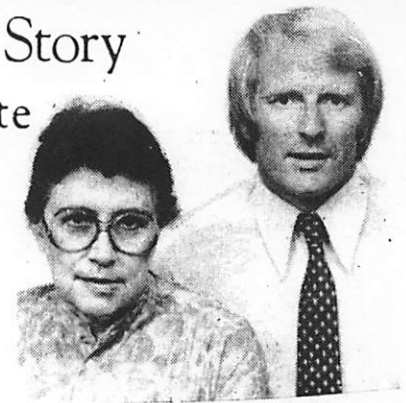


South Carolina's Story

The making of a state



Bethune-Cookman College Began In 4-Room Cottage

Page 6-B The Lancaster News Wednesday, February 8, 1984

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Mary McCleod Bethune, the daughter of former slaves, rose from poverty to become a South Carolinian of international stature. During her long life, she met with the British royal family, served as an advisor to four American presidents and knelt before the pope in the Vatican.

Mary McCleod Bethune, the 15th of 17 children, was born July 10, 1875, to Sam and Patsy McCleod. After emancipation, her parents obtained a 5-acre tract of land about five miles from Mayesville.

As a child, she helped out on the small family farm. Later she recalled that by the age of 9 she could pick 250 pounds of cotton a day.

As she grew, Mary McCleod Bethune became more and more interested in reading. She longed for an education, but schools were not open to blacks. The family's poverty prevented her from being sent away to school.

In 1894 a small missionary school was established near Mayesville. The McCleod family was allowed to send one child to the school. Mary was chosen.

She walked five miles to and from school each day. When she came home, the youngster taught her family the learning acquired during the day.

Her zeal for learning and education finally paid off. Mary received a small scholarship to attend Scotia Seminary in Concord, N.C.

In a few years, she took her first train ride, going to Chicago and entering the Moody Bible Institute. Her wish was to be a missionary and serve in Africa. Instead, she was first sent to teach in Augusta, Ga., then to Sumter.

There she met another teacher, Albertus Bethune, whom she married in 1898. After her marriage she went into the insurance business. However, teaching was soon to be her life's work.

In 1904, after the death of her husband, Mary Bethune made what was to be the most significant decision of her life. She moved to Daytona Beach, Fla.

With cash resources of \$1.65 and a rented four-room cottage, she started the Daytona Normal and Industrial School for Girls. The initial enrollment consisted of five small black girls whose parents could pay the tuition of 50 cents a week.

Mary Bethune worked hard to make the school a success. When the small cottage became too crowded she bought a large lot for \$200. She got the money by selling ice cream cones and sweet potatoes on the side.

This was the beginning of Bethune College. In 1925 it merged with Cookman College to become Bethune-Cookman College. Today, the college is a four-year coeducational institution with a student body of more than 1,300.

Mary Bethune's efforts to start the college showed the great confidence she had in her talents and in her future. Years later she said, "I have faith in God, faith in my people, and faith in Mary McCleod Bethune."

She became an advisor to Presidents Hoover, Roosevelt, and Truman. When President Roosevelt died in 1944, she was invited by her friend Eleanor Roosevelt to ride in the funeral train.