

September = *Labor Day!* = *Unions!*

...Because my birthday, September 7th, was on a Labor Day...so I always honor my mother then...*Boy, that was 'labor'!* But, on to more mundane things....

Surprisingly, Congress did not create Labor Day to honor my mother. Instead it has something to do with...ah yes....America's working men and women. Let's see...The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City, in accordance with the plans of the Central Labor Union. The Central Labor Union held its second Labor Day holiday just a year later, on September 5, 1883. In 1884, the first Monday in September was selected as the holiday, as originally proposed, and the Central Labor Union urged similar organizations in other cities to follow the example of New York and celebrate a "workingman's holiday" on that date. The idea spread with the growth of labor organizations, and in 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in many industrial centers of the country.

Through the years the nation gave increasing emphasis to Labor Day. The first governmental recognition came through municipal ordinances passed during 1885 and 1886. From them developed the movement to secure state legislation. The first state bill was introduced into the New York legislature, but the first to become law was passed by Oregon on February 21, 1887. During the year four more states — Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York — created the Labor Day holiday by legislative enactment. By the end of the decade Connecticut, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania had followed suit. By 1894, 23 other states had adopted the holiday in honor of workers, and on June 28 of that year, Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. [<http://www.dol.gov/opa/aboutdol/laborday.htm>] It was President Grover Cleveland who signed the bill making it a legal holiday. The actual founder of Labor Day was Peter J. Maguire, a carpenter and founder of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. Thus, we eventually have the Labor Day we have today as a national day of recognition.

But, all of this has a lot to do with Unions, which, in the hobby, is a little-heard of and infrequently collected category, but it's one that I find quite interesting. In my 21 years of collecting, I believe I've only known two or three fellow collectors who actively sought Union covers, and I didn't start collecting in that category, myself, until a couple of years ago. Again, it's the history in the topic that got me interested, and, of course, as a teacher, I belong to both CTA and NEA [*whether I want to or not...but that's another story*].

If you've never paid attention to this category, you might be surprised to see how many 'Union' covers there are. And, we're not talking about all those covers that say "Union made" or anything like that—although you certainly might make a sub-category for such covers...and there are *a lot* of those. No, we talking covers *from* unions, here. In my short Union collecting career, the ones I've come across are basically either 1) local chapters, affiliates, etc. or 2) Nationals (covers issued by the Teamsters, AFL-CIO, etc.).

There is no listing of Union covers, but Art Houser, NY, had the biggest Unions collection that I am aware of. Art had 750 back in 1997. I'm a novice compared to that...and that number is 7 years old. Anyway, you might give this topic some thought. A lot of history here, and there are some fascinating covers relating to various strikes to be seen here, as well.

[*By the way, just as an aside, even though we hear a lot about unions, bargaining, strikes, and the like, the vast majority of American workers do not belong to a union*]