

B4 SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1990

The Heights of Glory

GLORY, From B1

One who did not go west was the remarkable Christian Fleetwood; nor did he cease pressing for black opportunity in the military. Born of free parents in Baltimore, Fleetwood was well educated and worked briefly in Liberia before enlisting at age 23.

Returning from the war, Fleetwood settled in Washington, worked at the Freedmen's Bank and War Department and became known as a choirmaster and speaker. In 1887, he was appointed major in command of the Sixth (later First Separate) Battalion of the D.C. National Guard and in 1888 helped organize the Colored High School Cadets Corps.

But one more disappointment awaited. In 1898, aged 58 and partially deaf, Fleetwood proposed to the secretary of war that he raise a "three-battalion regiment, *officers included*, of colored citizens as U.S. volunteers" in the Spanish-American War. Prominent Washingtonians urged President McKinley to commission Fleetwood as a colonel. The War Department did not seriously consider either idea.

Christian Fleetwood died in 1914. The chapel at the D.C. National Guard Armory is named for him, and his Medal of Honor will soon be on display in the reopened Armed Forces Hall of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.



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