

Inventory of the

**Rockford Building and Construction
Trades Council**
Rockford, Illinois

Records

In the

Regional History Center

RC 138

INTRODUCTION

Bob Custer, President of the Rockford Building and Construction Trades Council, deposited the R.B.C.T.C. records with the Regional History Center on October 6, 1981.

Property rights in the collection remain with the Council: literary rights are dedicated to the public and there are no restrictions on access to the collection.

Linear feet of shelf space: 14.25
Number of containers: 29
Northern Illinois Regional History Center
Collection Number 138

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Rockford Building and Construction Trades Council records (1937-1981) are arranged in the four series established by the R.B.C.T.C. office: minutes of meetings, topical correspondence files, wage scales and contracts, and financial records. With some exceptions this collection is complete in tracing the history of the Council from its founding in 1937: records from 1968 to the present have been retained in the R.B.C.T.C. office and will be added to the collection when no longer needed for current business.

The first series contains minutes of regular and executive board meetings and runs from 1937 through 1968 without a break. The minutes of the first organizational meeting (January 1937?) have been lost and the collection does not contain the original constitution and by-laws. Topical correspondence files, arranged chronologically by year and alphabetically within each year, begin in 1951 and run through 1968. Neither the Council nor the Center has been able to locate pre-1951 correspondence. The third series, financial records, is the most complete and contains both general ledgers and member union account books (1937-1968). Most of the contracts and agreements found in series four are available for the entire thirty year period.

This collection documents not only the history of an important Rockford labor organization but also the local impact of major national events over the past forty years including the Great Depression, World War II, the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, the merger of the AFL and CIO, the increasing role of government in the construction industry, and the building boom of the 1960's. Researchers using this collection should search the Center's Guide for related holdings which complement the R.B.C.T.C. records.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Although individual building trade local unions in Rockford trace their history to the late nineteenth century, it was not until 1937 these locals united in a Rockford Building and Construction Trades Council. The minutes of the first organizational meeting have apparently

been lost as has the original constitution and by-laws. However, the minutes of a February 22, 1937 meeting speak of framing a charter from the A. F. of L., accepting “the by-laws as written,” renting office space in the labor hall, and paying various expenses to establish the Council. It is likely, then, that local union delegates first met to organize the R.B.C.T.C. in late January 1937.

Coerced by the Great Depression to present a united front seventeen local unions sent representatives to these organizational meetings: Bricklayers 31, Carpenters 792, Electrical Workers 196, Elevator Construction Workers 105, Laborers 32, Lathers 114, Painters and Decorators 607, Plasterers 382, Plumbers and Pipefitters 57, Roofers 6, Sheetmetal Workers 219, Steamfitters 210, Structural Ironworkers 498, Terrazo and Tile, Truck Drivers 325, Operating Engineers 150, Upholsterers, Carpet and Linoleum Workers 148.

To lead the newly formed Council, local union delegates elected Nick Augustino (Laborers) president and John A. Eroc (Carpenters) vice-president; Chester Fowler served as secretary and William Lamps as treasurer. Within several months the Council had solidly established itself and, in a meeting on April 26, 1937 it was agreed that “that Building Trades Council go in effect May 1, 1937, cards to be enforced.” Thus all members of cooperating locals were to have a card and button with them on the job, assuring only union labor would work on that job.

The Council’s basic tasks were to promote cooperation between local unions, to present a united front to management, and to expand the role of organized labor in the Rockford construction industry. To accomplish these goals the Council oversaw and coordinated the enforcement of building trades union contracts, promoted organized labor through special events, maintained an “unfair” list of non-union contractors, and issued cards and buttons to members of affiliated local unions. The Council also mediated jurisdictional disputes, sought to expand the roles of member locals, and investigated problems facing the construction industry. For example, it looked into the new prefabricate home industry which began to grow in the late 1930’s; it kept a close watch on city building codes and code enforcement; it built information files on various contractors’ associations and materials suppliers.

The R.B.C.T.C. also served an important role as a communications link and liaison to the A.F.L.’s Building Trades Division, the Illinois Federation of Labor, the Illinois State Conference of Building and Construction Trades, and federal labor offices including the War Labor Board and the U.S. Department of Labor. The Council also participated in local politics on occasion and, throughout its history, has contributed to solving civic and social problems in the Rockford area.

Throughout its forty-four year history the composition and goals of the Council have not changed much. Several new locals have affiliated and some have dropped out due to mergers; the total membership represented by the Council has, of course, increased significantly. The passage of the Taft-Hartley Act (1947) and the Labor Management, Reporting, and Disclosure Act (1959); the merger of the AFL and CIO (1955); and the ever increasing role of public financing and regulation in the construction industry have greatly broadened the Council’s utility

to affiliated members. Still, it remains today what it was in 1937-a voluntary association of Rockford building trades locals seeking to improve the status and condition of both union members and the community.

SUBJECT TRACINGS

Building Trades
Construction Industry
Labor
Labor Unions
Politics
Rockford
Rockford Building and Construction Trades Council
Strikes

COLLECTION INVENTORY

<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Series I. Minutes of Meetings		
1	1-6	Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1937-1951
2	1-5	Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1952-1964
3	1-2 3-10	Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1964-1971 Minutes, Executive Board, 1943-1951
4	1-10	Minutes, Executive Board, 1952-1961
5	1-8	Minutes, Executive Board, 1962-1968, 1980-1981
Series II. Topical Correspondence Files		
6	1 2 3 4-8	National Labor Relations Board, 1947-1950 Membership Rosters, 1950 Rockford Federation of Labor, Minutes, 1950 Correspondence, 1951
7	1-2 3-6	Correspondence, 1951 Correspondence, 1952
8	1-2 3-7	Correspondence, 1952 Correspondence, 1953
9	1-8	Correspondence, 1954
10	1-8 9	Correspondence, 1955 Correspondence, 1956
11	1-8	Correspondence, 1956
12	1 2-9	Correspondence, 1956 Correspondence, 1957
13	1-5 6-8	Correspondence, 1958 Correspondence, 1959
14	1-3 4-7	Correspondence, 1959 Correspondence, 1960
15	1-4 5-9	Correspondence, 1960 Correspondence, 1961

<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
16	1 2-5	Correspondence, 1961 Correspondence, 1962
17	1-6	Correspondence, 1962
18	1-7	Correspondence, 1963
19	1-7	Correspondence, 1964
20	1-6	Correspondence, 1965
21	1-8	Correspondence, 1966
22	1-4 5 6-7	Correspondence, 1967 Correspondence, 1967, 1968 Correspondence, 1968
23	1-3	Correspondence, 1968

Series III. Wage Scales and Contracts

24	1-3	Agreements and Wage Scales, 1939-1961
25	1 2 3	Agreements and Wage Scales, 1962-1968 Contractors and Wage Scales, 1962-1969 Contracts, 1962-1963
26	1-3	Contracts, 1963-1964
27	1-6	Contracts, 1964-1972

Series IV. Financial Records

28	18 volumes	Local Union Account Books, 1937-1967
29	1 2 3 10 volumes 7 volumes 2 volumes 2 volumes 1 volumes	Financial Reports, R.B.C.T.C., 1948-1961 Financial Reports, R.B.C.T.C., 1962-1971 (R.B.C.T.C.) Payroll ledger, 1944-1966 Daybooks (Expenses), 1937-1972 Petty Cash Account Records, 1937-1967 Hall Rental Book, 1938-1942 Receipts Record, 1942-1964 Picket Fund Account, 1959