

Washburn Summer Celebrations—Part 2

The end of summer was marked by Labor Day on the first Monday in September. Labor Day, honoring working men and women, was first celebrated in New York City in September 1882 and was made a national holiday in 1894. The first Labor Day celebration in Washburn appears to have been held on September 5 1892, a "Gigantic Affair" in the opinion of the Washburn News. Union delegations came from Bayfield by train and from "Ashland, Hurley, and other points" by boat, and were met by the "Washburn boys." There was a nearly mile-long parade of delegations from "the dock"—most likely the public or city dock—to Eighth Avenue West, then east to the town hall, and then to the speaker's stand. Later there was a baseball game between the "Lady Champions of Denver" and the Washburn ball club, which the latter won, prompting the News to comment that "the Denverites may be able to do some things but it is quite evident that they can't play ball." The day's events culminated with dances in the various pub-

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Lars Larson
 Guest columnist

lic halls in the village. The News reported that the celebration was a "general success," "A Great day For Washburn, not a single thing occurring during the day to mar" the event.

For the 1908 celebration "Professor Leon Gage" was engaged to perform, but his balloon was ruptured in some way and then burned up, fortunately before he ascended. He had better luck in 1909, however, "going into the air a long distance," performing on a trapeze and then parachuting safely to the ground. Dare-devil stunts by man and beast seemed to have been the order of the day in that year. A "high-diving dog," a little terrier, dove off "a fifty foot ladder unto a net beneath," while George Glazier, "saturated with gasoline which had been set on fire" slid along a cable stretched from the top of the elevator, and "A successful landing was made in the bay."

In 1912 Professor Gage's balloon caught fire just as he was about to ascend, ending that event. The other novel and exciting feature of the program was a sham battle between Ashland and Washburn companies of the naval militia on the lake shore. The Times reported that "There were many people who had never witnessed a sham battle and it was quite a treat for many." In 1913 Washburn and Bayfield held a joint celebration at Bayfield, the Times estimating that "Between seven and eight hundred people from this city went to Bayfield" by train, auto or ferry for "one of the biggest Labor Day celebrations that has been held in any city on Chequamegon Bay in years." A highlight of the day's program, what the Times described as "a rare treat," was an "old fashioned Indian Pow-wow" staged by Indians from Red Cliff, who were "dressed in their dancing regalia... and presented quite a novel appearance."

In the following years Labor Day was celebrated by a community get-together at Memorial Park. In 1923 the day's activities began in mid-morning with a baseball game and horseshoe pitching contests, then a big picnic dinner at noon, followed by log rolling and water stunt exhibitions by George Glazier,

sports, and other contests for everyone, the day culminating in a street dance in front of the Legion Hall.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11, 1919 as Armistice Day, to be observed by suitable ceremonies throughout the nation. (Armistice Day marked the end of hostilities on the western front in the Great War at 11:00AM on November 11 1919. In 1926 it was designated a national holiday, and in 1954 was renamed Veterans Day in honor of the veterans of all of the nation's wars.) Washburn celebrated the first Armistice Day with a parade, programs of music, speeches, and other activities at the Du Pont Y.M.C.A. and Temple Theatre, auto races, and another program of musical selections and addresses in the evening. The Times declared that the celebration "proved to be a little dandy... a fine observance of Peace Day." The celebration symbolized both an end and a beginning—the end of a terrible war and the beginning of what everyone was convinced, or at least hoped, would be an unending era of peace and prosperity. But in a great irony the era ended with an even more terrible that created the prosperity peace had failed to provide.