

A Century of Evolution to Power the Future

If the story of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 617 of San Mateo – every single moment of that tale, right through to its current verse – attests to anything, it's that the local has always endeavored to be steward of its membership and the community it serves. Local 617's officers and members, from that inaugural day in 1908, for 100 years now through wars, depression, merger, good times and bad, have held true to the principles set forth by the local's Founding Fathers and also in its application to be re-chartered in 1948:

"We ... believe a union to be well calculated to improve our intellectual and social condition, and promote our industrial well being and advancement ..."

This is the story of how "A Century of Evolution" has enabled I.B.E.W. Local 617 "to Power the Future" for its members and the San Mateo County region.



**IBEW Local #617 ~ San Mateo – California
Members & Officers**

Dominic Nolan * Business Manager

Congratulations on 100 great years in the IBEW!!!



From the Members & Officers of IBEW Local #47

*Patrick Lavin
Business Manager - IBEW #47
7th District International Executive Council
August 2008*

Revolution and Evolution: Unions and the I.B.E.W. take hold

The setting in which the organized labor movement in America took place at the turn of the 20th Century was anything but conducive to union activity, let alone prosperity. While total organized labor membership grew from fewer than 450,000 to over 2 million working Americans between 1897 and 1904, progress was only made amid great struggle – and sometimes even bloodshed. Management at the time was akin to using intimidation, spies, blacklists and strikebreaking goons to slow the advance of workers, who countered with strikes, boycotts and occasional worksite sabotage.

Indeed, labor's powerful enemies were determined to keep workers in their places, seemingly at any cost. In 1886, for instance, Chicago police killed four unionists demonstrating for an eight-hour workday during the Haymarket Riots. In 1887, the Louisiana Militia shot at least 35 unarmed black sugar workers striking to gain a dollar-per-day wage in what is known as "The Thibodaux Massacre." In 1892, steel mogul Andrew Carnegie brought in the Pinkerton Detective Agency to break up a strike in Pittsburgh, and in the aftermath of one bloody clash, two dozen detectives and steelworkers were killed. In 1894, Federal troops killed 34 American Railway Union members in the Chicago area attempting to break a strike,



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led by Eugene Debs, against the Pullman Company. In 1897, 19 unarmed striking mine workers were killed by a posse organized by the Luzerne County sheriff for refusing to disperse near Lattimer, Pennsylvania. In 1904, a battle between the Colorado Militia and striking miners at Dunnville ended with six union members dead.

Even Harvard University president Charles W. Elliot praised the brutal and sometimes deadly strikebreakers of the era, referring to them as, "The finest type of American citizen whose liberty has to be protected at all costs."

But perhaps more so than for any other trade, developments during that period primed the nation's electricians to organize. Advancing technology put electrical workers in high demand – and in good position

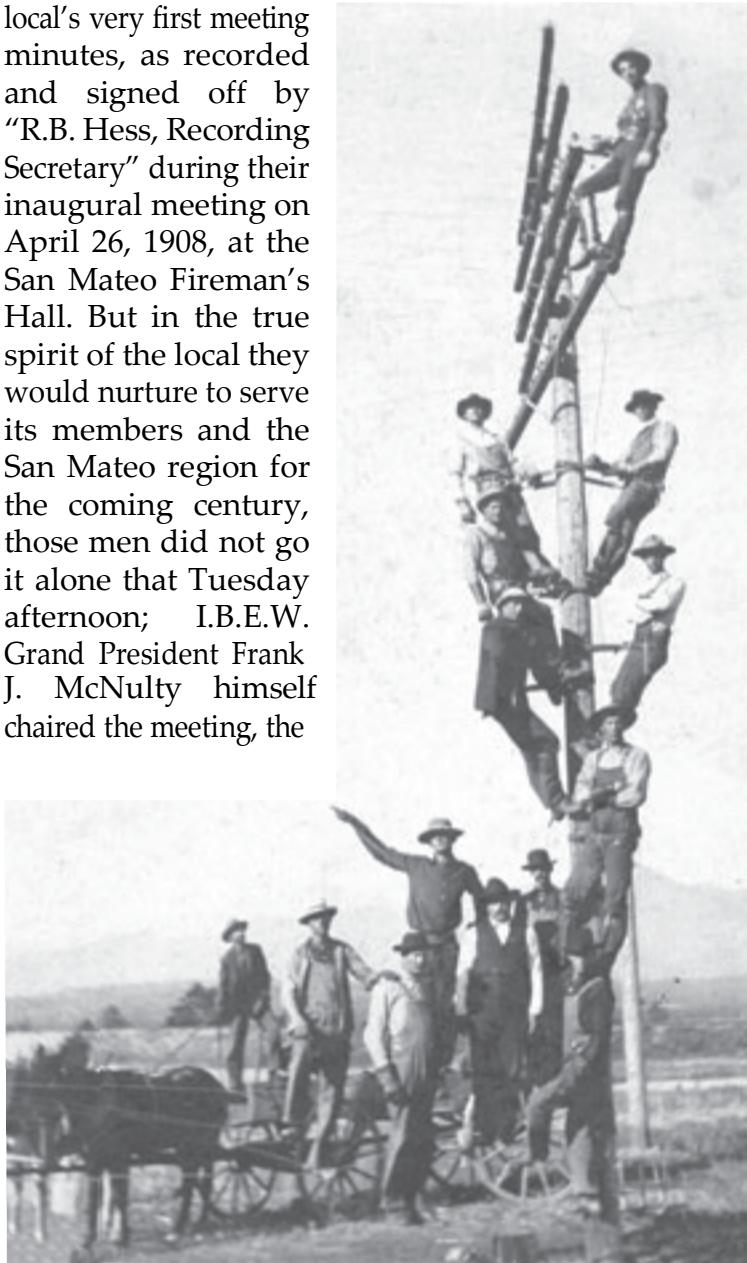
to lobby for safer jobsite conditions, reasonable working hours and better pay. Thomas Edison's invention of the incandescent bulb had ushered in a new age in lighting, telephones were the latest communications technology, and homes, businesses, commercial buildings and public spaces were becoming "electrified" at a lightning pace all across the country.

So when 10 men met on November 21, 1891, in St. Louis to form the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, their purpose would have a profound and lasting effect. At that meeting, Henry Miller was named first Grand President and J.T. Kelly was appointed Grand Secretary during what would mark the advent of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Founding Fathers: The I.B.E.W. comes to San Mateo

Jones. Ferrea. Morrison. Magee. Tonberg. Findler. Bradford. Hess.

The eight founding members of I.B.E.W. Local 617 are listed as such within the local's very first meeting minutes, as recorded and signed off by "R.B. Hess, Recording Secretary" during their inaugural meeting on April 26, 1908, at the San Mateo Fireman's Hall. But in the true spirit of the local they would nurture to serve its members and the San Mateo region for the coming century, those men did not go it alone that Tuesday afternoon; I.B.E.W. Grand President Frank J. McNulty himself chaired the meeting, the



Local 617 remained with the 'true' Brotherhood

A bitter internal struggle literally divided the I.B.E.W. in 1908, resulting in a division of the international union referred to as the "Reid-Murphy split" after the two officers selected by the seceding factions. While the international was actually enjoying a time of relative success, the split was brought about by a number of factors:

"First, the long-brewing dissension between wiremen and linemen, which was stimulated by disappointed office-seekers and by a former Grand Treasurer who had been removed from office in 1907 because of irregularities. In addition, indications are that there were employer forces outside the organization who wanted to see the fast-growing union wrecked. They aided and abetted the struggle which divided our Brotherhood for six long years."

In 1908, the dissenting forces called a special convention that would not recognize I.B.E.W. Grand President Frank J. McNulty or International Secretary Peter W. Collins as their officers. The large number of local union representatives attending the convention instead elected J.J. Reid and J. W. Murphy to lead them as president and secretary, respectively, and they secured an injunction to stop the dispersing of union funds through the original I.B.E.W.

McNulty and the remnants of his charges – which included Local 617 – likewise gained an injunction of its own to prevent seizures of the international office and "operated on loans from local unions and individuals."

Meanwhile, not even A.F.L. President Samuel Gompers could reconcile the group; but the A.F.L. did subsequently recognize the McNulty-led faction as the "legitimate" Brotherhood – although it is generally accepted that the Reid-led group at one time encompassed three-fourths of the organized electrical workers in the United States and Canada.

But a February 1912 court decision marked the beginning of the end of the "rebellion" when it declared that the 1908 convention of the "Reid-Murphy split" was illegal and its actions void. The decision also restored all union funds to the A.F.L.-recognized I.B.E.W., and at its 12th Annual Convention in Boston in 1913, nearly all of the local unions that had seceded were in attendance.

— Abridged from "History and Structure of the I.B.E.W."

minutes noted that a "visiting brother" was in attendance, and within that list of eight men, what seems to be another indecipherable name was logged – though it never appears again in Local 617 archives.

During that very first meeting, the attendees went about the business of running an I.B.E.W. local, first and foremost setting a membership initiation fee: \$10. They also selected

their officers, electing Chas H. Morrison as president, Paul Ferrea as vice president, R. B. Hess as recording secretary, H. F. Magee as financial secretary (the predecessor of the business agents and, subsequently, the business managers) and J. S. Jones as treasurer. Morrison and Jones were also selected as delegates to the San Mateo County Building Trades Council.

Modernization and Growth

At the same time, the San Mateo region was trying to keep pace with an industrializing America. Near the end of the first decade, San Mateo county saw the beginnings of a dramatic population expansion; the Ocean Shore Railroad was extending closer to its final destination, Santa Cruz, and South San Francisco and Burlingame were incorporated as towns – and the demand for electrical workers was growing. From that wave of modernization and progress, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 617 was born and would flourish.

From the beginning, the men who formed the fledgling Local 617 were dedicated to making it thrive, reconvening just four days after their initial April 26, 1908, meeting and thereafter gathering almost weekly to tend to the local's business. Their duties included crafting bylaws, establishing working rules, organizing new members and setting member dues – which would be \$1.75 per month for journeymen and \$1.25 per month for helpers. They also kept close watch on the local's finances, and by June 16, 1908, it had a robust \$16.90 balance in its coffers.

The original architects of Local 617 also made it a priority to see to it that the local's charter be framed properly for display, a task they gave to Brother J.S. Jones.

The local's initial years truly were a time of great promise, and the men behind the founding of the local meant to build on that potential, as indicated in entries from Local 617's March 2, 1909, meeting minutes:

"Committee to see Barnes discharged with thanks, Barnes having gone out of business ... Moved and Seconded to place Barnes Construction on the unfair list in case Barnes should come back."

"Moved and Seconded to notify Building Trades Council agent to pull off any man working in this district without cards from Local 617."

A 'Great War' and Early Growth for 617

By 1910, the population of San Mateo County had reached 20,600, well up from 12,000 just a decade earlier, and reconstruction of the San Mateo Courthouse, heavily damaged during the 1906 earthquake, was complete. In 1913, county voters approved a \$1,250,000 bond to create the northern portion of the Bayshore Highway.

Local 617 was humming along, also, during the first half

of the new decade. Officers were kept busy running and growing the local, and working hard to make its presence known – even wrangling with San Francisco's Local 6 over a jurisdictional agreement, as noted in the August 16, 1910, minutes:

"Motion and Second that Secretary write out set of Resolutions to the effect that Number 6 is not living up to her end of the agreement via paying assessments levied by Building Trades Council and that the agreement be null and void."

Their efforts were beginning to pay dividends, too. By mid-1915, business agents were being paid \$5 per month for their services while the local's treasury had ballooned to \$98.81 as of April 20 that year. In 1917, the local declared: "Members of local do not work for anyone but regular contractors for less than \$1 per hour, or \$8 per day."

But sadly, The Great War – World War I – would interrupt life in the United States and the union. More than 200,000 American servicemen died in 1917 and 1918, though the war brought with it a huge need for electricity and for electrically operated equipment and facilities. Local 617, with a membership of 13 when war broke out, responded in kind. In 1914, Brother Martial Dechoquet joined the French Army and was killed in action, and by 1918, two other members, Lee Larnoy and Paul Ferrea, were serving.

At home, Local 617 took action on October 2, 1917, specifically to make certain their members in the military were properly honored, declaring that "all Brothers serving our Country shall be kept in good standing at International Office during service."

The local continued to do its share during the war, even organizing electricians in the area's shipyards, which were especially busy with war production. In early 1918, the local purchased \$100 in War Savings Stamps and held a banquet in honor of its members who were fighting overseas, and in December of that year special note was made that 617 "add two more stars to Service Flag of Local."

Keeping Busy

At war's end, a boom would fashion "The Roaring Twenties" throughout America, and Local 617 would roar right along with the decade. With its membership swelling to over 60 electricians by 1927, the local reported in a letter from November that year to the I.B.E.W. "Worker" publication, "We have had no unemployment since the war other than the time when the open shippers tried to lock us out. Wages are \$10 and closed shop." In July 1928, another letter self-describes Local 617 as "one of the busiest little locals in the I.B.E.W." Local 617's treasury would grow to over \$1,000 at its height during the decade, though it shrunk to \$266.33 as the '20s came to a close.

All around San Mateo, San Francisco and The Peninsula,

social and economic progress was being made. As indication of the growth surrounding Local 617 during the decade, San Mateo Junior College was established in 1922, the City of San Francisco established an airport dubbed Mills Field and later renamed San Francisco Airport in 1926, and the Dumbarton Bridge, the first vehicular bridge to cross the San Francisco Bay, opened in 1927.

During this prosperous time, the local would begin referring to its future first Business Manager, F. Paul Hamilton, as its Recording Secretary and Business Agent. The local also extended the prosperity to its members, as witnessed in the December 3, 1929, meeting minutes noting a change to the local's bylaws:

"Any member with 10 years continuous good standing and 55 years of age be exempt from all local union dues and assessments except his per capita and insurance to I.O."

Depression and Another War – and 'Unit No. 3' of I.B.E.W. 'Local B6'

It was "Black Tuesday," October 29, 1929, and the U.S. stock market crash marked the beginning of a decade of high unemployment, poverty, and deflation in the United States. Only another, even more costly and devastating World War would help pull the country from the depths of

Local # 369 Louisville, Ky.

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On Celebrating 100 years...*

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"The Great Depression," which would last through much of the 1930s until the dawn of World War II.

The Great Depression's extensive reach was felt locally, even forcing the Leslie Salt Company to close its San Mateo plant in 1931 and

duly affecting Local 617. In correspondence to the I.B.E.W. Journal, Business Agent Paul Hamilton noted as early as February 1931 that while 1930 was a good year for the local, "those happy days are behind us, and we have men out of work, plenty of them, too." But the local had a good grasp of the situation at hand, Hamilton later noted, "A little reasoning compels us to state that we do not believe that industry, under the present competitive economic system, will, at any time in the future, be able to employ all of the men who wish to work."

That understanding of the country's economic situation helped keep 617 on its feet. Later in 1931, the local moved to revise its bylaws to declare that Local 617 had jurisdiction over all of San Mateo County, and not just San Mateo. And in 1933, the local reduced the salaries of its officers while also reducing its wage scale from \$9 per day to \$8 per day. In between, a new financial secretary and business manager, H.H. Jackson, was elected on July 5, 1932.

As the '30s were coming to a close, the local was already again picking up steam under its new business manager, J.P. "Jack" Crown. Elected June 16, 1936, he would be given much of the credit for the local's resurgence. The decade's final years saw 617 sign up a flurry of employers, including the local dog tracks of the American Totalization Company, the Pacific Portland Cement Company cement plant, neon sign shops and the Western Pipe and Steel Company, which was building ships for the U.S. Government.

"San Mateo is determined that we are going to keep the conditions that we have made for ourselves, and with Local

617 and our business agent, Brother Crown, to keep up the good work we are sure to continue to make gains as we have done during the past year," Local 617 Press Secretary P.C. MacKay wrote in a letter to the Journal in January 1939.

Doing Our Part

Tragically, the country and San Mateo would again be dragged into a costly world war that would also bring a measure of prosperity to the workforce. In fact, membership in the I.B.E.W. nearly doubled during the war years. International President Ed J. Brown would say that I.B.E.W. members "performed 95 percent of all the electrical work used and installed in the prosecution of the war effort." Men – and women – across America and locally worked around the clock to keep up with the industrial and technological demands of World War II. By 1943, Bethlehem Steel and other steel-makers were employing more than 10,000 people to help build ships and escort aircraft carriers in South San Francisco.

The decade and its war would profoundly shape Local 617. On December 16, 1941, just 9 days after the Japanese attacked the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Business Manager Crown "asked each and every member to sign the Civilian Defense Oath." By early 1942, 18 members of Local 617 were in service of the country. On the home front, members were kept busy; among their work, Local 617 electricians wired the new National Motor Bearing

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Company plant in Redwood City in 1942 and in 1943 re-wired the Eitel-McCullough Vacuum Tube Factory plant and wired its new buildings.

During the war, on January 2, 1942, Local 617 was amalgamated with Local 6 of San Francisco – and would eventually be re-chartered on April 28, 1948. The first meeting of “Local Union B6” was held January 10, 1942, in the main office located at 229 Valencia Street. The local would go on to be recognized as “Unit 3” while under the auspices of its neighbor local in San Francisco.

The very year Local 617 would re-form, it picked up right where it left off six years earlier and even broke ground for its first union hall, to be located on the corner of B Street and 8th Avenue in San Mateo. The hall was dedicated on



Women Answer the Call

When the United States entered World War II, war production had to increase dramatically in a short amount of time, especially in factories and shipyards. Eventually, women were needed to fill labor shortages as companies signed large contracts with the government just as men were leaving for military service. With the help of propaganda campaigns like the fictional character “Rosie the Riveter,” which portrayed the ideal female worker as loyal, efficient, patriotic and pretty, women answered the call. When the United States entered the war, 12 million women (one-quarter of the workforce) were already working and by the end of the war, the number was up to 18 million (one-third of the workforce).

Today, some Local 617 retirees recall the first women to join them on worksites around the San Mateo region and the peninsula in the early 1940s – and though they don’t recall their names and there are no records for Local 617 during that period that document who the first female members of “Local Union No. B 6, Unit No. 3” were, some 617 retirees do remember unequivocally that the women were well qualified and good workers.

Dramatically long lists of new members during the war years were dominated by female electricians. Pearly Morgan. Mary Eckert. Anita Zichosch. Hazel Anastos. These were among the dozens of women who took the oath of membership with the amalgamated Local Union No. 6. At least one female member, **Maud Griffen**, would even serve as an Executive Committee member of one of the local’s “units,” Unit No. 9.



San Mateo Chapter

CONGRATULATIONS

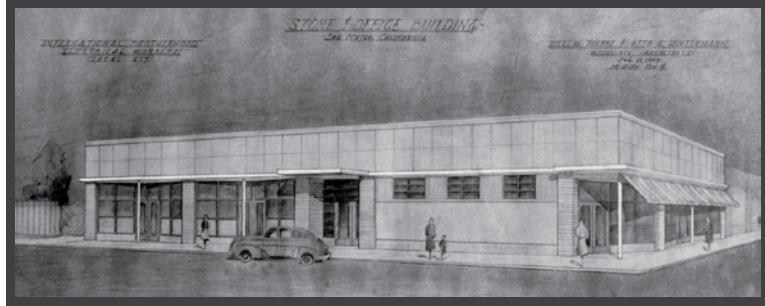


IBEW LOCAL 617



100 YEARS OF SERVICE

We commend all the members of Local 617 for contributing to the success of our industry for the last and the next 100 years.



October 4, 1949.

During this time, Local 617's members were being trained at Sequoia High School two nights a week. The mid-1940s also saw Local 617's helper system replaced by an apprenticeship program, under 617's "Father of Apprenticeship," **Seth Cohn**, a longtime signatory contractor. The local's first apprentices would graduate in 1947.

Post-War Prosperity and Stability

With the war's end and a boom in technology and development across the nation and in San Mateo County, whose population at the beginning of the 1950s had increased to over 235,000, the I.B.E.W. in general and Local 617 in particular experienced what was perhaps the longest period of virtually uninterrupted prosperity for organized labor. Full employment for Local 617 members continued, for the most part, throughout the '50s. Most notably, 617's

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electricians worked on the new, \$11 million passenger terminal at the San Francisco International Airport in 1953 and 1954.

During that time, Local 617 even saw fit in March 1956 to hire an assistant for its business manager, Werner H. "Dick" Diederichsen, at \$7,000 a year. The local was also, perhaps, even feeling a bit plucky, given its encouraging state of affairs; earlier that year it had voted to add to its agreement a stipulation that





U.A. Local 38

San Francisco, California



The Officers and Members of
U.A. Local 38
salute
IBEW Local 617
on their
100th Anniversary

- Larry Mazzola
Bus. Man./Fin. Secty-Treas.



Plumbers, Pipe & Refrigeration Fitters Local 442

Modesto, CA



Bill Taylor
Business Manager/
Financial Secretary

Mary Abbott
Business Agent

Greg Vincellet
Training Coordinator

Randall George
President

Brian Berg
Vice President

further emboldened the I.B.E.W. It read:

"The refusal of any individual workman to perform work on lighting fixtures not bearing the I.B.E.W. Union Label shall not be considered a violation of any terms of this Agreement, nor shall any such workman be discharged as a result thereof."

Members Remain the Priority

This measure of stability would, for the most part, last through the 1960s for Local 617, even while the nation was going through a time of great social upheaval, with the War in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement at its core. The

50 Years – And Counting

I.B.E.W. Local 617 celebrated its "Silver Anniversary" with a dinner on May 3, 1958. Perhaps nothing better symbolized 617's resiliency than a note from Business Manager Werner H. "Dick" Diederichsen to the I.B.E.W. Journal in May 1958 regarding the local's very first president attending the event:

"One of the founders of Local 617 and the only surviving charter member, Charles H. Morrison, gave a great deal of his time and energy to the building of the union, but that, to him, was just a part of living a full and useful life."

entire county continued to grow, with the College of San Mateo expanding to a new multi-million dollar campus in 1963 and even the Beatles visited for a 1965 concert at the Cow Palace in Daly City, but Local 617 remained focused on the mission its founders had established six decades earlier – serving its membership.

The local's efforts included intense contract negotiating and political action. A Committee on Political Action was even formed, as the local became more vigilant while right-to-work laws were being passed in several states across the country. Promoting better worksite safety was a priority within the local at the time, too, so much so that during its regular meeting on May 7, 1963, the local presented hardhats to each and every one of its 700 journeymen and apprentices. Dick Diederichsen, who led this effort before he would retire from his post and the electrical industry two years later after 18 years as Business Manager, proudly reported, "This is the first total use of safety hats by members of a construction industry local union, and we in San Mateo County are proud of it."

This strong focus on its members would translate to additional assistance for Local 617 retirees, when a retirement plan was instituted in 1963. That year, a pension founded by the handful of leaders digressed into a trust fund that lost about 60% of the union's money within about two years. But member John C. "Jack" Hatt, a

member electrician with a financial background, stepped in to not only save the trust but make it prosper. Local 617 member Adolphis "Paul" Regnier, who served as business manager from 1999 to 2001, remembers that Jack Hatt was knowledgeable about gold and silver investment and helped the local start an investment club. It paid off; Mr. Regnier recalls that the fund was worth about \$6 million when it was started and was valued at \$180 million around 2000. Later, the local would be one of the first in the country to set up a program with which retirees own their own health and welfare plans, so if the local bails out, the retirees still have them.

Re-Building Blocks

In 1976, Local 617 was part of one of the first strikes in I.B.E.W. history. Walking from June 1 to July 17 for a better

contract, the local won – and won big. A 2-year agreement was reached in August, retroactive to June 1. "The local settled for approximately 60 or 70 percent more than

the International thought they would get and certainly more than the contractors thought they would give," Paul Regnier recounts.

But an even more groundbreaking result would come from those negotiations; the strike served as a building block that started the present-day foundation on which the I.B.E.W. and its signatory contractor group, the National Electrical Contractors Association – NECA – would base their relationship. "Each of us now knows that the other side isn't weak. And we both know that neither side is really going to win," Regnier says.

The rest of the 1970s was not overly kind to Local 617, which would be guided through the decade beginning in 1971 and through 1986 by Business Manager Wayne Thomas.

San Mateo County's population had grown to over 556,000 in 1970, and by 1973 the high-voltage rails from

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IBEW Local 613-Atlanta, Georgia

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San Francisco to Daly City, the final portion of the 75-mile BART transportation system, were completely energized. But with the beginnings of de-industrialization in the San Mateo region and a shifting electrical-industry market, particularly toward cable TV and low-voltage installations, the local would see a steady decline in membership from 736 members in 1970 to 650 members by 1980.

Over this period, some Local 617 members and union contractors alike were indifferent to new areas of electrical work created in the developing industry with its advancing technology. Those attitudes opened the doors for non-union expansion in the region.

But as always, the local remained resilient. In his first report as business manager on Feb. 2, 1971, Wayne Thomas "informed the members that the work situation was not good" – but on Dec. 4, 1979, he reported that "work is still good" and during the decade's last meeting on Dec. 11 reported "work still holding up."

Determined to Succeed

The slow decline in Local 617 membership continued through 1987, when the local numbered just under 600. Regardless (or, perhaps, as a result), the local was determined to counteract the rise in non-union activity in the area as it entered the 1980s. So much so, in fact, that in 1981 the local passed a resolution for the express purpose of funding union picket duty at the worksites of "unfair employers," collecting \$5 per member per month to pay picketers.

Jennifer S. Murphy and Thomas R. Goode
Smith Barney Financial Advisors

salute the

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 617

For A Century of Service to the City and County of San Mateo, CA

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At the time, women were just as determined to expand their opportunities to work within the electrical industry through membership with Local 617. In 1981, a lawsuit was filed against the local for discrimination in the placement of women into its apprenticeship training program, with the plaintiff demanding that 40% of new apprentices be women. Eventually, a monetary settlement was reached, as well as a mandate that a certain percentage of women be placed in the program over the next few years. In 1985, four women graduated from the local's apprenticeship program.



During the 1980s, Local 617 also made headlines when its membership voluntarily worked to re-illuminate the renovated stained-glass dome on the historic Old County Court House in 1986, which had to be rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake. Also in 1986, the local formed its Retirees Club, a social organization for retired 617 members that in 2008 has about 120 members and remains very active.

When new Business Manager Joe Hogan took over in 1986, the local was already attempting to organize both workers and jobs, while also administering various new programs in order to recapture the local electrical market – including the burgeoning "Sound and Communication." That same year, the I.B.E.W gave jurisdiction for the growing low-voltage industry to inside locals, a great benefit for Local 617, and at the same time, the I.B.E.W.'s Ninth District office instructed its locals, including 617, to create a Sound and Communications program, which would become the local's "Voice, Data, Video" certified Apprenticeship. This new industry was beginning its march towards the future, and Local 617 would step in line, dispatching Sound & Communications Workers by 1988.

The Quake of '89

On October 17, 1989, at 5:04 p.m. 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck the San Francisco Bay Area for nearly 15 seconds, killing 67 people throughout northern California, injuring 3,757 more and leaving over 12,000 people homeless.

In the aftermath of the "Quake of '89," which caused \$6 billion in property damage, I.B.E.W. Local 617 members could be found throughout the crippled region, repairing and installing upgrades to vital infrastructure, such as the International Airport, and buildings and structures everywhere.

From the earthquake came a slew of new rules for electrical installations that would require nearly each and every project (and would also create many upgrade projects) to institute advanced "seismic bracing" techniques. Local 617 would fully embrace and support the new earthquake-safety regulations, pushing training for the updated procedures so that safety – as always – remained a priority.

Congratulations on 100 years!

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Moving On – and Into a New Century

A great transformation occurred during the 1990s – around the world and for Local 617 – with the explosive, nearly instantaneous arrival of the “dot-com” industry. The rapidly advancing methods needed to support this burgeoning new technology, which demanded ever-increasing speed in transporting information, proved to be a boon to Local 617. The “dot-com” was a tremendous growth sector for 617, as the local’s communications division adapted to the new technologies that came into effect at the time, and the results were extraordinary.

The 20th Century’s final decade began sluggishly for Local 617 as the country fell into a “mini” recession. But with the “dot-com” boom and a slew of vital projects in the region such as the BART extension, the San Francisco International Airport and emerging biotechnology-industry founder Genentech, 617 would finish the century strong. During that time, the local would also embrace the International’s new edict to actively organize non-union entities such as individual workers and contractors.

Over the final three decades of the 20th Century, finding a new union hall for Local 617 was in the backs of most everyone’s mind, and rightly so. There were times during negotiation discussions when the local had to borrow the nearby plumbers’ union hall because the 617 hall at 8th and B Streets was too small to accommodate everyone. A substantial effort to replace the 70-person facility was started in earnest in 1986, led by Business Manager Joe Hogan, and the local even began to accumulate some funding.

Overall, the 1990s was a period of sustained growth for

Local 617, which by 1999 was back to over 600 members strong, and for San Mateo County, where the population reached 707,000 at the turn of the century. Soon after, the local purchased a vacant Sears warehouse at 1701 Leslie Street in San Mateo, renovated it and moved its operations there in November 2002.

With the growth of the union, there was much change within Local 617. It literally went from having a small-office mentality to requiring many more organizers to handle the change in the workload and the lofty organizing goals passed down by the International, as well as the local’s expanded involvement in the community and political arena. It was quite a revolution that came about with the growth from a smaller outfit to a full-blown “let’s-go-get-‘em” operation.



I.B.E.W. Local 617 Today ...

The position in which Local 617 has situated itself as it turns 100 years old is nothing short of phenomenal. Membership is up over 1,000, with over 200 members in the Voice/Data/Video field and a great deal of redevelopment and new construction returning to San Mateo County.

Local 617 continues to fill the strong need for electricians on modern jobs at the San Francisco International Airport, the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, and various hospital projects and college campus projects throughout the county. Additional work is coming in the biotechnology industry, real-estate and along the transit corridor, where electric transit and electric rail will some day soon span the county, and Local 617 also is embracing renewable energies and green construction.

The local has also completely changed its outlook on organizing, focusing on organizing jobs *and* workers, while continuing to forge its strong relationship with NECA.

Local 617 has become progressive and prominent, proactive in politics and the community as it becomes entrenched in all industry markets. The union has brought the electrical trade to the forefront in the region, where being an electrician is now considered a "true" career – thanks in large part to what Local 617 offers its membership.

At the heart of today's 617 is its Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (J.A.T.C.) partnership between the local and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). Together, this labor-management effort provides local, world-class and highly accredited educational programs for electricians in a modern training facility. Its success has reached such an esteemed level that other unions are emulating 617 educational efforts, there is intense competition to get into the J.A.T.C. apprenticeship program and the local has forged strong relationships with area schools and community colleges.

Local 617 also remains a vital and vibrant partner with the community. Its outreach programs include a nationally recognized partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation and School Districts in their "Scoreboard Program," in which since 2002 Local 617 has been donating and voluntarily installing and repairing athletic field scoreboards around the region. The local is also helping at-risk youth find employment opportunities with a unique and promising internship program.

So today, the local, its leadership and its members find themselves as the industry benchmark for professionalism, skills, training and leadership.

...and Into the Next Century

By Dominic Nolan, Business Manager
I.B.E.W. Local 617, San Mateo, Calif.

Local 617 fully understands that how we got here to this 100th anniversary is what is going to lead us into the future. It's how we have moved forward with technology and how we have recognized the need to be more involved with the community. It's how we understand what politics means and how we need to make our voices heard to those we need to communicate with. It's how we project our image.

It is these things that have and will continue to set for us the foundation for our next 100 years.

Part of our history has always been the ability to adapt and embrace change, a huge part of which has been the education and the training programs we have created, for apprentices and for our journeymen.

As we look at our 100 year celebration, and as we come to work and perform our daily tasks and I, personally, represent the membership, we should take moments during this time to reflect and acknowledge how we got here. It's a phenomenal feat and a phenomenal effort. I take that moment and I look at all the building blocks that were put in place to get us here. All the people. The blood, sweat and tears. Missed work opportunities on the picket lines. The changes in materials and methods we use. The education and the training.

You ask yourself, "How am I so fortunate to belong to an organization that's so community involved, so driven, so family-oriented." And we should realize the wonderful position that we're in. We can look at it and know that our challenge is to continue the traditions of the past, to acknowledge what we have in the future and to put a plan in place that will take us through into the next 100 years.

We have many challenges ahead, just as we have overcome those in the past, so we'll continue to get involved and remain at the forefront of all the leading-edge technology of the electrical industry.

