

LOCAL HAS HAD ONLY SEVEN TREASURERS IN 125 YEARS

Local 33 had only two men serve as its treasurer during its first 99 years: **Brother James "Jay" Holland** was the local's first treasurer from 1891 until October 1940, when he passed away, and **Brother Frank A. Lynch** was then treasurer until 1990. The two men helped guide the local through its early years and into the complex piping industry of the mid-20th Century.



Brother James "Jay" Holland



Brother Frank A. Lynch

Brother Holland, a charter member of Local 33, was initiated into the United Association in 1889 and held Steamfitter Card No. 7280. His son, Elmer Holland, and two grandsons, Gerald Holland and James Holland, were also members of Local 33.

(A 1939 article in the *Des Moines Register*, at which time Brother Holland was the local's only surviving charter member, commented, "Jim ... may be the only man in the world who ever served 50 years as treasurer for a plumbers and steamfitters union.")

Brother Lynch joined the local in 1918 and held a then-record 53 years of continuous good-standing membership. He was Chief Plumbing Inspector for the City of Des Moines for many years before retiring.

With that foundation, during its first 125 years, Local 33 has had a total of only six brothers and one sister hold the position of treasurer (the business manager took over the role of treasurer beginning in 2001). Following Brother Lynch, **Brother Steven R. Boggs** served as treasurer from 1990 to 1998; **Sister Patricia A. Broerman** served from 1998 to June 2001; **Thomas F. Gillespie** from June 2001 to July 2007; **Brother Gregory B. Foshe** from July 2007 to July 2010; and current treasurer **Brother Andrew "Andy" Roberts** has served since July 2010.

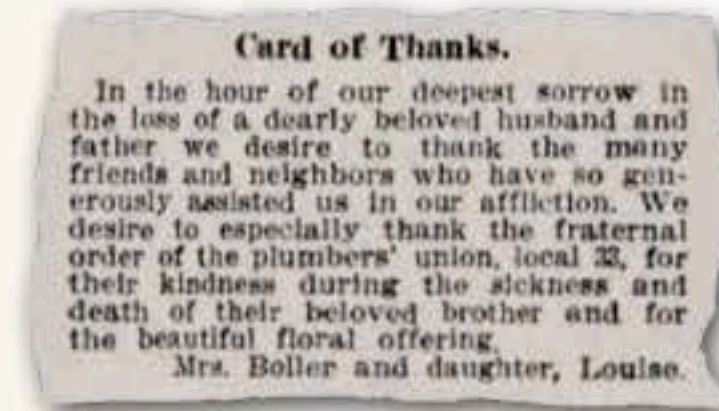
Before the ordinance was approved, however, it was considerably altered to, among other things, reduce the proposed Board of Examiners from five to three members and to disallow the master plumbers and the journeymen plumbers from having representatives on the board. After some further debate, it was then passed in October.

Soon after, the first group of 10 of the approximately 160 plumbers in Des Moines were being examined at City Hall by the plumbing board on December 20, 1913, "tinkering with lead pipe and other material to demonstrate their ability to do sanitary plumbing" – which an article in the *Register* the next day described as "the oddest examination ever held in Des Moines." But in the end, General Organizer Kennedy was able to convey in the January 1914 *Journal*:

"The first of January the ordinance creating a Board of Examiners of Plumbers goes into effect. The ordinance compels any person desiring to work as a journeyman plumber to first pass an examination as to his qualifications to work at such trade. Under the ordinance, the boss plumber is not compelled to take an examination to engage in the plumbing business, but if he desires to do his own work he must first take a journeyman's examination and procure a certificate before proceeding to do the work of a journeyman. This ordinance is backed up by a state law, which was passed at the last session of the legislature. I trust the other locals of the state will take advantage of the rights granted by the state law and insist on the city authorities of their various cities passing a similar ordinance."

MAKING SUBSTANTIAL GAINS

By 1915, Local 33 had not only contributed to creating the **Iowa State Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters**, but the local's Business Agent H. P. Willey and Brother Harry Loring were kept busy helping to run it, the later as its president, while the association's primary energies focused on passing state legislation to protect and improve the plumbing industry (which more often than not was a struggle). The local even hosted all of the state's U.A. locals on May 2 in Des Moines for the group's annual state convention.



Letter in the *Des Moines Register*, March 26, 1910.

Meanwhile, Local 33 was enjoying a good measure of prosperity into 1916, during which time wages for its plumbers and fitters were at \$5.50 per day. U.A. General Organizer Edward W. Leonard even commented in the May 1916 *Journal*:

"I am pleased to say that the affairs of the Des Moines Local Union are in excellent condition and the energy shown by their business agent is manifest by the unity that was exhibited by all the members and the confidences imposed in their officers."

The local endured a lockout in 1917 while it squabbled with its employing contractors over a new contract, and again the following year was forced to strike for an agreement. As a result,

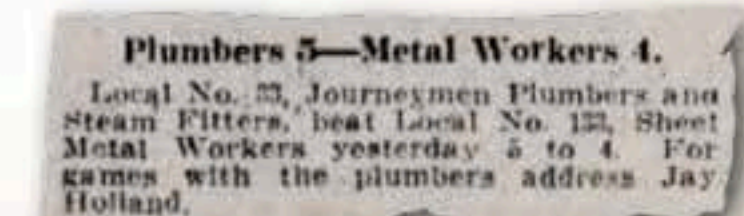
The wives and girlfriends of Local 33 members formed **Ladies Auxiliary No. 7** in 1915 to help support the local and its social and charitable activities.

by the spring of 1918 the local had secured "a good substantial increase in wages and one that is in keeping with the general increase of all our locals," General Organizer Kennedy reported in the August 1918 *Journal*.

Many of the local's men at that time were working on construction of the 400-room **Fort Des Moines Hotel**, which would open in 1919 after local business leaders pooled their money to build it, citing the need for a marquee hotel downtown. (At least 13 presidents would be guests of the hotel, as well as foreign leaders, musicians and celebrities.)

During the spring of that year, Local 33 joined the other building trades of the city in an eight-week-long strike that ended on May 25 with a new, two-year contract. While the labor dispute was conducted in a civilized manner and was "not nearly so costly as a 'labor war' would have been," a May 26, 1919, *Register & Tribune* editorial commented, it also forewarned:

"The employer who still believes that labor unions can be broken by a determined resistance is merely blinding himself to the commonest experience. ... While the terms of the agreement for the coming two years in Des Moines have not been published, it is plain on the face of it that the employers have recognized the right of labor to act in a body"



Baseball game score announced in a June 23, 1912, newspaper.

The local led another breakthrough later that year when the Iowa State Association, under the leadership of Local 33 brothers **Jason A. Sneddon** as its president and **William A. Hoos** as its secretary, finally had a new state plumbing code passed in the Iowa legislature and officially adopted on October 2, 1919. The law made it mandatory for all cities with more than 6,000 residents to draft ordinances relative to the installation and inspection of plumbing and for plumbers to be examined by local boards composed of one journeyman, one employer and a member of the city's Board of Health. Cities with populations under 6,000 could elect to come under the same provisions.

With the new, statewide regulations in place, General Organizer Kennedy reflected in the 1919 *Journal*, "From the number of cities in Iowa without proper plumbing ordinances, we can all agree to the necessity of a state code to make them do things along this line."

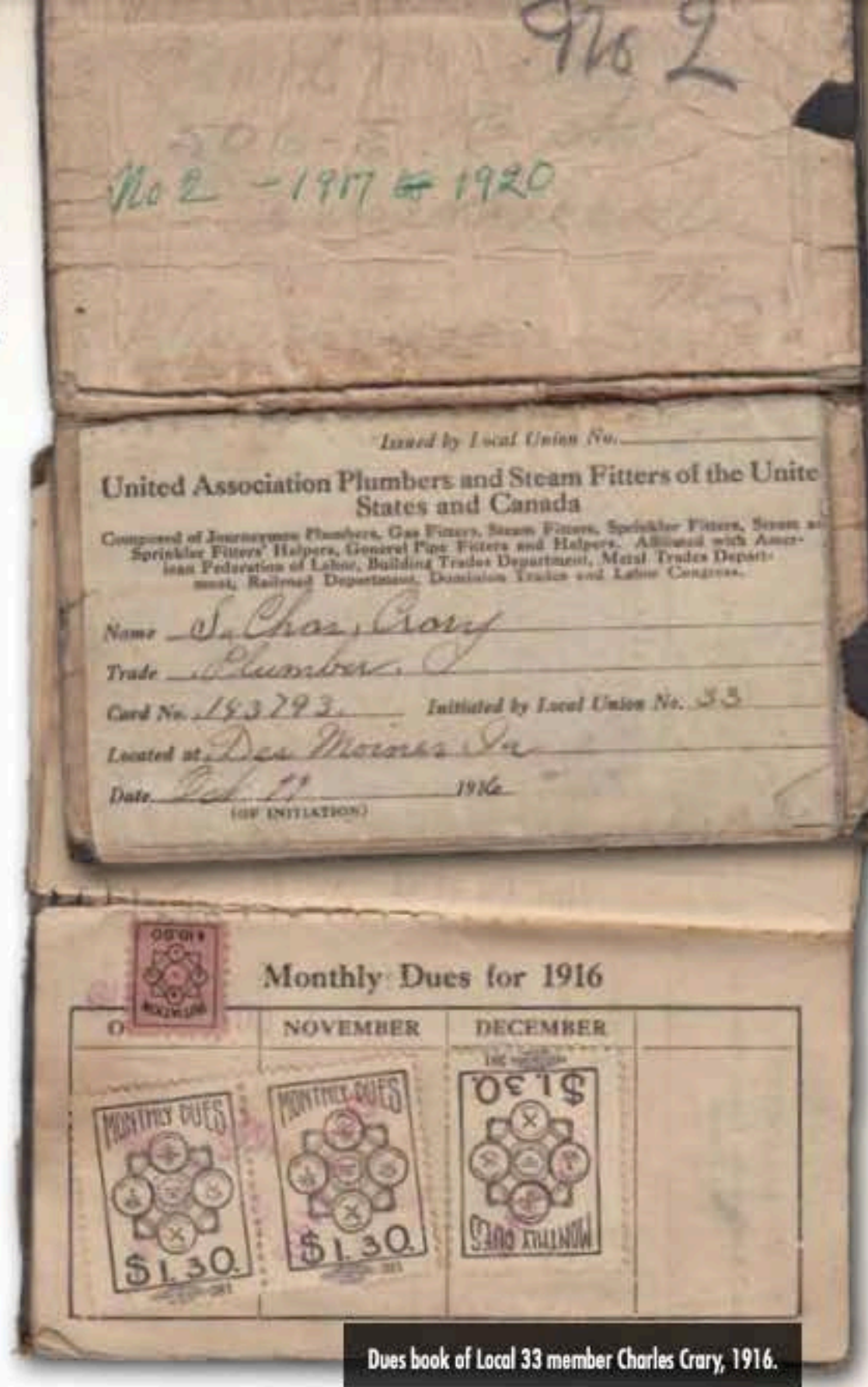
ENDURING THE 1920s AND '30s

While Local 33 had secured a \$10-per-day contract for 1920, the next two years were far less kind to the local than the previous decade had been. In fact, in early 1921, with the City of Des Moines and the State of Iowa in a serious economic and construction downturn (at one point in 1922 the city's Building Trades Council was not functioning because work was so slow),

the master plumbers cut wages to \$8 per day, effective April 1.

The following year, the local's members walked off their jobs for 10 days beginning March 1 before an agreement on wages could be reached. However, by July, more than half of the local's fitters were unemployed – while the local was fighting maintenance workers throughout the city who were performing steam-fitting work.

Worked picked up again in Local 33's



Dues book of Local 33 member Charles Crary, 1916.



Local 33 members working for Ryan Plumbing and Heating on construction of Fort Des Moines Hotel in 1918 and 1919 included (left to right, starting at top) A. Burnside; George Hunt; Paul Pennington, assistant superintendent of heating; William Robinson; L. Feezer; Ed Spitznagle; W. Wittkowsky; W. A. Rupkey; Brother McAniff; C. J. Olson; S. L. Whitmore; George Kennedy; P. A. Kehoe; S. A. Moran; Martin McGlone; Joe Fox; Charles Miller; Jerry Brown; Victor Merchant; Steve Crary; George Gerber; Harry Loring; Oscar Sparland; Tom Lynch; C. W. Stall; Charles Arkill; Charles Crary; H. E. Korneman; Joe Kohler; Dan Baldwin; William Ammison; C. Otto; Joe Burkehead; Robert Gilmore; W. E. Bunton; Dave Morgan; Paul Gustafson; W. C. Shanley; Roy Wiseman, superintendent of heating; Patrick Mansfield, superintendent of plumbing; M. Sandler, timekeeper; A. Isbell; W. E. Dike; Robert Haslett; Frank Wilson, assistant superintendent of plumbing; and J. W. Conklin, business agent.

jurisdiction, and before the end of 1922, U.A. General Organizer Richard P. Walsh was able to report in the November *Journal* that all of the local's members were employed and "conditions are very good in Des Moines."

The local joined the Building Trades in another strike in April 1923, the plumbers seeking a wage increase to \$1.25 per hour, although the employers again held firm to their refusal for the substantial wage increase. Just three years later, however, a strike by the Building Trades was averted on April 1 when annual contracts were extended by 15 days – but Local 33 signed its contract with the master plumbers that very day.

The local began to dwindle with the onset of the **Great Depression** after the stock market crashed in late 1928, and by June 1929, it numbered only 114 journeymen

and apprentices. While the local did gain a new, two-year contract in 1930 for the \$10-per-day wage rate, its situation would only get worse, as it would for many across the state and nation.

Undeniably, U.A. members throughout the country fell on hard times as unemployment soared, according to the U.A. International History. The *Journal* even ran several articles during the early 1930s that offered advice on how members could stretch their wages, such as growing food in their own gardens, but much of the focus was on calling on the government to take action to help people and on trying to offer some kind of hope and encouragement to the U.A. membership.

"... Construction all but stopped, and this led to a significant decline in manufacturing," the U.A. History recounts. "The economies of both (the United States and Canada) spiraled ever downward, until unemployment reached extremely high numbers and workers began to give up altogether." But while membership declined and no U.A. International conventions were convened between 1928 and 1938, "the union held it together."

In and around Des Moines, the depression had a profound effect, as hundreds of workers were out of work and the region's agricultural industry suffered greatly during the early 1930s. Local 33 also did not escape the distress, and by June 1932, it was down to only 96 total members.