



## To Whom It May Concern Greeting:

**T**his Charter, issued by the authority of the Executive Council of the National Union of Elevator Constructors of the United States, does grant to the herein named organization and to its successors power to establish and hold a Local Union of this National Union, to be located at Pittsburgh, in the State of Pennsylvania and to be known and hailed as Pittsburgh Local Union, No. 5, of the National Union of Elevator Constructors of the United States.

THIS CHARTER grants to said Local Union all powers delegated by the Constitution. The conditions of this Charter are such that it may be retained so long as TEN MEMBERS in good standing desire and so long as this Local Union promptly pays its dues and is not reclaimed by the Executive Council of the National Union.

In Witness Whereof, We have hereunto set our hands and the seal of this National Union of Elevator Constructors of the United States, this eighteenth day of July, in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and one.

*William Young*  
General Secretary-Treasurer.



*F. W. Doyle*  
General President.

The I.U.E.C. Local 5 charter, dated July 18, 1901, and signed by I.U.E.C. General President Frederick W. Doyle, who was the first to serve in that position after being elected when the union was established that day, and first General Secretary-Treasurer (and Local 5 charter member) William Young.



Delegates to the I.U.E.C. Second Convention, held in Chicago in September 1902, included Local 5 officers Brother Joseph Giberson (back row, far left) and Brother Frank Feeny (front row, far right).

fee. The Philadelphia elevator constructors were designated **N.U.E.C. Local No. 5** when they were issued an N.U.E.C. charter, along with five other locals, on **July 18, 1901**.

As the I.U.E.C. Centennial history states, being a member of a union during the early 1900s was “controversial.” But, as the essay also goes on to explain, “Being a union member allowed protection against unfair employers even if there weren’t any labor laws to protect a worker.”

Regardless, the new union was prepared to forge ahead. As such, during that first convention the delegates elected its first officers, with Brother F. W. Doyle of St. Louis selected to serve as the union’s first general president, Brother Young as its general secretary-treasurer and Brother Giberson as its 4<sup>th</sup> general vice-president.

## STRIKES, SAFETY, ADVANCES

The newly minted Local 5 set out immediately to fulfill the mission set forth in its original constitution, an emphasis

of which was “to elevate the condition of all our members and improve the trade.” In doing so, it regularly held general membership meetings at the **Hector Tyndale Post Hall** on Ridge Avenue in the city (*where the former Elevator Erectors Union had hosted its meetings*), and before the end of the year the local had organized a total of 260 members in Philadelphia.

Also keenly committed to improving safety standards in the elevator-construction industry, the young local and the Council of the Allied Building Trades “jointly engaged in a movement looking toward better safeguards for elevators,” as the March 6, 1902, *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper described. What’s more, at that time the two organizations wrote a letter to Philadelphia Mayor Samuel Ashbridge imploring him to address the issue of elevator safety.

Then, less than a year after it had been chartered, Local 5’s nearly 400 members went on strike on May 5, 1902, after the elevator contractors in the city refused to sign a new working agreement that included an increase in wages for the local’s members. The union



had asked for eight-hour workdays at \$3.60 per day for “first-class” (or journeyman) mechanics and \$3 for “second-class” helpers (or apprentices), the following day’s *Inquirer* reported, having been receiving daily wages of \$3.25 and \$2.75, respectively.

More than a week later and after the local rejected offers from the contractors, the two sides reached a compromise agreement that was made effective back to May 1. However, over the next year, several of the local’s members had to strike their individual employers when they were not abiding by the terms of the contract.

Also that year, with Local 5 rapidly growing and work in the elevator industry remaining strong, the local’s membership selected **Brother Frank Feeny** to serve as the local’s first-ever business manager, a position in which he would serve for the next six years. During that time, he would also serve as I.U.E.C. general president in 1904 and 1905.

But the local went back out on a prolonged strike just two years after its first work stoppage

when members walked off their jobs on May 1, 1904, after the **Elevator Manufacturers’ Association of Philadelphia**, which by then was representing the employers, refused the local’s request for an increase in its journeyman constructors’ wage scale from \$3.75 to \$4.25 per day. The entire N.U.E.C. joined the fight two weeks later when on May 15 the union called for a nationwide strike in support of Local 5 to be directed against elevator companies that employed Philadelphia members and also operated in other locations around the country.

Eight weeks later, the national strike ended on June 30, 1904, when the local and the employers’ association agreed to take their contract dispute to arbitration while the local’s members returned to work under their previous agreement. Subsequently, the arbitrator issued a decision favorable to the local, ruling that the local’s journeymen would receive an increase of 15 cents to \$3.90 per day and its helpers/apprentices would receive the same \$3-per-day wage as when they were termed “second-class mechanics.”



Local 5 members pose while participating in the Labor Day celebration and parade in Philadelphia in 1905.



“The laborer is eliminated from the business and the members work under strict union conditions,” the November 1904 issue of *The Elevator Constructor*, the international union’s official monthly journal, reported. “The arbitrator ... recognizes the fallacy of the so-called ‘open shop’ argument, and declared a shop must be either union or non-union. ... A happy ending.”

A month later on August 3, however, Local 5 members repairing the hydraulic elevators on the ornate, grand **Hotel Walton** at the southeast corner of Broad and Locust streets in downtown Philadelphia walked off the job when the hotel’s chief engineer hired non-union workers to assist the elevator constructors. After Brother Feeny declared in that day’s *Inquirer* that non-union helpers “were unable to complete the work,” they were removed from the job.

With work abundant enough to require Local 5 to host members (“travelers”) from

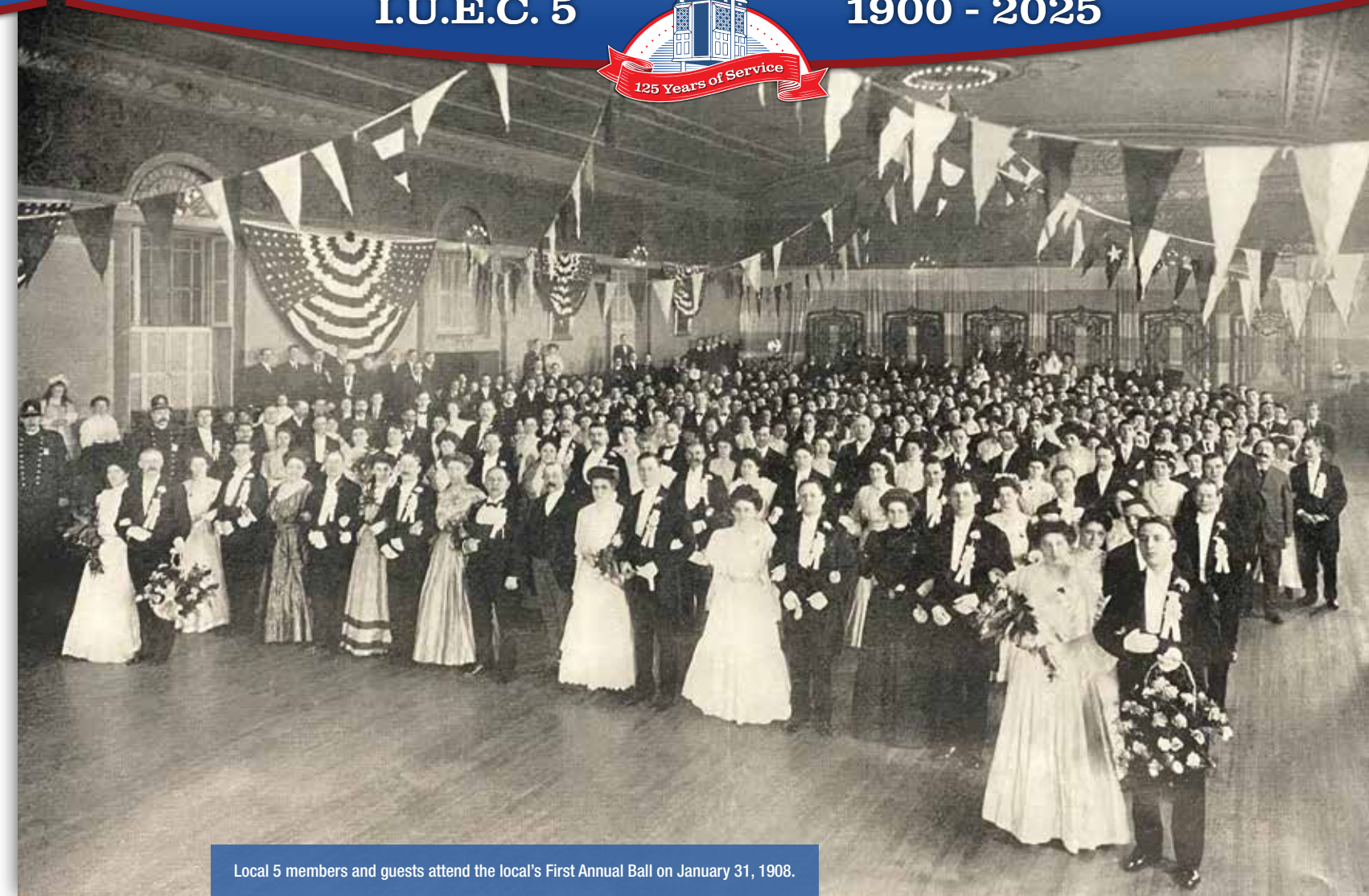
other I.U.E.C. locals to help man jobs within its jurisdiction, by the beginning of 1907 the local had two business agents in the field. “Our local is in better shape now than it has been in all its career,” **Recording Secretary Frank C. Holberg** declared in a letter in the February 1907 *Elevator Constructor*. “We hope that all the other locals have the same prosperity that No. 5 is now enjoying.”

The local also made strides away from the worksites that year, playing a major role in the Pennsylvania State Legislature’s passage of a bill requiring elevator inspectors in Philadelphia. “Local No. 5, through the influence of her business agent and financial secretary,” new **Recording Secretary William B. MacAlister** explained in the November 1907 *Elevator Constructor*, “was instrumental in having these bills passed and signed, so that they became effective.

As employment conditions for the local fluctuated over the final two years of the decade,



The Local 5 crew of elevator constructors and helpers working on the new, 12-story John Wanamaker Building department store in the Center City district of Philadelphia in 1907 for its opening in 1911.



Local 5 members and guests attend the local's First Annual Ball on January 31, 1908.

the local was able to maintain a membership of at least 185 elevator constructors. During that time, the local also renewed its working agreement with its contractors in early 1909, which extended its wage scale of 50 cents per hour for journeyman mechanics and 37-1/2 cents per hour for helpers.

Many Local 5 members worked that year in the shop of the new **Supplee Elevator Company**, which was building new elevators it had recently designed. Meanwhile, more than 80 members employed by the **Standard Plunger Company** worked on installing elevators in the new **Wanamaker Building**, the massive flagship location for the department-store chain when it was completed in 1911.

About 70 other members went on strike beginning July 12, 1909, however, against the large **Otis Elevator Company** after it

had refused to sign a new agreement with the local. During what would be a six-month-long strike, members who were working contributed 20 percent of their wages at times to a pair of strike assessments supporting the striking elevator constructors.

“From the beginning to the end of our strike, the members that were out never murmured,” Brother MacAlister announced in the December 1909 *Elevator Constructor* after Otis signed the union agreement. “They were tested and tried, and found loyal to our cause to the end.”

Before the end of the decade, work increased for the local as large buildings neared completion and, therefore, were ready for elevators to be installed, providing full employment for most of the local’s roughly 250 members. “Notwithstanding the length of



Brother Frank Feeney Sr.

## LOCAL 5 MEMBER WAS LONGTIME I.U.E.C. PRESIDENT

Local 5 member **Frank Feeney Sr.**, who served as the local's first-ever business agent, led the International Union of Elevator Constructors (I.U.E.C.) as its general president from 1904 to 1905 and again from 1916 into 1938. His 23 total years at the helm of the union still makes him the longest-tenured president of the organization.

A former powerful figure in politics, Brother Feeney was president of the Central Labor Union of Philadelphia for seven years before being elected I.U.E.C. president. He also was a former head of the Philadelphia Building Trades Council, was chief of the Bureau of Elevator Inspection of Philadelphia and was supervising referee of the State Workmen's Compensation Bureau.

His son, Frank Feeney Jr., served as the local's secretary-treasurer and also briefly as its business manager.

Brother Feeney passed away suddenly while still serving as general president on May 28, 1938. He was 67 years old.



Local 5 member Frank Feeney, shown in 1916 shortly after he was named general president of the I.U.E.C.

By that time, the local was also providing any member who had been with the union for at least 12 months and was injured on a job with a \$5-per-week **injury benefit** for a maximum period of 13 weeks. The local would also provide each member's family with a **death benefit**, in case a member were to be killed on a job, of \$80 and an assessment of \$1 from each member.

Under those favorable conditions, the local swelled to nearly 600 member mechanics, helpers and apprentices in 1912. Among the major jobs on which many of those members worked that year was construction of the original **West Philadelphia High School**, which when opened as the city's first secondary school west of the Schuylkill River held more than 5,500 students.

With the local controlling 90 percent of the work in its city, it was also regularly receiving applications for membership. "Our organization is more strongly united than ever before," Brother MacAlister rightly boasted in the April 1913 *Elevator Constructor* while reporting his local's progress. "Other crafts are taking our organization as an object lesson of what can be done with a real union."

But more than 400 Local 5 members went on strike beginning May 1, 1913, to enforce their demand for wage increases from \$4.50 to \$5.50 per day for constructors and \$3 to \$4 per day for helpers. After one week, the strike ended when local and the Elevator Manufacturers' Association compromised in a new, four-year contract that provided journeyman mechanics with wages of \$5 per day, helpers with \$3.36 per day and apprentices with \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50 and \$3 per day based on the year in which they were serving their four-year apprenticeships.

Although construction slowed in Philadelphia into the second half of the

our strike, we are still on the map and doing a good share of business," the local's recording secretary had also been able to proclaim in the August 1909 *Elevator Constructor*, "in spite of all efforts put forth to destroy us."

## PEACE, GROWTH, NEW SUCCESS

Construction work in Philadelphia and, consequently, employment for Local 5 remained strong into 1910. What's more, for the first time in almost a year the local's members were "at peace" on their jobs, as Recording Secretary MacAlister described in the February 1910 *Elevator Constructor*.



Local 5 members and guests pose while attending the local's First Annual Picnic Outing at The Orchard in Philadelphia on July 27, 1912.



decade, by 1916 a rush in work at the factories and mills surrounding the downtown area provided stable employment for Local 5. What's more, by that time all but one of the large department stores in the city and many other businesses were employing members for maintenance, including Wanamaker and the **Curtis Publishing Company** plant, which had 16 modern electric elevators.

As the local's prosperity and full employment of its members and even some travelers from time to time continued, the recording secretary was able to report in the December 1916 *Elevator Constructor*, "Work continues very brisk. There seems to be a general business movement in all lines. In our city this year there has been spent \$60 million for buildings of all kinds, about 50 percent of which were mills, factories, garages, apartments, stores and buildings of such character as would necessitate having elevators, and our firms have been right hot after all of it, not only the new but the repairs as well. Of course we have had our ups and downs, but we have never been counted out."

Then in April the following year, Local 5 and the Elevator Manufacturers' Association reached agreement on a new working contract before their previous pact expired. The agreement provided immediate increases beginning May 1, 1917, to \$5.50 per day for mechanics and \$3.50 per day for helpers before ultimately raising wages for the final year beginning May 1, 1919, to \$6 per day for mechanics and \$3.94 per day for helpers.

Indeed, the local was enjoying a full measure of success as its employers remained busy with work – as they would throughout the balance of the decade. Subsequently, by May 1917 the local had been putting an average of 40 "permit men" (elevator constructors working temporarily through the union) to work during the previous six months.

## ADDED GAINS, HIGHS, LOWS

In another sign of its continuing prosperity, in 1920 Local 5 initiated more new members into the union than it had during any other year of its existence, and, as Brother



Local 5 members and guests celebrate the local's 25th anniversary at a dinner/dance in the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia on May 11, 1925.



MacAllister reported in the January 1921 *Elevator Constructor*, it paid out less for accident benefits than ever before and closed the year with "accounts all settled." What's more, the local's journeyman wage scale was significantly increased to \$1.25 per hour (or \$10 per day) and its helpers' pay to 80 cents per hour (\$6 per day) for 1921.

The steady stream of major projects in the local's jurisdiction that kept its expanding membership working during the early 1920s included a 400-room tower addition to the **Ambassador Hotel** in Atlantic City, New Jersey, that was completed in 1921.

But after a proposal to the Elevator Manufacturers' Association asking for a new contract with a wage increase was countered with a demand that its members accept a pay cut, Local 5 went on strike again after its previous agreement expired on May 1, 1921. After the local's members returned to their jobs under their former wage scale on May 13 while negotiations continued, the two sides ultimately agreed to work under a new national **Standard Agreement** negotiated by the I.U.E.C. and the national **Elevator Manufacturers' Association** during meetings held from July 11 through July 16, 1921, which went into effect the following year.

*(The national Elevator Manufacturers' Association was formed in May 1914 to represent its member companies across the United States in codes and standards and labor relations. The association would reorganize on March 8, 1934, as the **National Elevator Manufacturing Industry, Inc.**, which would change its name to the **National Elevator Industry, Inc.**, in early 1969.)*

With that first national contract, known as the "Atlantic City Agreement," wage scales were determined by averaging the five-highest pay rates of the seven principal building trades (the bricklayers, the plasterers, the carpenters, the electricians, the sheet metal workers, the plumbers and steamfitters and the ironworkers), and helpers' pay would then be calculated as 70 percent of the elevator constructor mechanics' rate.

The new contract, however, initially cut Local 5 mechanic wages from \$1.25 to \$1.06 per hour under its new formula. Likewise, helpers' pay dropped from 80 cents to 75 cents per hour.

Meanwhile, the combination of decreasing construction work and a building-trades strike in 1921 severely impacted the elevator constructors' employment. In fact, at one point

late that year Local 5 had more unemployed members than at any time during the previous 15 years.

A large project replacing all 16 elevators in the Philadelphia City Hall with new, modern machines featuring the most up-to-date safety appliances beginning in late 1921 put many members back to work. The \$470,000 contract for the job was the largest for elevators that had been awarded in Philadelphia for several years.

A construction surge in 1923 after the so-called "Roaring Twenties," a period of historic economic and cultural change and prosperity in the United States, kicked into full gear provided the local with an equivalent rush of employment. "There was such a demand for elevator mechanics that 48 of our helpers were promoted to mechanics, and from all accounts they are making good," Press Secretary MacAlister was able to announce in the January 1924 *Elevator Constructor* while also reporting that the local's membership was recently increased with the initiation of 52 helpers, five apprentices and five mechanics.

Additionally, the local's journeyman wage rate increased in 1923 from \$1.06 to \$1.322 per hour. The pay for its helpers was similarly raised from 75 cents to 88 cents per hour.

After celebrating its **25<sup>th</sup> charter anniversary** with a dinner/dance at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia, on May 11, 1925, the local enjoyed "a good measure of prosperity in

this district with our great manufacturing and commercial enterprises," as Brother MacAlister reported in the October 1925 *Elevator Constructor*. He also noted, "Our city is doing a lot of work along permanent improvement lines, amounting to large sums of money" – and jobs for elevator constructors.

Following a relatively long lull during which no tall buildings were erected in the city, even more work was generated for the local's members when numerous high-rises were constructed in the "Center City" area of downtown Philadelphia during the late 1920s. Those that employed the union elevator constructors included construction of the 30-story **Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company Building** (now the Wells Fargo Building), which was the tallest in the city when it was completed in June 1928.

Another stretch of high unemployment plagued the Local 5 membership yet again when most of the larger jobs in its jurisdiction were completed by mid-1928. What's more, the city's "Mill District," in which many members worked in its many factories, had also been experiencing a down period of more than a year by that time.

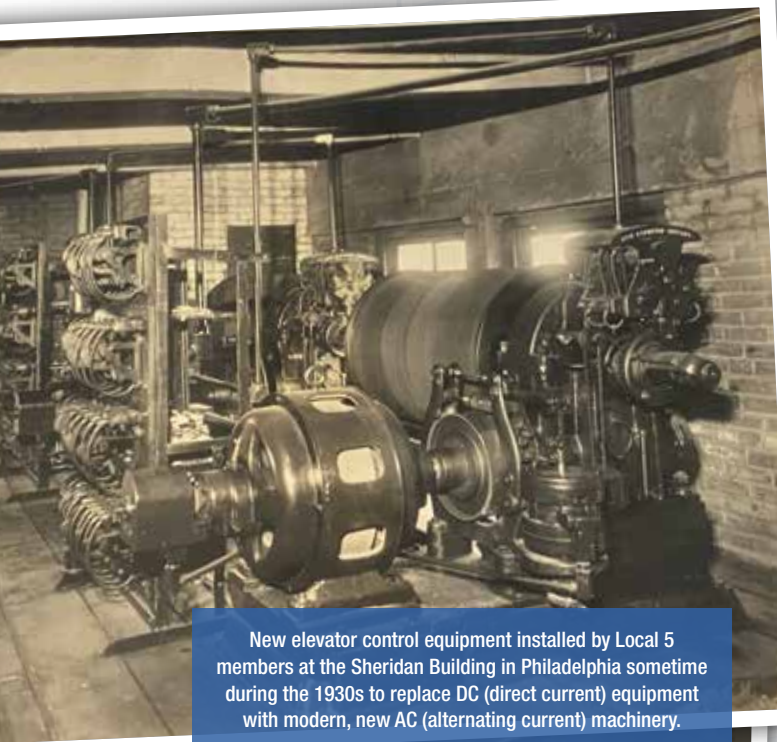
A construction boom of lavish hotels in Atlantic City, New Jersey, which was fast becoming a popular vacation destination during what would become known as the city's "golden period," provided another spike in jobs for Local 5 members. Many of those union mechanics and helpers worked on several of the

Local 5 members working for Otis Elevator Company on construction of the Haddon Hall hotel (now Resorts Casino) in Atlantic City in 1929, the year it was completed.

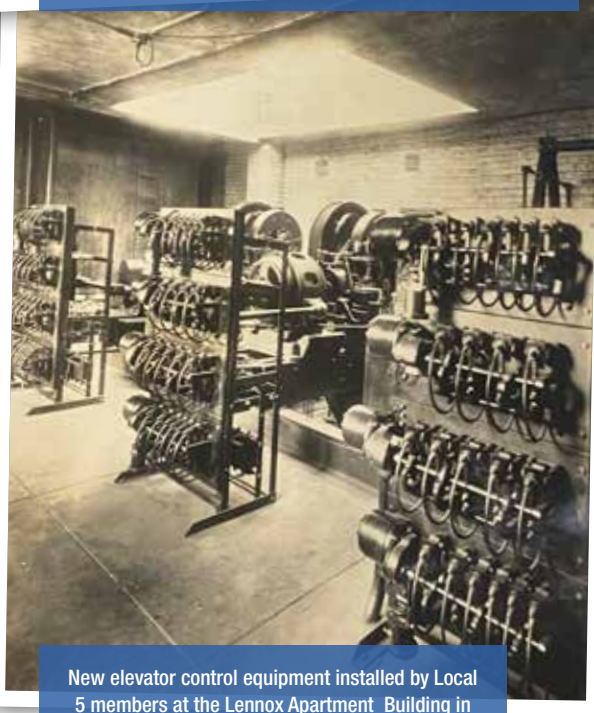




city's new edifices, including the new **Atlantic City Convention Hall** (now Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall) from 1926 into 1929 and **The Claridge** hotel, which opened in 1930.



New elevator control equipment installed by Local 5 members at the Sheridan Building in Philadelphia sometime during the 1930s to replace DC (direct current) equipment with modern, new AC (alternating current) machinery.



New elevator control equipment installed by Local 5 members at the Lennox Apartment Building in Philadelphia sometime during the 1930s to replace DC equipment with modern, new AC machinery.

## DEPRESSION, WAR, RECOVERY

The Great Depression, the historic decade-long economic and human catastrophe that began after the U.S. stock market crashed on October 29, 1929 (history's "Black Tuesday"), was especially hard for elevator constructors around the country. According to the *History of the I.U.E.C.*, elevator-manufacturing industry sales that had reached \$77 million in 1929 plummeted to only \$11 million by 1934 – "and nearly all elevator constructors were out of work."

Initially, however, Local 5 was not severely affected by the turmoil, as many members were able to maintain at least some employment because of an abundance of work changing elevator equipment around Philadelphia from "direct current" to new, modern "alternating current" machinery. The new elevator mechanisms would prove valuable in that they would save money and make elevator operation more efficient.

But by May 1930, unemployment among the local's membership had become so prevalent that the local instituted a program of distributing work more evenly to "give every member at least a slice of the loaf," as Brother McAlister explained in that month's *Elevator Constructor*. The effort was successful, at least at first, in not only giving more members work hours but also by creating "a better spirit of helpfulness among the members."

While government assistance for some building trade unions came through subsidized housing projects, as the I.U.E.C. history notes, "this did nothing to help the elevator constructors." The international union was able to alleviate some of the devastating effects of the depression on its membership when in 1931 it approved a new national Standard Agreement with the Elevator Manufacturers' Association for maintenance work that called for a slight reduction in wages which, as a

result, produced a significant number of jobs fixing and upgrading existing elevators.

However, like most of the nation, which experienced upwards of 25 percent unemployment in the 1930s, Local 5 could not avoid the harmful impact of the Great Depression. The "New Deal" federal-government funded public-work projects, programs and regulations beginning in 1933 helped curb the depression's damaging effect on employment through its federally sponsored work programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works Administration.

A "second phase" of the New Deal launched by President Roosevelt in 1935 included legislation that guaranteed workers the right to unionize and bargain for better working conditions and higher wages. Those included the National Labor Relations Act that created a National Labor Relations Board to oversee union elections and supervise businesses' treatment of their workers, effectively ending a nationwide iron contractors' anti-union, open-shop campaign that had been ongoing since 1906.

By 1939, I.U.E.C. locals across the country were "getting back on their feet and the unemployed were returning to work as jobs began to grow in the industry," according to the union's history. In Philadelphia, as Local 5 was well into its recovery, Press **Secretary L. V. Tapp** was able to report in the January 1940 *Elevator Constructor*, "Business has been on the up and up for the year 1939."

Brother Tapp also reflected on the changes that had recently come to the industry: "How many of us stop to think of the many new improvements that have been made in the elevator mechanism in the last few years? Just touch a button and the elevator does the rest. And to say the least, we must not overlook the beauty in our new, streamlined cabs."



## LOCAL 5 UNION HALLS AND MEETING LOCATIONS

(All locations are in Philadelphia.)

**Grand Army of the Republic Hector Tyndale Post Hall**  
1363 Ridge Avenue  
1901 – 1914

**Grand Army of the Republic Hall**  
Broad and Columbia streets  
1914 – 1918

**Bricklayers' Hall**  
707 North Broad Street  
1918 – 1967

**Operating Engineers Hall**  
248 North 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
1967 – 1973

**Chestnut Hall**  
3900 Chestnut Street  
1973 – 1979

**I.B.E.W. Local 98 Union Hall**  
1807 Spring Garden Street  
1979 – 1984

**I.B.E.W. Local 98 Union Hall**  
719 Spring Garden Street  
1984 – 1991

**Local 5 Union Hall**  
12273 Townsend Road  
1991 – current

As work continued to return, 1940 was the best year of employment for the Local 5 membership since 1929. "We who are in the elevator trade have done very well," the press secretary announced in the January 1941 *Elevator Constructor*, "(and) the manufacturers have sold and installed more jobs in the Philadelphia area."

Employment in the elevator industry remained steady throughout 1940 and 1941. However, a lack of materials caused primarily by the outbreak of World War II in Europe and Asia in 1939 often slowed work for Local 5 members.



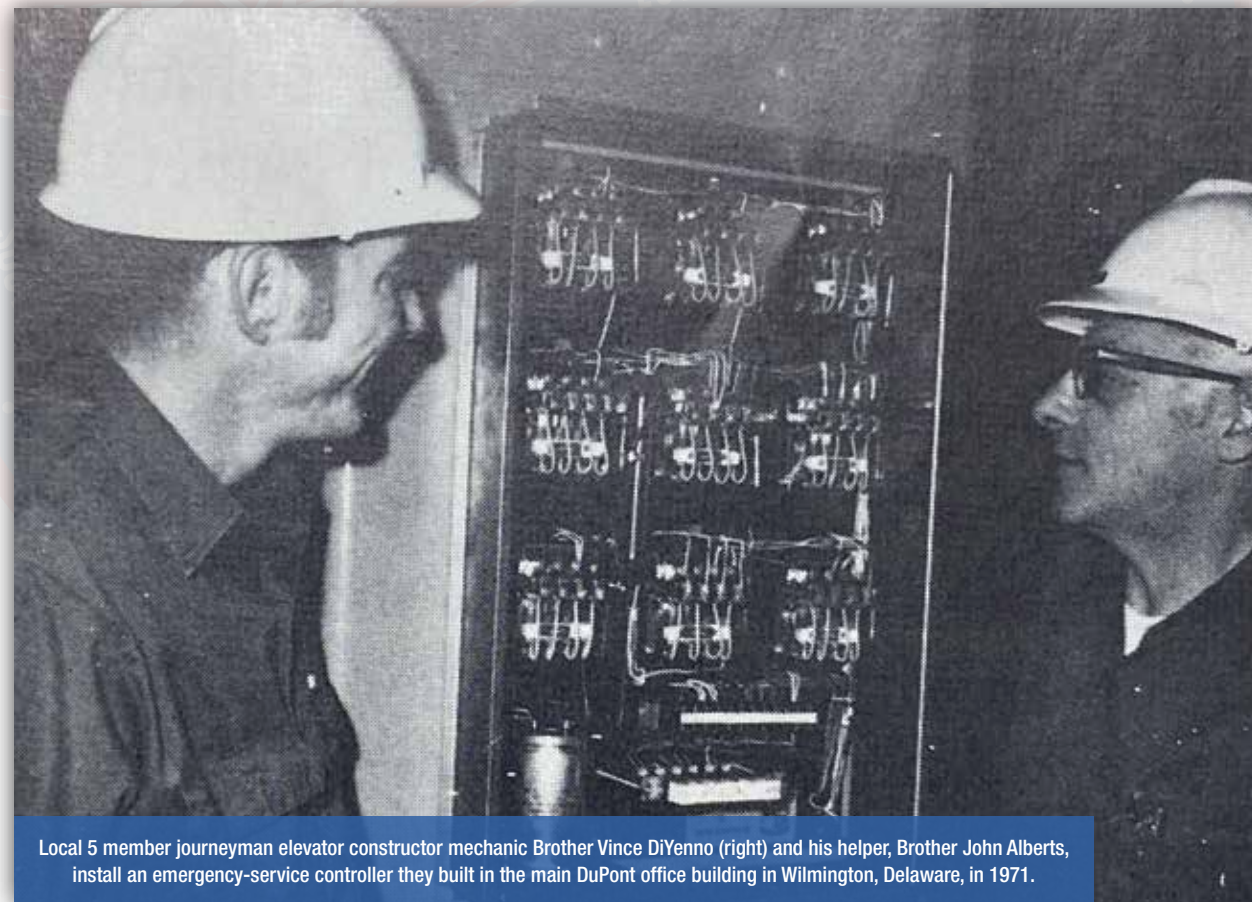
After the United States entered the global war following the Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, work in Philadelphia increased for the local – although not as dramatically as it had for other building trades since much of the work involved revamping factories for war production. Regardless, while industry and wage controls were put into place by the government to help steady the costs of goods and services that were in short supply because of the war effort, the local's wage scale steadily increased during the war.

After federal economic controls were lifted in 1946 following the war's end in September 1945, "The economy began rampaging," the *History of the I.U.E.C.* states. "Prices soared and wages moved in unison."

But the Local 5 membership did not benefit greatly from the favorable national employment

conditions throughout much of the remainder of the decade because Philadelphia lost some of its manufacturing edge to other areas of the country that had gained factories and plants for the war. As the *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, further explains, "After World War II, such emerging competition proved particularly difficult for the Philadelphia region because of its heavy reliance on manufacturing in both the city and suburban economies."

Local 5 subsequently endured long stretches of unemployment throughout the second half of the 1940s. Brother Tapp even reported in the October 1949 *Journal*, "Work at this time is not too good. Quite a number of the brothers are still out. We would like to see conditions better, and with the winter months coming on it would make a person feel better if he knew he had work."



Local 5 member journeyman elevator constructor mechanic Brother Vince DiYenno (right) and his helper, Brother John Alberts, install an emergency-service controller they built in the main DuPont office building in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1971.



## NEW BENEFITS, NATIONAL STRIKE

Significant construction activity in Philadelphia during the early 1950s included large-scale urban renewal projects and the development of public housing. As a result of that substantial increase in building, steady work returned for the Local 5 membership as it advanced into the new decade.

The local also gained a new **Welfare Plan** as a fringe benefit in a new Standard Agreement with the National Elevator Manufacturing Industry (N.E.M.I.) in 1951. Contractors and the local would contribute a portion of the hourly wages earned by the local's members to a fund to subsidize the healthcare and life insurance for members and their families.

Employment slowed again by 1954 but remained moderate during the remainder of the 1950s, fluctuating at times but usually steady enough to keep the local's members busy. "Work in this territory is fair," Brother Tapp announced in the April 1955 *Elevator Constructor*. "Most all the brothers are getting fair time."

The press secretary would more often than not repeat that condition in his reports throughout the next five years. "Work in these parts is fair, not too good and not too bad," he wrote in the May 1959 issue of the I.U.E.C. journal for instance. "I believe that all our brothers are working, although conditions are constantly changing due to various causes."

Among some of the more-noteworthy projects in its jurisdiction on which Local 5 members worked during that time was construction of **Nike "Ajax" guided-missile sites**. Work was temporarily halted on three of the U.S. Army defensive surface-to-air missile-system sites on June 1, 1955, when 33 elevator constructors briefly walked off those jobs to protest a subcontractor's hiring of six non-



Local 5 members (top photo, left to right) Joe Keller, Dave McAdams, George Hohenstein, Nick Gagliardi Sr. and Mike Connelly and (bottom photo) Joe Keller (left) and Bruce Haines work on a casino expansion project in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1989.



union technicians.

*(The Nike Ajax surface-to-air missile system was developed during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union to defend against aerial threats. Philadelphia was among the cities protected by the missile batteries as part of the U.S. air-defense system.)*

Importantly, the new Standard Agreement with the N.E.M.I. that went into effect on January 1, 1962, included the new **National Elevator Industry Pension Plan**, which would begin July 1, 1962. The plan would provide I.U.E.C. members with a first-ever national retirement benefit funded with employer contributions.



## Local 5 Member Training

### PREPARING THE INDUSTRY'S MOST-QUALIFIED CRAFTSPEOPLE

Local 5 has been furnishing its employing elevator companies and their customers with highly trained and skilled elevator constructors for 125 years now by preparing its workforce through on-the-job apprenticeship training. Through the program, the local's apprentices have learned the trade from journeyman-level mechanics while working on jobsites and earning wages.

While the local had no structured training program during its first several decades, it did first set up an informal "school" in 1949 to supplement on-the-job training. The school was also geared toward providing the local's mechanics with information on the latest machinery and techniques being implemented in the elevator industry.

On March 23, 1967, the National Elevator Manufacturing Industry (N.E.M.I.), which is now the National Elevator Industry (N.E.I.) and the I.U.E.C. signed a new Standard Agreement that among its provisions established an **Educational Fund**. The fund would be used to initiate and operate a program "for the education and training of employees in the basic, intermediate and advanced techniques of installing, maintaining and servicing all types of passenger and freight elevators, dumbwaiters, and moving stairways and walkways, with the object of ensuring the elevator industry of a constant supply of competent elevator constructor mechanics and helpers."

The program was designated the National Elevator Industry Educational Program (N.E.I.E.P.), for which the International Educational Services developed

the first four modules to be offered to Local 5 and all I.U.E.C. members at their local's own facilities: Introduction to Elevators, Drawing and Layout Work, Handling Materials, Rigging and Hoisting and Pit Structures. Over the next several years and well beyond, the N.E.I.E.P. continued to develop modules for educating the union's workforce of mechanics and engineers, with locals leading the implementation of the program through hands-on training labs, assorted training aids, text materials and video.

The N.E.I.E.P. training program utilized by Local 5 has evolved into a five-year apprenticeship during which students complete 600 hours of classroom study and more than 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, all of which focuses on safety, to become journeyman elevator constructors. It also offers more than 40 continuing-education classes for mechanics to allow them to stay on top of their ever-changing industry.

What's more, to further enhance the N.E.I.E.P. curriculum, in 2023 Local 5 converted a large portion of its Union Hall into a state-of-the-art, hands-on **Local 5 N.E.I.E.P. Training Center**. The facility features an eight-booth welding room, classrooms, three elevator pits and an escalator pit inside the hall.

The middle elevator hatch is a fully functional, two-stop Machine Room Less elevator. The hatch to its right has a hole drilled for a jack so that apprentices are able to plumb a jack, set rails and learn how to start a construction job properly, and the third hatch is empty for scaffolding and rigging classes.

As a provision of that agreement, employers would contribute 10 cents per hour worked by elevator constructor mechanics and helpers and the union would contribute 5 cents per hour worked by each member into the National Elevator Industry Pension Trust Fund to subsidize the pensions. Beginning January 1, 1966, employer contributions would be increased to 12-1/2 cents per hour and I.U.E.C. member contributions would be increased to 5-1/2 cents per hour worked.

That four-year Standard Agreement, which expired on December 31, 1966, ultimately

increased the wages of Local 5 mechanics to \$5.41 per hour. It also initially set new contributions for the union's Welfare Plan at 6 cents per hour for employers and 2-1/2 cents per hour worked for I.U.E.C. members, which would be increased to 7-1/2 cents for employers and 3-1/2 cents for elevator constructors beginning June 30, 1962.

But the 525 Philadelphia-area elevator constructors of Local 5 joined nearly 13,000 members of most all other I.U.E.C. locals across North America in a strike beginning February 4, 1967, against N.E.M.I. after



contract negotiations for a new work agreement broke down. (*Local No. 1 of New York City had its own agreement and was not a party to the Standard Agreement.*) The union had agreed to extend the previous contract that expired on December 31, 1966, until January 31, but no agreement could be reached between the two sides by that time as the union refused the employers' offer of 4-percent wage increases for construction workers and 2 percent for other members – resulting in the union's first nationwide strike since the early 1920s.

Before calling the walkout, however, the elevator constructors informed N.E.M.I. that during a strike they would continue to service hospitals, nursing homes and defense projects. They also pledged to have mechanics available at their union halls to respond to emergencies, but the employers refused that offer.

At issue was the formula for which each local's wage scale is figured, which since 1921 had been determined by averaging the wage

rates of the five highest of seven building trades unions in each local's respective area. However, with the development of fringe benefits, both N.E.M.I. and the I.U.E.C. recognized that a new formula had to be developed, and the subsequent dispute over that calculation resulted in the strike.

With Local 5's contractors receiving between 400 and 800 repair calls each day in the Philadelphia area, according to the February 4, 1967, *Inquirer*, by that time seven of those companies signed an interim agreement with the local to continue some work. Of the local's more than 500 members, about 200 of them were repairmen.

The elevator constructors ended the strike 48 days later on March 24, 1967, after federal mediators in Washington, D.C., brokered an agreement the day before. The new five-year contract between the I.U.E.C. and the N.E.M.I. provided improved wage formulas, which would average only the top four wages



Local 5 officers and other dignitaries break ground for the new (and current) Local 5 Union Hall at 12273 Townsend Road in Philadelphia on September 5, 1990.



of other building-trades unions in a local's area when calculating its scale, as well as increased benefits contributions and travel allowances.

Back on their jobs, the local's members remained steadily working throughout the late 1960s in between occasional down periods of employment. Among the more-prominent projects they helped build during that time was the new **Veterans Stadium** multi-purpose facility, which would feature 25 elevators and escalators when it was completed and opened in April 1971 as the home fields of the Philadelphia Phillies of Major League Baseball and the Philadelphia Eagles of the National Football League.

### RACISM, ANOTHER LONG STRIKE

Continued accusations of racial discrimination, magnified by the federal government's "Philadelphia Plan" affirmative-action program implemented in 1967 to address perceived racism in the construction industry, hounded Local 5 during the early 1970s. At its core, the Philadelphia Plan required government contractors to set and meet specific goals for hiring minority workers when working on federally funded construction projects and submit those targets in their contracting bids.

The issue was brought to a head in late September 1970 when elevator contractor Westinghouse Electric hired a Black non-union worker for the Veterans Stadium project and, in response, Local 5 pulled its members off the job in protest because many of its members were out of work at the time. However, the contractor and eventually the City of Philadelphia's Human Relations Commission charged that the local did not want to hire Jesse Oliver because he was Black.

"First of all, we don't have an all-white union," Local 5 **Business Representative Bill Freman** countered in an article in the October 20, 1970,

*Inquirer*. He further declared that the company "deliberately used Oliver in an effort to force down our throat (its) efforts to disregard the union regulations in hiring."

But in December, the Human Relations Commission found the local guilty of racial discrimination and ordered it to issue a permit to Oliver that would allow him to work at the stadium. The local complied with the verdict – even though many of its members were still unemployed.

The following year on January 26, 1971, as the beginning of what would be a sweeping edict for the city's building-trades unions, the commission ordered Local 5 to accept one Black worker for each White worker it admitted for membership over the following five years "until the union is 30 percent Black," the *Inquirer* reported the following day. The newspaper also reported that commission Chairman Clarence Farmer called the order "the toughest of its sort yet issued to end discrimination in unions of the high-wage skilled critical trades."

A survey by the U.S. Department of Labor a year-and-a-half later found that the elevator constructors were keeping up with minority hiring quotas established under the Philadelphia Plan. According to the August 8, 1972, *Philadelphia Daily News*, the survey, which covered the first five months of that year, revealed that the elevator constructors were among the "three of six key construction unions" adhering to minority-group hiring standards set by the federal government.

Back in the field, however, after the stadium and other major projects in the Local 5 jurisdiction were completed, the local's membership suffered through an extended period of poor employment conditions for the remainder of 1971 and into 1972. In fact, by November 1971 more members were unemployed than at any other time over the previous 12 years.



### LOCAL 5 BUSINESS MANAGERS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Frank Feeny Sr.</b><br>1902 – 1908    | <b>Thomas Lyons</b><br>1949 – 1959          |
| <b>William H. Smith</b><br>1908 – 1914   | <b>Robert M. Williams</b><br>1960 – 1984    |
| <b>Frank J. Schneider</b><br>1914 – 1915 | <b>Joseph Rapine Sr.</b><br>1984 – 1989     |
| <b>Robert Smith</b><br>1915 – 1920       | <b>William Fagan</b><br>1989 – 1995         |
| <b>Frank J. Schneider</b><br>1920 – 1921 | <b>John Davenport</b><br>1995 – 2006        |
| <b>L. P. Osborn</b><br>1921 – 1925       | <b>Joseph Rapine Jr.</b><br>2006 – 2011     |
| <b>Frank Lynch</b><br>1925 – 1934        | <b>Edward Loomis</b><br>2012 – 2016         |
| <b>Frank Feeny Jr.</b><br>1934 – 1935    | <b>Joseph M. Williams</b><br>2016 – current |
| <b>William Lundgren</b><br>1935 – 1949   |   |

### LOCAL 5 OFFICERS, 2025

- Joseph M. Williams, Business Manager
- Jack D. Koch, Business Representative
- Eric Rittenhouse, Business Representative
- Joe O'Connor, Organizer
- John Cichon, Secretary-Treasurer
- Frank Gramaglia, President
- Gerry Kerr, Vice President
- Doug Kirkwood, Recording Secretary

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

- |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Mike Connelly  | Darren Hollingsworth |
| Shaun Thomas   | Jack Koch            |
| Jim Gleason    | Sean Loomis          |
| Bob McLaughlin | Eric Rittenhouse     |
| Mark Gray      |                      |



Frank Feeny



William H. Smith



Frank J. Schneider



Robert Smith



William Lundgren



Thomas Lyons



Robert M. Williams



Joseph Rapine Sr.



William Fagan



John Davenport



Joseph Rapine Jr.



Just as work was picking up, on March 30, 1972, the I.U.E.C. and its locals, including Local 5 and its more than 650 members, began what would become a 101-day national strike against the National Elevator Industry (N.E.I.) after negotiations for a new Standard Agreement broke down. Across the country, more than 15,000 elevator constructors initially stayed off

their jobs as disputes centered on the absence in proposed contracts of a “strike clause” and the increased use of prefabricated material.

Elevator installation work being performed by the local’s members at several major construction projects in the Philadelphia area was subsequently halted by the strike. Those jobs included the new **James A. Byrne U.S. Federal Courthouse** and the twin-tower **Centre Square** office complex in Center City and the installation of new elevators at **Temple University** and in the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company Building.

After the strike was settled July 8, 1972, in Washington, D.C., under mediation through the U.S. Department of Labor, a new five-year contract furnished Local 5 with a wage increase effective the previous October. Over the life of the agreement, it provided hourly wages consistent with those in other construction trades while incrementally increasing the pay for the members of Local 5.

A building boom in Philadelphia’s Center City that would feature the construction of a number of skyscrapers turned the local’s fortunes once again, if only temporarily. As such, **Press Correspondent Jack McGlinn** announced in the November 1972 *Elevator Constructor*, “The work situation is good. So good, there are over 100 permits out (for permit workers).”

However, the bottom fell out of construction in 1973 with the “1973-1975 Recession,” a period of “stagflation” in which high unemployment and high inflation simultaneously existed that was caused in part by the 1973 oil crisis. Abysmal employment conditions would then afflict the local for the remainder of the decade, during which more than 100 members were out of work at one point in 1975 and Brother Jack McGlinn would report in the November 1976 *Elevator Constructor*, “The work situation is still the same, poor. There doesn’t seem to be any construction.”



The new Local 5 Union Hall under construction in 1990 and 1991.



The newly completed Local 5 Union Hall in March 1991.

## CASINOS, TOWERS, NEW HQ

The November 2, 1976, passage by New Jersey voters of a referendum legalizing casino gambling in Atlantic City was a saving grace for the struggling Local 5 and its membership. Indeed, soon after the “Casino Control Act” became law on June 2, 1977, multiple casinos were built in the city – including its first, Resorts International that opened on May 26, 1978 – most all of which employed Local 5 elevator constructors, including **Caesars Atlantic City** that opened on June 26, 1979.

Throughout the first half of the 1980s, the local’s mechanics and helpers stayed busy with strong when not stable employment conditions bolstered by the casino boom and a surge in other construction as well as modernization projects. Among the casinos on which many of the local’s members worked was the **Playboy**

**Hotel and Casino** that opened April 14, 1981; the **Trump Plaza** that opened May 26, 1984; and the **Showboat Hotel and Casino** that opened on April 2, 1987.

Maintenance at the casinos would continue to provide employment for the local’s members after casino construction was completed. Notably, in 1985 maintenance members employed by Otis Elevator were working shifts at the **Trump Castle Hotel and Casino** (now the Golden Nugget Atlantic City) after it opened earlier that year – the first time Local 5 members had performed **shift work**, which was addressed in the Standard Agreement.

A wave of office-tower construction in the West Market Street area of Center City during the late-1980s further contributed to the local’s regular full employment. Those skyscrapers that were erected at that time and employed the local’s members under various elevator



companies included the 58-story **Two Liberty Place** that would be completed in 1990 as part of the Liberty Place office, hotel and shopping complex; the 54-story **Mellon Bank Center** (now BNY Mellon Center) that would be completed in 1990; the 55-story **Bell Atlantic Tower** (now Three Logan Square) that would open in 1991.

With some casino work also continuing in Atlantic City, Local 5 **Press Correspondent Bill Walthes** was able to declare in the March 1989 *Elevator Constructor*, "The work situation remains strong and looks as though it will remain strong throughout the year."

Meanwhile, after completing a study "on the need for an I.U.E.C. Local No. 5 day room and union hall facility," the Local 5 **Building Committee** submitted a resolution to the local on November 8, 1989, calling for the purchase of a lot on which to construct a

new headquarters building. The membership subsequently voted on January 2, 1990, to approve the resolution, which also stipulated the facility would be funded through an assessment of \$15 per member per month for one year, a \$300,000 contribution from the local's General Fund and a 10-year mortgage for the balance of the cost.



Rodgers family patriarch Arthur A. Rodgers was a member of Local 5 from 1903 into 1950.



Family and Local 5 members (left to right) Tom, Brian, Arthur J., Jim and Art Rodgers pose together during the 1999 meeting at which Brian was sworn into the local as a member.



Having held their meetings at the Electrical Workers Local No. 98 Union Hall for many years, the elevator constructors broke ground for their new **Local 5 Union Hall** on Townsend Road in Philadelphia on September 5, 1990. Six months later on March 5, 1991, after moving its offices into the new building shortly before, about 500 members attended the local's first general membership held in the hall, after which the local held an open house on March 30.

Full employment of Local 5 elevator constructor mechanics, maintenance workers and apprentices also continued into the 1990s before construction faded in 1990, leaving up to 90 members on the "out-of-work" bench at one point before the end of the year. Over the first half of the decade, work remained lackluster for the most part and at one point in February 1991 more than 130 members were out of work.

Throughout the course of the latter half of that final decade of the century and millennium, occasional relief from the poor employment conditions came in the form of some major new construction projects such as the **Wells Fargo Center** multi-purpose sports and entertainment arena, which opened at the South Philadelphia Sports Complex in August 1996; a new 604-room hotel tower for the **Tropicana Atlantic City** casino that opened in 1996; and the new **Atlantic City Convention Center**, which opened in May 1997. But those breaks in the slow construction work did not alleviate the local's overall employment issues, and as a result, its membership fell from roughly 1,000 in 1990 to about 600 elevator constructors and apprentices by the end of the decade.

### STADIUMS, SAFETY, NEW JOBS

The new "Y2K" (Year 2000) millennium brought with it more tangible solutions for Local 5's troublesome

### RETIRES CLUB IS 34 YEARS YOUNG

The **Golden Rail Club** for retirees of Local 5 was formed in 1991 by a group of retired members who desired to remain updated on current activities and to maintain friendships with their fellow present and retired members. The club is strictly a fraternal organization dedicated to fellowship.

Its informal meetings are held at the Local 5 Union Hall on mornings following the local's general meeting night. The club holds a June luncheon for members only and a Christmas party for members and guests in December, and it also sponsors other activities such as museum tours and bus trips to shows and dinners.

As Local 5 celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025, the Golden Rail Club had about 70 members, as its numbers had increased thanks to the Golden Rail Club Committee, its Activities Committee and the officers of Local 5. The Golden Rail Club Committee consisted of Ron Marple, Rick Good, Tom Keil and Art Rodgers.



work conditions, initially in the form of the construction of two new South Philadelphia Sports Complex facilities. With those, the local's members workhours installing elevators and escalators at **Lincoln Financial Field**, the new home field for the Philadelphia Eagles that opened in August 2003, and **Citizens Bank Park**, the new home field for the Philadelphia Phillies that opened in April 2004.

A major expansion to the **Philadelphia International Airport** likewise significantly added to the available workhours for the local's elevator constructors during the early



## LOCAL LIFTS UP VETERANS

Among the many charitable organizations in which Local 5 and its members have been involved, they are especially proud and eager to utilize their elevator constructor skills to help others. In doing so, the local has assisted people with leading independent lives through the installation of vertical transportation systems in their homes.

Among the many deserving people who need a lift or elevator in their homes are U.S. military veterans, for whom the local founded its **A Lift For A Vet** program in 2010. The mission of the non-profit organization is to buy and install elevators, home lifts, stair lifts or wheelchair lifts in the residences of disabled U.S. military service veterans -- helping those veterans continue to lead independent lives.

The purchase, installation and maintenance of the systems A Lift For A Vet installs is free of charge to the veterans. The program relies on donations to fund its efforts.

Additionally, each May Local 5's Activities Committee hosts a golf outing to benefit A Lift For A Vet at the Mays Landing Golf and Country Club, with all proceeds going toward the purchase of home lifts, stair chairs or elevators for vets.



2000s. As such, members took part in the project that constructed two new terminals that nearly doubled the size of the airport complex and expanded its Concourse D and the Terminal D baggage claim, all of which was completed by 2003.

What's more, with as many as 15,000 elevators in the Philadelphia area, by 2001 most were being maintained by many of the 700 members of Local 5.

With its mechanics' base hourly pay rate at \$33.50 and its helpers receiving \$23.45 per hour in 2001, the local also gained a new work contract in July 2002 with the I.U.E.C. negotiating a five-year updated Standard Agreement with N.E.I. – which many in the union believed was the best contract between the two organizations in the past two decades. As part of the pact, in addition to wage increases the union was provided with a new **Annuity Fund** retirement plan as a fringe benefit for its members, which began with employer contributions of 40 cents per hour worked by I.U.E.C. members.



Another new Standard Agreement signed in 2007 provided a pay raise for Local 5 mechanics and apprentices and included an increase in the Annuity Fund benefit as well. Over the course of the remaining four years of the five-year contract, additional increases would roughly double that initial raise.

But that year, the start of the so-called "Great Recession" economic crisis that would persist into 2009 dramatically slowed employment for the local. Regardless, in 2008 the local's membership was up to more than 850 mechanics, helpers and apprentices at one point.

Employment remained decidedly poor, however, for the local's members for much of the first half of the new 2010s decade as the effects of the historic recession lingered. "With

work as slow as it is and only getting slower," a Local 5 column in the February 2012 *Elevator Constructor* even lamented, "it's harder to stand and fight."

In July 2012, the union did gain its next five-year working agreements between the I.U.E.C. and the National Elevator Bargaining Association, which represented the Schindler, Thyssen, Otis and KONE elevator companies, and the Elevator Contractors of America, which represented Stanley Elevator, Associated Elevator, Atlantic Elevator and numerous other firms.

Another surge in new construction, including City Center skyscrapers, and modernization of existing elevators and escalators in the Local 5 jurisdiction once again boosted employment for its membership. Work and, subsequently,



Local 5 officers when the local celebrated its 100th anniversary on May 20, 2000, were (left to right, seated) Robert B. Barrett Jr., Joseph W. Whalen, Walter Micka, Mark Gray, Robert S. Duffy, Kenneth E. Hartery, Robert J. Eells Jr. and Arthur E. Rodgers; and (standing) Richard F. Good, Mark A. Ferguson, Joseph P. Rapine Jr., James E. Martin, William R. Johnston Jr., Frank J. Dubeck, Joseph Pietro, John Davenport, Harry J. Sloan, John D. Koch, John R. Lavelle and Edward A. Loomis.



jobs for the local's members would remain plentiful throughout the balance of the decade, allowing the local to enjoy full employment while also bringing in new members.

Also during that time, Local 5 formed a **Safety Committee** in 2015 that would focus on "encouraging workers to follow all safety procedures" to help eliminate workplace accidents and deaths. Additionally, with the local's prompting, the City of Philadelphia was elevating its safety standards regarding elevator construction and maintenance.

What's more, the I.U.E.C. bargained for a new, five-year agreement with signatory companies after their previous contract expired on July 8, 2017, at midnight.

In that atmosphere, the local's column in the August 2018 *Elevator Constructor* echoed a

sentiment found throughout many of the decade's previous issues: "Local 5 members continue to be busy, and work is abundant in Philly."

## PANDEMIC, SURGE TO 125<sup>TH</sup>

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which first appeared in the United States in early 2020 and would claim the lives of more than 1 million Americans over the next three years, halted the soaring construction in the Philadelphia area, however, stifling employment for the Local 5 membership. But the local worked to ensure the safety of its members and staff, following COVID-19 protocols such as mandating masks and social distancing, to help re-open "essential" jobsites as well as its union hall and training.

Subsequently, with elevator constructors in high demand, the following year the



Local 5 officers swear in the local's newest organized members during its general meeting on November 7, 2023, at the Local 5 Union Hall.



local had nearly all of its members working again. "Wish we could attain 100 percent employment," Local 5 Press Correspondent Matt Wister accordingly wrote in the April 2021 *Elevator Constructor*, "but 98 percent is pretty remarkable, all things considered."

However, in the aftermath of the pandemic, Local 5 exited the catering business it had hosted from its union hall with **P&P Caterers** since building the facility back in 1991. Instead, in 2023 the local converted the space into a new, state-of-the-art training area for its apprentices and journeymen who were participating in "upgrade" training to educate themselves on new equipment and techniques in the trade.

Meanwhile, the I.U.E.C. presented its locals with a new work agreement with employing companies that it had signed on July 9, 2022, after the previous five-year contract had expired. With the contract, the local would continue to see higher pay and improved benefits, including an annuity contribution of \$11 per hour before the pact ends.

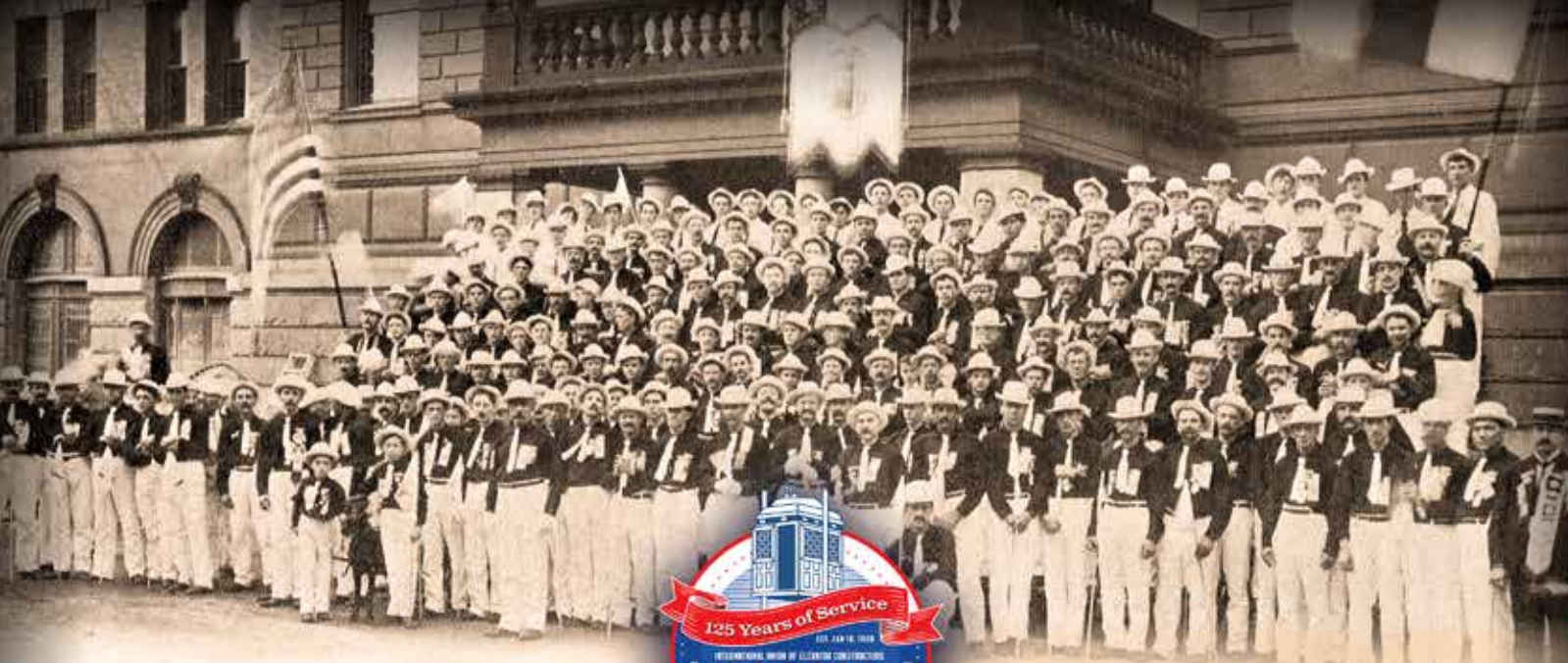
As Local 5 approached the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding as the United Association of

Elevator Men and then the Elevator Erectors Union of Philadelphia, the city was in the midst of another major construction boom, particularly within Center City, where no less than 66 major development projects had been completed or were ongoing or planned. Elevator constructors who form the membership of Local 5 have been and will continue to be able to work jobs such as those while earning some of the highest wages and best benefits among the building trades – just as the local's members have throughout its 125-year history – because of the men of great strength and character who founded the elevator constructors union, both locally and nationally.

At 125 years, Local 5 will also maintain its strength and unity, which has been passed from generation to generation, with strong leadership and dedicated members. From there and with a strong legacy built on solidarity and member training, the local along with the I.U.E.C. will continue to secure excellent wages, healthcare and retirement benefits and safety standards for the membership into the future while continuing to lift Philadelphia and the region. ●







# Thank You TO OUR LIBERTY SPONSORS



 **Mezrow Law**