

A 100-YEAR HISTORY OF SERVICE TO CENTRAL IOWA

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local No. 347, Des Moines



When officials of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers met with leaders of the union's great "secession movement" in Des Moines on June 7, 1914, to work out final details of the end of hostilities, they could not have selected a more symbolically appropriate location than the capital of Iowa. As *The Iowa Unionist* newspaper noted when it announced in its October 8, 1914, issue that "the 'war' was over," the state's contingent of locals had been affiliated with the break-away "Reid-Murphy" faction.

What's more, by then the rebelling locals were headed by Des Moines resident James "Jim" Fitzgerald, who was president of the city's mixed-classification Local 55 and had replaced the secessionists' inaugural president, J.J. Reid. (Fitzgerald had written in the June 1908 *Electrical Worker*, the official journal of the I.B.E.W., "I am convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that a mere special Executive Board meeting will not bring about that unity of action which is so necessary at this time for the future growth and prosperity of our I.B.E.W.")

Through the course of six years, the I.B.E.W. endured a bitter internal struggle during which a large number of locals across the nation formed a competing union. Driven by discord between linemen and wiremen, disgruntled office-seekers and a former grand treasurer removed from office in 1907 because of "irregularities," as the History of The I.B.E.W. recounts, the "Reid-Murphy Split" elected Reid as its president and J.W. Murphy as its secretary during a special convention in 1908.

The splinter locals rejected President Frank J. McNulty and Secretary Peter W. Collins as leaders of the I.B.E.W. and held their own convention in 1911 – while the original Brotherhood was also meeting. A court decision in February 1912 rendered the actions taken during the Reid-Murphy convention in 1908 illegitimate, however, signaling the beginning of the end of the division within the union.

By the time the two sides met in Des Moines, the I.B.E.W. had received requests from several local unions and representatives of District Councils "connected with the seceders" asking to "re-affiliate," President McNulty revealed in the June 1914 I.B.E.W. *Journal of Electrical Workers*. Both McNulty and Fitzgerald were present at the meeting, during which the "Tentative Agreement" to allow the Reid-Murphy locals back into the I.B.E.W. was further interpreted for the leaders of the split.

No fewer than four electrical locals existed in Des Moines shortly after that meeting took place, including Local 55, which had been chartered as a mixed local of inside electricians and outside wiremen on July 29, 1893. An inside-only Local 51 was chartered on June 9, 1913, and a Local 642 was also chartered around that time – but both went defunct shortly afterward.

Local 347 was also already being organized and was even listed in the June 1914 *Journal*.

I.B.E.W. officials met in Des Moines in June 1914 to finally resolve the "Reid-Murphy Split."



ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT LOCAL

Apparently eager to reinstate a faithful local in Des Moines, the I.B.E.W. established Local 347 in the city well before the local was officially chartered on December 26, 1914. In fact, the local was already participating with the Des Moines Trades and Labor Assembly by November 1914, seating delegates Harvey Penny, C.R. Moore and N.W. Moon at the Assembly's November 24 meeting, according to a report in the November 26 *Iowa Unionist*.

I.B.E.W. Local 347 was chartered on December 26, 1914.

By that month, Fred Martinson, who had been listed as financial secretary of Local 51, was serving in that capacity for Local 347. Two months later, Martinson was the recording secretary and Charles L. Page was the local's financial secretary, a position he had previously held for Local 642 – which, like Local 51, no longer existed by February 1915, according to I.B.E.W. records.

Initially meeting every Monday evening at the Labor Temple at Sixth and Plum Streets in Des Moines, Local 347 struggled early on, with a reprieve for “loafing” brothers only coming in the form of two sleet storms in February that “tore down about everything that was loose” and created work for members, the March 1915 *Journal* reported. Nevertheless, the local was “taking in a few new members now and then” and was also involved in the push to pass legislation that would establish a state electrical inspector and standardize construction work (which was being opposed by the Business Men's Association.)

Local 347 was also having difficulty negotiating a new agreement with contractors, resulting in additional unemployment and forcing the local to place “in force Section 8, Article 14 of the Constitution,” whereby each individual member worked fewer hours per week to provide other members with work. But by June 1915, the local had signed a contract with “improved working conditions and increased wage

The Journal of Electrical Workers, January 1915

(c) No. 347, Des Moines, Ia.—Meets every Monday eve at Labor Temple, Sixth and Plum Sts. President, Jas. R. Payton, 1625 Ninth St.; Vice President, C. R. Moore, 1321 Hull Ave.; Financial Secretary, Chas. L. Page, 1124 Euclid Ave.; Recording Secretary, Fred Martinson, 712 Eighth St.; Treasurer, Chas. L. Page, 1124 Euclid Ave.

During its first several years, Local 347 held its meetings at the Labor Temple in Des Moines on Monday nights.

Local 347 members assemble on Labor Day 1914 in Des Moines.



Editor:

The past history of Local No. 347 has probably been no different than that of most Locals so I will confine myself to a brief account of our recent demand for improved working conditions and increased wage scale.

Previous to the signing of our present agreement, wages were \$4.00 per day, with card men running the rats a poor race for preference. At present the scale is \$4.50 per day with the usual time and one-half for overtime and double time for Sundays and holidays. At present work is fairly plentiful and all brothers not afflicted with the hook worm are busy.

Conditions in the other crafts are good with the exception of the iron workers, who have been up against a pretty hard proposition for a long time.

The prompt and satisfactory adjustment of our difficulty was in great part due to the efficient management of Vice President Noonan, whose genial presence and wise council was a great inspiration to us all.

The willingness of each and every member to do his part was also very gratifying.

The meetings were all held in the local hall where they belonged, and not on the street corners.

All personal grievances were laid aside the hatchet was buried and in most cases also the cork screw. Our orators broke all previous records for speed and endurance.

German experts, who are experimenting with a process for manufacturing fertilizers from nitrogen extracted from the atmosphere, would do well to attend one of our local meetings and get in touch with the wonderfully efficient process developed by our high tension orators.

Before closing I would like to extend the thanks of the Local to the traveling brothers, who visited us during the adjustment of our agreement. Their free hearted offers to do missionary duty among the heathen was a revelation to us homeguards, who were in the habit of looking on a brother with the wonderlust as a parasite who traveled from town to town seeing whose meal ticket he could devour.

Before closing I would like to suggest that all brothers expecting to visit this city would first get in communication with Brother Jim Lyons, our efficient Business Agent, who is in position to give them any information they might wish.

Fraternally yours,

P. Ganz.

The Journal of Electrical Workers. June 1915

U.S. Army Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa, was a primary employer of Local 347 members by 1917.

Meanwhile, work was “fairly plentiful and all brothers not afflicted with the hook worm (were) busy.” Also at that time, about 10 shops in the City of Des Moines were closed shops and union men “were enjoying good conditions.”

Local 347 electrical workers were making \$4.50 per day in June 1915.

The following year, Local 347 electricians were working on a Ford plant job and also on six-, 10- and 13-story buildings being constructed in the city. However, the friendly environment was slowly eroding, as Local 347 Press Secretary Theodore Kooreman detailed in the March 1917 *Journal*:

“Then the Business Men’s League thought things were going too nicely and they told one of the contractors that the way for him to make more money was to run an open shop. He and a couple of others ran an open shop for a couple of years. A year ago, he talked some more into the open shop notion. The result is that today instead of 10 good shops there are about 75 men in the contracting game.”

FIGHTING THE OPEN SHOPS

“We have a small war on in this city.”

Local 347 Press Secretary Kooreman left no doubt as to the situation in Des Moines during the spring of 1917 in his column in the April *Journal*. The city's Master Builders had locked out the brick masons, carpenters and engineers on April 1 and had closed down the lumberyards, leaving contractors unable to do any work, he reported.

By September, Camp Dodge, a large army facility near Des Moines that was being expanded, was employing a large number of Local 347 members, helping the local take in “a good many new members” while also making “a lot of progress ... toward getting Local Union No. 374 on its feet.” The project’s contractor was originally using nonunion, inexperienced workers and paying them \$6.60 per day, but the local complained to the camp’s major and

Local 347 electrical workers were making \$4.50 per day in June 1915.



I.B.E.W. Local 347 charter

the union was soon after put on the job, Kooreman explained in the September *Journal*.

Local 347 brothers C.F. Clark and W.F. Bristow wired the Des Moines community Christmas tree in 1918.

The following year, a large number of men were still working at Fort Dodge and making 65 cents per hour, the same scale being paid by the City of Des Moines, according to Kooreman in the June 1918 *Journal*. What's more, the local on April 1 had negotiated a new wage scale and better conditions, "which are better at this time than they ever were before," Kooreman proclaimed.

While Local 347 members were working on the construction of the new Fort Des Moines Hotel, in early 1919 the local was again forced to put Section 8, Article 14, of its Constitution into effect as it had "the required number of men out of employment," according to the January 9 *Iowa Unionist*. Meanwhile, members were traveling to find jobs in places such as Marshalltown to work with the Marshall Electric Co.; Rockford, Illinois; and Aberdeen, Maryland, to work on a government project.

Local 347 held a dance at the Masonic Temple on February 1, 1919, to which the local invited "organized labor." Admission was \$1, but ladies were admitted free.

In 1919, Local 347 members helped build Hotel Fort Des Moines, which has since hosted 12 U.S. presidents, actress Mae West and aviator Charles Lindbergh, among other prominent guests. (Pictured is the historic hotel as it stands as the local marks its 100th anniversary.)

Things again picked up for the local, as by March 1919 it had notified its electrical contractors that the new scale for electricians beginning April 1 was to be 87-1/2 cents per hour, *The Iowa Unionist* reported on March 6, 1919. Kooreman, who had been made business agent of the local, also had been very successful in having several nonunion jobs turn union, affording him the opportunity to tell the newspaper, "The employers generally are quite willing to remove the nonunion men and place the union men at work."

But in early April, the electricians joined the bricklayers, painters, hoisting engineers and carpenters of Des Moines in a strike for higher wages, as the contractors apparently did not agree to the proposed pay increase. A full eight weeks later, the strike finally ended after "satisfactory agreement to both parties concerned" was reached, *The Iowa Unionist* reported on May 29.

The electricians, who had been receiving 75 cents per hour, would receive 81-1/4 cents until September 1, after which they would receive 87 cents per hour until April 1, 1921. "The agreement signed embodies a 'closed shop' provision for the building trades in Des Moines," the newspaper declared. "This is

undoubtedly the best understanding that has been reached between the general contractors and the building trades in the history of Des Moines."

Following the strike, new Local 347 Press Secretary Charles Jahn was able to proclaim in the January 1920 *Journal*:

"I'm glad to say that we have a 100 percent Building Trades Council in good working order at the present time, a condition we have never enjoyed in the city. We have a 95 percent organization here and expect to make it 100 percent in the near future."

An agreement signed with contractors paid Local 347 members 87 cents per hour until April 1921 and included closed-shop stipulations for Des Moines.

FACING HARDSHIP WITH VIGOR

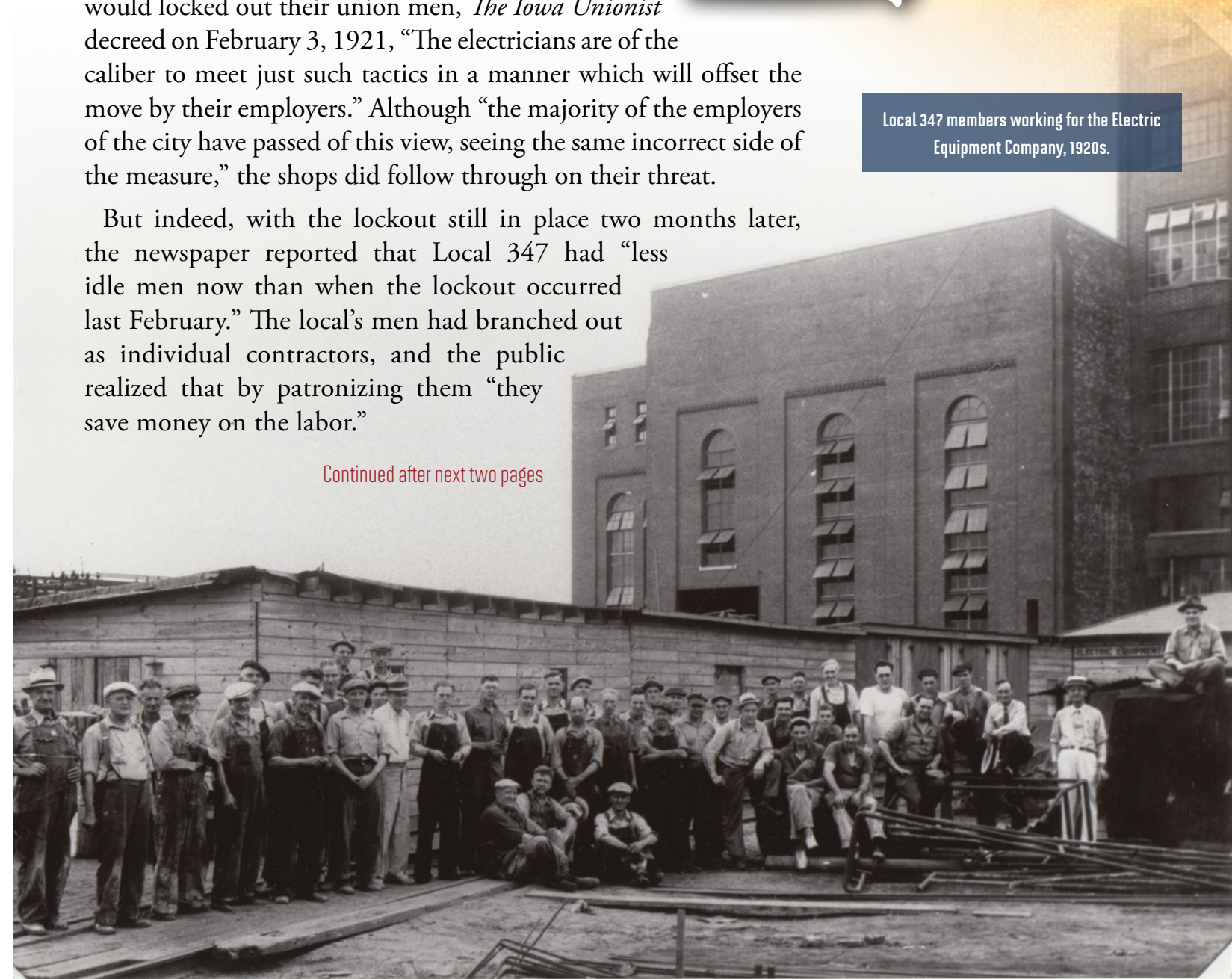
After six electrical shops in Des Moines declared that their wages would be cut on February 1 and they would locked out their union men, *The Iowa Unionist* decreed on February 3, 1921, "The electricians are of the caliber to meet just such tactics in a manner which will offset the move by their employers." Although "the majority of the employers of the city have passed of this view, seeing the same incorrect side of the measure," the shops did follow through on their threat.

In the early 1920s, many Local 347 members responded to a surge of open-shop contractors within Des Moines by becoming contractors themselves.

But indeed, with the lockout still in place two months later, the newspaper reported that Local 347 had "less idle men now than when the lockout occurred last February." The local's men had branched out as individual contractors, and the public realized that by patronizing them "they save money on the labor."

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Local 347 members working for the Electric Equipment Company, 1920s.



Harry Broach

Member Led International Union

Starting his career as an inside wireman at age 16 when he was initiated into I.B.E.W. Local 456 of Oklahoma City on April 29, 1909, **Howell Hamilton “Harry” Broach** transferred his membership to Local 347 of Des Moines in August 1915. He then helped organize the fledgling local before he



was named International President of the I.B.E.W. in 1929, serving in that capacity through 1933.

Brother Broach was appointed an International Representative of the I.B.E.W. in October 1917, becoming one of the youngest members ever appointed to the International staff, and in January 1920, he became an International Vice President. Nine years later on December 7, 1929, following the death of International President James P.

Noonan, Brother Broach was appointed International President by the I.B.E.W. Executive Council.

President Broach presided over the Brotherhood during the Great Depression, and his tenure was marked by a series of changes designed to enable the union to meet the challenges of the times. Among the many contributions he made to the union, perhaps none was more monumental than his rewriting of the International Constitution in 1930 (as authorized during the 1929 convention).

Poor health forced him to resign in August 1933.

In November 1941, Brother Broach returned to the I.B.E.W. staff as an International Representative. At the 1946 I.B.E.W. convention in San Francisco, he was elected to the International Executive Council, serving as its secretary until January 1960, when he retired.

Born on March 8, 1893, Brother Broach passed away July 25, 1960.

Shortly after he ascended to the union’s presidency, his local saluted him in the February 1930 I.B.E.W. Journal:

“We are all real proud to think that our new international president, H. H. Broach, has his name on our roll call. ... We feel that the brotherhood has chosen a very capable leader who will surely do everything humanly possible for the betterment of the organization in all of its branches.”

Des Moines, Ia. Local No. 347

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

(Date) Jan. 4, 1935

The Local was called to order at P. M., and opened in due form.

President, in the forum. Bristow

The following *pro tem.* appointments were made: Clerk - Foreman.

The official roll call resulted as follows:

President	P	Treasurer	A
Vice President	A	Financial Secretary	P
Recording Secretary	P	Foreman	P
First Inspector	A	Second Inspector	A

Minutes of last meeting were read and Approved

Min. of Build. trades Council read.

Bill of Build. trades \$18.00 read.

Min. of Ex. Board of 12/22/34 read.

Communication of Painters in regards to legal representative read.

Mrs. by Townsend, sec. by Kale that \$1.00 dues. be placed for above purpose. 1st annually.

Motion carried.

Communication from V. Pres. office in re - to post office job read and filed.

Report of B.E. Syester heard.

Committee on Legislation turned over to ex-board.

Mrs. by Norman. sec. by Kale Brief of findings of R.R. commiss + Eng. White be drawn up and sent to proper authorities in regard to same.

Carried.

A.M. Anderson given obligation.

J. H. Dinegan P.S.

Local 347 Press Secretary Charles Frohne admitted in the February 1922 *Journal* that 1921 had been a “difficult year” during which the local lost almost half of its membership. However, while most every contractor in town had turned open shop, Frohne also noted that during the slack time, several Local 347 members had become contractors themselves.

Throughout much of 1922, there was little work and most Local 347 members were only working half-time as the local was without an agreement with the contractors association. But the local was biding its time; by May, its press secretary reported that two more open shops had gone bankrupt and “we are smashing right along, and while doing so rub our hands and chuckle with glee.”

The local was also contending with another dilemma at the time: jurisdictional disputes with the carpenters over certain types of work. (The issue would persist for years to come.)

A glimmer of hope emerged when the local signed an agreement on December 22, 1922, that called for \$7.50-per-day pay through April 1, 1923, than an increase to \$8 per day. The local had organized about half of the city’s approximately 124 electricians when

the accord was reached and had added to its election of officers a committee of three members who would “sit with a committee of the contractors once a month.”

However, work would remain slow throughout most of the remainder of the decade. The November 1924 *Journal* described that year and the year before as “panicky times” for the local, as unemployment remained a problem – so much so that the local by 1925 had instituted the four-day work week “in an effort to ease this situation.”

There were still no large projects in the Des Moines area through 1927, and most members were only working three or four days each week by then, according to the December *Journal*. It was

Continued after next two pages

We, the undersigned members of Electrical Workers Union No. 347, are of the opinion that the present rate of percentage is too high and therefore,

Resolve, that the present rate should be cut from three percent (3%) to one and one-half percent (1½%).

Signed,

Ike Johnson R. F. Reaves
J. E. Cox R. E. Jones
R. Lambert
A. Penney
C. A. Herrington
Ray Mills
R. B. Ayer
C. A. Powers
W. A. Chamberlain
Low Townsend
W. E. Herring
C. P. Clark

Handwritten resolution from Local 347 members protesting the percentage taken from their pay by the union, October 1940.

By 1923, Local 347 had established a committee that would sit with a committee representing its contractors to discuss issues within the industry.

Fred H. Powers, Sr. Scribe A Reader Favorite for 37 Years

As the Local 347 press secretary from 1950 to 1977 (with a hiatus from August 1953 through March 1957), Fred H. Powers became semi-famous for his fishing stories at the end of most of his articles. But he was well known, too, for publicly and continuously chastising members for not attending meetings, while also “eulogizing” and “giving bouquets to” deserving brothers “while they were still around.”

When in 1953 he tried to relinquish his position, citing an indifference to his musings by *Journal* readers, the editor was quick to respond in the August 1953 issue, “You had many interested readers, Brother Powers, who look forward to your letters.” Indeed, a decade later, he was still on the job and was honored as the “Press Secretary of the Month” in the April 1963 *Journal*.

Upon his retirement, the *Journal* editor again praised Brother Powers, this time in the April 1977 issue: “His outstanding dedication is to be congratulated and the Brotherhood wishes Brother Powers a happy and healthy retirement.”

True to form, when Local 347 formed a retirees club in 1980, Brother Powers was its first chairman and took on the duties of club Press Secretary almost immediately, having an article penned for the May 1980 *Journal*. His final article would appear in the November



1987 *Journal* – in which he, once again, prodded members to attend meetings.

Brother Powers also served several terms on the local’s executive board until his appointment as assistant business manager of Local 347. He was a delegate to the Des Moines Building Trades Council for many years and was a delegate to and past president of the Polk County Labor Council.

His interest in civic affairs was manifested in his extensive work for COPE (the I.B.E.W. Committee on Political Education) and his work on the Des Moines urban renewal board, for which he served as chairman. In his spare time, Brother Powers was an ardent fisherman, hunter and outdoorsman and was very active in conservation work.

Brother Powers passed away in March 1996.

AGREEMENT

This agreement made and entered into this 7th day of July, 1941, by and between the Iowa Broadcasting Company, owners and operators of Radio Stations KRNT and KSO, Des Moines, Iowa, hereinafter called the "Employer" and the Associated Broadcast Technicians Unit of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, hereinafter called the "union", as the sole collective bargaining agency for all broadcast technicians or engineers, but not including the Chief Engineer, herein called "Technicians", now or hereafter employed by the Employer during the term of this agreement.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The Employer and the Union have a common and sympathetic interest in the radio broadcasting industry. Therefore, a working system and harmonious relations by the Employer, The Union and the Public. All will benefit by continuous peace and by adjusting any difference by rational, common-sense methods. To these ends this agreement is made.

ARTICLE I

Date Effective - Jurisdiction - Recognition - Membership.

Section 1. This agreement shall take effect May 31, 1941 and shall remain in effect until June 1, 1943. It shall continue in effect from year to year thereafter, from May 31st to June 1st of each year, unless changed or terminated in the way later provided herein.

Section 2. Either party desiring to change or terminate this agreement must notify the other in writing at least 30 days prior to June 1st, 1943. Whenever notice is given for changes, the nature of the changes desired must be stated in the notice. However, changes can be made at any time by mutual consent of the parties hereto, provided such changes shall be reduced to writing and approved by the International Office of the Union the same as this Agreement.

Section 3. There shall be no stoppage of operation, either by strike or lockout, during the terms of this Agreement, because of any dispute over matters relating to the provisions herein. All such matters must be handled in the manner provided hereinafter. Neither shall any strike or lockout be resorted to during the time that any grievance or other matter is under arbitration, as provided herein.

Section 4. The jurisdiction of the work covered by and to be performed by technicians under the terms of this Agreement shall include all work in connection with the installation, operation and maintenance of radio broadcast, television, voice, facsimile, rebroadcast and apparatus by means of which electricity is applied in the transmission or transference, production or reproduction of voice, sound or vision, with or without ethereal aid; and including the cutting and processing of records and transcriptions. Present method of playing records and transcriptions shall not be disturbed.

Section 5. The Employer recognizes the right of it's employees to self-organization and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. The Associated Broadcast Technicians Unit of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers is hereby recognized as the sole collective bargaining agency for all technicians in the employ of the Employer, except the Chief Engineer, who shall not be a member of the Union.

Agreement between the Local 347 broadcasting unit and the Iowa Broadcast Co., 1941.

"still quiet" the next year, during which only about 60 percent of the local's members were working only about 40 percent of the time, the March 1928 *Journal* reported.

The onset of the Great Depression and the 1930s initially did not have as adverse of an effect on the local as it did on much of the country. Truth be told, Frohne wrote in the February 1930 *Journal* that "no one in the local ... lost in the Wall Street crash."

What's more, Local 347 gained a \$1 wage increase in the fall of 1929 to raise its pay rate to \$11 for an eight-hour day, and "the local didn't even have to strike to get it," Frohne boasted. "We have had a fine year," he went on to announce. "Everyone has been having a payday every Saturday and although our usual winter slump is here now, the boys are still getting enough to keep the wolf from the door."

Working conditions remained fair until August 1931, when they "deteriorated quickly in just a two-month period," Frohne reported in the October *Journal*, and 40 percent of the local would find itself out of work. In one effort to create more jobs to curb that trend, Local 347 had started an alliance with the bricklayers and the carpenters that was meant to curtail jurisdictional disputes, especially on house work.

But unemployment reached about 50 percent a year later, despite the promise of a government hospital job coming to the area. Periods of slow work, during which members were forced to travel for employment, would persist throughout much of the remainder of the decade.

EXPANDING AMID UPS & DOWNS

The end of the Depression and beginning of World War II were watershed events for Local 347. The local had made it through a dark decade, and the need for war materiel to support the war effort provided abundant work for its members going forward.

By September 1941, just months before the United States would

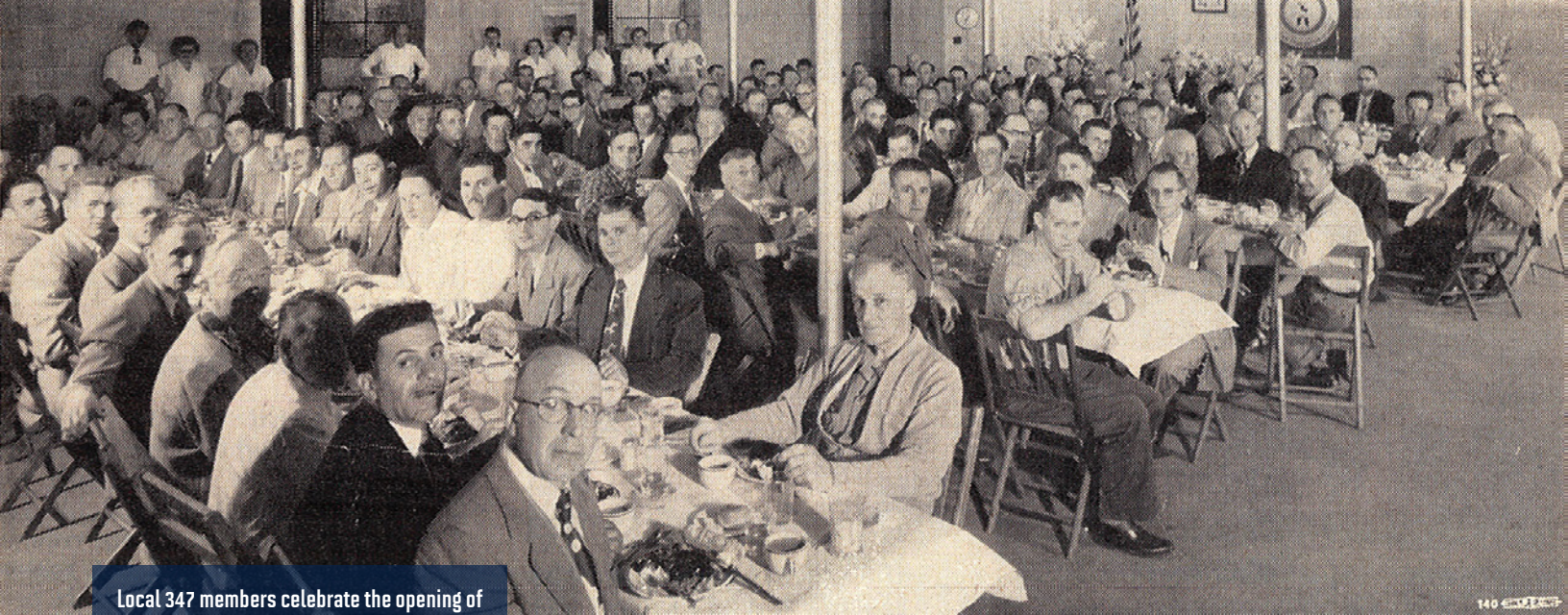
DATE		HOURS EMPLOYED		EARNINGS		DEDUCTIONS		TOTAL EARNINGS	
DATE	ST. TIME	ST. TIME	OVERTIME	ST. TIME	OVERTIME	ST. TIME	OVERTIME	ST. TIME	OVERTIME
1944-3-31	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
4-1	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
4-2	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
4-3	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
4-4	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
4-5	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
4-6	8	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	2
TOTAL HOURS		40		16		16		16	
AMOUNTS		\$ 60.00		\$ 36.00		\$ 17.56		\$ 78.44	

Local 347 payroll ledger, 1944.

Local 347 members gained a \$1 raise without the aid of a strike in 1929 just as the Great Depression began to grip the United States.

By July 1930, Local 347 was involved in legislative efforts as part of the Iowa Electrical Workers' Association to "correct some of the conditions pertaining to our trade existing in this state."

In April 1937, Local 347 journeyman electrician wages were \$1.37-1/2 cents per hour.



Local 347 members celebrate the opening of the local's new union hall at the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Ascension Street with a banquet on September 7, 1951.

be plunged into the global conflict, the U.S. government was building a small-arms plant in Des Moines that employed many Local 347 members. During the war, Johnson Electric was engaged in a joint venture to construct the Des Moines ordnance plant; a cement plant and new hospitals were built in the city; and members worked 10-hours a day constructing a new radio station in town – all of which resulted in hundreds of traveling I.B.E.W. brothers being employed within the Local 347 jurisdiction.

During World War II, Local 347 members were employed at many jobs that helped sustain the war effort, including an ordnance factory in Des Moines.

Meanwhile, the local had negotiated for a new wage agreement in 1941 to receive \$1.15 an hour for a 40-hour week, with double time for all overtime except on defense work, which paid time-and-a-half for overtime.

Following the war, Local 347 continued to expand as its members remained busy, the majority of them working on a large addition to the city's power plant through 1950. By the end of that year, the local had established an active apprentice school committee and a strong apprentice training program, and it had also purchased a building in Des Moines for its new, larger offices and union hall.

Local 347 moved into a new union hall at the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Ascension Street in Des Moines in 1951, celebrating with a dedication party on September 7.

The local's wage committee had also been successful, negotiating a 10-cent raise to bring the new wage scale up to \$2.55 per hour by July.

Intent on sharing its good fortune, during its May 4, 1951, meeting, the local unanimously voted to raise its dues amount \$1 per month to assist with the I.B.E.W. pension fund, which was in jeopardy at the time. (The local would go on to contribute "a considerable part" of its cash reserve to the fund over

the course of the following several years.)

But by the end of 1951, Local 347 was in the midst of a contentious wage dispute with its contractors, who refused the local's wage requests. Negotiations were eventually taken before the Council of Industrial Relations of the Electrical Industry, which prompted longtime Local 347 Press Secretary Fred H. Powers to express his disappointment that members were being denied "a much deserved and needed wage raise" in the January 1952 *Journal*:

I.B.E.W. Local 1195 of Marshalltown, which was chartered August 15, 1940, amalgamated with Local 347 on March 1, 1953, growing the Des Moines local's jurisdiction to 25 counties in the central part of the state.

"The electrician is not only a skilled workman but he is also a salesman and an emissary of goodwill for the contractor. In view of all these extra services for the contractors, it is very disconcerting to have them show utter contempt for our members who are, in fact, their very life blood."

Never giving up its fight, the local finally secured a new wage scale in June.

Work in and around Des Moines slowed by 1953, and "members were scattered from Greenland to Texas and from Virginia to California," according to Powers, seeking employment with sister I.B.E.W. locals. Early that year, the local also established a benefit fund to pay the dues of any of its members "overtaken by adversities or misfortunes," assessing each member a minuscule – but beneficial – 15 cents per month for the fund.

By June, several members of the building trades began what would be a nearly two-month-long strike for better wages, which closed down practically every large job in the area, rendering many more Local 347 members unemployed and forcing them to work out of town. Shortly after the strike began, the local reached a wage settlement with the contractors for a raise up to \$2.85 per hour, but by August, with the building-trades strike continuing, the local voted to work only 24 hours per week.

Work was steady for Local 347 throughout 1954, even after the powerhouse project was completed earlier that year. While the local was dormant for a week while negotiating for a new contract after its agreement expired on May 1, 1955 – the local

I.B.E.W. Local 1258 of Des Moines, which was chartered May 22, 1941, amalgamated with Local 347 on February 1, 1955.



Among the 35- and 40-year veteran members of Local 347 recognized during a ceremony in 1953 were (standing, left to right) Ed Harmon, Pete Franklin, International Representative Henry Kuklish, Art Brandt, Business Agent Harold Baker and Nels Herring; and (seated, left to right) Frankie Smith, Charles Page, Ernie Johnson and Andy Johnson.

Local 347 established its Broadcast Unit in 1956 to represent workers at area TV and radio stations; they initially began their meetings at 11:00 in the evenings and many would last until 2:30 in the morning.

'The Hot Spotters' A Unique Branch of Local 347

In 1956, Local 347 took on a distinctive set of members when the entire factory staff of technicians and electrical workers at Hot Spot Detector, Inc., in Des Moines became members of the local – and became known as “The Hot Spotters.” The company manufactured electronic temperature monitoring systems used throughout the world in grain elevators and mills for detecting “hotspots” in grain bins, which are caused by mold, moisture and foreign materials and can damage contents.

The temperature-measuring apparatus acted as a warning device before the loss of product from spoilage or deterioration could take place, helping to save billions of dollars in damage to grain.

The local would soon after also establish a bargaining unit at the George A. Rolfes Company in Boone, Iowa, which produced similar instruments for the protection of grain storage facilities.

eventually gained a 5-cent-an-hour raise and a 7-1/2-cent vacation fund – work in the area remained steady through 1956, with most of the men working on major projects such as an office building for the Bankers' Life Insurance Company and the Iowa Methodist Hospital.

Local 347's ongoing efforts to bring all electrical work in its jurisdiction under the I.B.E.W. banner paid off in early 1957 when it won a National Labor Relations Board (N.L.R.B.) election at the Fair Play Manufacturing Company, which produced electrical scoreboards that were installed in stadiums around the world. However, while there were about 33 employees in that bargaining unit, by December 1 none had joined the union (a situation that would soon after rectify itself.)

Despite a growth in construction in and around Des Moines, for the remainder of the decade a considerable number of Local 347 members again needed to find work in other jurisdictions. Those who were able to remain wired projects such as an Iowa Methodist Hospital expansion and the modernization of the Mercy Hospital in Des Moines.

The local's electricians working for Furlong and Baker Electrical contractors also worked on a unique project in Des Moines that was completed in 1958 – an electronically operated feed mill operated automatically through formulas composed using a punch-card system.

During the 1950s, Local 347 was maintaining an electronics class of about 40 members and an apprentice class of about 23 trainees while using the facilities at Iowa State College.

By the end of the 1950s, Local 347 was primarily an inside wiremen's local comprised of about 550 members, of which approximately 200 were broadcast technicians, manufacturing members, sign men, maintenance electricians or armature winders.

Determined to improve its lot, the local participated in a meeting on March 24, 1962, that was “unique in the history of labor-management relations,” Powers declared in the *May Journal*. Local 347 Business Manager Harold Baker and Donald Clark, chapter manager of the Iowa Division of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), had arranged the gathering of electrical contractors and union representatives “for the purpose of solving common problems in the electrical industry in Iowa” – and ultimately to help recapture business that had been lost to nonunion electrical contractors.

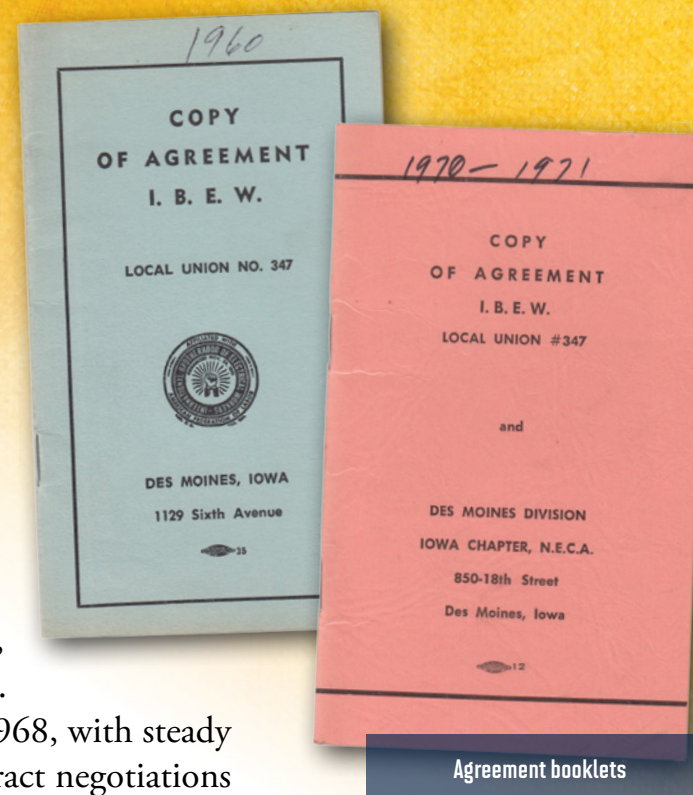
Following a couple of relatively “dry” years, construction work picked up beginning in 1965. The local then enjoyed some prosperity through 1968, with steady employment and considerable gains made in contract negotiations for the several units comprising the local – including its Broadcasting Unit, whose members were employed at KIOA, KRNT, KSO and KDPS in Des Moines.

Then in 1970, contract negotiations resulted in the greatest wage increase in the history of the local, Powers reported in the *July Journal*. But a strike by the building laborers had all major construction work shut down during May that year in Des Moines.

By that time, the local had also formed a new unit to represent its residential wiremen. The effort proved successful in recapturing residential wiring, as by April 1971, the local's members were performing about 90 percent of the new residential work in the Des Moines area, according to Powers.

The early 1970s also brought a new phase in electrical construction work for the local's inside wiremen. Through the efforts of the Iowa State Coordinating Committee for Electrical Apprenticeship and Training, the local began teaching its journeyman wiremen the installation of multiple-antenna TV systems (MATV), as were various other locals across the state.

Meanwhile, Local 347 remained in the midst of a period of full employment for its wiremen, although there were no major construction projects in the area

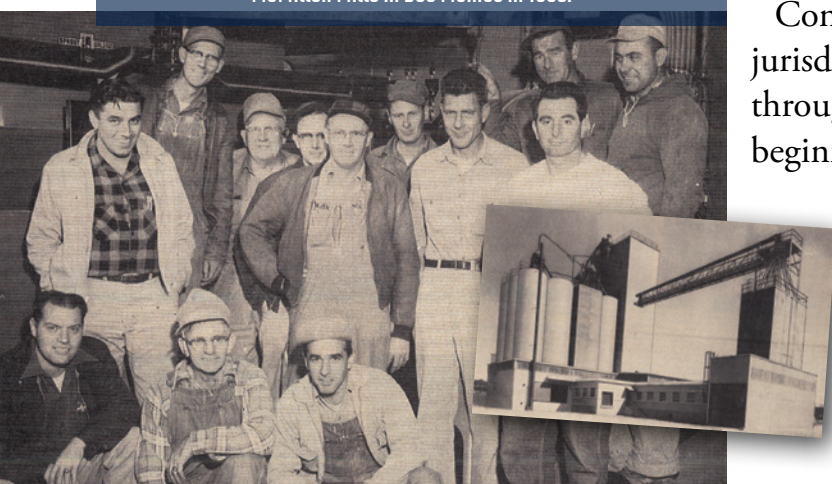


Agreement booklets

In anticipation of jobs that would not immediately come to Des Moines, by May 1964, Local 347 was providing atomic energy classes to its members.

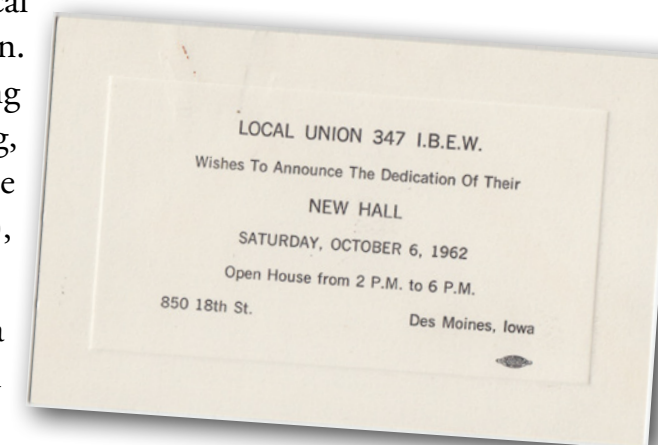
Representatives of Local 347 and the Iowa Chapter, NECA, met on March 24, 1962, marking the beginning of a true labor-management cooperation effort in the electrical industry in the local's jurisdiction.

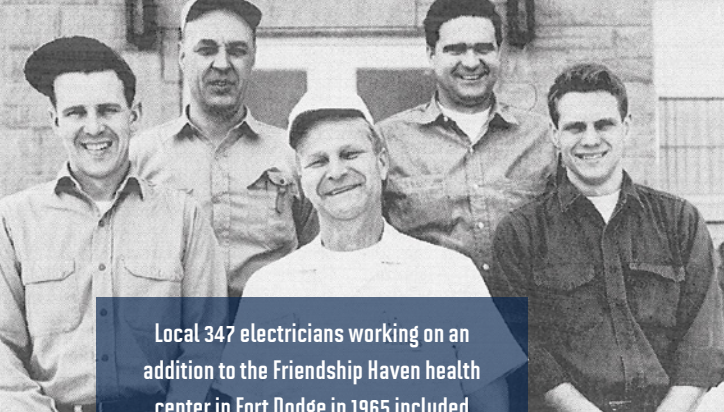
A Local 347 crew wired the automated feed manufacturing plant of McMillen Mills in Des Moines in 1958.



DEALING WITH EBB AND FLOW

Construction and subsequent work in Local 347's jurisdiction was very poor for several years into and through the early 1960s, compounded by delays in beginning urban-renewal projects within the City of Des Moines. Press Secretary Powers had even conceded in the February 1962 *Journal* that “the local has reached the peak of unemployment ... and no apparent relief is in sight.”





Local 347 electricians working on an addition to the Friendship Haven health center in Fort Dodge in 1965 included (back, left to right) Fred Davidson and Jim Bemerick, and (front, left to right) Dan Johnson, Ernie Lehman (who at the time had been foreman at the center since its construction began in 1949) and Boyd Holstrom.

A Permanent Home for Local 347

Local 347 formally dedicated its current union offices and hall at 850 18th Street on Saturday, October 6, 1962. The hall was named Broach Memorial Hall in honor of Local 347's Harry H. Broach, who rose from business manager of the local to the position of International President of the I.B.E.W.



The local had previously been located at the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Ascension Street since 1951 in a building that was originally constructed for a church. When the local was first chartered years earlier in 1914, it had met at the Labor Temple at Sixth and Plum streets in Des Moines for at least its first few years.

but instead a continuous series of small jobs keeping the local's contractors busy. Residential work also occupied the full time of the local's residential wiremen, who were limited in scope of their jurisdiction to not more than a "four-plex" residential occupancy.

But by May 1972, with a government-imposed wage freeze affecting the building trades nationally, about 40 of the local's members had to find employment elsewhere and were working with sister locals around the country. Over the next year, the local would go through an era of "unequaled sustained unemployment" of wireman members, Powers reported in the October 1973 *Journal*.

Among the projects employing Local 374 members was a new Jimmy Dean sausage plant in Osceola, Iowa, which was completed in early 1973. At that time, however, work remained slow in and around Des Moines, but it would improve before the end of the year as "the list of unemployed ... dwindled to a low ebb," Powers wrote.

More work came with the construction of 25- and 36-story high-rise office buildings and a large over-the-street parking garage in downtown Des Moines; a new 3M manufacturing plant; a large addition to the area's Maytag plant; several new motels; a raft of new shopping centers, suburban offices and apartment buildings; and acres of farmland converted to housing developments. Along with the expansion projects of two large tire factories and construction of a multimillion-dollar mail handling facility in the city, Powers decreed in the December 1973 *Journal* that all of the development "converted our former farm town atmosphere to that of a thriving metropolis."

Work only slowed when, in the summer of 1974, several building trades unions went on strike for several weeks, forcing some Local 347 members to travel. But by the spring of the following year, the local was again enjoying a period of prosperity and was able to provide jobs for several hundred travelers.

By August 1971, Local 347 had added a bargaining unit of electronics instructors from the United Electronics Institute, a trade school with about 500 students, believed to have been the first such unit of instructors in the I.B.E.W.

Local 347 actively participated in a promotional venture for the redevelopment of the downtown Des Moines business district under the moniker "Unicon" – Unions and Contractors working together to build a better Des Moines – in the mid-1970s.

Local 347 completed contract negotiations with contractors in August 1976 and notably retained in the agreement a "council clause" that contained a no-strike provision.

During the final years of that unprecedented construction in the Des Moines area, by August 1976 about 50 members were on Local 347's bench while the nonunion sector moved in on most of the work.

The local's September 22 newsletter even lamented that the local had enjoyed exactly one week of full employment since the start of the year, despite there being "more construction than ever going on."

The local's employment situation would not steady until late 1978, after which work for members would remain stable through the rest of the decade.

GAINING MOMENTUM TOWARDS Y2K

Work slowed again in the first half of the 1980s, and at one point by 1984 over 100 Local 347 members were unemployed. The local's condition was not helped when the new Holiday Inn Conference Center constructed in Des Moines in the mid-1980s was built by nonunion, out-of-town contractors.

But in late 1985, Local 347 crews from Commonwealth Electric and Brown Brothers were involved in the renovation of the Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines. Members were also working for Baker Electric on a new, \$48 million, 11-story office building for Bankers Life and Casualty Company in the city, which employed about 25 electricians annually between September 1984 and its completion in the fall of 1986.

By the 1990s, Local 347 was representing no less than 10 bargaining units: Des Moines inside construction; Fort Dodge inside

Local 347 members with 25 years or more of membership in the I.B.E.W. were presented lapel pins at a party celebrating the 52nd anniversary of Local 347 and the I.B.E.W.'s 75th anniversary on December 16, 1966.



Scoring with Astrodome's 'Super Board'

The largest, fanciest and flashiest scoreboard in the world at the time it was installed in the Houston Astrodome in 1970 was the product of I.B.E.W. Local 347 members employed at Fair-Play Manufacturing, which was a fully union company.

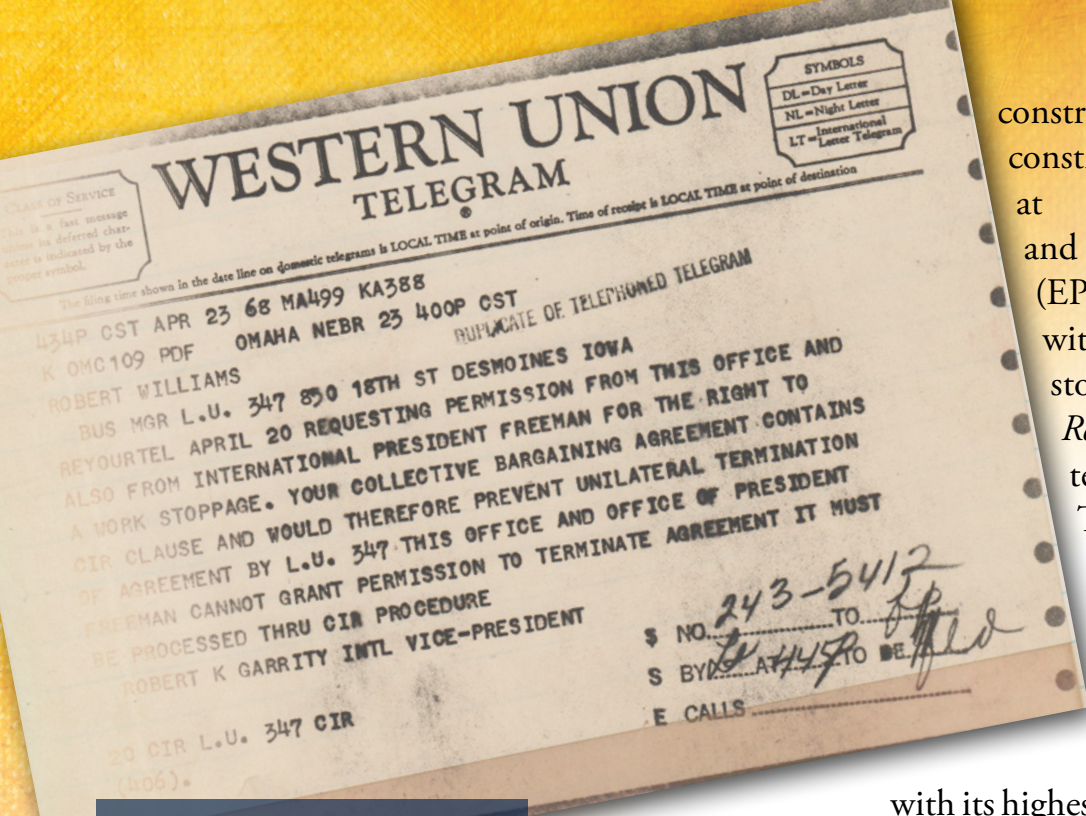


The \$2 million, one-and-a-half-block long and four-story high "super board" featured 50,000 light bulbs



and a similar number of wired electric sockets; countless contactors and other switching devices; and 1,200 miles of wire.

In the mid-1980s, Local 347's Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee started a training program in telecommunications in an attempt to secure more work in that field.



construction; Des Moines residential construction; manufacturing units at Keystone, Fairplay/Fairtron and Electrical Power Products (EP-2); maintenance contracts with the Younkers department store chain and *The Des Moines Register* newspaper; the broadcast technician's contract at KCCI-TV; and workers of the City of Des Moines.

But in part because of the sluggish economy across the State of Iowa, the local found itself by mid-1991 dealing

with its highest unemployment since the mid-

1980s. Despite that, members were employed on projects such as a K-Mart on Northeast 14th Street, a Chi-Chi's restaurant and Toys-R-Us on Southeast 14th and a Hy-Vee store in Altoona.

In 1993, Des Moines achieved the "dubious" distinction of becoming the first city of its size in the United States whose local water processing plant was rendered inoperable by flooding. The metropolitan area was without drinking from 19 days, and Local 347 members worked long hours repairing the severe damage to equipment and buildings, clearing the local's unemployed books and even requiring some traveling I.B.E.W. electricians from other locals.

That year, the local and its contractors reached agreement on a Dollar Bank program, by which a "dollar bank" was established

Local 347's "Dollar Bank" program established in 1993 allowed members to make individual contributions into the Health & Welfare Fund.

Continued after next page



Local 347 members working on the KCCI television broadcasting company building in Des Moines, early 1980s.

Camaraderie & Community Local 347 Has The 'Spirit'

In early 1919, Local 347 pledged \$50 to the construction of a home for girls in Des Moines. Since then, the local has been an active member of the community – for instance, in 2014 Local 347 brothers and sisters worked with Habitat for Humanity to help build homes, and the local has been volunteering for several years with Make-A-Wish Foundation and Toys for Tots annual events.

Through the years, the local's members have spent their time donating countless hours on countless projects, from wiring the YMCA camp in Boone, Iowa, to doing electrical work at the Easter Seals' Camp Sunnyside to setting up the electrical system for the Make-A-Wish Foundation Jolly Holiday Lights fundraiser display. Members also gave of their personal time during 1988 when they voluntarily wired the famous McCaughey septuplets' house in Carlisle, Iowa, and contributed funds to pay for much of the electrical supplies.

In yet another example, scores of members gave their time to assist with construction of the John L. Lewis Memorial Museum of Mining and Labor, which opened in summer 1990 in Lucas, Iowa. (Lewis, a native of the nearby mining camp of Cleveland, Iowa, was president of the United Mine Workers of America for 40 years and founded the

Congress of Industrial Organizations. He passed away in 1969.)

Local 347 takes time to play, too; its members over the decades have participated on softball teams, volleyball teams, bowling teams and bowling leagues (the local's multiple bowling teams were



virtual powerhouses in the 1950s) – and in 1979 the local started its own yearly softball tournament.

The local has for many years held annual dances, annual Christmas parties, fishing contests, apprentice graduation banquets, pin ceremonies for special membership anniversaries and plenty of picnics.

Local 347's members have also been constant and enthusiastic participants in the annual Federation of Labor's Labor Day "Solidarity Fest" and the Labor Day parade in Des Moines – entering a homemade float in the parade many years.

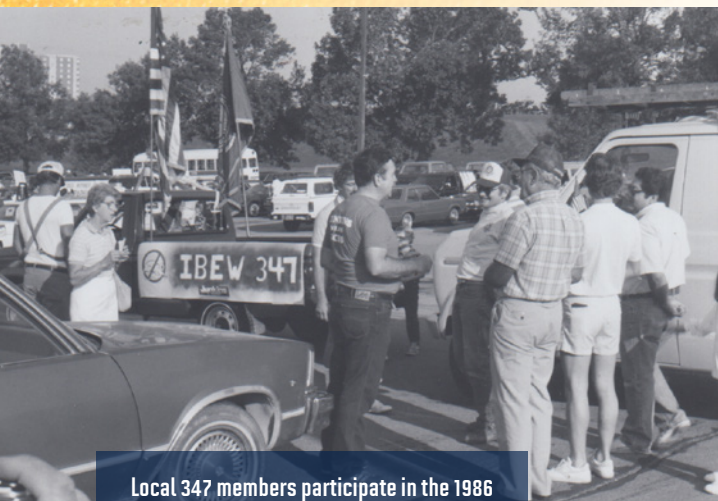
Retirees Club Formed in 1980

Local 347's retirees organized their own club in early 1980. "Being social and informal, the gist of conversations at our meeting included the subjects of winter vacations, fishing, investments, insurance and reminiscing about past experiences," a May 1980 Journal article explained.

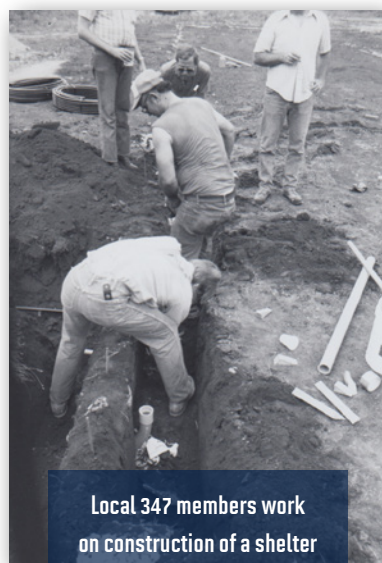
Brother Don Pace was the club's first secretary, and Brother Fred H. Powers was the club's first chairman.



I.B.E.W. Convention sign, 1986.



Local 347 members participate in the 1986 Solidarity Fest in Des Moines.



Local 347 members work on construction of a shelter house in 1987.

for each member participating in the Health & Welfare Fund into which individual contributions could be placed. The program allowed all Health & Welfare provisions in contracts to be addressed on an individual basis rather than as one rate for all of the local's units.

(Effective May 1, 2013, the local instituted a new Health Reimbursement Arrangement to its Health and Welfare Plan, whereby all eligible participants with a dollar bank in excess of \$5,400 could have the remaining funds roll into the HRA.)

Always striving to improve its standing within the electrical construction industry, Local 347 in December 1993 had a Market Recovery Program up and running to help boost its inside business. Financed by a 3 percent contribution of a member's gross earnings, the program was "another step in solidifying our stance on aggressive action to regain our share in this area," a column in the January 1994 *Journal* explained.

The local's Fort Dodge unit had a successful Market Recovery Program for several years by that time, and the inside unit's effort got off to a encouraged start. Almost immediately, the local won two projects through its market recovery: Brown

Brothers contractor won the bid on the Orthopedic Surgeons Medical Office Building at 60th Street and Westown Parkway, which would provide 9,000 hours of work for members, and the electrical work for the Polk County Courthouse remodel added an additional 5,000 hours of work for Local 347's electricians.

After one year, the program was dubbed an "unqualified success" by Business Manager Ronald Belcher. By December 1994, nine contractors had utilized the fund on 56 jobs, recovering 83,950 man-hours on nearly \$5 million worth of construction projects, Belcher announced in the March 1995 *Journal*.

Also in early 1994, the electrical contract for the new \$60 million, 45-story Principal Building skyscraper in Des Moines was awarded to Local 347 contractor Baker Electric, a Unicon project that would provide another boost to employment. Other Unicon jobs in the local's jurisdiction at the time included the Central Life Assurance and new KVI buildings in West Des Moines and the Iowa Methodist

Local 347 members working under its inside agreement voted to create a Market Recovery Program in 1994 to help union contractors regain market share they had lost.

Member Training Always a Priority

Throughout its history, I.B.E.W. Local 347 has always worked to ensure its membership was and is the best-prepared workforce available through apprenticeship and, eventually, journeyman upgrade training.

As the local's training programs became more organized and focused, beginning November 1, 1953, apprentices started attending classes at Iowa State College at Ames for six hours each Saturday. The program, which was administered by the local, the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and the U.S. Government, required apprentices to take a 24-week course each year, and the Iowa State facilities and complete electrical laboratory enabled them to apply electrical theory in the classroom.

By this time, the local's training program called for apprentices to receive 4,000 hours of on-the-job training over a four-year period and classroom instruction totaling 144 hours per year in a program already managed by an Apprentice Training Committee. By 1963, the local was also promoting its journeymen advanced training programs, including motor control and electronics classes.

Today, the **Iowa Electrical Apprenticeship Program** has been jointly sponsored by Local 347 and the Iowa Chapter of NECA and I.B.E.W.

Locals 231, 288 and 704 for over 20 years.

In July 1994, and the Apprenticeship Program moved into a new, spacious, state-of-the-art regional training center at 1948 Northwest 92nd Court in Clive, Iowa, just west of Des Moines. With the move, the local's first-year apprentice training was able to provide better-structured training, hands-on equipment and the ability to change the type of training along with technology changes. What's more, for the first time, apprentices were attending week-long training sessions at the training center four times per year to obtain their required annual hours.

The **Des Moines Joint Electrical Apprenticeship Training (J.A.T.C.) Trust** is a nonprofit organization jointly sponsored by the Des Moines chapter of NECA and Local 347 to provide training to the local's apprentices and journeymen through the Iowa Electrical Apprenticeship. The J.A.T.C. consists of an eight-member committee – four appointed by Local 347 and four appointed by NECA.

The Des Moines J.A.T.C. has traditionally trained between 175 and 230 apprentices annually in the three disciplines of the program while providing continuing education courses for more than 1,000 Des Moines-area journeymen.



Local 347 members take part in the parade during the 1987 Labor Fest in Des Moines.

Thirty percent of Local 347 members had received COMET (Construction Organizing Membership Education Training) instruction through monthly classes by the spring of 1995, with the hope that the entire membership would soon complete the training.

The Local 347 J.A.T.C. training program expanded to include a "record-breaking" number of apprentices and indentured workers in 1998.

Medical Center Research Lab and a Federal courthouse expansion in Des Moines.

Later that year, the local's Keystone Manufacturing members voted to accept a 10-percent wage cut to help the company recoup from the financial damages it incurred during the summer flooding of 1993. In the end, the local's actions helped save the plant and keep it open.

In October 1995, the local hired Brother Tim Stolp as a full-time organizer as the local prepared to step up a campaign to gain membership. By March 1996, Belcher was able to proclaim in the *Journal* that Stolp and State Organizer Dick Dickerson had "batched

most of the area nonunion competitors and were then able to file N.L.R.B. charges on them. At the same time, we were stripping the same companies of their top workers by organizing them into the I.B.E.W.!"

Meanwhile worked continue to increase steadily to the point where the local had many travelers working in its jurisdiction. For example, 1998 was a very good year for the local, as its contractors "made steady gains in capturing more of the market share of work," and the local increased its membership to accommodate that growth, according to a column by Local 347 President Ron Saf in the March 1999 *Journal*.

As the decade and the millennium came to a close, work in the area continued to grow steadily as organizing efforts remained very successful. The local's new sound and communications contract was also "off the ground and running," Belcher reported in the January 2000 *Journal*.

BUILDING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Despite a powerhouse project that employed 60 electricians by 2003, the work picture was often "bleak" as Local 347 made its way into the new millennium. During the first few years of Y2K, many members were regularly unemployed or traveling.

But as the end of 2003 approached, work was "finally looking up," Press Secretary Craig Rothamel announced in the January 2004 *Journal*. Among the projects, construction of the Jordan Creek Town Center shopping mall in West Des Moines was "full speed ahead," with many members working there as one union contractor was handling the base building and others were doing some of the mall's anchor stores. (When the mall opened in August 2004, it was the largest shopping complex in the state of Iowa.)

While many workers were laid off at the Greater Des Moines Energy Center power plant in the spring when its simple-cycle (gas) project was completed, work on its boilers, cooling tower, water treatment and the steam side were rolling along by late 2003, and "many more hands" were needed to finish the project.

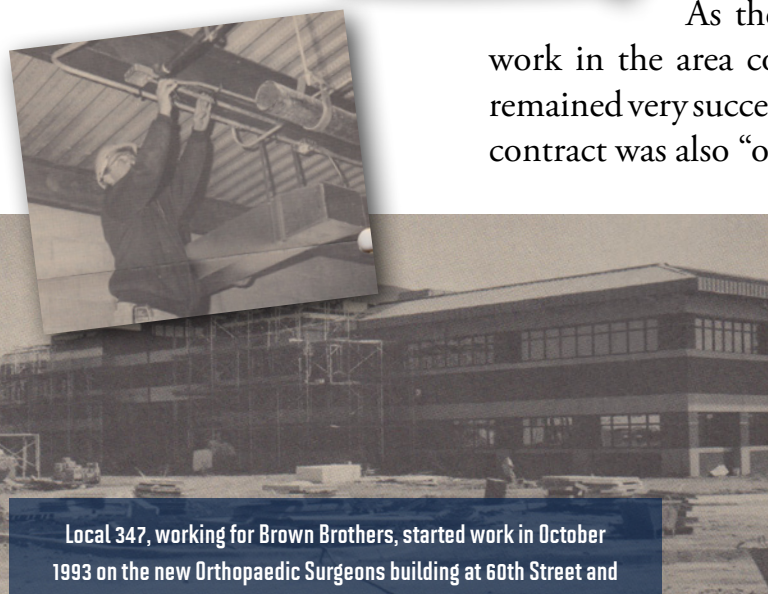
Throughout the remainder of the decade, Local 347 would score some major victories on various fronts. In one instance, longtime open-shop adversary Meisner Electric declared bankruptcy in March 2007 "after years of fighting off the I.B.E.W. in several N.L.R.B. elections," the May 2007 *Electrical Worker*, the new monthly I.B.E.W. newspaper, reported. Local 347 gained many of the company's 40 electricians and potential apprentices, taking them in and putting them to work almost immediately as signatory contractors such as Wolin Electric and Winger took over unfinished Meisner projects.

After a "long, hard fight," Local 347 helped get a Project Labor Agreement passed for construction of the new Des Moines Events Center in early 2003.

A Local 347 crew employed by Baker Electric, Brown Brothers and Waldinger at the Allied Insurance headquarters construction project in 2002.



Local 347 members and their families march in the 1997 Labor Fest parade in Des Moines.



Local 347, working for Brown Brothers, started work in October 1993 on the new Orthopaedic Surgeons building at 60th Street and Westown Parkway in West Des Moines -- the first job "won" by the local's Market Recovery Program.





Greater Des Moines Energy Center, which Local 347 members helped construct from 2002 to 2005.

After advocating over several years for the state to implement statewide licensing of electricians, the local's efforts finally came to fruition as of January 1, 2008, when the State of Iowa established a licensing program for all electricians and contractors through its new Electrical Examining and Inspections Department. "Our motive in this effort was to provide the public with a safer and more reliable end product and to

create a reasonable standard that we can all live with in the electrical industry," Press Secretary Mike Schweiger explained in the March 2009 *Electrical Worker*.

As the decade was closing out and a new one again beginning, Local 347 (as were many locals across the country) was facing declining commercial, industrial and residential construction work as the national economy struggled. But the local did make gains during this time, particularly when workers at Trinity Structural Towers, Iowa's leading manufacturer of wind towers, voted 69 to 62 in favor of I.B.E.W. representation in August 2010.

The plant, located in the shadows of the iconic Maytag appliance factory shut down by Whirlpool in 2007, and its workers' struggles had received national attention – particularly Trinity's practice of knocking off production during the week and scheduling workers to work weekends without overtime compensation. Initial contract negotiations bogged down, however, and Local 347 eventually filed N.L.R.B. charges accusing Trinity of coercion and failure to bargain in good faith.

An informational picket in June 2011 brought out 80 percent of the workers in the 175-member plant, wearing union T-shirts and handing out fliers declaring: "WE DESERVE: A fair wage increase! Affordable Health Care! Time off to spend with our families or overtime pay when working weekends." Soon after, Local 347 agreed to drop the N.L.R.B. charges after the company agreed to

Local 347 Brother Pat Merrick was appointment as chief electrical inspector of the State of Iowa beginning in January 2009, shortly after the creation of the State of Iowa Electrical Examining and Inspections Department.

Iowa Primate Learning Sanctuary Local 347 Members Design & Build 'Groundbreaking' Research Center

I.B.E.W. Local 347 members working for T3 Technologies were at the heart of the Iowa Primate Learning Sanctuary, the world-class sanctuary and scientific research facility in Des Moines, when it opened in 2004. A team of the local's technicians "helped translate the aspirations of scientists into technological reality" by developing and installing a state-of-the-art communications system at the "Great Ape Trust of Iowa."

(Following are excerpts from a March 2005 I.B.E.W. Journal article.)

At what will be the largest research facility of its kind in North America, three computer-savvy orangutans and eight bonobos inhabit a world of their making, with touch keyboards that allow the apes to communicate, order food and even control access to visitors.

The technology and computer equipment was developed by Des Moines contractor T3 Technologies, Inc., which worked with the scientists to enhance communications between the species while giving the apes more autonomy in their new habitat.

"What we came up with is really beyond the scientists' expectation of what we could accomplish," said T3 owner Steve Boers.

Boers and his I.B.E.W. employees, along with equipment suppliers, designed a series of sliding doors and transfer tunnels for the

bonobos that allow them to roam throughout the 30,000-square-foot building, which includes sleeping quarters, greenhouse, kitchen, music room and a Jacuzzi with a waterfall. They communicate with researchers via a "lexigram" touch screen — a symbolized keyboard — in which the buttons represent a word or concept.

All the rooms are equipped with cameras and microphones. A dedicated fiber-optic line will enable students and scientists across the world to participate in the research.

"There was no engineering for the technology; we just developed it ourselves," Boers said.

Most of the work on the doors, computers, security, fire alarms, cell phone boosters and voice-data-video was done by T3 workers before the apes moved in last spring. But they are called back occasionally, to fix glitches, make upgrades and, soon, to continue the several-phase project that is expected to last 10 years and include buildings for more orangutans, gorillas and chimpanzees, plus a visitor's center with a pedestrian skywalk.

Local 347 Business Manager Gerald Granberg said the initial I.B.E.W. work on the preserve has only begun. "This is just the beginning of the partnership. I think the fact that we're learning to communicate with primates here in Des Moines is awesome."



This Local 347 crew worked for Cupertino Electric, Commonwealth Electric and Baker Group on the Facebook data center project in Altoona in 2013.

make a public apology and commit to scheduling five negotiating sessions before mid-August 2011.

By that time, Trinity had three years of orders on the books supplying towers for General Electric and was solidifying its position in the marketplace.

Local 347 had also began an organizing effort at TPI, a wind-blade manufacturer in Newton, Iowa, in early 2012. However, at that time contracts awarded for continued construction of wind-generation facilities in the State of Iowa had been going nonunion, “a very disappointing development to Local 347,” the July 2012 *Electrical Worker* reported.

Local 347 re-affiliated with the South Central Iowa Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO) in 2011.

The work picture continued to develop in the local’s jurisdiction into 2013 and man hours steadily climbed. The improving conditions allowed the local – earlier than expected – to decrease working dues for all Des Moines and Fort Dodge inside wiremen, voice-data-video technicians and residential wiremen to 3 percent beginning May 1.

Then later that year, work started on a \$1.5 billion, 1.4-million-square-foot data center for Facebook in Des Moines, which would employ well over 100 Local 347 electricians. Other projects to which the local was looking forward included a new substation for the Microsoft Data Center, a Marshalltown Power House job and a Lake Red Rock hydroelectric generating facility project.

There were also “many other smaller parts to this generally rosy picture” in the form of abundant smaller jobs for Local 347, Schweiger proclaimed in the July 2013 *Electrical Worker*.

As Local 347 approached its 100th Anniversary in 2014, it was handling 45 percent of the work in its area. By September, three large projects were in the works: The Marshalltown powerhouse contract was awarded to Van Ert Electric; the Facebook phase-one project was scheduled to finish up in January 2015 and its phase-two project was ramping up; and Microsoft had approved the next phase of a large project.

In that atmosphere, Schweiger had announced in the May 2014 *Electrical Worker* that “Local 347 is currently in the enviable position of having nearly 200 travelers working in the jurisdiction.” He went on to exalt:

“This is the first time that I know of, in the history of this local, that we have had this magnitude of work and this many calls for travelers. Thanks to all for your assistance.”



Local 347 crew at an Electrical Power Products manufacturing facility.

