

# CARRY NATION A KENTUCKY GIRL

BY PATRICIA OWENS, KFRW AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANNE STEELE



*November 25, 1846: Carry Nation, the woman whose bar smashing in Kansas will make her an infamous character in the Prohibition movement, is born in Kentucky.*

## CARRY NATION, A KENTUCKY GIRL



*Carry Nation*

Carry Nation was born in Kentucky on November 25, 1846 to George Moore and Mary Campbell. Her father was a plantation owner in the northern part of Garrard County near the Kentucky River. As a child, she experienced several family tragedies. She was not a strong child--- but she DID learn to read---and she spent much time reading the Bible.

In 1867, at age 21, she fell in love with--- and married--- a young physician, Charles Gloyd, in Belton, Missouri. The union produced a sickly, emotionally unstable daughter--- whose condition she attributed to her husband's heavy drinking. Carry subsequently left her husband because of his drinking and his inability to earn a steady living---and he died six months later. (The child was later put in a lunatic asylum.)

To survive---Carry turned to teaching and keeping rooms--- but was more successful at keeping rooms.

In 1877 (10 years after her first marriage) --- she married again. This time---she married David Nation--- a preacher, attorney and editor 19 years

her senior-- in what was seemingly a marriage of convenience.

David and Carry moved to Texas---then to Medicine Lodge, Kansas in 1889--- where David became pastor of the Christian Church. Carry taught Sunday school, saw to the needs of poor people, and became a jail evangelist.

Carry Nation's religious convictions sharpened. She began to experience visions and a sense of divine protection. The latter seemed to be confirmed when her rooming house was left untouched by a town fire in 1889. She even believed her name, Carry Nation, was foreordained.

\*Some confusion exists over the spelling of Nation's first name---official records seem to indicate that she was originally named Carrie (spelled C-a-r-r-i-e), but in later years she adopted Carry (spelled C-a-r-r-y)---because she liked to say that she was confident her movement would help "CARRY THE NATION."

Women were the driving force in reform movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the campaign to prohibit alcohol. They founded the Women's Christian Temperance Union---and Carry Nation helped to establish the local chapter in her hometown of Medicine Lodge, Kansas. Carry began speaking out--- not only about the evils of drink--- but tobacco and women's immodest dress as well.

Her crusade had begun!



## CARRY NATION, A KENTUCKY GIRL

Back in 1880---nine years before Carry and David had moved to Kansas---Kansas residents had voted for prohibition. Kansas women had been working to close saloons as early as 1855--- and their temperance efforts had been rewarded in 1880 when Kansas became the first state to adopt a constitutional amendment prohibiting alcohol. Even though Kansas residents had VOTED for prohibition---the law was largely ignored by saloon keepers---so reformers remained active even after the amendment was passed because the prohibition laws were not being enforced. Saloons continued to operate openly.

But Carry Nation would help change all that!

Women had tried speaking out and praying in front of the saloons, but Carry eventually felt that God wanted her to do more.

On June 1, 1900 in Kiowa, Kansas---in the name of temperance---Carry STRUCK at her first saloon. Initially, she used rocks, bricks, and other objects for her attacks--- but then---she turned to the HATCHET---which became her trademark.

Standing at nearly 6 feet tall and weighing 180 pounds---Carry was an IMPOSING figure. Carrying a hatchet in her hand---she became downright frightful! And the target of her wrath ---was alcoholic drink. This big, strapping, determined woman--- successfully closed down the saloons in her hometown--- Medicine Lodge, Kansas---and she then continued to respond to appeals of OTHER towns to close down THEIR saloons.

Carry described herself as “a bulldog running along at the feet of Jesus, barking at what he doesn't like”. She felt divinely ordained to forcefully promote temperance.



**1881** Kansas becomes first state to outlaw booze. Teetotaler Carry Nation takes to entering saloons with a hatchet to destroy bottles of liquor. She occasionally greets bartenders with a cheery “Good morning, destroyer of men’s souls.”

During her crusade---Carry even entered states where liquor sales were still legal. Her behavior provoked a tremendous uproar and sent her to jail repeatedly for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. Self-righteous and formidable---Nation mocked her opponents as “rum-soaked, whiskey-swilled, saturn-faced rummies”.

Carry and David were divorced in 1901 (12 years after they moved to Kansas) and David died in 1903.

Between 1900 and 1910---Carry spent much time in her reform efforts. She traveled all around the United States, Canada, and the British Isles. She was tireless in her campaign to prohibit alcohol. Carry was arrested some 30 times after leading her followers in the destruction of one water hole after another---with cries of “Smash, ladies, smash!” Her fines were often said to be paid--- by the sale of pewter HATCHET pins.

## CARRY NATION, A KENTUCKY GIRL

Carry Nation wielded her VOICE as effectively as her hatchet---eloquently speaking her mind and inspiring others on numerous occasions. Even sworn enemies acknowledged her success with compelling enforcement of prohibition laws and spreading her message. Prize fighter, John L. Sullivan, was reported to have run and hid when Nation once burst into New York City.

Carry's antics drew national attention to the issue of alcohol prohibition in the U. S. ---and her efforts paid off in 1919 with the passage of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution---banning “intoxicating liquors.” The era known as Prohibition lasted for 14 years---until 1933, when the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment repealed the ban.

\*An interesting side fact---In the early 1900's---prohibitionists realized that 70 % of the nation's income came from the sale of alcoholic beverages and they knew that if they were successful---there would no longer be these alcohol taxes. Thus---the personal income tax was born! Of course, repealing the ban on intoxicating beverages by passage of the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment---did not mean the repeal of the personal income tax---which continues even today.

Carry Nation---a Kentucky girl---was certainly one of the most colorful members of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement---which was at one time the largest women's organization in the country. Not only was the organization concerned with alcohol issues, but other issues such as health and hygiene, prison reform, and world peace.

Carry completed her last speaking tour in 1910, owing to failing health. She then purchased property in Eureka Springs, Arkansas which included a farm with a building she dubbed “Hatchet Hall”. She intended for this to become a school of prohibition.





## CARRY NATION, A KENTUCKY GIRL

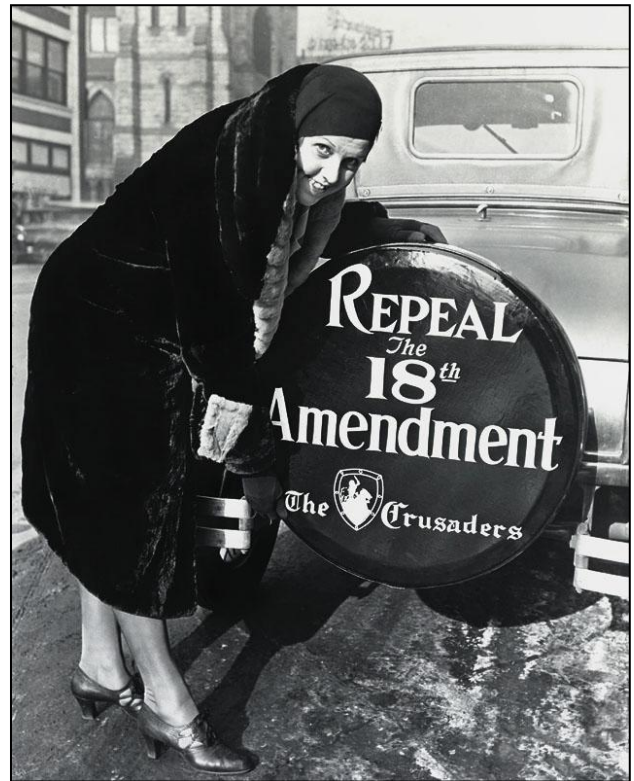
Carry crumpled on stage in January, 1911 during what would be her final oration. She died isolated and dirt poor in Leavenworth, Kansas and her remains were buried in Belton, Kansas. The Kansas Museum of History contains an exhibit noting her life and accomplishments entitled: "Carry A Nation: The Famous and Original Bar Room Smasher."

Not far from Lexington, Kentucky—in northern Garrard County near the Kentucky River--- is the Carry Nation House--- where Carry was born. The house is still standing--- but is not open to the public at this time.

However, because of Carry Nation's efforts as an anti-alcohol, saloon-smashing, early proponent of women's suffrage---Garrard County, Kentucky ---where Carry Nation was born--- is known ---as the "Birthplace of Prohibition."



*Carry Nation's Home in Garrard County*



*Nationwide prohibition did not begin in the United States until 1920, when the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution went into effect, and was repealed in 1933, with the ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment.*