

# International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers. Local 278 Records

1942-1984

4 boxes, 2 loose volumes (2 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 252



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Local chapter of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers that represented workers at the Chapman Valve Manufacturing Company of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. Records include detailed minute books of general and executive board meetings as well as several ledgers that reflect the activities of the credit union and the Chapman Valve Athletic Association.

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## Background on International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, Local 278

Local 278 represented the workers at the Chapman Valve Manufacturing Company of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, which was later purchased by the Crane Company of New York. At its peak, the company employed more than 1,000 workers manufacturing valves, fittings, and plumbing material. The union, founded as United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE) Local 278, organized most of the plant in March 1942 and won a NLRB representation victory of most production workers in May. The victory was contested by an America Federation of Labor affiliate which was strong in the foundry, a company union which was a carryover from earlier company paternalism, and Chapman Valve president J.J. Duggan, a prominent Springfield citizen. Nevertheless, collective bargaining began in June of 1942.

Tensions between the members of Local 278 and the national policies of UE surfaced as early as May 1942. On May 29, the UE national officers (many of whom adhered to the political positions of the Communist Party, U.S.A.) pressed Local 278 to pass a resolution calling for a second front in the war in Europe. Local 278 officers refused to do so. At the same time, however, the local was an active supporter of other UE locals and proponent of the social unionism of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). When the UE was expelled from the CIO for its connections to the CPUSA, Local 278 left the UE and affiliated with the newly formed CIO union in the industry, the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (IUE).

From the late 1940s to the late 1970s, Local 278 was a fairly stable force at Chapman Valve and its successor, the Crane Company. A conspicuous testimony to the local's stability was the continued election of a core officer, particularly Edward Brunelle as president (1948-1980), as well as Joseph Gray, Theodore LaRose, and Eugene Beauregard. Local 278's stability was also institutionalized through its control of the Chapman Valve Athletic Association (a carryover from the pre-union days), by its establishment of a women's auxiliary, and by its creation of the Chapman Credit Union.

In the 1980s, however, the corporate strategies of the Crane Company demanded a more active response from the rank and file. With the retirement of Edward Brunelle, a new leadership emerged, eventually directed by Dennis Riel. The Crane Company meanwhile began the slow elimination of the plant's productive capacity, shifting production to other plants. After stormier labor-management relations in the early 1980s, Crane finally made the decision to suspend its Indian Orchard operations. Local 278 made an unsuccessful attempt to buy out Crane's interests in the plant, but the factory closed permanently in 1984.

### Scope of collection

The records consist principally of detailed minute books of general and executive board meetings. In addition there are several ledgers reflecting the activities of the credit union and the Chapman Valve Athletic Association.

# Inventory

Minutes

1942-1943

Box 1: 1

Minutes

1944-1946

Box 1: 2

Minutes

1946-1948

Box 1: 3

Minutes

1948-1955

Box 2: 4

Minutes (typed copies)

1948-1954

Box 2: 5

Minutes

1955-1963

Box 2: 6

Minutes

1964-1967

Box 3: 7

Minutes

1968-1970

Box 3: 8

Minutes

1970-1973

Box 3: 9

Minutes

1974-1978

Box 3: 10

Minutes

1978-1983

Box 3: 11

Attendance Book

1962-1984

Box 3: 12

Chapman Valve Athletic Association

1958-1975

Box 4: 13

Check-off Lists

1974-1979

Box 4: 14

Loose Volumes

Chapman Credit Union Ledger

1969-1980

Box 4: 15

Financial Secretary's Cash Book

1942-1945

Box 4: 16

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## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Acquired from Dennis Riel, November 1988.

## Processing Information

Processed by Kenneth Fones-Wolf, June 1989.

## Language:

English

## Acknowledgments

Encoding funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## Copyright and Use (More information )

*Cite as:* International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers. Local 278 Records (MS 252). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

## Search terms

### Subjects

Chapman Valve Manufacturing Company.  
Communist Party of the United States of America.  
Congress of Industrial Organizations.  
Crane Company.  
Indian Orchard (Mass.)--Economic conditions.  
Labor unions--Massachusetts.

### Contributors

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