

Doll Clothes of Yore

Original, Historical Designs for 18" Dolls

American Civil War Period - Circa 1840-1870



'Victoria's Wedding Gown'

History

When Queen Victoria of England was married on February 10th, 1840, she began a bridal tradition that has lasted to this day. Although white was worn by brides before Victoria's time, in Victoria's day, all colors but black could be worn at the altar – indeed, colors were more fashionable than white. Queen Victoria wore a simple, off-shoulder ivory dress decorated with lace and a few pieces of jewelry. Her veil was also made of lace, and she wore a simple wreath of orange blossoms instead of a diamond tiara.

After her wedding, Queen Victoria was criticized for being so conservative with her wedding attire, as white was not the fashionable color for brides. However, ten years later a popular fashion magazine, 'Godey's Lady's Book', praised her decision and wrote "...that white is the most fitting hue, whatever may be the material. It is an emblem of the purity and innocence of girlhood, and the unsullied heart she now yields to the chosen one..." Queen Victoria made it a tradition to wear white as a symbol of purity, and it has been the traditional color for brides to this day.

Fashion

This wedding gown, although similar to that of Queen Victoria, is actually based on an illustration from 1849. Although this dress is trimmed with roses, Victoria made it popular to wear orange blossoms (pictured at right) as hair and dress decorations for brides during the Victorian period.

Unlike today, the term 'Wedding White' during the Victorian period could mean many shades of white and cream, including eggshell, ecru, and ivory. A wedding gown during this time could be of any design and was not always in 'evening dress' form. Many were made with long sleeves and with more practical fabrics so that the bride could use her gown again after the ceremony.

What is a 'Bertha'?

A 'Bertha' in the 1850's was a type of collar that stretched around a lady's shoulders. It was acceptable for a lady's shoulders to be exposed in evening dresses, and this collar was a way of accentuating that style. The style of this collar originated in the 1830's, and has been popular in various forms since.