

SAY
“I Do”
TO WESTERN WEDDINGS

By Corinne J. Brown



WEDDINGS ARE EVERY couple's chance to be the star of their own show—romantic tradition that remains locked in hearts, minds and scrapbooks for years. Big weddings or small, indoors or out, many brides-to-be dream of being married in white, wearing yards of lace, elegant satin boots and a pearl-studded cowboy hat. And did we mention—astride a horse?

Get on board! Tap into one of the top trends in the wedding business—the Western, or cowboy wedding, a merchandising opportunity that can become a full-time department in itself. For that customer who wants a stylish “Frontier Western” nuptial, bridal needs include gowns, hats,

Bridal gown by **Pat Dahnke**,
frame by **Montana Silversmiths**





footwear, gloves and jewelry, often with a Victorian or romantic edge. Men's attire is just as important, with the groom and his entourage stepping out in frock coats and vests for a true "period" look that includes braces, breeches, high boots and more. Meanwhile, the rehearsal dinner or bachelorette party are perfect places for gals to wear seasonal fancy jeans and tops, or the newer one-and two-piece dresses, along with embellished boots, great belts and everything else you can suggest.

For enticing add-on business, special gifts are always needed, from thank-you tokens for the bridal party

to centerpieces for the tables at the wedding reception or bridal shower! Stock **Montana Silversmiths'** "Two Trails" wedding cake topper—a fabulous keepsake. Offer a wide range of choices in fragrances, personal accessories, picture frames and jewelry or watches for the gals.

Casey Vogt of **Vogt Western Silver** confirms that their beautiful engraved-silver money clips are hugely popular for men. Other items might include silver-plated flasks and fancy key rings.

What about the wedding set? Yes, you can provide those, too—Doug Magnus of **Magnus Studios** makes exceptional wedding rings, especially those with turquoise, diamonds and gold. You probably have a favorite jewelry supplier who does equestrian-themed rings as well.

Wedding gifts are a huge category, too, so offer an in-store registry to those planning a Western-themed wedding. **Patricia Wolf** suggests her newest hand-painted vanity bench in pigskin suede, with the coordinating bed throw and dresser runner to dress the newlyweds' bedroom—a beautiful set to become an heirloom.



Blackfoot Indian bridal gown by **Pat Dahnke**

FIRST TIMERS “HOW TO”

To get started, build an in-store display that lets your customers know you’re equipped to provide for their event. A wedding canopy, tabletop setting, or full-blown mannequin in bridal attire works. Once you’ve caught the customer’s interest, offer a binder with a product showcase, wedding dress options, and actual photos from weddings you’ve helped create (or are willing to). Show the possibilities *and the proof* that only you can make their special day one to remember. In time, your store can easily become Western Wedding Central.

Marty Denny, a Western retailer in Masonville, Colo., knows what works. Her store, Masonville Mercantile & Wedding Emporium, does business all over the West; partially because she often participated in bridal shows.

“If you can find your niche,” she explains, “you’ll succeed. And in this area of specialization, there are more niches than ever before. Shopping has grown so impersonal, especially with the Internet. We provide a very personal service and know the products—wedding clients actually become dependent on us for everything.”

Though she might not provide every wedding every piece, she proudly relates that “during 2005, before I cut back, we had more than 700 brides han-



CircleS by **Sidran** groomsweat

dle purchases through us in one year.” Today, customers just won’t let her get out of the business, although she’s trying to slow down.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

For the bride, some of your favorite names in the **Gist Silversmiths** money clip



Sonoran Star
bridal gown by
Martin McCrea
Couture

Gist Silversmiths jewelry

business are already geared up to help you succeed. You don't have to look far to provide beautiful clothes, either off the rack or individually fitted. **Double D Ranch** is always a great resource, with flirty and fun clothes, or elaborate, often embellished outfits that can be worn to the nuptial festivities or even, for some, to the altar as well.

Pat Dahnke (**Designs By Pat Dahnke**) says, "The Victorian cowgirl bride is still the leading look—the essence of romance. In addition to white, customers seem to love a more elegant appearance, especially iridescent sheers in soft colors like lavender and gold. I like to mix textures, like our white boarsuede-fringed belt overlaid with Venetian lace, something you can wear again. For a ranch wedding, many prefer the Sunday afternoon dress with the lace dolman, so pretty with a hat and parasol. We can set up any store with a photo book and fabric swatches. And for men, for example, we can coor-

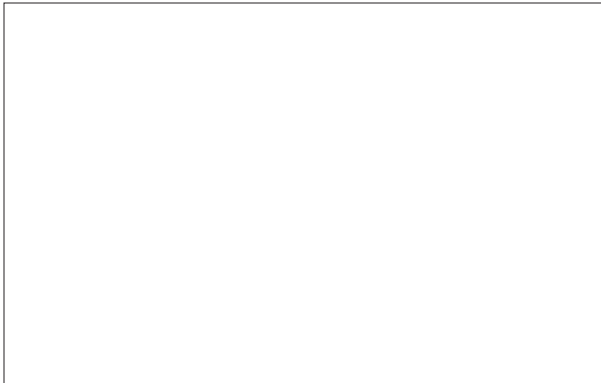
Scully groomswear

dinate and make cummerbunds to match the bride's outfit. We have even made decorative velvet-fringed horse shawls (for behind the saddle) and put lace on brides."


Wedding boots that complement all Victorian/frontier styles are available from **Oak Tree Farms**, a brand known for comfort and a really great price. The choices are authentic, in several colors and textures.

For a very vintage feel, **Martin McCrea** in Tucson can provide memorable wedding gowns, too. They'll tell you just how to measure and help you custom order from their amazing collection of period attire available in an array of colors and sizes.

For fitting the groom's party, **Scully/Wahmaker** offers authentic frock coats and vests. Dave Morgan believes that most men prefer their formality and style—52 classic features such as puff ties, cummerbunds, wool-blend breeches and high boots are flattering to men of any age, even the father of the bride!



Pat Dahnke guest book

several choices of dress, depending on your mood: Frontier Plains Preacher, the Shotgun Wedding or a Formal Church Service. (This could be an unmet opportunity for a local preacher.) Assign a staff person who loves details and can learn the business to expedite this unique department and watch the business blossom. Next thing, you'll be doing the anniversaries, too! 

WESTERN WEDDING *resources*

Designs by Pat Dahnke
(800) 728-7376
designsbypat.com

Circle S
(214) 352-7979
sidraninc.com

Double D Ranch
(800) 899-3379
ddranchwear.com

Gist Silversmiths
(800) 456-4478
gistsilversmiths.com

Magnus Studios
(505) 983-6777
douglasmagnus.com

Martin McCre
(800) 424-2976
martinmccrea.com

Montana Silversmiths
(800) 446-0233
montanasilversmiths.com

Oak Tree Farms
(888) 235-9877
oaktreefarms.com

Patricia Wolf Designs
(800) 728-9653
patriciawolf.com

Scully/Wahmaker
(805) 483-6339
scullyleather.com

Vogt Western Silver
(530) 669-6840
vogtsilversmiths.com

Patricia Wolf ottoman and pillows

Circle S makes a handsome tux sport coat (model CTO129) with a classic Western feel, a purchase to wear again and again. Paired with a white shirt, this item even looks great over a pair of jeans.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

Cultivate local resources that can help make you the “wedding planner”—your clients will appreciate the referrals and usually the courtesy is mutual. It’s a great way to build future business—being part of a network. Keep a list of locations such as nearby guest ranches, tailors, bakeries, musicians, horse-and- buggy liveries, caterers and especially, ministers who can offer a Western-style service. In Colorado,

Oak Tree Farms victorian boot one justice of the peace offers

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