

## Creation of the Safety Pin

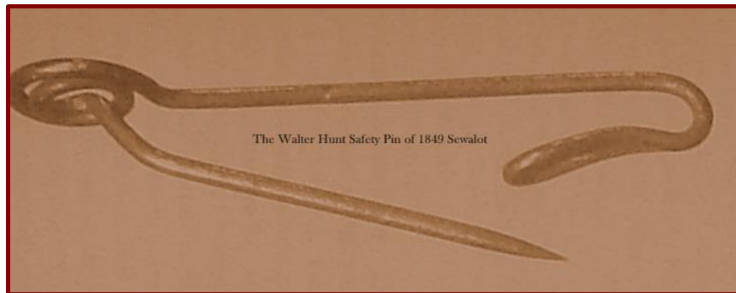
Innovation is highly prized in our world – whether it be in business, athletics, science or education.

But it can also be challenging. Especially if you feel held back by that old saying, “There’s nothing new under the sun.”

There is more to innovation, however, than a unique idea. Take the safety pin as an example.

An American mechanic by the name of Walter Hunt is regarded as the inventor of the safety pin, which is sometimes called a baby pin. It is commonly used to fasten pieces of fabric or clothing – such as diapers – together.

Needing to settle a \$15 debt with a friend, Hunt decided to invent something new in order to pay off the friend. He used a piece of brass wire that was about 8 inches long



and made a coil in the center of the wire so that it would open up when released. The clasp at one end was devised in order to shield the sharp edge from the user.

Hunt was issued a U.S. patent on April 10, 1849, and sold the patent to W.R. Grace and

Company for \$400 (equivalent to more than \$10,000 in today’s dollars). With that money, Hunt paid the debt of \$15 to his friend and kept the remaining \$385 for himself. In the years to come, W.R. Grace and Company made millions of dollars in profits from Hunt’s invention.

But here’s a lesson. When Hunt patented the pin, it was reminiscent of a fibula – a form of a brooch invented by the Myceaneans on the Greek Peloponnesus between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It was used by the ancient Romans to fasten their togas shut. Many would-be inventors might have said of the safety pin, “Why should I bother with this? It’s already been done.”

But not Hunt. His story is a reminder to us that nearly anything you can dream up has a strike against it.

You may hear of an idea, “It’s either already been done or it’s never been done.” Ignore both assertions.

Pushing an idea through the dip of acceptance is far more valuable than inventing something that’s never existed – and then walking away from it.

– Beecher Hunter