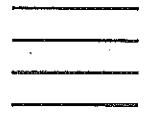


NEWS



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July 12, 1991

NECA Commemorates 90 Years Of Progress On July 17 Birthday

NECA did not invent the electrical contracting industry. Rather the industry, responding to a need, invented our national organization. Since its birth on July 17, 1901, NECA has flourished as an association truly of, by, and for electrical contractors. This special anniversary issue of *NECA News* and the enclosed supplement traces highlights from the first 90 years of the National Electrical Contractors Association.

In The Beginning

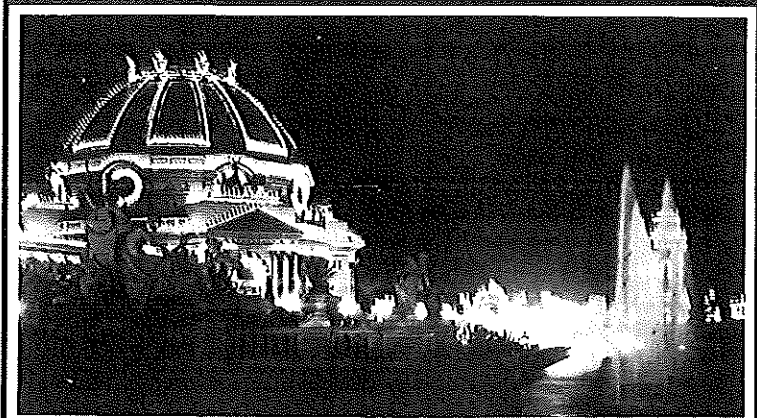
The industry was born within months after Thomas Edison changed the course of history in 1879 by introducing a successful carbon incandescent lamp. In fact, many of the first electrical contractors rose from the ranks of employment in the Edison Electric Illuminating Companies that were formed around the country. Other early contractors began by working for the telephone companies or for the forerunners of public utilities, which were established to power electric street cars. As far as can be determined, the

first "official" electrical contracting business opened in New York City in 1882. Soon, others sprang up in major cities all over America.

Within the next few years local associations of electrical contractors began to arise to meet the needs that could not be met by individuals working alone. Working in cooperation allowed contractors to share tools and skilled workers – both of which were in short supply in those days – and to exchange ideas and information, just as association members do today. One of the first local associations was founded in New York City in 1892. By 1899, an organization representing six associations in the state was formed: the United Electrical Contractors of New York State.

In early 1901, the New York group was preparing for its convention at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo.

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"AN AWESOME SIGHT, ITS LIKE BEFORE NEVER SEEN" lights up the night sky as 10,914 bulbs go into action at the first-ever "electrification" of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, NY, birthplace of the National Electrical Contractors Association.

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NECA's Industry Partner To Celebrate Centennial November 21

This is a big year for anniversaries. It's the 90th for NECA and the 50th for the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee. And it's the 100th for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The IBEW will celebrate its centennial this year in the city of its birth when the labor organization holds its convention in St. Louis.

Like NECA, the IBEW can be said to have gotten its start at an exposition. In 1890, wiremen and linemen were attracted to Missouri's "Queen City" to wire the buildings and erect the exhibits to be featured in "a glorious display of electrical wonders." The exposition workers soon organized as

the "Electrical Wiremen and Linemen's Union, No. 5221 of the American Federation Of Labor."

Within the next few months, similar unions were established in major cities all across the U.S. On November 21, 1891, representatives from 10 of these unions convened in St. Louis to launch the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. (The Brotherhood went international when a Canadian affiliate was inducted in December 1899.)

Labor relations were rocky going at first. Not until 1919 were visionaries from the IBEW and NECA able at last to implement a joint "Declaration of Principles," the vehicle that resulted in

the 1920 establishment of our Council on Industrial Relations, which settles management-labor disputes. Nearly two decades would pass before a truly workable labor relations program – our current program – was to be established.

Since then, however, these two organizations have developed such a degree of mutual trust that their joint efforts stand as a monument to cooperative labor relations that is highly regarded by the industry, the government, and the general public alike.

NECA is pleased to share "happy anniversary" wishes – and hopes for "many happy returns" – with our partners in the industry.

Roots In Electrical Contracting Industry Run Deep For Many Members

Many NECA-member firms trace their ancestry in the electrical contracting industry back a hundred years or more. NECA congratulates all long-standing electrical contracting companies. Special recognition is due those that have grown up with our association. The firms listed below have been NECA members for 75 years or longer.

Hatzel & Buehler, Inc. of New York City tops the list. J.C. Hatzel, a former employee of the Edison Electric Illuminating Company, opened his

electrical contracting business in 1889 with partner Joseph Buehler and was one of the 49 men who originated NECA. His firm attained membership in our association just as soon as the paperwork was ready, on August 1, 1901. Today, Hatzel & Buehler has branches in Claymont, DE; Copiague, NY; Fords, NJ; Oak Park, MI; and Lansing, MI. All are in the NECA fold.

Another member deserving special mention is **Henry Newgard & Co.** of Arlington Heights, IL. This firm has

likely been in business longer than any other electrical contractor in the nation. In fact, it got its start in the same year the title "electrical contractor" was, as far as can be determined, first used (by the Electrical Contracting and Supply Company of New York, an early member). But Henry Newgard was not yet using that term on the business cards he handed out in 1882: He billed himself as an "installer of electric lights, speaking tubes, electric bells, burglar alarms, and gas lighting." Today, Henry Newgard & Co., which joined NECA on February 27, 1903, is one of the largest electrical contracting firms in the Chicago area and offers a full range of business and commercial electrical construction services.

What motivates long-time members to renew their affiliation year after year? Perhaps Donald Colaner, president of **Hilscher-Clarke Electric** of Canton, Ohio, says it best. The history of the company goes back to 1905; the firm joined NECA on May 29, 1916, making it one of the "youngest" members on the list. Recently recognized by our North Central Ohio Chapter for his company's 75 years with NECA, Mr. Colaner said "The member companies are in business today because of the combination of good management skills, which continually improve through our NECA services, and skilled employees who are among the best in the country." He added, "Great organizations like NECA and the IBEW are built by people who find a common goal and refuse to abandon it for the temptation of a short-term benefit."

Long-Time Members Appreciated

On our 90th anniversary, NECA proudly salutes the following member companies that have been with our association for 75 continuous years or longer. (Date in parentheses notes year membership began.)

Hatzel & Buehler, New York, NY (1901)
Briner Electric, St. Louis, MO (1902)
Henry Newgard & Co., Arlington Heights, IL (1903)
E-J Electric Installation, Long Island City, NY (1903)
Herbert A. Holder Company, Boston, MA (1903)
Swanson-Nunn Electric, Evansville, IN (1903)
L.K. Comstock & Co., New York, NY (1904)
Pierce Electric, Chicago, IL (1906)
Gray Electric, Troy, MI (1910)
J.M. Clayton Company, Thomaston, GA (1910)
Coghlin Electrical Contractors, Worcester, MA (1911)
White Electrical Construction, Atlanta, GA (1912)
Cahn Electric, Shreveport, LA (1913)
Hilscher-Clark Electric, Canton, Ohio (1916)
Colip Electric, South Bend, IN (1916)
Kelso-Burnett Co., Rolling Meadows, IL (1916)

affiliated with NECA for 75 years or longer

Would An Electrical Contractors Association By Any Other Name Be The Same?

Although some early members called themselves "electrifiers," our group was originally chartered as the "National Electrical Contractors Association of the United States." In 1918, a new name - "National Association of Electrical Contractors and Dealers" - was adopted. From 1921 until 1932, the organization labored under the name "Association of Electragists, International" when some scholars among the group coined a label that combined "electricity" with the Greek root of the verb "to lead or act" as a "more intelligent" name for "a business that is more scientific and technical in its public contacts than most others." It was introduced at our 20th convention, along with such terms as electragy, electragize, and electragician, with the suggestion that they be adopted "unless something more suitable is presented." Something more suitable was presented later, at the national association's convention in 1932. That's when the 1921 name change was declared a dismal failure and NECA assumed its current title. The words "of the United States," which had been in our original name, were dropped because NECA had already gone international through the affiliation of many Canadian electrical contractors.

Accomplished Past Depicts Progress As 90-Year Tradition For NECA

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This was to be a historic occasion. Mr. Edison himself was to be on hand to officiate at an "illumination" ceremony to launch the "electrification" of the fair, where exposition-goers were to be dazzled, for the first time ever, by the light of nearly 11,000 bulbs providing instant illumination at the flick of a switch.

The United Electrical Contractors of New York State decided to make the event even more historic. They sent out a call for representatives of all the electrical contracting associations all across the nation to join their convention to explore the possibility of establishing a national organization. The call was answered by 49 contractors from 18 cities in eight states (New York, Maryland, Missouri, Minnesota, Michigan, Massachusetts, Ohio and Pennsylvania). Shortly after 2:00 p.m. on July 17, 1901, this group meeting in the New York State Building on the exposition grounds had ratified into being the National Electrical Contractors Association of the United States.

At that first meeting, the contractors elected officers, with Charles L. Eidlitz of New York City chosen as the association's first national president, and settled on Utica, NY, as home to the association's first national headquarters. A constitution and bylaws also were adopted. As set forth in that first constitution, "The objects for which this Association is formed are the fostering of trade among electrical contractors ... to reform abuses ... to settle differences between its members ... and to promote more enlarged and friendly discourse among its membership."

First Orders Of Business

Years after that initial meeting, some contractors from New York and other large cities admitted they were disappointed by their inability to get the assembly to deal with the question of labor relations. The New York City association had, after all, arisen within months of the establishment of a union specifically to deal with this issue, and larger contractors saw labor relations as an all-important topic. But the ma-

majority of conventioners were from smaller cities where they knew nothing about - or wanted nothing to do with - any labor organization. (They were more concerned with the resale prices of dry cells and push buttons and "the proper differential in the price of key and keyless sockets.") Conflict over how to deal with labor would embroil the association for years, as noted in the enclosed supplement.

NECA founders did share many concerns, however. The prime motivation that prompted the 49 contractors to come together was the installation of electrical equipment by a wide variety of businessmen lacking any common code of ethics or standard protocol. Therefore, the men who met in Buffalo wanted to create an industry. They were struggling, in effect, to establish an identity for their trade.

In the first years of our association, the group began to concern itself with many basic issues that continue to affect electrical contractors today. These interests are apparent in the very first issue of the association's magazine *The National Electrical Contractor*. In its pages, members exchanged information about emerging licensing and in-

spection legislation, direct selling by "jobbers," labor agreement provisions, change orders, separate contracts, and uniform plans and specifications.

(When the magazine debuted, in November 1901, Theodore Roosevelt had just assumed the Oval Office following the assassination of President William McKinley, who was shot at the Pan-American Exposition on September 6, 1901, two months after NECA's founding convention. A measure of the rising status of our association was the fact that NECA's Board of Directors met with President Roosevelt in 1904, at the White House's request, to discuss the market for electrical contractors' services in the Phillipines.)

The NECA founders shared another motivation: They realized their fledgling industry could flourish only if all its members nationwide adopted a "professional approach." To accomplish this objective, a system of management training would have to be developed. And the new association set to work on this task almost immediately. The magazine was the logical starting point for imparting management information, but the association began

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This Room Is Equipped With

Edison Electric Light.

Do not attempt to light with
match. Simply turn key
on wall by the door.

— — — — —

The use of Electricity for lighting is in no way harmful
to health, nor does it affect the soundness of sleep.

SIGN OF THE TIMES. In 1901, such notices were commonplace in public facilities.

Building On The Sturdy Structure Of The Past Assures Bright Future

(continued from page 3)

publishing broader reference material as early as 1910, when its *Universal Data and Sales Book* appeared. Formal education courses were first offered in 1914.

Much credit for developing NECA's approach to management training goes to economist John H. Kuhlmeier, who served as an independent management consultant for groups of electrical contractors affiliated with NECA and who later joined our association when he opened his own electrical contracting business in Chicago. He originated and conducted the first educational workshops in the industry - "Estimating," "Accounting," and "Business Management." It was his theory that group study of basic business management and its application to electrical contracting would raise the standards of competitive practice and improve the contractor's image and profitability.

Historical Highlights

An early example of NECA's commitment to quality and safety dates from December 8, 1902, when the association's Electrical Committee developed recommendations for changing the ineffectual electrical codes that contractors had previously had no voice in formulating. The committee also submitted a recommended procedure for contractors to appeal the decisions of electrical inspectors and attained membership in the National Conference on Standard Electrical Rules. Thus was the foundation laid for our association's involvement in developing safe and effective codes and standards.

The development of a code of ethics was another way in which NECA sought to serve the public while enhancing the effectiveness and image of the industry. NECA's first code of ethics, adopted in 1914, set forth the ethical standards for fair competition and touched upon safety, bid shopping and peddling, and fair contracting procedures. It also provided for arbitration of disputes between members.

By 1930, NECA saw the need to further define and expand the code of ethical practices for the industry. A NECA

committee, headed by one of the association's founders and chief advocates, L.K. Comstock, worked with the Federal Trade Commission for nearly a year to develop a set of industry rules and guidelines that were approved in 1931. NECA continues to be guided by the highest regard for business ethics.

Development of harmonious labor relations would further serve the best interests of the electrical contracting industry and its customers. By 1920, NECA's commitment to responsible service would result in the establishment of the Council on Industrial Relations for the Electrical Contracting Industry.

The concept of the Council was first conceived during the World War I era, when widespread labor strife plagued America on the home front. As early as 1916, a small group of NECA member contractors was meeting regularly to discuss matters pertinent to electrical construction. A most active member of this group, Mr. Comstock, proposed that the club get together with a committee from the IBEW to draft a national labor agreement.

Their negotiations, beginning immediately after the war's end, resulted in the development of a joint Declaration of Principles. Subsequently, a joint committee of five NECA contractors and five labor representatives used the Declaration as a foundation for development of the Council on Industrial Relations. A monument to constructive-labor management relations, the Council has been an important part of the electrical construction industry from April 1920 to the present day and presaged the 1938 adoption of the NECA-IBEW labor relations program, which has been in effect ever since.

NECA's historic quest to better the industry goes even beyond the formulation of codes - both technical and ethical - and the establishment of har-

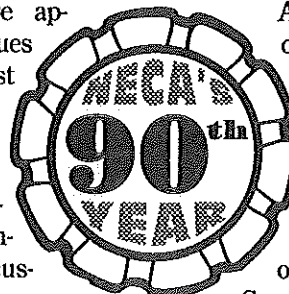
monious labor relations. The association was undertaking joint ventures and forming coalitions with utilities, manufacturers, and other branches of the industry as early as 1911.

And NECA has a long history of involvement in government affairs. The enclosed list of highlights notes myriad examples from our past, such as our development of an NRA Code at the depth of the Great Depression, and our founding participation in a Construction Industry Stabilization Committee in 1951 (responding to the Korean Conflict) and again in 1971 (responding to wage and price freezes in the wake of unprecedented run-away inflation). In fact, we've responded at every major turn affecting our industry.

In the past two decades, NECA has stepped up its involvement in legislative and industry affairs in response to their heightened impact on members' livelihood. NECA has expanded its member services and involvement in technical and management training for all members of the industry, too, in order to help electrical contractors cope and prosper in an increasingly complex business environment.

And, our association has begun to look beyond, with the establishment of The Electrical Contracting Foundation to move innovations from the lab to the jobsite more rapidly, the initiation of means to train our industry's future leaders and to reclaim the rightful pre-eminence of unionized electrical construction, and the development of concepts and programs that will guide our action into the twenty-first century. NECA has even devised a blueprint - our *Long-Range Plan* - to ensure the continued growth of our dynamic National Electrical Contractors Association.

With this in mind, we can note that NECA not only has a long and accomplished past: Our association also has a bright future assured.



NEXT WEEK: It's back to the present and on to the future as we return with our regular features and bring you the latest news.