One day, little Mary McLeod picked up a white little girl’s book. The girl grabbed the book back and shouted, ”Colored people can’t read!” Mary knew that the white girl was wrong and decided to prove it. Mary wanted to go to school. But her family was very poor and there were no schools for black children near by. Finally, when Mary was 10, a school did open where black children could attend. Mary learned to read and add numbers. She loved learning-she loved school.

After a few years, a rich person gave money to the school. It was for the best student. That student was Mary. Now she could go to college. She became a teacher. In 1897, she married another teacher, Albertus Bethune.

Then Mary opened her own school. At first, it was small. There were only 5 students. Soon there were many more. Everyone worked hard to raise money for the school. Students baked pies and they sang at big events. The school grew and grew. After many years, the school was big enough to become a college. Mary McLeod Bethune was its president.

In 1935, another president, by the name of Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, came to Mary for help. Mary worked with him to help black children stay in school. Mary McLeod Bethune was a proud woman. She spent her life helping other Black Americans feel proud, too.