West Orange, NJ was the birthplace of the modern motion picture industry. In the early 1890's Thomas Edison erected the first motion picture studio, the "Black Mariah", a simple structure of tar-papered, wood-framed walls and glass ceilings, which had a moveable roof operated by a pulley system. The entire edifice was built upon a circular railroad track, which enabled the building to be revolved as the sun’s light moved. Although Edison himself considered his Kinetograph, the first motion picture camera, a mere novelty, he had on his staff a man named Edwin S. Porter, who was an imaginative and enthusiastic devotee of the new medium. His first two films, "The Life of an American Fireman," (1902) and "The Great Train Robbery", (1903), made in East Orange, were the first motion pictures to use interweaving plot lines. They were also the first to demonstrate the techniques of editing, such as close-ups, dissolves, flashbacks and inserts, despite being a mere 11 minutes and 13 minutes long respectively.

New Jersey quickly became the movie-making capitol of the world. Production companies such as Universal, Champion, Eclair, World Pictures, Fox, Selznick, Goldwyn and others, themselves in their infancy, built studios in the Coyetsville section of Fort Lee. Mack Sennett and his Keystone Kops also began in Fort Lee, before moving westward. It is estimated that over 1/3 of the residents of Fort Lee were employed by the various companies as workers and craftsmen.

In the early Twenties, silent pictures were at their peak, and by then producers had slowly moved from Fort Lee to the more accessible Manhattan. With no bridges or tunnels, the move saved actors and crew members the three hours it took to reach New Jersey by trolleys and ferries. Small and large studios were springing up all over New York City, including Edison's own 21st Street studio.

At that time, there were no set working rules in the studios. Conditions and hours varied from job to job. Wages ranged from $15 a week for workers to $35 a week for "bosses" for 48 hours of work. It was in the spring of 1922 that the seed was sown creating the Studio Mechanics Association, the now legendary "Green Card" organization that led eventually to Local 52.

On that spring day in 1922, seven weary studio electricians, who had spent the past three days and nights lugging and operating "sun-light" arcs on the set of D.W. Griffith's "One Exciting Night", were talking shop. A mild-mannered electrician named Charlie Pfeif finally asked his companions, "Well, isn't it about time we all got together?"

This was a question being asked in all the studios. The need to improve conditions was urgent, and the time for action was right.

Once the drive to organize began, it moved quickly. The first meeting of studio technicians was held in the fall of 1922, and about a month later, 175 men were carrying the Green Cards in their wallets. The movement spread until almost all the working craftsmen were members of the association. All this had to be accomplished quietly, and in some studios secretely, for fear of reprisals.

The leaders of the organization realized that, in order to be effective and come out into the open, the association would have to join the official Labor Movement of the U.S.A.-- then the A. F. of L.

The next step was to obtain a charter from the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), the Union representing the workers of the entertainment industry. Although there was resistance, the pleas for a charter were made to the I.A. Convention in Cincinnati in the spring of 1924 by John Murphy, Ben Mahoney and Arthur Gerson.

The Committee assigned to vote on the proposal, which was composed of Locals 1, 306, 4 and 59, voted "yea" and the new organization, Studio Mechanics Local 52, was born—the first Motion Picture Local in the world.
THE EARLY YEARS
The beginning years were not easy. Slowly, the Local emerged as the respected provider of film crews in the New York area while raising wage standards and bringing improvements in working conditions and working rules. This all happened during the prosperous days of silent pictures. Although many production companies had made the trek westward earlier in the century, to a small enclave known as Los Angeles, there came a terrible slump from 1926 to 1928 when all the business went West. It was a drought- absolutely no work. Local 52 lost approximately 60% of its membership of about 700, but there remained a steadfast group of men who held on, eking out a living in any way they could, holding out for the film business to return. Some of the members who remained active in Local 52 were able to obtain work only one day a week-and those were the lucky ones.

Then, miraculously, sound was introduced, and the industry here revived. Local 52 recognized the importance of this innovation and organized the soundmen, catapulting New York into a position of importance. From 1928 to 1932, New York was a boom town, with artists such as the Marx Brothers, Walter Huston and Maurice Chevalier walking the stages of what we now fondly call "The Big House"- then Paramount Studios, now Kaufman-Astoria Studios.

However, by 1932, Hollywood had completed its conversion to sound. For the next ten years, New York's film industry was in bleak condition. Although there were occasional films shot here during those years, such as "The Scoundrel," "The Emperor Jones," "One Third of a Nation," and "The March Times," on the whole, these were hard and bitter days for the men of Local 52.

At the advent of World War II, the Army Signal Corps took over the "Big House" and the Office of War Information (OWI) began operating there. Each of them put many Local 52 men to work making training films for our Armed Forces. At the same time, pictures like "The House on 92nd Street" and "The Window" improved things a bit, but not enough to indicate that New York's film business would ever equal the glory days of the Silent Era. Then, after the war, along came the "Magic Box"-Television.

THE MIDDLE YEARS

The renaissance of the film industry in New York occurred around 1950 with the advent of Television. The impact of TV on New York was like a massive shot of adrenaline. TV became a major medium of advertising, and with New York's Madison Avenue the advertising capitol of the world, our city became the prime source of TV commercials. They, in turn, became the main reason for New York's upsurge in film production and employment.

Major production houses, such as Filmways and M.P.O., (both unfortunately now defunct) were formed to handle the extraordinary TV commercial business, and approximately 50 TV commercial companies opened their doors.

Around this period, New York also produced the first successful television film series, "Man Against Crime." This was followed by other filmed shows, among them the classic Phil Silvers "Sergeant Bilko" series, "Car 54," "Naked City," and the 1962 Emmy-winning "The Defenders."

Adding to New York's resurgence at this time was the Academy-Award winning film "On the Waterfront." (1950). This film helped to turn the spotlight on New York's vast pool of theatrical talent, as well as its technical capabilities and its fine Local 52 craftsmen, most of whom were now the sons of the original members, having entered the Local after World War II. Each year that passed now saw new theatrical releases being filmed in New York, with Local 52 proving its mettle in manning these productions.

The resurgence of theatrical films based in New York was due to a number of factors, the largest of which was the breakdown of the "studio system." Producers and audiences had matured, and were looking for films that had real content. The films the public wanted to see were more reality-based, requiring a type of actor unlike the glamour stars of the past. The main source of the new talent being called for in these films was the Broadway stage. "The Miracle Worker," "Requiem for a Heavyweight," and "Long Day's Journey into Night" are just a few examples of the "New York Cinema" of that time.
The A.D.T.F.C. and NABET LOCAL 15

A complicating factor which arose after World War II was the presence of a dual Union—the Association of Documentary Technicians and Film Cameramen, which was affiliated with the CIO, and which later came under the umbrella of NABET (the National Association of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians.) The existence of the two competing groups hampered the organization of non-union shops and slowed the progress of living standards for everyone.

Aware that this situation was against the best interests of all motion picture workers, International President Richard F. Walsh recommended in 1954 that Local 52 absorb the A.D.T.F.C. and end the situation of competing Unions. On September 1st, 1954, Local 52 voted to accept the A.D.T.F.C. members, bringing in about 75 new men— and our first woman, Donna Johnke.

However, no written agreement was ever made between NABET and the IATSE that prevented NABET from organizing in the film industry, and the NABET Local 15 charter was left dormant. By the early 1960's, a large nucleus of non-Union workers had formed as a result of the demand for low-budget production. On September 19, 1965, these non-Union workers got the protection they sought by reactivating the old ADTFC charter, forming the Local known as Local 15 Association of Film Craftsmen NABET, with some 750 formerly non-Union workers joining.

The strength and numbers of NABET Local 15 grew, building until by the early Seventies dual Unionism had once again become an untenable problem for all of New York's film workers. Producers of TV commercials, Movies of the Week, and even feature films were playing off one Union against the other, trying to manipulate Business Agents on both sides of the fence, looking for lower rates and lesser terms and conditions.

Finally, in 1990, the situation was resolved. NABET 15's charter was dissolved. The members had a choice of joining the IATSE; Local 3, IBEW; or trying to remain independent. Wisely, they chose to become members of the International Alliance.

THE CHANGING FACE OF LOCAL 52

Even before the absorption of NABET Local 15 in 1990, Local 52 had begun its expansion. While our original jurisdiction was the five boroughs of New York, in 1964 we expanded to include all of Long Island. In 1994, we were given control over all of New York and New Jersey; in 1995 we took in Delaware and Pennsylvania (with the exception of the 50 mile radius around Pittsburg;) and in 1998, we expanded to include Connecticut.

In 1965, we had approximately 625 members; by the beginning of 1990, this number had doubled to 1250, and after the merger with NABET, in October 1990, we grew to 2000 strong. The current membership hovers around 3,280.

The demographics of Local 52 have changed dramatically since the early 1970's. Additionally, the technologies employed in our industry have become more and more sophisticated, requiring more training to educate our members in the new approaches to filmmaking.

Local 52 is addressing this issue with our new Education and Safety Trust Fund, an Erisa trust that was established in July 1998. The employer trustee for this fund is Jim Finnerty, a former Local 52 Grip who is now a successful producer. Local 52's trustee is Jim Gartland. The fund was started with seed money from Local 52 and is now funded by employer contributions. This fund is used to provide continuing education to our members through seminars and safety certification classes.

Local 52 has come a long way since the brave men of the Twenties forged a Union for us all. On any set now, you will find men and women, former NABET members, third-generation members, film-school graduates and organized members working together.

We continue to be grateful to those who have come before us, the original Green Card men who made all of this possible. In the exciting climate of our new millennium, we take the very best that has preceded us, the technology of today and tomorrow, and look forward to a vibrant, growing industry in this, the entertainment capitol of the world.
LOCAL 52 APPLICATION PROCESS

JANUARY 6 - 10, 2014
Mon. – Thurs. 9am – 1pm
Fri. 9am – 12pm
LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED

* In order to be eligible to fill out an application to Local 52, the applicant MUST complete the required pre-certification courses PRIOR TO filling out an application. Check iatselocal52.org under “MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION”

1. RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

18 Month residency in LOCAL 52 jurisdiction

Substantiated by COPIES: Payroll stubs
Rental receipts/Lease agreements
Utility Bills
Bank Statements

LOCAL 52 JURISDICTIONS:
New York State, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania (excluding Pittsburgh), Connecticut

2. State Issued Driver’s License/ State Issued Photo ID
Issued within “LOCAL 52” Jurisdiction MANDATORY
(For 18-month period preceding application)

3. Applicants to all crafts except First Aid are required to provide proof of 800 hours of employment in the craft they are applying for. Pay stubs are best. Production assistant employment does not count. Verifiable resume, including Motion Picture craft experience, dates and length of time working within “Local 52” Jurisdiction. (18 months prior)
   *Best documented by pay stubs
   *References/Contact information

4. Filing Fee: $750.00
Filing Fee for Medics and Allied Crafts: $150
Money Order, Bank Check: payable to “LOCAL 52 IATSE”
*NO PERSONAL CHECKS

*APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED WITHOUT MEETING ABOVE CRITERIA WILL BE REJECTED
*Include copies of all documents with application

IF THE APPLICATION IS REJECTED DURING INITIAL EVALUATION, THE FILING FEE WILL BE REFUNDED MINUS $75.00 Administrative fee
IF THE APPLICATION IS ACCEPTED, NO REFUNDS WILL BE GIVEN FROM THIS POINT ON. THIS IS CALLED THE "QUALIFICATION PERIOD".

5. **AERIAL LIFT CERTIFICATION**  
   Location Options for Seminar  
   
   **PRIDE EQUIP. CORP.**  
   150 Nassau Avenue  
   Islip, NY 11751  
   631-224-5000  
   Carol Ext. 9302

   **BLAKELY LEASING CO.**  
   491 East Third Street  
   Mt. Vernon, NY 10553  
   914-664-5500  
   http://blakleyequipment.com/training/

6. **OSHA “10 HOUR CONSTRUCTION SAFETY CERTIFICATE**  
   http://www.oshacampus.com/osha-10-hour-training.cfm

**Local 52 MEDIC DEPARTMENT ONLY specific requirements.**

First Aid / Medic Department – Pre-Application Requirements:  
1. Dr. Levine Protocols/ First Aid review class  
2. Lift class  
3. 10 hr OSHA General industry Outreach Training course

To be eligible to apply to Local 52 First Aid / Medic Department  
Candidates must have the following:  
1. Current RN license or Paramedic certification with 5 yrs work experience in either 911 system prehospital or Emergency Care in-hospital experience  
2. NYS residency for 18 months  
3. Resume on file with Local 52  
4. Current CPR Card  
5. Current Malpractice  
6. Preceptorship (20 approved permit days on set working)

*CPR certification and Malpractice insurance is mandatory to be current and it is the First Aid /Medics responsibility to submit current cards to the Local.
*APPlicants will receive written confirmation of acceptance or rejection, and pertinent testing information.

*Notification will also appear on Local 52’s website as to specific times and dates of departmental testing.

*Applicants must bring with them on test day all certifications and identification in order to participate in craft testing.

1. If the applicant satisfies requirements and passes the craft test, his/her name will be placed on a ballot for vote, during the upcoming General Membership meeting.

2. If the applicant passes the test, but does not get voted into membership, he/she will have the opportunity to be placed on the ballot again for vote at the April/October General Membership Meeting at NO EXTRA COST.

3. If the applicant fails the test for the “first” time, he can reapply a “second” time, at no extra cost.

4. If the applicant fails the test two times, he can reapply for a third application at a cost of $200.00. That $200.00 administrative fee will also cover an additional application, should the applicant fail for a third consecutive time.

*The cycle described in #4. Repeats itself, should the applicant continue to reapply and fail.

*Applications are valid for a period of six months from date of signature.

Upon successfully completing the craft test AND a vote into membership, the following Local 52 Union fees will apply, payable before being sworn into membership.

- INITIATION FEE 2500.00
- CURRENT DUES AND INSURANCE 64.25
- ONE TIME BENEFIT FUND DONATION 10.00

TOTAL DUE 2574.25

Fees accepted: by bank or certified check or money order only

* Make checks payable to: LOCAL 52 IATSE
326 W 48th ST.
NEW YORK, NY 10036