

Tradition Comes Second

Bridal Gown Design Becomes Imaginative

There once was a time when all weddings followed the same general pattern; they were planned by the dictates of tradition. Today traditions play a role in all weddings, but the decision concerning how many or how few of them are observed is strictly that of the bride.

Wedding gowns once were primarily the same in style: a fitted bodice, long sleeves, a full skirt and a long train. The only fabrics considered were satin and lace. After the wedding day had passed, the gown was packed away in a box and kept far out of sight, until perhaps one day a daughter asked to see "mother's gown."

Trains Now Detachable

Now the styles in wedding gowns are nearly as varied as those in other apparel, and the range of fabrics is wide. Gowns are designed to keep up with the faster pace of life today. Detachable trains and bolero jackets are the major innovations, making possible use of the gown after the wedding.

Traditions are still prevalent, and always will be, because a completely rational young woman becomes a hopeless romantic when it comes time to plan her wedding. Most brides follow the "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" tradition. Many of them choose to wear heirloom gowns or veils, or perhaps carry a handkerchief carried in previous family weddings.

Skirt Styles Vary

Bridal gown styles, despite their wide range, can put in four basic classifications: "modified A" line, sheaths, controlled skirts and bouffant skirts.

The modified "A" line skirt features a fitted waistline and subtle shaping of the skirt, widening as the length increases, until it forms an "A" shape. The sheath

style gowns give an air of dignity to a wedding with their long, slim lines. Both empire and natural waistlines are popular.

Simplicity Important

The controlled skirt, too, can portray dignity, and it tends to disguise either a too-heavy or too-thin figure. The more sleek lines of the controlled skirt are contrasted to the billowy, fullness of a bouffant gown. The bouffant skirt may feature a straight front panel, tiers of lace, the ever-important back interest, or simply be extremely full.

Simplicity is the key word in achieving elegance in a bridal gown. The billowy petticoats and hoop skirts are relatively uncommon in wedding attire at present. Instead, the gowns are designed to use the cut and substance of the fabric to form the shape, rather than an artificial means. Ruffles and flounces have been virtually eliminated with the trend toward simple, clean cut lines.

Tradition Retained

The molded look is popular, no matter whether the gown is a sheath or bouffant style. Straight front panels in bouffant gowns are accented with a fullness at the sides and in back, giving a dignified, modern look, yet retaining the traditional fullness of a bridal gown. Sheath gowns, although they are slim and straight, are never tightly fitted.

Detachable trains are predominant in sheath and bell skirted gowns, allowing future use of the dress, minus the train. Trains may be attached at the waistline of the gown, or flow from the shoulder as panels. They are usually

not worn for daytime weddings, although the style varies from area to area, and decisions should be left to the bride. If she has always dreamed of a flowing train on her bridal gown, and finds a morning or afternoon wedding to her liking, there is no reason she should not wear the dress of her dreams.

Empire Look Popular

Until recent years bodices on bridal gowns were fitted, although the neckline styles and sleeve lengths varied. In the past a sweetheart neckline and long sleeves, coming to points over the hands, were the rule. Now the choice includes wide-scooped necklines, "V's," square necklines, high necklines, and even gowns with wide collars. Occasionally gowns are sleeveless and are topped by a bolero jacket, thereby enabling the bride to use the dress as a ballgown or opera gown by removing the jacket, and train.

With the advent of the empire waistline last year, bodice styles underwent a change. The more full, bloused effect is gaining popularity, especially on the east coast, while the traditional fitted look remains more popular in the west.

Bows are often used to mark an empire waistline, as well as lace jackets, wide ribbons or bands of the gown material. Empire waistlines are generally used with a modified "A" line skirt, or a sheath style.

Fabrics Change, Too

Fabrics have undergone the most noticeable change in all wedding style traditions. Satin or lace are still used extensively, but

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A SPARKLING YOUNG DRESS fashioned of silk linen for the spring bride is modeled here by Linda Lea. The bodice is banded in Venice lace, which is repeated on the bell skirt and outlines the detachable train. The lace pillbox hat clasps an elbow length veil. The bridal ensemble is completed with white linen pumps, short white gloves and a white prayer book.

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