

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Something old, something new: Wedding garb wasn't always white
by Jay Graybeal

The historical society's photograph collection of Carroll County families includes a number of images of wedding couples. Our library collection also contains local newspapers that provide wedding announcements. A comparison of 19th and 20th century examples shows changes in wedding attire and customs for brides and grooms in Carroll County.

The local wedding rituals of the mid-19th century were not as elaborate as today. At the time of Caroline Byers' marriage to William G. Rinehart in December 1856, newspapers carried a brief wedding notice under the heading of "MARRIED." A typical notice included only the names of the wedding couple, the clergyman and the date of the ceremony. The ambrotype image of Caroline Rinehart shows that she wore a plaid silk dress and a bonnet.

Little had changed when Hannah S. Yon married Joseph C. Garner on Feb. 21, 1871. The brief notice informed readers that the couple was married by Elder Solomon Stoner at the Uniontown home of the bride's parents. The photograph of the Garners includes attendants Martin L. Buffington and Fannie Starr. The dark colored clothing worn by the two couples represents their "Sunday best," but is not distinguished by any feature unique to weddings of this period.

The white wedding dress had become very popular by the 1890s. Fannie K. Bish wore a long white silk dress with matching gloves when she wed Charles E. Royer in 1898. The Westminster newspaper, the *American Sentinel*, carried a lengthy article about their "exceedingly pretty" wedding which took place at the Westminster home of the bride's parents: "The parlor of the pleasant home was handsomely decorated with ferns and chrysanthemums, and the bride and groom stood beneath a bough of mistletoe while the ceremony which made them one was impressively performed...The bride's gown was of white India silk, trimmed with real lace which was worn by her mother at her marriage, and she carried chrysanthemums." The newlyweds were showered with rice as they departed by train for a trip to Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Va.

Lillian W. Baile's January 27, 1904 marriage to Herbert G. Englar was quite similar. The couple was married in the parlor of Mr. and Mrs. Amos Wampler, the bride's aunt and uncle. The bride "was becomingly attired in a costume of white silk, trimmed in real lace, and carried a bouquet of bride roses."

The New Year's Day 1920 wedding of Ellen Valentine and Eureka Gregg Kiser took place at the Keysville home of the bride's parents. The newspaper article notes that the home was "tastefully decorated" with ferns. "The bride was attired in white satin, trimmed with georgette and silver lace, and carried a shower bouquet of white roses." The maid of honor wore pink satin and

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Georgette and carried pink carnations. The two bridesmaids wore blue satin and chiffon and carried pink carnations. In addition to the wedding photograph, the dress and white silk shoes were donated to the Historical Society.

These five Carroll County weddings reveal an evolution in wedding traditions which paralleled those taking place throughout the rest of the nation. By the mid-20th century the wedding ceremony had moved out of the family parlor and into the church. The local newspapers also carried a photograph of the newlyweds, something which was not possible a century earlier when Mr. and Mrs. William Rinehart “had their likenesses taken.”

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: Wedding pictures of Caroline Byers and William G. Rinehart, married in December 1856.

Photo caption: Hannah S. Yon married Joseph C. Garner in 1871. Attendants were Martin L. Buffington and Fannie Starr.

Photo caption: The white wedding dress had become very popular by the 1898 wedding of Fannie K. Bish to Charles E. Royer

Photo caption: Individual portraits were taken of the wedding couple for Lillian W. Baile and Herbert G. Englar in 1904.

Photo caption: Honeymooners Guy Cookson and Ada Royer pose at Devil’s Den on the Gettysburg Battlefield in 1899.

Photo caption: The Keysville wedding of Ellen Valentine and Eureka Gregg Kisler took place on New Year’s Day 1920.