The 1920s were an age of dramatic social and political change. For the first time, more Americans lived in cities than on farms. The nation's total wealth more than doubled between 1920 and 1929, and this economic growth swept many Americans into an affluent but unfamiliar "consumer society." People from coast to coast bought the same goods (thanks to nationwide advertising and the spread of chain stores), listened to the same music, did the same dances and even used the same slang! Many Americans were uncomfortable with this new, urban, sometimes racy "mass culture"; in fact, for many–even most–people in the United States, the 1920s brought more conflict than celebration. However, for a small handful of young people in the nation's big cities, the 1920s were roaring indeed.

Band-Aid® Adhesive Bandage



Though his name has been somewhat lost to history over the years, Earle Dickson is responsible for the invention of one of the world's most useful devices for the accident-prone: the Band-Aid® brand adhesive bandage.

In 1917, Dickson married Josephine Frances Knight. He quickly realized that his new bride seemed to constantly be nicking her fingers while working in the kitchen, and he thought the big bandages he was using to help her treat them were too big and clumsy.

He decided to affix small pieces of the sterile gauze to the center of strips of surgical tape. Dickson folded the gauze into a narrow pad, unrolled the tape, laid the gauze over it, and put down a band of crinoline to keep the tape from sticking to itself. He then rerolled the tape so that his wife could unwind and scissor off what she needed.

At the time, Dickson happened to be working for Johnson & Johnson as a cotton buyer in New Brunswick, New Jersey. When Dickson mentioned what he had created to a fellow employee there he was encouraged to approach management with the idea. The Johnsons weren't overly impressed initially, but then Dickson showed them that he could easily apply his bandage to himself: this, they thought, was a great feature.

Johnson & Johnson was already a popular manufacturer of large cotton and gauze bandages for hospitals and soldiers when Dickson offered up his Band-Aid® solution. Unfortunately, the original handmade bandages did not sell well - only $3,000 worth of the product was sold during their first year. This may have been because the first versions of the bandages came in sections 2 1/2 inches wide and 18 inches long.

Sales were poor until the company distributed an unlimited number of free Band-Aids® to Boy Scout troops across the country, sparking widespread use. By 1924 Johnson & Johnson was producing different sizes of Band-Aids® by machine. The bandages were completely sterilized in 1939, and spun out in sheer vinyl in 1958. Over one hundred billion have been made to date.

Johnson & Johnson eventually made Dickson a vice president at the company, a position in which he remained until his retirement in 1957. He was also a member of the board of directors until his death in 1961. At the time of his death, Johnson & Johnson was selling over $30,000,000 worth of Band-Aids® each year.

BAND-AID® Brand Adhesive Bandages Beginnings

Who hasn't used BAND-AID® Brand Adhesive Bandages? In a world full of cuts, scrapes, blisters and bruises it seems hard to imagine life without those little adhesive bandages.
Of course, there have always been cuts and scrapes, but there haven't always been adhesive bandages. This fact was painfully clear to a young housewife named Josephine Dickson.

Back in 1920, this newlywed was living in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with her husband Earle, and though married life agreed with her, housekeeping did not. Not that she didn't try. When Earle came home from his job as a cotton buyer at Johnson & Johnson, Josephine would always have dinner on the table. Unfortunately, she'd also have several cuts or burns on her fingers. Without an adhesive bandage, Josephine had no easy way of bandaging her own cuts. Earle had to cut pieces of adhesive tape and cotton gauze and make a bandage for each wound. This happened day after day-and, day after day Josephine needed more bandages. They were in a real bind.

Finally, after several weeks of kitchen accidents, Earle hit upon an idea. (Luckily for Johnson & Johnson, his idea was not to go out and hire a cook.) No, Earle sat down and prepared some ready-made bandages by placing squares of cotton gauze at intervals along an adhesive strip and covering them with crinoline. Now all Josephine had to do was cut off a length of the strip and wrap it over her cut. In a way, it was a mother who was responsible for the invention of the BAND-AID®Brand Adhesive Bandage.
Earle soon told his boss at work about his new invention and soon the first adhesive bandages were being produced and sold under the world famous BAND-AID® trademark. Earle was eventually rewarded with a position as Vice President in the company, where he stayed until his retirement. As for Josephine, history does not record whether she ever mastered the art of accident-free cooking. But we do know she had plenty of BAND-AID®Brand Adhesive Bandages available just in case. Earle Dickson may not have realized what a cutting edge product he was inventing, but it certainly stuck around.

For All Your Healing Needs
BAND-AID® Brand Adhesive Bandages have long been a staple in a family's first-aid kit as a source of healing, comfort and protection. And as the brand has expanded over the years, so too has the technology and innovation behind it. BAND-AID® Brand has moved from being strictly a bandage to becoming a brand that offers a wide variety of products to meet the diverse needs of today's active families and their lifestyles.