

Donation of the Month

Wedding Gown, 1906
Donor: Thelma Wark
1977.626.3



“Here comes the bride, all dressed in white”. While this is a common occurrence at today’s weddings, this wasn’t always the case. The tradition of wearing white wasn’t popular until Queen Victoria donned a white gown for her wedding to Prince Albert. Until then women wore a “best” dress or something that could be worn again. On January 28, 1906 Carra Wark was wed to John Wark in this white lawn gown.

The style popularized prior to the turn of the 20th century, labeled the Victorian era after Queen Victoria, featured heavy petticoats, large hoops, very full sleeves, and tight corsets creating a small waist. With her son, King Edwards, rise to the throne the style changed becoming more feminine and clingy. A woman in 1901 wore a skirt that curved upwards over a full behind and then down and in slightly at the knees to

flow out again in a sweeping train. The bodice was two layers, one of boned support and another cut larger to be fashioned so it drooped over the waist. The newer corset pushed the shoulders back while pushing the bosom forward. This along with the raised bottom and slight curve at the knees made an S silhouette. Unlike previous corsets the bosom wasn't divided creating a single, monobosom. The extra bodice fabric created a pouch allowing for the monobosom and by 1901 it was exaggerated. The sleeves were tight at the top and flared at the elbow. Edwardian style also introduced the high collar for day dresses. Often rising to the bottom of the ears and stiffened with boning or wire it was meant to give the woman a long elegant neck. The only resemblance of the Victorian style was the tiny waist.

When Carra purchased her dress in 1905 the Edwardian style had become less pronounced and began to incorporate some of the Victorian style. The first noticeable change was the fuller skirts, which still rose over a full behind but no longer clung to the woman's frame. The tight sleeves also relaxed with a layered or slight puff with narrowness at the wrist. In addition, the pouch of earlier became less and while the bodice still accommodated the monobosom it no longer fell over the waist. The collar remained high on day dresses, but no longer rose to the ears and became more flexible. Carr was on the cutting edge of fashion when she walked down the aisle in 1906, much like brides of today.