

Life and Culture of the 1920s

The Invention of the Teenager



In the 19th century, the American world consisted of children and adults. Most Americans tried their best to allow their children to enjoy their youth while they were slowly prepared for the trials and tribulations of adulthood. Although child labor practices still existed, more and more states were passing restrictions against such exploitation. The average number of years spent in school for young Americans was also on the rise. Parents were waiting longer to goad their youngsters into marriage rather than pairing them off at the tender age of sixteen or seventeen. In short, it soon became apparent that a new stage of life — the **TEENAGE** phase — was becoming a reality in

America. American adolescents were displaying traits unknown among children and adults. Although the word teenager did not come into use until decades later, the teenage mindset dawned in the 1920s.



From Courtship to Dating

The single greatest factor that led to the emergence of the independent teenager was the automobile. Teens enjoyed a freedom from parental supervision unknown to previous generations. The courtship process rapidly evolved into dating. In earlier times, young boys and girls spent their first dates at home. The boy would meet the girl's parents, they would have a sitting in the parlor, followed by dinner with the entire family. Later in the evening, the couple might enjoy a few moments alone on the front porch. After several meetings, they could be lucky enough to be granted permission for an unchaperoned walk through town. The automobile simply shattered these old-fashioned traditions. Dating was removed from the watchful eyes of anxious parents. Teenagers were given privacy, and a sexual revolution swept America. Experimentation with sexual behaviors before marriage became increasingly common. Young Americans were now able to look beyond their own small towns at an enlarged dating pool.

Impact of the Automobile

Automobile technology led directly to the other major factor that fostered a teenage culture: the consolidated **HIGH SCHOOL**. Buses could now transport students farther from their homes, leading to the decline of the one-room schoolhouse. Furthermore, Americans were realizing the potential of a longer education, and states were adding more years to their compulsory schooling laws. As a result, a larger number of teenagers were thrown into a common space than ever before. It was only natural that discussions about commonalities would occur. Before long, schools developed their own cultural patterns, completely unlike the childhood or adult experience. School athletics and extracurricular activities only enhanced this nascent culture. The American teenager was born.

The Invention of Sliced Bread

Who – Otto Fredrick Rohwedder was the inventor of the bread slicer. Otto was married to Carrie Johnson and had 2 kids. He was the owner of a jewelry store.



What – The first prototype built and was destroyed in a fire and it was not till 1928 Otto had another prototype working.

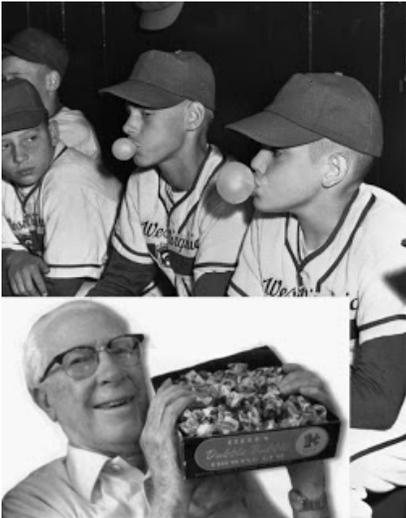
When – Sliced bread was made on July 7, 1928.

Where – Chillicothe Missouri Bakery was the first commercial use of the bread slicer.

Why / How – In January 18, 1943 sliced bread was banned due to the military needing more metal. Sliced bread factories used metal in their slicers, and the military needed that metal. Then on March 18, 1943 it was allowed back on the market because of a letter from a lady in New York. She wrote a letter complaining that it took too long to slice bread when her family was in a rush.

The Invention of Bubble Gum

Who – Bubblegum was invented by Walter Diemer; he spent his spare time playing around with different gum recipes. He lived from January 5, 1904 until January 9, 1998. He was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was married, but had no kids.



What - Bubble gum is a type of chewing gum that is specifically designed for blowing bubbles of all sizes. It is usually pink in color and has its own unique 'bubble gum' flavor. Today you can get many flavors.

When - It was invented in 1928 by Walter Diemer.

Where – The first gum was invented at the Fleeer Chewing Gum Company in Philadelphia.

Why – This invention was a complete accident. Diemer was playing around with the recipes and made a less sticky batch, and what he ended up with was bubble gum.

How – Bubble gum changed from regular gum that had already been invented. It was more fun to chew, because you could make bubbles and this gum didn't have nicotine in it, so it was more appropriate for children to chew, which made it very popular.