

WHO IS THE FATHER OF LABOR DAY?

By JONATHAN GROSSMAN

On June 29, 1894, Congressman Amos J. Cummings of New York wrote to Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor: "Yesterday I took the bill making Labor Day a National Holiday . . . to the President and he signed it. Thinking that you would like to have a memento . . . I send you the pen and holder which the President used in signing the bill."¹

Some labor leaders immediately protested. The Paterson, New Jersey, *Morning Call*, under the headline, "HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE" noted that Matthew Maguire "should have President Cleveland's Souvenir Pen" for he was "the undisputed author of Labor Day as a holiday."² Gompers believed that his associate Peter J. McGuire was the "author of Labor Day" and asked him to write "a brief history of the origin and growth of the day."³ Seventy-five years later, the "paternity" battle still rages between supporters of Peter J. McGuire and supporters of Matthew Maguire.

Peter J. McGuire

Peter J. McGuire was a co-founder and leading official of the American Federation of Labor. He also organized one of America's great labor unions, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. In his youth

¹ Amos Cummings to Samuel Gompers, June 29, 1894, as quoted in *AFL Weekly News Service*, August 15, 1939.

² *Morning Call*, Paterson, New Jersey, July 2, 1894.

³ Samuel Gompers to P. J. McGuire, July 26, 1894, *Gomper's Letterbooks*, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D. C.; *The Evening Star*, Washington, D. C.; June 29, 1894.

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he was a flaming radical, described by an associate as a man "whose blood was at 150 degrees in the shade."⁴ His father, an official at the New York department store of Lord & Taylor, felt that Peter was disgracing him, so one Sunday on the steps of St. John's Catholic Church he "denounced and disowned his son."⁵ Some years later, Peter J. McGuire, still quite radical, told a United States Senate Committee that even when workers lost a strike they forced Capitalists to treat labor better; "Hence every strike is a success,"⁶ As he matured, he modified his radical views in order to strengthen the labor movement. Because Peter J. McGuire was an important member of the union establishment, organized labor tended to support him as "father of Labor Day."

Before Labor Day became a national holiday, it was celebrated in many States. In October 1889, *The Carpenter* noted: "In the spring of 1882, General Secretary P. J. McGuire, of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters first originated the observance of a distinct and a new holiday—with parade and picnic—to be known as 'Labor Day'."⁷ McGuire was editor of the *Carpenter* when the article about him appeared. Eight years later, after Labor Day became a national event, P. J. McGuire repeated his assertion: "On May 8, 1882, the writer, present General Secretary-Treasurer of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, made the proposition. He urged the propriety of setting aside one day in the year, to be designated as 'Labor Day,' . . ."⁸ *The American Federationist* in 1897, and again in 1902, reprinted this statement.⁹

Nevertheless some labor leaders continued to challenge McGuire's claim. In 1929, President William Green of the A.F.L. determined to give an "authentic history of Labor Day origin" which "once and for all will end the controversy." He then reiterated McGuire's role.¹⁰

Repetition made reputation, and repeated assertions and celebrations marked Peter McGuire's ascent on the pedestal. His article in *The Carpenter* in 1897 has been quoted again and again. In an extreme statement, a union brother of McGuire's, at a gravesite ceremony dedicating a McGuire memorial in 1952, quoted from McGuire's editorial in 1897 as if it were a speech made in 1882. He then compared this "speech" to

⁴ *The Journal of United Labor* (November 1882), 379-380.

⁵ Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York, 1925), 85.

⁶ Philip Taft, *Organized Labor in American History* (New York, 1964), 110.

⁷ *The Carpenter*, October 1889, 4.

⁸ *The Carpenter*, September 1897.

⁹ *American Federationist*, October, 1897, 183; September 1902, 487.

¹⁰ "President Green Gives Authentic History of Labor Day's Origin," *The Federal Employee*, (September, 1929), 13.

Lincoln's Gettysburg address.¹¹ A short book about McGuire has him proposing labor day "in his rich baritone voice to thunderous applause" of the delegates,¹² In a 1936 article, "Origin and Significance of Labor Day," the objective *Monthly Labor Review* noted that from available records it seems that Peter J. McGuire originated the idea.¹³

Peter J. McGuire's position as founder of the holiday has become so strongly entrenched that union leaders make pilgrimages to his grave near Camden, New Jersey, on Labor Day¹⁴ The United States Information Service in 1952 issued a bulletin abroad to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Peter McGuire.¹⁵ When the United States issued its first stamp dedicated to workers on Labor Day, 1956, descendants of Peter J. McGuire joined labor leaders, Cabinet members, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower in the ceremonies.¹⁶ In 1970, officials of the Carpenters' Union claimed that Secretary of Labor James D. Hodgson agreed to McGuire's place as founder.¹⁷

Matthew Maguire

Yet the attempt persists to replace Peter J. McGuire with Matthew Maguire as the founder of Labor Day. In a sense this is a renewed skirmish in the old war between the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. The apparent victory of Peter J. McGuire, the Federation candidate, over Matthew Maguire, the Knights candidate, may be another instance of the maxim that history represents the point of view of the victor. But in 1967 George Pearlman, a retired machinist from Paterson, New Jersey, refused to accept the prevailing interpretation and became a champion of his fellow machinist, Matthew Maguire.¹⁸

¹¹ Frank Duffy, "Union Brother of Peter J. McGuire Throws Light on Labor Day Founder," *The Signalman's Journal*, July-August, 1966.

¹² Charles Corotes, Charles W. Phillips, *The Life of a Forgotten Giant* (Camden, New Jersey), 1946.

¹³ Estelle Stewart, "Origin and Significance of Labor Day," *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 43 (August 1936), U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C., 297f.

¹⁴ *The New York Times*, September 4, 1956.

¹⁵ *U. S. Information Service*, "Labour News From the United States," Vol. II, No. 55, August 27, 1952.

¹⁶ *The New York Times*, September 2, 1956.

¹⁷ Neil Gilbride, *Associated Press* report, September 7, 1970.

¹⁸ Much of the material for this article is based on the material that Pearlman located. He has pored over old newspapers, talked to "old-timers," and has built up an important file of records. With wry humor he remarked that those labor historians who have written about Labor Day should have gone into the millinery business because their variations would make them top designers. Pearlman rejected any suggestion that we prepare an article jointly because he is an out and out "Matthewite." Though I have personally studied every source cited, it was Pearlman who dug most of them out.

Matthew Maguire was Secretary of a Machinists and Blacksmith local in Brooklyn, New York, and active in the eight-hour movement and other labor causes. He was one of the organizers of the Central Labor Union in New York City in 1882. Maguire later became interested in politics, and in 1894 won an astonishing victory as Alderman in Paterson, New Jersey, on a Socialist ticket. He was Socialist candidate for Governor of New Jersey, and ran for Vice President of the United States on the Socialist Labor Party ticket.

Though Maguire seems never to have made the claim that he was the "father of Labor Day," others have done so for him. Nine years after what may have been the first Labor Day parade, on September 5, 1882, the New York City Socialist newspaper, *The People*, featured an article, "Labor Day: Its History and Development in the Land." The editor and many staff members had been active in the Knights of Labor and may have had first-hand knowledge of events. "The first great labor parade," the article began, "was arranged by the Central Labor Union through the instrumentality of its first Secretary, Matthew Maguire."¹⁹

Fifteen years after the event, William McCabe, a printer, who was Grand Marshall of the 1882 parade, reminisced how "One Sunday afternoon the secretary of the central body, Matthew Maguire, a delegate from the Brooklyn K. of L. Assembly . . . suggested that the Central Labor Union call upon the trade and labor organizations of New York City and vicinity to join in a labor parade . . ."²⁰

T. V. Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, in letters written years after the 1882 parade, noted that so many articles mentioned Peter McGuire as the founder of Labor Day, that he discussed the matter with McGuire himself. Powderly reports that McGuire "never claimed that credit" and allegedly admitted that his name might have been mixed up with that of Matthew Maguire.²¹

Champions of Matthew Maguire have fought hard to establish his role in the history of Labor Day. The Paterson *Morning Call* sought credit for its native son. Maguire's granddaughter makes claims on her grandfather's behalf. Several authors of books on holidays give Maguire credit. The Machinists' Union, in particular, strongly insists that the

¹⁹ *The People*, September 6, 1891.

²⁰ *The Cleveland Recorder*, September 5, 1897.

²¹ T.V. Powderly to Editor of the *Druid*, Scranton, Pa., September 12, 1911; T.V. Powderly to James J. Davis, Secretary of Labor, 1922; *Powderly Papers*, Catholic University, Washington, D.C. *United Mine Workers Journal*, August 25, 1913.

honor belongs to Matthew Maguire.²² When Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz spoke at the Convention of the International Association of Machinists in 1968, he declared: "My decision . . . is that there is no question as to who is the Father of Labor Day in this country. Officially, as of this moment, insofar as the Department of Labor is concerned, it is Matt Maguire, Machinist."²³ (Cheers and Applause)

The Origin of Labor Day

In view of these conflicting claims, is it possible to provide a persuasive answer to the question, who is the father of Labor Day?

The first problem is that Labor Day evolved over a period of years. The date that the day became a distinct and definable holiday is a matter of interpretation. In the ancient world and in the Middle Ages, days were sometimes designated for workers and for crafts. During the French Revolution, a special day in September was set aside as a labor holiday.

In nineteenth-century North America, celebrations, picnics, parades, benefits, and demonstrations of various kinds were held to support shorter hours, to help strikers, and for other labor causes. Just when such events became formal Labor holidays is difficult to pinpoint. There may have been a specific Labor Day in Toronto, Canada, in 1872 and in Boston and other cities thereafter. But a good case can be made that the American Labor Day holiday grew out of the parade and picnic of the Central Labor Union of New York City on September 5, 1882.²⁴

The year 1882 was charged with excitement for organized workers in New York City. On January 30, thousands of workers packed Cooper Union in support of Irish tenants against their British landlords. Under such banners as "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey/Where wealth accumulates, and men decay," union leaders expressed the unity of labor's cause throughout the world. Among the participants were Matthew Maguire, Secretary of the Committee on Arrangements, who read letters from labor unions from every part of America, and Peter J. McGuire, who "spoke eloquently for half an hour, retiring among continued applause. . . ."²⁵

²² MS. George Pearlman, "Chronology of Labor Day," *D/L Historical Files*, Washington, D.C.

²³ International Association of Machinists, *Proceedings of 27th Annual Convention*, September 9, 1968.

²⁴ *Industrial Relations News*, XI, No. 35, September 2, 1961. B. E. and E. B. Stevenson, *Days and Deeds*, Vol. II, (New York, 1912), 57. Williams J. Walsh. *Curiosities of Popular Customs*, (Philadelphia, 1898), 606. *The Carpenter*, November 15, 1890.

²⁵ *Irish World*, January 7, February 11, 1882; *Truth*, January 30, 31, 1882.

Strikes for increased wages and demonstrations for social reform abounded. "Everyday . . . a strike is going on somewhere," one newspaper noted.²⁶ Monster meetings, parades, and picnics were held on behalf of penal reform, to support a labor newspaper, or to welcome the Irish patriot Mike Davitt. The Socialists parade on May 1 to honor the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Froebel, the German educator, was thwarted when the police, with 800 men in reserve, refused a permit. The Socialists then held a funeral at which 6,000 workers turned out.²⁷

In this atmosphere of enthusiasm by a resurgent labor movement, the Central Labor Union of New York, made up of representatives of many local unions, was born and prospered. Here the proposal for a labor festival was made. Peter J. McGuire wrote fifteen years later: ". . . the thought, the conception, yea the very inspiration of this holiday came from men in the ranks of the working people—men active in uplifting their fellows, and leading them to better conditions. It came from a little group in New York City, the Central Labor Union, which had just been formed. . . ."²⁸

The *Minutes* of the Central Labor Union have many references to the holiday. On May 14, the minutes report a proposal for a "monster labor festival" in which all workers could take part early in September. The following week a committee of five was appointed to obtain a suitable park. Two weeks later the committee reported that it had secured for Tuesday, September 5, Wendel's Elm Park at 92nd St. and 9th Ave., the largest park in New York City. By June 11, 20,000 tickets had been distributed to trade unions. In order to encourage attendance, the money from the sale of tickets went to the organization selling them. On August 6, the Central Labor Union resolved "that the 5th of September be proclaimed a general holiday for the workingmen in this city."²⁹

There were mixed motives behind the parade—sordid, practical, and idealistic. On the sordid side, some militant radicals falsely accused the

²⁶ *Irish World*, April 1, 8; June 24, 1882.

²⁷ *Truth*, April 24, May 1, June 6 and passim; *Irish World*, April 8, June 24, 1882.

²⁸ McGuire, P.J., "Labor Day, Its Birth and Significance" *The Carpenter*, September, 1897. The *New York Star*, September 1, 1889, suggests that the idea was suggested first by P.J. McGuire to Theodore Cuno and Matthew Maguire; *The Carpenter*, November 15, 1890, reports "the first inception of the Labor Day festival took place in Brooklyn in June 1882" at a meeting of the Advance Local Assembly 1562. At the next meeting of the Central Labor Union, P.J. McGuire and Matthew Maguire, members of Local 1562, brought the matter up.

²⁹ *Truth*, May 15, 22, 28, June 5, 12, 19, August 7, 28, September 4, 5, 1882. *Irish World*, April 1, July 29, August 5, 12, 1882.

Duryea Starch Company of Glen Cove, Long Island, of abusing its workers, and they attacked officers of the Knights of Labor who failed to support a boycott against the Company. These militants maneuvered to make the parade a display of strength before the delegates of the Knights of Labor, who were to meet in convention in New York City on September 5, 1882.³⁰ On the practical side, the Central Labor Union wanted to impress the people of New York with the power of the labor movement. The *New York Herald* called the demonstration a "Plain Hint to Demagogues" and the *Irish World* ran a huge front-page cartoon of "The Awakening Labor Gulliver" breaking the bonds of land monopoly, stock speculation, and other evils.³¹ As to idealism, some of the parade's supporters saw it simply as a source of inspiration for those who sought to improve the lot of their fellow workers.³²

Yet several delegates to the Central Labor Union feared failure. Many paraders would lose a day's pay and some union leaders thought a fiasco might damage the emerging labor movement. William McCabe, Grand Marshall of the parade, recalled several years later that most organizations invited had not responded and that "the whole thing certainly looked dubious."

On the morning of September 5, just before the parade, only a handful of men assembled, while hundreds stood on the sidewalk making fun of the marchers. Some encouragement came when 200 men and a band from the Jewelers' Union of Newark, New Jersey, arrived unexpectedly. The police escort of six men started to move. McCabe rode on horseback and the paraders followed. At almost every intersection wagons forced the parade to split up, while the police seemed to regard the whole thing as a circus. In the early stages, policemen along the route of the parade stopped McCabe and demanded to see the parade permit, even though "these blue-coated humorists" could have easily gotten the information from the police escort.

Things began to improve when along the route a column of bricklayers with a band joined the parade. Around Cooper Union, which was popular with labor organizations, many more groups started to march. Some of the marchers carried banners with such slogans as "Labor Will Be United"; "Close the Stores at 6 P.M."; "Less Work and More Pay";

³⁰ *The Journal of United Labor*, November 1882, 379-380; Norman J. Ware, *The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-95*, (New York, 1929), 104-108; *The People*, September 6, 1891; Knights of Labor, *Proceedings*, 1883, 447-451.

³¹ *New York Herald*, September 6, 1882; *Irish World*, September 16, 1882.

³² William McCabe, "Origin of Labor Day," *The Cleveland Recorder*, September 5, 1897.

and, "To the Workers Should Belong all Wealth." The *New York Herald* reported that "there were perhaps 10,000 in line," and that they were mostly young, well-dressed, and wore derby hats. They were applauded by thousands of spectators as they passed the reviewing stand at Union Square.

The parade was dismissed at the aqueduct at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. Then many of the marchers met their families and went to Wendel's Elm Park, which was decorated with American, Irish, French, and German flags. Some of the thousands of workers and their families listened to the speeches which began at 2:30 and continued till nightfall. Others picnicked, drank beer, joked, and caroused while "Americans, English, Irish, German, all hobnobbed." In the evening a still larger crowd packed the park for amusements, fireworks, and dancing. It was a big affair, commented one New York newspaper "and a jolly one as most of the participants can well testify." Other newspapers agreed that the festival was a success, and one reporter noted it was "indeed a day of the people."³³

Who is the Father?

The assumption that the 1882 celebration was the first Labor Day narrows but does not solve the controversy about who founded it. From available records it is impossible to determine whether Peter J. McGuire or Matthew Maguire, or some other labor leader was the moving spirit.

As long as it seemed that the big parade would end with a picnic, it did not seem important enough for anyone to document his claim as the father of the idea. No one knew that a national holiday was being born. No one realized that a father of Labor Day was in the making. Claims for Peter J. McGuire and Matthew Maguire developed after Labor Day became an important event. Though these later claims do contain valuable information, they are less significant than facts from contemporary records. This evidence, gleaned at the time of the first festival, though insufficient for firm conclusions, sheds some light on the issue of who was the father of the 1882 Labor Festival.

Contemporary records show that Peter J. McGuire attended several meetings of the Central Labor Union and that he was among the esti-

³³ *The Cleveland Recorder*, September 5, 1897; *The Irish World*, September 16, 1882; *Truth*, September 6, 7, 1882; *The New York World*, September 6, 1882; *The New York Times*, September 6, 1882; *The New York Herald*, September 6, 1882.

mated fifty labor figures on the reviewing stand at Union Square. More important, he was one of the principal speakers at the picnic after the parade, and possibly the only speaker who emphasized the special nature of the occasion. He noted that it was a festival of rejoicing, which he hoped would be repeated once each year. The festival would not be to celebrate a victory or a bloody battle, but in honor of labor coming into its own.³⁴

Contemporary records also show Matthew Maguire's claim. He was one of the organizers of the Central Labor Union. In the days before the typewriter and inexpensive duplicating, he wrote thousands of handwritten notices concerning the business of the Union, including items about the Labor festival.³⁵ On August 31, 1882, Matthew Maguire, as Secretary of the Central Labor Union, invited T. V. Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, to "review the Procession of the Trade and Labor Unions of New York and Vicinity" at Union Square and address the workers at Wendel's Elm Park. The General Assembly of the Knights noted Matthew Maguire's communication, and took a break to review the labor demonstration.³⁶ After the demonstration Maguire received public thanks for the arrangements he made for reporters.³⁷

Evidence from the time of the 1882 parade shows that other men actively participated. William McCabe, of the printer's union, was not only Grand Marshall of the parade but worked hard to get union support. He also rallied the marchers. Robert Bartholomew of the Piano Makers Union fought hard to make the affair a success. Louis F. Post, later a key figure in the Department of Labor, worked for the journal *Truth*, which gave the Central Labor Union and the parade much publicity. Post was an official reviewer and orator. Similarly, John Swinton of the *Sun* served as publicist, reviewer, and lead-off speaker at the picnic. George Block is mentioned as Chairman of the Committee on Demonstration. Robert Blissert was President of the Central Labor Union. Terence V. Powderly, then Mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania, was on the reviewing stand and, as Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, acknowledged each local body as it passed. Powderly reports

³⁴ *Irish World*, September 16, 1882; *Truth*, July 17, 1882; *New York World*, September 6, 1882; MS. Louis F. Post, "Living a Long Life Over Again," *Louis Post Papers*, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., 190-191.

³⁵ *Truth*, 1882 *passim*, specifically August 7, 1882.

³⁶ Matthew Maguire to T.V. Powderly, August 31, 1882, *Powderly Papers*, Catholic University, Washington, D.C.; Knights of Labor, *Proceedings*, September 5, 1882, 1.

³⁷ *Truth*, September 7, 1882.

that another man on the stand, Robert Price of the Miners' Union, actually designated the name of the day as "Labor Day." Theodore Cuno's battle with Powderly could have been the spark that ignited the demonstration. Alderman Ferdinand Levy of New York City may have been the first to gain the support of a government body when the New York City Board of Aldermen adopted his resolution of sympathy with labor and its demonstration. All these men have some claim for the success of the new labor festival.³⁸

Labor Day Becomes a National Holiday

The great parade and picnic of 1882 was a success, though in itself it did not create the Labor Day holiday. But it generated enthusiasm which quickly spread. In 1883, the Central Labor Union repeated the celebration on Wednesday, September 5,³⁹ and in 1884 George K. Lloyd, Union Secretary, resolved: "that the Central Labor Union does herewith declare and will observe the first Monday in each year as Labor Day."⁴⁰ In 1884 also, Lloyd introduced a Labor Day resolution at the Convention of the Knights of Labor,⁴¹ while A. C. Cameron, a labor leader and editor, at the meeting of the Federation of Organized Trades, (the predecessor of the American Federation of Labor), resolved that the first Monday in September of each year be set apart as Labor's National Holiday.⁴²

Labor organizations adopted the idea. By 1889, the *Carpenter* reported: "Never was Labor Day so universally and enthusiastically cheered as it was this year." There were celebrations in more than 400 cities. The usual custom was to have a picnic at some suitable grove with speeches, dancing, sports, and games.⁴³

Government recognition followed. In 1885 and 1886 some municipalities made Labor Day an official holiday.⁴⁴ The Central Labor Union reported an attempt by State Senator Edward F. Reilly in 1885 to introduce a bill to make Labor Day a holiday in New York State, but "legal luminaries . . . had it amended to read the first Monday in May. . . . They had their trouble for nought, however, as the day came and

³⁸ *New York Herald*, September 6, 1882; *The New York Times*, September 5, 6, 1882; *New York Sun*, March-September, 1882 *passim*; *Truth*, March-September *passim*, 1882; MS., Post, Louis F., "Living A Long Life Over Again," 190-191.

³⁹ *Truth*, May 7, 1883.

⁴⁰ Central Labor Union, *Official Handbook*, September 7, 1891, 14.

⁴¹ Knights of Labor General Assembly, *Proceedings*, 1884, 726.

⁴² Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, *Proceedings*, 1884, 16.

⁴³ *The Carpenter*, October, 1889, 4.

⁴⁴ Estelle Stewart, *op. cit.*, 280.

went and that was all anybody knew about it."⁴⁵ By the time New York's Governor signed a bill in May 1887 making the first Monday in September Labor Day, Oregon had passed its law. At the end of the year five states had such laws on their books. Soon a majority of the states recognized Labor Day as a legal holiday.⁴⁶

The labor movement then agitated for federal law to establish Labor Day as a national holiday. The proposal remained in Congress until 1894, when Senator James Henderson Kyle, Populist from South Dakota, and Representative Amos J. Cummings, Democrat from New York, introduced bills which were passed without opposition by both houses of Congress. On June 28, 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed the measure making the first Monday in September "the day known and celebrated as labor's holiday,"—a "legal public holiday."⁴⁷ Specifically, this law applied to the District of Columbia and the territories and to federal workers.

This federal act, along with additional state laws, in effect made Labor Day a national holiday. Unlike the labor festivals of many European countries, which have a *class* holiday on May 1st, the nation as a whole pays its respect to the role of labor in the United States.

The Founding Fathers of Labor Day

The difficulty of designating a "father" of Labor Day is inherent in the way the holiday developed. To the list of those who helped make the 1882 parade and picnic a success should be added the names of others who contributed to transform the celebration into a bona fide labor holiday.

In a real sense Labor Day is the creation of the labor movement, with the cooperation of local, state, and federal government. It is a reflection of the growth of the American economy and the role played by labor in that growth. Like many ideas and institutions, it was created because its time had come. Because Labor Day met the needs of the age, many men participated in its development.

Perhaps some new evidence may one day help single out a real "father" of Labor Day. From present available sources it is almost im-

⁴⁵ Central Labor Union, *Official Handbook*, September 7, 1891, 15.

⁴⁶ T. V. Powderly, A. W. Wright, *Labor Day Annual*, 1893.

⁴⁷ Central Labor Union, *Official Handbook*, September 7, 1891, 15; Amos J. Cummings to Samuel Gompers, June 29, 1894 and Gompers' reply to Cummings, July 3, 1894. Quoted in *A.F.L. Weekly News Service*, August 15, 1939; Walsh, *op. cit.*, 606; Department of Labor, *Bulletin No. 29*, "Labor Day," July 1900.

possible to measure the role of the holiday's many substantial contributors. It is probable, though by no means certain, that both Matthew Maguire and Peter J. McGuire deserve more credit than the others. The idealistic Matthew Maguire was the active rank-and-file organizer, the tireless arranger who, though still in his early thirties, was called "faithful old Mat" because he was always there when needed. However, Peter J. McGuire expressed the meaning behind Labor Day when he wrote:

. . . No festival of martial glory of warrior's renown is this; no pageant pomp of warlike conquest, no glory of fratricidal strike attend this day.

It is dedicated to Peace, Civilization and the triumphs of Industry. It is a demonstration of fraternity and the harbinger of a better age—a more chivalrous time, when labor shall be best honored and well rewarded.

. . . It was reserved . . . for the American people, to give birth to Labor Day. In this they honor the toilers of the earth, and pay homage to those who from rude nature have delved and carved all the comfort and grandeur we behold."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ P. J. McGuire, *op. cit.*; McCabe, *op. cit.*