

The Dionne Quintuplets

Annette, Émilie, Yvonne, Cécile and Marie aroused worldwide attention after their birth at Corbeil, Ontario, to Oliva and Elzire Dionne on 28th May, 1934. Most quintuplets are dizygotic "fraternal," but the Dionne quintuplets were monozygotic "identical."

The Ontario government removed them from their parents and, under the care of Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe who delivered them, they were placed in a specially built hospital. Here they were placed on display and quickly became the country's biggest tourist attraction. Over three million people visited "Quintland" as the site came to be known. They were used in dozens of commercial endorsements and three Hollywood movies fictionalized their story. Their trust articles grew.

Their father, Oliva, fought for nine years to have the girls returned to their family and in 1943, he finally won them back. But the reunion with their parents and six siblings was not successful. Eventually the girls moved to Montréal where Cécile, Marie and Annette married but these marriages failed (Cécile gave birth to twin boys, one of whom died at age 6 months of cancer of the kidney). Émilie was an epileptic and died during a seizure in 1954. Marie, the smallest at birth, died in 1970 of an apparent blood clot.

On February 26, 1998, the three surviving sisters held an emotional news conference with their lawyer, at the Ontario Provincial Legislature, to announce their rejection of the Mike Harris government's "final" offer of \$2000 a month for each of them, and demand "justice, not charity" from the province. On March 6, 1998, the Ontario government apologized to the Dionnes and offered them and the children of Marie a \$4-million lump-sum payment. The government also promised to conduct an inquiry into their treatment while they were in provincial custody from 1934-43. Yvonne died of cancer in 2001. Annette and Cécile currently still live in Montréal.