

# Harrisburg's Grand Review for Black Troops

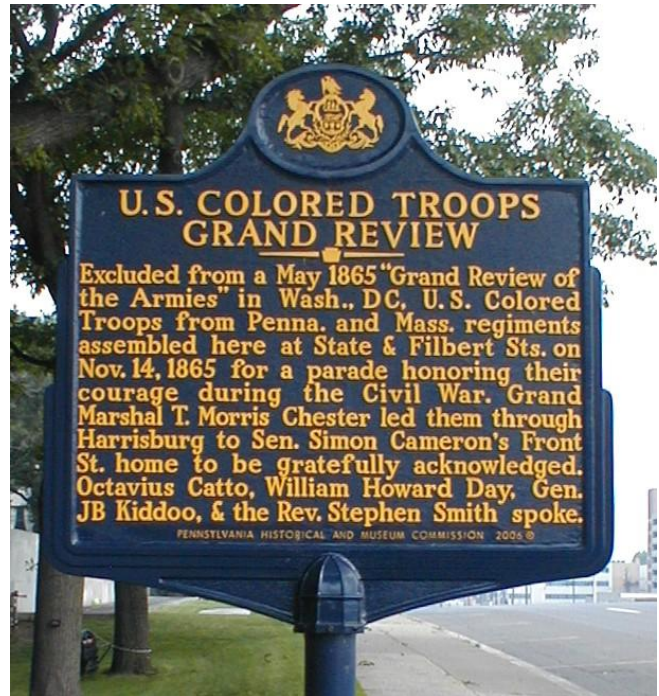
Prior to being sent home at the end of the Civil War, the Union Armies converged on Washington, D.C., for one last Grand Review. On May 23 and 24, 1865, the veteran Union soldiers marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to the cheers of thousands of grateful citizens. President Andrew Johnson and numerous civilian and military dignitaries saluted the massed troops as they passed the White House. It was a glorious celebration of a hard won victory!

Conspicuously absent, however, were the regiments of the United States Colored Troops. Despite the fact that over 180,000 African-Americans, including eleven regiments from Pennsylvania, had served in the Union Army, they were not invited to join the celebratory parade.

As a small recognition of the service of the black troops, a parade was held in Harrisburg on November 14, 1865. Pennsylvania was the only state to hold such an event. Thomas Morris Chester, Harrisburg's most distinguished African-American, served as grand marshal. The parade formed at State and Filbert Streets on the east side of the Capitol. Soldiers Grove now occupies the site and a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission historical marker commemorating the event was dedicated in May (above right).

The troops marched through the streets of Harrisburg to the home of Simon Cameron on South Front Street (below). Cameron had been a long time abolitionist and an early advocate for using African-American volunteers. He reviewed the troops from the front porch of the mansion and delivered a speech commending their service to the nation, saying:

*I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking the African soldiers for the compliment they have paid me, but more than all to thank them for the great service which they have been to their country in the terrible rebellion.*



*I never doubted that the people of African descent would play a great part in this struggle, and am proud to say, that all my anticipations have been more than realized. Your services, offered in the early part of the war, were refused; but when the struggle became one of life and death, then the country gladly received you, and, thank God, you nobly redeemed all you promised.*

*Like all other men, you have your destinies in your own hands, and if you continue to conduct yourselves hereafter as you have in this struggle, you will have all the rights you ask for, all the rights that belong to human beings.*

*I can only say again that I thank you, I thank you from my heart for all that you have done for your country, and I know the country will hold you in grateful remembrance.*

Others participating in the event included Octavius V. Catto, a noted African-American educator and USCT recruiter from Philadelphia, William Howard Day, an active abolitionist, clergyman, editor, and later the first black Harrisburg School Board president, and Brevet Major General Joseph B. Kiddoo, former commander of the 22nd Regiment of United States Colored Troops from Pennsylvania and later an administrator for the Freedmen's Bureau in Texas.