

# EMMONS COUNTY



# RECORD

701.254.4537 • info@lintonnd.com • www.ecrecord.com • Founded June 10, 1884, by Darwin Reed Streeper • USPS-175-340 Williamsport, Dakota Territory

## Easter brings cherished memories, and traditions still celebrated today

By Terri Lang

It is Easter time, and children have already participated in Easter Egg Hunts in their local towns. Hunting for eggs at Easter is a long-standing tradition in many cultures. The Germans from Russia had many traditions and customs which are still celebrated today, and some in the same fashion as they were in the olden days.

The preparations, activities and celebrations surrounding Easter were very important to people. For the Germans from Russia, Lent was observed in the strictest fashion. The last day before Lent, many areas celebrated by having a dance, a day to "let their hair down!" The day was named Shrove Tuesday (Fastnacht in German).

On Fastnacht, a popular food was prepared—Fastnacht Kuechla (special doughnuts) served with prunes. It was often the last sweet bread served until Easter.

Especially among the Catholics, breads were very common as many ate meatless meals during all the days of Lent. Most non-Catholics abstained from meat only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Some families traditionally ate noodles and prunes on Good Friday.

Also on Good Friday, some families would plant potatoes, while others were most careful not to disturb the earth at all that day.

What was common on Good Friday was coloring Easter eggs with homemade dye. Since there wasn't money available to buy dye, our ancestors were creative in coming up with their own colors. For purple or brown tones, dry onion skins were wrapped around the egg and covered with a damp cloth soaked in white vinegar. The next day, the egg had a marble effect. Vegetable juices were often used to get a reddish tint. Coffee or tea were used as was crepe paper.

Following Good Friday, it was time to get everything in order for the Easter holiday. The house was generally cleaned on Holy Saturday and everyone in the house was helping prepare for the Easter meal with family. Easter breads were baking in their ovens. Moms were laying out the outfits that their children were to wear for church services, as they were always dressed in their best for Easter Sunday. And just as it may be now, it probably was not most favored by the children. What they looked forward to was the Easter Rabbit.

Twas' the night before

Easter and all through the house, while the little children slept, the older children and the parents would make sure they had enough eggs for the traditional egg hunt on Easter morning. On that morning, children would hear "Ya, der Osterhase ist schon vorbei!" (The Easter Rabbit has already come by!).

The young children would go outside and find nests lined with the best grass as the Easter Rabbit expected a soft nest in which to lay the eggs. If the weather conditions were not favorable for the nests outdoors, caps would be used for nests instead and would be found inside the homes.

In later years, baskets were filled for each child or eggs hidden early in the morning so they could be found by the little ones. Some were still using the outdoors while others hid the baskets in their homes.

The Easter eggs had more uses than just for the hunt and the nests and baskets. They were used for a special contest where two contestants would each pick an egg and tap it against their rival. The object was to see whose egg was the strongest. The one whose egg broke first forfeited it to the lucky winner. Some played Eirschieben, a game in which competitors took turns rolling an egg down a sloping rail in an attempt to strike one of the opponent's eggs that had been placed on the ground.

The beautiful colored eggs were also used at a special breakfast on Easter morning, after church, served with Baska (Easter bread) and ham.

Easter time was a time of worship and a time for family gatherings.

At the Strasburg Care Center, residents remembered what Easter was like for them.

Irene Biesheuvel was of the German-Russian heritage, and although not Catholic, she remembers going to church often during Lent.

"We were brought up going to church, maybe not as much as some of the Catholic families who were our neighbors," Irene said.

She recalls that many of their Catholic neighbors fasted during Lent, but her family did not.

Irene remembers that her parents dyed Easter eggs, but she said they taught them more of the Christian-based traditions about the holiday. She said the children were led to believe that the Easter Rabbit dyed the eggs.

"On Easter morning, we would get up and the bunny was there during the night," she said.

Some years the Easter



At the Strasburg Care Center (SCC), the ladies reminisced about childhood Easters. SCC residents are, left to right, Gloria Trejo, Phyllis Fischer, Rosemary Kocher and Irene Biesheuvel.

Rabbit would leave eggs and candy for the children.

"We didn't always get candy though, especially during the Depression years," Irene added.

She said they were not accustomed to having all good things.

"But we had all what we needed," Irene said.

She also remembers when she was one of the older children that they were asked to "hush up" and not tell the little ones about who dyed the Easter eggs.

Her mom would be busy in the kitchen boiling eggs for two weeks.

"The chickens couldn't lay them fast enough!" she said.

And she also remembers the Good Friday meal — noodles and prunes.

"They go together," she added.

The meal on Easter Sunday she recalls was beef roast or chicken (those being from the animals they had on the farm), homemade bread, boiled eggs and kuchen for dessert.

"Mother would make huge amounts of kuchen," Irene said. "Then she would take it to the family Easter gatherings."

With their team of horses, they would travel about 10 miles to visit with their aunts and uncles and their kids.

"We worked hard and fast, and leave as soon as we could, and we would get there for dinner," she said.

Irene said that she tried to keep many of those Easter traditions with her children.

"I dressed up my kids at Easter for church and then we would have a noon meal with family and play and eat all day!" Irene said.

Phyllis Fischer also reminisces about Holy Week.

"We had lots of church. We fasted some (eating very light meals) from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday," Phyllis said.

Phyllis grew up in a Catho-

lic family and said during Lent, their family often ate noodles and prunes with fried-up bread crumbs.

"I love those fried crumbs over the thin noodles. It is so good!" she added.

Bread was common as dough worked very well for a big family. In Phyllis's family, there were 16 children (10 girls and 6 boys).

"I can't imagine how mom did it all!" Phyllis said. "I guess they had to rely on the older ones to help out. I was the fourth youngest one, so I did not do all those things the older siblings had to do."

They also dyed Easter eggs on Good Friday. She mostly remembers eating them and not hiding them.

Rosemary Kocher said they dyed Easter eggs, but only after church services on Good Friday.

The most important tradition for Easter for their family was to attend church services during Holy Week.

"We went to church first, then when we got home, we did our eggs and then we had to milk the cows," Rosemary said.

Before Easter morning, next to the house, the Easter Bunny would hide the eggs in a little grass nest.

"There was a plank of wood over it so the dogs would not get at it," she said.

Inside the house there were more nests filled with crepe paper and eggs and candy.

"That was fun, hunting for the nests!" Rosemary said.

She remembers her mom would have the little girls all dressed up with their fancy Easter bonnets and gloves.

"Mom sewed all of our clothes. She was a very good seamstress," she said. "She was also a good cook."

The family enjoyed big Easter meals of ham, Easter bread with sugar and cinnamon and raisins on top, and potatoes.

At the SCC is another lady

who grew up in the Catholic religion, but her parents were Mexican. Gloria Trejo's father was born and raised in Mexico. Her mother was born and raised in Texas.

Gloria's family did not have the same Easter menu as the other ladies.

"On Easter Sunday, we had ham, potato salad, Spanish rice and tortillas," Gloria said. She said their family always ate fish during Lent, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays. And they also went to Mass during Lent.

Gloria remembered they would dye Easter eggs and her mom would hide the eggs in the house in baskets which also had a little candy and the chocolate Easter Bunny.

When Gloria and her husband had their seven children, she would carry on the tradition of the Easter baskets and the chocolate Easter Bunny. "Then I would buy the girls Easter dresses and bonnets and the boys would have dress pants, shirt and ties to wear to Mass on Easter Sunday," Gloria said.

Following Mass was a big Easter lunch. Some years, their families would join them, but many of them lived far away.

The traditions of Easter varied some, but it is evident that what was most common and important was church and family.

From the entire staff at the Emmons County Record, we wish you and your families a blessed Easter!



In the olden days, the Easter Rabbit left nests lined with the best, fresh grass, filled with Easter eggs and maybe a few candy.



Baska or Easter bread was a common food served for Easter meals. Coffee cans were used to bake the Baska.

### Baska (Easter Bread)

- 3 pkg. dry yeast
- 1/2 C. warm water
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 3/4 C. sugar
- 1/2 C. shortening
- 2 cups milk
- 1 C. water
- 2 eggs
- 3 Tbsp. saffron flour

Soak yeast in warm water to which you add 2 tsp. of sugar. In another kettle, put 3/4 cup sugar, salt, shortening, milk and water. Scald. Let cool. Whip 2 eggs. Soak saffron in hot water and strain. Add to eggs. Add liquid mixture and yeast and enough flour to make soft dough. Knead and let rise 2 hours. Punch down and let rise again. Put into greased coffee cans. Let rise an hour and bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Glaze with powdered sugar, milk and anise flavored frosting or whatever you prefer.



Fasnacht were served on Shrove Tuesday, often with potato salad, as a Passover meal.

### Fasnacht Kuechla (Shrove Tuesday Doughnuts)

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. soda
- 3 eggs
- 1 C. milk
- 1 C. cream
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- flour to make soft dough
- 2 Tbsp. shortening (optional)

Mix and chill. Roll out and cut into 2 by 3 inch pieces. Slit each strip twice in the center and then pull ends through the slits and then deep fry them until they are browned. Sprinkle with sugar or powdered sugar.



Subscribe to the  
**Emmons County Record**  
by credit card online  
www.ecrecord.com  
or by phone, or  
mail your check.

### Send subscription to...

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

SUBSCRIPTIONS (Must be paid in advance)	
Emmons, Burleigh, Kidder, Logan, McIntosh, Morton, McPherson & Campbell counties, One Year	\$45.00
Emmons, Burleigh, Kidder, Logan, McIntosh, Morton, McPherson & Campbell counties, Six Months	\$24.00
Rest of North Dakota, One Year	\$50.00
Rest of North Dakota, Six Months	\$26.00
Outside of North Dakota, One Year	\$55.00
Outside of North Dakota, Six Months	\$30.00
Student Subscriptions, Nine Months	\$30.00
Rates to Foreign Countries	Call
Online Subscriptions, One Year	\$45.00
Combo Online and Print Subscription, One Year	\$65.00