



GETAWAY CAR

This powerful 1937 Monarch was stolen from W. E. Frasnidge's Garage at Alix by fugitive Robert Cook and abandoned in a field northwest of Bashaw. The car remained at the search headquarters throughout operations, an ominous reminder of the craftiness of the man being sought.

—A CAMROSE Canadian News Photo.

Mortal fear grips Bashaw area

The story of Alberta's most intensive manhunt is a story of devoted police and militia forces working around the clock with little sleep. It is a story of sensation and blaring headlines in what is normally Alberta's most peaceful region. But most notably, it is a story of mortal fear gripping an area that seldom before has seen violence of any type.

Police were gathered at important intersections on Highways 21 and 22 throughout the search area. And standing with them at many of the intersections were groups of farmers or residents of villages in the region, seeking the security of their protection.

One farmer in the immediate area of the car that Cook abandoned said that Monday afternoon, shortly after the search had begun in the region, he went down the road to a quarter that he farmed about two miles from his home quarter.

"As I came through the gate, I noticed the door of a granary was standing open. I was sure I hadn't left it open, so I turned and headed back home. I told the police about it, and I wouldn't go back until I was sure that Cook was a long way from here."

This particular farmer has an advantage of some eight inches in height, and 75 pounds in weight, over the suspected slayer. But his reaction was typical among a people who never before had had their lives threatened in any way.

Transpeople of Bashaw knew their homes lay in the most likely path of the fugitive, and their reaction was far from calm. Armed deputies patrolled the streets continually on the lookout for anything out of order. Monday night, residents locked their doors and windows, secured their motor vehicles and kept a close watch on all their supplies of food, firearms and clothing. Few slept easily.

It wasn't until Tuesday evening, when the fugitive had been captured, that the district residents began to enjoy the sensational attention their area had received. Hundreds of curiously seekers then flocked to the streets of the town, hoping to catch a glimpse of the young man who had gained such notoriety within the short period of a few days since he had been released from penitentiary. (Cook had served an extended term at Prince Albert for car theft, being released in June.)

Cook ...

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was surrounded, and the forces were systematically conveyed on the point where Cook had been seen.

By Monday night, it was known that the fugitive would have to be within the immediate area of Bashaw, a town of 250. Citizens were chilled by fear, many moving into the centre of the town. Local men were deputized and patrolled the streets, heavily armed.

Tuesday morning dawned with no definite trace of the hunted man. Then about 11:00 a. m., Herman Schultz, a farmer four miles west of Bashaw, reported seeing a man answering Cook's description limping through a field. He was carrying an object, said the farmer. The terrified populace of the region asked the silent question: was it a firearm, or just a stick to make the travelling easier?

SPOTTED BY WOMAN

Finally, at 3:40 p.m., Mrs. Norman Duvau looked out the kitchen window of her farm home one-half mile south of the town. She spotted a figure purposefully making his way for cover, and immediately she called the police. Within 20 minutes, police had converged on the terrain and the suspect was captured. He admitted to carrying without a fight.

He was wearing a pair of pants pulled over his head, pajamas, a brown coat, and rubber gaiters. Cook on his feet. It is believed that his double-locks made it difficult for dogs to pick up his scent. He was in quite good condition.

Cook was first arrested at Stettler on June 27th, the day before the blood-soaked bodies of his father, step-brother and two five children were found hidden in a garage pit in the Cook garage near their Stettler home. He had been charged with false pretences in connection with a car deal made in Edmonton. The hideous crime was discovered by police when they went to tell Cook's father of his arrest.

The night previous to his arrest, Cook had been on Camrose at a dance and had given several youngsters rides in his car, a 1937 Chevrolet convertible. The youngsters had thought him rather an odd person, but suspected nothing of his possible hook-up with the mass slaying. Police believe that the murders were committed Thursday night.

After his rearrest, Cook was held in the RCMP rolls at Bashaw, then transferred Tuesday night to Fort Saskatchewan jail. Inspector Ledingue accompanied the prisoner in person, to ascertain that everything possible was done to prevent another escape.

Cook was released just last month from Prince Albert Penitentiary, where he had served an extended term for car theft.