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Letter From H. Wayne Gruber to Alfred L. Shoemaker, March 27, 1948

H. Wayne Gruber

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4-71

March 27, 1948, Reading, Pa.

Dr. Alfred L. Shoemaker;

Dear sir;

When reading your article in Friday's Eagle about coloring Easter eggs, you mentioned "grab" and would like to know what that is. I may be at a loss to identify it thoroughly, but can give you some information about it.

This is what my wife knows about it--- Her mother used "grab" to color the eggs and the children could handle the eggs without any of the coloring to rub off. It was bought in the stores and consisted of lumps rather brittle that it could be broken in smaller lumps very easily. She took a certain amount, put it in a pot and boiled it until it was dissolved, then put in the eggs and continued boiling until the eggs were boiled hard. She then took some of the eggs and with a splint of wood and hot tallow drew flowers and flower stalks on the eggs, also other drawings as little chicks or rabbits; and some she made polka dots or any other design, such as stripes and so on. After the hot tallow was hard she put vinegar in a dish and laid the eggs in the vinegar. This vinegar removed all the "grab" coloring up to the tallow, leaving those places white or yellow depending on the natural color of the egg, and leaving these designs made by tallow. The color of "grab" was a dark red.

This egg coloring was done on the border of Berks County in Schuylkill County in the neighborhood of New Ringgold, a Reading Company Railroad station about two or three miles south of Tamaqua.

I know of no games played with Easter eggs, but I do know that on the evening before Easter we youngsters set our hat at some place in the house when we went to bed, and in the morning the Easter Rabbit had put colored eggs in them. However, these hats were not at the same places when we came down in the morning many times, but were hid for us sometimes rather hard to find.

Here are some "Aldeweiva glawe" (Old women beliefs).
Bake something on Good Friday and eating this will keep the doctor away for the year. The eggs that the chickens lay on Good Friday you shall put under a setting hen ~~and~~ to hatch, and the chicks hatched will be Plymouth Rocks (Shivaricha hinkl). The eggs that are layed on Good Friday you shall eat and you will not have Typhoid Fever that year. Schpasiche oldeweiva glawe waare yaare sturik.

Selli uugliks oia hav ich aw schund ~~hinaschich~~ hinaschich ivva es scheia dach kschemische. Deel mools hav ich si aw net iver es dach grikd, ava ich niks tsu meinre Mam gsawt, un ich wees aw niks as mier uuglik veda kfawre is fa es oia net driva tsu griie.

Yours truly;

H. Stayne Gruber

1048 North 11th St.