



# Local 18

## 75 YEARS OF GROWTH AND CHANGE



### 1939-2014 Three-quarters of a century

That sounds like a lot more than 75 years, but it's been three-quarters of a century since October 1, 1939 when six autonomous local Ohio unions came together to form one statewide organization – Local 18.

They were the fortunate ones who were employed as the Great Depression began drawing to an end. It was drawing to an end primarily because a world war was looming and business began gearing up to meet anticipated demand.

Just a few years earlier, 7 of 10 construction workers were without work, and they were among the 15 million Americans who were unemployed at the height of the Depression.

That began to change a year or so later, when America did go to war on December 7, 1941 and the ranks of the unemployed dwindled.

Many of those early Local 18 members went to war and many remained to work on the projects needed to keep the nation's economy moving during wartime.

But Local 18 members are still working on projects needed to keep the nation's economy moving during peace time.

Unlike 75 years ago, that economy is not just moving on the highways, but is traveling underground in pipelines and is affected above the ground on wind farms.

The economy, the marketplace and technological advances are moving at a pace totally unforeseen in 1939, but Local 18 members have not only kept pace with all those changes and advances, they have anticipated many and been in the forefront of change.

The story of Local 18 and its members is not the stirring adventure of an action movie or the excitement of a whodunit, but a story of well-trained men and women who went to work every day and did a professional job on every assignment they were given.

Their 75-year story, and that of Local 18, appears on the next several pages.

There may be some of you still on the job when Local 18 has its 100th birthday in 2039. Then you, too, can look back and remember what it was like "in the good old days."

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Patrick L. Sink'.

Patrick L. Sink  
Business Manager



## 1939-1964 The Early Years

"Everything that can be invented has been invented," is a quote falsely attributed to Charles Duell, Commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office in 1899.

Just think how that would have affected members of the six autonomous unions that came together in 1939 to form Local 18 of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

Rather than the crawler tractors and three-wheel loaders being introduced on their projects at the time, these men may well have still been using picks, shovels, wheelbarrows – and mules – like their 19th century predecessors – if everything that had been invented actually had been.

As America went to war after December 7, 1941, Local 18 became involved in several major defense projects throughout its jurisdiction.

During the war, 18,000 IUOE members served in the military, many of them in the Seabees (Construction Battalion), doing work in war zones similar to what they had done in peace time. Of those serving, 275 were killed in the line of duty.

Later in the decade, the anti-union Labor Management Relations Act (Taft-Hartley) was vetoed by President Harry Truman, but Congress overrode his veto. On the other

hand during the same period, the work week was reduced from 48 to 40 hours, and union membership grew from approximately 9 million in 1940 to 14.8 million in 1950.

Local 18 members were busy in the early 1950s, beginning work on the first segment of the Ohio Turnpike in 1953. Double shifts were required to meet deadlines and members were using 518 dozers, 368 scrapers, 731 haul trucks, 99 graders, 21 loaders, 79 roller/compactors, 131 cranes, 65 pavers, and 29 mixers with 17 batch plants. And not a mule in sight.



**CLEVELAND** drag box in use in the '50s, allowed operators to work safely when laying pipes.



**FATHER** of Business Manager Pat Sink, Benjamin Hugh (Huey) Sink, digging basements in Dayton in 1946. During WWII he served as a Seabee. (He's also in the background on page 1.)

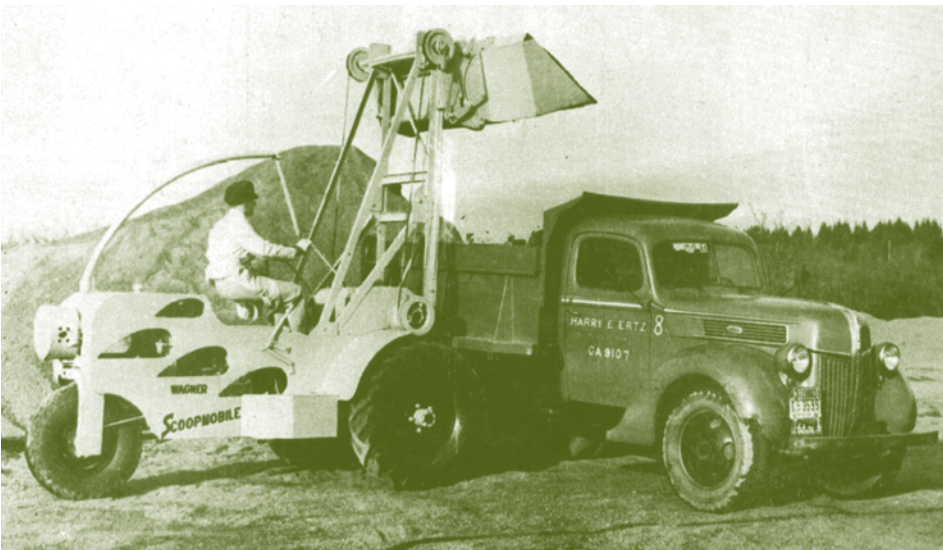


**CLEARING** land for the Ford engine plant in 1951 in Brook Park.





**BUILDING** the Kyger Creek power plant in 1953 required a great deal of equipment and manpower, including Operating Engineers, Teamsters and load checkers. The coal-fired plant had a capacity of 1,075 megawatts.



**THREE-WHEEL** LeTourneau loader, invented in 1939, was the first purpose-built wheel loader.

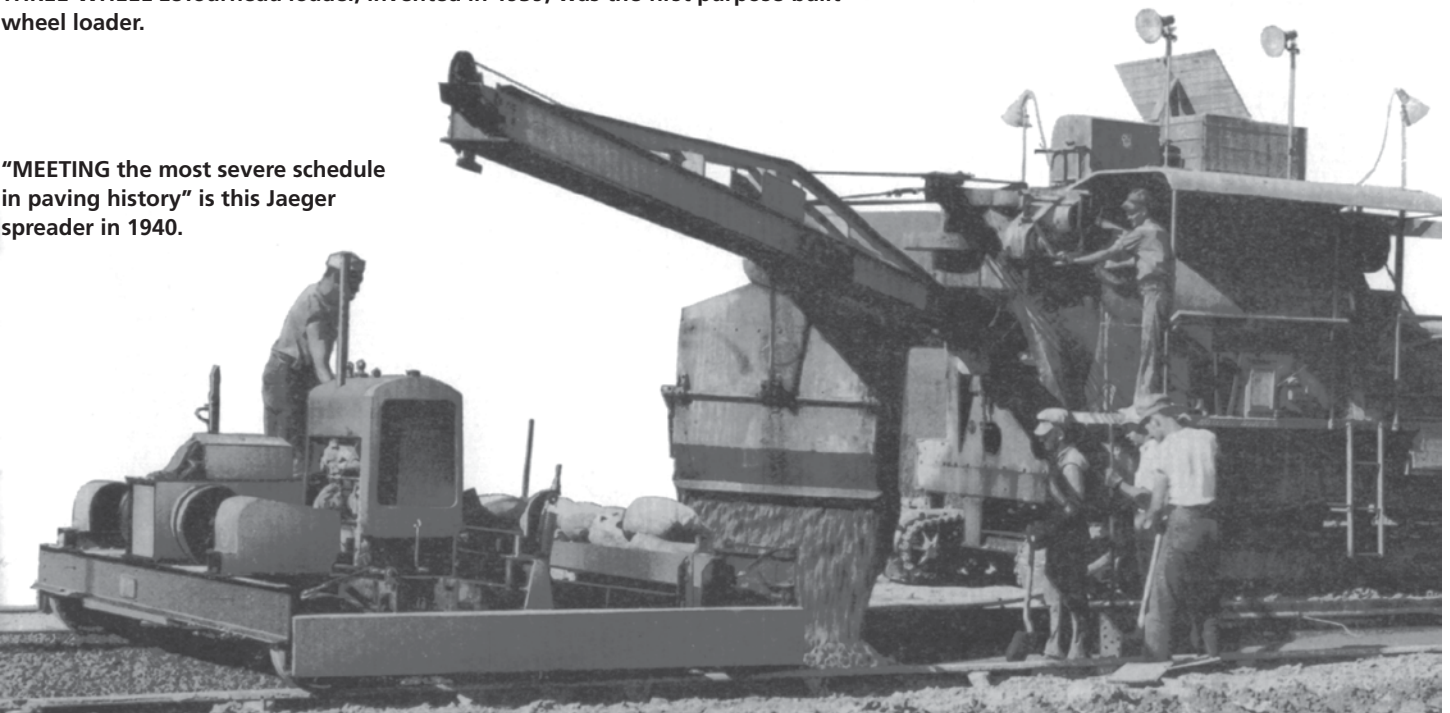
They were also busy moving into their new headquarters at 3515 Prospect Ave. in 1953.

About that time, a movement in the south which came to be known as Right-to-Work, reared its ugly head in Ohio in 1958, when the issue was proposed by the governor and placed on the ballot. The issue was defeated by a two-to-one majority and lost in 72 of the state's 88 counties.

The following year, a Local 18 Health and Welfare plan was instituted by the members for the members and jointly administered with management.

Members were learning about such activities through the "Ohio Bulletin," an Operating Engineers monthly publication for Local Unions 18, 18-A, 18-B and 18-C published in Washington, D.C.

**"MEETING** the most severe schedule in paving history" is this Jaeger spreader in 1940.





## 1964-1989 Some Ups, Some Downs

Four years after one governor supported Right-to-Work, Ohioans elected a different governor with a different attitude.

Elected in 1962, James A. Rhodes had public support shortly thereafter for a \$500 million bond issue for highway construction, for additional state universities and for an increased number of state parks – all of which provided employment for Local 18 members.

One highway construction project was the beginning of I-71 between Cleveland and Cincinnati.



"AND the walls came tumbling down. . ."

That same year, 1964, as Local 18 celebrated its quarter-century birthday, a pension fund was created, once again by the members for the members and jointly administered. The first pension check was issued in January, 1965.

As important as the health and welfare and pension plans were, perhaps an even more significant advance was made a year later when the Ohio Operating Engineers Apprenticeship and Training Fund was established, with a board of trustees evenly divided between contractors and union representatives.

Internal change was not yet over.

In 1968 Local 18 began issuing a new publication called the *Buckeye Engineer*, written and produced locally, not in Washington. Among the first items discussed in early editions were plans for a new training site near the Akron-Canton Airport and organization of Local 18's first steward classes.

*...as Local 18 celebrated its quarter-century birthday, a pension fund was created, once again by the members for the members and jointly administered.*



LAYING pipeline in the '70s was a little bit different than it is today.





A tower crane, poised high above the city, prepares to make a lift.

All seemed positive heading into the 1970s. It was not to be.

President Richard Nixon, elected in 1968, withheld money from the Highway Trust Fund and suspended Davis-Bacon provisions on all federally funded projects, giving new impetus to non-union and open shops.

Perhaps that governmental indifference is what led to an increase in union membership to 21.7 million, the highest in history. Among those 21.7 million were, for the first time, three Local 18 women apprentices.

The 1970 construction season was one of the worst ever, and it did not improve rapidly. In 1973 the state's road expenditures for the year were only \$207 million, the lowest in 10 years.

The election of Richard Celeste as governor in 1982, and his creation of "Operation Jobs for Ohioans," included six initiatives to improve the state of the state.

One of those initiatives was "Operation Jobs – Highways," a \$1.9 billion highway construction and jobs program.

In addition, the Federal Highway Transportation Assistance Act of 1984 made more than \$5.2 billion available for the 1984-85 fiscal year to help "prime the road construction pump."

By 1987, Local 18 was the closest to full employment that it had been in almost a decade as it moved toward its Golden Anniversary.

*By 1987, Local 18 was the closest to full employment than it had been in almost a decade as it moved toward its Golden Anniversary.*



A GROUP of cranes is called a "sedge," but these aren't flying, they're only operating on a very busy site that is keeping many Local 18 members busy.



## 1989-2014 Some Old Problems Return

As the 20th century headed into its last decade, some old problems resurfaced – and like jurisdictional disputes – are still resurfacing. The National Associated Builders and Contractors worked to have the state's prevailing wage repealed and once again brought up Right-to-Work.

On the other hand, at just about the same time, the Ohio Supreme Court approved Project Labor Agreements.

Another approval, as a result of a constitutional change at the International, had Stationary Local 589 become Local 18S.

Shortly after the creation of Local 18S, Governor Robert Taft, elected in 1995, announced a \$5 billion, 10-year Jobs and Progress program that included a great deal of positive action for Local 18.

Another positive action, this time for the members of Local 18, occurred in 2002 when the first Health Fair was held at the January semi-annual meeting. Several years later the program was expanded to each of the districts where members could receive health tests at no charge.

Almost in conjunction with that development, the monthly *Buckeye Engineer* began a series of relevant health articles which have appeared in every issue since.

The importance of a Republican governor was emphasized on Labor Day, 2003, a special day in the history of Local 18 when President George W. Bush came to Richfield to speak to the holiday crowd.

The holiday mood of the crowd dissipated a few years later when a recession, considered the deepest on record at least in terms of job losses since the Great Depression, began in December, 2007 and lasted until June, 2009.

As Local 18 reached its 70th birthday the same year the recession ended, its members successfully worked on the 1,679-mile REX Pipeline that passed through Ohio. As a result, Local 18 was asked to participate in initial discussions about a proposed 230-mile underground pipeline to originate in West Virginia and end in Fulton County, Ohio.

It was the beginning of what was to become a mutually beneficial relationship between the union and natural gas transporters and energy companies.

Another mutually beneficial relationship – this one by the members for the members – reached its Golden Anniversary in 2011, when the Ohio Operating Engineers Federal Credit Union celebrated its 50th anniversary.



**DURING** this quarter century pipeline installation improved even further.



**BRIDGE WORK** has become an important aspect of Local 18's operations as bridge conditions dictate adherence to safety.



**ROAD** and building expansion requires increased space, in many cases needing equipment such as log loaders with grinders to clear that space.



**FOR** three-quarters of a century road paving has been a key factor in Local 18's growth.

*Shortly after the creation of Local 18S, Governor Robert Taft, elected in 1995, announced a \$5 billion, 10-year Jobs and Progress program that included a great deal of positive action for Local 18.*



**OPERATING ENGINEERS** have no fear of heights as this member stands on the 34th floor of a building preparing to set windows.

There was another significant date that year, September 22, when Business Manager Patrick Sink served as a panelist at an Energy Summit that had been called by Ohio Governor John Kasich.

Shortly after that summit, Business Manager Sink, recognizing a completely new field of endeavor, reported to the membership that, "With the ongoing research and investment made in the capture of gas reserves in Ohio, we are gearing up to be a player/partner in the extraction and transport of that energy source.

"We are making it well known that the work of extraction and transporting is what we do. This work entails many steps, which require products to be transported by pipe both to and from the extraction site."

At the same time some members began handling underground work, others were "up in the air," handling wind turbine projects. To erect these more than 300-foot high assemblies required Operating Engineers to work on the access roads, footers, electrical grid, landscaping tiling and other functions needed to facilitate the projects.

Even though the work picture was good, and improving, there was a certain sense of frustration in these good times.

By 2012, a concern that had been dormant in Ohio, (but not elsewhere) for more than half a century, reared its ugly head – again. Right-to-Work or the misleading Workplace Freedom "spin" became a hot topic in Ohio's General Assembly.

Pursuing a philosophy that "the best defense is a good offense," Local 18's Keep Ohio's Heritage program began a strong offensive attack against the union-busting concept, placing anti-RTW billboards strategically around the state, and creating a series of "Middle Class Minute" video spots to inform, mobilize and motivate the public against Workplace Freedom.

In mid-2013, the merger between District 4 and District 5 took place, and District 4/5 became a new entity with new headquarters.

The year ended on a very positive note as ODOT and Governor Kasich were able to creatively leverage bond funds for road work and bridge construction; the oil and gas fields continued to provide work for many members as did renewable energy projects, including wind farms.

As Local 18 entered its diamond anniversary year, there were more positives



**LOCAL 18 MEMBERS** not only work the heights, they can work "down below," here raising a sunken houseboat in Newport, Kentucky.



than negatives. There were more members working, but there were other unions trying to trample the Local's jurisdiction. "Right-Not-to-Work" proponents kept popping up, and Local 18 kept popping them down again – and again. But like the proverbial bad penny, its proponents keep turning up.

## What Does the Future Hold?

In words of one syllable – "Who knows?"

Local 18 members in 1939 may have thought the fairly new crawler tractors they were using were the wave of the future. The same for the three-wheel LeTourneau loader, the first purpose-built wheel loader developed that year. Could they have envisioned the changes that were to come in equipment? In training? In legislation?

They certainly couldn't have envisioned computers, let alone onboard computers that monitored boom angle, cab orientation and inclination on pipe layers through load, boom and cab-mounted sensors.

They couldn't have envisioned the training Operating Engineers receive when they were learning by "the seat of their pants."

They couldn't have envisioned the effect state and national legislation would have on their daily personal and work lives.

There was a great deal they couldn't envision, just as it is impossible to envision all the developments that will come down the road.

Rapid changes, trends and technology make it almost impossible to determine what is just around the corner.

But there are some areas that can be determined.

According to a recent report, hydraulic fracturing – fracking – will likely raise average U.S. household income by \$2,700 per year and create 1.2 million new jobs by 2020.

Another report stated the U.S. will remain the second largest global wind power market in 2020. That's another existing market in which Local 18's skilled members have been active.

To bring things back to 1939, the General Motors exhibit at the 1939 New York World's Fair featured robotic cars controlled without using drivers but by centralized radio waves.

Seventy-five years later several auto makers have already said they plan to have driverless cars ready by 2020. In fact, British officials say driverless cars will be tested on roads in a trial program to begin in January.

No one has estimated the cost to cover America's eight million lane miles of road with a network of transponders and sensors necessary to relay road and weather conditions to driverless vehicles. Transponders and sensors – another new field for Operating Engineers?

That's the future – and the future may be now.

*Rapid changes, trends and technology make it almost impossible to determine what is just around the corner.*

**NO MORE** cables and slings to offload and distribute pipe, a process that hadn't changed in years until the Vac-U-Worx came on the scene last year to do the same job, more quickly, more safely and more efficiently.



**International Union of Operating Engineers  
Local Union 18 and its branches**

3515 Prospect Avenue • Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Phone: 216-432-3138

[www.iuolocal18.org](http://www.iuolocal18.org)

