

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 481

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The following is a quirky story passed on by Mrs. John Strick (Lois Hicks) who grew up in the Brighton area. This story is one of several printed in the Brighton Argus, December 1931 and January 1932. The story is from the era of 1832 through 1850s as collected by Mrs. Strick through the Past Matrons Club.

“Wild Man” Terrorized Residents!

One summer, Brighton had its “wild man.” He robbed the hen roosts and smoke houses; he would rifle the gardens at night. Farmers who were away with their families for the day would return to find provisions taken from their cellars. The only clue was the print, at times, of the man’s bare feet. The only person who ever saw him was Mrs. Harrison Dean, a bride of a few weeks. She had started for Brighton from their farm, just east of the village, to do some trading. Hearing a sound behind her, she glanced back to see a most grotesque figure just stepping from the bushes, practically nude with long, unkempt hair and whiskers; a truly horrifying sight.

Feet in those days were trained feet and she made good use of hers, running until she fell in a fainting condition among the carpenters who were building the Cobb house on the site where Wm. Hyne’s house now stands. As soon as she was revived enough to tell of her experience, a posse started in pursuit, but a thorough search failed to produce the “wild man” and he was never heard of again. (In the next installation of Mrs. Strick’s stories, it continued.)

“The story from my last article was as I heard it from my mother 40 years ago as a small girl. Mr. Norton tells me that I did not finish the story.” He tells me that the posse was composed of 50 or more men and boys of which he was one of the latter. They spread out through the heavy timber, which then covered Fairview Cemetery, over the knolls toward Noble Lake. There the “wild man” was seen again. He had a campfire burning and

when he saw them approaching he sprung up and with his bare feet dashed the fire in every direction and then raced swiftly across the marsh toward the lake. The fire caught in the dry grass and in a few minutes a wall of flame and smoke cut them off from their quarry. They beat out the fire and then hurried on. They caught a glimpse of him at the edge of the water and that was the last sighting. There was no way for him to escape except to swim the lake as he was surrounded. The island and shore were searched and no trace was ever found. Either he made his way across and escaped or his bones lie in the soft mushy ooze at the bottom of the lake.

(Thanks to Mindy Kinsey who has spent time gathering these “quirky” stories out of the Brighton Argus.)

We know there are many residents who have lots of family history and stories about Brighton’s past. We would like to capture those stories. If you have a story to tell, please send it to us for consideration. Thank You!

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