MAGGIE WALKER (July 15, 1867-Dec. 15, 1934)
Born in Richmond to one of Elizabeth Van Lew’s freed slaves, Maggie Walker taught Sunday school during her adolescence and later taught public school for three years. As a girl, Walker joined the Grand United Order of St. Luke, a black fraternal society and cooperative insurance organization that guaranteed sick care and burial to its members. That her strengths lay in finance and administration became evident in her employment with the Order of St. Luke. She became its executive secretary-treasurer in 1899. During her tenure, the Order grew immensely and was successful financially. Under her leadership, the Order began publishing the St. Luke Herald news sheet in 1902 and founded the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank in 1903 with Maggie Walker as president. Walker thus became the first woman bank president in the United States. Walker also founded the Richmond Council of Colored Women in 1912 and, under her presidency, the Council raised ample funds for the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls and other organizations assisting blacks. Her Richmond home is under restoration by the National Historic Register.