

National Patriotic Instructors Page April 2012

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April 1862 The Little Drummer Boy- Johnny Clem (AKA Johnny Shiloh)

One Hundred & Fifty Years ago This Month, The Battle of Shiloh took place in Western Tennessee, ten and a half year old Johnny Clem had joined The Union Army (Unofficially) as Part of The 22nd Michigan Infantry. He had tried to join several different regiments previously, but had been told, naturally, he was too young. Determined not to stop, he simply tagged along with the 22nd Michigan in May of 1861 where the Men adopted him as their Mascot and Drummer Boy.

They did allow him to officially enlist two years later. The Legend has it that at the Battle of Shiloh, a shell from a Confederate Cannon blew up his drum and knocked him to the ground. It knocked him unconscious, and was then rescued from The battlefield by his comrades who the nicknamed him "Johnny Shiloh". Probably it did not happen this way as the 22nd Michigan had not been in the Battle, but it was based on other facts. Johnny Clem did participate in The Battle of Chickamauga. Here he rode an artillery caisson up to the front and had a specially made musket cut down for his size. As his unit was pulling back from the battle, he shot a Confederate Colonel who pushed him to surrender. He lived through this battle (and all the others he was in) and was promoted to Sargent. He was the youngest non commissioned officer in The Union Army. He was wounded Twice during the Civil War.

After the War, he had a long career in The US Army. President U.S. Grant appointed him Second Lieutenant in The Twenty-Fourth US Infantry. He then went on and spent a number of his Army Years in Texas. He was Chief Quartermaster at Fort Sam Houston and retired with The Rank of Brigadier General. He was The Father of Two Children, and Died on May 13, 1937 at the age of 85. He is buried At Arlington National Cemetery. His example of service and dedication at such a young age is something to be remembered and admired. Let us keep fresh in our minds the Memory of John Clem and all Union Veterans and The Sacrifice and honorable duty they performed for us all. We must keep The Boys In Blue alive Today, so that our Descendants will know what they did to give us what we enjoy today. May it always be so.