

Labor Day

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Holiday once rivaled 4th of July

There was a time when Labor Day in Bloomington used to rival the Fourth of July for its all-day activities.

Actually the end-of-the-summer holiday wasn't a particularly important day in Bloomington until after the turn of the century. Credit for the idea of a special day to honor working persons goes to a now-defunct national organization called the Knights of Labor a hundred years ago, but it was not until 1894 that Congress passed a law authorizing the first Monday in September as a legal holiday.

A SEARCH OF BLOOMINGTON newspapers of the 1890s indicates that locally no notice was taken of the new holiday. One of the traditions that evolved in connection with the day was that it has become the "official" kick-off day for political campaigns in an election year.

There is a news item in the Bloomington *Evening World* of Aug. 31, 1915, which reported that the

Looking Back

By Rose H. McIlveen

Democrats of the Second District were going to get together at Washington for a barbecue/rally type of celebration. Thomas Sare, the Monroe County representative, was on the planning committee for the affair.

The article further stated "Over 1,000 Monroe Democrats were expected to attend in an automobile parade of 150 cars."

BY 1925 LABOR DAY in Bloomington had taken on a holiday atmosphere more like the Fourth. The *Evening World* that year had a news item announcing:

"The Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the labor unions in the Labor Day celebration sent out invitations last night to the business and industrial institutions of the city to take part in the Labor Day parade. Great interest is being shown in the labor celebration which is the first to be held in Bloomington for several years."

The Sept. 5, 1925, *World* carried a large-type banner headline, which proclaimed: "Labor Day To Be Observed Here." The article under the headline could have been a description of Fourth-of-July activities, beginning with a morning parade led by the city police and the City Band.

EACH LOCAL UNION as well as businesses and local companies was to have a float and banners. The article stated that L. P. Reeves was expected to organize the parade on the high school grounds.

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