

The Origin of Wedding Rings

The history of wedding rings dates to the 1500s. Couples would get engaged and purchase Gimmel rings. These interlocking rings would be divided, one for the bride to wear, the other was worn by the groom. This was the couple's way of announcing to the world that they plan to get married. During the wedding ceremony, the groom would remove his half of the Gimmel ring. He would then place it on his bride's finger as a symbol of unity. These days, more brides are breaking away from traditional wedding jewelry in efforts to make unique statements. They want their individuality to shine when planning their weddings and picking out their wedding rings.

It wasn't until the late 19th Century when men started wearing wedding bands in the U.S. And, it all started as a marketing campaign directed at ladies. The goal was to encourage men to also take part in the act of wearing a symbol of unity after the nuptials are over, just like the brides. Only about 15% of the men of the Depression days wore wedding bands. Many believe this was due to the financial hardships many suffered during that time. But, that number increased to about 80% by the post-World War II era. Today, during the 21st Century, this tradition continues here in the U.S. Many other countries have stuck with the tradition of just the bride wearing a wedding ring after the ceremony.

Wedding Traditions and Myths

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue

The saying, "Something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue" has been used since Victorian times. The "something old" represents the bond to the bride's family and her old life; "something new" represents the couple's new life together and their future hope for happiness, prosperity and success; "something borrowed" from a happily married woman is meant to impart similar happiness to the bride; and "something blue" represents fidelity and constancy.

White Bridal Dresses

Wearing white also dates to Victorian times when Queen Victoria discarded the royal tradition of wearing a silver gown and chose to wear white. Before that brides wore their best gown, rather than a distinct wedding dress. The acceptance of white can also be credited to it representing purity and virginity. White was also believed to ward off evil spirits.

Sharing the First Piece of Wedding Cake

The Romans believed that by eating the wedding cake together a special bond was created between the couple. The wheat used to bake the cake was symbolic of fertility and a "fruitful union", while the cake's sweetness was thought to bring sweetness to all areas of the couple's new life.

The **Ceremonial Kiss**

Concluding the wedding ceremony, this kiss is said to represent the couple sharing and joining their souls. In Roman times the kiss "sealed" the couple's agreement to join in a life-long commitment.

Groom's Boutonniere

The wedding tradition of the groom wearing a boutonniere originates in medieval times when a knight wore his lady's colors as a statement of his love.

Bridal Flowers

In addition to adorning the bride with flowers to promote good luck and good health, they would also allow the bride to express her feelings for the groom. Orange blossoms signify purity, daisies loyalty, violets modesty and red roses signify true love.

Wedding Ring Placement

Placing the wedding ring on the third finger of the left hand has two potential origins; ancient Egypt or 17th century Europe. The Egyptians believed the "vein of love" ran directly from the ring finger to the heart, therefore the ring was placed there to denote eternal love. During a 17th century wedding ceremony the groom would slide the wedding ring part way up the bride's thumb, index finger and middle finger as the priest said "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit". As the ring finger was the first free finger, the ring was placed there.

Throwing Rice

This is an ancient tradition based on the belief that is thought that by throwing in on the couple they will be bestowed with fertility and have many children....as rice is considered a "life giving" seed. Many churches however, forbid it on their property these days, but there are some alternatives.

Toss birdseed: organic and safe for the environment, birdseed provides a free meal to the birds and requires little clean up. But, if you thought rice was hard to pick out of the hair birdseed is nearly impossible!

Toss colored confetti: imagine walking through a swirl of delicate, brightly colored snowflakes - very pretty. However, like rice it causes a major mess and is difficult to brush off your clothes.

Blow bubbles: nothing evokes fond childhood memories like walking through a cloud of bubbles. They're fun, affordable and a big hit with guests. Another bonus is they cause no mess. One rare downside is that some bubbles can stain delicate materials.

Release butterflies or doves: this is a very dramatic, fairy tale type of exit. Unfortunately, birds and butterflies can be unpredictable; sometimes they don't fly as you like, or worse don't fly at all! (Butterflies in particular require warm weather). Plus, there's always the hilarious risk of someone's clothes being ruined from an "accident from the sky".

Throw rose petals: nothing is more romantic walking through a shower of velvety, delicately-scented rose petals. There is some mess involved, but it is much easier to clean up than rice. Another drawback is the cost - you'll require a lot of rose petals, which will be expensive.

Ring mini bells: the sound of ringing bells is said to bring good luck. Miniature bells are relatively affordable and the soft tinkling sound is quite pretty.

Wave sparklers: if your ceremony is in the evening this makes bright and dazzling exit. If you're having a Fourth of July wedding, this option is perfect for you!

Wearing Pearls

This is one of those wedding myths with both bad luck and good luck meanings. The ominous version of this myth holds that pearls represent future tears; thus wearing them will bring many tears and heartache in the marriage. The luckier version of this implies that the pearls take the place of the bride's real tears, thus she'll have a happy, tear-free wedding.

Tears on the Wedding Day

It is considered good luck for the bride to cry during her wedding. She will have cried all her tears away leaving none for the marriage. Another theory holds that a bride's tears are good luck as they bring rain for the crops.

Rain on the Wedding Day:

This is another good luck - bad luck wedding myth. In the good luck version, rain is said to foretell the coming of children just as rain promotes growth in the farmer's fields. In the unlucky version, rain drops represent the many tears a bride will cry throughout her marriage.

Signing your married name before the wedding

It is considered bad luck for the bride to sign her married name before the wedding as it tempts fate. For the same reason, the bride should avoid wearing her entire bridal outfit prior to her wedding day.

Dropping the wedding ring

On the one hand, dropping the wedding ring during the wedding ceremony was seen as lucky as it would shake out evil spirits hiding in the ring. On the other hand, dropping the ring was considered the most ominous of events; whoever dropped the ring was said to be the first to die.

Unity Candles

Lighting a unity candle is a beautiful and moving addition to the wedding ceremony. The lighting of candles has long been practiced in cultural and religious rituals, but the unity candle ceremony is relatively new. This act symbolizes the continuity of family and the sharing of the "eternal light of life". The couple use their individual tapers to light the one large candle together. The lighting of the single candle symbolizes two individuals joining as one.

Wedding Vows

Traditional wedding vows provide a time honored and revered way to exchange vows. These are likely the same wedding vows used by your parents, grandparents and other ancestors throughout the generations. There's a special sense of continuity and connectedness in knowing you're using those same words and that someday, so too may your children.