# The Jersey Devil



0. The Jersey Devil - Story Preface

#### 1. The Jersey Devil

- 2. Hurricane Sandy
- Volney Phifer of Hollywood and New Jersey by G. Monaghan



"It was neither beast nor man nor spirit, but a hellish brew of all three. It was beside a pond when I came upon it. I stopped and did not move. Nay, I could not move. It was dashing its tail to and fro in the pond and rubbing its horns against a tree trunk. It was as large as a moose with leather wings. It had cloven hooves as big around as an oak's trunk. After it was through with the tree, it yielded an awful scream as if it were a pained man, and then flew across the pond until I could see it no more."

So wrote <u>Vance Larner</u> in 1790, the first known person to see the Jersey Devil. It is depicted as a winged, kangaroo-like demon with the head of a horse and the face of a dog who haunts the <u>Pine Barrens of New Jersey</u>. For three centuries, it has stalked the Garden State, disturbing the otherwise serenity of the Pinelands and leaving tourists trembling.

Sporadic sightings over the past 300 years inevitably trigger questions. From whence did the beast come? Is it real? Could it truly be trapped in a forest of such absolute beauty? The answer lies in fact and history. The legend starts in the 1700s, in a cottage straight off the Pine Barrens where a woman named Deborah Leeds really lived with her family of 12 children.

As the story goes, Deborah was exhausted from tending to the demands of her home and family, of cooking and cleaning for her large brood. Imagine her anguish and anger when she discovered she was pregnant again, with her 13th baby. In a fit, she declared that this child would be a devil, and in the 1700s, about 100 years after the <u>Salem Witch Trials</u>, Deborah's words would be deemed a curse. Many believe that this is what turned her would-be, innocent child into a voracious demon. It would become best known as the Jersey Devil or the Leeds devil, according to some versions of the story. In most accounts, the child was born a demon, but some say it progressively grew into one.

Other versions say that the family was cursed beforehand or that the baby became a demon during the difficult and painful birth. There are even more twists to the tale, claiming clergymen cursed her child because Deborah Leeds was a Quaker who refused to change faiths. The most popular story tells of a long painful birth. The house echoed with deafening screams, either Deborah's or the demon's. Blood spattered the floor and walls. When the creature was finally born, it flew out of the womb on leathery, bat-like wings with a bone-rattling screech and slit the woman's throat in one sweep of his talons before soaring out the window.

Other versions claim that although the child was a demon, Deborah raised it in secret until it was driven out as a child. This theory also says that the Devil came back to its home to check on its mother until she died. At that point, the creature turned demonic and started to terrorize the neighborhood. Similar versions say that as Deborah raised it, it progressively transformed into the devil.

In Deborah's time, belief in witchcraft still abounded, and many today believe that the legend of the Devil was a result of a disfigured child or maybe even a miscarriage. It was often thought in those times that an imperfect child was the result of sin on the part of the parents, a curse delivered to balance their wrongdoings. However, this theory certainly does not explain the more recent sightings of the monster; that is unless it could somehow survive for three centuries alone in the woods of New Jersey.

Since the time of Vance Larner, <u>many sightings</u> have occurred steadily throughout the years, describing scenes of gremlin-like creatures and demonic monsters eating chickens and destroying property. At one point in the early 1900s, \$100,000 was offered for the kill or capture of the Devil, and in 2001, two teenage boys claimed to see the Devil staring at them through the trees while ice skating in his "Territory".

Despite the drastically different descriptions of the Devil over the years, the unexplainable occurrences and stories left today are a testament to the strength of the folktale. Considering the lack of medical knowledge in that time, it isn't hard to believe that disfigured babies were fairly common occurrences. So why did this one stand out? Perhaps it was just a family story that became something more, and what Larner saw was a buck rubbing up against the tree. Or maybe the story is true. Maybe the Devil does stalk the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. Maybe he discovered the child lost to darkness three centuries ago.

Even in the 21st-century, the Jersey Devil's legacy lingers in the Garden State, this time as an icon of popular sports culture. The ice hockey franchise known as the <u>Jersey Devils</u> debuted in 1982, a testament to the power of folklore.

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#### JERSEY SEES A DEVIL.

#### Leeds' Monster Reappears Among the Pines

A Strange Combination of Serpentine Body, Horse Head, Cloven Hoofs and Forked Tall

Inself skell has reappared in Nov James for the first time of the warred the poleomous of the approach of the civil warr. Back in the middle colonial days, any the New York Rends, there lived in Buttlequies, on the Debausser. The pronouse 'Quaker additional of the could, there lived in Buttlequies, on the Debausser. The pronouse 'Quaker additional of the could, a smalless witcherald, and withherald is at its height therealworks at that time. In 1735 Hother Leade gave birth to a make old, whose father was later and to have been some other than the father than the

The child was normal at birth, but before the termination of the temperatures night of the survival horrifled several old eroons gathered about the betaked of Mother Leedo by assuming an elongated, seepent-like body, cloven hoofs, the head of a hores, the wings of a bat and the forkest tall of a dragen. The coloring of the horrible creature inmed to a dauly broom, and after be-parementing its mother and her terrifical companions. If the cay the technomy, utilizing companions. If the cay the technomy, utilizing

Circling about from village to village during this countral night, the fined decoursed sourceal babins, annualited wemen and made for the force. For come yours alrevard, below the view of the view o

Accompanied, as it usually was, by the howlin of dogs and the hooting of owls, there could it no surer forecumer of dissater. Where the pine line the seashore it flitted from one desolate, grass-grown dune to another, watchful upon those wild nights when merchant ships, driving their pross into the sand, bust assander and distributed their freight of costly goods and human seeds upon the

Upon such occasions Lorda'd dwa'l was seen in the companionality of a beautiful, guiden haired worms in white, or yet of amen fierces synd, we will be suffered to the companional to the companional to the control of the share of Cape May country as, plying from the Spanish man, his gafaces had gone to destruction. Again this same seen of States when the Sammapper speciful sort of the control o

At other times Leeds' dovil, like a bird of prey, howered over a silent, star be-spangled pend in some silent recess of the codar awares, blasting with its foul breath the lives of hundreds of fishes.

sundreds of fishes, bound fleating next day upon the aurface, aimted and unfit for food. Again the dreaded send half ran, half flow through the shadowy istulas of the pienes, while before it to their overts hurried panther and deer, rabbits, quirrels and wild areg bride.

and Adlantic to the upper part of Cape May county, preferring the lonely result strength to county, preferring the lonely result strength who codar swamp regien, but frequently it made nocturnal enabling his upon the Be-stock and farm crops as it went. One tradition has it that it was particularly active during the Revolutionary period, but one more distinct is that it was banished for a contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 and contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and did not recorpose until about 60 to the contrary and the contrary to the Akron Newspaper Article in More Readable Form

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