

The history and art of the Easter egg

By Amy Leiser
Executive Director

Eggs have been a staple in human diets since ancient times. Early civilizations not only survived on eggs as a food source, but also regarded eggs as deep symbols of fertility, life, and a rebirth of the land after the cold winter. The word “Easter” comes from the name “Eostre” or “Ostara” which means “Spring” or “movement towards the rising sun.” Eostra was the pagan goddess of fertility, and her name first appears among the Anglo-Saxons of northern Europe in the 7th century. According to legend, Eostra always arrived in March or April, bringing warmer weather and longer days – the vernal equinox. Unsurprisingly, this event coincides with Christianity and Christ’s resurrection.

Some eggs, however, were intended for decoration,

not consumption. There seems to be no real reason for decorating eggs, and references of early egg-decorating traditions are almost non-existent. The earliest colored-egg reference can be

found in the April 13, 1824, edition of *Der Volksfreund* in Lancaster, Pa. A portion of the newspaper article, which was printed in German, reads, “A general custom with us is that of presenting children at Easter gayly colored eggs.”

The egg decorating process was common among local Pennsylvania Germans in the 1800s and involved much more effort than it does today. In the Pennsylvania Dutch regions, including areas in Monroe County, eggs were collected weeks before Easter to ensure there were plenty to be decorated, hidden, and then found by area children.

Eggs that would be dyed and consumed first had to be hard-boiled. Using natural resources from their environment, Pennsylvania Germans used boiled-down, dried onion skins, which produced a deep, rich red-brown color. The onion skins also gave the hard-cooked eggs a faint onion taste. Other natural resources were used to create different colors. Alder catkins and hickory bark yielded a yellow color, madder root produced a soft red color, and coffee and walnut shells gave the eggs a brown color. Commercial dyes were unheard of.

During the early egg decorating era, the Pennsylvania Germans developed unique methods to add designs to eggs. Some families would tightly wrap a piece of calico fabric around a raw egg. The cloth-wrapped eggs would be placed in boiling water, and once removed, that pattern of the cloth would be transferred to the egg. Children often used a hard tallow candle to draw patterns or pictures or write

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A distelfink scratch-carved egg from the Robacker collection.



Pennsylvania German experts Earl and Ada Robacker of Monroe County stand with their Easter egg tree in 1972. The Robackers decorated all of the eggs displayed.



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2025 Meetings

The MCHA Board of Directors meets
the fourth Tuesday of most months at 7 p.m.

Meetings are held online via Zoom

January 28
February 23– Annual Meeting
March 25
April 22
May 27
June 24
July – No meeting
August 26
September 23
October 28
November 25
December – No meeting

The Monroe County Historical Association is
a cultural and learning center that assists our
diverse community of residents and visitors
in connecting the county's past
with the present.



The Monroe County
Historical Association
hosted the Preserve
Committee's table during
the America250PA kick-
off event in January at
Northampton Community
College Pocono.

From left: Librarian Tania
Shelton, Curator Bret
Fowler, and Executive
Director Amy Leiser.

Monroe County joins America250 celebrations

On July 4, 2026, our nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Joining plans for nationwide **America250** festivities, in 2018 the state General Assembly and Gov. Tom Wolf established the Pennsylvania Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial — **America250PA** — to coordinate the commemorations in the state, which are to highlight Pennsylvania's integral role and the impact of its people on the nation's past, present, and future. The statewide effort aims to engage citizens in all 67 counties to bring Pennsylvania's history into the national conversation.

On the local level, all 20 Monroe County municipalities passed **America250PA** resolutions in January, making Monroe the second county in the Commonwealth to do so.

Monroe County Commissioner David Parker is representing the county on the **America250PA** county advisory committee, and has formed a committee to help the community commemorate this significant occasion.

Local subcommittees are focusing on eight areas: Arts & Culture; Business & Industry; Community Care; Education; Land, Water & Wildlife; Preserve; Service; and Tourism & Marketing.

Committee work and planning have just begun. If you are interested in volunteering, visit www.poconomountains.com/america250pa/monroe-county to learn more and discover how to become involved.

AMERICA 250 PA
NONPROFIT AFFILIATE



Business and suffrage presentation at Annual Meeting

The weather cooperated with abundant sunshine, and inside was equally bright and cheery as 150 members, friends, and supporters gathered at Stroudsmoor Country Inn on February 23 to celebrate another successful year for the Historical Association at its 103rd Annual Meeting and Award Luncheon.

At a short business meeting, members approved the 2025 budget, heard updates about the Heritage Center, and elected members for the Board of Directors. MCHA Board President Bob Moses and Secretary Precie Schroyer, having completed their two consecutive three-year terms, have rotated off the board per the by-laws. Both will continue serving on committees and remain active in fundraising.

Michelle Bisbing, Linda Post Bushkofsky, and Lois Gilroy were elected to serve their second three-year terms. Bill Leonard and Carrie Wetherbee were elected to serve, returning from their required year off after their previous tenure, and Beth Yaswinski joined for her first term.

The guest speaker was Wilkes University history professor Dr. Amy Sopcak-Joseph, who gave an informative and engaging presentation on the suffrage movement and history of the 19th Amendment. Thoughtful questions from the audience completed the afternoon.



MCHA Board of Directors President Bob Moses and Secretary Precie Schroyer received framed Dee Huxter Stroud Mansion prints to thank them for their service to the board.

Thank you to Ken Schurman of VIP Studios who donated his time to capture photographs from this year's Annual Meeting and Award Luncheon. To see all of the photographs from the event, visit his online gallery page at www.vipstudiosinc.com.

Bob Moses, 2025 Volunteer of the Year

Bob Moses, who has devoted endless time to the MCHA over the years and dedicated his life to making Monroe County a better place to live, was presented with the 2025 Volunteer of the Year Award.

Robert M. Moses, a native of Manchester, N.Y., attended the University of Albany, receiving a B.A. in sociology with minors in English and history and a master's degree in counseling and student personnel services. Bob worked at the university for four years before coming to East Stroudsburg University as assistant dean of students and director of residence life and housing, which he served as for 42 years before retiring in 2018.

A volunteer on St. Matthew's Church Pastoral Council, he also serves as the coordinator of the Warrior Food Pantry for ESU students experiencing food insecurity. He established the "Shoes That Fit" program with JM Hill Elementary School to buy clothing for children in need.

In addition to serving as the president of the Historical Association, he has served as president of the Pocono Arts Council, American Cancer Society, and Head Start/



Robert M. Moses

Pocono Services. He has received many awards, including the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education "Distinguished Service Award," the ESU President's first Medal of Honor, and the ESU Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award. Bob has also earned the Pocono Mountain Chamber of Commerce "Humanitarian of the Year" Award, the NAACP "Men of Distinction" Award, and the American Cancer Society "Lifetime Achievement" Award.

A resident of Shawnee-on-Delaware, Bob participates in the annual Shawnee River Road Cleanup and is a member of the Shawnee Preservation Society.

Bob continues to be an active Historical Association member, providing leadership, guidance, hard work, common-sense solutions, and always a smile. He serves as the chair of the Auction Committee for the very popular Raise Your Glass & Support the Past wine pairing dinner and auction, raising thousands of dollars for the MCHA.

Congratulations to Bob on this recognition and thank you for all you do!



Library books and files are packed and ready to return home to the Stroud Mansion and Heritage Center at 900 Main Street.



Preparing to move home

After two years at 748 Main Street, it's time for the Historical Association to say goodbye to our temporary home. The downtown Stroudsburg office space and library served us well over the past 24 months, and our organization is incredibly thankful to ESSA Bank & Trust for allowing us to be caretakers of the rental property.

MCHA staff and volunteers have begun packing up the library and office for the move back to the Stroud Mansion. Another team of volunteers will sort through books in our storage facility to expedite organizing them in the new space.

While our old Mansion library was in two adjacent rooms, the Heritage Center has space to categorize and separate high-use, public-access books and family files from the delicate archival materials and family bibles that will be kept in a special collections room that meets preservation standards.

The Stroud Mansion was emptied for the project, so it also is time to rebuild the gallery spaces and exhibition rooms from the ground up.

Of the 14 rooms in the Mansion, only three are returning to their pre-construction orientation and layout. The Heritage Center has allowed us reimagine and refresh the spaces to create relevant displays that better represent our past.

When the Mansion reopens, self-guided tours will encourage visitors to discover Monroe County's history through rooms dedicated to the Lenape peoples, women's history, the art of mourning, early settlers, our diverse communities, and so much more. MCHA is committed to creating an environment where everyone can learn, connect, and celebrate our history.

The task of rebuilding a museum, library, office, and a community outreach space is vast and will take the rest of 2025 to complete. The job will be accomplished with the ongoing support, encouragement, and kindness from our community.

We look forward to welcoming you to the new Heritage Center and sharing in the excitement of this remarkable achievement.

Old stones make new planters at Mansion

Stonemasons from TWK

Construction Company in Wind Gap have worked to build new planters at the Stroud Mansion Heritage Center. These planters are located at the 9th Street entrance to the new building.

The design of these planters called for a fieldstone facade. But rather than select and buy new stone, museum Curator Bret Fowler wanted to repurpose old ones: the original stone foundation stones from the 1890s addition that had to be dismantled as part of the expansion project.

The original foundation stones had been saved and stored off-site. This was an excellent reuse of materials while providing another opportunity to pay homage to the old structure.

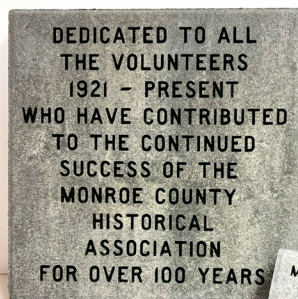
Keep an eye out for beautiful seasonal flowers to adorn these "new" historic planters!



New planters have been built in front of the Heritage Center from old stones saved from the 1890s Stroud Mansion annex.



PERSONALIZED ENGRAVED PAVERS AND BRICKS



To order your personalized engraved paver or brick that will become a lasting part of the new Kinsley Family Courtyard at the Heritage Center at the Stroud Mansion Museum and Library, please complete the attached order form and return with payment to:

Monroe County Historical Association
748 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Stroudsburg, PA 18360

Please print clearly. Engraving is limited to text only (no images, logos, or iconography). * Use additional pages for orders of multiple pavers or bricks. Payments may be combined.

Name _____ Email _____

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For more information or to order online, please scan the QR code or visit monroehistorical.org/heritagectr.html.

*The Monroe County Historical Association reserves the right to cancel any order that includes offensive or inappropriate text.



The concept drawing by MKSD Architects is shown above. In keeping with the federal, state and local historical preservation guidelines, the Heritage Center addition uses the same materials and a simplified design that references the historic Stroud Mansion building, but does not copy it to create a fake "old" appearance.

Heritage Center gets its final face



AT LEFT:
October 8,
2024

BELOW:
January 8,
2025



The exterior of the new Heritage Center addition to the Stroud Mansion is all but finished in this photo taken on March 20, 2025.



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Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Pennsylvania Library Association
Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau
R. Dale and Frances M. Hughes Foundation
The Weiler Family Foundation

New Members

Tricia Lowrey Lippert
Kristen Scott-Hamilton
and John Hamilton
Beverly Streck
Beth and Peter Yaswinski



Easter eggs

Continued from Page 1
phrases on uncooked eggs.

After creating the desired image, the eggs would be boiled in the dye, which would not penetrate the wax, and thus white images or phrases would remain. (This is very similar to the use of white crayons today.)

Some eggs were dyed a very dark color, and then designs were scratched to expose the white shell. These eggs were called scratch-carved, and the technique gave the egg a negative photo look.

By the late 1800s, businesses started

to sell not only dye but also eggs that were already dyed.

The March 26, 1880, edition of the *York Evening Post* advertised eggs that could be “colored beautifully and safely by dipping them in solutions of the analine colors” and further decorated by “wrapping rubber bands around parts of the egg and coloring the rest.”

In 1881, Lebanon businessman C.R. Fisher sold one dozen eggs for 5 cents, boasting the “sum charged is trifling compared to the trouble saved.”

Some eggs were used as decoration from year to year. Rather than being boiled, they had small holes poked at

each end, and the contents were blown out; the egg shells were then left to dry before decorating.

The idea of an Easter egg tree was not customary until the mid 1900s. The first mention of an egg tree was in 1876 when a Philadelphia man hung eggs from an evergreen bough. Easter egg trees came in all shapes and sizes, but the traditional ones featured deciduous tree branches that were wrapped in cotton and weighted down for display.

As you dye your own eggs this Easter, take a moment to remember you are continuing a tradition that is centuries old.

MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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