

Throw A May Basket

by: Leland Hite

Northwest Ohio including Wauseon, Winameg and Delta seems to be the only area in the world where this particular version of the "May Basket" was practiced. If you know of other locations in the USA or the world where this version was practiced, we would sure like to know about them. Send us an email with your account and version of a May Basket.

Our "Non-traditional May Basket"

Not limited to the rural community but more favored by those living in the country, the "May Basket" was an organized social mixer and a method to accomplish any number of goals in the rural community.

If your goal was to meet that special girl or guy, you would "Throw A May Basket" on them.

If you wanted a reason to get a group of friends together to party, you would "Throw A May Basket".

If you wanted to recognize that special person for doing "Good" you might "Throw A May Basket" on them.

Any age group might "Throw A May Basket" but it was most favored by the young, say under 20 or so.

As you can imagine, living on the farm or in a rural setting meant that your closest neighbor might be a mile or two away. Just to have a casual conversation or to catch up on the local gossip would require a trip down the road to see your neighbor. You might chat with a neighbor at church or at a school PTA meeting or while visiting the country store. Unfortunately, not all of the needs of the community were fulfilled by these methods.

Thus, the "May Basket" was used to fill a desire for social mixing in a rural community.

Details, details, details . . .

There was a protocol for accomplishing a successful "May Basket" and it goes something like this.

Anyone, at any age, could organize the event. An adult might organize the event for a group of children under the age of 10 or so. Teenagers would generally organize their own event. The group ranged in size from about 8 to 20.

Did I mention "Keep it Secret"? An important item for success was to keep the event secret from the person receiving the basket. Surprise was part of the event. If the secret was revealed, the event was not typically canceled, but postponed to again gain the element of surprise.



The basket could be any basket, but the most popular basket was a "new" bushel basket generally acquired from the local apple orchard business or vegetable farmer.

Filled to the top, the basket would contain mostly home-made goodies. i.e. home-made fudge, home-made popcorn balls, home-made candy-apples, pears, plums, apples and maybe a few ears of popcorn for the parents (a coveted item)

The process of "Throwing A May Basket" was to deliver a basket of goodies to the front door after the group had carefully hidden in and around the property of the person receiving the basket. This could be behind the barn, the garage, the house, or in the corn field, or maybe even the ditch. Most anywhere was acceptable as long as you remained nearby. This was most often an evening event just prior to dusk.

Basket delivery: This is where the fun begins. The group decided on a single individual who was to deliver the basket to the front door of the person. Not an easy task considering that you wanted to deliver the basket anonymously, ring the door-bell, run like heck and not get caught doing it. You were always in a hurry to deliver the basket to the front steps and it would appear that you "threw" the basket without spilling the contents of course. **Thus the phrase "Throw A May Basket"**.

The objective was to have the person come to the front door, see the basket of goodies but not see anyone else. Once that occurred, the person was to complete the "Hide & Seek" part of the event, sometimes easy, sometimes not, but always a lot of fun.

After the last person hiding had been located the group would gather around, socialize and eat the goodies. Depending on the size of the crowd the gathering might remain in the front yard or more often, be invited indoors.

While I have no specific details to offer other than participating in many May Baskets, I suspect there was a marriage to two resulting from the meeting of someone at a May Basket.

Certainly a great tradition and a terrific way to meet people and grow up in the 50's and 60's in Winameg, Ohio