

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary Project

JUNE 8, 2020



ABOUT THE PROJECT....

- On March 10, 2016, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed a law calling for the replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol and the selection of a new “Great Floridian” and the selection of a sculptor.
- On March 19, 2018, Governor Rick Scott signed the law requesting the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune.
- The law further required that ownership of the statue of General Kirby Smith be transferred from the federal government to the state of Florida and for the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs to take possession of the statue and make available for public display.



HISTORY'S PAST....

- On April 19, 1864, Representative Justin S. Morrill asked: "To what end more useful or grand, and at the same time simple and inexpensive, can we devote it [the Chamber] than to ordain that it shall be set apart for the reception of such statuary as each state shall elect to be deserving of in this lasting commemoration?" His proposal to create a National Statuary Hall became law on July 2, 1864.
- With the addition of New Mexico's second statue in 2005, the collection is now complete with 100 statues contributed by 50 states, plus one from the District of Columbia, plus one for all the states (Rosa Parks). Alabama, Arizona, California, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan and Ohio have each replaced one of their first two statues after Congress authorized replacements in 2000 (2 U.S.C. § 2132).



HISTORY'S PRESENT....



John Gorrie, M.D.
(1803-1855)

Distinction:
Considered the “Father of Air Conditioning”

Donated to U.S. Capitol:
1914

Artist:
C.Adrian Pillars

Connection to Florida:
Lived and worked for a lifetime in Florida and invented the first “ice machine” for cooling patients (the forerunner of modern air conditioning)



General Kirby Smith
(1824-1893)

Distinction:
Last Confederate General to surrender at the end of the Civil War

Donated to U.S. Capitol:
1922

Artist:
C.Adrian Pillars

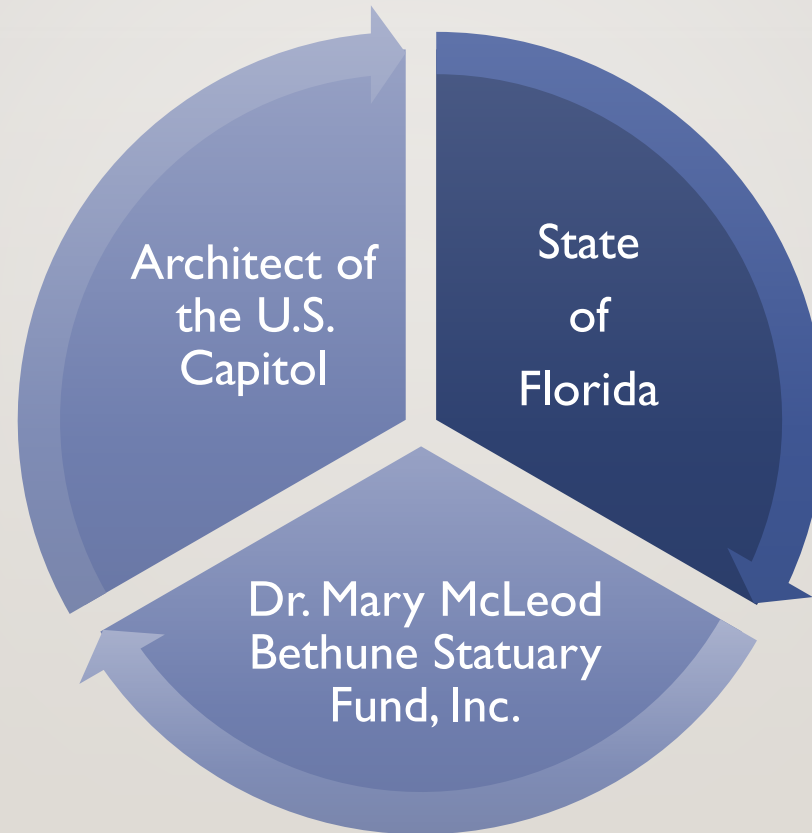
Connection to Florida:
Born in St. Augustine, FL

HISTORY'S FUTURE....

- Statewide search for the replacement conducted by the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs.
- The Division received a total of 3,585 submissions.
- A total of 259 unique names were submitted by the public. Of these, a total of 130 names were determined to be eligible by Division staff, while 129 names did not fit the guidelines.
- Upon a final vote of the eligible subjects, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune received 1,237 votes. The second place subject received 450 votes.
- After a national search, artist Nilda Comas was selected for this historic project.



ABOUT THE PROJECT....



ABOUT THE DR. MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE STATUARY FUND, INC.

- Formed in 2018 as a Florida not-for-profit corporation to fulfill the private funding component of the statuary project.
- Transferee of the original responsibilities placed upon Bethune-Cookman University.
- Led by President Nancy Lohman, former trustee of Bethune-Cookman University.



THE PLAN....



Mary McLeod Bethune statue takes the place of Dr. Gorrie's statue in National Statuary Hall



Dr. Gorrie's statue in National Statuary Hall moves downstairs to the Hall of Columns taking the place of General Edmund Kirby Smith



General Smith's statue moves from Washington, D.C. to the Lake County Historical Museum for public display per Florida statute



CONDITIONS PRECEDENT....

- ❑ Arrange for a place of public display for the statue of Kirby Smith.
- ❑ Raise private funds for the entirety of the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary project including, but not limited to, the artist's commission for the work, shipping, emplacement in the U.S. Capitol and the unveiling ceremony.
- ❑ Work in strict compliance with the protocols and procedures of the Florida Department of State, the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress and the Architect of the U.S. Capitol.

THE KIRBY SMITH CONUNDRUM....

- The replacement of the statue of General Kirby Smith was built into the law as a condition precedent.
- No place available for public display of the Kirby Smith statue, meant no place for the statue of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune.
- The Lake County Board of County Commissioners agreed to accept the Kirby Smith statue and place it in a contextual exhibit in the Lake County Historical Museum.
- Some Lake County residents have been fulminating in opposition ever since.

THE KIRBY SMITH CONUNDRUM....



AND....WE WAIT....



PROGRESS....

- On July 12, 2019 (Mary McLeod Bethune's birthday), Governor Ron DeSantis executed a letter formally requesting permission of the Architect of the Capitol to replace the statue of Kirby Smith with the statue of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune.
- Nilda Comas has secured the largest (and last) piece of statuary marble from the Italian Alps and the quarries above Pietrasanta, Italy.
- We are proceeding with approval of all details and dimensions of the project with the Architect of the Capitol so that Nilda Comas can begin putting hammer to chisel.



OTHER NOTEWORTHY ARTISTS AND SCULPTURES FROM THE QUARRIES OF PIETRASANTA, ITALY....



MAKING A HISTORY OF FIRSTS....

- First African-American to represent a state.
- First African-American woman to represent a state.
- First statue sculpted by a woman artist of Puerto Rican descent.
- First and only statue in the U.S. Capitol dressed in cap-and-gown of academia.
- First replacement of a statue in the U.S. Capitol by the State of Florida.
- First statue in the U.S. Capitol representing a person who called Daytona Beach home.

ABOUT THE STATUE....

- Designed by Nilda Comas after painstaking research and interviews.
- Maquette (model) produced in clay iterations doubling in size from one to eight feet using the same techniques as Michelangelo.
- Stacked books, used for balance of the weight of the marble statue, will have special inscriptions from Bethune's Last Will and Testament.
- Black rose in the left hand of the statue.

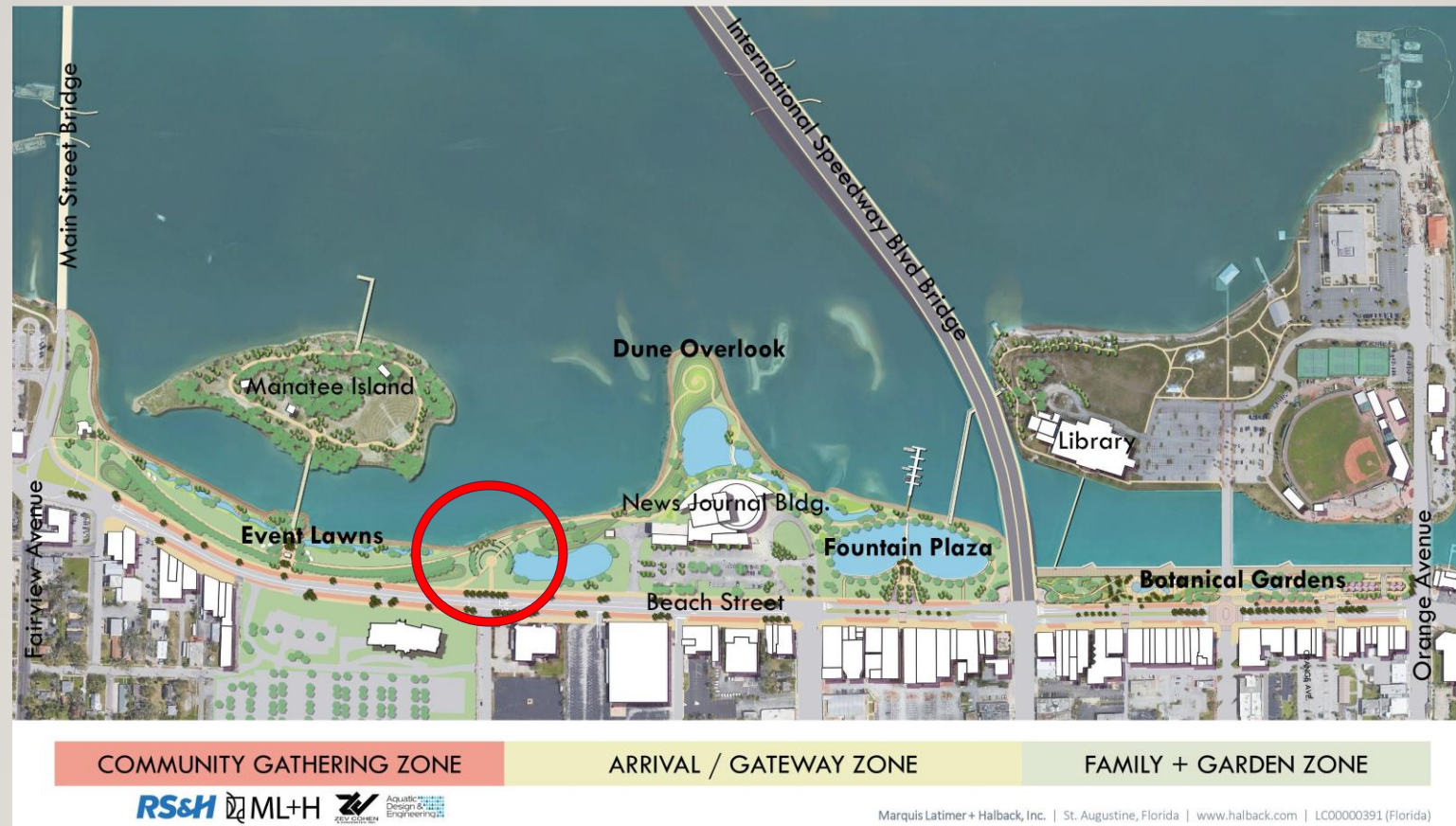


ABOUT THE TOUCHSTONE TO HISTORY IN DAYTONA BEACH....

- Volusia Honor Air was an amazing and touching tribute to WWII veterans, providing them an opportunity to travel to the WWII memorial in Washington, D.C.
- Regrettably, far too many veterans had already passed away or were too infirmed and were unable to travel to D.C. and be honored.
- With that lesson in mind, the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary Fund, Inc. commissioned Nilda Comas to create an original bronze of the statue that will be emplaced in the Capitol for permanent display in Riverfront Park in downtown Daytona Beach.
- The original bronze will be a permanent tribute and touchstone for Volusia County residents of the statue that stands in the Capitol as a source of pride for our community, our state and our nation.



DAYTONA BEACH TOUCHSTONE....



THANKS!

QUESTIONS?