

Trend Less Fussy

Bridal Gowns Have New Shape

Once upon a time the dictates of tradition formed the statutes which no girl would dare violate when thinking of wedding preparations. Tradition said everything the bride wore or carried must be white; tradition said the bridal gown must look like mama's: long, full and lavish. Tradition also said there were only three appropriate fabrics for the gown: lace, satin, or peau. And, above all, the inviolable rule of tradition was that the wedding gown absolutely could not be worn at any time after the wedding. It was a sacred garment to be put away in tissue paper, to be left to yellow with age, and to be shown only to one's children after much persuasion.

TRADITION still lingers because brides, obviously, and thankfully, are still irrational romanticists especially over weddings. But tradition today has been modified by selectivity. Brides still foster many traditional ideas of wedding clothes even while they seem unnecessary. For example, almost any bride finds it delightful to follow the "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" routine.

On the other hand, today practicality and a modern sense of what is most aesthetically pleasing take precedence over the traditional concepts of what is right and proper. This is especially so in bridal attire.

THE GOWN itself has lost its look of ornateness. The modern way to achieve elegance is through simplicity. Thus ruffles, flounces, glitter, and cluttered lines have been eliminated. The emphasis is on shape and clarity of line. The skirt no longer hangs from the waist nor is it held up and poufed awkwardly out by hoops, whale boning, or stiff crinolines.

Now the shape is built right into the skirt by the cut of the fabric, the type of fabric, and through delicate and subtle darts. This gives the skirt a controlled and molded look. The desirable shape is straight, no matter how full the skirt is. It can be a sheath (never-fitted) or quite full from the waist tapering down straight on the sides. This controlled straight silhouette, when full, is called the bell shape and it can be created in varying grades of fullness.

TODAY, a train is no longer an indispensable part of the gown. Especially in the informal daytime wedding the quest for simplicity has ruled the train out. But when a train is worn, it no longer need be an extension of the rear hem of the wedding gown. Most trains now are detachable and extend either from the waist or the shoulders as panels.

Bodices are the most individual, with no one neckline or sleeve-length dominating fashion unlike the past when the long-fitted tapered sleeve and the heart-shaped neckline did. Short sleeves are now worn as often as long. Sometimes large collars and often small jackets cap the gown. But nearly all bodices and sleeves are still fitted with a slim, delicate appearance in mind.

FABRICS, especially for spring and summer wedding gowns, are most divergent from the past. Traditional satin and peau, no longer lace, are popular still. But linen, pique, organza, eyelet, tissue silks, and heavy brocaded cottons have become staple wedding fabrics. True white and ivory are no longer the only choices for fabric color. The choice now includes pearl, silver-white, blue-white, and whites with hints of pastel.

Newest fashions of all are in length, waist, and accessories. The new length is just at the ankles and is used only in the narrower bell and sheath shaped skirts. The trend is definitely toward the narrower skirt. A-shaped gowns with high, sometimes empire waists are a new-just-this-year trend.

FOR ACCESSORIES simplicity and surprise are pronounced. The veil is getting shorter and fuller and most of all, higher. Height on the crown of the head increases the current tall-slender look. Sometimes no headpiece is visible. The net of the veil is simply

poufed over the crown. In other cases pill boxes, bows, and single flowers made of fabric matching the gown catch up the veil replacing glittery, sparkly tiaras and fussy floral wreaths.

Bouquets certainly diverge from tradition. Many today are colored forming bright accents against the white dress. Different flowers, big floppy and full, are being used: daisies, chrysanthemums, cabbage roses, and tulips.

AND, AFTER the wedding, the modern wedding gown often continues as part of the trousseau. Because most dresses are chosen with simplicity in mind, they do not look so obviously and ornately bridish without the veil and bouquet. With few alterations a short wedding gown becomes a cocktail or party dress.

The new long gowns are created especially so that they can easily be transformed into ball and opera gowns. Trains are detachable and sometimes form evening capes matching the dress. Many dresses have jackets with the high decolletage and sleeves necessary for the wedding. When the jacket is removed the gown is no more than an evening gown. The dress has so little resemblance to the original wedding gown that it need not even be dyed.

Bridal Terms

For those who are familiar with many of the terms involved in the wedding gown, the following is useful. Peas are either silk or synthetic taffetas. Illusion is a silk net used in bridal veils. The bell is a molded dome-shaped skirt and applique is the term for a fabric, normally lace, transposed on another fabric. The trousseau is the bride's collection of clothes and household items for the wedding and for life as a newlywed.



DARBY TRAINER looks through a rack of wedding dresses and finds that the gowns come in a variety of styles and fabrics. Tradition no longer limits the dress to one basic type. The gowns pictured range from chantilly lace to cotton organza. Even the shades of white differ with each dress ranging from true white to yellow-ivory.

Traditions Have Strange Origins

By CATHY NEVILLE

The Romans, the Greeks, and even some unknown aboriginals play a surprisingly large part in the traditions and customs connected with a modern marriage ceremony.

The cake is sometimes broken over the bride's head and some people throw flour on her instead of rice. The veil and the wedding ring both seem to stem from traditions of female subjection or slavery, and, contrary to popular opinion, the kiss is not a universally known habit. Yet, these and many more customs have become an indispensable part of the wedding ceremony.

ANCIENT CUSTOM was that the man and woman broke a piece of gold or silver between them to signify their pledge to marry. In ancient Ireland the bride-to-be was presented with a bracelet of woven hair. Medieval peasants exchanged such tokens as rings

made from rush, leather or wood.

Nearly all precious stones have been used in engagement rings but modern brides seem to prefer the diamond. This may have come from the ancient superstition that the sparkle of a diamond originated in the alchemistic fire of love. Another reason that the diamond is preferred is that its hardness led some to believe it was eternal, thus the diamond ring symbolizes the eternity of love.

The Egyptians were the first to use a wedding ring in their ceremony. The ancient Jewish ceremony included the exchange of a ring, but this token was too big to be worn on the finger and was merely symbolic.

Some say that the circular shape of the ring is a carry-over from the circular fetters or bracelets placed on slave women in primitive times and that the ring still, unconsciously of course, symbolizes subjection and servitude. Wearing the ring on the left hand seems to indicate the same thing since the left hand is traditionally the symbol of subjection and the right, the symbol of power and authority.

THE RING is worn on the third finger of the left hand probably because of an ancient belief that a vein in this finger ran directly to the heart. Even today, many women would not consider themselves married if they wore their rings on another finger.

Some feel that the veil is also a symbol of submission. They point to the fact that women in religious orders and in certain Eastern countries wear veils for this reason.

The ancient Romans and even the English broke the cake over the bride's head instead of letting her cut it. Later the English formed the custom of piling small, spiced buns on the feast table and said that if the bride and groom could kiss standing on either side of the pile, they would be happy. Tradition has it that a French cook, traveling in England, thought this pile of buns was cumbersome and so started the custom of holding them all together with frosting, the ancestor of the decorated tiered wedding cake.

SOME BELIEVE bridesmaids are left over from the era of captured brides. The young girls accompanied their friend when she was forcibly taken by her intended husband to protect her. The best man is probably the descendant of the capturing groom's strong-arm man who kept the bride's family busy while she was being captured. Others believe the attendants stem from the fact that ladies of position had ladies-in-waiting and gentlemen had valets to serve them.

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