

not fashionable to have the trousers creased, for this was the mark of ready-made clothes that had lain folded on a shelf—the “hand-me-downs.” With the rise of the high hat (beaver, later silk) in the 1830’s, the last phase of men’s fashionable costume was entered. Later styles have been variations of the ideas launched during this period.

Boys may take pride in the fact that knickerbockers were invented long before trousers, although perhaps they will not be so pleased to know that the parent of both garments was the skirt. The change was brought about by an Assyrian king who lived over eight hundred years before the birth of Christ, and who hit upon the idea of introducing cavalry armed with bows and arrows into his army. The notion was excellent, for horse-soldiers still form part of a modern army, despite the coming of tanks, aeroplanes, and many other mechanical devices. Unfortunately there was one great disadvantage for men who had to ride horses—their skirts were always in the way.

How Knickerbockers were First Made

In due course this defect was partly met by slitting the garment in the front and at the back. It was certainly more comfortable in one particular though not in another, for it was very cold in chilly weather. King Ashurnasirpal had probably been dead over 100 years before



Dutch—early 17th century.

an unknown tailor of mighty Assyria made an experiment by stitching up the edges of each division so that there was a little case for each leg. Thus knickerbockers came into being, though it was a long time before the novel garment was worn

by those who did not prance about on horses. Wonderful bas-reliefs depicting Assyrian warriors in both skirts and “shorts” are still in existence. The great starched ruff and the farthingale were the outstanding features of women’s costume in the days of Queen Elizabeth. These ruffs, stiffened with wires and spread over concealed frames, became so enormous that it looked as if the head were being carried on a

huge platter. The skirts became extended until they stood out at right angles to the body. This was the first appearance of that curious thing the “hoop skirt” or “farthingale,” as it was called at that time.



Burgundy—late 15th century.

Its next appearance was in the 18th century, when a tight-fitting bodice, often sleeveless, surmounted great billowing petticoats, and over these hoop skirts the gown was draped and looped like a drawn curtain. In 1750 the hoop petticoat had attained such proportions that ladies found it difficult to pass each other in the narrow streets of London and Paris. The last wave of the extended skirt or “crinoline” came in the 19th century, and echoes of it continued in the bustle and hip-pads even into the beginning of the present century. Since the draped and

kilted princess robe which followed the crinoline hoop skirt, women have had more individual freedom in their clothing, although the fashions are changed slightly from year to year.

Where the Women Wear Trousers

The distinction has been made that near the Equator both men and women wear a kind of skirt, while in the more active life of the Polar regions, both men and women wear trousers. In the great temperate zones the men have kept the trousers and the women the skirts. An exception to this is the trousers of the women of China and the long full trousers worn by Mohammedan women. The freedom of action possible when trousers are worn has led to their adoption by women engaged in hard work, as in the mines in Belgium, in tending cattle in the Tyrol, and in many industrial works in Europe and America as well. Women have also adopted breeches for riding, golfing, and other sports.



Dame and “Elegant” of 1695.

The practice of a bride wearing a veil on her wedding day is so old that it has been traced to ancient Greece. In Norway and Sweden the veil gives place to a crown, which is not the