

Labor Day, September 5, 1882

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In the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution, the average American worked 12 hours a day and 7 days a week just to make ends meet. All workers were required to work in extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient sanitary facilities, breaks, and fresh air. As a result, labor unions began to form to fight for workers' rights. On September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, holding the first Labor Day parade in U.S. history. The following articles are from the New York Times and describe the parade and its participants.

Working Men's Parade And Picnic.

New York Times (1857-1922); Sep 4, 1882

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2010)

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The Central Labor Union met yesterday afternoon at Clarendon Hall. The Committee on Arrangements for the working men's parade and picnic to-morrow reported that they had all the money needed to defray expenses, and would probably have a surplus. It was stated that the piano-makers would parade with 2,000 men and cigar-makers with 1,500 men; also, that Typographical Union No. 6 would be in line with a band of music and the shoe-makers', bricklayers', coopers', and the dock-builders' unions have signified their intention to participate. The various unions will meet at three different points to-morrow morning. The First Division, consisting of unions from Brooklyn, Jersey City, and this city below Canal street, will assemble at City Hall Park. The Second Division, comprising all unions on the East Side above Canal-Street, will form in line at Cooper Union. The Third Division, consisting of all unions on the West Side above Canal-street, will meet at Washinton-square. At 10 o'clock, sharp, the First Division will move up Broadway and at Fourth-Street the Second Division will fall in, the Third Division to connect at Waverley-place. Thence up Broadway to Fourteenth-street, to Fourth-avenue, to Seventeenth, to Fifth-avenue, and dismiss at Reservoir-square. (Forty-second-street and Fifth-avenue.) The procession will be reviewed at Union-square and Seventeenth-street by the Rev. Dr. McGlynn, John Swinton, and others. William McCabe will lead as Grand Marshal for the occasion. After the parade the working men will spend the day at Elm Park at North-avenue and Ninety-second-street. A resolution was adopted by the Central Labor Union yesterday that until after the Fall elections no association shall be admitted which has not been in existence at least one year. This, it was said, was adopted as a precaution against political clubs that may seek admittance for political ends.

WORKING MEN ON PARADE.: AN ORDERLY LABOR DEMONSTRATION-TEN THOUS

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WORKING MEN ON PARADE.

AN ORDERLY LABOR DEMONSTRATION—TEN THOUSAND MEN IN LINE.

The parade of the working men yesterday, although not so large as its organizers had predicted, was conducted in an orderly and pleasant manner. Those who rode or marched in the procession

were cheerful, and evidently highly gratified with the display. Nearly all were well clothed, and some wore attire of fashionable cut. The great majority smoked cigars, and all seemed bent upon having a good time at the picnic grounds. The originators of the labor demonstration, as the parade was spoken of, frankly admitted that the working men were determined to show their numerical strength in order to satisfy the politicians of this City that they must not be trifled with. It was estimated that at least 20,000 persons would take part in the parade, and those figures were inserted in the permit granted by the Police authorities. The leaders of the movement were satisfied, however, that fully 30,000 or 40,000 men would be in line. Considerable disappointment was therefore expressed when it was discovered yesterday that the number did not exceed 10,000. It was determined by the Grand Marshal and his assistant that no person under the influence of liquor should take part in the procession, and the orderly appearance of the men in line bore testimony to the fact that they demanded recognition as law-abiding, peaceable citizens. All along the route there were frequent cheers from the spectators on the sidewalks. Although the Police force was liberally represented, the officers were not at any time forced to exercise their authority. Many bands of musicians were employed by the working men. The extensive cigar manufactories and other establishments where skilled labor is required were closed for the day so that the employes might appear in the parade. It was said that the absence of many members of the organizations was due to the fact that they preferred to enjoy the day in quiet excursions to Coney island, Glen Island, and elsewhere.

Grand Marshal William McCabe and Roger Burke, the Marshal of the First Division, had their head-quarters at No. 19 Centre-street, in the rooms of Typographical Union No. 0, and were hard at work at an early hour in making arrangements for the parade. The First Division began to form in Mall-street and in front of the City Hall, and a strong force of Police officers under command of Inspector Murray was in attendance. The first organization which presented itself was the Clothing Cutters' Protective Union, numbering about 500 men, with Charles Miller at the head. Next was the Dress and Cloak Makers' Union with a band of musicians. Members of Typographical Union No. 0, with President George McKay, followed, and behind this organization was the Advance Labor Union and Mat-makers' Union No. 1, of New-York. The banners of Typographical Union No. 0 were plentiful, and among the mottoes were the following: "Labor Built this Republic and Labor shall Rule It," "Don't Forget the Penal Code on Election Day," "No Land Monopoly," "No Money Monopoly." "Labor Pays All Taxes," "Labor will be United." The Advance Labor Union carried a banner with the startling motto, "Pay No Rent." Other mottoes were: "The Government Must Issue All Money," "Down with Convict Contract Labor," "(Close the Stores at 12 P. M." "The Laborer Must Receive and Enjoy the Full Fruit of His Labor." "The True Remedy is Organization and the ballot." The Newark jewelers arrived shortly after 10 o'clock. They numbered about 700 men. All carried canes, and were escorted by the New-York Jewelers' Union, which met them at the ferry. The bricklayers were the Police guard of the First Division. The Manufacturing Shoe-makers' Union No. 1 had a silk banner with the inscription, "No Convict Labor." The printers marched like soldiers, and were frequently applauded. The Second Division formed near the Cooper Union, and was composed of organizations east of Broadway from Canal-street to the Harlem River. The Mat-maker of this division was Joseph A. Lees. At 11 o'clock the Cigar-makers' Progressive Union marched up the Bowery led by a military band. There were 1,000 men in line, and they were commanded by Marshal Seheinkowitz. Banners were numerous, and among the inscriptions were the following: "Eight Hours for a Legal Day's Work," "Less Hours and More Pay," "Down with the Tenement-house and Truck System." "No Capitalists. No Generals, No Lawyers Can Represent Labor,"

"Don't Smoke Cigars without the Union Label," "Less Work and More Pay," "Smoke No Republican Jawbreakers and Democratic Stinkers." About 1,000 members under Marshal John Lutter followed. A wagon containing a desk and other office furniture was at the head, in this wagon were the officers of the union. The wagon was draped with German mottoes. Banners bore mottoes as follows: "Workers. Band Together," "Land, tin: Common Property of the Whole People." "Labor Creates All Wealth," "Vote the Labor Ticket--Party Hacks to the Rear," "Agitate, Educate, organize," "Order for the Sake of Progress—Progress for the Sake of Order." Following were 700 cabinet-makers. Their mottoes were: "Down with Penal Code Legislators," "Eight hours to Constitute a Day's Work," "Strike with the Ballot," "Workers. Band Together." The Brick-layers' Union No. 30 had a silk banner with the words, "To the Workers Should Belong the Wealth."

The Third Division, under Marshal M. M. McGrath, formed in Waverley-place. The brick-layers were the first to put in an appearance. At the head of this body were two trucks, in which were improvised pieces of brick-work representing fireplaces. The route of the procession was up Broadway to Fourteenth-street, to Fourth-avenue, to Seventeenth-street, to Fifth-avenue, to Reservoir Park. The reviewing stand was the cottage on the plaza at Union Square. The procession was there reviewed by Mr. John Swinton, J. A. Beecher, of Newark; Henry Appleton, of Rhode Island, and many others. Nearly all of the organizations went to Elm Park, at Ninth-avenue and Ninety-second-street, after the parade, and enjoyed a picnic. Speeches were there delivered by prominent labor advocates.