"Keeping the Nation in Good Shape," Maidenform, Inc., Maidenform Collection

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KEEPING THE NATION in good shape

...A story of maidenform

America's leading brassiere brand!

"Reprinted from ESSO Oilways"
Inside information on some undergarments for women. A story of Maidenform, America's leading brassiere brand that is...

KEEPING THE NATION in Good Shape

Preparations were in progress for Joan's 15th birthday party. Dutiful Mrs. Gormlie, her mother, left dress-buying as a final chore. In a shop in their native Brooklyn, a salesgirl whispered the obvious news: "Your daughter is a teen-ager; get her a dress with a figure." Mother Gormlie, who didn't need the hint, felt that Joan also needed something more -- a brassiere. In the undergarment department, Joan, proud as a peacock, had her mother fasten the hook and eye of her Maidenform Adagio. Now she felt "grown up."

Joan at the age of 15 is shown in the picture on this page wearing a 32-A size Maidenform. Girls much younger than she also wear brassieres as small as 30-AA, and, of course, older women wear from 32 to 46 inches bust sizes and pocket, or cup, designations A, B, C and D.

Maidenform is said to be the most widely sold brassiere in the United States. Its manufacturer, Maiden Form Brassiere Co., Inc., has 7 factories in this country. Its control plants are at Bayonne, N. J. Other plants are at Morristown and Perth Amboy, also in New Jersey, and at Clarksburg, Huntington and Princeton in West Virginia. The concern also has manufacturing contractors at Union City, N. J., and in Puerto Rico. The company employs 3,200 persons and sells its products to 20,000 retail outlets in the United States and hundreds in foreign lands.

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One of Maidenform's leading styles is Chansonette, a stitched-pocket, spoked-center design of cotton broadcloth and other fabrics.

Maidenform is known to women shoppers in Canada, Mexico, Japan, Burma, Hawaii, China, Thailand and many European and South American countries.

The brassiere is classed as a foundation garment, along with corsets, corselettes, girdles and combinations of girdles and brassieres. In the latter category are so-called long-line garments. Last year women spent more than $677 million for foundation garments of which about $296 million was for brassieres.

Women and their figures make extravagant demands on brassiere designers. It is not enough that these garments be lightweight, comfortable bust supports, they must also have precise contours to satisfy the wide variety of requirements of women. Brassieres must also be decorated with embroidery, lace and other fancy additions; and to satisfy some women, brassieres must be padded to make the bosom appear larger than it is. Some women insist that brassieres have air vents, others that the garments be made of nylon, nylon marquisette, nylon taffeta, nylon lace, cotton broadcloth, acetate satin, Dacron, Dacron and cotton, or other fabrics. Although brassieres are made of black fabric, most women prefer white, which is, perhaps, the only specification on which there is some measure of agreement. There also are strapless brassieres, and halter types which have a strap that is supported by the back of the neck.

Maidenform is offered in all styles and types of garments mentioned. The line also includes a 6-way brassiere, so-called because it can be transformed at will into a strapless, halter, regular shoulder strap and 3 other types. Regular brassieres, long-lines and intermediate-length types are made. Maidenform brassieres also are made in strap-type, nursing styles, which have lined cups that can be partly detached by disconnecting a row of hooks and eyes.

Maidenform meets the demand for so many different styles and types of brassieres by manufacturing them in the required bust and pocket sizes.

One of the most popular lines bears the trademark Pre-Lude, which is offered in 52 different styles, materials, pocket contours and sizes. Pre-Lude retail prices range from $2 for regular, white, embroidered broadcloth short-line to $10.95 for strapless, white or black, embroidered nylon sheer, long-torso styles with foam-rubber under-cup lining and detachable garters. Like other Maidenform brassieres, which retail as low as $1.50, these have hook and eye fasteners. The company states that most women prefer this type fastener.

Maidenform brassieres are sold through the usual retail channels - department stores, dress shops and specialty stores, which usually
employ attractive display cards showing pretty girls with nifty figures wearing different Maidenform styles. Also used by some stores are translucent bust forms on counter stands, electric shadow boxes and other eye appeals that display Maidenform to best advantage. This year, for the first time, brassieres and corsets are being sold in packages so the buyer can make her own selection without the aid of a sales girl. And to help increase the sale of brassieres, they are being displayed on live models shown on TV. Unlike men's undergarments, brassieres and other foundation aids may be tried on at points of sale. Then, like Joan Gormlie's brassiere in the picture on Page 1, they are tried on again at home.

The teen-age market for brassieres is considered big and important, because the 11 to 17-year-old girls are also future brassiere customers. They "graduate" from teen-agers to juniors, then to the average figure class and, as the industry delicately states, into "full-figure" class. Although first-time users of brassieres need the help of mother or other assistant to hook the straps behind the shoulders, women with little experience manage to do this themselves, much to the surprise of husbands who cannot even tie a bow tie.

Nomenclature used by the makers of foundation garments is, sometimes, beyond understanding by men. The industry

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dustry, for instance, use the contraction "bra" that is not in current dictionaries. It also uses such advertised expressions as "new softer silhouette; dreamy, more rounded look; perfect separation and natural uplift; exclusive inner hug band; bare look fashion; high, round look; diaphragm discipline; and shape mates that give individual curvings." And in current "dream" advertising, Maidenform shows pretty girls with brassieres exposed, of course, and headline like "I dreamed I lived in a house of mirrors with my Maidenform bra." Women understand and like these appeals, all of which have a bearing on figure improvement, according to the Maiden Form company.

![image]

[caption] Above, an 1884 corset-brassiere combination. [/caption]

[caption] Below, a style of Maidenform Pre-Lude, a strapless, so called long-line brassiere with detachable garters. It is made of cotton broadcloth, or embroidered nylon, or satin with lace, and other fabrics and trimming combinations. [/caption]

Women, since the beginning of civilization, it seems, have spent more time on face and figure improvements than on many other duties. Legend has it that Juno, the Roman goddess who consorted with Jupiter, borrowed a "girdle" from Venus, the shapely goddess of beauty. Hefty ancient Roman women wrapped purple-dyed bands (strophiums) around their waists in their "battle" to reduce the bulge. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, with all her hypnotizing influence and, teenage members of there court are said to have used reeds to reduce bulges here and there. Many "full-figure" women in ancient Egypt had the "uplift" idea. They wore tight, naoo cotton bands as supporting devices for their busts. Women have tried for more than 4,000 years to "push, pull or pinch themselves," as stated by the Corset and Brassiere Association of America, to make their bodies assume shapes appealing to men. Ancient Grecian women wrapped swollen cloth (apodesms) around their bosoms and woolen bands (zones) around their waists to improve their appeal to men.

According to printed records, women on Crete, circa 2500 B.C., used heavy metal rings around their waists in an effort to arrest attention of male admirers. In every age, in every country, whether there is documentary evidence or not, it is safe to say that women used devices to improve their figures. It wasn't always women, however, who were figure conscious. The word "corset," first written on May 24, 1265 in the diary of the Countess of Leicester, referred to a girth improver for Richard, King of Normandy, and his son, Edward. It is difficult to believe, but records state, that corsets worn by Catherine de' Medici, wife of Henry II of France and also by Queen Elizabeth of England, attempted to contract the waist so it would measure 13 inches. To do this seemingly impossible job, steel plates were worn over a tightly laced corset. Also in the 16th Century, a near "revolution: occurred when Emperor Joseph of Austria passed a law forbidding the use of such corsets by nuns and young ladies in general. The law could not be enforced.

In an effort to attract females, Englishmen of the late 1700's were first house "falsies." These paddings improved the shape of the calf. They did this in
the belief that women like to see men with shapely legs. Even today male TV performers who have "spindly" legs are required by some directors to use shaped pads on calves and thighs.

Records show that though the centuries in most countries women's ideas on figure improvement alternated between desires for full busts and flat "chests." The sweater girl type figure is in vogue now as it was in the 1800's. The desire for a narrow waist, however, has never been abandoned.

The modern brassiere business started in the 1800's when Charles Debevoise invested and manufactured a relatively lightweight breast support. His brassieres were known as debases. They employed 2 straps which were crossed at the back and tied in front. In 1913 hooks and eyes started to be used as brassiere fasteners.

In the 1920's brassieres were very popular in achieving a flattest look, or boyish form. The so-called uplift brassiere, which gave breast support as well as attractive contours, were introduced in the United States in 1923, it is claimed, by Mrs. Ida Rosenthal, who with her husband, William, organized the Maiden Form Brassier Co., Inc. About 2 years earlier Mrs. Rosenthal met Englishwoman Enid Bissett. Mrs. Bissett felt there was a future in dressmaking for middle and upper class New Yorkers. In 1922 she persuaded Mrs. Rosenthal to join her in opening a dress shop to cater to this trade. Mrs. Rosenthal made the brassieres in the dress shop of which she was part owner. She gave the brassieres free with the dresses. It was soon discovered that instead of giving brassieres with dress purchases, the foundation business could be profitable divorced from that of outer garments. As a result Mrs. Rosenthal leased factory space at Bayonne, N.J. to manufacture brassieres on a large scale.

The Maidenform brand became more popular with each succeeding year. Manufacturing facilities were expanded rapidly. Other New Jersey plants were opened enabling production to be increased to the point where Maidenform was the largest selling brassiere in the world, it was claimed. During World War II, however, Bayonne and other New Jersey facilities accepted defense work. Brassiere manufacturing had to be reduced considerably. In 1943 Mr. Rosenthal decided to find brassiere manufacturing facilities in areas where defense work would not required all available labor. He bought a plant a Princeton, W. Va. In 1952 still larger manufacturing space was needed and this resulted in
the purchase of the Pepsi-Cola bottling plant at Princeton. Other West Virginia plants also were opened in those years. Bayonne is now the design and manufacturing control center. Parts are shipped by truck to all other plants, which assemble them into finished products. Finished brassieres are shipped to Bayonne where they are inspected, pressed and packaged for shipment.

Princeton employs 525 workers, most of them girls trained by the company to operate sewing machines. With this staff and equipment Princeton can assemble up to 12,000 brassieres per day. The plant does not make all styles and sizes, nor does any other Maiden Form plant. Furthermore, production of given styles and sizes may be changed during the year. Thus, during the visit of the ESSO OILWAYS reporter...

In 1796 corsets with bust supports made their appearance in England. Wig-wearing women also wore other "falsies" to attract admirers.

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Inserting semicircular wires in strapless type Maidenform brassieres. The wire has rounded ends and is heavily coated with enamel.

Princeton facilities were devoted to production of certain styles and sizes of Ariette, a bra made mostly of elastic material; Pre-Lude long-line; Chansonette, a stitched-cup style, most popular of all Maidenform bras; Maidenette, a teen-age item with medium-band, shoulder strap, and inserts of lace or nylon, and Adagio, an AA, 30- to 36-inch style for first-time users.

Parts are in bundles received at a checking station. Each bundle is wrapped in a form on which code letters and numbers are printed. Bundles consist of backs, pockets, bands, foam-rubber inserts, linings, lace, shoulder straps, and other parts. The identification form, or ticket, is coded to give such information as the date when the material was cut at Bayonne, the lot, or sequence figure, indicating the numerical order in which the parts were cut as, for instance, the 35th lot from 1,000 dozen of a given style. The style code also is on the ticket, as well

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The checker, observing the codes, can place all units to be assembled into one style and size in inventory boxes. These are kept in bins and when parts are ready for assembly, the boxes are transported on hand trucks to a sewing station. A sewing-machine operator at the station performs the needed work on the parts given to her. When she completes her sewing job, the material is dropped into a floor box. There is a floor, or assembly inventory, box for each worker. Since they do not all perform their allotted tasks at the same speed and since different parts require more or less work than others, inventory boxes must always contain enough parts to keep each girl supplied. These boxes must also contain enough production inventory to compensate for absent workers. Thus, even if a girl is absent from the plant, her inventory box contains sufficient number of parts to keep the next operator in line supplied for as long as 4 days. Sewing work, which may mean as many as 34 operations per brassier, takes only about 25 percent of production time. The remainder is required for matching parts, folding, adjusting, inserting wires into strapless bra pockets, inspecting and packing.

Sewing machines are of Singer and Merrow make, many using multiple needles. These multiple-needle machines can sew up to 14 rows of stitches in one operation. Merrow machines are so-called overlock types. They cut and trim edges and finish them by stitching. They also handle 2 pieces, trim their raw edges and then sew them together. A machine which Maidenform company designed is fed with a roll of textile tape and a spool of wire. The wire is cut and formed into eyes

Above, called bust improvers in 1888-1896, brassieres like this had slits into which pads of different size could be inserted. Left, Pre-Lude strapless Maidenform made of lace.
which are sewn on the tape at precise points. The principal production problem is, of course, feeding all parts of a given style, size and material to sewing machines at the proper rate. Tickets showing style, size and material code numbers and letters travel with the parts so that at the end of a given sewing line finished brassieres match their coded specifications. The inventory boxes at sewing machines permit proper rate of parts flow. Original tickets are packed with brassieres before shipment to Bayonne. All machines in the Princeton plant are lubricated with Fractol A, which not only provides lubrication at high speeds but minimizes staining if it accidentally reaches fabrics. Other Maiden Form plants also use Esso lubricants.

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