20th Century Essay, Research Paper

The 1920s in America were times of great change. Coming out of the horror

of the First World War, society exploded in a million different directions.

The Twenties saw women voting, the Harlem Renaissance, and an incredible

burst of affluence for the middle class. With automobiles and appliances

made people’s lives easier and gave them more leisure time.

The incredible, rapid change that struck the country is clearly illustrated by

women’s fashions of the decade. Woman in the 1900s went from cover-up to

showing parts of their body, in only a short period of twenty years. Women?s

fashions in pre WWI and in the 1920s have many differences and

similarities.

There are many differences in women?s fashions in pre WWI and

1920s. In the first half of this century, every conceivable possibility in

millinery design was explored: from the extravagant hats of the early 1900s,

to the elegant cloche hats of the 1920s. Both day and night, hemlines were

to the floor; eveningwear (and some daywear) was even longer, in the 1900s.

In the 1920s, the salient features of women’s day wear clothing are short

skirts and dropped waistlines. Then evening wear became straighter and

shorter, after which daytime wear copied it. It was in evening wear that the

innovations of twenties style first appeared. By 1926, women who grew up in

a world that barely acknowledged knees were nearly wearing their dresses

above them. In the 1900s, women covered up their necks, but women in the

1920s showed their necks. The style of hair in the 1900s was an ?up? hair

do. The 1920s time period was “bobbed” hair. First introduced during and

just after World War I and popularized by Irene Castle (amongst others),

bobbed hair created a sensation. The impact of bobbed hair and all it was

felt to represent was enormous. In the 1900s, women wore tallies. The

taille is only waist-length with the hem made to look like a satin belt. The

top fabric defines a V neckline supposed to look as though a lace waistcoat

and undergarment showed in the opening. In fact, the all of it is sewn into

the front parts and closed with patent buttons. The sleeves are tight and

wrist- length. Black fabric is about the worst to get a good look at… To the

right of the opening is the edge of the base bodice, marked by the

interchanging hooks and eyes that close it. Immediately left from it

protrudes the middle lace flap that covers the d?colletage, onto which the

collar is sewn. In the 1920s, women wore silhouettes. The silhouettes of

the earlier part of the decade are long and cylindrical, with the skirt falling

7″ to 10″ below the knee. Despite the relatively simple silhouette, the wide

variety of detail was astonishing. Even inexpensive, ready-made clothing

from catalog and chain stores such as Sears portrayed an imaginative range

of cuts and trims. The silhouette of the early twenties was still rooted in

the shirtwaist and skirt mode of the teens. It was in high fashion that the

long straight silhouette started to get a toe-hold. In the 1900s, women?s?

clothes were light colors and in the 1920s, they were darker and more

outstanding.

There are similarities in women?s fashions in pre WWI and the 1920s.

Women wore hats, hats were always worn, even today. Women wore dresses

all day. Their day wear clothing was always more casual than the evening

wear. Women wore long silhouettes. Fashion was very important to women in

both periods.

In conclusion, postwar disillusionment lead to many social changes

during the 1920s. Women?s fashions is one social change that occurred in

1920s with pre WWI culture. There are many differences and similarities

between women?s fashions in pre WWI and 1920s. The flapper plays a great

role in the changing of women?s fashion. The flapper challenged the past

social roles of women by enjoying the same freedom as men and dressed in a

way their mother and grandmother wouldn?t believe possible.