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# Evolution of Bras

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## Why Bras?

Bras have played an important role in feminism movements. As women's role in our society changes so does the bra as a reflection of it. The bra shapes the trends and how we view the female body. Once was something to hide with clothes but now women show off their bras proudly. Through the bra we are able to see the zeitgeist of each era.



# Timeline

# Undergarments Before Bras:

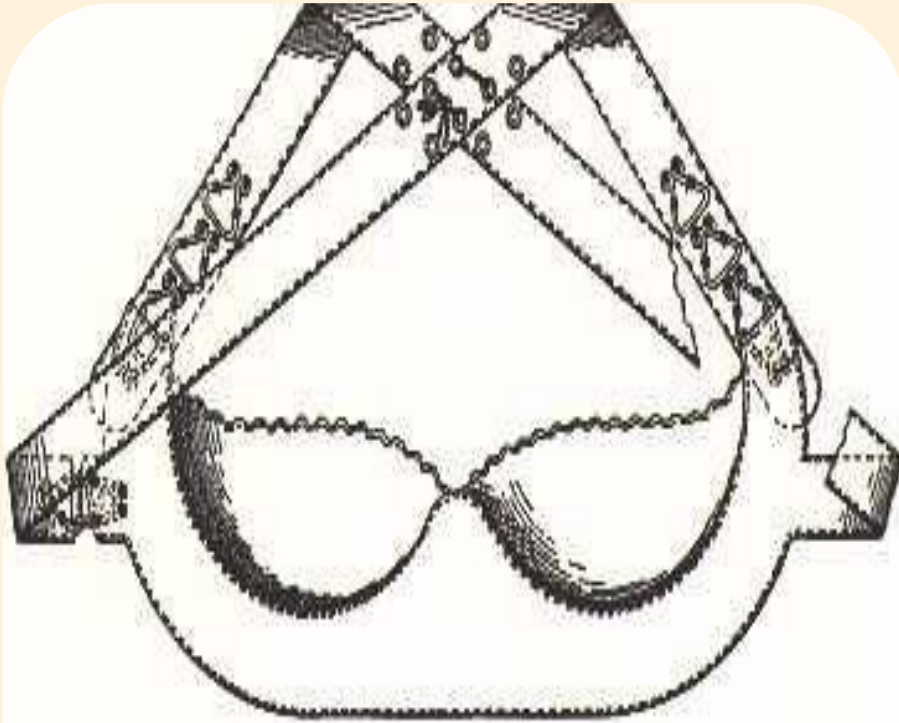


- Strays and Corsets were soft muslin dresses that were popular in the early 1800s. By the late 1800s corsets were made with less boning. In 1840 a new style of corset was introduced which featured vertical rows of whalebone shaped to fit the natural curves of the body.
- Health Corsets were designed to allow women to breathe more freely.
- S-Bend Corset were worn extremely tight to create a dramatic silhouette, and to achieve a “handspan” waist.
- After 1907 the extreme “wasp waist” style began to fade. Corsets became straighter in shape.
- 1911 the elastic belt and bust bodice were worn by younger women during World War I. By 1914 it was worn under the bust, covering the nipples.

# The Brassiere:

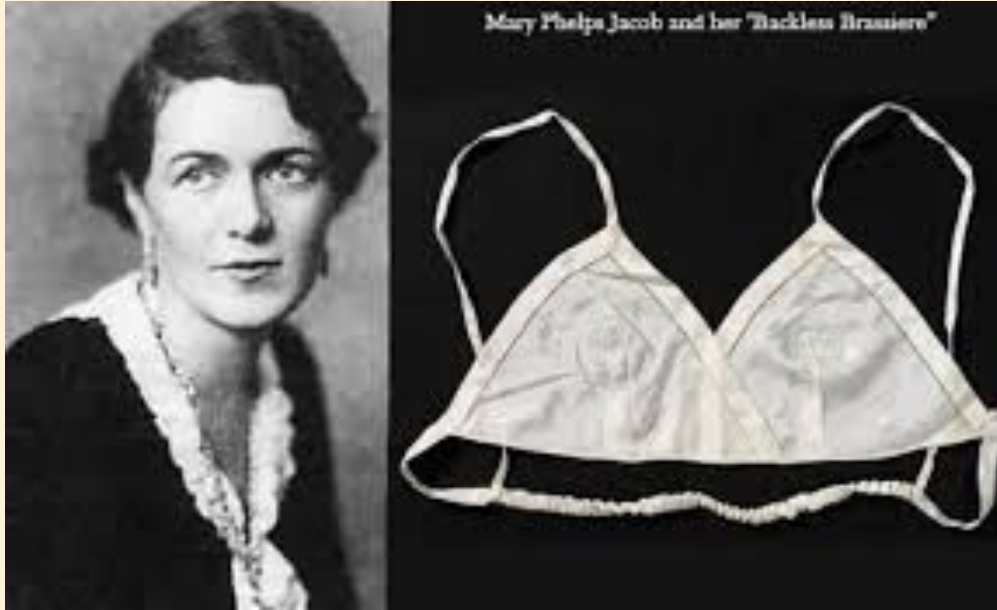
## Marie Tucek:

- **Patented the breast supporter in 1893**
  - Considered an early version of the modern bra
  - Featured shoulder straps and hook-and-eye closures
  - Supported the breasts in separate fabric pockets
  - Designed to lift rather than compress the bust
- **Not comfortable by modern standards**
  - Materials and structure were rigid compared to today's bras
- **Worn by daring women as an alternative to the corset**
  - Represented a move toward body freedom and function
- The word "brassiere" was used by *Vogue* in 1907 for the first time.
- The word would later be introduced in the Oxford Dictionary in 1911



Marie Tucek's patented "breast supporter" above would not be out of place even in today's lingerie shops. No. 494,397 (1893).

# The Invention of the Modern Bra:



- The modern bra was designed by Mary Phelps Jacob, who was a New York Socialite in 1910.
- She created this first bra with two silk handkerchiefs fashion with a ribbon. This design was a big hit with her friends and acquaintances that she was asked to make more.
- She patented this design in 1914 and later sold it to Warner Brothers Corset Company
- With the developed of the first bra it was a move away from the restrictive corset of the past and movement towards femininity and body image

# Introduction of Cup Sizes:



Difference in inches	UK Cup Size
1"	A
2"	B
3"	C
4"	D
5"	DD
6"	E
7"	F
8"	FF
9"	G
10"	GG
11"	H
12"	HH
13"	J
14"	JJ
15"	K

- In the 1930s the bra became more mass produced.
- The first sizing scale for bra cups was introduced in 1932 by S.H. Camp and Company. Before cups sizes were created companies used stretch fabric to make bra 'one size fit all.'
- They used letter to represent the cup sizes these letters being A, B, C, D, which is the scale that is still used to this day.
- Cup sizes, bands, and eye hook were all introduced to give a better fitting bra



## WWII Impact on Bras:

- WWII led to changes in the bra. The first was that **women were working more** especially more labor intensive jobs. Because of this the **Torpedo bra** was invented, it had thick straps, heavier padding and more coverage. All of these design features provided more **protection and support for working women.**



## Transition from Function to Fashion:

- Nylon was introduced in the 1940s, which allowed for more colors and prints to be added to bras.
- Bras became more fashion statements
- The torpedo bra became the the bullet bra but was more defined. And was worn by many famous stars of the 50s including marilyn Monroe, Jayne Mansfield, and Lans Turner.
- Along with this the padded bra was invented by Frederick Mellinger, who owns Frederick's of Hollywood. He paved the way for how we view undergarments. He added lace and satin along with bold colors and shapes

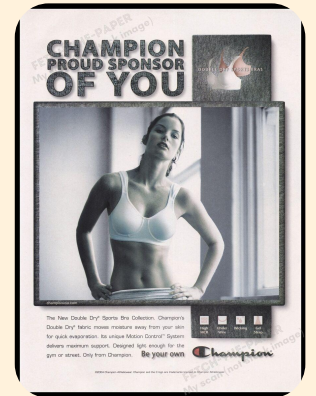
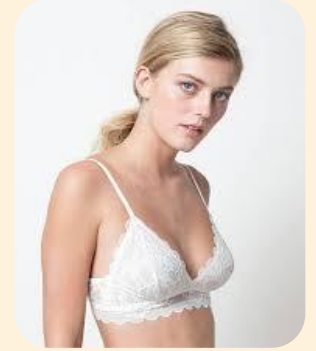
# Feminism in the 1960s & 70s:

- In the late 1960s into the 1970s, the feminist movement impacted the bra. Many deemed them to be restrictive and uncomfortable. They wanted more equal rights and to broaden the beauty standard. Symbolic “Bra burning” in the 1960s to represent getting rid of traditional gender roles
- With the feminist movement came the sports bra. Because more women were participating in sports and working out, they needed something to support them but also be comfortable. It was created by three friends, Lisa Lindahl, Hinda Miller, and Polly Smith, in 1977 when they put two jock straps together naming it the “Jogbra”
- The sports bra was a more full coverage and supportive bra for moving around a lot



## 2000S-2010S:

- There was a rise in body positivity in the 2000s and a rise in athleisure movement. This caused for bra companies to make more comfortable bras. The bralette became more popular and women chose those and sports bras over cupped style or completely ditched the bra
- Memory Foam Bras were introduced in 2009. These bras were designed to keep the wearer comfortable and cool while giving shape
- Modern Mastectomy Bras made by Dana Donofree to make them without underwire and more soft fabric for those that had a mastectomy



# Designs & Innovations:

## Sizing Inclusivity:

- Extended size ranges, that can accommodate more body types
- Use of diverse models to reflect real-world representation

## Sustainable & Ethical Manufacturing:

- Use of eco-friendly materials like organic cotton, bamboo, and recycled fabrics
- *Meeloy*: Recycles bras to reduce landfill waste, and donates to women and girls globally



## Technological Integration:

- Incorporation of advanced materials and fabrication techniques
- Features like breathable fabrics, moisture-wicking technology, and smart bras with health monitoring capabilities
- Digital fitting technologies

## Luxury & Craftsmanship:

- Premium fabrics, hand-sewn details, and limited edition collections
- Focus on niche markets and attention to intricate details

## Versatile & Convertible Styles:

- Designs with removable straps, adjustable fits, and reversible functionality

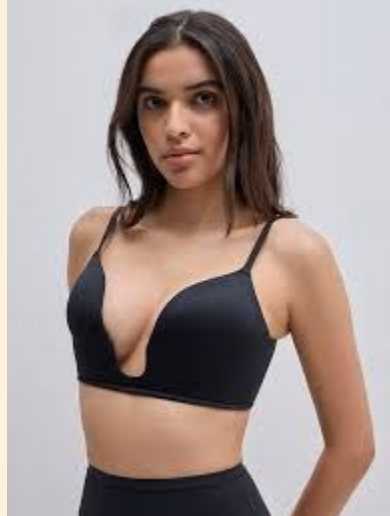
## Bold Colors & Expressive Patterns:

- While neutral tones remain, there's a shift toward bolder colors and patterns
- Emphasis on self-expression through fashion
- Includes floral motifs, eye catching prints, rich hues, and seasonal themes

## Comfort-Driven Design:

- Seamless construction, wireless support, and softer, skin friendly materials





## Bras Today:

- There are many bras options available today. Companies want their bras to be more inclusive, offering a wide range of sizes and shades of fabric.
- You are able to find a bra for any outfit, including backless or plunging necklines.
- Companies like Nubian Skin, Savage x Fenty, Third Love, and Skims are known for offering more than just beige they offer many colors for different skin tones
- And brands like Elomi, Freya, and Pepper offer a wide range of sizes for every busts



# Victoria's Secret:

- Victoria's Secret dominated the U.S. lingerie segment for decades
- The brand turned the lingerie sector into something glamorous and mainstream
- In 1995 is when the brand first launched the *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show*. The show was a televised global event spotlighting top supermodels, and featuring music performances. With this launch they also create the first jewel encrusted bra called the "Fantasy Bra"
- Controversy overcame the company in 2018 with their marketing being centered around ultra-thin, conventionally attractive models, alienating broader body types
- The brand did their first fashion show since 2019 with diverse models to reintroduce the brand in 2024





## Influencers/Media:

- Celebrities like Madonna and Grace Jones would wear looks that were bra-centric on stage when they perform
- Brands use social media to engage with customers
- Brands embrace social media through influencer marketing with their lingerie lines
- With user-generated content, it makes lingerie a more normalized topic





## SKIMS:

- In 2023, Skims which is a lingerie company founded by Kim Kardashian, launched a bra with added nipples. It gives that perky braless look without the bra
- This was very silhouette shows signs of movement, it gives women more options. It's about reclaiming femininity. It's not about keeping them covered or not.
- A lot of criticism came out from this bra but many came into support of it especially for new moms and cancer survivors.
- Also recently they came out with a nipple bra that has fake nipple piercings



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# Resources