



Special Collections and University Archives

**Manuscript Group 204
Nellie Bly Collection**

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Last Modified June 28, 2021**

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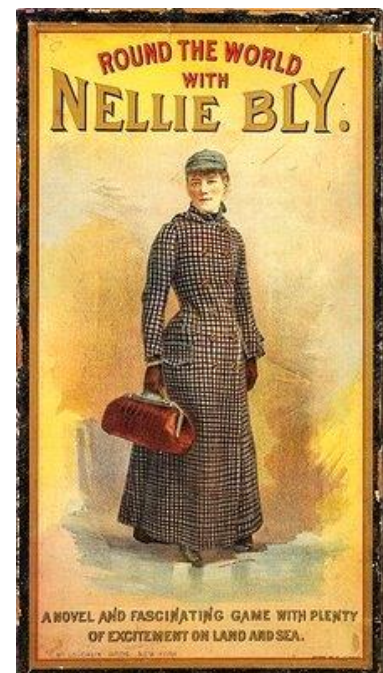
Nellie Bly Collection; Manuscript Group 204
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Virtual Collection

Biographical Note



American journalist Elizabeth Jane Cochran (later Cochrane) Seaman (May 5, 1864-January 27, 1922) better known by her pen name, Nellie Bly, was a writer, investigative reporter, industrialist, inventor, and charity worker who became known internationally for her record-breaking trip around the world. She was born at Cochran's Mills in Burrell Township, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. Her parents were Michael and Mary Jane Cochran. As a teenager, she changed her last name from Cochran to Cochrane. Elizabeth Jane Cochrane attended Indiana State Normal School (ISNS – later Indiana University of Pennsylvania) in Indiana, Pennsylvania from September to December 1879. In the [1879-1880 Indiana State Normal School Catalog](#), 15-year old Elizabeth Jane Cochrane is listed as a First-Year Junior. She lived on the fourth floor of the only building on campus at the time, what became John Sutton Hall. After leaving school before the end of the term, her family moved to Pittsburgh in 1880. She eventually started writing for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* using the pseudonym Nellie Bly.

As a writer, Nellie Bly focused on the plight of working women and wrote a series of investigative articles on female factory workers, but editorial pressure forced her to cover fashion, society, and gardening. Being dissatisfied with these responsibilities, Nellie Bly traveled to Mexico and served as a foreign correspondent. At the age of 21, she spent six months interviewing and reporting on the people and customs in Mexico, which were later published in *Six Months in Mexico*. In 1887, she left the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* for New York City, and came to work for *New York World*. There Nellie Bly took an undercover assignment to study reports of brutality and neglect at the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island. Her report was later published in *Ten Days in a Mad-House*. In 1888, Nellie Bly suggested to her editor at the *New York World* that she attempt to take a trip around the world. On November 14, 1889, with two days' notice, she began her 24,899 mile journey – which she completed in 72 days. She was the first person to undertake the fictional journey of Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873).



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In 1895, Elizabeth Cochrane (Nellie Bly) married industrialist Robert Seaman (1822-March 11, 1904), and she became the president of the Iron Clad Manufacturing Company. In 1905, her company began manufacturing the steel barrel that served as the model for the modern 55-gallon oil drum still in use today. Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman received U.S. Patents 697,553 for inventing a milk can and 703,711 for a stacking garbage can. Nellie Bly returned to journalism in the 1910s, and she wrote about the Women Suffrage Movement and events surrounding World War I. She died of pneumonia at St. Mark's Hospital in New York City in 1922.

Sources: <http://www.biography.com/people/nellie-bly-9216680>,
<http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/>, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nellie_Bly

Scope and Content Note

This collection represents a combination of documents and publications that can be found in other collections in the [IUP Special Collections and University Archives](#) including [Record Groups](#) and the [Pennsylvania Collection](#). See the vertical files for folder 1.

Provenance

This collection was created by Harrison Wick in 2015.

Restrictions

None, this collection is open for research. Property rights reside with Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), and the IUP Special Collections and University Archives. Literary rights are retained by the creators of the records and their heirs. For permissions to reproduce or publish, please contact the [Special Collections Librarian and University Archivist](#).

Processor

The collection was organized and the finding aid was updated by Harrison Wick on June 28, 2021.

Content List

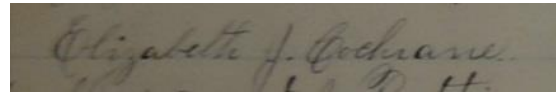
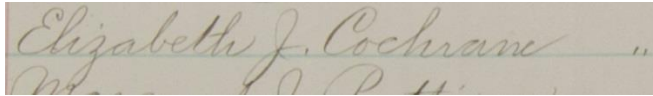
Box 1 (2 folders)

1. U.S. Post Office: Nellie Bly Stamp (37 Cents), first date of issue, September 14, 2002, donated by Susan Kirschner.
2. "Before she was famous: Nellie Bly spent early years in western Pennsylvania," *Indiana Gazette*, June 19-20, 2021, pages E-1 and E-3, by Bob Fulton, bfulton@indianagazette.net

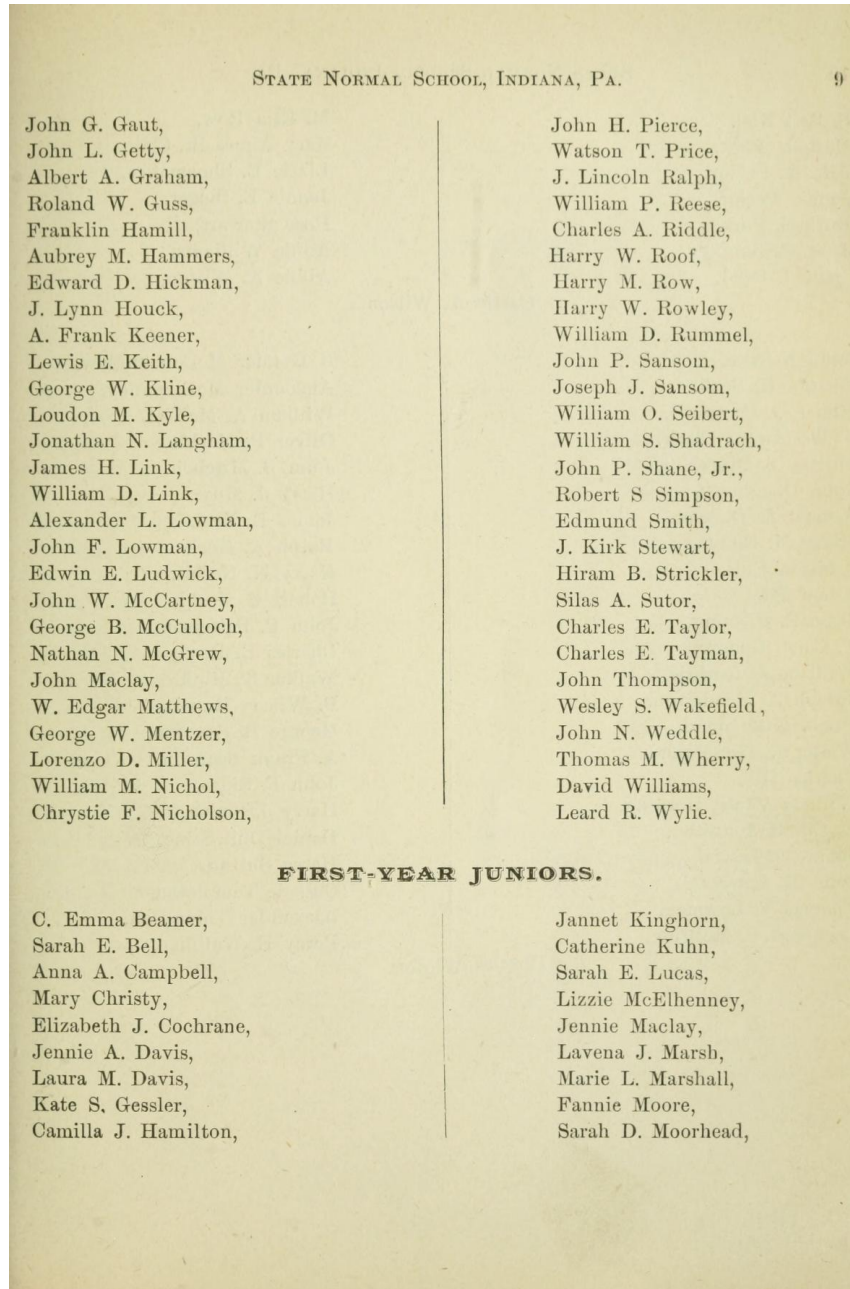
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3. The name Elizabeth J. Cochrane appears in the ledgers of the Registrar and Bursar during the Fall 1879 semester (see below)
 - a. [Record Group 52 Office of the Registrar](#)
 - b. [Record Group 56 Office of the Bursar](#)

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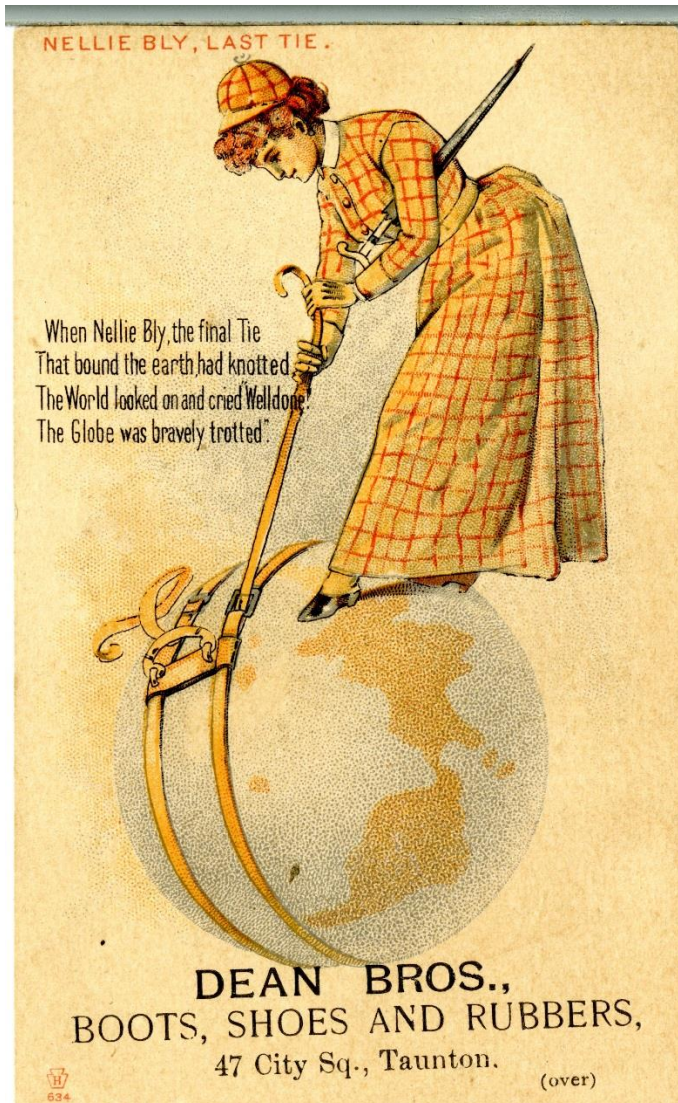
4. Elizabeth Jane Cochrane appears in the [1879-1880 Indiana State Normal School Catalog](#) on pages 9 and 13 (see below) [Record Group 26 Catalogs](#)



Pennsylvania Collection

5. Kroeger, Brooke. (1994). *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, reporter, feminist*. New York: Times Book. Call Number: PN 4874 .C59 K76 1994 (Special Collections)
6. Mahoney, Ellen. (2015). *Nellie Bly and investigative journalism for kids: Might muckrakers from the Golden Age to today*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Images related to Nellie Bly



Advertisement images courtesy of the [Senator John Heinz History Center](#) (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

No. 697,553.

Patented Apr. 15, 1902.

E. C. SEAMAN.
MILK CAN.

(Application filed Dec. 7, 1901.)

(No Model.)

Fig. I.

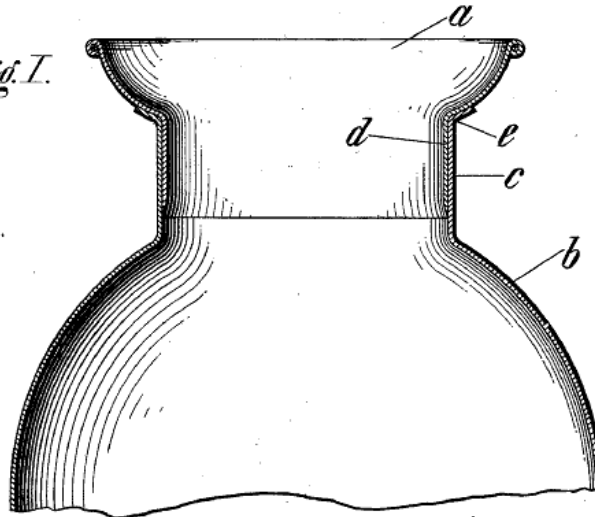
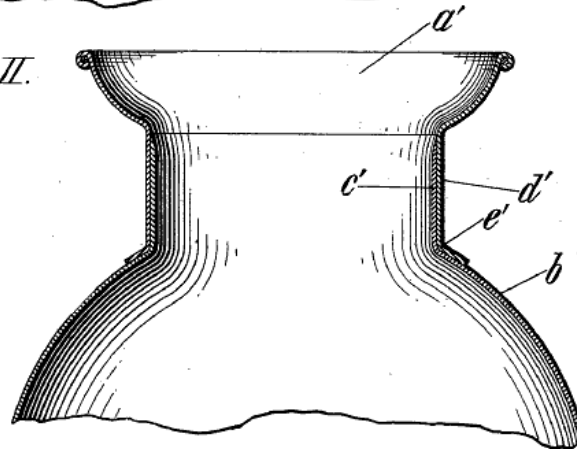


Fig. II.



WITNESSES:

Lindsley Schepmoes
Conrad Wump

INVENTOR

Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman
BY
Stinson, Con. Fuley & Atkins
ATTORNEYS

JHEPHEYS PETERS CO., PHOTO-LITHO., WASHINGTON, D. C.

Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman received U.S. Patent 697,553 for inventing a novel milk can (1902)