

THE DEPRESSION'S IMPACT

1930 The Great Depression hit electrical contractors and Local 48 electricians particularly hard.

“While it is very true there have been a number of large jobs . . . 97 percent of this work is done under the most intolerable conditions, and all closed shop: closed to organized labor . . . They have guards stationed at the gates”

Fred C. Ream
IBEW Local 48
The Electrical Workers' Journal, May 1930

1933 Congress passed the National Recovery Act. Yet, recovery remained tepid at best.

The total value of Portland area construction was \$2 million – just 6% of the value of construction 10 years earlier. Local 48 electricians helped build new amusement parks at Jantzen Beach and Lotus Isle, and a dog track in Troutdale.

The Roosevelt Administration announced construction of Bonneville Dam to create jobs, generate cheap electricity and contribute to national security.

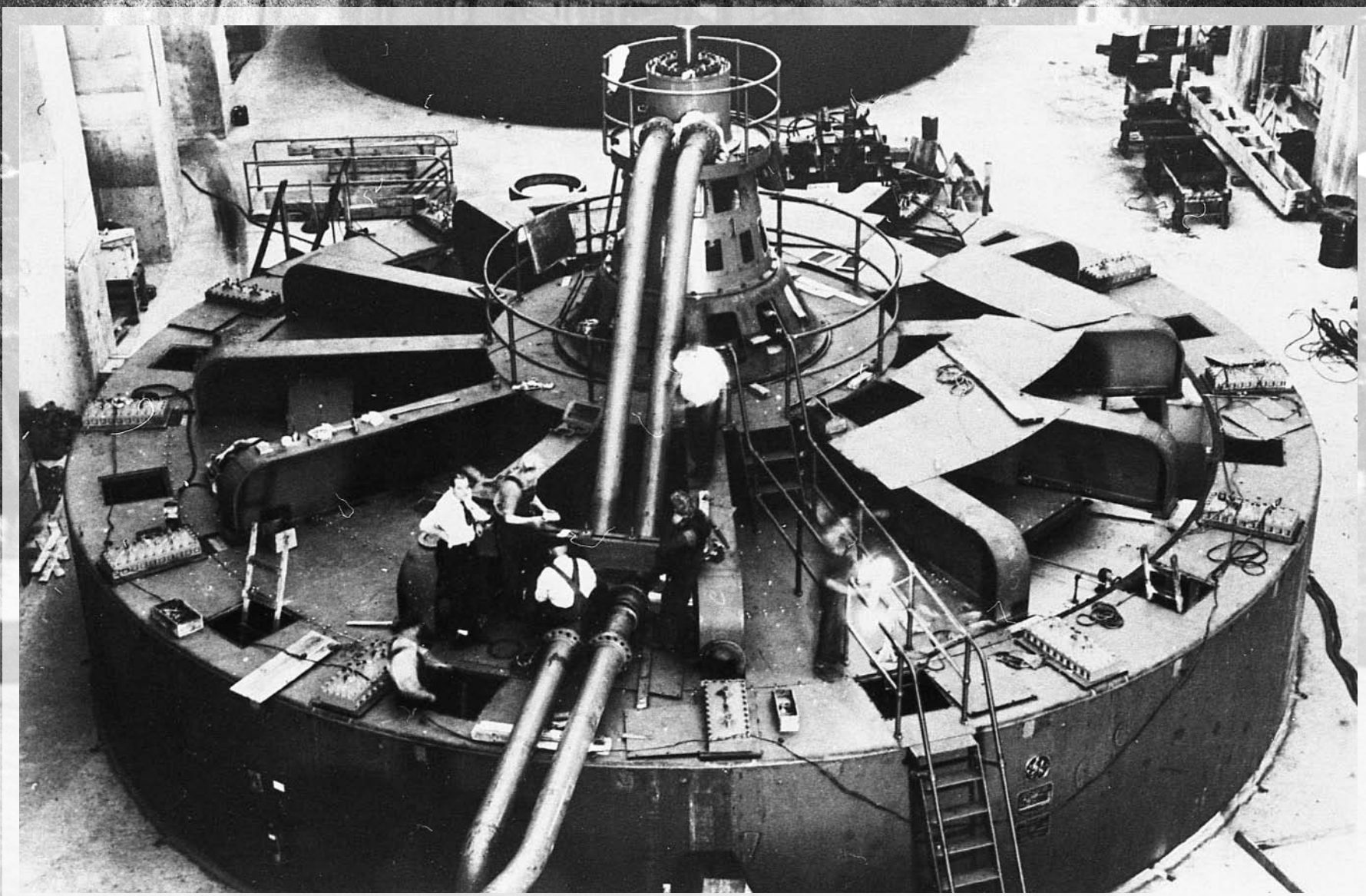
“The official count at the unemployment office at the end of September (1933) was 20,050, which is sufficient to build several dams the size of Bonneville.”

Joe H. Lake
IBEW Local 48
The Electrical Workers' Journal, November 1933

1934 President Franklin Roosevelt sailed into Portland through the open bascules of Burnside Bridge on the USS Houston to kick off construction of Bonneville Dam. Thousands of contractors and electricians would find work. There would be little in the way of jobs to cheer about though, when Roosevelt returned to dedicate the dam in late summer, 1937.

1935 Fire destroyed the Oregon Capitol. Replacement created hundreds of jobs for NECA/IBEW Local 48 during a time when new work was sorely needed.

1939 George Pettingell, manager of the Oregon Electric Contractors Association, and Joe H. Lake, business manager for IBEW Local 48 implemented temporary measures to “recapture” the residential market: They cut journeyman’s pay from \$1.37 to \$1.00 an hour; contractors’ “mark-up” from 25% to 15%. The 1939 initiative anticipated NECA/IBEW Local 48’s market recovery efforts in the 1980s.



Electricians and engineers install the first generator inside the powerhouse of Bonneville Dam, March 1938.



IBEW Local 48 apprentice electrician Eric Christenson Sr. started in the trade working on the St. Johns Bridge, shown in this 1930 photo awaiting suspender cables and the installation of its distinctive bridge deck and electric lamp posts. In 1945, Christenson would found his own firm, Christenson Electric. With its ubiquitous red trucks, NECA contractor Christenson Electric remains in operation today, in 2013, under its fifth owner.