

PORTLAND'S POSTWAR BOOM

1950 The last “owl run” of the Willamette Heights temporarily ended six decades of electric streetcar operations in Portland. Electric trolleybuses succumbed to the automobile in 1958. (In 1986, NECA/IBEW Local 48 would return electric mass transit to Portland with MAX Light Rail.)

1954 The first 10 cent per hour contribution negotiated to start the Harrison Health Trust, the monthly premium was \$8.00. Today the Harrison Plan covers 5,000 families and 1800 retirees with assets of \$160,000,000 and has paid in excess of \$850,000,000 in health claims over the past 59 years.

1955 - 1959 NECA/IBEW Local 48 enjoyed a building boom in outlying Portland. Tektronix constructed its first building on a large campus in Beaverton – a seedling in what would be Oregon’s Silicon Forest. Construction began on Portland International Airport, tens of thousands of homes, strip malls on 82nd Avenue and 102 Avenue, commercial buildings, The Dalles Dam, Detroit Dam, Morrison Bridge, Interstate 5 and Interstate 80 (later re-named I-84), Omark, Nabisco, and others.

1956 IBEW Local 48 membership swelled to 1,800. Benefits increased and members chartered a federal credit union.

1958 NECA contractor W.R. Grasse and Local 48 electricians began construction of Lloyd Center. Construction of Gateway Center and Eastport Plaza followed, as did urban renewal of South Portland.

1959 Construction began on the \$8 million Veterans Memorial Coliseum, adjacent to Lloyd Center.

MORRISON BRIDGE

Many NECA/IBEW Local 48 members became specialists in Portland bridges, including Morrison Bridge, built in 1905, replaced in 1958, illuminated in 1987, and substantially overhauled in 2003. Four 100-horsepower AC electric motors power the steel double-leaf bascules vertical.



Wired and just about ready for electric traffic gates, the new Morrison Bridge, with its double-leaf bascule spans raised nearly vertical in this 1958 photo, contrasted sharply with the old Morrison Bridge, built in 1905, that it would replace.

In 1987, as part of the community’s “Bridge Lights” campaign, volunteers from NECA/IBEW Local 48 and the Apprentice Training Center covered the \$78,000 in cost and labor to light Morrison Bridge with 35 one-thousand watt bulbs. In 2003, NECA contractor Heil Electric and Local 48 renovated Morrison and Burnside bridges under a \$1.2 million contract, enabling Multnomah County to control both from a single remote site.



Bridge tender in the old swing-span Morrison Bridge (1905) pictured here in the mid-1950s. His job would be made obsolete by construction of a new Morrison Bridge in 1958 that would be remotely controlled offsite by Multnomah County Bridge Office.

“This year has been a good year for almost everyone in Local 48 as work has been plentiful and the outlook for 1956 is very good.”

Eldon Kellas
Press Secretary
IBEW Local 48

JOURNEYMEN WAGES 1956
\$3.50 per hour

A heavy-lift crane was required for each letter in this 50-foot electric sign installed at the remodeled entrance of the J.C. Penney store at 511 SW Washington St. during the retail construction boom in 1958 that employed just about every NECA/IBEW contractor and electrician who wanted to work.