

# Bicentennial Panorama of Lovely Bridal Gowns

Styles in women's fashion have changed drastically over the years, often reflecting the social and economic atmosphere of the times.

Bridal gowns, however, have changed less in their fundamentals than any other type of costuming. The satin, the lace veil, the bridal bouquet, the prayer book, rosary, fan

or muff have been more or less constant features. Through the eighteenth century the wedding ceremony was held in the bride's home, but by the end of the Civil War the church had become the approved setting for the fashionable wedding.

Imported customs  
In the 1770s panniers

(frameworks used to puff out a skirt at the hips) were becoming more exaggerated and had become the court dress in France and England — a custom which lasted in England for 75 years.

During the 1770s the pannier was so large the sacque (over dress) closed only at the waist. Consequently, the petticoat became a functional part of the dress. Hair was powdered and decorated with flowers.

During the next 80 years fashion became influenced by a Greek revival, then to a new version of the hoop. Skirts began to swell and at first were held out by numerous petticoats.

Because of the weight of wearing many petticoats, these were soon replaced by a series of whalebone hoops attached by straps over which a petticoat and then a dress were worn.

Traditional white

It was only in the nineteenth century that white bridal gowns became a tradition which continues

up to today.

In the next 16 years the hoop diminished with the fullness moving to the back. When the hoop was finally ousted it was not by a rational silhouette but by the irrational bustle — one of the strangest shapes ever adopted.

1876 was also the year America was celebrating its centennial. Many fashions were designed in honor of the anniversary. The military influence was very strong and the dress had a definite tailored look.

Bustling brides

It was traditional at this time for the bride to wear her gown to the first dinner party after the wedding. The train of the skirt was laid in large organpipe pleats which gave the necessary fullness for the bustle.

By 1905 brides in general were imposing with their high pompadours, hourglass figures and forward-slanted posture of the Grecian bend. During this period, there was great emphasis on elegant

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undergarments, although they were never shown!

Twenty years later the history of fashion took a revolutionary turn. For the first time in the history of fashion, the dress reached the knees. This fashion trend lasted only three years, until the great depression, but it signifies the beginning of the liberated woman — a movement which changed the world.

THE UNVEILING

Wedding veils were unheard-of in the 1700's. Instead, hats, trimmings or flowers were used.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS

The orange blossom has been a bridal flower since ancient times. The goddess Juno gave Jupiter a "golden apple" on their wedding day — some say the golden apple was an orange; thus its blossom became associated with happiness in marriage.

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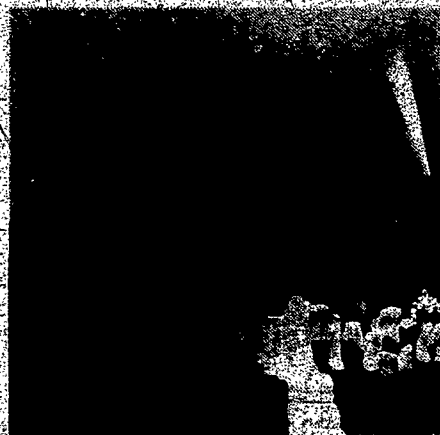
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