
The **INFANCY** of **UA Local 343**



It was in a climate of expanding labor organization and economic upheaval that UA found its roots. On March 24, 1906, the United Association (UA) Local 343, then known as a plumbers, gas fitters and steam fitters union, and an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), was established by United Association General President Martin Durkin to serve the interests of Solano and Napa Counties.

The past 100 years have been a testament to UA Local 343's commitment, perseverance and loyalty to its members, and to the community of Solano and Napa Counties. The struggles and triumphs faced throughout the past century have helped Local 343 become a strong and united union representing the plumbers and pipefitters of Northern California. As tumultuous as the past 100 years have been for Local 343, the years leading up to the establishment of UA Local 343 was indeed historic, and a very pivotal period in the landscape of union evolution.

The 1890's found America in the middle of an economic crisis that caused an unprecedented number of businesses to close. There were thousands of jobless men traveling the nation in hopes of finding work. Historically, unions had been looked down upon in America, but because of such a bleak job market, many people were now calling for more organized labor. People believed that having collective power was the only way they could secure a job. Because of this, many new unions were founded and public attitude towards unions softened. Between 1897 and 1904 union membership climbed from 447,000 to 2,072,700.

Many of the new labor organizations modeled themselves after the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, arguably one of the most successful labor organizations of the 19th century. The Knights of Labor believed that all workers, regardless of craft, should band together under one union to rally for improvements in working conditions and pay raises when they were necessary. At its peak, The Knights grew to over 700,000 members, but many members were disenfranchised over the lack of work.

A major milestone in the history of unions occurred in 1889 with the founding of the United Association. The creation of the UA began when a Boston plumber named P. J. Quinlan addressed a brief letter to Richard A. O'Brien, a plumber in Washington, D.C.

"Dear Sir and Brother," the letter began, "I take the liberty of addressing a few lines to you to obtain your views as regards the formation of a United Brotherhood..."

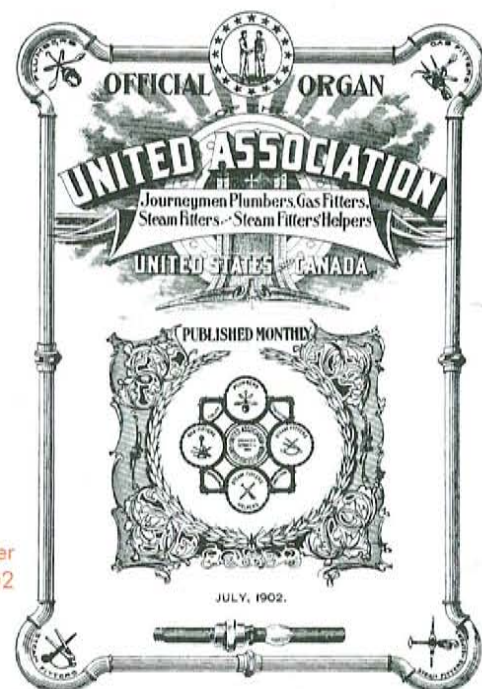
Prior to the founding, plumbers, steamfitters and gas fitters were either members of small local unions or had no affiliation with a union.



An early gathering of plumbers under the Knights of Labor

The UA was organized as a way to unite national pipe trades journeymen in America and Canada, and deal with mutual problems. Some issues the UA initially addressed for members were providing strike aid, establishing apprenticeship programs and most importantly, trying to gain some job security for the workers. The UA was often in disputes over jurisdiction and work assignments with the International Association. These disputes often resulted in walkouts or work stoppages. By the end of 1910, many building trades' leaders were determined to resolve this problem because it was weakening local trade councils. At this time, the UA had 25,000 members, and an average annual income of over \$200,000, making it one of the stronger emerging labor organizations. In 1912, seeking to resolve the disputes, the AFL revoked the International Association's charter, and put its full support behind the UA. This made the UA the only legitimate pipe trades union. After the International Association locals merged peacefully with the UA, the UA became bigger and stronger, and allowed for a more united representation for locals and workers. Coupled with the establishment of a Department of Labor in 1913, and the passage of the Clayton Act in 1914, which made it legal for unions to strike, boycott, and picket; unions were making significant gains.

UA Journal cover
example - 1902





Even though the UA was financially sound, with union membership growing, they needed more financial help in order for the UA to adequately represent all their union locals on various issues. To accomplish this, one of the first Secretary Treasurers for the UA, William J. Spencer, advocated the use of a stamp system. The national office of the UA sold dues stamps to all the union locals for 2 cents each. The increase in membership costs for UA Local 343 members was outweighed by the fact that the UA now had the needed finances to represent their union locals when needed.

Dues stamp book - 1941

The **WORLD WAR I** Era



With the advent of World War I, President Woodrow Wilson assisted the unions by placing union workers in key war industries. As the war came to an end, Solano County and Vallejo saw the start of an economic upswing. The Navy had increased the size of the fleet in the Pacific. Because Mare Island Vallejo was Uncle Sam's principal seat of defense, more and more people were being stationed there. With these new Vallejo citizens, there was an explosion in the construction of new homes, stores, restaurants and offices in the city. Local 343 was at the forefront of this explosion, helping build the Vallejo City Hall, the Empress Theater, the Bay Terrace Housing Development and the Vallejo YMCA, as well as new construction on Mare Island itself.

However, with this economic upswing, many businesses attempted to keep profits up by suppressing wages and opposing union labor. Many businesses in Napa and Solano Counties subscribed to the tactic known as the "American Plan." The anti-union National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) sponsored the American Plan, and encouraged employers to run "open shops" where non-union employees were hired over union members. NAM also encouraged employers to use "yellow-dog" contracts which forbade employees from joining a union. Many unions challenged the NAM sponsored program, but the American Plan was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Labor Temple June 24th 1918.

The Solano Co Bldg Trades Council convened in regular session on above date at 8 P.M. President Hopkins in the Chair.

Nine Officers and delegates answered the roll call and the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read.

Credentials: - From International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local No. 180 for Broos.

R. H. Porche, E. Pierce, and A. C. Sparr. Moved and seconded that Credentials be accepted and delegates obligated. Motion carried.

Communications & Bills: - From State Bldg Trades Council, requesting that we advise all affiliated Painters Unions that when their members go to Stockton, or any town within the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Co. Bldg T. C. that their members when depositing their cards must request and obtain a current quarterly working card of the State Bldg. Trades Council. Also Painters coming from Stockton must show their working cards before they are issued one in our jurisdiction. Filed and delegates instructed to take notice of contents.

From Plumbers Local No 343 stating that on and after Monday July 29th the wage scale for Plumbers would be increased from \$7.00

to \$8.00 per day, and requesting the Council's endorsement of same. Moved & sec the request to endorse be complied with. Motion Carried. From the Bldg Trades Department A. Lof L. enclosing official directory of department, also forwarding copies of minutes of Convention being held in St. Paul, Minn. Filed.

A. Bill from A. W. Hopkins for one weeks salary & Carriage, was read and on motion ordered paid. \$20.00 From Storker's Print Shop for 500 copies of Bylaws \$40.00 On motion the Bill was ordered paid, if the Secy after comparing them found the printed copies same as the sample submitted. From Secy. for one months salary for June \$8.00 Stationery 65¢ ordered paid.

Reports of Locals.

Carpenters. Routine business. Took in 3 members by initiation. Are endeavouring to clear up debt on Labor Temple. Plumbers well attended meeting. Took in 1 new member by initiation 2 by clearance. adopted new wage scale. new City Plumbing Inspector made application for membership. Teamsters no meeting.

Painters good meeting. Nomination of officers. Hod carriers good meeting. Initiated 2. Elected officers. routine business. Sheet metal workers well attended meeting.

The American Plan and all its tactics were widely accepted, and open shops became the norm in Napa and Solano Counties. Work for union members, including members of Local 343, quickly became scarce. By the 1920's Mare Island Naval Base had drastically cut back on its operations and there were no ships launched at the navy yard between 1922 and 1929. Mare Island was even threatened with closure until UA Local 343 members and Vallejo citizens convinced the government to keep the base open. During this time the population of Vallejo dropped by 5,000. This meant an additional slowdown in construction work for Local 343. With Local 343's deep connections in the community and their collective power, employers were urged to hire union members. With momentum building, UA Local 343 banded together with other unions to oppose the American Plan tactics, and their efforts proved fruitful. They were able to increase union employment so much that members of UA Local 343 were able to win a pay increase from contractors.

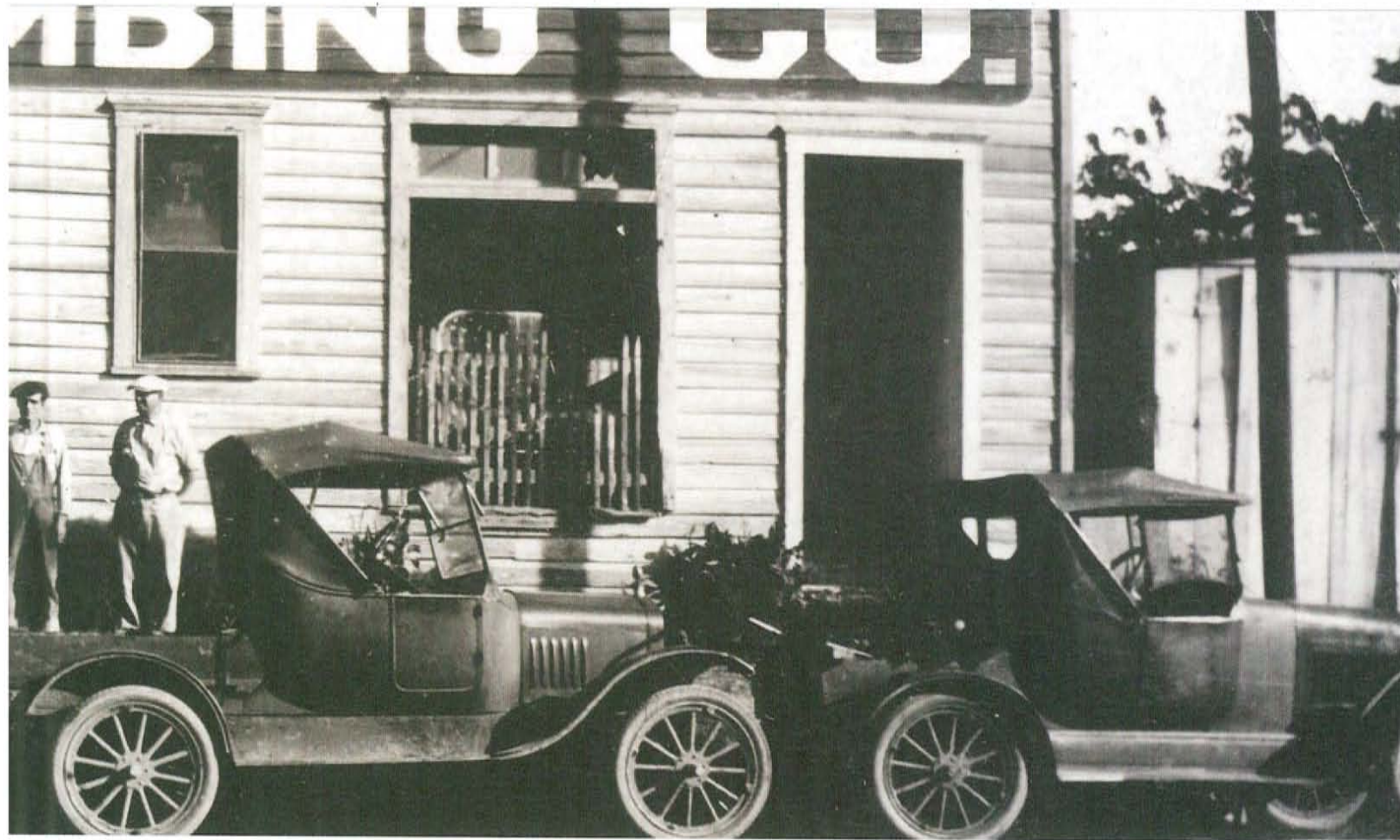


The **DEPRESSION** Years

Moore Plumbing Company

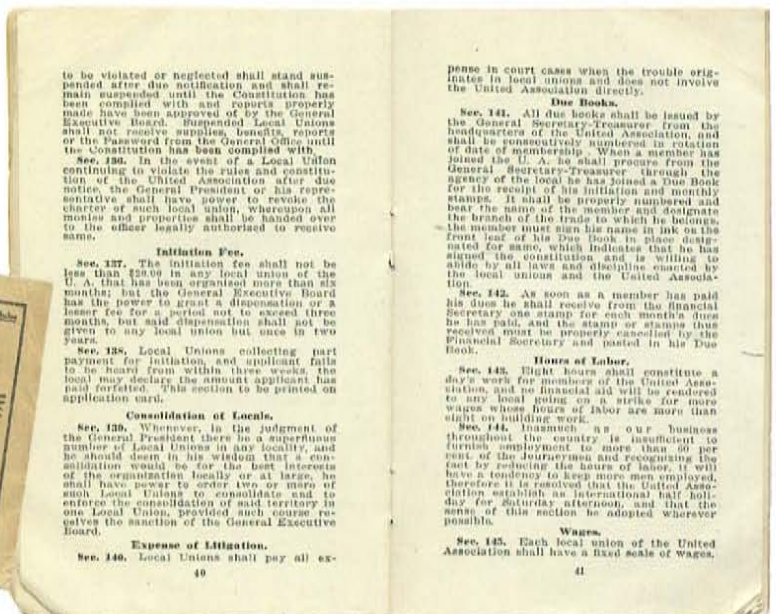
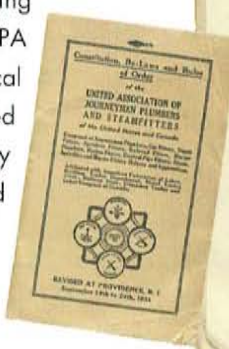
The Stock Market crash of 1929 sent America into the worst economic depression it had ever seen. The future of unions seemed grim. In 1933 the number of labor union members in America was around 3 million, compared to 5 million a decade earlier. As thousands flooded into Napa and Solano Counties looking for work, many Local 343 members left to find work in other areas.

During 1935 the job forecast for Local 343 members was bleak. As a way to help the unions, the U.S. government passed the National Labor Relations Act, commonly known as the Wagner Act. Under the act a National Labor Relations Board was established to investigate and decide unfair labor practice charges and to conduct elections, giving workers the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to be represented by a union. Most importantly, the act protected the rights of workers to organize, thereby engaging in collective bargaining over wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment. Even though this piece of legislation did much to help unions, it did very little to improve the economic condition of UA Local 343 during the Great Depression. Over half of Local 343 members were out of work.



Fortunately, soon after the National Labor Relations Act, Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of 1935. The WPA was part of the President's ambitious "New Deal", and was designed to provide jobs and income to the unemployed by starting construction, and financing projects such as dams, hospitals, and bridges. The WPA was effective in creating and promoting jobs in UA Local 343's jurisdiction. Some of the first projects constructed by Local 343 members included Solano County Grocery Co. on Merchant Street in Vacaville, and the Standard Oil natural gas plant, also in Vacaville.

UA Constitution, By-Laws and Rules of Order - 1920



to be violated or neglected shall stand suspended after due notification and shall remain suspended until the Constitution has been complied with and reports properly made have been approved of by the General Executive Board. Suspended Local Unions shall not receive supplies, benefits, reports or the Password from the General Office until the Constitution has been complied with.

Sec. 136. In the event of a Local Union continuing to violate the rules and constitution of the United Association after due notice, the General President or his representative shall have power to revoke the charter of such local union, whereupon all monies and properties shall be handed over to the officer legally authorized to receive same.

Initiation Fee.

Sec. 137. The initiation fee shall not be less than \$25.00 in any local union of the U. A. that has been organized more than six months; but the General Executive Board has the power to grant a dispensation of a lesser fee for a period not to exceed three months, but said dispensation shall not be given to any local union but once in two years.

Sec. 138. Local Unions collecting part payment for initiation, and applicant fails to be heard from within three weeks the local may declare the amount applicant has paid forfeited. This section to be printed on application card.

Consolidation of Locals.

Sec. 139. Whenever, in the judgment of the General President there is a superfluous number of Local Unions in any locality, and he should deem in his wisdom that a consolidation would be for the best interests of the organization locally or at large, he shall have power to order two or more of such Local Unions to consolidate and to enforce the consolidation of said territory in one Local Union, provided such course receives the sanction of the General Executive Board.

Expense of Litigation.

Sec. 140. Local Unions shall pay all expense in court cases when the trouble originates in local unions and does not involve the United Association directly.

Due Books.

Sec. 141. All due books shall be issued by the General Secretary-Treasurer from the headquarters of the United Association, and shall be consecutively numbered in rotation of date of membership. When a member has joined the U. A. he shall procure from the General Secretary-Treasurer through the agency of the local he has joined a Due Book for the receipt of his initiation and monthly stamps. It shall be properly numbered and bear the name of the member and designate the branch of the trade to which he belongs, the member must sign his name in ink on the front leaf of his Due Book in place designated for same, which indicates that he has signed the constitution and is willing to abide by all laws and discipline enacted by the local union and the United Association.

Sec. 142. As soon as a member has paid his dues he shall receive from the Financial Secretary one stamp for each month's dues he has paid, and the stamp or stamps thus received must be properly cancelled by the Financial Secretary and posted in his Due Book.

Hours of Labor.

Sec. 143. Eight hours shall constitute a day's work for members of the United Association, and no financial aid will be rendered to any local going on a strike for more wages whose hours of labor are more than eight on building work.

Sec. 144. Inasmuch as our business throughout the country is insufficient to furnish employment to more than 50 per cent of the journeymen and recognizing the fact by reducing the hours of labor, it will have a tendency to keep more men employed, therefore it is resolved that the United Association establish an international half holiday for Saturday afternoon, and that the same of this section be adopted wherever possible.

Wages.

Sec. 145. Each local union of the United Association shall have a fixed scale of wages.

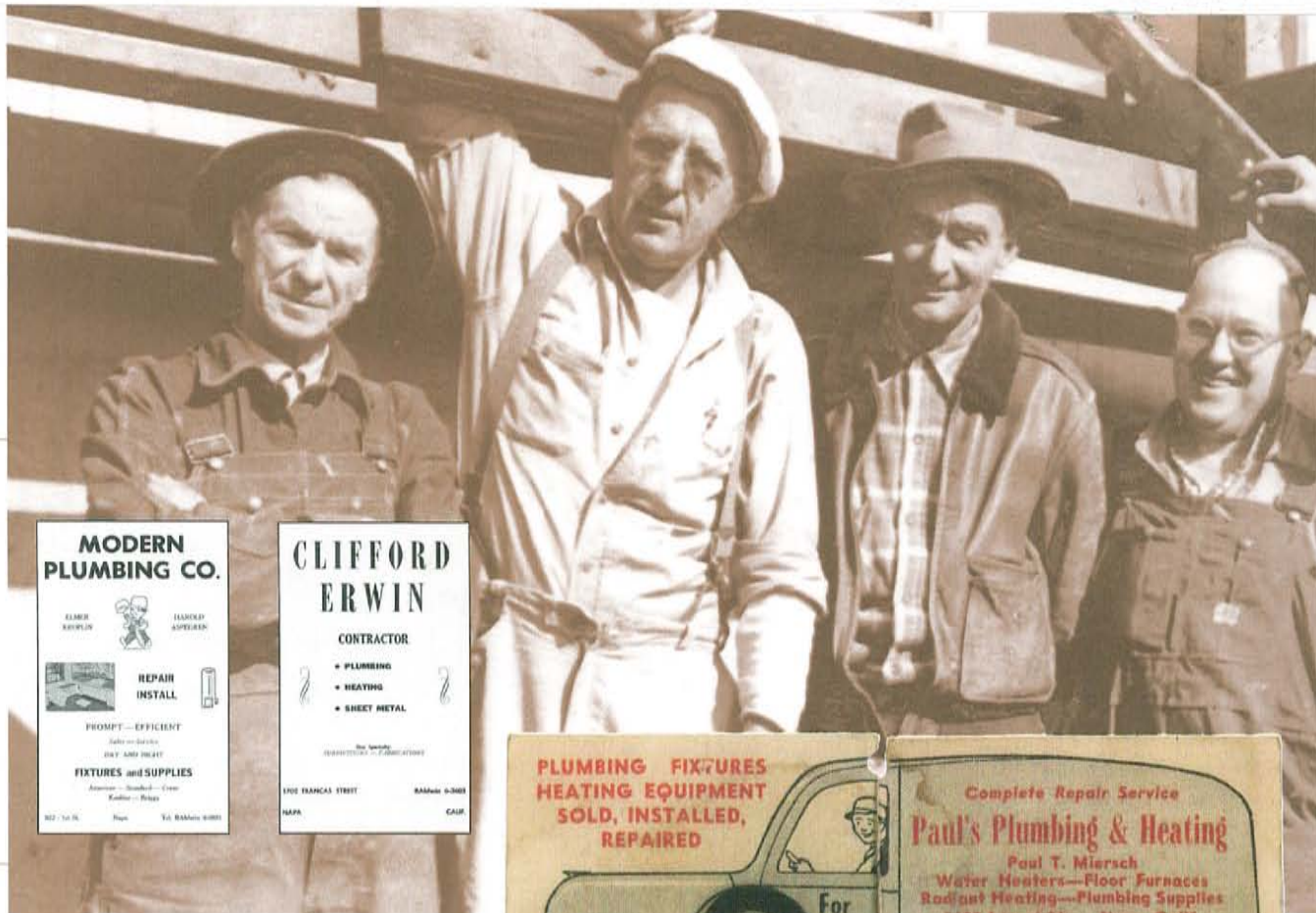


The **TAFT-HARTLEY ACT** and **its fall out**

With each piece of legislation formed and passed to help unions, there were always others who wanted to counter union progress. The most intense conflicts between union members and non-union workers and management naturally took place in the 1930's when jobs were at a minimum. One of the most notorious conflicts that occurred during this time was the Kohler Strike in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. In 1934 The Kohler Company, a manufacturer of plumbing fixtures, had around 2,000 employees. Financial problems caused the company's president, Walter J. Kohler Sr., to cut back on jobs and salaries. Scared for their jobs, employees tried to organize. Kohler refused to bargain with them and his employees called a strike. The strike lasted from 1934 to 1941. In solidarity with the Kohler workers, UA Local 343 refused to install Kohler products during the eight year strike. Two Kohler strikers were killed and forty-seven other wounded as men tried to cross the picket line. But, in the end, the Kohler workers were allowed to unionize and struck a temporary victory for organized labor as a whole.

The way the bloody clash of the Kohler strike was portrayed, along with other incidences throughout the country, made many Americans fear the power that unions could potentially have. Because of this, the landmark 1947 Taft-Hartley Act was passed by congress over the veto of President Harry Truman. The Taft-Hartley Act severely limited the power of unions. The act completely outlawed the "closed shop" where employers only hired union members. Also, the act banned local union work rules that established wages, hours, and working conditions. It made it necessary for local unions to bargain collectively with contractors

343 workers at
Hogan High
School - 1953



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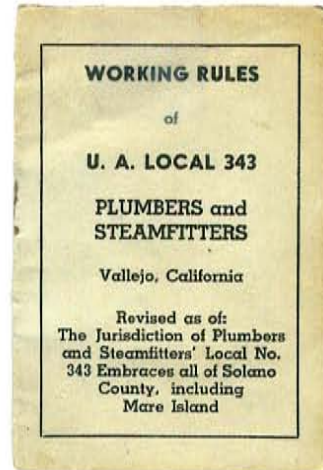
Examples of advertising - 1950-1960

The Taft-Hartley Act also gave individual states the option of passing "Right-to-Work" legislation, which allowed employers to stop granting union security clauses in their contracts. This sort of legislation had the potential of hurting unions in many ways. In 1958, Bill Knowland, a U.S. Senator and Republican who was planning to run for California Governor, sponsored Proposition 18, which would bring Right-to-Work laws into California.

UA Local 343 banded together with other unions throughout the state to defeat the proposition. As a result, Proposition 18 lost by over one million votes, due in large part to a great union turnout.

In the same election, the union presence elected Democrats to every statewide office, including Pat Brown as Governor. Because organized labor had such a marked presence in the election, Governor Brown became very union friendly, and in 1959, signed favorable legislation which served to protect the rights of union members.

Revised 343 Working Rules
booklet with the inclusion
of Mare Island - 1941



UA Local 343 and its Rich **MILITARY HISTORY**

In addition to serving their country in the armed forces, many members of Local 343 have worked continuously on the two military bases in their jurisdiction, Mare Island Naval Base, and Travis Air Force Base, maintaining facilities during World War I, building military housing during World War II, and improving infrastructure during the Vietnam conflict.

Built in 1854, Mare Island Naval Base located in Vallejo, is the oldest and arguably most illustrious naval base on the west coast. It had the distinction of building the first ever naval vessel in the west, the USS Saginaw. The USS Saginaw was the first of over 500 ships built at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. Although UA Local 343 members worked at the Mare Island Naval Base since it was founded in 1906, it shared jurisdiction with Local 23, chartered in 1917, until 1923 when they merged. During WW II Mare Island exploded into a frenzy of activity. During the height of the war, Mare Island Naval Base employed over 46,000 civilian and military personnel, many of whom were members of UA Local 343. With the booming workforce Local 343 members built over 1,000 Quonset huts to house these new workers, and 996 buildings that made up the facilities on the island.

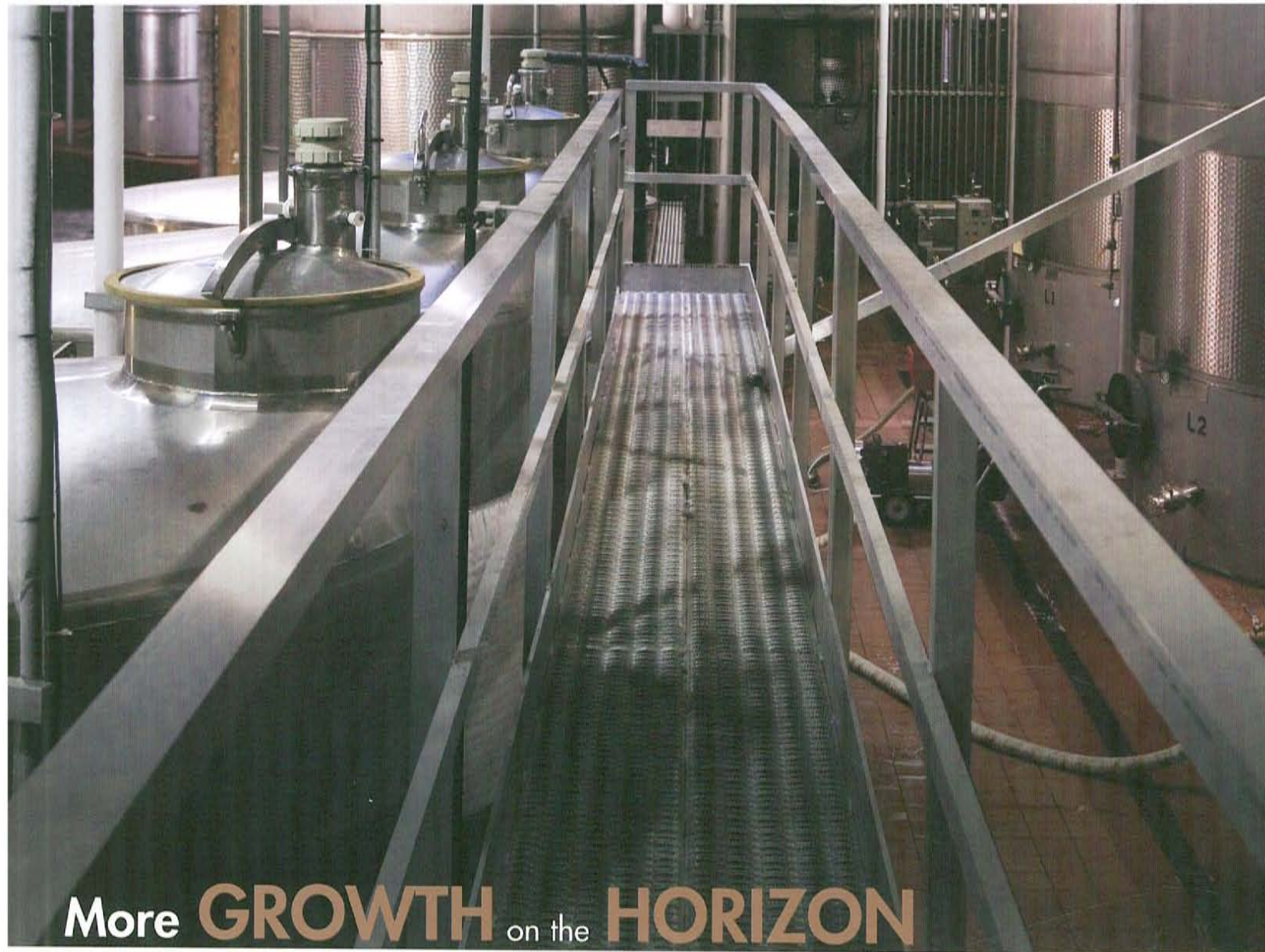
In the 1960s the decision was made to build nuclear submarines at Mare Island. The USS Sargo was the first nuclear submarine built at the base with 16 more following. In 1965 the Navy combined Mare Island with Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco. This new naval Shipyard became the largest in the world for the five years that the Mare Island-Hunter's Point joint operating arrangement was in effect.

Mare Island Naval Base was the second largest Naval Yard in the United States in 1988. But in 1993 it was put on the closure list. In 1996 the 4,351 acre Mare Island Naval Base was shut down. With the closure of the Base, UA Local 127, which was also working on Mare Island, merged with UA Local 343. With the merger, Local 343 grew stronger and members continued to work steadily, overseeing maintenance on Mare Island, and assisting in the construction of more new housing developments. In 2003 Local 343 members helped in the construction of new housing developments on the island, marking a new era and creating a new usage for Mare Island Naval Base.

Travis Air Force Base was also instrumental in the Second World War efforts. Built for the sole purpose of adding to Pacific efforts, the base became a major aerial port, and primary supply transfer point for the Pacific War Zone. During the war, UA Local 343 members were active on base, building housing and the David Grant USAF Medical Center. After the war, the base was greatly expanded to cover more than 6,000 acres. Local 343 members built additional base housing, as well as aiding in the construction of supplementary base facilities and industrial complexes. Now known as the "Gateway to the Pacific", Travis Air Force Base handles more cargo and passenger traffic through its aerial port than any other military air terminal in the United States. Today, the base houses the largest airlift organization in the Air Force 60th Air Mobility Wing, and includes over 7,100 active military personnel, and roughly 3,500 reservists. Travis Air Force Base continues to thrive today, and could not operate at maximum efficiency if it were not for the on-going efforts of members of UA Local 343.

Capehart Housing
Travis Air Base - 1957
Inland Mechanics Inc. of Riverside





More **GROWTH** on the **HORIZON**

Inside winery with extensive piping system

With the presence of Mare Island and Travis Air Force Base during World War II, the Vallejo population exploded. A boom in Vallejo caused a huge demand for housing, and provided excellent job opportunities for members of Local 343. From 1939 to 1945, the population of Vallejo grew rapidly and the government poured \$2 billion dollars into Vallejo for the construction of new housing. UA Local 343 built these new housing projects that provided homes for 30,000 people.

After World War II, UA Local 800 of Napa County, which originally was founded in 1919 as a plumbing and steam fitting union, merged with UA Local 343 on December 10, 1947. Local 800 was well established and working on many Napa projects, including the City of Napa's historic downtown development. With the merger, the new jurisdiction brought plenty of work for Local 343 members, most notably, in the booming wine industry.

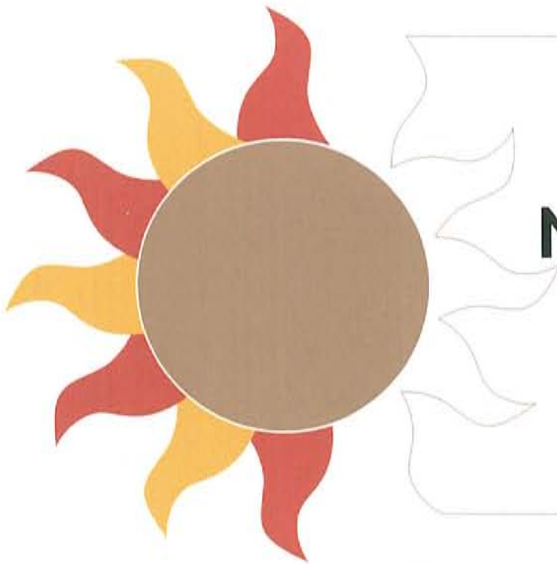
California's wine industry had been in a lull since prohibition, The Depression, and a bout with an infestation that destroyed many grape plants. But in the mid-1960s, a few people saw California's unique climate as the ideal place to start vineyards that could compete with international manufacturers. Most notably was Robert Mondavi. With the help of UA Local 343, Mondavi built the first winery in Napa. Having gained the expertise and specific knowledge necessary for building wineries, UA Local 343 helped in the construction of almost every major Napa Valley winery. UA Local 343's work included Christian Brothers, Greystone, Beringer and Sterling. Today, 95% of wine produced in the United States is made in California.



Even though a recession was plaguing the country in the mid-1970s, Local 343 members were able to find work because of many public projects related to the continuing growth of the population of Vallejo and the surrounding areas.

New Officers and Guests
at Installation Ceremony - 1974

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, stemming from the bargaining patterns known as "leapfrogging", UA Local 343 was in the midst of intense negotiations with management and contractors. Because of Local 343's skill in negotiating, and success in gaining pay raises and increased benefits from their contractors, other locals were demanding the same. In order to maintain their successes and to capitalize on millions of dollars of work within their jurisdiction, Local 343 was in constant negotiations with their contractors. Looming on the horizon was yet another set-back for Local 343. Corporations and contractors did not like the "leapfrogging" tactics, and successfully sought an end to the practice during a series of high level business meetings in San Francisco. Corporations stopped bargaining and contracts were awarded to non-union shops. But UA Local 343 members had a plan of their own to keep moving forward.



New **TECHNOLOGY** and a **TRAINING Plan**

In spite of all the union issues and legislation UA Local 343 members had to contend with, they stayed abreast of the ever-changing technology that was being implemented. In 1962 dual tight neoprene gaskets replaced lead and okum joints in cast iron pipes, but not all of the changes were for the better. In 1966 the state of California began to use ABS plastic pipe instead of cast iron pipes. Local 343 workers discovered that the ABS plastic pipe was creating a fire hazard. Through the efforts of Local 343 and other California locals, the use of ABS was limited to houses and apartments of no more than two stories in height. With these new technologies, Journeymen plumbers began to specialize in either rough, top out, or finish. Before these changes, an experienced plumber could plumb a house without plans. The changes created somewhat of a boom in lower cost housing, and brought more jobs for UA Local 343, but also made it possible for many less skilled non-union workers to enter residential plumbing construction.



Trade Certificate - 1954

16



Marvin J. Boede Training Center



UA Local 343 Headquarters

The computer age was also dawning, and with it came even more advances in plumbing and pipefitting technologies. Stainless steel became the norm, and pipe joining techniques progressed from compression fittings to heli-arc welding to orbital welding. In order to face these changes head-on, Local 343 built the Marvin J. Boede Training Center, under the direction of Brothers Michael Beavers and Rod Cameron. This impressive center trains UA Local 343 members in new and ever changing plumbing and pipefitting technologies. Local 343 journey-level plumbers and pipefitters are trained here through an intensive five-year apprenticeship program that combines classroom and on-site instruction. The apprenticeship program that was made mandatory for union members during the UA convention of 1921 has become even more critical for success as technology in the piping industry changes and advances.

Each year millions of dollars are spent training apprentices and journeymen in local union programs. Completion of the apprenticeship program provides great career paths and advancement opportunities for UA Local 343 members. All of the instructors at the Marvin J. Boede Training Center are graduates of the United Association Instructor Program. This commitment to training means that UA Local 343 remains competitive and knowledgeable in the cutting edge technology of the piping industry. The advanced training at the Marvin J. Boede Training Center has served as a catalyst for bolstering membership numbers in UA Local 343. From a total of 353 UA Local members when the center opened, UA Local 343 has grown to 600 members today.



Genentech Facility - 200

UA Local 343 and the **FUTURE**

Commitment, perseverance and training have paid off for UA Local 343. In late 1994 the biotechnology research company Genentec announced plans for building a \$250 million dollar manufacturing facility in Vacaville, California. UA Local 343 provided plumbing and pipefitting for the original construction of Genentech's first building complex, which encompassed 310,000 square feet. In 2001, UA Local 343 helped Genentech expand operations by adding a new 42,000 square foot warehouse and a 50,000 square foot administrative building, bringing the total area of their facilities to 402,000 square feet. In 2004, Genentech began expanding again and will employ UA Local 343 in the construction of three new manufacturing buildings comprised of 380,000 square feet, and one new 135,000 square foot administration building. This will make Genentech the largest biotechnology manufacturing facility in the world.



A UA Local 343 member at the Anheuser-Busch plant

The success and growth of Genentech in Vacaville mirrors the growth of business and population in both Solano and Napa Counties. The Association of Bay Area Governments, projects that Solano County will be the fastest growing county in the Bay Area between 1995 and 2020. Between 1996 and 2004 alone, Solano County grew from a population of 373,000 to 417,000. As well, Solano and Napa Counties will have the greatest percentage increase in job growth in the Bay Area between 1995 and 2020. It is estimated that Solano County's employment will jump by 74% while Napa County will see a 69% increase. Good news and good job opportunities for UA Local 343.

In addition to Genentech, UA Local 343 has assisted in lending their expertise to businesses such as Exxon, Exxon - Valero, Chiron, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Jelly Belly Factory, Huntway Refinery, Campbell Soup, Alza Pharmaceutical, Dey Laboratory, North Bay Medical Center, Sutter-Solano Hospital, Six Flags Marine World Composite Medical Facility, Basic Vegetable Food Processing, Clorox, Kaiser Steel, and many others. The impact of increased population and job growth to Napa and Solano Counties will bring new business interests and housing developments to the ever-ready members of UA Local 343 who will be able to showcase their craftsmanship for years to come.



From its birth 100 years ago, until now, UA Local 343 has experienced a century of ups and downs. Generations of UA Local 343 members worked tirelessly to provide a solid foundation for the future of UA Local 343, and etched their place in history.

Today, UA Local 343 is led by Business Manager, Greg Partch and Business Agent, Greig Hope, along with a skilled group of elected officials. The leadership of Local 343 acknowledges the accomplishments and pride of their predecessors. This pride is at the core of who UA Local 343 was, is and will continue to be for generations to come.