

# Mary McLeod Bethune Council House

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historic Site  
Washington, D.C.



*I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. I leave you a thirst for education. I leave you a respect for the use of power. I leave you faith. I leave you racial dignity. I leave you also a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man. I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people.*

—MARY McLEOD BETHUNE'S "LEGACY," 1955



By her own words and example, Mary McLeod Bethune

demonstrated the value of education, a philosophy of universal love, and the wise and consistent use of political power in striving for racial and gender equality. The 15th of 17 children of former slaves, Bethune grew up amidst the poverty and oppression of the Reconstruction South, yet rose to prominence as an educator, presidential advisor, and political activist.

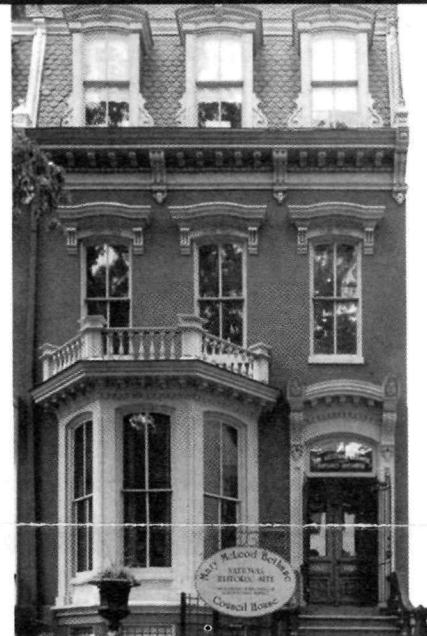
Through her own schooling by missionaries in South Carolina, Bethune recognized the importance of education in the emerging struggle for civil rights. In 1904 she founded the Daytona

Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls in Daytona Beach, Florida, which later merged with Cookman Institute to become Bethune-Cookman College.

Mary McLeod Bethune worked tirelessly to influence legislation affecting African Americans and women and continued to be an important voice for human rights until her death in 1955 at the age of 79.

## Headquarters for the National Council of Negro Women

In 1935, the same year President Roosevelt brought her to Washington as a special advisor on minority affairs, Bethune founded and became the first president of the National Council of Negro Women. Always eloquent, Bethune wrote:



*The great need for uniting the effort of our women kept weighing upon my mind. I could not free myself from the sense of loss, of wasted strength, sustained by the national community through failure to harness the great power of women into a force for constructive action. I could not rest until our women had met this challenge.*

Today, through national affiliate organizations and 250 community-based sections, the National Council of Negro Women unites more than 4 million women, in their efforts to reach peaceful solutions to the problems of human welfare and rights.

The Victorian townhouse she purchased in 1943 was her Washington, DC, residence for six years and served, from 1943 to 1966, as the first headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women. Designated a National Historic Site by Congress in 1982, the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House is now administered by the National Park Service.

## National Archives for Black Women's History

Mary McLeod Bethune was one of the first African American leaders to recognize the need to preserve historical records, especially those pertaining to African American women. Appropriately, the house that once served as headquarters for the National Council of Negro Women contains the National

Archives for Black Women's History, the only institution in the United States solely dedicated to this purpose. The archival holdings include the personal papers of African American women, records of their organizations, and a collection of more than 4000 photographs that document African American women's activities in the 20th century.

*The* Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site continues to serve as a research center, an archive to preserve African American women's heritage and recognize African American women's achievements and as a memorial to a pioneer in her field. This commemoration of the lives and contributions of African American women perpetuates Bethune's legacy of leadership, commitment, and service.

## How to Get There



The Mary McLeod Bethune Council House is located at 1318 Vermont Ave., NW.  
Metro: McPherson Square

## Features

- Self-guided tours for individuals
- Ranger-led tours and activities for groups of 10 or more
- Exhibits, films, lectures, workshops
- Bookshop
- Archives, open by appointment

## Information

For program information and hours, call 202-673-2402 or write:

Mary McLeod Bethune Council House  
National Historic Site  
1318 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
website: [www.nps.gov/mamc](http://www.nps.gov/mamc)

## Related Points of Interest

### Logan Circle Historic District

The Bethune Council House is part of a neighborhood of distinguished three and four-story Victorian houses built in 1875. At first a fashionable residential area for whites, by the 1940s these were the homes of prominent African American political and social figures. With time, those residents moved on and the once-grand homes deteriorated. In recent years, preservation efforts have revitalized the area.



### Lincoln Park

A 12-foot-tall bronze statue of Mary McLeod Bethune graces Lincoln Park, located on East Capitol Street between 11th and 13th streets northeast.

Dedicated in 1974 on the 99th anniversary of Bethune's birth, the statue is inscribed with the educator's famous "Legacy."

### Black History Trail

The Bethune Council House is among the sites included in the Washington, D.C., Black History National Recreation Trail. For a self-guiding booklet for the Trail, contact the National Park Service Office of Public Affairs, 202-619-7222.

