

Robert H. Hendershot

The Civil War's Youngest Hero

Robert Hendershot, joined other boys hanging around the soldier's camp in Jackson, Michigan, marching, beating on cans for drums and pretending to shoot the rifles like the soldiers during their drills. They learned the drills from the men of Charles V. DeLand's company which would soon be part of the 9th Michigan Infantry.

Robert was not yet 11 years old when he took hold of the idea he wanted to be a soldier. He had no desire to stay in school and asked Captain DeLand if he could join the 9th but the request was quickly denied. Not to be denied the adventure of a lifetime, young Hendershot stowed away on a train and caught up with the 9th Michigan in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

Captain DeLand saw Robert and put him on a train back to Jackson. At Indianapolis, Indiana, Robert managed to catch the next train back to Louisville.

When Robert arrived in camp, at West Point, Kentucky, Captain DeLand severely scolded him. Robert told him that there was no way he was going back home and stay. DeLand knew he had no strong rights over a civilian, so he decided to muster him in. Once mustered in, he would court-martial him and send him home. Robert was mustered in the military at West Point, Kentucky, October 30, 1861, at the age of 10 years and 10 months. He is the youngest person to ever enter the military in the United States and to be court-martialed. He stayed one night in jail and was released. Company B accepted him in their group and took responsibility for him.

From Robert Hendershot, Youngest Civil War Hero by Monie Matthews