

Stylish Elegance – The Beautiful Bow Front.

On average we spend more than one third of our lives sleeping. Beds have inspired furniture designers across centuries to produce a functional yet appealing piece of bedroom furniture. Whilst timber has certainly been a favourite to many and still remains so, with the many textures and its ease for carving. Brass and iron beds have stood the test of time well.



In the 1900s, bed designers entered a new design phase, moving away from the simple and/or intricate iron styles towards the more elegant and elaborate porcelain, glass mirrors and mother of pearl. Bed styles varied and each bed was unique with its own personality, the simple, the elegant, the ornate, the very brassy, the cute, the patriotic and the elegant bow fronts also known as serpentine or wedding bed. Designed and marketed, through mail order catalogues they were towards the top end of the market, it was a total contrast to many household items being offered to buyers. The harsh economic climate of the 1920s was out of the reach of many families struggling with surviving the post-war depression years. With this history this particular style is not readily found, especially in its low four poster style.

The Single Bow Front so named for the single bow which scooped outwards from the bed, was made in both single and double beds. Its design was adorned with three or five porcelains which were hand painted, usually in floral designs with a ribbon or bluebird, which were particularly done for the bed design only.

The Double Bow Front was the top of the range and adorned with either six or seven porcelains, and some rare cases rather than having a simple back it too was designed to complement the bow end with matching porcelains, taking the total of porcelains on the bed to ten and were with or without a matching porcelain medallion, some instead may have featured an etched mirror centre. Whatever the style or adornments, there is no denying that they attract attention in any bedroom they feature in.



Some variations included upward bow ends, where the end bowed upwards and were in simple or elaborate styles; however they often are not called bow fronts. Timber dressing tables, wardrobes and duchesses were made to compliment this impressive bed style featuring their own bow front, thus creating an entire bedroom of bow front furniture.

Queen size whilst uncommon, were available through special order though almost unheard of in normal family homes and it is only in recent decades has become the more common bed size in our homes today. Bow front styles can be successfully restored and extended to queen size by Timeless Antiques and still maintain their original appearance without the unsightly gaps of some extension attempts. The bed artisan of the time knew their trade and their product well, we have studied many books, catalogues featuring designs, large six inch gaps in the bed designs are noticeably lacking

When restoring or extending any brass beds, using this information as a guideline, Timeless antiques are able to offer our clients the space of the queen size bed, with the character and design of the original bed design maintained. Testers were still very much part of the bed, if not a necessity for the harsh Australian environment. Some of Australia's not-so-cute animal kingdom members aim in life was to make sleeping as uncomfortable as possible. The creation of the aptly named mosquito net was a feature in many family homes, until the wide introduction of fly screens from approximately 1960s onwards on windows and doors.



Yet, low four poster beds did exist, though not in great numbers or in styles, including the single and double bow fronts, demand for this style today is constant, as their size is more suitable for the height and width of our modern bedrooms. Some found today are not original low four posters, but have been cut or sawn down in their lives to suit the new houses and roof heights that were being built.

Today, these timeless treasures are reminders of our historic past which is all around us, seen either in fashion trends or furniture styles. The purest form of honouring that work is continued by the trend of reproductions. However, nothing compares to the pleasure of feeling and owning the originals.

Timeless Antiques enjoy our historical caretaker role of maintaining, restoring and educating our clients on brass and iron beds. There has always been a hierarchy of bed designs and the Bow front designs have always been versatile by their adaptation to include porcelain, porcelain medallion centres, mirror centres, mother of pearl medallion and spindles and stunning in brass or nickel finish, resulting in a unique brass bed design.

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