

He is too small. At least that was the reason they gave when they told him he couldn't join. However being turned down repeatedly for military service didn't deter Johnny Clem. He traveled on the train a number of times to join, but to no avail. Finally, one day after his mother died, he decided to leave home for good and hang out with the 22nd Michigan Infantry. Maybe if he hung around long enough they'd find some use for him. His patience paid off. After 2 years he was finally accepted into the unit.

There was no celebration however because soon after, he would get his first taste of war. His introduction to combat would come at one of the bloodiest battles in the war; Shiloh. Of the 110,000 combatants, the combined casualties were 24,000. One can only imagine the fear he must have felt; the isolation he must have endured with each soldier focused on their duty having no time for someone like Johnny. But in spite of his fears and isolation, Johnny held his own. One historian would write,

*"The smashing of Johnny's drum at Pittsburg Landing won for him the sobriquet of 'Johnny Shiloh.' Subsequently, he exchanged gun for musket because, as he put it, 'I did not like to stand and be shot at without shooting back.' ... Johnny carried dispatches for General Thomas during the Atlanta campaign, had his pony killed under him and before the end of his service was twice wounded."*

The battle of Chickamauga was next. Many of the men of 22nd Michigan company were captured in that battle; Johnny was almost one of them. When a soldier took off after him to bring him in, Johnny pulled out his pistol and raising it with both hands shoot the soldier and then ran off.

Seemed like Johnny was a pretty popular guy with the enemy because soon after he was captured with some of his unit members but once again managed to escape.

His bravery and contribution in the both the battle of Chickamauga and Shiloh prompted General George H. Thomas to promote Johnny to lance sergeant which earned him the title of “The Rock of Chickamauga.” A prestigious title for someone such as Johnny.

Johnny Clem would go on to achieve the rank of Brigadier General later in his career and at his death be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

So much more to be said about this young man.

But without a doubt the most remarkable thing about Johnny Clem had nothing to do with his military career.

For you see, Johnny clem, that young man who ran away from home and started his military career hanging out with soldiers,

Johnny clem was only 9 years old.

After hanging out for almost 2 years, he was finally accepted into the 22nd Michigan infantry when he was 11 years old.



He was Twelve at the battle of Shiloh and 13 at the battle of Chickamauga where he was promoted to sergeant making him the youngest non commissioned officer ever.

Being wounded at Shiloh gave him the title of being the youngest soldier to ever be wounded in combat.

Later President Grant appointed him to 2nd Lieutenant, which was something usually reserved for those who attended West Point, something Johnny couldn't do due to his lack of education.

He was only 20 at the time.

His military career ended with the rank of Brigadier General in 1915 and he died at age 85 in 1937. He would be the last Civil War veteran on the army rolls at the time of his retirement.



You probably heard about this young man at one time or another while watching a civil war documentary or a WWI movie and not even know it.

For you see Johnny Clem impressed so many people at the time of the civil war that they wrote a song about him which became revered in both wars.

The title...

*“When Johnny comes marching home again”*

