

# ALBERT D. J. CASHIER

## Transgender Civil War Soldier (1843 - 1915)



When Albert D. J. Cashier emigrated to the U.S. from Ireland as a teenager, he cast off the name and gender he was assigned at birth. In 1862 the 5'-3" 19-year-old Belvidere man enlisted in the 95th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company G. Cashier fought in approximately 40 battles during the Civil War including Nashville, Vicksburg, and the Red River Campaign before being mustered out with his regiment at war's end in 1865. During this time no one ever considered him anything but a good soldier and "one of the boys." After the war he worked as a farmhand, a janitor, a cemetery worker, and a lamplighter – eventually settling in 1869 in Saunemin, IL. There Cashier's gender assigned at birth was discovered by his employers, but seeing only harm in disclosure, the family kept his secret. In 1910, Cashier was employed as a handyman for State Senator Ira Lish who accidentally ran over Cashier, breaking his leg. Upon medical examination, Cashier's gender assigned at birth was revealed again. Disabled from the accident, the Senator arranged for Cashier to enter the Illinois Soldier and Sailors Home in Quincy, IL., swearing the staff to secrecy. Cashier lived there three years and loved discussing his Civil War career with other veterans. In 1914, with his mental health in decline, Cashier was sent to the Watertown State Hospital for the Insane where he was forced to identify as a woman and wear a dress. He died in 1915 and was buried in Saunemin wearing his Union uniform. His first tombstone read only Albert D. J. Cashier – later a second monument was erected that reads: "Albert D. J. Cashier. Co. G, 95, Inf. Civil War. Born Jennie Hodgers in Clogher Head, Ireland. 1843-1915."

## Lesson Plan

### Level 1: Contributions Approach

1. Activate Prior Experience: Before today, have you ever heard of Albert D. J. Cashier? Read the biographical information: <https://legacyprojectchicago.org/person/albert-d-j-cashier>
2. Group Discussion: What daily challenges would a Transgender man face while serving in the military during the Civil War?
3. Extend Knowledge: Learn more about Cashier's life here: <https://www.irishcentral.com/opinion/niallodowd/albert-cashier-civil-war> What part of Cashier's story do you think is most important to remember?

### Level 2: Additive Approach

1. Read about Cashier's capture and escape at the Battle of Vicksburg: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/jennie-hodgers-aka-private-albert-cashier.htm>
2. Cashier voted in national elections after the war, a right not yet extended to women. Research the fight for women's suffrage in the United States, including the contributions of Legacy Project nominee Frances Kellor (<https://legacyprojectchicago.org/person/frances-kellor>).
3. Explore the Civil War poetry of Walt Whitman – a 2013 Legacy Project inductee – who volunteered in Union Army hospitals during the conflict. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/civilwarr/econ/whitman/>
4. Cashier's home in Saunemin, Illinois, is now a museum. Visit his home and nearby grave if you are able: <https://saunemin.centralillattractions.com/things-to-do/cashier-historic-home-civil-war-attraction/>

### Level 3: Transformational Approach

1. Historians believe between 400 and 1,000 women enlisted as men to serve during the Civil War. (<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/female-soldiers-civil-war>) Is it appropriate to include Albert D. J. Cashier among their numbers? Why or why not?
2. If you were one of the people who learned that Cashier's assigned gender at birth had been female, how do you think you would have responded to this information, given the era? Why? Do you feel differently now? If so, why?
3. Transgender men and women are not allowed to serve in the U.S. armed forces. Follow their ongoing struggle for recognition through the Transgender American Veterans Association website. (<http://transveteran.org/>) How does learning about their current treatment make you feel?

### Level 4: Social Action Approach

1. Research the issue of deadnaming: <https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/deadnaming>
2. Discuss whether you believe it was wrong to include "Born Jennie Hodgers in Clogher Head, Ireland" on Cashier's second tombstone. Do you feel recognizing a Transgender person's identity prior to their transition is appropriate when discussing historical figures? How about for contemporary figures? If you feel differently for each case, why?
3. Reread Cashier's Vicksburg entry on the National Park Services website: (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/jennie-hodgers-aka-private-albert-cashier.htm>) How would you rewrite this entry to reflect Cashier's identity as a Transgender man?
4. Write to the National Park Service (<https://www.nps.gov/vick/contacts.htm>) to suggest edits to its website entry for Albert D. J. Cashier.