

The Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial



Highsmith, C. M., photographer. Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.

Washington, DC, has many monuments and memorials. Until 40 years ago, all of them were for white men. There were no monuments to honor any black people or women. In 1974, a special monument was erected. It honored both a black person and a woman. That woman was Mary McLeod Bethune.

The National Council of Negro Women raised money to pay for the monument. Bethune began this organization in 1935. The organization made the monument to honor her.

Bethune's monument is located in Lincoln Park. Lincoln Park is about 12 blocks east of the Capitol Building.

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Bethune's monument faces a monument of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's monument is on the opposite side of the park. President Lincoln issued the order to free all the slaves in 1863. His order was called the Emancipation Proclamation. His order freed all the slaves. The monument shows Lincoln standing. He is holding the Emancipation Proclamation. Next to him kneels a black man. The man's hands were in chains. But his chains have been broken. He holds his freed hands up in the air.

The monument of Bethune is quite large. It is made out of brass. It shows three people. The first is Mary



McLeod Bethune. It shows her as an old lady. In her right hand, Bethune holds a cane that President Roosevelt gave her. In her right hand is a scroll. The scroll is her legacy. A legacy is a gift. Bethune's

legacy is education. It is the gift she wanted to give all black children. She wanted every black child to have an education. The other two people are black children. One is a girl and the other is a boy. Bethune is passing her legacy to these children.

The following is written underneath the monument.

"Mary McLeod Bethune

1875–1955

Let her works praise her"

The monument was supposed to be unveiled in 1963. That was the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. The artists building the monument were black. In 1963, they were too busy fighting for civil rights to complete the monument. This delayed the monument's unveiling. The completed monument was finally unveiled on July 10th, 1974. This date would have been Bethune's 99th birthday. A crowd of more than 18,000 people came to the unveiling.

