



# NEWS – Local 825

## International Union of Operating Engineers

### IUOE & LOCAL 825 HISTORY

#### For Release

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### ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF THE IUOE & LOCAL 825

SPRINGFIELD, NJ – The steam engine unlocked a new technology during the Industrial Revolution that was as game-changing as other innovations in history, such as the introduction of the automobile, cars, airplanes, telephones, radio, television and even computers.

The steam engine found many uses in a variety of industries, from mines, to furnaces, mills and construction, from steam locomotives to steamboats and steam shovels. With the introduction of high-pressure steam engines, even greater power was unleashed, enabling such previously impossible feats such as the construction of the transcontinental railroad and moving mountains over a 10-year period to dig the Panama Canal.

Yet their power was potentially dangerous in the hands of inexperienced boiler operators. It took skill and experience to safely operate the boilers and steam engines of the day. Out of this need grew a cadre of men who specialized in steam operations. Their unique ability made the steam engineers vital to the operation of steam-driven construction equipment introduced on a large scale at the turn of the 20th century.

On December 7, 1896, eleven of these men from eight states – Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Michigan and Colorado – met in Chicago and organized The National Union of Steam Engineers. They drafted the first constitution of the National Union of Steam Engineers of America, the parent organization of today's International Union of Operating Engineers.

A week later, delegates were sent to the American Federation of Labor (AFL) convention in Cincinnati to petition for a charter. That charter was granted on May 7, 1897. A year later, the National Union of Steam Engineers began granting its own charters to local unions. With new locals being recognized in Canada, the organization updated its name to the International Union of Steam Engineers in 1898.

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In recognition of the central role of the steam engine in the organization's identity, a steam gauge was adopted as the emblem, or logo, of the IUOE.

The New Jersey Local was formed in 1920.

Steam engines remained the dominant source of power well into the 20th century. But gradually, advances in the design of electric motors and internal combustion engines reduced their use. In 1928 the word "steam" was dropped from the organization's name and it became the International Union of Operating Engineers, which it remains to this day. Although the word "steam" was removed from the name, the steam gauge logo continues in use.

#### Some milestones

In 1912, a unique contract between Locals 68 and 185 and the brewery owners of New Jersey provided the eight-hour day at \$23.50 per week. In the same contract, an interesting provision stipulated that "during working hours the men shall receive beer free of charge."

With the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed, many large construction projects continued or were initiated to spur employment. In New Jersey, engineers built the Newark Airport and the George Washington Bridge, which was suspended by cables across the Hudson River to connect New Jersey and New York.

During World War II, many operating engineers from New Jersey and New York enlisted to become Navy "Seabees." These were battalions of skilled construction workers -- who were also equipped to fight -- who were sent into war zones to carve out bases, airfields and camps on beachheads of Europe and jungles of the Pacific Islands, and years later, in Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since its founding, IUOE members have played a critical role in every major construction project, from the Hoover Dam to the Alaska Pipeline. Closer to home, they participated in the building of the New York and New Jersey skylines, the Holland and Lincoln tunnels, the World Trade Center and, sadly, its demolition after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

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