



*****NOTE TO TEACHER:**

This article is meant to be read aloud to early elementary students



<http://www.timeforkids.com/>
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History of Labor Day

Americans set aside a day to honor the nation's workers

How does your family plan to spend the Labor Day holiday?

To many Americans, Labor Day marks the end of the summer, a day off from work and school, and one last chance to relax. But Labor Day is much more than just a day off. It represents a very important victory for laborers everywhere. The holiday is a celebration of the social and economic achievements of American workers.

Fighting for Change

More than a century ago, workers were forced to deal with harsh conditions. They were paid very little, and they often worked 10- to 12-hour days. Men, women and even small children were forced to work even when they were sick.

Tired of long hours and dangerous conditions, workers began organizing themselves into labor unions. On top of fighting for higher pay and shorter workdays, they also fought for the rights of children. The workers wanted employers to place limits on the age of their workers so that small children were not overworked or hurt in factories.



Peter McGuire is often called the "father" of Labor Day. He came up with the idea for the holiday in 1882.

A Holiday for Workers

A New York City carpenter named Peter McGuire is credited for coming up the idea for Labor Day. In 1872, after working many long hours under poor conditions, McGuire rallied 100,000 workers to go on strike. The workers marched through the streets of New York City, demanding a better work environment.

McGuire spent a decade fighting for worker's rights. In 1882, he proposed the idea to create a special holiday for workers. On Tuesday, September 5, 1882, more than 10,000 workers hit the streets of New York City for the first ever Labor Day parade. Two years later the celebration was moved to the first Monday in September. And in 1894, Congress passed a law making Labor Day a national holiday.

A Relaxing Celebration

Americans celebrated the first Labor Day holiday with a parade, picnics and fireworks. Today, many people hit the road to enjoy the last of their summer vacation. Others enjoy the long weekend with picnics, backyard barbecues or just rest and relaxation.

However you spend Labor Day, remember that the holiday is a time to pay tribute to the workers who have made America what it is today.