

NECKTIE



The earliest known relatives of the necktie can be found around the necks of the famous Terracotta Warriors, which date back to about 210 BCE. But the necktie we know and love today was introduced by different soldiers—specifically, Croatian mercenaries who were hired to fight for the French during the Thirty Years War in the early-to-mid 1600s. As a part of their uniforms, the Croatian soldiers wore brightly colored handkerchiefs knotted around their necks. The mercenaries’ style was quickly borrowed by the French who fought alongside them; they dubbed the handkerchiefs “Croats” or “Cravats” (the Croatians refer to themselves as Hrvati), the latter of which is still the modern French word for necktie.

Cravats then became popular with the French upper-class; they weren’t accepted for wear in court until 1646, when Louis XIV began sporting a white lace cravat. White lace cravats became extremely popular in the following decades, reaching England via the 1660 return of King Charles II from exile in France, and they continued to grow in popularity and variety over the next couple centuries. Then, in the early 1800s, the cravat gave way to today’s necktie, and so many new ways to knot the ties were popularized—including the indefatigable bowtie— that numerous pamphlets and books were published on the subject (H. LeBlanc’s 1828 tome *The Art of Tying the Cravat* outlined a whopping 32 different styles).

With the rise of mass manufacturing and the introduction of the modern long tie in the 1920s, ties became accessible to white-collar workers as a menswear standard, largely leaving the battlefield behind. However, a relative of the cravats worn by French nobility can be found on a different type of battlefield today—in the lacy white jabots of the United States Supreme Court.

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