



## KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

### Klondike Kate (1873-1957)

Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell was born on October 4, 1876, in Junction City, Kan. She soon moved with her mother, a waitress, and her father, a railroad worker, to Oswego. After her mother divorced her father, Rockwell moved to Spokane, Wash., with her mother and step-father.

Much a tomboy in her childhood, Rockwell spent time playing with boys and defying the rules. Her parents sent her to boarding school as a result of her behavior, but she continued to break the rules and spend time with older men. Rockwell was eventually expelled. She and her mother then moved to New York City for a change of pace, where Rockwell began working as a stage dancer and a chorus girl.

After finding little success in New York, Rockwell decided to move to the Yukon Territory when miners struck gold in 1898. Rockwell found her niche working as dance hall girl and as a member of the Savoy Theatrical Company in Dawson City. She was a fantastic entertainer who became very popular with the miners and known as Klondike Kate. She also earned the nicknames Queen of the Yukon and the Darling of Dawson.

Rockwell reportedly was making more than \$30,000 a year, eventually becoming the most famous dance hall girl in the city. She soon fell in love with a Greek waiter, Alexander Pantages, and helped him work his way up through the theater. Eventually he became a theater manager, but their relationship fell apart before they ever got married. With no real ties to the area and the slowing of the gold rush, Rockwell picked up and moved to Oregon.

In Oregon, Rockwell opened a restaurant and entertained her customers with stories of the gold rush days. In 1914, at age 37, Rockwell married Floyd Warner, but the marriage didn't last. She moved to Bend and took jobs cooking and cleaning. A former acquaintance from her Yukon days, John Maddson, contacted her in 1931, and the two began a correspondence. In 1933, the couple was married, but he returned to the Yukon in search of gold and they never lived together.

In the 1940s, Rockwell spent time training Hollywood starlets but never achieved the fame she had known as Queen of the Yukon. She joined the Bend Voluntary Fire Department and, at 71, married an old friend, Bill Van Duren. The couple moved to Sweet Home, Ore., where Rockwell passed away at age 80.

