

THE MAD TRAPPER OF RAT RIVER

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THE MAD TRAPPER

HE'S DYNAMITE PROOF AND BLIZZARD PROOF.

HE'S FASTER THAN THE WIND.

HIS SECRET IDENTITY STILL REMAINS UNKNOWN.

HE IS... SUPER WILDMAN.



A HISTORIC MANHUNT

Albert Johnson, also known as the Mad Trapper of Rat River, was the focus of Canada's largest manhunt.

Beginning in Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories, the pursuit extended 240 km, in frigid conditions and over mountainous terrain, for 48 days.



THE CHASE

Trapping in Fort McPherson

Suspicious Stranger Among the Gwich'in

Shots Fired

Chase Across the Arctic

Hero pilot

Final Shootout

Mystery DNA

Hero or a Villain



FORT MCPHERSON IN 1901.
courtesy NWT Archives/C. W. Mathers fonds/N-1979-058: 000



TRAPPING IN FORT MCPHERSON

The Mad Trapper was first seen in Fort McPherson a small town in between Inuvik and Whitehorse

Fort McPherson was mostly populated by members of the Gwich'in First Nation and was heavily involved in the fur trapping and trading business. It was a popular stopping point for traveling trappers.

TRAPPING IN THE NORTH

- Trapping is a foundational practice in both Indigenous and European cultures. It was also an important reason for European settlement in Canada.
- The Mad Trapper manhunt occurred during the Great Depression, a time when many came to Canada's north to trap for a more reliable income.

GWICH'IN PEOPLE

- The majority of Fort McPherson residents were members of the Gwich'in First Nation. Several Gwich'in officers were involved in the chase for Johnson
- The Gwich'in elders called 1932, "That Albert Johnson year."
- The event was so important to the Gwich'in that it was like asking about where someone was were during 9-11 or the assassination of John Kennedy.

SUSPICIOUS STRANGER AMONG THE GWICH'IN

Johnson was first seen coming down a raft on the Peel river by locals

Over the first two weeks in Fort McPherson, he spent \$1400 CAD

Traveling trappers were not uncommon at Fort McPherson, but Albert Johnson was different as he wouldn't speak much and gave no direct answers.



BENZMIDT. (2016, MAY 31). NATIVE AMERICAN FLAGS: THE GOOD AND THE BAD. FUN FLAG FACTS. RETRIEVED MARCH 27, 2023, FROM [HTTP://FUNFLAGFACTS.COM/2015/11/25/NATIVE-AMERICAN-FLAGS-THE-GOOD-AND-THE-BAD/](http://funflagfacts.com/2015/11/25/native-american-flags-the-good-and-the-bad/)

SHOTS FIRED

DECEMBER 25-31, 1931

- The RCMP received complaints from local indigenous trappers about Albert Johnson
- The RCMP saw smoke coming from the chimney. After knocking on the cabin and receiving no answer. They left to obtain a search warrant.
- They returned with the warrant, and the RCMP constable was hit with a bullet. They left trying to keep him alive. The officer survived.



FORT MCPHERSON IN 1901.

(courtesy NWT Archives/C. W. Mathers fonds/N-1979-058: 000

SHOTS FIRED

JAN 4 - 11, 1932



JOHNSON'S CABIN AFTER IT WAS DESTROYED

- A team of 9 men and 42 dogs left Aklavic to search Johnson's cabin
- The posse was under heavy fire from Johnson immediately, and could not reach the cabin.
- The police used dynamite, blowing off the cabin's roof and walls. Johnson was unhurt and continued firing.
- After 15 hours of freezing conditions, the posse retreated

THE LARGEST MANHUNT IN CANADIAN HISTORY

- When they returned to Johnson's cabin a third time he had fled
- He could have been anywhere in a 260 km² area between the Mackenzie River and the east Richardson mountains
- During the first month of the chase, the RCMP followed many false leads
- On the 30th day of the manhunt, during a snowstorm, Johnson climbed up and across the Richardson mountains



PILOT "WOP" MAY

- Born on March 20, 1896
- World War 1 ace who received a distinguished flying cross.
- First pilot to ever be used in an RCMP manhunt
- Instrumental in finding and photographing Johnson during the chase from the sky
- Saved lives by flying injured officers back to the hospital



THE FINAL SHOOTOUT

February 14-17

The RCMP found Johnson along the Eagle river. He tried to run, then threw himself into the snow and opened fire.

The RCMP responded. Johnson was shot several times & died. In his possession, he had:

\$2,410 Canadian

\$10 American

5 pearls

5 pieces of gold dental work

Model 99 Savage rifle

An Iver Johnson sawed-off shotgun

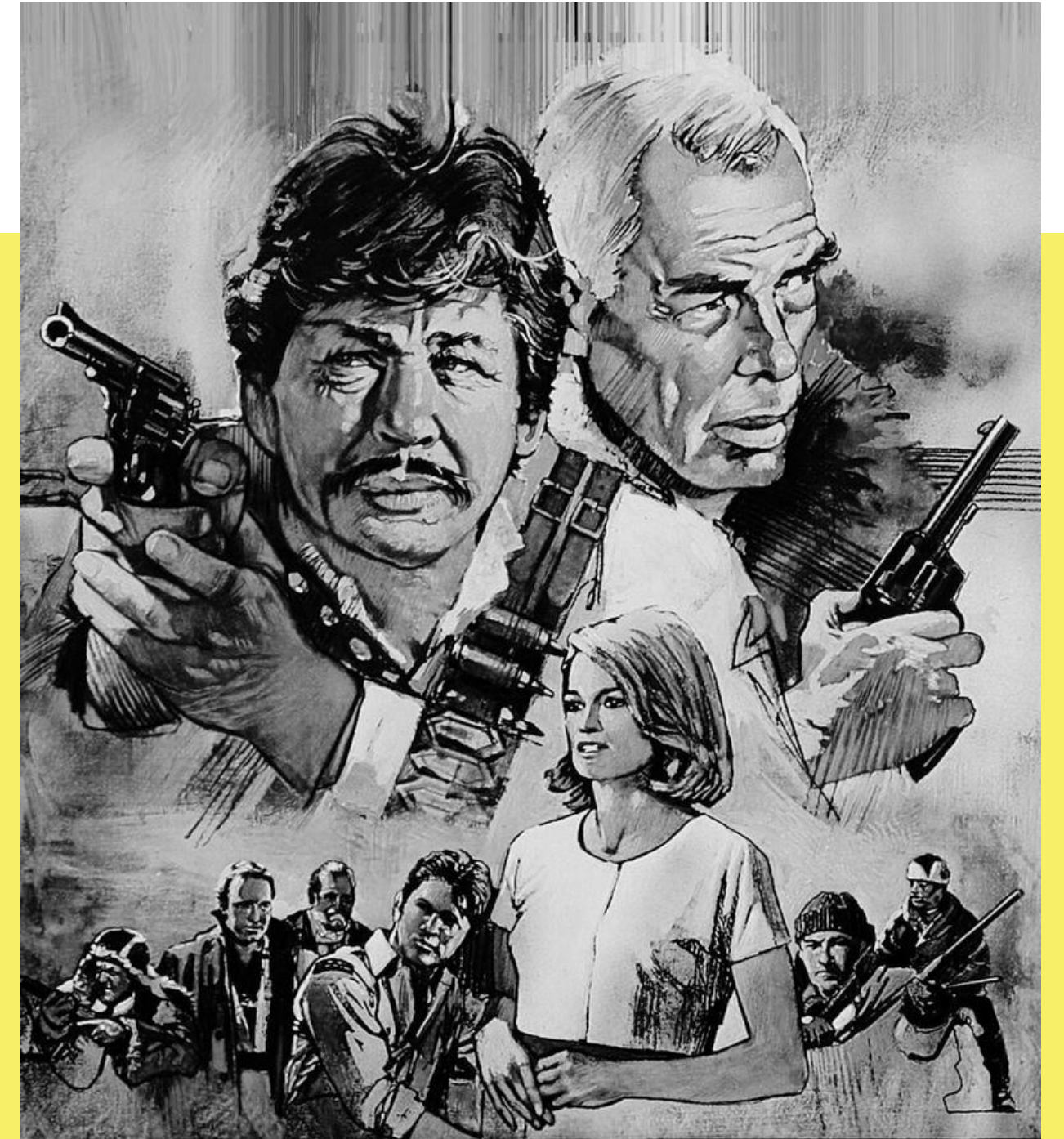
A Winchester .22 rifle

2 snowshoes



A HERO OR A VILLAIN?

- Johnson's one-man stand against the police drew the attention of the media, which labeled him "The Mad Trapper of Rat River"
- Civilians during the Great Depression sympathized with the fugitive
- Several films recreated the story of The Mad Trapper the most popular and controversial was Death Hunt



Death Hunt



MYSTERY DNA

DNA analysis has shed new light on the identity of the Mad Trapper, also known as Albert Johnson.

By analyzing isotopes, scientists determined that Albert Johnson grew up in the northern United States or northern Scandinavia.

News of Johnson's nationality disappointed dozens of Canadians who had submitted their DNA for testing.

Scientists also determined that Johnson was in his 30s when he died.

**THE MAD
TRAPPER
EXHUMED**



WHY IS THE MAD TRAPPER IMPORTANT TO CANADIAN HISTORY?



The Johnson chase brought a new resource to law enforcement in Canada - the airplane. Today, Canadian airborne search and rescue resources involve over 750 personnel, including ground crew, air crew, and 150 Search and Rescue Technicians.

The Johnson chase left a lasting memory in many minds, some good and some bad. This chase affected the lives of tens of thousands of people across Canada and inspired artistic and scientific innovations, whether individuals were rooting for him or trying to solve the mystery of his identity.



Johnson used unmatched athleticism and intelligence to do what no one else, before or after, has done. He avoided police for over 40 days, across 240 km, in rugged and freezing conditions. His survival skills and will to avoid capture are unmatched and contributed to the legacy of the Mad Trapper.



WHY I CHOSE THIS TOPIC

I chose this topic because from the minute I first heard the story of the Mad Trapper during a history class I was hooked. The Mad Trapper astounded me not only because of his athletic ability but because of the mystery and questions around this chase.

The Mad Trapper was a fascinating project to research and it taught me that the willpower of one man could outlast hundreds of others. Learning about the Mad Trapper gave me some insight into life in Canada's north almost 100 years ago. The Mad Trapper chase broke so many barriers and records not only because of the manhunt but because of the resources and officers involved. I had so much fun doing this presentation and hope to continue to find out more about this mysterious man.

RESOURCES

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