

WHAT IS ROSENWALD'S SCHOOLS?

A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South



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WHAT IS ROSENWALD'S SCHOOLS ?



This photograph outside of the Peaksville School, a Rosenwald school in Durham County, offers a look at the school's teachers and students.

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Who Was Julius Rosenwald?

Julius Rosenwald was born August 12, 1862, in Springfield, Illinois, the son of a German-Jewish immigrant who had risen from peddler to partner in a clothing concern.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932) was a multimillionaire merchant and one of the founders of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, then the largest department store in the United States.



WHAT IS ROSENWALD'S SCHOOLS?

A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Rosenwald was a friend and admirer of Booker T. Washington and at the time a member of the Tuskegee Institute Board of Trustees



WHAT IS ROSENWALD'S SCHOOLS?

A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

In 1911, however, after reading Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, he persuaded other wealthy white philanthropists to join him in setting aside a portion of the funds they donated to Tuskegee to be used to build black schools in rural Alabama.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The Rosenwald Schools were built in the early 20th century as a solution to the scarcity of schools for African-Americans in the rural South at that time.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The school-building program was the idea of educator Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) who approached Julius Rosenwald, (1862-1932), the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The result stimulated the building of over 5,000 schools, vocational workshops, and teachers' homes in the South.



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While Southern states discouraged teaching slaves to read, the conclusion of the Civil War brought with it sporadic efforts to educate black children. schools for blacks, and underfunded those that existed.



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Missionaries arrived to establish schools, and later in the century some communities permitted African-American children to enroll in public schools.



WHAT IS ROSENWALD'S SCHOOLS?

A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Then between 1890-1908, states in the Deep South began adopting new state constitutions for the express purpose of taking the vote away from African-Americans.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

They did so by instituting measures such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and setting arbitrary voter registration practices.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

As the blacks were stripped of the right to vote, the whites began reducing opportunities for their children to attend regular public schools.

The white communities created separate and lesser



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

In 1909 Julius Rosenwald became president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, a firm that he joined in 1897.

With the personal fortune that he amassed, he also became known as one of America's leading philanthropists.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Rosenwald held education in high regard and considered it the key to African American progress.

He also observed that support for black educational opportunities in the South was compromised by the racial policies of white supremacy.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Rosenwald was determined to support black education through Alabama at first and eventually across the entire region by providing funds for the construction of rural schools and for teacher salaries and school supplies.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Booker T. Washington was looking for funding for his Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. introduced him to Julius Rosenwald.

Rosenwald, a longtime retailer, was already well-known for his generosity.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Washington made a specific request: He asked Rosenwald to fund six small schools to be built in rural Alabama; they would be supervised by people at Tuskegee.

Rosenwald agreed to the request, and the buildings were erected in 1913 and 1914.



WHAT IS ROSENWALD'S SCHOOLS?

A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Rosenwald also stipulated that the support would last for thirty years only. After that point local organizations were to assume support for these schools.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Of the North Carolina projects, 787 were schoolhouses, 18 were teachers' residences, and 8 were industrial education shops. . . .



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Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington built a strong working relationship. In 1917 Rosenwald established the Rosenwald Fund.

His commitment was to give to causes for the “good of mankind,” which resulted in money going toward education, and programs for both Jewish people and African-Americans.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

When asked why he felt so strongly about funding projects for African-Americans, Rosenwald replied:

“The horrors that are due to race prejudice come home to the Jew more forcefully than to others of the white race, on account of the centuries of persecution which they have suffered and still suffer.”



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Booker T. Washington persuaded Rosenwald to extend his support to allow for the construction of houses for teachers in rural communities.

The first two schools supported by the Rosenwald Fund were built near Tuskegee.



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The Rosenwald Fund school project faced criticism from white Southerners who were irritated that black schools should receive support over white schools.



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Southern school boards and state systems of education routinely underfunded African American schools while allocating more funds for the education of white students.



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Many white Southerners considered providing any education for blacks as troublesome and unnecessary.

Rosenwald felt otherwise, and maintained the firm belief that black self-help was as important as the donation of monetary resources by outsiders.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Black communities raised millions of dollars in the two decades that the schools were built.

By 1928, one in every five black schools in the South had been constructed using aid from the Rosenwald Fund and by 1932 Rosenwald Fund schools accommodated a third of the Southern black school population across fifteen states.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

When the program ceased in 1932, over 5,300 schools, homes, and shops had been constructed.

North Carolina had the largest number of Rosenwald Fund schools with a total of 787.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The Rosenwald Fund donated to a number of other projects including the work of the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Some Rosenwald Fund schools still stand across the South today and remain in use as community centers and registered historic sites.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Rosenwald Program Concludes

The building program was in effect until 1932 and during that time, Rosenwald schools were built in 883 counties in 15 states, from Maryland to Texas.

The final construction tally was 4977 schools, 217 teachers homes, and 163 shop buildings.



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By 1932 the schools were educating one-third of all African-American children in Southern schools. The research also showed higher attendance, increased literacy, more years of schooling, and improved test scores.

The school-building program ceased in 1932.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The Depression had had its effect on the Fund itself, but more important, Rosenwald and the Fund administrator agreed that the next step needed to be investment in teacher development.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

For that reason, the Rosenwald Fund shifted to supporting advanced education for teachers, paying for needed supplies, and eventually funding fellowships in various careers for African-Americans who were pursuing their dreams



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

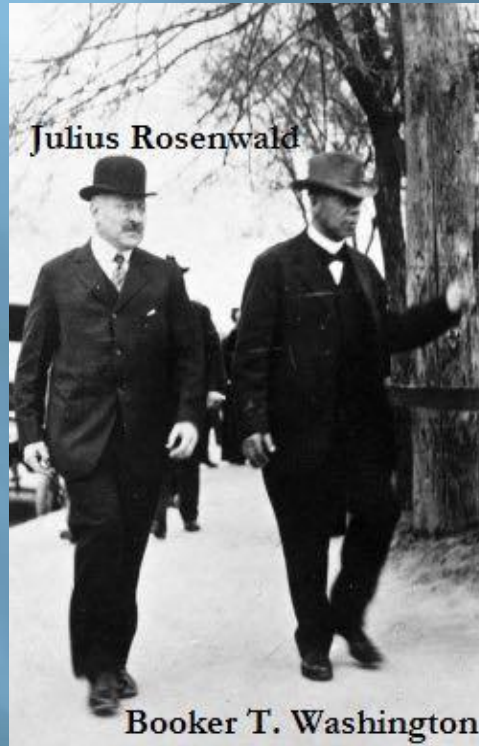
While today the schools are now referred to as “The Rosenwald Schools”, during his time, Rosenwald wouldn't stand for it.

He wasn't in it for the glory. His gift was about each school; it was not about Julius Rosenwald.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South



“The generation which has contributed to the making of a millionaire should be the one to profit by his generosity.”

- *Julius Rosenwald*

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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South



Rosenwald died in 1932. His death was to trigger the beginning of the end of the Fund.

He had specified that 25 years after his death, all funds should be dispersed and the Fund should be officially shuttered.

By 1948—the target year—the Fund had given away more than \$70 million.

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Rosenwald established the Julius Rosenwald Fund to expand his charitable activities. . . .

The Julius Rosenwald Fund schools were built across the South beginning in 1912 with money donated from businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald.

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Raising local black money for Rosenwald schools was no simple task among the cotton and tobacco tenant farmers of North Carolina. . . . A successful rally yielded both cash donations and pledges. . . .

Thus, money for the Rosenwald schoolhouses was gathered a penny and a nickel at a time. . . .

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OUR GOAL FOR 1928-'29

A Better School & Better Facilities.

Financial Educational Rally

To Be Held At

White Store Colored School

Saturday, Feb. 18, 1928

For the purpose of raising money for a
new school building.

Many prominent visitors are expected to be present, including Prof. R. W. Allen, County Supt. of Public Instruction, Miss Leila A. Kelley, Supervisor of Colored Schools, Anson Co., Rev. W. W. Blair, P.E. of A.M.E. Zion Church, Wadesboro District.

Dr. George Davis, Agt. Rosenwald School Building Fund, will be the principle speaker for the day.

Special program arranged. Free dinner served.

Program begins at 1 p. m.

Realizing the fact that the only medium through which any race can achieve success is by its people, we are inviting every community, school and church to be present in order that our goal might be successfully reached.

Chesleigh Walker, Principal

J. V. Crowder, Sec'y.

G. C. Davis, Treas.

Grass-roots fundraising was a key component in the Rosenwald effort.

Dr. George E. Davis, North Carolina's supervisor of Rosenwald buildings, led hundreds of rallies—like the one this handbill announces—in rural black communities across the state to incite enthusiasm and raise money for school building.

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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South



Rosenwald Fund School, Orange County, North Carolina, ca. 1925

All the schools were centers of small rural black settlements. . . .Beginning in 1928, the priorities of the Rosenwald foundation changed. . . .

Rosenwald grants to North Carolina during the late 1920s and 1930s included pilot programs for rural library service in Mecklenburg and Davidson counties,

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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South



Aid for the purchase of school buses in rural areas, and substantial support for the University of North Carolina Press for its “courageous [work] in printing and distributing reports and texts on southern problems”

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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

While the Rosenwald Fund continued its many other efforts until 1948, the school-building program closed in July, 1932. .



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. . . By July 1, 1932, a total of 5,357 Rosenwald schoolhouses, shops, and teacherages stood in 883 counties of fifteen states, erected at a total cost of \$28.4 million.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The Rosenwald Fund's donation of some \$4.3 million had sparked \$4.7 million in black contributions.

Local governments had in turn spent \$18.1 million . . . with private local white contributions making up the remaining 4 percent.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

In North Carolina, black residents had contributed more than \$666,000 toward the new Rosenwald buildings. . . .

More of the state's black children now went to school, and they benefited from longer school years and from better trained teachers.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute and Julius Rosenwald, philanthropist and president of Sears Roebuck, built state-of-the-art schools for African-American children across the South.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The effort has been called the most important initiative to advance black education in the early 20th century.

Attending a Rosenwald School put a student at the vanguard of education for southern African-American children.



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A 19th and 20th Century Leader for Negro education in the South

The architecture of the schools was a tangible statement of the equality of all children, and their programming made them a focal point of community identity and aspirations.

By 1928, one-third of the South's rural black school children and teachers were served by Rosenwald Schools.



BOOKER T'ISMS

Quotes by Booker T. Washington - Educator, Orator, Ex-Slave, Republican, 1856-1915

A 19th Century Maverick



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