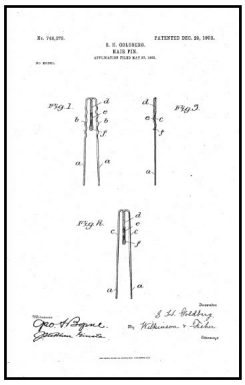
THE WACKY TALE OF THE HUMP ... AND ITS DEMISE

By Don Thornton, Correspondent

Sol Goldberg was a myth creator extraordinaire. He spent a lifetime manipulating the facts to perpetuate his story of the Hump Hair Pin.

The tale of his hairpin inspiration was never told exactly the same in newspaper stories of the day, but Goldberg was always celebrated as a resourceful hero whose "Hump" revolutionized feminine hair care. It was all part of his successful advertising promotion and it made the slight, wiry, energetic and fast-talking promoter a millionaire several times over more than a century ago.

It all began with Solomon Harry Goldberg's 1903 patent (image, near right) for a woman's hairpin featuring a "hump" that prevented it from "sliding out" of place in holding long hair, a major problem of then existing pins. His three-prong hairpin had a short center prong of twisted wire forming what Goldberg called the "hump" (image, far right)

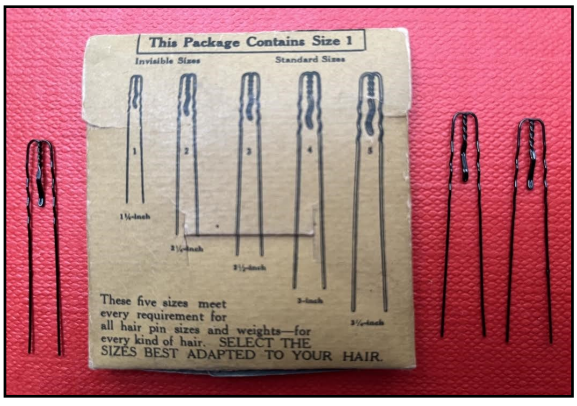


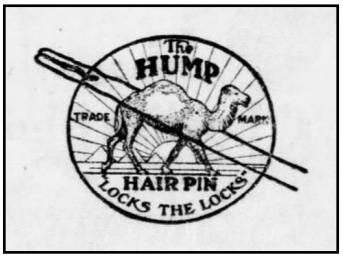


At its peak beginning in 1916, Goldberg's Chicago-based Hump Hair Pin Manufacturing Company factory was operating 24 hours a day producing 125 hairpins a minute or 180,000 a day -- and barely keeping up with the demand. (Daily production in later years was in the tens of millions.) Packaging for this unique product celebrated its ability to "Keep the Hair in Place" (images below).









Marketing by Goldberg turned the Hump brand into a sales juggernaut, with coast-to-coast newspaper ads featuring the catchy Hump name and an exotic "good luck" camel (image, left).

The ads not only promoted the Hump, but Goldberg himself, as follows:.

"*The Hump hair pin is a new invention ingenious enough to secure a niche in the woman's hall of fame for the man who devised it*," said a 1916 ad. Another 1916 ad, using reverse psychology, asked consumers to "please don't buy more than two packages" of Hump pins to prevent shortages and then went on to praise its inventor: "*One of the greatest mechanical geniuses of this country has invented and perfected the HUMP Hair Pin. He has worked for seven years to make the HUMP Hair Pin a wonder of perfection …*" (image, next page).



Please Don't Buy More Than Two Packages of the New

HUMP Hair Pin

this week. This is the first week of the sale. Women of Minneapolis and women all over the world have been waiting for this little hair pin miracle—**the hair pin that won't fall out.** The newspapers have talked about it. Great firms in Europe have written for foreign rights.

16,000 Women Write

Sixteen thousand letters have come from women saying: "Why can't we get the HUMP HAIR PIN at our stores?" Big buyers have sent telegrams. But not a single hair pin would we sell. And now that everything is in readiness—now the first weeks of the sale with our factory running 24 hours a day—we have been delayed in getting materials because of shortage caused by the war. That is why we say: "Please buy not more than two packages this week." We don't want anyone to be disappointed. We don't want the stores to have to say: "We are all sold out." We want every woman who has waited so long to have at least one package of HUMP Hair Pins.

One of the greatest mechanical geniuses of this country has designed and perfected this, the first great hair pin invention in 2,000 years. He has worked ceaselessly for seven years to make the HUMP Hair Pin a complete triumph, from the first little hump that "Locks the Locks"—and keeps the hair in place no matter how hard you dance or ride or work—to the ruthless cutting of flash that makes each HUMP Hair Pin smooth as satin, from end to end. He has invented a hair pin strong as steel, yet light as a snowflake. The points shine under the HUMP Hair Pin is a great achievement. They are like invisible satin bobs that glide through the hair, never splitting, never scraping.

factory, which we are now building, to see the marvelous steel fingers that fashion and finish this immaculate pin for the hair. These very machines are mechanical wonders.

Such a little thing as a hair pin, yet it will save a million headaches a day.

For years past women in every big city in this country have seen, wanting trial HUMP Hair Pins, sent in their personally by the inventor, as they would have the judgment of thousands of sisters. If anything more could be done to make the HUMP Hair Pin a greater boon and joy for women, it would have been done in those years of perfecting. Now, everything is ready. The HUMP Hair Pins are in the stores all over this city, ready for your hair. Women everywhere have heard of this great invention from friends or neighbors, and thousands have called repeatedly at their dealers, and have been disappointed because it was not yet on sale.

You Are Invited.

Not only the HUMP Hair Pin but the machines to make it, are the work of this great inventor. Every woman who visits Chicago is invited to come after May 1, to the new mammoth HUMP Hair Pin

No More Waiting

But now there will be no more waiting. We only ask you to help us out, because of this temporary shortage of supplies, not to buy at your office or grocery store this week, but to buy not over two packages on your first purchase, so that every one may be served.

Free Samples at All the Stores

If your dealer hasn't HUMP Hair Pins he can get them from his Wholesale House.
HUMP HAIR PIN MFG. CO., CHICAGO.

By the early 1920s, Goldberg's factory was producing and selling millions and millions of the distinctive hairpins yearly and Goldberg noted the fact with yet another advertising gimmick – a good luck metal token just over 1-inch in diameter.

The front of the coin features the Hump company's cool camel and a prediction of good luck, prosperity, health and happiness. The back notes hairpin production, saying: "75 MILLION ADVERTISING MESSAGES" (images below).



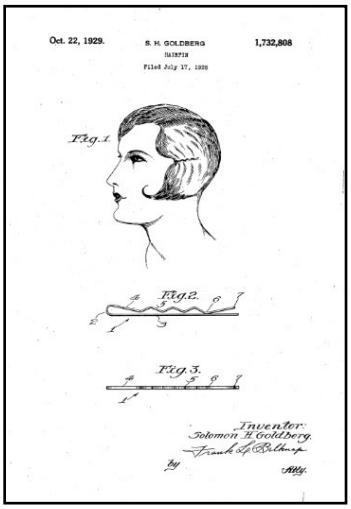


It was clear sailing for Goldberg until the short bobbed hair-do of flapper fame began sweeping the nation. "I almost had heart failure when bobbed hair grew more popular," he told the *New York Herald Tribune* in late October 1924. The reason? Short hair requires two-prong hump-less pins and much fewer of them.

"I had to invent a lot of new hairpins, very fine, little ones suitable for short hair," he said. In the same breath he predicted, "bobbed hair won't last long. Just wait until women's necks (without long hair) begin to get red and rough like men's. That will be the end of the shingle (a then popular bob haircut)."

In an article in the *Chicago Tribune* January 26, 1935, Goldberg looked back on his hairpin career. He said "the business grew by leaps and bounds from 1906 until the early 1920s. "And then came the bobbed hair craze. We didn't like that; we were losing money. But resourcefulness – I don't claim to be an inventor – came to the rescue and hair bobbing turned out to be a blessing. We turned to "bobbie pins" and today sales are greater than ever" (image, right).

The contradictions are worth noting – not really outright lies, but fabrications to advance the myth. For example, business for the hump did not grow by leads and bounds starting in 1906, but rather 1916 when his factory first opened. In 1924 he said he invented "a lot of new hairpins." But in 1935, he claimed not to be an inventor. And, in fact, Goldberg applied for a patent for a hairpin for "short or bobbed hair" in 1926 and it was granted in 1929.



In his patent application, Goldberg said: "I believe I am the first to construct a hairpin … in which one of the legs is substantially straight, and the other leg of which is crimped relative to the straight leg."



This design was branded "Hold-Bobs" when the pin was introduced in 1929 and it was a best seller through most of the 1930s. An ad in the *San Francisco Examiner* on April 6, 1930 said in part: "Hold-Bobs keep your hair at its best" (image, right).

Hold-Bobs featured a "Lady Ruth" package with the 1929 patent number and the back stating, in part, "Made by the makers of HOLD-BOBS the world's most efficient bob pins" (images, right).





Sol Goldberg died on June 5, 1940 and even in death, and thereafter, the myth, like pin production, flourished. For example, his obituary in the *New York Times* said in part:

Mr. Goldberg was born in Cincinnati and began his business career as a bellboy. Probably the most important event in his life was the reading of a magazine article in 1905 which stated that a fortune was waiting for the inventor of a satisfactory hair fastener for women. Mr. Goldberg promptly invented the hairpin-with-the-hump, which made his fortune. (image, below)



SOL H. GOLDBERG, HAIRPIN MAKER, 53

Manufacturer Who Invented Fastener With Hump Made Fortune—Dies in Chicago

BEAT BOBBED HAIR THREAT

Immediately Began Producing Bobby-Pins—He Had Large Real Estate Holdings

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

CHICAGO, June 5—Sol H. Goldberg, president of the Hump Hairpin Manufacturing Company, died of a heart ailment last night in his home here at the age of 53.

Mr. Goldberg was born in Cincinnati and began his business career as a bellboy. Probably the most

Whoa! Goldberg in fact began his business career with his brothers in a jewelry business in Cincinnati. As far as can be determined, he was never a bellboy – although that occupation made it a better story.

The magazine article has never been found. A newspaper once reported it was the December 21, 1905 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post* that ran the article – but there was no such edition. The weekly magazine came out December 16 and December 23 that year.

The *Times* obit said Goldberg died at the age of 53, meaning he was born in 1887. However his tombstone at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago says he was born in 1875. The Associated Press and International News Service picked up the obit and newspapers across the country ran the "bellboy" story. But the myth didn't end there.

In an editorial June 7, 1940, the *Baltimore Evening Sun* said: *"The other day in Chicago an inventor died who deserves to rank with the unknown deviser of the wheel, the lever, the umbrella and other discoveries which have revolutionized human society. He was a Mr. Sol Goldberg, inventor of the hairpin with the hump. Mr. Goldberg ... observed that women had a terrible time keeping their hair in place. He read in a magazine that the man who invented something to solve this problem would make a fortune. Mr. Goldberg got busy, invented the the humped hairpin and made a fortune."*

The *Minneapolis Times Tribune* said in an editorial June 15, 1940: *"The death in Chicago a short time ago of Sol Goldberg brings to mind the recent origin of the hairpin as it is known today. This is perhaps not a significant contribution to the progress of mankind, but to women it has been a boon which they can hardly imagine themselves without. Women had for centuries struggled, with indifferent success, to keep their hair in place until Mr. Goldberg came to their rescue and invented the hairpin with the hump. Shortly before the turn of the century Mr. Goldberg read in a magazine that the man who invented something to solve the feminine problem of keeping the hair in place would make himself a fortune. Mr. Goldberg set to work and invented the humped hairpin and made himself a fortune."*

The *Herald and Review* of Decatur, Illinois said in an editorial June 26, 1940: *"Sol H. Goldberg was 18 years old when he read in a magazine article the assertion that a fortune was waiting for the inventor of a satisfactory hair fastener for women. That was in 1905. Goldberg promptly invented 'the hair pin with the hump.' He was well on his way to the promised fortune when Irene Castle bobbed hee hair. The hairpin market collapsed but Goldberg began to manufacture the bobby pin. When Sol H. Goldberg died the other day in Chicago he was rated many times a millionaire."*

Following Goldberg's death, his widow, the former Ruth K. Kahan, a Russian-born fashion designer, took over the business with her own game plan and she was as dedicated as her late husband to myth making. However, her blueprint was to dump the hump and establish a new family name.

She became the boss during limited war time production but was credited with guiding the company with a steady hand. However, a big change came only four years later in 1944 when she, for unknown reasons, changed her last name from Goldberg to Gaylord. She also convinced her adult children, Sol Jr., James, Edward and June, to do the same. And she reportedly began referring to her late husband as Sol Gaylord.

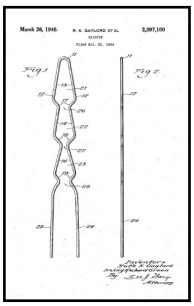
And at this point she moved to get rid of the hump name, launching Gaylord Products Inc. One of her first business moves as Ruth K. Gaylord was to apply for a hairpin patent on Oct. 2, 1944 and it was granted March 24, 1946. The patent, assigned to Gaylord Products Inc., featured a hairpin with two legs having "a plurality of relatively large hair receiving pockets (curves) to keep the pin in place."

Production of that pin began before the patent was granted and it proved to be briefly popular. It was branded "Hold-Bob", as compared to "Hold-Bobs" (images, right).









Ruth Gaylord went after the Hump name in about 1946. At that time, Gaylord Products began producing "Gayla Hold-Bob Bobby Pins" based on Goldberg's 1929 patent (images, immediately below).



The back sides of these pins are displayed below the image to the left. The first one says "Copyright 1946, Gaylord Products…" There is no mention of the Hump.

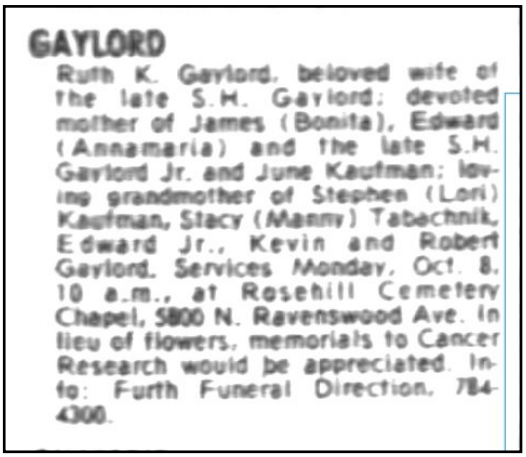
The back of the second one acknowledges the name change, saying "Copyright 1947 Gaylord Products …" and then: "Formerly The Hump Hairpin Mfg. Co."

The Gaylord company prospered during the 1950s and into the 60s, but cheap imports of hair products took their toll. Business faded fast in the 1970s and it was the death of Gaylord Products and what used to be the Hump. In the end, Ruth K. Gaylord, as her husband before her, got her wish, even in death.





Her paid obituary (image, right) in the *Chicago Tribune* October 7, 1979, said in part: "Ruth K. Gaylord, beloved wife of the late S. H. Gaylord…" The obit also listed her three sons with the Gaylord name, and her daughter with her new married name.



GAYLORD

Ruth K. Gaylord, beloved wife of the late S.H. Gaylord; devoted mother of James (Bonita), Edward (Annamaria) and the late S.H. Gaylord Jr. and June Kaufman; loving grandmother of Stephen (Lori) Kaufman, Stacy (Manny) Tabachnik, Edward Jr., Kevin and Robert Gaylord. Services Monday, Oct. 8, 10 a.m., at Rosehill Cemetery Chapel, 5800 N. Ravenswood Ave. In lieu of flowers, memorials to Cancer Research would be appreciated. Info: Furth Funeral Direction, 784-4300.