

This Day in History... January 4, 1925

Death of Nellie Cashman

Nurse, businesswoman, and philanthropist Nellie Cashman died on January 4, 1925, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Spending much of her life running boarding houses near mining camps and caring for sick miners, she became known as the "Miners' Angel."

Cashman's exact birthday is unknown, but some sources cite it as August 25, 1845, while others say it was in 1844. It's believed she was born Ellen Cashman in Cork County, Ireland, and baptized on October 15, 1845. Raised in Ireland during the Great Famine, Nellie traveled with her mother and sister to Boston to begin a new life around 1850. During her teen years in Boston, Nellie found work as a bellhop in a local hotel. In 1865, Nellie and her family migrated to San Francisco, and her life as a successful businesswoman began five years later.

Nellie and her mother followed the gold and silver strikes throughout the West and into Canada. They first opened a boarding house in Pioche, Nevada, just miles away from the silver mines. It was a success, but Nellie soon sold it and returned to California to find gold. She wasn't in San Francisco long before news of the Klondike Gold Rush reached her.



This design was taken from a drawing by Frederic Remington, entitled "The Gold Bug." It pictures an old prospector, who, with two pack burros, makes his way through mountain country in search of riches.

In 1874, Nellie was struck by gold rush fever and joined the stampede north to the remote Cassiar strike in British Columbia. She established a miner's boarding house near the Telegraph Creek. She asked the miners that stayed there make donations to the Sisters of St. Anne in exchange for the services she offered there. She also financed miners who were developing claims.

One year, when she was bringing \$500 in donations to the Sisters of St. Anne, Nellie learned of a group of 26 miners suffering from scurvy who had been stranded in the Cassiar Mountains during a terrible snowstorm. Nellie organized a search party and collected food and medicine for the stranded miners. The Canadian Army told her it was too dangerous, but she went anyway. Nellie and her search party spent 77 days in the frigid temperatures before finding the stranded miners. However, the initial reports of it being 26 men were incorrect, as she found nearly 75 men there. Nellie gave them the food and medicine and was soon known as the "Angel of the Cassiar" and the "Miners' Angel."

It wasn't long before Nellie felt the urge to wander again. This time, it was to the silver fields of Arizona. In Tucson, she opened a restaurant, the first business there to be owned by a woman. The following year, she opened businesses in Tombstone. Nellie collected money to build the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and work with the Sisters of St. Joseph. She also worked as a nurse in a Cochise County Hospital and continued to aid the ill and the injured, raising funds through benefits and soliciting money from wealthy businessmen. She made a habit of feeding the poor and helping those who had been injured in the mines. Nellie also opened her own restaurant and boarding house. The restaurant, then known as Russ House, is still open today, and known as The Nellie Cashman Restaurant. Nellie's sister and her five children came to live with her in 1881. When her sister died in 1884, Nellie became responsible for their care.

In 1897, news of gold in the Klondike reached the then 47-year-old Cashman, who once again joined the rush. Enduring the demanding 600-mile trek which climbed over the formidable Chilkoot Pass, she became the first woman in the mining camp of Dawson. From there she traveled north to the mining camps in Coldfoot, Alaska. Four years before her death at age 70, she revisited Tombstone – a trip whose first 750 miles she traveled by dogsled.

Nellie Cashman continued to wander, to prosper, and to give to those in need. She finally settled in British Columbia in 1923. Two years later, she developed pneumonia and was admitted to the Sisters of St. Anne, the same hospital she helped build half a decade earlier. She died there on January 4, 1925. In the years since her death, Cashman was inducted into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame and the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.



From the 1994 Legends of the West sheet



Issued for the 100th anniversary of the peak of the Klondike Gold Rush.

This Day in History... January 4, 1925

Death of Nellie Cashman

Nurse, businesswoman, and philanthropist Nellie Cashman died on January 4, 1925, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Spending much of her life running boarding houses near mining camps and caring for sick miners, she became known as the “Miners’ Angel.”

Cashman’s exact birthday is unknown, but some sources cite it as August 25, 1845, while others say it was in 1844. It’s believed she was born Ellen Cashman in Cork County, Ireland, and baptized on October 15, 1845. Raised in Ireland during the Great Famine, Nellie traveled with her mother and sister to Boston to begin a new life around 1850. During her teen years in Boston, Nellie found work as a bellhop in a local hotel. In 1865, Nellie and her family migrated to San Francisco, and her life as a successful businesswoman began five years later.

Nellie and her mother followed the gold and silver strikes throughout the West and into Canada. They first opened a boarding house in Pioche, Nevada, just miles away from the silver mines. It was a success, but Nellie soon sold it and returned to California to find gold. She wasn’t in San Francisco long before news of the Klondike Gold Rush reached her.



From the 1994 Legends of the West sheet



This design was taken from a drawing by Frederic Remington, entitled “The Gold Bug.” It pictures an old prospector, who, with two pack burros, makes his way through mountain country in search of riches.

In 1874, Nellie was struck by gold rush fever and joined the stampede north to the remote Cassiar strike in British Columbia. She established a miner’s boarding house near the Telegraph Creek. She asked the miners that stayed there make donations to the Sisters of St. Anne in exchange for the services she offered there. She also financed miners who were developing claims.

One year, when she was bringing \$500 in donations to the Sisters of St. Anne, Nellie learned of a group of 26 miners suffering from scurvy who had been stranded in the Cassiar Mountains during a terrible snowstorm. Nellie organized a search party and collected food and medicine for the stranded miners. The Canadian Army told her it was too dangerous, but she went anyway. Nellie and her search party spent 77 days in the frigid temperatures before finding the stranded miners. However, the initial reports of it being 26 men were incorrect, as she found nearly 75 men there. Nellie gave them the food and medicine and was soon known as the “Angel of the Cassiar” and the “Miners’ Angel.”

It wasn’t long before Nellie felt the urge to wander again. This time, it was to the silver fields of Arizona. In Tucson, she opened a restaurant, the first business there to be owned by a woman. The following year, she opened businesses in Tombstone. Nellie collected money to build the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and work with the Sisters of St. Joseph. She also worked as a nurse in a Cochise County Hospital and continued to aid the ill and the injured, raising funds through benefits and soliciting money from wealthy businessmen. She made a habit of feeding the poor and helping those who had been injured in the mines. Nellie also opened her own restaurant and boarding house. The restaurant, then known as Russ House, is still open today, and known as The Nellie Cashman Restaurant. Nellie’s sister and her five children came to live with her in 1881. When her sister died in 1884, Nellie became responsible for their care.

In 1897, news of gold in the Klondike reached the then 47-year-old Cashman, who once again joined the rush. Enduring the demanding 600-mile trek which climbed over the formidable Chilkoot Pass, she became the first woman in the mining camp of Dawson. From there she traveled north to the mining camps in Coldfoot, Alaska. Four years before her death at age 70, she revisited Tombstone – a trip whose first 750 miles she traveled by dogsled.

Nellie Cashman continued to wander, to prosper, and to give to those in need. She finally settled in British Columbia in 1923. Two years later, she developed pneumonia and was admitted to the Sisters of St. Anne, the same hospital she helped build half a decade earlier. She died there on January 4, 1925. In the years since her death, Cashman was inducted into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame and the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.



Issued for the 100th anniversary of the peak of the Klondike Gold Rush.