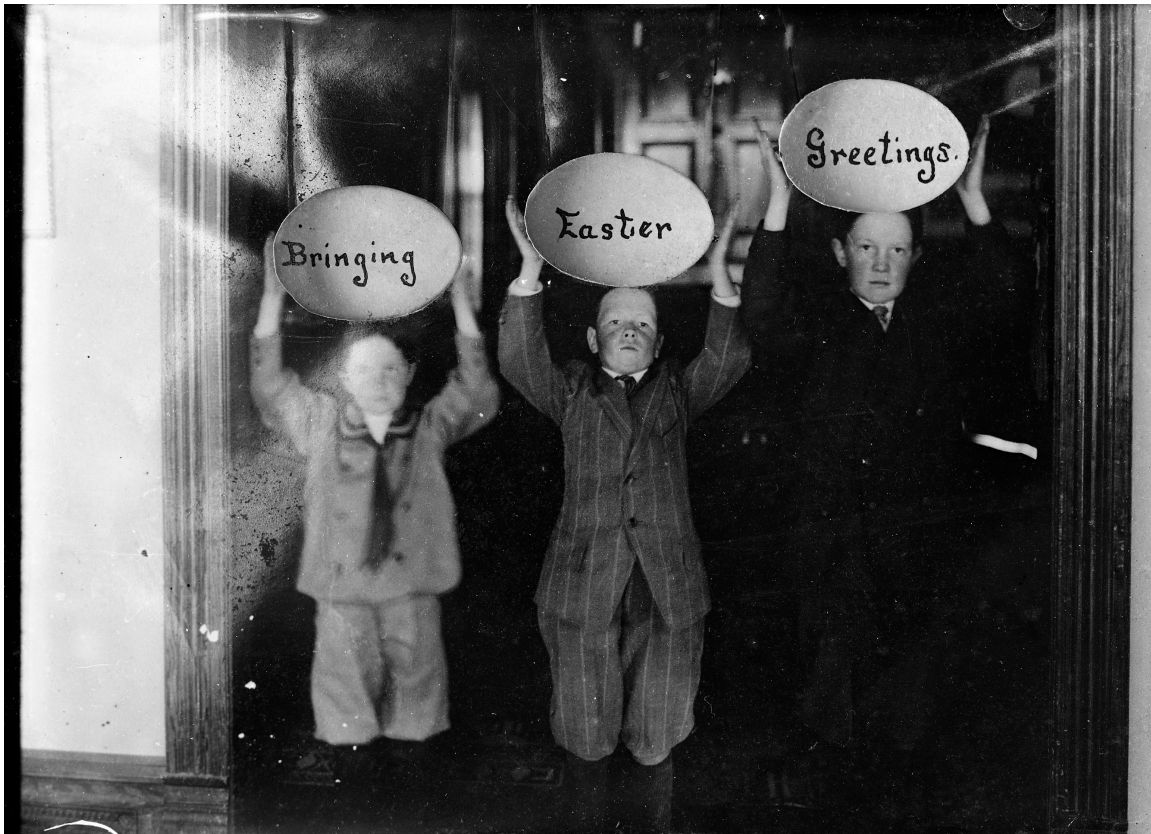


Egg Industry Has Changed in a Century

“Eggs are the highest they have ever been at this time of the year, and no one is to blame but the hens,” was what a well known grocer said when asked what caused the soaring of the price of eggs. This is how an article in the December 4, 1908 article in the Monroe Evening Times started. In those days, and at least into the 1950s, farmers would bring cleaned eggs in from the farm to trade with the local grocer who would then sell to their other customers. These are days long gone.



This photo, is from the collection of David and Sharon Riese. John, Howard, and Joseph Bolender are holding “eggs” with Easter greetings to brighten the day for each of us.

The grocer continued, “Usually we can lay a sudden rise in price of a commodity to the door of a trust or a monopoly, but this time it is the legitimate rule of supply and demand that is causing the trouble. Until the hen decides to go to work again eggs will not go any lower.

“We are selling strictly fresh eggs, large size at 30 cents per dozen.

“I cannot predict where the price per dozen may be in a few days if the egg famine continues. It is hard to get fresh eggs now at any price and if they get much scarcer we can’t get them at all.

“Farmers who have supplied our company with eggs for years have sent word they have none to consign.”

The article also stated that the price of butter was also ascending likely to reach 35 cents wholesale, which would make the retail price 37 cents or more per pound. It is hard to fathom that the prices were that low, but we must realize that the county board had just raised the salary of the county judge to \$2,000 a year at the end of November.

Another article that appeared earlier that year on June 25 had the headline, “Eggs By Mail.” The smaller headline said, “Crushed Hen Fruit Made a Lot of Trouble at the Local Postof-

EGGS BY MAIL
**Crushed Hen Fruit Made a Lot of
Trouble at the Local Postoffice.**

Monroe Evening Times headline
June 25, 1908

“The article stated, “A setting of eggs shipped by mail from Schultz to Brodhead made a lot of trouble for the clerks at the local postoffice yesterday. The eggs arrived here [Monroe] in a mail pouch to be transferred from the Illinois Central to the Milwaukee road. They had been packed in a pasteboard box, which had become crushed, and when the mail sack was opened it was found that all the other mail in the sack was smeared with egg. It was a hard mess but the mail had to be han-

dled and was cleaned the best way possible while what was left of the box was sent on to Brodhead.”

If you have ever had to clean anything that was smeared with raw eggs, you can only imagine how long it would have taken those postal workers to clean up all the mail. I am certain that the recipients of those pieces were puzzled as to what had happened to the pieces that they received.

A much older article came from the April 20, 1881 issue of the Monroe Sentinel. “John Sissons shipped 1,800 doz. eggs for Easter trade to Chicago last week. Eggs brought 15 cents per dozen just before Easter.”

Easter 2020 will be one that we will remember for many years to come! It cannot be celebrated in the traditional way with much family around. Use the telephone, social media, and correct “social distancing” to make it as good as it can be. I’d like to wish each of you the very best Easter that you are able to have under the circumstances.

Additionally, I would like to thank those readers who have reached out with reactions to this column. As a retired math teacher, I never would have expected to be writing a column at any time in my life. To be doing it now is astounding!