

The History of Toilet Paper

The surprising story of one of the world's most popular products



Everybody uses it, but few people ever think about it. What is it? Toilet paper! People haven't always used toilet paper, though. In fact, the first bathroom wipes were not invented until 1857. They came in sheets. But not many people bought them.

Instead, most Americans used things like corncobs (yikes), moss (ew), and pages torn from catalogs and books (ow). Buying paper just for bathroom use seemed silly.

After all, people used outhouses back then. These outdoor toilets didn't flush. Their seats opened to a hole in the ground.

In 1890, brothers Clarence and E. Irvin Scott came up with the idea of making one long sheet of paper attached to a roll. But in those days, talking about bathroom business was a big no-no. In fact, the Scotts were so embarrassed by their own invention that they didn't take credit for it until 1902.

In the 1900s, indoor plumbing and flush toilets became common in homes. Suddenly, people needed a product that wouldn't clog their toilets. In 1928, the Hoberg Paper Company began selling Charmin brand toilet paper.

The package gave no mention of the product's actual purpose. Charmin was an immediate success!

Before long, Americans couldn't imagine life without toilet paper. Today, we spend \$6 billion on it each year. It's safe to say that the toilet paper business is on a roll.

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