

**TENNESSEE TEENS CONTRIBUTED MUCH
TO THE CIVIL WAR AT A YOUNG AGE**

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Many young men lied about their ages to serve in the War Between the States:

Tennessee contributed 120,000 soldiers to the Confederate cause, and 31,000 fought with the Union army. Tennessee contributed more soldiers to the U.S. Army than any other southern state. Of these total numbers, a surprisingly large group of participants were very young. Both armies officially refused to accept any person younger than age 18 within its fighting ranks. Only drummer boys and musicians could enroll at an earlier age, and there were 40,000 such positions in the U. S. Army. Drummers were an important part of communication on Civil War battlefields, issuing long-distance commands with their drumbeat rhythms. They were also important in the camps, carrying messages, cooking and caring for horse and mules. Many young boys did enter as drummers or musicians, but in the midst of battles, some became soldiers because of the chaotic circumstances. After the battles they helped carry the wounded and bury the dead.

Other underage boys volunteered as soldiers by lying about their ages, and they might be enrolled even though it was obvious that they were younger than they claimed. In 1864 the U. S. Sanitary Commission looked at the records of more than 1 million soldiers in the Union army. The study concluded that 127 soldiers were 13 years old, 330 were 14, 773 were 15, 2,758 were 16, and 366 were 17. I did find one boy who was discharged because he was “underage.” **L. B. Christian** enlisted in the 16th Tennessee Infantry on May 21, 1861. On July 19, 1862, he was discharged as a “non-conscript.”

Looking at enlistments from the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee, many underage boys joined the services of both sides. Counting enlistments from Putnam County alone, I found almost 100 names of soldiers who were born in 1844 or later. Of the 485 gravestones in the Tennessee Confederate Soldiers Home Cemetery at The Hermitage, 60 of the soldiers were born between 1844 and 1847. (The oldest was born in 1816).

The youngest Tennessee recruit I found was **James Prentice**, born in 1852, who served in some capacity in the Confederate army. **Henry P. Davis**, born in 1844 in White County, joined **Col. Sidney Stanton’s** 25th Tennessee Infantry. When his term expired he joined **General Dibrell’s** 8th Cavalry. **Joseph Dibrell** of White County rode with his father, **General George Dibrell** of the Eighth Tennessee Cavalry, at age 14. **Arkley F. Christian** of Hilham enlisted in the Confederate army at the age of 15, with the consent of his mother. He served in the Eighth Tennessee Regiment of **General George Dibrell** and the cavalry brigade of **General Nathan Bedford Forrest**. Christian fought in the battles at Triune, Humboldt, Trenton and Parker’s Cross Roads.

Bailey Key, born on Dec. 27, 1848, was listed as a private in the 14th Tennessee Cavalry. He served as an orderly to CSA **General Robert Vance** and **General Thompson**. Bailey was captured at Carthage and served some time as a prisoner of war with **General Thompson**. **Thomas J. Stowers**, was also born in 1848, was a private in the 199th Pennsylvania Regiment in 1864. He told the story that he intended to join his brother in the Confederate army, but was captured and conscripted into the Union army. After the Civil War he fought with **General Custer's** 7th Cavalry, and he falsely claimed to be the sole survivor of the 1876 battle with the Sioux. Stowers is buried in Odd Fellows Cemetery near Baxter. **Joseph Carr (or Kerr)**, born in 1849, was a private in the 5th Tennessee Cavalry (USA).

Many Tennesseans of all ages, some quite young, joined the United States mounted infantry regiments toward the end of the war for various reasons. Some had even served in the Confederate army earlier in the war. **Thomas Taylor Bradford** of Putnam County joined the Tennessee Mounted Infantry (USA) at age 16, serving in Nashville during the last two years of the war. Two boys whom I assume were brothers, **J.K.P. Brim** (born 1848) and **Ozias D. P. Brim** (born 1850), also served in the Tennessee Mounted Infantry (USA).

Some stories of very young soldiers are quite sad. **T. W. Phillips**, at age 17, enlisted in McMinnville in the 84th Tennessee Infantry Regiment of Co. **Sidney Stanton**, then in the 28th Tennessee Infantry. In 1863 he was furloughed because of sickness. Returning to Putnam County, he and another man who had enlisted as a teenager, **Uriah Gillihan**, were murdered by Home Guard soldiers in 1865.

Albert Templeton, a boy soldier in the 9th Tennessee Regiment, was a native of White County. Killed in the battle of Franklin in 1864, Templeton's mother had the body embalmed and carried back to White County in a wagon. She placed the corpse in the attic of the Templeton home, where it stayed until she died. Then mother and son were buried in a cemetery.

Some young girls were involved in the Civil War. They were spies, information collectors, unofficial nurses, supply handlers, and killers; but that is another column.

Jennie Ivey and Calvin Dickinson will publish a book in 2009 called "soldiers, Spies, and Spartans." Ten stories make up the book; stories about boys and girls involved in the Civil War. Most of the boys were soldiers. The girls were spies, or were involved in killing soldiers. The Spartans were a group of girls in Rhea County who participated in the war.

The editors, Calvin Dickinson and Michael Birdwell, invite anyone to submit a story of 800 words concerning the history/folklore of the Upper Cumberland region. Send stories to the editors at history Department, Box 5064 TTU, Cookeville, TN 38505. E-mail addresses are cdickinson@tntech.edu and birdie@tntech.edu.

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