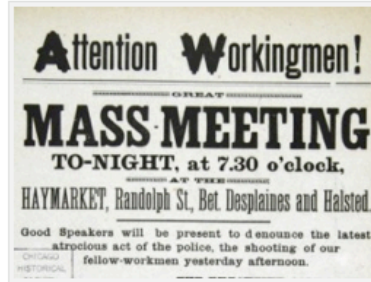


# The Real Reasons Why We Celebrate Labor Day

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by Lisa Quast -



Happy Labor Day, for those of you in the United States of America! While having a day off of work to celebrate the end of summer is always a treat, you might be surprised at the real reasons we celebrate Labor Day on the first Monday of September each year. The Labor Day holiday was actually created out of the labor movement in the late 19th century. The Industrial Revolution was at its height in the late 1800s. According to [History.com](http://History.com), during this time, "the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to eke out a basic living." And even though many states prohibited it, children as young as five or six were often forced to work in mills, factories and mines.

Because of the long hours, unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, and poor treatment by management, labor unions organized and workers began holding strikes and protest rallies. Unfortunately, these events often turned into dangerous riots, such as the [Haymarket Riot](#). The violence that day in Chicago included a bomb thrown at police and a total of eight deaths.

The idea of a labor holiday caught on as more and more people sought a peaceful way to protest for better working conditions and for eight-hour workdays. The holiday evolved over time, "but most historians emphasize one specific event in the development of today's modern Labor Day. That pivotal event was the parade of unions and a massive picnic that took place in New York City on September 5, 1882," says [Linda Stinson](#), a former U.S. Department of Labor's historian.

But the event on September 5th didn't go smoothly. Chaos reigned during the parade and the picnic and speeches afterwards were overshadowed by "an abundance of cigars and Lager beer kegs... mounted in every conceivable place," notes the [U.S. Department of Labor](#). While almost 25,000 union members and their families attended, the event turned out to be a fairly disastrous Labor Day celebration.

Over time, more and more states created the Labor Day holiday. Then, on June 28, 1894, Congress passed an act making the first Monday of September a legal holiday, dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers.

So as you relax on your day off today (possibly with a cold beer in your hands), don't forget to take a moment of silence to thank the hardworking men and women from the late 1800s for their efforts to create the much-improved working conditions we now enjoy.

