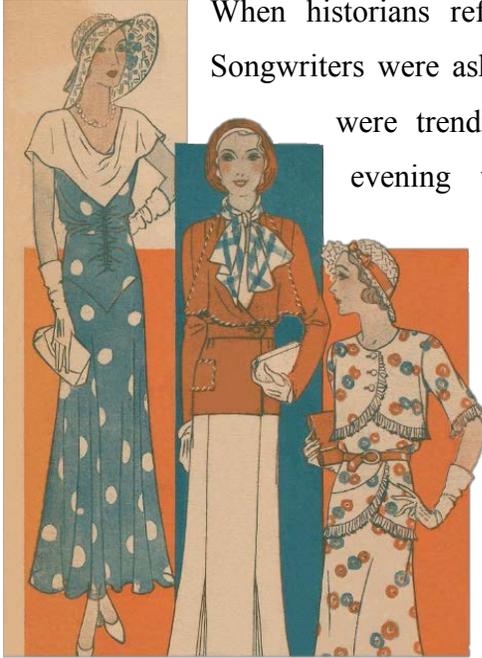


Looking One's Loveliest in 1931

A Pictorial Summary of Model 'A' Fashions

By Jill Barrett, Santa Clara Valley Chapter, California



When historians refer to the 1930's, we read about "the great depression". Songwriters were asking, "Brother can you spare a dime?" But fashion dictators were trending feminine hairstyles, wider shoulders, narrow hips and evening wear with a new emphasis on the back. In 1931, dresses were charming, graceful, slenderizing and exuded femininity.

The dropped waist was gone. The waistline was worn higher at the natural line and belts were worn tighter. Hemlines were one to two inches longer than the previous year falling at the mid-calf and for the most part were straight although uneven hems were seen on "Sunday Supper", semi-formal and other formal afternoon fashions.

Sleeveless dresses had matching jackets or boleros. Dresses with short sleeves were here to stay. Semi-formal dresses had capped sleeves, short elbow length sleeves or a shallow cape attached.

Dresses were seen in black, shades of dark brown, wine, maroon, rose and a variety of dark greens. Black or navy blue were combined with white, pastels or bright colors and were important spring and summer colors. Shades of tan and brown were mixed with colors in a print or as an accent. Ornamental bows and flowers of earlier years weren't as common but were seen on semi-formal and formal dresses.





Felt and straw cloches had close fitting brims with shallow cap-like crowns for daytime wear. For afternoon wear, straw and horse hair hats tended to have larger brims. In general, hats were worn up off the face, pulled down on one side to expose a woman's graceful waves of hair. Her hat was matched with her accessories instead of her dress or coat as in previous years. Fur scarves were still popular and a sign of discriminating taste. Shawls and scarves were practical and available during all years. Colored stone jewelry was almost entirely relegated to sport and morning outings. Pearls are seen more with fluttering afternoon frocks and colored crystals

were popular for afternoons and evenings.

Purses were still a major accessory, usually made from leather, but fabric purses were also found with needlework or petit point. Late afternoon and evening bags were smaller than daytime bags. Course mesh, fine mesh and enameled mesh were popular with art deco designs and shapes. Glass beaded purses with colorful designs were popular for evening outings.



Seamed hose and shoe styles did not change in 1931. Shoes with round, square and pointed toes were common throughout 1931. The heel height was determined by the purpose of the shoe. Evening shoes had graceful, slender heels.

The new lines were nothing if they weren't slenderizing. Women were encouraged to select dresses with small prints, soft flattering collars and surplice closings. The sophisticated, elegant look and fashions of 1931 were meant to uplift women and help them forget the bleak years and the shapeless day wear when the stock market crashed.



Bibliography

Model A Ford Club of America, MAFCA Fashion Guidelines, 2010 Edition, La Habra, California, Model A Ford Club of America, Women's Era Fashions 1928-1931, page 3A-9

The Pictorial Review Company, Pictorial Printed Patterns, June 1931, 560 Mission Street, San Francisco, California, The Pictorial Review Company, front cover, page 4

The Pictorial Review Company, Fashion Book illustrating Pictorial Patterns, Summer 1931, Pictorial Review Quarterly, 222 West 39th Street, New York City, New York, Pictorial Review Company, page 51

Coming Fashions and Ideal Woman, Coming Fashions and Ideal Woman Free Paper Patterns, June 1931, Coming Fashions, 93 Long Acre W.C.2, page 48, 49, color center fold

Model A Ford Club of America, Running Board Vogue, date unknown, La Habra, California, Edie Jones

1930's Fashion: What Did People Wear?, The RetroWaste, www.retrowaste.com/1930s/fashion-in-the-1930's, Fashion in 1931, March 14, 2019

#####