

STRIKELESS INDUSTRY

JANUARY 26, 1920 IBEW Local 48 and the NECA predecessor, Oregon Association of Electrical Contractors and Dealers, adopted the national “no-strike” agreement established by the Council on Industrial Relations (CIR) in Washington, D.C.

Instead of costly strikes, labor and management agreed to submit disputes to the CIR panel. Six panelists from the IBEW and six from NECA would serve as the “supreme court” of the electrical construction industry. It would settle more than 8,000 disputes without a labor strike.

1920-21 Times were hard for electricians and contractors alike. Shipbuilding dried up, unemployment rose, increasing numbers of women entered the workplace, child labor was commonplace and political change made for workplace uncertainty.

OCTOBER 3, 1923 IBEW Local 48 celebrated its 10th anniversary with a gala dinner in Portland’s new Labor Temple at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Jefferson, with speeches by state and national officers of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), IBEW President James P. Noonan, and former IBEW President Frank McNulty. Membership: 250



Electric demand in thousands of homes in “streetcar suburbs” on the eastside of the Willamette prompted Northwestern Electric’s construction of this Albina warehouse in 1926.



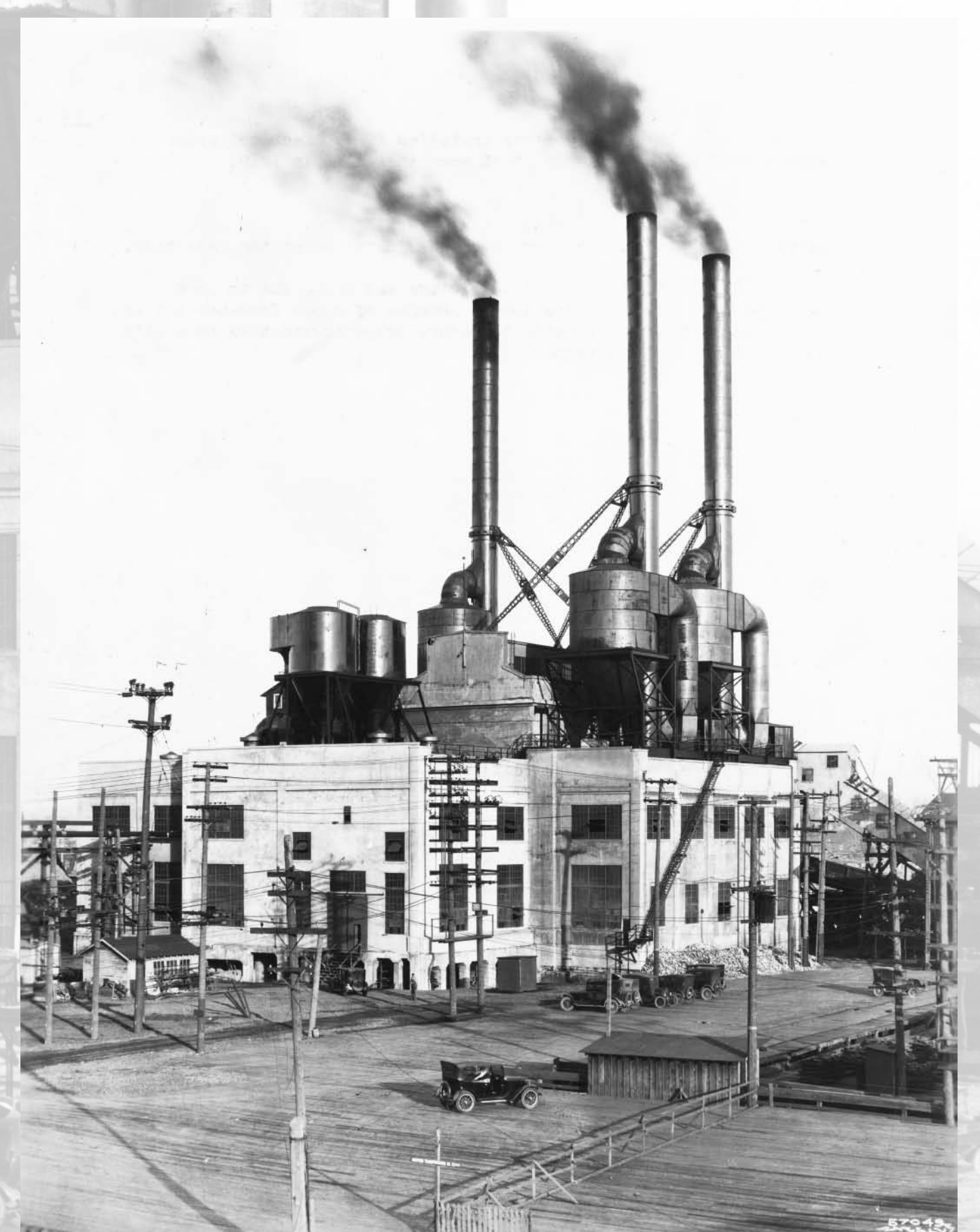
Portland General Electric’s store in St. Johns in 1927 featured the latest Thor electrically-driven washing machines and Hotpoint’s “Electric Maid” oven and range for the “Modern Mothers” of the Roaring 20’s.

1924-1929 Boom Time. Work ignited for the Association of Electrical Contractors and Local 48 electricians with the construction of high rises, amusement parks, churches, garages and factories, and 25,000 new homes, filling in the neighborhoods such as Eastmoreland, Grant Park and Concordia, adding a dozen schools, including Cleveland, Roosevelt and Grant high schools. In 1925 alone, electrical construction was needed in almost 4,000 new buildings, including eight hotels, valued at \$21.8 million. Jantzen Knitting Mills and Pendleton Woolen Mills expanded. Apprentice electricians needed!

MARCH 8, 1929 Demand for skilled electricians prompted IBEW Local 48, Portland Public Schools, Oregon Building Congress and the Oregon Association of Contractors to start an Apprentice School funded by labor and management. It would morph in 1963 into the Metro Training Center, and in 1998 into the NECA/IBEW Electrical Training Center.

“Local No. 48 is a narrow back organization. We have about 250 members, mostly employed in building construction, some fixture men and quite a number of maintenance men. We meet in the labor temple on the first and third Wednesdays . . . Our wage scale is \$10 a day, five days a week and double time for all overtime . . . All of our boys were busy the first part of the winter and we were able to find jobs for quite a number of travelers.”

B.H. Graham
IBEW Local Union 48
The Electrical Workers’ Journal, February 1928



Heavy electric demand in 1928 by new buildings in downtown Portland – many wired by Oregon Electric Contractors Association members and IBEW Local 48 electricians – caused smoke to belch from Northwestern Electric’s Lincoln Street steam plant.

OCTOBER 28, 1929 Wall Street crashed.