NESSLER
RESEARCH PROJECT

Historical Research into the Permanent Wave and the International Hairdressing Profession

CHARLES NESSLER FACT SHEET

Karl Ludwig (Charles) Nessler (1872–1951)

Inventor of the Permanent Wave

Personal Details

Full name
Karl Ludwig Nessler

Internationally known as
Charles Nessler

Born
2 May 1872
Todtnau, Black Forest, Germany

Died
22 January 1951
Harrington Park, New Jersey, USA

Profession
Hairdresser, inventor and entrepreneur

Best Known For

Karl Ludwig (Charles) Nessler is recognised as the inventor of the permanent wave, an innovation that transformed professional hairdressing worldwide. Developed in London at the beginning of the twentieth century, his invention laid the foundation for modern permanent wave technology and influenced the international beauty industry for generations.

Career Highlights

- Completed his apprenticeship as a hairdresser in the Black Forest region of Germany and continued his professional training in Switzerland.
- Moved to London in the late nineteenth century, where he established his own hairdressing business and began developing new methods of permanent hair waving.

- Developed the first commercially successful permanent wave process, laying the foundation for modern permanent waving.
- Presented the permanent wave publicly in London in 1906, attracting international attention within the hairdressing profession.
- Secured international patent protection beginning in 1909, paving the way for the worldwide commercial success of his invention.
- Expanded his business and manufacturing activities to the United States, where he continued to develop new products and technologies for the professional beauty industry.
- Left a lasting legacy that transformed professional hairdressing and influenced the international beauty industry throughout the twentieth century.

Historical Significance

Charles Nessler's invention marked the beginning of modern permanent wave technology and fundamentally transformed professional hairdressing. His process made long-lasting hair styling commercially viable and influenced salon practice, hairdressing education and the development of the international beauty industry throughout the twentieth century.

Today, Charles Nessler is widely recognised as one of the pioneering figures in the history of professional hairdressing, whose work continues to be regarded as a milestone in the evolution of modern hair technology.

About the Research Project

This fact sheet forms part of the **Charles Nessler Research Project**, an independent historical research initiative dedicated to documenting the life, work and international legacy of Karl Ludwig (Charles) Nessler.

The project is based on original archival sources from archives, libraries and private collections in Switzerland, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Its aim is to preserve historical sources, document new research findings and make Charles Nessler's contribution to the history of hairdressing and beauty innovation accessible to an international audience.

Contact

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