

GADGETS & GIZMOS

Home State Inventions

Inventions like duct tape and sticky notes came from the creative minds of men and women who worked for corporations, universities, and government agencies. But many inventions spring from individuals with ideas about how to make everyday life simpler, safer, or more enjoyable. Some of these people generated their bright ideas right here in California.

Levi Strauss noticed that the trousers of miners and prospectors during the California Gold Rush of 1849 couldn't take the wear and tear of gold mining. He invented **blue jeans** in San Francisco by stitching sturdy pants made of canvas, dyed blue to help hide stains.

Luther Burbank invented more than 800 **plants**, from potatoes and berries to thornless cactus, in his gardens in Santa Rosa, California.

The **Barbie doll** was invented in 1959 in Hawthorne, California, by Ruth Handler, co-founder of the Mattel Company (which was founded to manufacture picture frames).

The **square tomato** (which isn't really square, but it packs well in boxes) was invented by Gordie "Jack" C. Hanna at the University of California, Davis. It was developed to pack with fewer smashed tomatoes. Hanna tested his inventions by picking random tomatoes from the experimental fields and hurling them down on the pavement. He continued perfecting the plants with tomatoes that could survive his road test.

The **computer mouse**, hypermedia, and on-screen video teleconferencing, all first demonstrated in San Francisco in 1968, were inventions of Douglas Engelbart and the Augmentation Research Center in Palo Alto.

The neoprene **wetsuit** used by skindivers and surfers was invented in 1952 by Dr. Hugh Bradner while living in Berkeley. Dr. Bradner was also on the team of atomic bomb inventors who worked on the top-secret Manhattan Project during World War II.

After nearly getting hit by a truck while driving in Indio in 1917, June McCarroll came up with the idea of painted lines to separate lanes of traffic. When the Riverside County Board of Supervisors refused to consider her idea, she hand-painted the first **lane dividers** herself. **Bott's dots** raised pavement markers, invented to make lane lines more visible, were the creation of Elbert D. Botts when he worked for CalTrans in Sacramento in 1953.



San Bernardino County Museum

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