

Homestead Notes



Muriel A. Thomas . . .

Egg Decorating Becomes A Craft

With Easter just one week away our thoughts turn to the foundation of the Christian's belief, to the hope of the future, to the beautiful springtime when we clear away the debris of last year and prepare for new growth. A symbol widely used to denote new life is the egg and the chick. Yes, beautifying the simple egg has become not only a fun thing to do but has become an art and a hobby for many individuals.

One lady who is especially talented in decorating eggs is Miss Muriel A. Thomas, Lancaster, who formerly lived in Schuylkill County near Mahanoy City. Although she started this hobby only four years ago she has decorated countless numbers of them and has given most of them to relatives and friends.

The ones she has given were especially appropriate for the occasion. For instance she gave one as a wedding gift that carried with it many sentiments and memories. The bride having made her own gown and veil as well as her attendants' gowns naturally had some scraps of the materials left. Unknown to her, Muriel secured some of them and covered a music box with them. The music box plays "Lohengrin's Wedding March." On top she mounted a large egg with two hinges on it. Opened, it displayed a miniature bride and groom, the veil being a piece of the bride's veil and she edged it with pearls. Inside the hinged doors were parts of the reception napkins bearing the names of the bride and groom and the date of the wedding. These were overlaid with bits of crystal glitter.

Muriel made egg trees for her three brothers' families and for her sister. She made six for twenty-fifth wedding anniversaries and four for wedding gifts, two of which used materials from the bride's and the attendants' gowns. She used reed mats and made two hats decorated with eggs to hang as door or wall ornaments. She put eggs on artificial flower stems to make a bouquet. She has made a number of jewel cases, a ring box, bird houses, Easter nests and Christmas music boxes. One that is mounted on a music box which plays "Silent Night" is an ostrich egg hinged to reveal a manger scene. On top of the egg is an angel and around the base of the egg are the three kings.

Miss Thomas has used eggs that vary in size from parakeet to ostrich eggs and have come from as close as her bird cage to as far away as Africa. She uses more of the eggs which are easier to obtain such as chicken, turkey, goose and duck. A couple of unusual ones are the snake and emu eggs. The snake egg is slightly smaller than a bantam egg and is dark grey with black spots on it. The emu egg is about two and a half times the size of a duck egg and is almost black in color. She also uses eggs from chickens which lay blue and pink eggs.

Miss Thomas enjoys attending egg shows. Last Saturday she went to one in Phillipsburg, N. J. Kit Stansbury is the show director and it is held in the youth center there. The show is called "Eggs-ibit." This was the fourth year for it. There were about 80 people exhibiting. A number of dealers



Some of the varied Easter decorated eggs here include one with a cross on it, mounted on top of a fountain type stand, a corsage, a lamp, umbrellas over Easter flowers, a jewel box and nests. Also included is a wedding creation mounted on a music box which plays Lohengrin's Wedding March. The materials used are from the bridal gowns and veil. The egg opens to display the bride and groom and is lined with a frosted wedding napkin bearing the date and the name of the bride and groom.



Miss Muriel A. Thomas's dining room is beautifully decorated for Easter with her tree of decorated eggs and other decorated egg creations she made as well as her home-made chocolate coconut eggs, a bunny and a basket of ceramic and china eggs. She is holding an ostrich egg which she decorated with a creche for Christmas and mounted on a revolving music box which plays Silent Night.

in small objects and trimmings used for egg decorating have space there. Exhibitors and dealers come from Canada, California, North Carolina and Michigan as well as nearby. Muriel also goes to egg shows in Ephrata, Pa. and Baltimore, Md.

Miss Thomas' decorating talents do not stop with egg decorating. She decorates styrofoam balls and uses can lids, bracelets, tuna fish cans and many objects to make Christmas tree ornaments. She has a large artificial tree which revolves and plays Christmas carols and she focuses a spot light on it. Last year she had 135 items on her tree and she made all of them. She exhibited her Christmas tree balls at Lancaster Hobby Show two years ago. She also made four hats with reed mats as a base and decorated balls on them and gave them as gifts. In fact she makes most of her gifts for all occasions.

Muriel does a lot of sewing. She makes about 90 per cent of her own clothes. She just finished three dresses, has two out and material for four more. She also makes her own drapes.

She does a lot of fancywork. She has embroidered three quilt tops, crocheted a spiral design afghan, made velvet stuffed patchwork pillow tops and made needlepoint covers for a piano bench and a sewing bench. She has two needlepoint pictures started.

Muriel refinished two chairs, a rocking chair, a doll high chair, a drop-leaf table and a desk. She painted the woodwork trim and the walls in her house as well as removed wallpaper. She even painted her porch roof.

One of her other hobbies is doing figure draping. She made the three Kings and is making a creche set. She also made a manger scene in string art. She has done several paint by number pictures. She has a collection of 15 or 20 china cups and saucers, a collection of small glass baskets and a small collection of brass bells. One of her prized possessions is an antique china doll that she had as a girl. She had a friend make an outfit for it, the dress is a beautiful soft shade of green with mink trim. She enjoys reading, particularly magazines.

She has some antiques. One unusual piece she is proud of is a natural pitch fork she bought. It was made from a mulberry tree in France. The trees are trained into the shape of a pitch fork. When the tree is seven years old it is cut and peeled off of its bark and tied into shape. It is then dried in a heater oven to temper it. The wood is very tough. These pitch forks are used in the perfume factories of Grasse, France, to pitel roses off of the wagons. These roses are used to make "Otto" of Roses perfume oil.

Miss Thomas is a very hospitable person and a good housekeeper. In spite of doing so many crafts she is a full-

time employee of Armstrong Cork Company. She started working in the Aircraft Department as a time clerk in 1942. In 1946 she was transferred to the Stationery Department Stores and kept records there, then in 1949 was transferred to the Employee Relations Department where she still works. Normally she works 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. but for a long time has been working 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

She belongs to the First United Methodist Church in Mahanoy City but attended more frequently the Saint Nicholas Union United Methodist Church out in the country.

Muriel's father died when she was two and a half years old so her mother and all the children had to work. She has a sister who is a widow, one brother who is an electrical contractor, one a linotype operator and one who has a general store. Her mother did all her own canning, made jellies and baked bread. They had a garden and all of them picked coal and blueberries and worked on her uncle's farm picking vegetables, blueberries and cherries.

Muriel is a very good cook and on weekends prepares quantities of food for her freezer and puts it in so that it is convenient to take out in quantities for one person. She prepares and freezes TV dinners for herself and freezes vegetable soup in ice cube trays so she can cook a couple for lunch. She freezes hamburger stuffed cabbage leaves. She bakes four small white loaves and four small raisin loaves of bread at a time. She also bakes rolls, small pies and cakes. She has tried freezing pies before and after baking but prefers to bake them then freeze them. She puts tapioca in her fruit pies. She cuts a cake into four pieces or into slices and freezes each separately. She bakes beans and freezes them. She picks strawberries and either makes jelly or freezes the berries. She also freezes lots of vegetables.

Miss Thomas has a few favorite Easter recipes, all of which are good anytime:

Easter Eggs

1 good sized potato, cooked and mashed

Add: ¼ lb. butter

½ lb. grated fresh coconut

Gradually add 3 to 4 pounds of 10X sugar

Mix well and chill overnight. Shape into eggs and cover with melted semi-sweet chocolate morsels.

Coconut Cake

1 cup butter

2 cups sugar

3 cups flour

4 eggs

1 cup milk

2 teaspoons baking powder



Mrs.
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Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time and mix well. Add baking powder. Add milk and flour alternately. Bake at 350 degrees 30 to 40 minutes in 9 inch layer cake pans that have been greased and floured.

Frost with butter frosting and cover with grated fresh coconut. Make nest on top by arranging petite jelly eggs.

Jello Eggs Salad

Using fresh eggs, let stand at room temperature until chill is off them. Punch a small hole at top and bottom end of eggs and blow out contents. Close bottom holes of shells with tape. Pour any flavor jello into shells and chill in refrigerator until jello is set. Peel off shells and you have jello eggs. Arrange on lettuce and garnish with flaked coconut.

Baked Ham

Baked ham in a 325 degree oven, basting frequently with pineapple juice. Put pineapple slices and brown sugar on top of the ham the last half hour the ham is baking.

String Bean Casserole

Place 1 qt. of cooked string beans in a casserole. Add 1 can of cream of mushroom soup. Top with french fried onion rings and bake at 325 degrees.

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