

## So where did that bunny come from?

Since today is Good Friday, marking the start of Easter, I wondered where Easter customs found their origins.

Tapping into my favorite resource, I searched the Internet for background on Easter traditions and all the history associated with them.

First and foremost, we all know Easter is the celebration of the crucifixion of Christ, and churches the world over are filled to overflowing as Christians celebrate the culmination of Holy Week.

Holy Week, the last week of Lent, begins with Palm Sunday, which takes its name from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem where the crowds laid palms at his feet. Holy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper, which was held the evening before the crucifixion.

Good Friday in Holy Week is the anniversary of the crucifixion. Holy Week ends with Easter Sunday, the day of resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I wondered why Easter was never celebrated on a set date— so, back to the Internet.

I found Easter is observed the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or following the spring equinox (March 21).

As a result, Easter is a celebration which can occur as early as March 22 or as late as April 25 in any given year, depending upon the phases of the moon.

Okay, next question— so where did the Easter bunny and the Easter egg come from?

It seems the bunny has its origin in pre-Christian fertility lore, being the most fertile animal (the randy little devils...) serving as symbols of the new life of spring.

The first Easter bunny seems to have originated in Germany in the late 1500s, and the first edible 'bunnies' were also of German origin in the early 1800s, made of flour and sugar, and decorated with icing.

The bunny concept was brought to North

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Ted Brown

America in the 1700s, with the arrival of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

Named Oschter Haws, the Easter Bunny was only second in popularity to Christ-Kindel (Santa Claus). If they were good, little children would receive a nest of decorated eggs on Easter Sunday morning, compliments of the bunny.

Eggs, also a symbol of fertility, originated in Germany as well, and decorated eggs, always in bright colors, were painted to simulate the brightness of spring flowers.

Eggs have crossed over to the Christian celebration as well, since in Greece, Easter eggs are painted red to represent the blood of Christ. Purple and gold colors used on eggs represent the purple robe that was placed on Christ when he was mocked as the "King of the Jews" prior to his crucifixion.

Like others, I've spent a lifetime celebrating the annual rituals of Easter, from both a religious and whimsical point of view, but never questioned the origin of the traditions.

Most people who have any religious affiliation are well versed on Holy Week and Christ's crucifixion.

But when I asked a few people if they knew where the bunny came from, they just hummed and hawed. But if you've read this far— now you know.

Have a Happy Easter.

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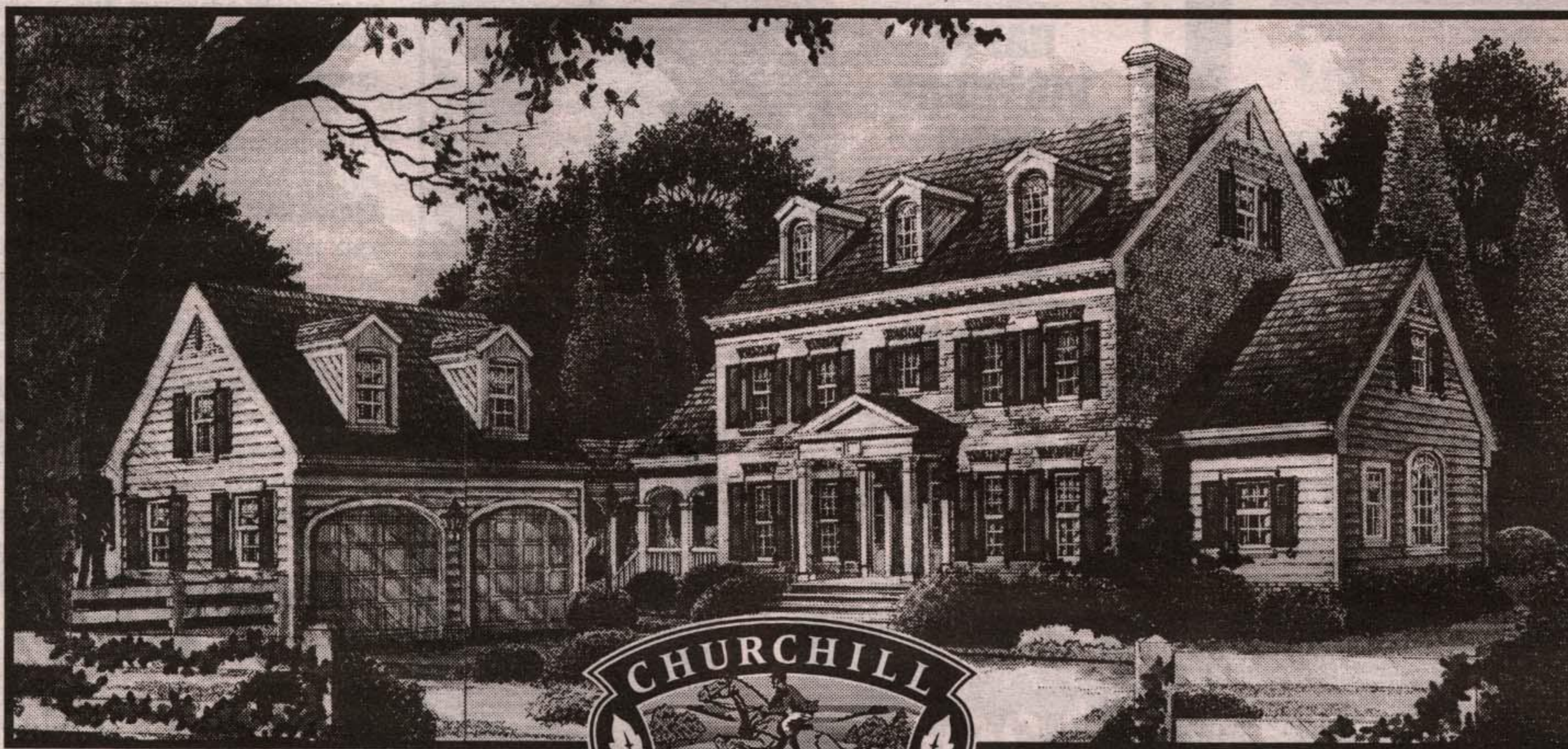
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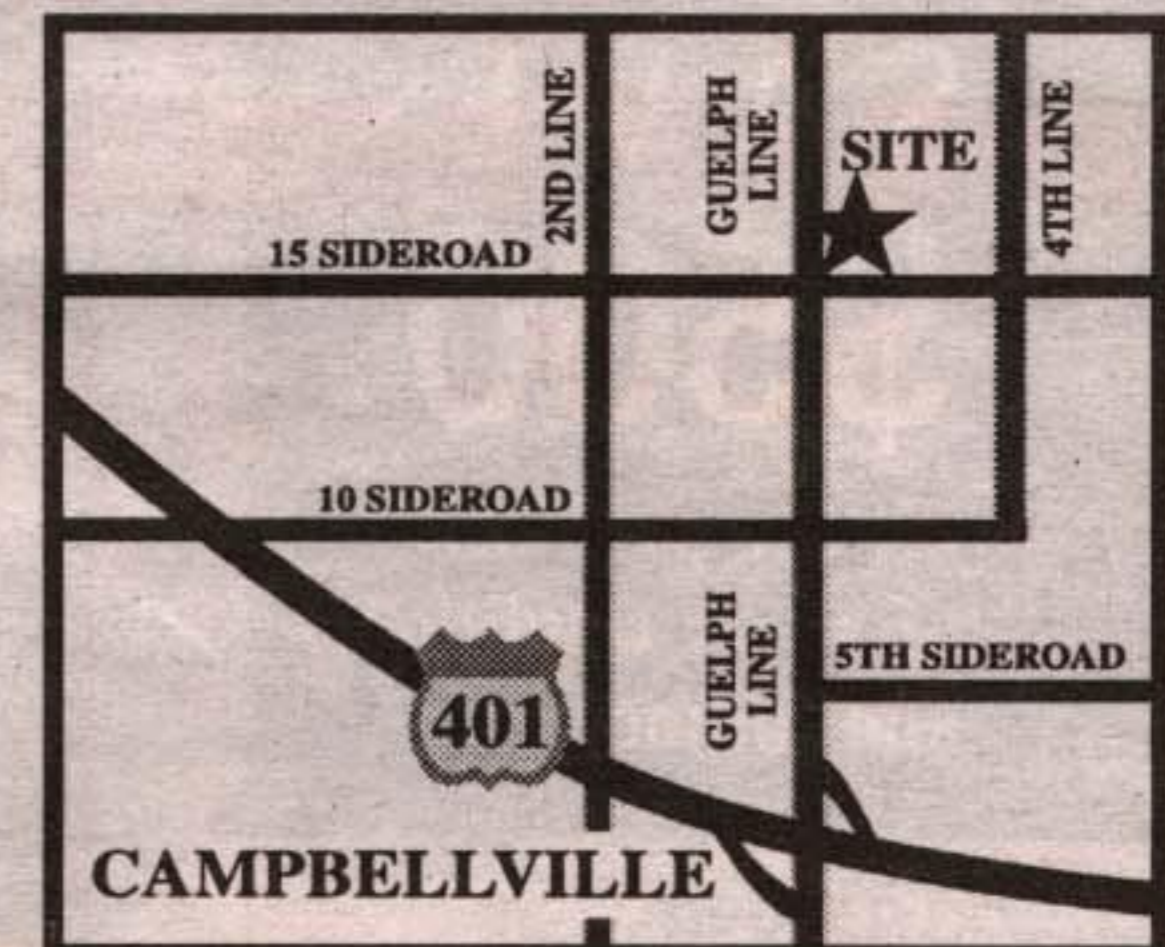


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