

THE EVOLUTION OF THE WHITE WEDDING DRESS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

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Throughout the history of time a woman and a man tying the knot was looked upon as nothing more than a business venture that both families would enter into, in hopes of gaining financial or social notoriety. Though the patriarch of the family usually would arrange to marry off his daughter to the best suitor available, it was left up to the rest of the family, mainly the mother to make sure that their daughter was presented appropriately at these ceremonies. This is when the wedding dress was introduced; families would choose the most lavish gowns they could afford.

Most times brides would often wear the nicest dress they could obtain and with many women unable to purchase new garments during these times it wasn't very unusual to see a bride walk down the aisle in a variety of different colors, one of these colors being black. "There were only a few colors that were typically avoided when deciding on a dress, like green which was considered to be unlucky back then. The color blue was a very popular choice for many brides as the color represented purity, piety and a closer connection to the Virgin Mary, and it's said that darker colors were perfect because the colors could easily hide stains and imperfections and be worn multiple times" (allthatsinteresting.com, 2013, para. 3).

The introduction of the white wedding dress can be traced back as early as 1406, with one of the most notable white weddings in history being the 1840 marriage of Queen Victoria. After the royal wedding the white trend was accepted within society, and began to continuously evolve throughout the century (allthatsinteresting.com, 2013, para. 4). During the Industrial Revolution many brides were able to purchase a new dress for their big day. The birth of the railroad reflected the dress styles women wore, with many women gravitating towards a narrower skirt. By the early 1900's the use of the corset under dresses was introduced, creating an even narrower frame for women. At this period in time the white bridal gown also featured puffed sleeves, frills, high

collars, and long trains. Ten years later (1910's) brides decided to lose the corset and go with a more looser dress style. Though the white gowns weren't as fancy bridal gowns still had a lot of character and often showcased a variety of lace, ruffles, and high collars.

Throughout the Roaring 20's components of the flapper dress were reflected in the style of wedding gowns worn. Many details such as dropped waistlines, shorter hemlines, and fringe were displayed within women's bridal fashion. The 1930's brought about the Great Depression and many brides felt compelled to go more simple and form-fitting opting out of the traditional fancy white gown, women would wear the best church outfit they had which would often be made from rayon. A decade after the Depression, the 1940's dress styles were made of furnishing fabrics to help save money and create practicality since post war times.

Continuing post war (1950's) formal white gowns were back in style with a variety of whites to accompany it such as off-white, ivory, cream, and colored bridal dresses were now considered to be tacky. The brides of this decade would utilize lots of lace, with humongous ball-gown bottoms, with a strapless and/or sweetheart neckline. The 1960's hipster fashion really translated into the bridal designs of this time with A-line skirts becoming very popular. Women's bridal gowns were created to form slimmer silhouettes, with the emergence of empire waists being featured in many designs. Contrary to the previous decade the 1970's disco era created a totally different vibe for women's bridal garments. The bohemian look was very popular and commonly used designs at this time were square necklines with batwing sleeves, ruffle skirts usually made from lace, chiffon, and charmeuse.

During the 1980's, it was an extremely trendy period especially for fashion and pop-culture. The "big look" expressed women's fashion styles, most notably within bridal fashion. More women would walk down the aisle in what was known as princess style dresses, coined

after the wedding gown princess Diana wore in her 1981 wedding to prince Charles. The princess style featured puffed sleeves long or short, and an excess of lace, tulle, and taffeta. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1990's) pop-culture was evolving and with that the typical white bridal look of the previous decade (80's) faded out of fashion, it became a lot more effortless depicting sleek, elegant streamlined gowns. Designers during the 90's would create minimalist gowns for women, opting for slinky gowns with spaghetti straps using very little detailing.

At the dawn of a new century (2000's- current) brides now have an abundance of options when deciding on the perfect wedding dress. Designers not only have access to endless fabrics like organza, chiffon, crêpe, satin, silk, and charmeuse, they also take inspiration from the past and present to help come up with different design styles. Some styles like fit-and-flare gowns with jeweled embellishments pant suits with capes, lace or satin gowns with bell or trumpet flouncy bottoms. Every season there is a new standout design that pushes the envelope on bridal couture as we entered 2019 we see feathers being used, and creative necklines designed with illusion fabric to help hold up these new lavish styles. As well now many brides decide go the custom route when choosing a bridal gown in order to truly stand out from the rest on their big day, personalizing their garments with colored accents, solid bold colors, patterns, and accessories.

Over the century, it is interesting to distinguish the various different white wedding dresses there has been throughout time. It is no surprise that culture, social class, and financial status all play a huge role in the type of wedding dresses women has worn. Although every bride has her own style and bridal fashion is continuing to evolve, we can truly see how the influence of an era has impacted the wedding attire of many women.



Industrial Revolution wedding dress- [www.weddings.lovetoknow.com](http://www.weddings.lovetoknow.com) (contributed by Donna Sundbald)



1900's wedding gown- [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) (The Evelyn Wedding Dress)



1910's wedding garment- London Museum/google images



1920's wedding gown- [www.thevintagenews.com](http://www.thevintagenews.com)



1930's wedding dress- [www.weddings.lovetoknow.com](http://www.weddings.lovetoknow.com)



1940's wedding dress- [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)



1950's wedding dress- [www.vintagedancer.com](http://www.vintagedancer.com)



1960's wedding gown- [www.burbankhigh1968.net](http://www.burbankhigh1968.net)



1970's wedding dress- [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) (Handmade bell sleeve crochet dress)



1980's wedding gown- [www.marieclaire.co.uk](http://www.marieclaire.co.uk)  
(Mar/29/2017, Caroline Leaper)



1990's wedding dress- Martha Stewart Wedding Dress/ google images



2000's wedding garment- [www.theknot.com](http://www.theknot.com) (by Sophie Burton)





2010-current wedding gown- [www.weddinginspirasi.com](http://www.weddinginspirasi.com)

(Paloma Blanca 2010 wedding dress)

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