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Labor Day. A long standing holiday to celebrate the hard work and determination of American workers dating all the way back to the 19th Century. It occurs every year on the first Monday of September with this year falling exactly on September 1st, 2025. While many know Labor Day to be considered “The Official Last Day of Summer” the history of this day and getting it recognized wasn’t as simple as taking the day off and going to the beach.

Back in the late 1800s the Industrial Revolution was at the height of its time, with the average American working 12 hours a day seven days a week just to afford general living. It wasn’t just adults working these grand work schedules, despite laws preventing it in certain states, children as young as five or six were working in mills, mines, and factories across the country. They were even paid a fraction of the pay their parents were making for this work.

Conditions for these jobs were usually on the unsafe side, insufficient access to fresh air, limited to no real breaks, and lack of proper sanitary stations. As the work increased, so did the outcry by Labor Unions just starting to surface around the late 18th century, asking for fairer working conditions and best working hours and pay.

A few of the events asking for better rights were challenged and even turned violent including the Haymaker Riot of 1886 where several Chicago police and workers were killed. There was even the time where over 10,000 New York workers took unpaid time to march from City Hall to Union Square in the city as the first Labor Day parade in US history.

Over time the idea of a holiday to celebrate the “workingpeople” that was celebrated on the first Monday of September slowly started to gain traction with even a few states passing legislation such as Oregon (being the first to), New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York to recognize it.

Though it would take about 12 years after the early beginnings of Labor Day to be fully federalized by Congress when the rights of workers’ was put right in center stage for all to see.

On May 11th 1894 employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike protesting wage cuts and the firing of Union Representation. On June 26th, Eugene V. Debs, head of the American Railroad Company called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic across the nation.

To try and end the strike the federal government sent troops down to Chicago, starting mass riots that resulted in the death of over a dozen workers.

With all the chaos surrounding the situation and trying to rebuild their relationship with the working class, Congress passed an act to legalize Labor Day as a national holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. President Grover Cleveland signed the act into law on June 28th, 1894.

Though to this day, the true founder of Labor Day hasn't been identified. Many give credit to Peter J. McGuire cofounder of the American Federation of Labor, while some also suggest Matthew Maguire a secretary of the Central Labor Union first proposed it.

While it may be unknown who truly proposed the invention of Labor Day, it's important to remember how important the day truly is, and all the hard work working class Americans had to put in for fair and equal treatment.

It's important to remember these parts of our history to know where we've come from and how we can not let anyone take the things our fellow workers gave us. So this Labor Day think about those who came before you, and remember what you have and what can't be taken away.