

Ellen Cashman (1845 – 4 January 1925) was an Irish [nurse](#), [restaurateur](#), [businesswoman](#) and [philanthropist](#) in [Arizona](#), Alaska, [British Columbia](#) and [Yukon](#).

Cashman led a rescue party to miners to the Cassiar Country gold mine in the [Cassiar Mountains](#) of [British Columbia](#) earning her the nickname "Angel of the Cassiar". In [Tombstone, Arizona](#), Cashman raised money to build the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and did charitable work with the Sisters of St. Joseph. She went to the [Yukon](#) during the [Klondike Gold Rush](#) for gold prospecting, working there until 1905. She became nationally known as a frontierswoman, with the [Associated Press](#) covering a later trip.

In 2006, Cashman was inducted into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame.

Biography

Ellen "Nellie" Cashman was born in Midleton, County Cork in the mid 1840s. Some sources give 1844 as her year of birth, while some other research indicates she was the Ellen Cashman baptised on 15 October 1845. Her family lived on Free School Lane (now known as Mc Donaghs Lane). Cashman was brought to the United States around 1850 by her mother, along with her sister Frances (known as Fanny); they settled first in Boston.

British Columbia

Cashman left her family home in 1874 for the Cassiar Country in British Columbia. She set up a boarding house for miners at [Telegraph Creek](#), asking for donations to the Sisters of St Anne in return for the services available at her boarding house. Cashman was travelling to [Victoria](#) to deliver 500 [dollars](#) to the sisters of St. Anne when she heard that a [snowstorm](#) had descended on the Cassiar Mountains, stranding and injuring 26 miners, who were also suffering from [scurvy](#). She took charge of a six-man search party and collected food and medicine to take to the stranded miners. Conditions in the Cassiar Mountains were so dangerous that the [Canadian Army](#) advised against attempting the rescue. Upon learning of Cashman's expedition, a commander sent his troops to locate her party and bring them to safety. An army trooper eventually found Cashman camped on the frozen surface of the [Stikine River](#). After 77 days of harsh weather, Cashman and her party located the sick men, who numbered far more than 26. Some historical accounts credit Cashman with saving the lives of as many as 75 men. She administered a diet containing [Vitamin C](#) to restore the men to health. She was afterward fondly known in the region as the "Angel of the Cassiar".

Arizona

About 1880, Cashman moved to [Tombstone, Arizona](#). She raised money to build the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and committed herself to charity work with the Sisters of St. Joseph. She took a

position as a nurse in a [Cochise County](#) hospital, but also opened another restaurant and boarding house.

Her sister Fanny Cunningham was widowed in 1881. Cashman arranged for Fanny and her five children to move to nearby [Tucson, Arizona](#). Fanny died in 1884 of [tuberculosis](#), leaving her children in Cashman's care.

In December 1883, bandits committed the Bisbee massacre in Tombstone, killing four innocent bystanders and wounding two others in the course of a robbery. The five men were convicted and sentenced to die by hanging on 28 March 1884. The hangings proceeded as scheduled, but out of public view. When Cashman learned that a medical school planned to exhume the bodies of the convicts for study, she enlisted two prospectors to stand watch over the Boot Hill Cemetery for 10 days.

Cashman and her associate Joseph Pascholy co-owned and ran a restaurant and hotel in Tombstone, Arizona called Russ House, now known as The Nellie Cashman Restaurant.

Yukon and Alaska

In 1898, Cashman left Arizona for the [Yukon](#) in search of gold, staying until 1905. Her prospecting ventures took her to [Klondike](#), [Fairbanks](#) and Nolan Creek in [Yukon-Koyukuk County](#), Alaska. She later owned a store in [Dawson City, Yukon](#). She subsequently settled in [Koyukuk, Alaska](#), along with other established miners.

In January 1925, Cashman developed [pneumonia](#) and [rheumatism](#). Friends admitted her to the Sisters of St. Anne, the same hospital which she had helped to build fifty-one years earlier. She died there, and was interred at [Ross Bay Cemetery](#) in [Victoria, British Columbia](#).