
Transportation Communications Union/IAM: A Union of Unions



The union we call TCU/IAM today took root back in 1899 when on a cold winter's evening shortly after Christmas, 33 railroad clerks gathered in the back room of Behrens' cigar shop in Sedalia, Missouri. That night, December 29, they formed Local Lodge Number 1 of a union they named the Order of the Railroad Clerks of America. Since then, men and women from many different crafts have brought their dedication and strength to our union. Our range is extensive and complex, on and off the railroads throughout the transportation industry. But the union still runs on those same simple principles of democracy and full membership participation that it always has.



In 1919, we became the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees. The name was expanded more when, in 1967, Convention delegates added the word "Airline"—making us the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees, otherwise known as BRAC. But in the years since then, our union has welcomed into its ranks the members of half a dozen labor organizations—among them the Transportation-Communication Employees Union (once known as the Order of Railroad Telegraphers), the United Transport Service Employees Union, the Railway Patrolmen's International Union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the American Railway and Airway Supervisors Association, the Western Railway Supervisors Association, and the Brotherhood Railway Carmen.

Naturally, as these other groups merged, strengthening the union and building it in its diversity, the question of adding their names kept coming up. Many thought that rather than making the name even more unwieldy, we ought to find a way to simplify, to express our unity.

Delegates to the 1987 Convention found the solution. Today the "Transportation Communications Union"—known as TCU—includes us all.

Here are brief profiles of some of those labor organizations, which are now part of our union:



The **Brotherhood Railway Carmen of America** was founded on October 27, 1888, in a combined baggage and smoking car. At that time, repairers made 10 or 15 cents an hour. There was no compensation for injury, and there were no pensions and no laws protecting worker rights. The workweek was usually seven days, 12 hours a day. There was no overtime. In that year, founder William Ronemus wrote, "Every day we see where monopolies have formed trusts, corporations and have consolidated—then why (should) not the laboring men unite to aid and protect each other?"

In June 1934 rail workers won a victory when President Roosevelt signed legislation strengthening the Railway Labor Act. The amendments established National Adjustment Boards with awards enforceable in court; company unions were outlawed; and a new National Mediation Board was created.

Since then, hard-won victories have continued and, in 1986, the Carmen voted to merge with BRAC. Members in this craft today are part of TCU's Carmen Division. The Division President serves on the TCU Executive Council as a Vice President of the full union.



The American Railway and Airway Supervisors Association (ARASA) — On November 14, 1934, 29 supervisors at the Chicago & North Western Railway met at Harmony Hall in Chicago. There they founded what would become the American Railway Supervisors Association (later adding the word “Airway”).

One of the founders, John Nuter, recalled that in 1934, the supervisors “worked not less than 10-12 hours a day. We were assigned two rest days a month and most of the time we worked the rest days with no additional compensation.” Ironically, those railroaders working under their supervision already had the benefits of unionization and were paid more for fewer hours.

The Supervisors’ first contract was signed in 1936, and from that beginning ARASA went on to organize supervisors at railroads around the country. In 1980 the Supervisors Union merged with TCU and are called the ARASA Division.

Western Railway Supervisors Association — Yardmasters on the Southern Pacific organized in 1938, joining the Railroad Yardmasters of America in 1941. A dozen years later yardmasters on the SP Pacific Lines joined another Union, the Railroad Yardmasters of North America. In 1967 SP yardmasters withdrew from the RYNA and formed their own independent Union, the Western Railway Supervisors Association. WRSA’s ranks grew in 1974 when yardmasters on the St. Louis Southwestern voted to affiliate. WRSA voted to merge with BRAC in 1983.



The famed **Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters** became a part of BRAC in 1978. Founded in 1925, the pioneering Union was led by A. Philip Randolph, one of America’s great civil rights leaders. In an epic struggle, the Porters fought the bitterly anti-union Pullman Company for 12 years before the Union was recognized and a contract signed. When the Porters merged with our Union, they formed the Sleeping Car Porters System Division. This merger is the reason that TCU is a member of Amtrak’s On-Board Service Workers Council.



organization, RPIU merged with BRAC in 1969. Today members are found on railroads ranging from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe to the Delaware and Hudson.

The **United Transport Services Employees Union** was founded in 1937 as the International Brotherhood of Red Caps. (The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters assisted in the formation of this Union.) In 1940 the Union changed its name to the UTSE and in 1942 it joined the CIO. Three decades later, in 1972, the Red Cap and Sky Cap members of UTSE merged with BRAC.

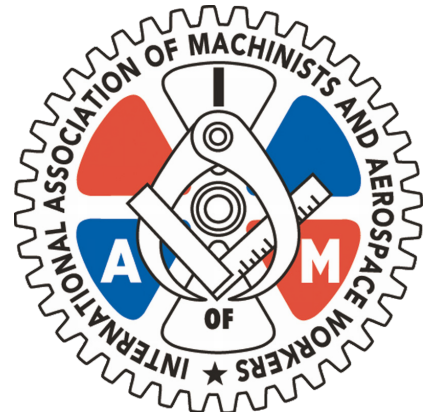


The **Order of Railroad Telegraphers** was founded in June 1886 at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In 1965 the Union changed its name to the Transportation Communication Employees Union and, in 1969, the TCEU telegraphers merged with BRAC.



We are now, formally, TCU/IAM: TCU agreed to merge with the IAM in 2005. The full merger took place on January 1, 2012. Today TCU retains its autonomy within the IAM.

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