

Wedding Traditions

Socratic Adventures Photography

www.SocraticAdventures.com

facebook: Socratic Adventures Photography

"TIE THE KNOT"

The expression "tie the knot" comes from Roman times when the bride wore a girdle that was tied in knots, which the groom had the fun of untying.

THE RING FINGER

In 3rd century Greece the ring finger was the index finger. In India it was the thumb. The western tradition began with the Greeks who believed that the third finger was connected directly to the heart by a route that was called "the vein of love."

THE ENGAGEMENT RING

In 860 A.D. Pope Nicholas I decreed that an engagement ring become a required statement of nuptial intent. He insisted that engagement rings had to be made of gold, which signified a financial sacrifice on the part of the prospective husband. The diamond engagement ring originated with King Maximilian who presented Mary of Burgundy with a diamond ring in 1477 as a token of his love. The Venetians popularized the custom during the 15th century. Since the diamond was the hardest and most enduring substance in nature it followed that the engagement and marriage would endure forever.



THE WEDDING RING

The early Egyptians believed that a circle was a symbol of eternity a sign that life, happiness, and love have no beginning and no end. Romans chose to wear a wedding ring on the third finger of the left hand because it was believed that a vein ran directly from that finger to the heart. In early Rome a gold band came to symbolize everlasting love and commitment in marriage. Roman wedding rings were carved with two clasped hands. Very early rings had a carved key through which a woman was taught to be able to open her husband's heart. There is a belief that during the 17th century, there was a Christian wedding where a priest arrived at the fourth finger (counting the thumb), after touching the heart.

THE TERM "WEDDING"

Although some brides were kidnapped, marriage by purchase was the preferred method of obtaining a wife. The 'bride price' could be land, social statues, political alliances, or cash. The Anglo Saxon word *wed* meant that the groom would vow to marry the woman, but it also referred to the bride price (money or barter) to be paid by the groom to the bride's father. The root of the word *wedding* literally means to gamble or wager.

LEAP YEAR PROPOSALS

The right of every woman to propose on the 29th of February each leap year goes back many hundreds of years to when the leap year day had no recognition in English law (the day was 'lept over' and ignored, hence the term 'leap year'). It was considered, therefore, that as the day had no legal status, it was reasonable to assume that traditions also had no status. Consequently, women who were concerned about never marrying, took advantage of this anomaly and proposed to the man they wished to marry. It was also thought that since the leap year day corrected the discrepancy between the calendar of 365 days and the time it takes for the earth to complete one orbit of the sun (365 days and 6 hours), it was an opportunity for women to correct a tradition that was one-sided and unjust.

DOWRIES

As civilizations developed, political, military, and economic ties became very important to prominent families and clans. Arranged marriages were a means of cementing ties between families, middle class, family businesses, and countries. A man's daughters, who were considered to be his property in those days, provided a means of securing needed alliances with other families. Thus, dowries were introduced as a means of attracting and securing the most beneficial family alliances possibly by the three fingers on the left hand; in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

STAG PARTIES

In Sparta, during the height of Breed civilization, soldiers were the first to hold stag parties. The groom would have a party for his friends the night before he was to marry. He would bid farewell to his bachelorhood and pledge his continued allegiance to his bride.



MARRIED IN THE MONTH

Married when the year is new, he'll be loving, kind and true. When February birds do mate, You wed nor dread you fate. If you wed when March winds blow, joy and sorrow both you'll know. Marry in April when you can, joy for Maiden and for Man. Marry in the month of May, and you'll surely rue the day. Marry when June roses grow, overland and sea you'll go.

Those who in July do wed, must labor for their daily bread. Whoever wed in August be, many a change is sure to see. Marry in September's shrine, your living will be rich and fine. If in October you do marry, love will come but riches tarry. If you wed in bleak November, only joys will come, remember. When December snows fall fast, marry and true love will last.

BRIDAL SHOWERS

Bridal showers were meant to strengthen the ties between the bride and her friends, provide her with moral support and help her prepare for her marriage. Gift giving at showers dates from the 1890's.

SATURDAY WEDDING

In early times, for Christians, Sunday was the original day of choice for weddings because it was not a work day. The Puritan revolution in England during the 17th century changed all that because the Puritans thought it improper to be festive on the Sabbath. Saturday is the most popular day for weddings now despite the rhyme.

*Monday for health, Tuesday for wealth, Wednesday best of all,
Thursday for losses, Friday for Crosses, Saturday for no luck at all.*

'BAD LUCK' FOR THE GROOM TO SEE THE BRIDE BEFORE THE CEREMONY

Until relatively recently, brides were considered the property of their father. Their futures and husbands were arranged without their consent. The marriage of an unattractive woman was often arranged with a prospective groom from another town without either of them having seen.

WHY THE BRIDE STANDS ON THE LEFT

During the marriage ceremony, the bride stands on the left and the groom on the right. The origin of this goes back to the days when a groom would capture his bride by kidnapping her. If the groom had to fight off other men who also wanted her as their bride, he would hold his bride-to-be with his left hand allowing his right hand to be free to use his sword.

THE BRIDAL PARTY

This term has many origins from different cultures. In Anglo Saxon times, the groom had the help of "brides men" or "bride knights" to help him capture or escort his bride. Later they would make sure that the bride got to the church and to the groom's home afterwards. The women who accompanied and assisted the bride were called "bridesmaids" or "brides women." The tradition of bridesmaids is evolved from the custom of surrounding the bride with other richly dressed women, in order to confuse evil spirits.

BEST MAN TRADITION

Among the Germanic Goths of northern Europe in 200 AD, a man usually married a woman from within his own community. However, when there were fewer women, the prospective bridegroom would capture his bride from a neighboring village. His strongest friend (or best friend), who helped him capture his bride accompanied the bridegroom.

WEDDING FLOWERS

From the earliest times, brides have adorned their hair with flowers and carried bunches of flowers. Traditionally, each type of flower had a special meaning and significance in and of itself. Flowers were often thrown at the couple after the ceremony. However today, most brides pick their flowers for color and personal appeal not based on the traditional meaning of particular flowers.

BRIDAL DRESS

Until the 1900s brides hardly ever bought a special wedding dress, opting for their best outfit instead. Green was always avoided, as it was thought to be unlucky. To say a girl 'had a green gown' also implied that she was of loose morals, because her dress would be grass stained due to rolling around in the fields! Hence 'Marry in Green, ashamed to be seen.'



Queen Victoria, who broke the tradition of royals marrying in Silver, made White dresses popular. Symbolizing purity and virginity, white was also thought to ward off evil spirits.

Other traditions are that the bride should never make her own dress, that the final stitch should not be completed until she is departing for the church, and that she should never try on the entire outfit before the day. This was because it was felt dangerous for the bride to count her chickens. For the same reason, a bride should never practice signing her new name until it is legally hers, and wedding linen was marked with the bride's maiden name rather than married initials.

Married in White, you have chosen right,
Married in Grey, you will go far away,
Married in Black, you 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 in the town,
Married in Pink, your spirit will sink.

BRIDAL VEIL

The origin of the wedding veil is unclear, but it is thought that it predates the wedding dress by centuries. One explanation is that it is a relic of the days when a groom would throw a blanket over the head of the woman of his choice when he captured and carted her off. It is also thought that the veil was worn to protect the bride from evil spirits that would be floating around on her wedding day. Brightly colored veils were worn in ancient times in many parts of the world and were considered a protection against evil spirits. Greek and Roman brides wore yellow or red veils (representing fire) to ward off evil spirits and demons. At one time, Roman brides were completely covered with a red veil for protection.

In early European history, with the advent of arranged marriages, veils served another purpose to prevent the groom from seeing the bride's face until after the ceremony was over. Brides began to wear opaque, yellow veils. Not only could the groom not see in, the bride could not see out! Therefore, the father of the bride had to escort her down the aisle and literally give the bride to the groom. Another explanation is that during the times of arranged marriage, the bride's face was covered until the groom was committed to her at the ceremony so it would be too late for him to run off if he didn't like the look of her!

GARTER AND BRIDAL BOUQUET TOSS

In parts of Europe during the 14th century, having a piece of the bride's clothing was thought to bring good luck. Guests would literally destroy the bride's dress by ripping off pieces of fabric. In order to prevent this, brides began throwing various items to the guests the garter belt being one of the items.

In order to avoid this problem, it became customary in the 14th century for the bride to toss her garter to the men. Sometimes the men would get drunk, become impatient, and try to remove the garter ahead of time. Therefore, the custom evolved for the groom to remove and toss the garter. With that change the bride started to toss the bridal bouquet to the unwed girls of marriageable age.

THE ADAGES: "SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE" AND "A SILVER SIXPENCE IN HER SHOE"

This rhyme originated in Victorian times. 'Something Old' refers to wearing something that represents a link with the bride's family and her old life. Usually, the bride wears a piece of family jewelry, or maybe her mother or grandmother's piece of family jewelry, or maybe her mothers or grandmother's wedding dress or garter.

'Something New' represents good fortune and success in the bride's new life. The bride's wedding dress is usually chosen, if purchased new, but it can be any other new item of the bride's wedding attire. 'Something Borrowed,' which has already been worn by a happy bride at her wedding, is meant to bring good luck to the marriage. Something borrowed could be an item of bridal clothing, a handkerchief or an item of jewelry.

'Something Blue' dates back to Biblical times when the color blue was considered to represent purity and fidelity. Over time this has evolved from wearing blue clothing to wearing a blue band around the bottom of the bride's dress, and to modern times where the bride wears a blue or blue trimmed garter.

'Silver Sixpence In Her Shoe' This shows wealth. This is not just to bring the bride financial wealth but also a wealth of happiness and joy throughout her married life.



GROOM'S CAKE

The tradition of a "Groom's Cake" comes from England and Ireland. There, the traditional grooms cake is a fruit cake with white icing. The groom's cake is usually served along with the traditional wedding cake. Today groom's cakes are very often chocolate instead of the traditional fruit cake.

WEDDING CAKE

Ancient Romans would bake a cake made of wheat or barley, and at the end of the ceremony, would break a thin layer over the bride's head as a symbol of fertility. Crumbs were then gathered by guests as good luck tokens. Eventually, it became tradition to pile up several small cakes, one on top of the other, as high as they could, and the bride and groom would kiss over the tower and try not to knock it down. If they were successful, it meant a lifetime of prosperity. During the reign of King Charles II of England, it became customary to turn the piles of small cakes into an edible palace, iced with white sugar.

THE TOAST

The term originates from the sixteenth century. At that time a small piece of bread would be placed in a goblet of wine. The goblet would be passed from guest to guest until it reached the person being honored who would drain the goblet and eat the morsel of bread in the bottom. This tradition is practiced at weddings today usually in the form of one or more champagne "toasts." The best man has the honor of giving the first toast. Usually the bride and groom remain seated for the toasts while all the guests are usually standing to honor them. The couple may then make a few remarks thanking their families, wedding party members, and guests. They may also "toast" each other or share a "toast" together. The bride and groom often use special glass or silver goblets.

CONFETTI & RICE

Rice has been used as a symbol of fertility and as a wish for a "full party" in various parts of the world from ancient to modern times. In the past, rice was not the only thing thrown at the bride and groom as they left the wedding. Wheat, instead of rice, was thrown in France, figs and dates were thrown in Northern Africa, and a combination of coins, dried fruit, and candy was thrown in Italy. Since rice is harmful to the birds that eat it, birdseed has replaced it for most weddings. Flower petals, confetti, bubbles, and balloons are often used today instead of rice.

TYING OLD SHOES TO THE CAR

This tradition originated in England during the Tudor period. At that time, guests would throw shoes at the bride and groom as they left in their carriage. It was considered good luck if their carriage was hit. Today, more often than not, it is beverage cans that are tied to a couples car instead of shoes. It should also be noted that the English consider it good luck if it rains on their wedding day!

THE "HONEYMOON"

After "kidnapping" his bride, the groom would take her and go into hiding. By the time the bride's family tracked them down, the bride would probably already be pregnant! A "bride price" would then be negotiated. An earlier source is the early Jewish custom of the bride and groom spending a week together alone immediately after the marriage feast. The earliest reference to this practice is Jacob's marriages to Leah and Rachel.



THE THRESHOLD

When entering their home as a married couple for the first time, the new husband would carry the bride over the threshold to protect her from evil spirits that were thought to be lying in wait under the threshold. Romans believed that if the bride stumbled when entering the newlywed's home for the first time, it would bring bad luck and harm to their marriage.