

## National Park Service

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### ARTICLE

# Albert Cashier

One of the most famous Civil War soldiers who was assigned female at birth but lived as a man was Albert Cashier. Born in 1843 and given the name “Jennie Hodgers,” Cashier emigrated from Ireland, possibly Belfast, to the United States. Eventually, he enlisted with the 95th Illinois Infantry under the name “Albert D.J. Cashier” and began his military career.



## Private Albert Cashier in uniform

Albert Cashier was born in 1843. He was assigned female at birth and given the name “Jennie Hodgers,” but at a young age began to dress as a boy and assumed a male identity. According to stories, Cashier’s step-father, short on money, dressed him as a boy to get a job. After Cashier’s mother died, he moved to Illinois and worked as a laborer, farmhand, and shepherd.

In August of 1862, "Private Albert D.J. Cashier" enlisted in the army at Belvidere, Illinois. Diminutive in size, Cashier resembled many Irishmen of the time. He continued to go unnoticed. No one thought anything of a quiet soldier seeking privacy for bathing and dressing. This was common. All in all, Cashier fought as an infantryman in forty battles. Even when receiving treatment for chronic diarrhea, his secret was not detected.

In May, 1863, Private Cashier participated in the Siege of Vicksburg, during which he was captured while performing a reconnaissance mission. He escaped by wrestling a gun away from a Confederate and was chased on foot, narrowly reaching the safety of the Union lines.

Private Cashier served a full enlistment. Even well after the war his comrades remembered the slight soldier as a brave fighter, admired for heroic actions and undertaking dangerous assignments, yet never receiving a scratch.

After the war Cashier returned to Illinois, taking work doing odd jobs for Illinois State Senator Ira Lish. On one fateful day, Senator Lish ran Cashier over with his car, breaking his leg. It was then that the town doctor discovered Cashier’s secret. Moved by Cashier’s pleas, the doctor agreed to maintain his confidence. This was a soldier with a pension. Had the secret been revealed, not only would the pension be revoked, but Cashier would have been forced to live as a woman. Cashier’s leg never healed, and the Senator arranged for him to be placed in a rest home for veterans. While the staff was aware of Cashier’s secret, they never broke his confidence.

Over time, Cashier’s physical and mental health deteriorated, and he was sent to the Watertown State Hospital for the Insane in 1914. Soon thereafter, facility staff discovered his secret. Newspapers leaked the story, which stirred controversy. The government charged Private Albert Cashier with defrauding the government to receive a military pension. An investigation was launched. Cashier’s comrades from the 95th Illinois rallied and testified that this was not Jennie Hodgers but Albert Cashier, a small but brave soldier who showed bravery on dangerous missions. In the end, Cashier maintained his veteran status. Despite this, he was kept in the mental institution and forced to wear women’s clothing. This took a great toll on his mental state. At 67 years old, frail and unaccustomed to walking in women's clothing, he tripped and broke his hip. He never recovered from the injury and spent the rest of his life bedridden and died on October 10, 1915. He was buried in uniform with full military honors. Many scholars suggest that if he had been alive today, Cashier may have identified as a transgender man.

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