

From Venice, Rome to Ottawa – A History of Blinds

Have you ever given any thought to the history of what you put on your windows? Seriously, think about it. The quest for light and comfort in the home has been a preoccupation of civilizations for centuries. It may come as a surprise, but there is actually a fascinating history to window blinds. Archaeological evidence suggests that they appeared at about the same period in both the great Chinese and Egyptian civilizations. The first window blinds in ancient China were made of bamboo whereas ancient Egyptians wove reeds into mats to create shades that worked much like modern roller blinds. However, even before the Egyptians, it seems that desert civilizations had methods for creating blinds that inspired many of today's options. Many of these pre-Egyptian civilizations are believed to have simply used wetted cloth to cover their windows. By soaking the cloth, cool air was allowed in while heat and sand were kept out. The cloth concept was eventually adopted by the Romans, who wove slats into fabric sheets to give us Roman blinds. Thousands of years later, we still rely on these blinds to create a Mediterranean feel in our homes.

Window blinds are often referred to as "Venetian blinds". However, the Venetians, who were once great traders, are thought to have imported the idea from Persia. Once the shipboard slaves were freed, they brought the blinds with them to France, where they are known to this day as *les persiennes*.

In 1769, British designer Edward Beran patented Venetian blinds in London and they began popping up everywhere. But even earlier, across the Pond, they were making their mark. The St. Peter's Church in Philadelphia was fitted with Venetian blinds in 1761 and later that decade, in 1767, thanks to clever advertising by craftsman John Webster of London, their popularity soared in the US.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Venetian blinds were widely adopted for use in ever-higher office buildings to regulate light and air. The Rockefeller Center's art-deco RCA Building in New York City incorporated Venetian blinds into its design when it was built in the 1930s. In 1946, however, home decorating took a major turn when mass-made



Ornately carved shutters of the past block both light and views compared with today's Krumpers Solar Blinds that save energy and allow for unobstructed views.

aluminum Venetian-style blinds hit the market. These early blinds incorporated fabric strips to control the raising, lowering, and tilting of the metal vanes. By the 1980s, vinyl began to replace aluminum and became the standard miniblind. The popularity of miniblinds fueled a shift in design and put home decorating within the reach of the average person. In 1985, honeycomb or cellular shades were developed, largely in response to a demand for more energy efficiency. No longer were window coverings simply a stylish addition to a room. They became a practicality that would not only provide privacy but promised to reduce that energy bill.

The evolution of space age technology allowed for the introduction and implementation of the smart home. It is this advancement in technology that propelled the static window blinds to the cutting edge. For the past 5 years, Krumpers Solar Blinds has been a leader in the window covering industry, earning the "Best Blinds of 2010" award. The uniquely engineered blinds are reversible for summer/winter applications.

Although both sides allow for a clear, unobstructed view, each side has a distinctive function. The summer side is solar reflective, and 72 per cent of the heat is reflected back outside. With the increase of hot, steamy,



sticky summers, this is a real gift to your pocketbook. And then when the blinds are turned to the winter side, they become passive solar collectors. Lab results illustrate that a 4'x4' window in direct light, creates over 2000 BTU's of heat an hour in the winter. Moreover the blinds have an insulating factor of R10. Both sides of the blinds allow for 98 per cent UV protection.

Krumpers has also been keeping abreast of innovation and architectural trends in trapezoidal windows, skylights and odd shapes and has developed a patented in-house solution to address such variances.

Krumpers Solar Blinds is a Canadian company and a local success story. KrumpersBlinds have been extensively tested by various laboratories which have shown a reduction in energy consumption of up to 41 per cent both during the summer and winter seasons. It seems that the evolution of the window blind just reached a new level that is worthy of a smart home. For more information, visit www.krumpers.ca or call 613-864-4921. ■