



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

MONDAY – 4/09/2007

Here comes Peter Cottontail!

HOW DID THE TERM “*EASTER BUNNY*” ORIGINATE?

***Encyclopedia Britannica*: "As at Christmas, so also at Easter, popular customs reflect many ancient pagan survivals—in this instance, connected with spring fertility rites, such as the symbols of the Easter egg and the Easter hare or rabbit." The 8th century scholar St. Bede believed the term came from Eostre or Ostara, the Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility.**

The "Easter hare" was a sacred companion of Eostre, and children were told that the magic hare would bring presents, like painted eggs. Since people were more reluctant to give up their holidays and festivals than their gods, the Christian church often incorporated pagan practices into their festivals to attract new converts.

16th century Germany writings showed the bunny as a symbol of Easter. By the early 1800s, the first edible (pastry / sugar) Easter bunnies were produced in Germany, where children made nests of grass to place in their yards on Easter Eve believing that the *Easter Bunny* would fill these baskets with brightly decorated eggs.

The *Easter Bunny* was introduced to American folklore during the 1700s by the German settlers in the Pennsylvania Dutch country.

Conventional Wisdom: Easter Bunny = A non-religious symbol

M of Z: Mr. Rabbit was a pagan deliveryman well before Easter