

Birth ^{of} Earmuffs INNOVATION



It all started with ears. Chester Greenwood's ears got very cold during the winters. Something had to be done. The invention? Earmuffs. To shield his ears, Chester decided on a combination of beaver fur on the outside and black velvet for the surface against the ear. A springy steel band enabled him to attach a tiny hinge to each earflap so that the muff could fit snugly against his ears. When he was finished with using the muff, he could coil it flat and stuff the contraption in his pocket!

The result? Greenwood had an invention that took on a life

of its own. On March 13, 1877, the United States Patent Office awarded him the patent. When he died in 1937 at the age of 79, Greenwood was a celebrity. In addition to running the muff business, Greenwood had been granted more than 130 patents. Women and men in the area took the piecework home, and it spread as a cottage industry, an industry whose labour force was made up of people working at home.

This was the birth of the earmuff. Everyone, not just kids but people allergic to wool, had to have the earmuffs.

Good merchandise, even when hidden, soon finds buyers.
—Plautus