

## Donation of the Month

Teddy  
1992.43.2  
Donor: Vera Hill



Wearing a pair of pajamas, pj's, nightgown or some type of comfortable clothing to bed has been part of the nighttime ritual for a long time. Originally just a long night shirt the act of wearing specific bedtime

attire called pajamas started after English colonists discovered that the loose-fitting jackets and trousers worn by the Indians were perfect for lounging and sleeping. In fact the term pajama comes from the Persian word “payjama” meaning “leg garment”.

While men have always traditionally worn trousers or a long night shirt to bed, women’s night garments resembled their daytime attire. Although missing the restrictive corsets and multiple petticoats, women traditionally slept in a gown in very similar cut and style to their day dress. By the 1910s and 1920s the shorter less restrictive dress styles brought about a large change in women’s undergarments and lingerie. It was a loose fitting garment with a straight cut and a simple button closure at the crotch to define the legs. This new style was called an envelope chemise or camiknickers as it combined a camisole (bra cover) and knickers (basically shorts) that had traditionally been worn under women’s clothing. The envelope chemise or camiknicker better conformed to the loose fitting and boyish look of the 1910s and 1920s.

The envelope chemise or teddy as it was called later pictured here is a great example. Made of silk and lace this teddy was made by Mrs. Hill in the current 1920s style. The loose fitting style would match her loose fitting dress and allow her to remain ‘in style’ while lounging or sleeping.

The style remained popular through the 1940s as it accommodated the rise in popularity and necessity of trousers for women. The clothing style of the 1930s and 1940s changed from the boyish look of the 1920s to a more form fitting style; the undergarment also became more fitting and contained a fitted bust line. By the end of the 1940s the popularity of this type of undergarment and lingerie dropped; however, it saw resurgence in the 1990s. In the 1990s the style was for use only as nighttime wear. Today, most pajamas no longer match current style trends as they no longer relate in any way to outerwear. However, the comfort of pajamas means that many wear their pajamas as outerwear while lounging at home or grocery shopping.