

Egg Gathering – An Easter Game

Source: DAI Microfilm T-81; Roll 317; Group 1035;
Item VOMI 928; Frames 2448129-2448133

Translated/Transcribed by Allen E. Konrad (September 2011)
P.O. Box 157, Rowley, IA 52329 (USA)
<onamission@lbt.org>

[Translator's Note: This document appears to be part of a presentation that made use of pictures. References are made here and there to a particular film or photo number, but the microfilm does not contain any of these. Other renditions of this event can also be read about in the following documents by this translator: *Folklore Collection of Maraslienfeld Resettlers*, page 9; *Kulm Community Homeland Book*, page 94.]

[Begin Translation/Transcription]

O.B. Liebl
Friedenstal

Tarutino, 22 October, 1940
Fin.

Egg Gathering

Description of an Easter Game

The second day of Easter always has a special meaning for our youth. After all, this is the day that embraces both the young and the old. Since there is no youth organization in Friedenstal (in the beginning any attempt to get one going was frustrated by the opposition of the Brotherhood (*Stundenbrüder*), that is to say, Pietists. Later on, it was the Romanian State that supported an undertaking in that direction. For that reason, the second day of Easter is the one day of the year when they are free and able to participate in large crowd entertainment.

Only once in a year is the youth offered the opportunity to organize the so very much looked forward to Easter game called "Egg Gathering" (*Eierlesen*). Preparations for it get going already weeks before, and frequently it is not easy to come by the required number of eggs (400-800 per group game), especially when annually three or four groups are organized in the village for this game. The eggs are gathered from friends and well-wishers as free-will contributions. It is also not always so easy to find the necessary young girls, who have to carry the eggs with their aprons, due to the Brotherhood considering "Egg Gathering" a sin because, along with the game, there is the playing of instruments and dancing and sometimes the young people get a bit unruly during the game. The Brotherhood believes that if they participate in "such things" then it goes against their piety, which is why they advocate non-participation in such nonsense and demand the same from their sons and daughters. Thus the young fellows spend a long time searching for the necessary female input. Drinks (wine, schnapps, lemonade) have to be gotten hold of, too. It is difficult to imagine such an Easter game without these things. It is very important that enough provisions are on hand so that under no circumstances a shortage takes place, which would be, in the eyes of many, an inexcusable mistake, bringing upon them ridicule and shame.

A banner with the national colors, decorated with the picture of the ruler, paper roses and other ornaments has to also be provided.

Four to eight young fellows are singled out, those who can run the best, who have to gather the eggs in the game.

The question of a place to meet (*Quartierfrage*) is often also a most difficult task. There might be the need of the youth for a house where they can gather at the end of the game to play and dance, eat and drink and spend a few hours of good time together. If it should turn out that there is no such place readily available, they have to spend a long time searching out such a place.

All these things have to be taken care of in a timely fashion so that everything is in order at the proper time.

The gathering of the eggs itself is dealt with on an evening during the week before Easter. In collecting the eggs, two or three young fellows go with a basket to the homes of friends and well-wishers and say a verse that goes something like this:

<i>Ich tret herein – ich tret heraus,</i>	I am coming in – I am going out,
<i>Ist einen gute Frau im Haus?</i>	Is there a good woman in the house?
<i>So bringt sie 2, 3 Zehnt Eier heraus!</i>	Let her bring out 20% or 30% of her eggs!

The gathered eggs are all carried to a certain place and stored. As a rule, enough eggs are donated to meet the needs of the egg gathering game. Should it happen, which is seldom the case, that not enough eggs are gathered, then the amount needed to make up the difference is purchased.

Already in the early morning hours on the second day of Easter, an enthusiastic spirit reigns among the youth. One notices that they are going to have one “big day”. Now it is time to take care of the last minute preparations which all have to be absolutely finished before noon. A level place in the meadow outside of the village has already been identified earlier. A hole of 50-60 cm [ca.20-24 inches] has been dug in the middle of that area into which a pole of 10-12 meters [ca.33-39 feet] long will be firmly set. The banner is to be hoisted high on this pole in the afternoon. At a radius extending 8-10 meters [ca.26-33 feet] out from this center point, two rows, crisscrossing each other, are set up (the two rows in each line being 4-5 meters [ca.13-16 feet] apart from each other). About every 3 meters [ca.10 feet], square pieces of sod are placed upon the ground, bottom side up. They are called “steps” (*Stufen*). Every row receives 11 such steps. Between each of them, in perfectly straight lines and spaced at the same interval, are placed 9 raw uncooked chicken eggs. A hard boiled, dyed (red, yellow, green or black, etc.) egg is placed at every step. Beside the very last step, for every row, a paper flag with the national colors is stuck into the ground. The pole on which the banner is to be fastened is placed on the ground beside the hole dug earlier. After that, some benches are yet to be set up in the open area around the place of the banner. They are made available to the participants of the game and the older people, after which someone stays back to watch the place while the others all go back home.

Immediately after the noon meal, the young people gather in a house more to the middle of the village. Now things start off with concertina music (*Handharmonika*, called *Blasebalg*) and drumming, along with a lot of loud shouting while on their way to the prepared place mentioned above. This takes place in one big continuous procession. At the head of the procession marches the banner bearer. Fastened on a pole, the banner flutters actively in front of the procession. Following it are the young boys and, behind them, the young girls in their white aprons and their own baskets to be used to deposit the eggs that will be gathered. At the end of the procession come the spectators (see film 24a and 25). Some of the young fellows bring water and the other drinks to the game area. Upon arrival, the flag bearer fastens [the banner] onto the pole and, with the assistance of other young fellows, the pole is hoisted and set securely into the pre-dug hole. On a cross bar fastened to the lower half of the pole where the banner is attached, a bottle filled with a drink (red wine, or colored lemonade) is placed on each side of the cross bar and hoisted up to advertize that plenty of drinks are available and no one has to go thirsty. Wine is free, lemonade is poured for a price. While occupied with this job, the rest of the young people are having a good time as they energetically go about dancing to the beat of the music.

The whole egg gathering game has 2-4 supervisors (photo 50—in the foreground with the whip) overseeing the event. It is their responsibility to see to it that order is kept and that the large crowd of spectators keep their distance from the egg rows that have been set up. Bringing in the eggs is the business of the runners (*Springer*) (photo 50 in the center, wearing large red paper roses on their shoulders), who place the eggs one-by-one into the white apron of the “apron bearers” (*Schurzaufheberin*) (photo 50 right and left in white aprons), and she in turn passes them on to a young girl, or it can be that she herself takes it out of the apron and puts it in the appropriately placed basket. There is a “runner”, an “apron bearer” and a young girl with a basket required for each egg row. All the “team members” of the game participants and all taking part in the event get ready (Film 24b). At the last Easter celebration, the egg gathering game was organized by the D.J. (*Deutschen Jugend*) and had great approval. The game started off with the so-called “Forming up for deployment” (*Aufmarsch*) (Film 24c and f). To continue, the rest of the celebration goes as follows:

A shrill sound of the whistle from one of the supervisors brings all participants to their stations: The “apron bearers” and their helpers (young girls with their white covered baskets) take their position, each at an egg line. The runners race in a mad dash to the other end, grab the dyed egg by the step at the extreme end and then quickly rush back and toss the egg in a big arch over the flag. This indicates that the egg gathering game has begun. There is a pause for 10-15 minutes, during which time the runners dance with their young girl attendants. Then another sound of the whistle and all go to their stations. Egg after egg now moves into the aprons and from there into the basket. After the still fresh unboiled eggs are gathered, the dyed egg from the step is flung in a wide arch over the banner. Right after that comes another 10-15 minute pause, during which time real energetic dancing takes place (photo 48). Those young people not participating in the game, are dancing during that whole time (photo 49). And so time passes quickly. The egg rows between the breaks get shorter. Eventually, it is down to the last 10 eggs. A final longer pause follows. The supervisors have placed a dyed egg by the step at the extreme end. Beside it, a paper flag is stuck into the ground. The runners are noticeably excited. The final act begins. A final shrill whistle sounds. With all their might, the runners fly down their row, snatch the paper

flag with their left hand and, with the right, the egg sitting beside the step. With all haste, they again return and, if they succeed, the first one with the little flag in hand, flinging the egg over the banner, will be celebrated as the winner of the day. Loud shouts and a boisterous shout of “Hurrah” (some strong young fellows will take hold of the winner and, with a shout of Hurrah, toss him into the air a few times), “that is the reward, an abundant reward”.

While the music now plays for the last dance, the banner is lowered, and the remaining things are packed up. The young people, in an orderly fashion, go back to their **quarters** (*Quartier*) in a big procession. At that place, the young girls, from some of the eggs and others from things they brought from their homes (bread, sausage, etc.) prepare something to eat (what eggs remain are sold. The money realized goes into the youth group treasury). With food and drink, game and dance and singing of song, the young people bring the day to an end, whereby the winner of the day was bestowed with special attention.

And so another memorable day has passed for the youth. For a long time, one will talk about the happy hours and is already excited to think about the second day of Easter in the coming year, at which time this game should repeat itself, only to a degree that it will be even nicer and bigger.

{ signed over official O.B. seal } Liebl

[End Translation/Transcription]