

Young Inventors: Chester Greenwood



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Ear protectors are designed to keep people's ears safe. For example, workers who use loud machines often wear special ear protectors to save their hearing.

The original ear protectors, however, were designed to protect people's ears from the cold. In fact, the first pair was invented more than 150 years ago by Chester Greenwood, a fifteen-year-old boy from Maine.

It's very cold in Maine during the winter. Chester wanted to ice skate, but his ears hurt too much. First, Chester wrapped a wool scarf around his head, but that didn't work. The wool made his ears itch.

Next, Chester formed two loops of wire to fit around his ears. Then he asked his grandmother to sew cloth and fur over the loops. These ear warmers solved his problem.

Soon, Chester's friends and neighbors wanted a pair of ear warmers like his. His grandmother and mother began to sew ear warmers for their friends and

neighbors. Then Chester changed the design. He added a flat piece of steel that went over the top of the head to hold the ear warmers in place. Soon, Greenwood's Ear Protectors were selling in several nearby states.

In 1877, Chester patented his design. Later, during World War I, he supplied ear warmers to US soldiers. At that time, soldiers were spending long hours outdoors, where it was very wet and cold. Chester's invention helped them protect their ears.

Although he is best known for inventing ear warmers, Chester also patented many other inventions. These include a wide-bottom tea pot, a rake with steel teeth, and a machine that drills holes in wood.

In 1997, the state of Maine named December 21, the first day of winter, as Chester Greenwood Day. Each year on that day, people in his home town hold a parade and a coolest-ears contest to honor Chester Greenwood, their young inventor.



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