

## THE ORIGIN OF THE EASTER EGG

Written by: Robert J. Ott

Edited by: JoLee Lyons

As a child, my most memorable moments of Easter were the decorating of eggs and the Easter egg hunt. We would gather around the kitchen table with the dye and paint spread out all over the table. My goal was to make the most beautiful decorated eggs. At the end of our festive tradition I would always feel proud and satisfied due to our recently made creations.

As a child and even until recently I had no clue as to where the origin of Easter came into being. Where did this tradition begin? To understand this annual egg hunt, it is critical to understand the origins of the Easter egg. However, Easter has two different faces, two different connotations in the minds of people. For Christians, this holiday represents a special significance in that it celebrates the Resurrection. As for unbelievers, Easter brings to mind the coming of spring, Easter eggs and Easter bunnies.

Modern tradition has the Easter bunny hiding the eggs. Contests are also held among the children, to find the maximum number of eggs. In some communities the local Easter egg hunt becomes a large event, where thousands of people participate. While the fun of Easter hunts continues, no one appears to be exactly sure of where the tradition actually started.

The Easter egg was a symbol of fertility and rebirth used by the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Romans and Greeks during their spring festivals. Ancient Babylonians viewed the egg as a sacred symbol. The egg signified new life and was decorated with bright colors which symbolized the sunlight of spring. The eggs were then exchanged among friends at the spring equinox. Christians later adopted the tradition and the egg came to be a religious symbol representing the tomb in which Jesus Christ came to new life through Resurrection.

Easter eggs, the Easter Bunny, and the dawn that arrives with resurrection of life, and the celebration of spring all serve to remind us of the cycle of rebirth and the need for renewal in our lives. In the history of Easter, Christian and pagan traditions are gracefully interwoven. No matter the actual origin, it does not appear that the popularity of Easter egg hunts will diminish.