NATIONAL ZIPPER DAY

National Zipper Day commemorates April 29, 1913, when the patent for the modern zipper was issued. The day celebrates something that we often do not think about and may automatically take for granted.

The first attempt at creating the zipper came from the inventor of the sewing machine. In 1851, Elias Howe received a patent for the “Automatic, Continuous Clothing Closure.” However, Howe never marketed his invention and missed the recognition he may have received.

Forty-two years later, Whitcomb Judson began selling the “Clasp Locker.” Very similar to Elias Howe’s patent, this device served as a more complicated hook-and-eye shoe fastener. Judson started the Universal Fastener Company where he manufactured his new device and debuted it at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. There he met with very little success. Because Judson put his invention before the public for sale, he earned credit as its creator.

In 1906, the Universal Fastener Company also hired Gideon Sundback, a Swedish-American electrical engineer. He was highly skilled and known for his devotion to the company. On April 29, 1913, he was granted a patent for the modern zipper, known then as the “Separable Fastener.” He submitted modifications to his invention in 1917. Today we wear designs quite similar to the ones Sundback created in his patent. While he may have called them a separable fastener, we know them as zippers. By 1923, B.F. Goodrich popularized the word zipper as it applied to use in the boots and pouches it made. The company even copyrighted the name for a time.