

French Lingerie from 1931

Lingerie Élégante

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Feminine Daintiness in the New Lingerie

By Jeanie Adair

The following pages are from a 1931 French lingerie catalog that belongs to Beaver Chapter member Pam McClaflin. I have permission from her to use scans from the catalog to share the gorgeous items found on the pages. The following text below was an introduction to the fashion pages. There are several words that you may wonder what they are, so I've included in parenthesis a translation or meaning. There were however, a few I could not find. And of course a few words that are spelled differently, such as colour for color as we usually use it. Further, as you might expect, era lingerie had lots of pretty trimmings on it. So there are several different kinds of lace mentioned. Many times it refers to where it was made, for instance Chantilly lace was named after the city of Chantilly, France. Lace and decorative hand work could be a whole other article.

One is constantly impressed anew by the perfection of detail and fineness of material that characterize the modern (to that era!) underwear. Only real lace sorts are used by a leading Parisian firm for this purpose. Besides crepe georgette, crepe de Chine and voile triple, crepe satin is of paramount importance. The dull surface is generally trimmed with bands and cut-outs of the lustrous side.

Dark brown and ochre Maline and Alengon lace are incrustated in Nile green, pink, pastel blue and emerald green silk. Yokes, scallops curved pieces, bows are of lace together with jacket and bolero shaped incrustation of this handsome garniture (adornment, trim, embellishment, finishing touch). One sees lace let-in (insert, widened by sewing in an additional piece) on vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines. It forms rosettes, medallions and all sorts of motives, followed by hand-made ajours (hand work, cut outs), delicate embroidery, knots, appliques and cut-outs.

Useful step-ins to be worn with trotteur (referred to a trotting horse or meaning to go, to be on the go, scurry about) and sport frocks, have coloured pipings and trimming effects; much in favour are two shades of one colour, pale and dark lilac, beige and brown, peach and pastel blue a. s. o. However pink is the pet of our well dressed ladies. Pink in all its hues: apricot, eglantine (bright pink), rose Ninon (a sheer silk fabric), ancient and Patou (a French designer) rose, salmon, aurore (pinky orange) combined with ochre or black lace. Black frocks are worn with matching combinations (this refers to a set as in a bra and panty of the same fabric and designs) and trimmed with ficelle (literally means string in French so probably string lace) or ivory lace and discreet white garnitures. Ivory crepe de



Chine looks very well when worked up with black Binche, Maline or Chantilly lace.

Evening slips are often made of doubly laid silk muslin of a most delicate changeable effect. Some consist of flat crepe, crepe satin or georgette, held in the colour of the dress. They are in knee length or reach to the ankle bone following the length of dress and finished off by transparent tulle or lace yokes atop and borders below. Some have front and back of silk material while the remaining part is of silk lace matching in colour. Evening combinations appear in well-known shapes and styles. There is, first of all, the princess slip fitting tightly to the figure and buttoned on the left side or at the back. The low back is fixed with slender shoulder straps. Seams are nearly always open-worked.

Night robes go well down below the knees and are enriched by plisses or bell pleats. They are often longer behind and have festooned or waving hemlines. Yokes of all sorts as well as bolero effects in lace for sort of Empire style, with a slender girdle effect. Shoulder collar and epaulettes cut with yoke are specially meant for slender appearances.

Apart from bed jackets, 3/4 long coats are of great importance, which are used as saut de lit (a light bathrobe worn when jumping out of bed) in place of morning gowns. Both are selected of the same material or only in the same colour as the nightgown. Some old fashioned styles are made in the mantlet (sleeveless cloak or robe) shape or look like the peignoirs (a light dressing gown or negligee) of our grandmothers. Morning gowns are in Empire or Directory style, completed by short coatees (short close fitted jacket) of matching zenana or pressed panne (velvet like fabric), banded with fur or marabout plumes. (Marabout plumes came from a stork, today they use the fluffy part of chicken or turkey feathers. Marabout plumes are mostly used today in making fishing lures.)

White coloured trim lingerie, too is shown for everyday wear. There are batiste, toile de soie, lavable (washable), triple voile, Japanese silk with fils tires, ajours, buttonholed borders and embroidery, curved edges, Valenciennes and bone lace. Our women of fashion have particularly smart lingerie pieces trimmed with practical and handsome embroidery which is coming back to us once more. Hole embroidery is high in fashion for all sorts of lingerie pieces, for pillow-sheets and table linen alike. A chic new contribution to the feminized fashions of our days are pyjamas (pajamas). The long and wide trousers are pleated, cut in curves or in leaf shaped and trimmed with bows and lace. Sleeveless blouses long or tucked-in are bound with slender girdles. A long, wide coat made of the same coloured or the same material as the trousers serves as a completion. The handsomest colour combinations are black and turquoise blue, black and red, black and oranges, black and white, emerald green with beige.

The same tendencies are followed by the beach pyjamas with bolero of white dotted red shantung which is meant for fair blondes. Three-coloured combinations are much liked too; white-pale bluer and navy; black-white and red; beige-red and ochre. A smart model in Mexican style is made of gold brown satin with white trousers puffed below, worn with short and wide bolero, completed by an orange red silk bloused with wide girdle embroidered in many colours. Another one is made of long trousers in white crepe, sleeveless long coat with capelet trimmed with black satin appliques.

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Lingerie, and Teddies, and Bloomers, Oh My!

Lingerie from the Model A era had several names for the garments that are uncommon to us today. Slips were pretty common to today's. Bras were called bandeaus and brassiers. There were panties, bloomers, step-ins and dance sets that were a matching pair of panties and bandeaus. Then another item was chemises and teddies. They look like a short slip but actually have a slip top but with a snap or button closure at the crotch; the lower half hangs like a slip. There are lots of examples of sleepwear, robes, jackets, pajamas and even a page of beach wear. Be sure to check out all the lovely lacey adornment on the garments.



In the center circle is shown a blue slip with lots of lace; notice the back is bare to be worn with a backless dress. The pink garment is a chemise, again trimmed with lace. The model in white is modeling a very plain, though monogrammed, vest and step-in that buttons on the side. At the top center is a pretty pink dance set (#159) of a bandeau and step-in. Another example in yellow is at the center at the bottom of the page (#166). On #162 you can see a button closure of the lavender teddie or chemise at the folded up center front hemline.



What an array of color choices they had!



Check out the variety of adornment or "garniture" as the text said.



Slips, gowns, chemises or teddies, step-ins and panties on this page.

Gowns,
jackets and
slips



I thought the green set (#107) was a lovely color, this would be a bloomer style instead of a panty style as in the pink set (#110). Also notice the pretty jackets.

Pyjamas with various kinds of trims.

The yellow set could be a three piece set with a sleeveless jacket.



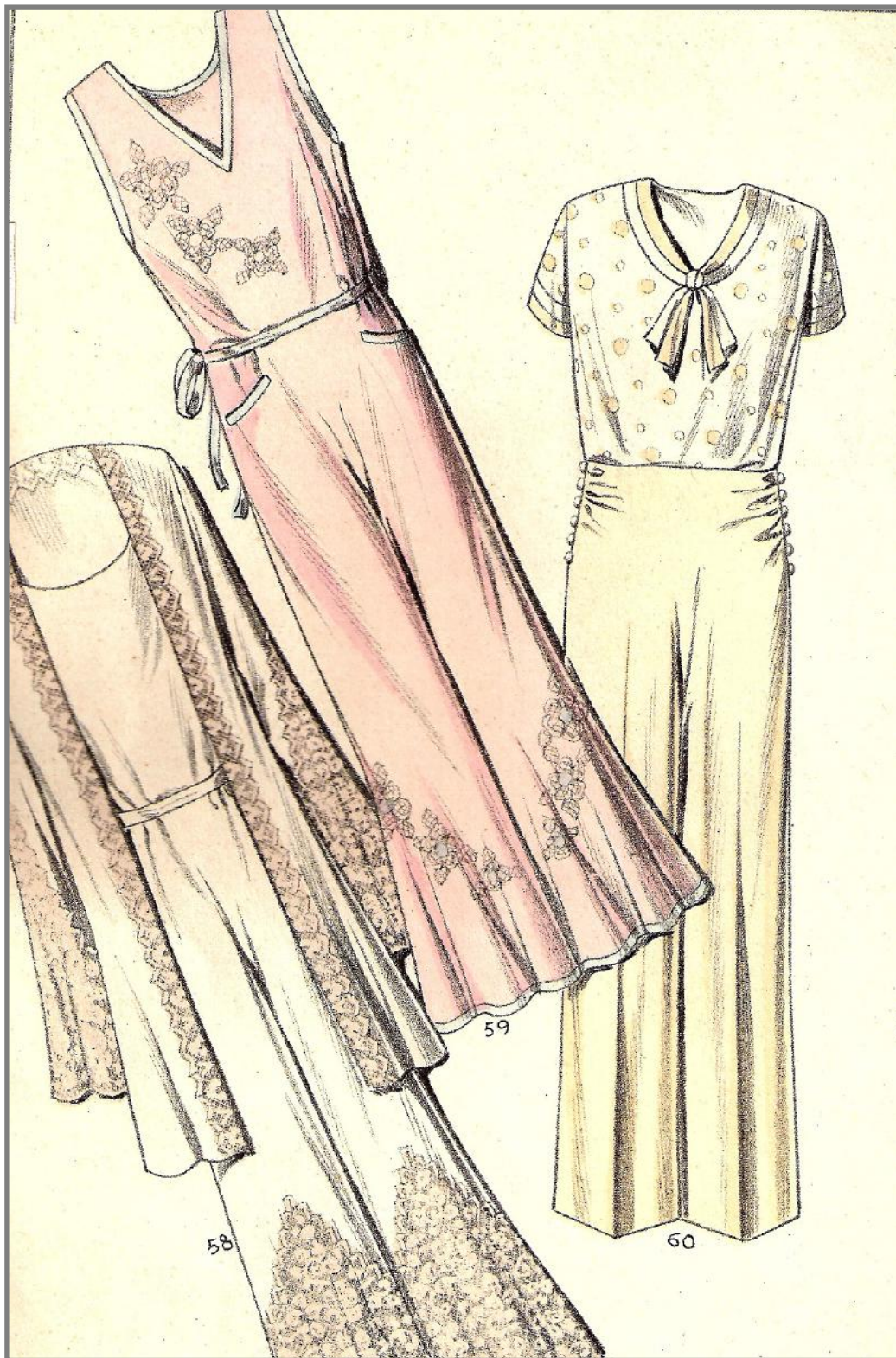
The model seated is wearing a white and turquoise floral print crepe pyjamas with piping trim. Notice how wide the flared legs are.

The pink dressing gown (#275) is in washing silk, applied with a garland of flowers.

The black silk pyjamas are trimmed with red and has a sleeveless red jacket.



This page shows gowns and bed jackets in crepe de Chine, georgette, triple voile, and satin all adorned with tucks, appliques and lace.



The ivory pyjamas (#58) is of voile triple and tulle lace with a matching coatee.

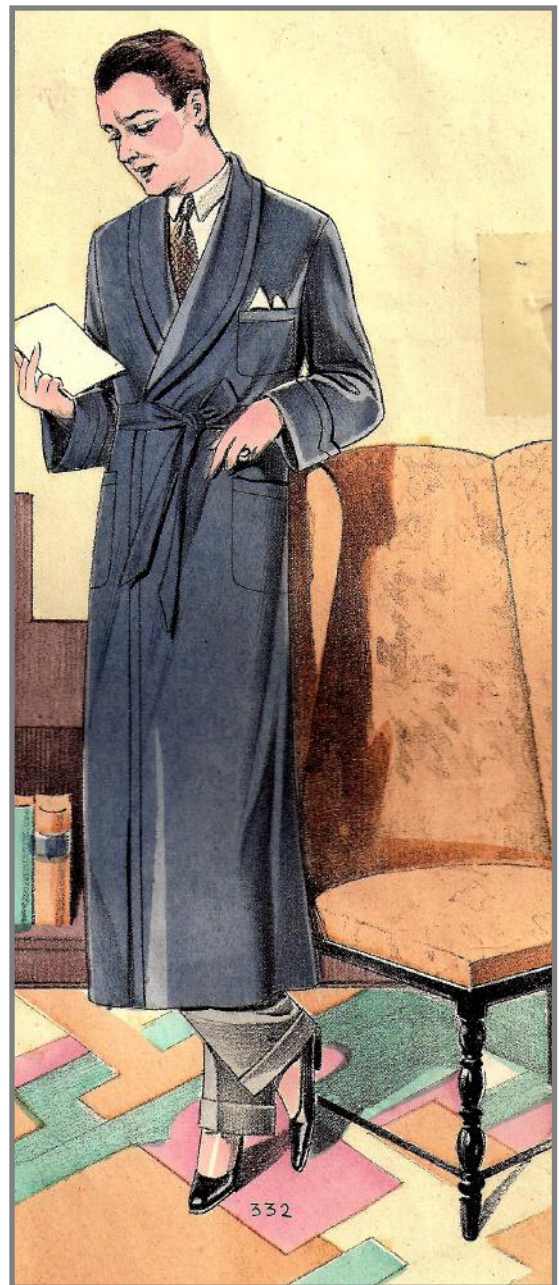
Number 59 is sleeveless pyjamas of toile de sole with embroidered motives and colored piping.

And finally, yellow pyjamas consisting of a dotted silk blouse and shirred trousers of tussor, a kind of silk. It looks like there are buttons on each side of the pants.



I'm not sure why they included beach wear in the lingerie catalog, but they did! Here it shows six distinctively different swim suits - have you ever had one with pockets (#304)? It has a coordinating sleeveless beach robe also. The two examples of beach pyjamas are unique. And it slays me when I've seen beach wear illustrated with models wearing heels! Then the model with the beach ball has on flats with socks!! It seems a bit strange to me.

Finally, lets not forget the gentlemen...



Both of these men are wearing what was called a lounging robe. It was common for them to take off their suit jacket in the evening and to slip the robe on over their slacks, shirt and tie. Also of note are their footwear, they are wearing slippers.