Necktie Encyclopedia Article

Necktie

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Necktie

The necktie is thought to have its origins in the military. Soldiers of ancient Rome wore focales tied around their necks. Croatian soldiers are thought to have introduced neck scarves to France when they arrived there as mercenaries in the late seventeenth century. Worn by Croatian officers, these neck scarves were made of silk or muslin and had tassels attached to their ends. It is also believed that the French may have begun wearing neck scarves or ties even earlier, possibly during the Thirty Years War (1618-48).

During the 1700s it was common for men to sport wide, stiff whalebone stocks, fastened with straps or buckles at the back of the neck and a bow or knot in the front. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cravats, which were full, frilly, or lace-trimmed neck scarves, were a popular component of male clothing. By the middle of thenineteenth century, cravats had been replaced by string ties, knotted bow ties, and ascots.

By 1870, Western men were wearing the "four-in-hand" style tie that would remain popular through the twentieth century. For formal occasions, the white bow tie or black string tie was popular. The wide, soft, loosely-knotted windsor tie was worn with sporting attire. During the settlement of the American West in the nineteenth century, bandanna-patterned cotton neckerchiefs became a practical accessory of the American cowboy's wardrobe, protecting its wearer from dust during cattle drives. The twentieth century saw the arrival of the black bow tie (initially considered rather daring) and the popular striped pattern necktie.

Today's standard necktie was patented in 1920 by the American Jesse Langsdorf. Made up of four pieces of cloth cut diagonal to the grain of the cloth (to prevent twisting), necties remain a staple of the male wardrobe as well as ties continue to reflect fashion trends and changes in popular culture.