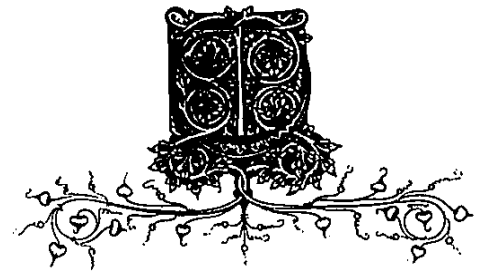


'Farthingale Fashion Festival Fun Fest'



Avenue de Sept.

This might have been the report of the Fashion Editor for the 16th Century Society news--when fashion found its most luxurious expression -- a time which marked a Renaissance in fashion as well as in politics and art. Then, as now, high couture was decided by the most prominent ladies in the land, be they queens, actresses or mistresses. France had just become the fashion center of the world--a position it has held for four hundred years. Fabrics were imported from all over the world: linen from Holland, lace from Belgium, wools from Spain, jeweled gold and silver cloth from Italy. The French court was dazzling. Gowns were tightly fitted with either deep décolletage or very high necklines accented with the Elizabethan Ruff -- an extraordinary style which reached such extremes that it became impossible to move one's head or to eat!

By far, the most dramatic fashion innovation was the farthingale, an unheard-of contrivance ushered into France from Spain in 1530 that changed fashion for the next 300 years, under different aliases and disguises

(the hoop, panier, crinoline, pouf or bustle.) Complimenting this was the steel corset -- a tortuous instrument that continues to squeeze, gouge, poke, push, mold and squash us into whatever shape is demanded by current whims of fashion. Styles of the 16th Century are a treasure trove for today's bridal fashion designer because there was such infinite variety in the shapes of sleeves, necklines, bodices and hems. Early in the century, sleeves were narrow at the shoulder and upper arm and opened into great hanging drapes which fell well below the waistline. These were gradually modified and by the late 1500's, sleeves puffed at the shoulder and narrowed to the wrist. The "leg o'mutton" of earlier centuries had a brief revival.

Renaissance stylists used all the sumptuous fabrics we see today in evening clothes and wedding gowns -- silk, satin, damask, velvet, and trims of embroidered tapestries and needlepoint ribbons shot through with silver and gold threads.

The ivory silk satin gown in the photograph below, taken by Jack Gorbach at St. Hugo of the Hills in Bloomfield is an adaptation of the Renaissance mood.

"Leg o'mutton" sleeves have vertical bands of french pastel and gold embroidered petit point edged in narrow Valenciennes lace. The same tapestry accents the reverse basque waist and embellishes the 16th Century headpiece. Lace edges the deep ruffled flounce which flows into a true "royal court" train. The low neckline is sculptured and feminine.

Current wedding gown trends are toward the 16th Century deep-pointed fitted "Basquine" waistline, which is in direct contrast to the all time favored "empire" look, so named for Empress Josephine. Today's wedding gown is likely to feature pleated ruffles at neckline, sleeve, shoulder, cuff and hem, capturing the style made popular by Elizabeth I of England.

Even shoe styling owes a debt to 16th Century, when the high-heeled broad-toe shoe was first introduced. Initially, it had elevations at both front and back. This preceded the "wedgie" or "chopine" which appeared later in France -- and was exactly like today's popular high wedge-heeled clog!

Hats and headpieces became smaller and close fitting, no longer distorting

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Sue Gordon Bridal Salon

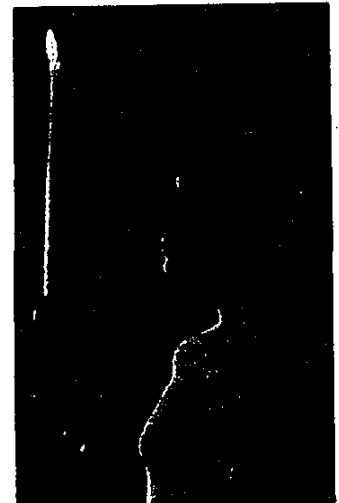


gown by Priscilla of Boston
Renaissance veil by Sue Gordon

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