

# Fashion in the 1920s

[History](#)



Women's Fashion In The sass After the end of World War I, the United States president, Warren G. Harding, claimed that he wanted to return to normalcy and to bring back the peace following the years of war; society did change, but it was no where near what it had been before the war (Margarita 14). " The reactionary temper of the sass and the repressive movements it spawned arose as reactions to a much-publicized social and intellectual revolution that threatened to rip America from it old moorings" (Tindal 800). During this time, the 18th Amendment was passed in order to maintain society's previous morals and tankards.

Many Americans saw the consumption of alcohol as a sin and did not want their society to lose their morals (Margarita 8). Shortly after its passage, the 19th Amendment was passed allowing women the right to vote; instead of having a passive role in society, women were beginning to be more proactive. The appearance of woman in society did not stop work place; instead, because of prohibition and the popularity of speakeasies, women were welcomed and populated such venues. Tuxedoed men accompanied women wearing the latest fashions filled the latest clubs (Margarita 27).

Traditionally, 1920 was seen as marking a clear divide in the chronology of women's affairs: the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the vote ended years of struggle, and with the 'liberation' of the war, which destroyed old stereotypes, led on to the 'New Woman' of the sass" (Wynn 133). World War I was the turning point from traditional values to a newly enlightened America, a rebellious youth, and newly freed women; as art reflects society, the emancipation and celebration following the war is reflected in the style and fashion that came alive in this new era.

Beautiful coordinated and accessories outfits were a feature of sass's ladies fashion, [which consisted of] hats, shoes, stockings, handbags, dresses and Jewelry [that] all came together in perfect harmony to create a unique and elegant style" (Scott). This style portrayed the times as Americans began to stray from the past and the old American ways. " During those years a cosmopolitan urban America confronted an insular, rural America" leading to the development of urban cities (Tindal 800).

In these populated cities, people began to let loose as " Prohibition indirectly led to bootlegging and speakeasies, while the rowing rebelliousness of teenagers highlighted the generation gap" (Drowned back cover).

Participation in these illegal venues had been unheard of in the previous decades, but these changing times encouraged the promotion of such activities and these environments called for a certain style and fashion. " The Twenties did roar, and this volume shows the many colorful ways the decade altered America, its people, and its future" (Drowned back cover). This 'new woman' [that arose] eagerly discarded the constraining fashions of the nineteenth century - pinched-in corsets, conforming petticoats, and floor-length dresses" (Tindal 801). As the times were changing, their fashion changed in order to reflect " the rebellion against prudishness and a loosening of inhibitions" (Tindal 801). These new trends shocked the old-timers as the " the revolution in manners and morals, evidenced first among young people" were represented in their clothing (Tindal 800). As women were beginning to live more freely, their style reflected the same attitude. In 1919 women's skirts were typically six inches about the ground; [but] by 1927 they were at the knee, and the flapper' was providing a shocking model

of the newfeminism" (Tindal 801). These omen portrayed " a period of escapism, a youthful reaction against the dark and serious clothes, behavior and mood of an older generation still clinging to old Victorian and Edwardian values" (Herald 6). They were starting to represent the idea behind the 'new women. ' During this time the girls are actually tempting the boys more than the boys do the girls, by their dress and conversation" straying away from old traditions (Tindal 801).

They began " a move[meet] toward breaking down national boundaries in everything fromfinanceto style - [which] was a theme that ran through the decade" (Herald 6). Women's fashion reflected the change in attitude evident following the war. Fashion followed the new needs of the wearers and the more rebellious consumers in urban American society. " The passing of bustles and corsets gave clothing designers much greater freedom of expression resulting in innovative styling" (Scott). This permitted the newly reformed lifestyle and attitude to be expressed in women's clothing.

In came " the new and colorful fabrics [that] echoed the Joy felt by a war weary population following the end of hostilities" as well as the " slim, streamlined look of the twentieth century," which represented " youth, ability, and a freer form of sexual expression" (Scott; Blackjacks 133).

Women now had the freedom to express themselves and not worry about the opinion of the public. They no longer had to be concerned with their modesty as the ideals began to yield " to modern sensibilities," they began to expose their limbs and a " tight encasement of the[IR] torso" (Blackjacks 133).

Society demand brought the new style as they insisted " that clothes be appropriate for the time of day, the activity, or the formality of the occasion... The higher someone's rank, [depicted the amount of] clothes they needed to meet society demands" (Herald 11). In addition, fashion made improvements towards practical clothing as " women's underwear changed . With corsets becoming smaller and more flexible, and modern style bras being introduced... [providing] shape and support whereas the older style tended to flatten breasts and constrict the chest" (Scott).

Another practical need emerged with the growing popularity of the speakeasies. Women were welcome and where the women are, the men will be and the women were flocking these clubs and actively dancing the night away. " Flappers, as the trendy young women were called in the U. S. Wore short dresses with a straight loose silhouette. By 1927 seams had risen to just below the knee, so that part of the knee could be seen when dancing the Charleston" (Scott). " Flapper fashion featured bobbed hair, minimal undergarments, gauzy fabrics, and sheer stockings" so that they could be free to move while dancing (Tindal 801). Although the sass did abound with flappers and would be flappers, the decade also hosted... Women asserting new power" (Coot 413). And while the flappers' new needs were sought out, fashion also created new opportunities in the workforce for Hess brave and powerful women. Along with the 19th amendment allowing women's voice and freedom, fashion opened up new Job opportunities that were available to women. " Women were beginning to enter male-dominated profession, where male clerks were generally being replaced by women typists and secretaries" (Herald 11).

The " office girls needed a whole new wardrobe of smart day wear [as they began working] with new-fangled machines" (Herald 11). These Jobs of " dressmaking and millinery courses in particular were embraced by women who wanted the new fashions but couldn't afford the retail prices" (Scott). Some women moved into new vocations created by the burgeoning consumerculturesuch as accounting assistants and departments store clerks" (Tindal 802). " All the big department stores had mail-order catalogs where you could order clothes for men, women, and children" and have them delivered (Scott).

This meant country people had easy access to city fashions for the first time" (Scott). Others were looking to create full part-time Jobs for themselves" (Scott). They also wanted to " support their fatherless families or to earn extra income to spend on the new luxuries. Working omen also embraced the relatively inexpensive ready-made clothes a mass production of contemporary clothing became common. " (Scott). As the times began to change, the clothes and their designers followed suit.

Style and design of fashion changed as women's clothing became " lighter (due to less material and new synthetic fabrics) and brighter and shorter than ever before" (Scott). Fashion designers experimented with colors, patterns, and fabrics for textures. Evening dresses, coats and Jackets were often trimmed with fur. Hemlines rose for most of the decade" (Scott). One of the influential designers of the decade was Hattie Carnegie, known for her " personal taste and fashion sense, [which] influenced the styles worn by countless American women" (Shaw). She sought to " interpret European style for American consumers" and her style was welcomed as it had " a <https://assignbuster.com/fashion-in-the-1920s/>

guarantee of sophistication and propriety' (Shaw). Carnegie had " an approach to fashion that emphasized consummate polish in every outfit" (Shaw). Eventually she " made her name synonymous with American high fashion for almost half a century' (Shaw). " The Carnegie customer, whatever her age, seems to have been neither girlish nor attorney, but possessed of a certain decorousness" portraying the turn in attitude as well as fashion (Shaw).

As the event of changing style, different fabrics were introduced changing the shape, feel, and mood of fashion. " The sass opened with an explosion of color" as the education of fabric became known and lines were becoming more demonstrated through out the style (Herald 6). Hattie Carnegie " often stressed the importance of black as a wardrobe basic for both day and evening" (Shaw). The color blue was known as " a standard color for woman's dress" in the sass's (Scott). Fashion designers used color to portray different emotions.

Colors such as green were notorious for being " very restful to the eye [as] light orange is too bright to be used freely' (Scott). Later the " Barberry Company introduced its trademark red/camel/black-and-white check in the twenties as a lining for the trench coat" that is still popular today (Herald 6). As women were beginning to understand the use of the textiles, they began to see their " possibilities and make the most of them" (Scott). Fashion helped the women express their individuality as their role of the 'new woman' was taking form.

The transformation in American culture and society would not have been possible without World War I. Whether it was the celebrations for the end of the war or the results of 18th and 19th Amendments, society transformed from traditional values to new, enlightened customs. The celebrations, speakeasies, and superfluous lifestyles demented change and woman paved the way with fashion. Not only did women's fashion change, the new 'modern women' was born. During this era known as the 'Roaring Twenties' women were given the right to vote and more importantly, the right to live more freely throughout society.