



International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
District Lodge 66  
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Union Herald Article from the desk of:

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May is an important month in the history of the IAMAW. In 1888, nineteen machinists joined together to found the Order of the United Machinists and Mechanical Engineers. Thomas Talbot organized his fellow workers to form the secret Order, to cope with problems particular to their craft. “Boomers”—a term given to the men who travelled the railway lines for work wherever they went, spread the word, and within one year there were forty lodges. By 1891, there were 189. The organizing had to be kept secret to protect the Order, as employers were hostile to organized labor. In the beginning, we were strictly a TRADE, or as also sometimes called, a CRAFT union. We represented machinists only. The First Convention of the Order was held on MAY 6, 1889 in the Georgia Senate Chamber in Atlanta. Talbot was elected Master Machinist, and the organization’s name was changed to the National Association of Machinists. In 1890 and 1891 there were local lodges established in Canada and Mexico, so at the 1891 Convention, the name was changed to the International Association of Machinists. In 1895, the Machinists affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and in 1898 they went on strike to secure the nine- hour workday. The eight-hour workday was won in 1915.

In 1911, the I.A.M. began to allow new types of workers into its ranks. From the beginning, the I.A.M. had been primarily for skilled, white, male, railroad workers. In that year, they changed the Constitution to allow unskilled machinists, as well as women workers. Provisions were made for “colored people” to become full members in 1948, however both women, and people of color had been members prior to the Constitutional change. In 1947, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, which laid the foundation for several states to pass “right to work” laws, and affected the rights of organized labor. Despite this, the railroad machinists managed to win a forty-hour work week in 1949.

By 1954, after organizing in the airline and aerospace industries, and the bulk of members in metal fabrication with the aircraft industry, the I.A.M. changed its name one more time, to the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. Today, there are over 600,00 members who do a multitude of different jobs, across many different industries. We have elected women, and people of color to lead our organization into the next generation of “Fighting Machinists” making positive change to the lives of workers and their families. That is an amazing transformation. The thing that is great about that, is the opportunities and inspiration to excel have been provided-to everyone. So, HAPPY BIRTHDAY! to the organization that began in a railroad pit long, long ago-and grew into the powerhouse that we are today!