

Wild Family

This is a reprint of an 1874 newspaper article about a “wild family.” that lived on an island in Lake Huron. Whoever wrote the original article certainly obtained detailed information, and probably saw the wild children he so aptly describes.

As to Lake Huron, about two-thirds of the lake’s 51,700-square-mile watershed is still covered by forests, and the lake contains more than 30,000 islands. The illustration provided shows a small section of the lake’s islands.

A Mysterious Family History; Three Children Taken Wild off an Island In Lake Huron

Lake Huron, Ontario, November 27, 1874

One morning about a month ago a man “of strange, wild men,” and not very respectable dressed nor of intelligent appearance, came to the Orphan’s House in connection with the Sisters of St. Joseph, and knocked on the door. One of the sisters came and opened it, and the man presented three children to be taken care of. The children bore a much stranger aspect than himself, and the group excited the surprise and wonder of the sisters. They consisted of a girl and two boys. The boys were clad in loose plaids and were attired altogether with a neatness and respectability which contrasted singularly with their deportment and looks. The girl was about fourteen years old, and was the eldest of the three. She was dressed in a plain and rustic style, but had an expression of much more intelligence than her younger brothers.

All of them were small in stature, but the boys especially so, and still they were not dwarfish. They were not deformed, but there was an unnatural and inhuman appearance about them which could be suggested by scarcely any other word than deformity. Their oddly expressive eyes, their apish features, their thin, bony, fang-like hands, their slender limbs and attenuated forms, their strange apathy to what was said by their father, their general inattention, their peculiar way of crouching in the corners of the passage-way, made them an object of curiosity and pitying interest.

They were led in by one of the Sisters, who also invited the father – for such he announced himself in disjointed sentences to be – to partake of something to eat. But he refused in a hurried manner, saying that he had something in his pocket, and seemed fidgety to get away. As soon as



Some of Lake Huron’s islands.

the children were in, the man left with the same wild, unintelligible stare which he wore throughout the short interview, and did not make any sign of parting or say a farewell word to his children, or indeed to anyone. But as he passed out of the entrance he turned round and furtively looked in through the sidelights of the door. Then he ran off hastily and was soon out of reach and out of sight.

The children were taken into the Home and had food offered them. About two o’clock in the afternoon the wild-looking father was seen to steal softly up to the convent and again entered the gate and peered inquisitively into the sidelights. His offsprings were not there, however, and the moment he saw he was observed, again fled and was seen no more. The youngest would not taste any food that was offered them, though they were emaciated and exhausted as could be. Their hands resembled bird’s claws more than anything else and their feet were but a cluster of bones.

On talking to them it was found that they could not speak, albeit they possessed the natural capacity for articulation, having a full set of teeth, perfectly formed roof of the mouth, and tongue capable of every movement. Neither did they pay attention to any words or kind of noise. They had been kept and kindly cared for by the sisters ever since their advent. But it was discovered that the boys were afflicted with a desperate cough, and though every kindness has been bestowed upon them and every mode of treatment adopted, it is not thought likely they will survive long. However, they appeared to be gaining strength for some time after being introduced.

Their stay in the house has shown them to have lived in the wildest manner and to have been totally unacquainted with the habits of civilized people. They can utter no articulate sound, as was said, but at various times they have been heard to give vent to a weird cry, entirely unlike an human utterance, but somewhat resembling the low wail of some wild animal. This is the sole expression the boys have been know to make, but the girl seems much more intelligent, and can speak common words, though she knows nothing of the ways of civilized life.

The boys have a constant habit of crouching in corners, and one of them sits with his shoulder “hunched up,” as if by malformation. They prefer raw edibles to cooked food, and have only lately taken to eating at the table. At first they greedily devoured raw cabbage, leaves of turnips, and even have been know to gulp up the swill that stood in the pail.

Of the commonest acts of decency they at first had no idea (showing their former habits of life), but they have latterly improved in many respects. They sleep mostly in the day-time, and at night wander around the rooms; one of

them being found one night in a dangerous position on a staircase in the middle of the night.

As to their former history only this is known, that they were found by Father Chenier, of Owen Sound R.C. Mission, on a lonely isle in Lake Huron, where the father lived with these strange children and would allow no one but themselves to live there. The Father seeing their condition obtained the father’s permission at last to have them taken to a refuge and cared for.

The parent came with them voluntarily and brought them here. The parents of these singular beings were not married but are said to have been nearly related. The mother has been dead for years. A letter is expected here giving a sketch of their history.

Source: Robert Columbo, 2004. *Canadian Monsters*; George A. Vanderburgh (Publisher), Shelburne, Ontario, Canada, from (same heading), the *Daily British Colonist*, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, reprinted from the *Spectator*, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, (date not known).