

OH, COULD THEY BUT SPEAK..."

The history and importance of Michigan's Civil War Battle Flags

Bulletin Board Assignment: Snapshots of Michiganders in the Civil War

Because so many colorful and fascinating Michiganders served in and around the Civil War, it would be impossible to include all of them in class lectures. Below are sample "snapshots" of people and events. Using snapshots like these, create a bulletin board in your classroom for your students to explore and enjoy. Use these snapshots as writing, discussion, or picture prompts. Encourage your students to add to the board as they find new and interesting people, events and information.

Snapshots:

Johnny Clem:

Johnny Clem was an 11 year-old orphan who stood only four feet tall and weighed just 62 pounds. When he went to the recruiters' office in Ohio and tried to join the army, he was denied. Johnny walked off down the road and ran into the 22nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry. After a little coaxing they let him join as the "mascot" and they gave him a small drum to play. Caught in the battle of Chickamauga, Johnny put down his drum and picked up a gun and found himself in the midst of the battle. To avoid personal harm, Johnny mortally wounded a confederate Colonel. Johnny was wounded in the exchange and was left for dead in the hail of fire. After dark, Johnny slipped across the enemy lines and rejoined the 22nd. Johnny stayed with them throughout the rest of the war.

Emma Edmunds:

This daring young woman joined the Michigan 2nd Volunteer Infantry as Franklin Thompson. She was 22 years old when she enlisted in 1861. Emma worked side by side with male soldiers and was never discovered. She also rose to the challenge and worked as a spy behind enemy lines—one of her best disguises was that of a woman. She deserted the army in 1863, probably because she had a serious injury and wanted to avoid detection. Many years later she applied for service pension, and she got it!

Michigan's Personal Liberty Law:

This law directed all prosecuting attorneys to defend any person arrested as a fugitive slave. It also gave these people the right to a trial by jury and to appeal through the county courts. Local jails could not be used to incarcerate alleged fugitives. Two witnesses were required in all fugitive cases and stiff fines and penalties were given to anyone who gave false witness. The bill was introduced on January 31, 1855, and became law one month later.