

## Hatchetations: Carry A Nation's Sober Defense For Kansas

Carry A. Nation. *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation*. F. M. Steves & Sons 1904.  
Special Collections, Hale Library  
Kansas State University  
A13201313554

In Carry A. Nation's most iconic photo we see her standing outdoors staring through round glasses straight at us dressed in a modest black coat and wearing an over-the-shoulder purse that emphasizes function over fashion<sup>1</sup>. A white bow ornaments her collar and a black veil covers her hair. Contrasting with the humble, unasserting outfit, Nation is holding a hatchet in her right hand while her left hand effectively stabilizes a large open Bible. Both are symbolic objects of Nation in her



war against the disease of alcoholism and disbelief. In this paper, I examine the first edition of Nation's autobiography, housed at special collections in Hale Library, and the ways in which she constructs herself as a local Kansas "home defender."

The image of Nation wielding her hatchet juxtaposes the self-image displayed in the frontispiece of her autobiography *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation*, published in 1904. Here we see a surprisingly domestic Nation sporting a much more peaceful and demure

---

<sup>1</sup> Carry A. Nation photograph, <http://media1.shmoop.com/media/images/large/carry-a-nation.JPG>

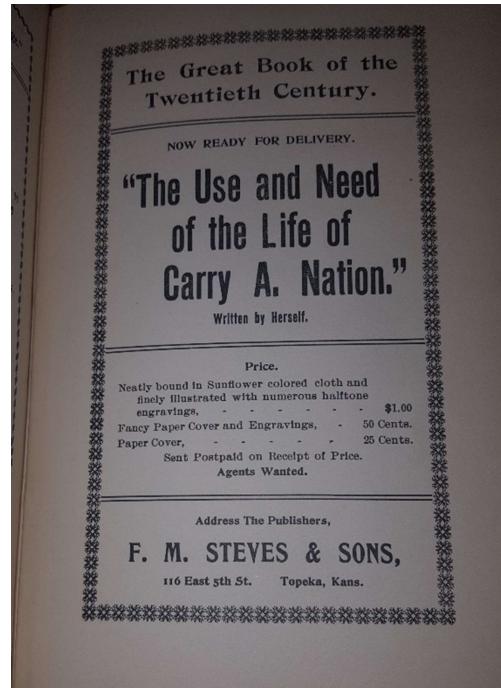


*Carry A. Nation  
Your loving  
Home Defender*

look<sup>2</sup>. This time, Nation sits indoors in a plain chair and looks up again from a book that in all likelihood is again a Bible. Nation's strong faith defines not only her visual but also her textual self-fashioning. While the second photo portrays Nation as a modest and conventional domestic matron, it showcases her singular passion for her bible, setting the prophetic tone of her autobiography at large.

Around the turn of the century, the infamous, hatchet-wielding prohibitionist started to pen her

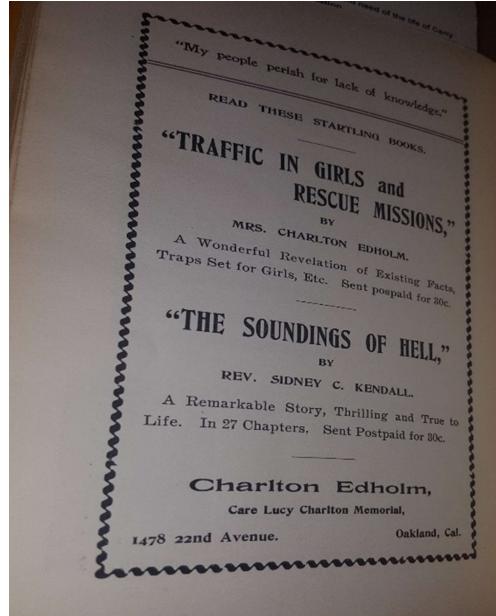
autobiography *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation*. In 1904, the local printing press F. M. Steves & Sons of Topeka, Kansas, printed her life-narrative, a bookish monument to Midwestern patriotism. The presentation copy held in Hale Library Special Collections at Kansas State University cost \$1.00 in 1904; this is the price of the expensive dedicated edition, compared to the 50 cents for the “fancy paper cover and engravings” edition, whereas the humble “paper cover” version went for only 25 cents<sup>3</sup>. The 200-page long volume of Hale Library’s first edition appears plain and releases a slightly humid odor, the typical smell for old houses. Right away, the book looks humble and sturdy, much like its author.



<sup>2</sup> Carry A. Nation, “Untitled,” *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (1904), flyleaf.

<sup>3</sup> Carry A. Nation, “Untitled,” *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (1904).

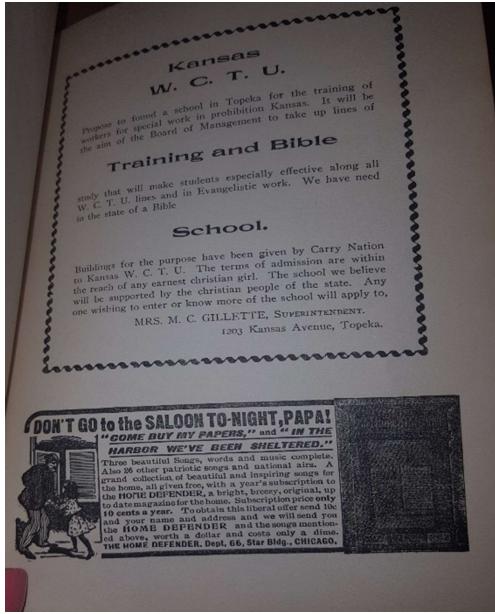
Bound in a rich sunflower-colored cloth, the cover spells out the book's title in sparkling golden letters. The yellow binding cleverly showcases Nation's love for the state of Kansas, the Sunflower State. Nation organized her autobiography into 32 chapters including an extra section for her poetry. Each chapter retraces Nation's life in chronological order. Printed in a small neat font, the average page of *The Use and Need* holds 47 lines promoting prohibition



and Christianity. A set of Christian advertisements on the back pages extends and deepens the devout message of her autobiography. The first promotes two books on sin and destruction in America, "Traffic in Girls and Rescue Missions" by Charlton Edholm and "The Soundings of Hell" by Rev. Sidney C. Kendall<sup>4</sup>. The second ad publicizes the Kansas WCTU Training and Bible School, donated by Nation, and the songs "Don't Go to the Saloon To-Night, Papa!", "Come Buy My Papers," and "In the Harbor We've Been Sheltered" along with a year-long subscription to the "Home Defender" magazine<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Carry A. Nation, "Untitled," *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (1904).

<sup>5</sup> Carry A. Nation, "Untitled," *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (1904).



first owner or by children after her death. The autobiography feels personal because taped right between the flyleaf and the first page is a handwritten dedication: an autograph slip Nation herself penned in ink “Compliments of Carry A. Nation your loving Home Defender.”

Carry A. Nation was born Carry Amelia Moore in Garrald County, Kentucky in 1846. Until 1903 she actually signed her name Carrie, a typically spelling at the time. When she married her first husband, Charles Gloyd, in Belton, Missouri in 1867, she changed her name to Carrie Amelia Moore Gloyd. Six months later, Carrie left Charles because of his uncontrollable alcoholism<sup>6</sup>. After Charles’ death two years later, Carrie kept his last name, perhaps as a physical reminder of the dangers of alcohol. However, when Carrie married her second husband David Nation in Holden, Missouri in 1874, she altered her name again to Carrie Amelia Moore Gloyd Nation. In 1903, after smashing saloons across Kansas and becoming a successful lobbyist for prohibition, Carrie switched her name back to Carry, her full name then being Carry Amelia Moore Gloyd Nation or Carry A. Nation. Clearly, Nation intended to have a name that could

The pages of the K-State copy are stiff,

indicating that this book was rather a displayed item than read. The fore-edge of the pages show distinct yellowing, as if the volume had been sitting on a shelf for a long time. Probably bought by a woman after attending lecture by Nation, the volume was donated to Kansas State University in all likelihood by the book’s

<sup>6</sup> Charles Gloyd was probably the real motivating factor in Nation’s fight against alcohol.

voice her larger purpose, insisting that ultimately God had chosen her to carry a nation towards prohibition.

While Nation's name served as symbol for her larger purpose in life, her childhood built the foundation for her strong convictions as an adult. Nation was born on November 25, 1846 to Mary Campbell and George Moore and lived a rather conventional and sheltered life as a young child. Her family, however, experienced difficult financial times, which is why Nation received very little formal education. During her childhood, Nation's family relocated to Kansas City, Missouri and aided wounded civil war soldiers in Independence, Missouri. It was likely that she met her first husband, Charles Gloyd, a civil war soldier, during her time as a nurse. In 1884 and married to her second husband David, Nation experienced a "baptism of the Holy Ghost" at a Methodist meeting in Richmond, Texas. In her autobiography, she describes this divine revelation. "The minister read the sixty-second chapter of Isaiah," she writes referencing the hope of transformation for the citizens of Jerusalem. Specifically, the passage refers to the change from being forsaken to becoming righteous and being handed the crown of glory in the name of God. "From the time he began reading," Nation continues, "I was marvelously affected." She sees "a halo around the minister" and is "wrapt in ecstacy." In fact, Nation remembers that her "first impression was that an angel was talking and that the house was ascending to heaven. I felt my natural heart expending to an enormous size." This is also the time when Nation starts to believe that God is speaking directly to her through scripture. She will no longer be forsaken, she knows, and is righteous and handed the glory of God. This experience motivates Nation to give her life to God: "I then and there openly consecrated myself to God, telling my friends that 'from henceforth all my time, means and efforts should be given to God,'" she remembers. This conversion experience is a key moment in both the autobiography and

Nation's life because it fueled Nation's tenacity during her hatchetations. And beginning with this first baptism, Nation experiences frequent metaphysical visitations. Nation might have been genetically predisposed to such visions, given that her mother Mary Moore believed for a time she was Queen Victoria. In fact, Nation's mother was found to be of "unsound mind" by a jury in 1890 and was sent to a mental institution until the end of her life.

Nation married her first husband Charles Gloyd in 1867, but just two months after they wed, she left him due to his severe drinking problem; Charles Gloyd died two years later in 1869, likely as a result of his alcoholism. In 1874, Nation married her second husband, David Nation. After their failure to start an economically successful farming life in Texas, Nation and David Nation, moved to Kansas in 1889. Devoted to God, Nation opened the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) chapter in Barber County in southwest Kansas<sup>7</sup>. Originally, the WCTU was established in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1874 by women who had witnessed often in their personal lives how alcoholism destroys families and communities. In fact, alcohol addiction in America was a national problem in the early nineteenth century. In the 1830s for example, the average American drank upwards of seven gallons of alcohol each year. Due to this pressing problem, local WCTU chapters quickly began to mushroom across America in the nineteenth century. To push for prohibition within Kansas, Nation did not shy away from violent measures. In 1901, Nation began raiding saloons and publicly praying for the men seduced by alcohol. During this year, Nation famously raided the bar of the Hotel Carey in Wichita. Here, Nation first wielded her hatchet to smash bottles and kegs of alcohol. As a matter of fact, Nation's

---

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the WCTU, <https://www.wctu.org/home.html>, & Woman's Christian Temperance Union. *Handbook of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union*. Evanston, Ill.: National WCTU Pub. House, 1944. Print.

hatchet became the terrifying emblem of her effective nationwide campaigning and fame; it also shaped Nation's self-fashioning as a crazed "home-defender."

Clearly Nation stuck to her hatchet to promote her Teetotalism. Between 1900 and 1920, Nation was arrested over thirty times for organizing and leading destructive hatchetations that, as she claimed, were executed in the name of God. As Nation explains in her autobiography, she follows biblical precedent given that, "our Savior's mission on earth was to "break (smash) every yoke and set the captive free."<sup>8</sup> In fact, she dedicates her entire fifteenth chapter to "Spiritually Authority for My Christian Work." In this chapter, Nation explains that all believers "are told to "Abhor that which is evil", to "resist (or fight) the devil and he will flee."<sup>9</sup> Most importantly, she admonishes that "we are not to be "overcome with evil but to overcome evil with good."<sup>10</sup> Nation also offers a handy slogan for such overcoming: "resist the devil" she thunders. Clearly for Nation that devil was alcoholism. Backing rhetorically her destructive raids, she continues, "I will give you a Bible reading on the subject. There are some instances of smashing," she motivates her hatchetations. In fact, Nation cites 45 Biblical verses for her readers that support such "smashings"<sup>8</sup>. Twenty-four of these Bible passages describe smashings, stonings, and the violent destruction of sinners by God and Christians, alike. Clearly, Nation understood her combative raids as a form of Biblical precedent and fellowship. It is a book, therefore, Nation's Bible, rather than her hatchet that ultimately motivate the famous Kansas prohibitionist.

---

<sup>8</sup> Deut. 7:2, 5; 21:18-21; 17:5-7; 19:13, 20: 25:17-19. Josh. 7:25, 26; 10:11; 10:24-26; 23:7. Judge. 3:31; 9:53; 2:3; 3:10; 5:7; 4:21; 6:25; 7:20; 15:15. I Sam. 15:33. 2 Chron. 34:4, 5, 7. Isa. 28:21; 54:16. Matt. 21:12. Acts 13:8-11. John 2:13-23. Neh 13:8, 25. Gen. 19:24; 9:5, 6; 4:7, 11. Lev. 19:17. Num. 33: 55, 56; Deut. 30:15-19; 21:1-9; 13:12-18; Josh. 7:10-13; 19:20.