

Traditions keep changing

Bridal fashion changes with the times, expressing the spirit of its era, as all fashion does. Different historical periods have varying standards, ideals, and necessities.

What is "de rigueur" at the one time in history is outmoded, unnecessary, hopelessly dated in another. For instance, few women getting married for the first time today will walk down the aisle in a colored gown.

Whether their gowns are frilly or simple, sleekly sophisticated or fantasies in lace and embroidery, whether they opt for veils which trail down to the ground, or a simple wreath of daisies, white predominates. This was not always the case, however.

In fact, prior to the twentieth century, wedding gowns could be any color. According to one rhyme current in the Victorian era, the color of a woman's wedding gown reflected the future prosperity of her marriage. Thus:

Married in white, you have chosen all right;

Married in black, you will wish yourself back,

Married in red, you will wish yourself dead,

Married in green, ashamed to be seen,

Married in blue, you will always be true,

Married in pearl, you will live in a whirl,

Married in yellow, ashamed of your fellow,

Married in brown, you will live out of town,

Married in pink, your fortunes will sink.

About 100 years ago, only a reasonably well-to-do bride — or one whose family had pretensions to wealth — wore white to her wedding, as a white gown was a sign the bride's father was rich enough to buy his daughter a dress that she would wear only once. As clothing was expensive, most brides wore dresses that could be used over and over again.

One ingenious concept that made



its appearance toward the end of the 1800s was a gown made with alternative bodices — one would be used for the wedding, then put away as a keepsake; the second, less modest in design, would be paired with the skirt of the wedding dress and worn on special occasions.

Practicality, however, was not the sole force that dictated the bride's attire in the 19th century. Traditional superstitions held their own with regard to many aspects of the wedding, including what was worn, as they had for so many centuries.

The old rhyme, "Something old, something new, something borrow-

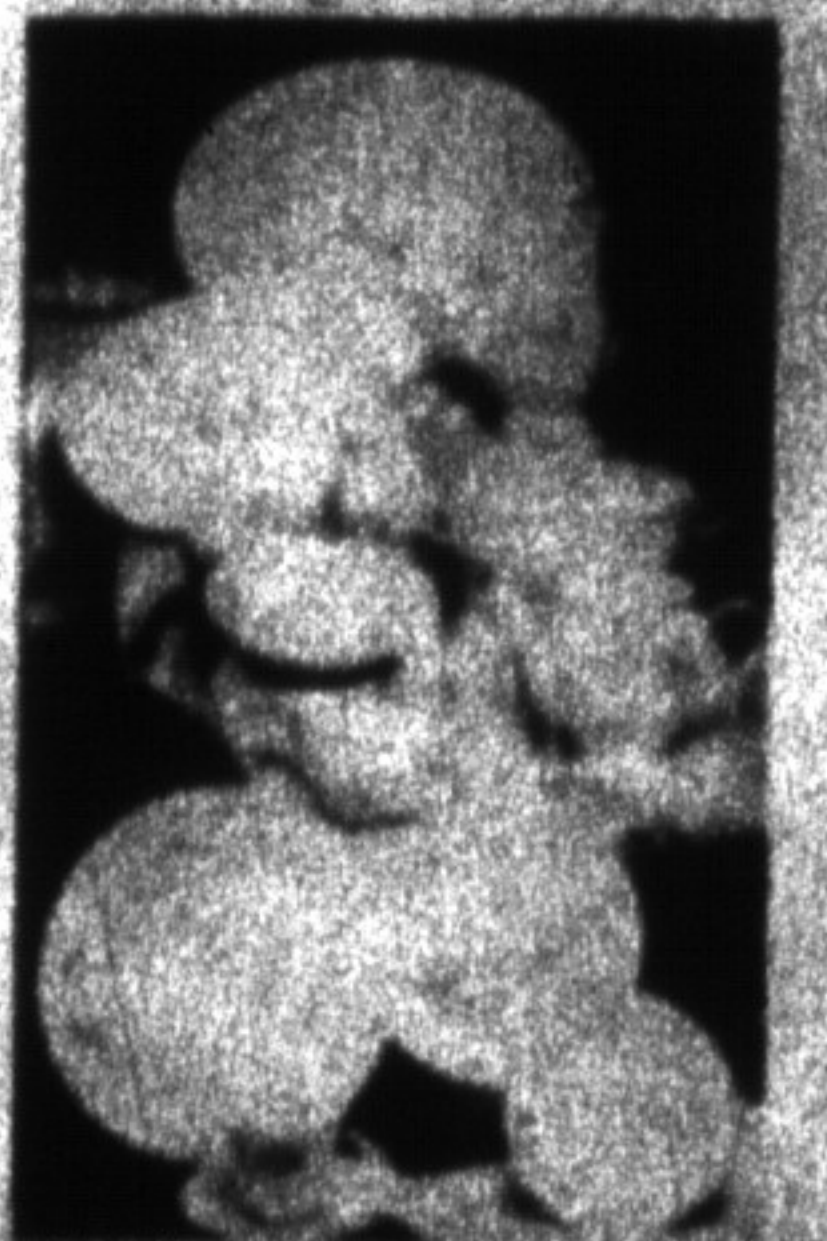
ed, and something blue," was religiously followed by many brides in the Victorian era, as it is today. There was a reason behind each of the elements in the rhyme.

According to *With This Ring* by Elizabeth Laverack (Elm Tree Books), a compendium of information on wedding customs and traditions, the "something old," usually lace that was handed down from generation to generation, was included in the bride's attire so that she would still be able to count on the love and affection that were hers prior to her marriage.

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