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BOOKER T. WASHINGTON – GREY COLUMNS, RESIDENCE OF TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

A BETTER LIFE FOR THEIR CHILDREN

Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, & the 4,978 Schools that Changed America

PHOTOGRAPHS & STORIES BY ANDREW FEILER

Born to Jewish immigrants, Julius Rosenwald rose to lead Sears, Roebuck & Company and turn it into the world's largest retailer. Born into slavery, Booker T. Washington became the founding principal of Tuskegee Institute.

Rosenwald and Washington met in 1911. At that time, Black public schools in the South were usually in terrible facilities with outdated materials and a tiny fraction of the funding provided for educating White children. Many communities did not even have public schools for African American students.

Rosenwald and Washington, forging one of the earliest collaborations between Jews and African Americans, attacked this education challenge with originality and sophistication and created the program that became known as Rosenwald schools.

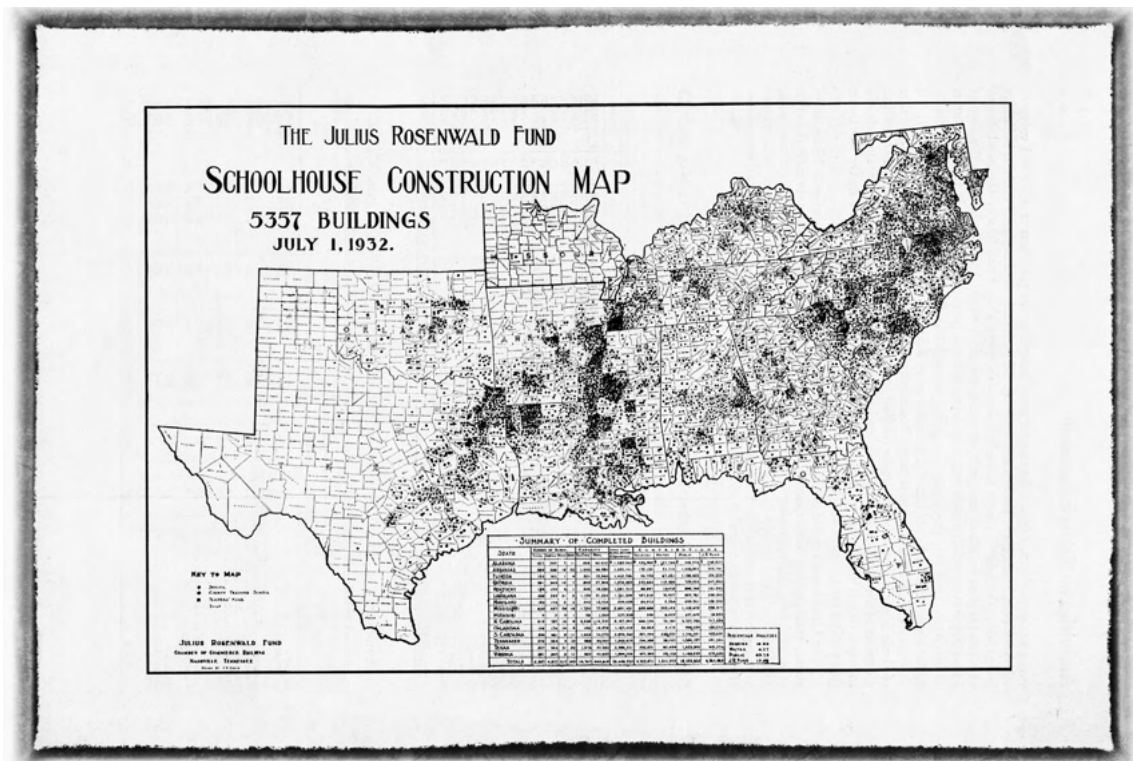
From 1912 to 1932, the Rosenwald Schools program built 4,977 schools for African American children across fifteen southern and border states. One final school was added in 1937. This program drove dramatic improvement in African American educational attainment and fostered the generation who became the leaders and foot soldiers of the civil rights movement.

Of the original 4,978 Rosenwald Schools, about 500 survive. While some have been repurposed and a handful remain active schools, many remain unrestored and at risk of collapse. To tell this story visually, Andrew Feiler drove more than twenty-five thousand miles, photographed 105 schools, and interviewed dozens of former students, teachers, preservationists, and community leaders in all fifteen of the program states. Brief narratives written by Feiler accompany each photograph.



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JULIUS ROSENWALD – NOBLE HILL SCHOOL, BARTOW COUNTY, GEORGIA



JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND SCHOOLHOUSE CONSTRUCTION MAP—FISK UNIVERSITY ARCHIVE

By 1932, Julius Rosenwald had helped fund 163 industrial education shops, 217 teachers' homes, and almost 5,000 schoolhouses.

ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHER & CURATOR ANDREW FEILER

Andrew Feiler is a fifth generation Georgian. Having grown up Jewish in Savannah, he has been shaped by the rich complexities of the American South. Andrew has long been active in civic life. He has helped create over a dozen community initiatives, serves on multiple not-for-profit boards, and is an active advisor to numerous elected officials and political candidates. His art is an extension of his civic values.

Andrew's photographs have been featured in such publications as *Smithsonian*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Architect*, *Preservation*, *Slate*, *Lenscratch*, *Oxford American*, and *The Bitter Southerner*. His work has been displayed in galleries and museums including solo exhibitions at such venues as the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Octagon Museum in Washington, D.C., International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, NC, and Burrison Gallery of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. His work is in a number of public and private collections including that of Atlanta University Center and Emory University.

More of his work can be seen at andrewfeiler.com.

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LOACHAPOKA SCHOOL—LEE COUNTY, ALABAMA, 1913-1958

The very first Rosenwald school to open was the Loachapoka School in Lee County, Alabama. It was part of a pilot launched by Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald in 1912 to test the idea of building schools for African American children. The pilot consisted of six schools, all of which were close to Tuskegee Institute where Washington's staff could oversee the program.

The Rosenwald School program was innovative and sophisticated. It was rooted in Washington and Rosenwald's belief that success required the local Black community to be a full partner in its school. If the African American community would contribute to a school, which could include contributions of cash, land, materials, and labor, Rosenwald would make a substantial contribution toward construction.

The grants, however, required that the local White school board agree to own, maintain, and staff the school. Over time these arrangements led to significant public investment in many Rosenwald schools. The program was intentional in fostering the beginnings of a new Black/White dialogue as another footing for future progress.

This Loachapoka community was one of the first to meet the match requirements for a school. The building's total cost was \$942.46. The local Black community contributed \$150, to buy the land, as well as labor, which was valued at \$132.46. Local Whites donated \$360, and Rosenwald contributed \$300. The schoolhouse was dedicated on May 18, 1913. It served African American students until it closed in the late 1950s. In 1960 the building was destroyed by fire.



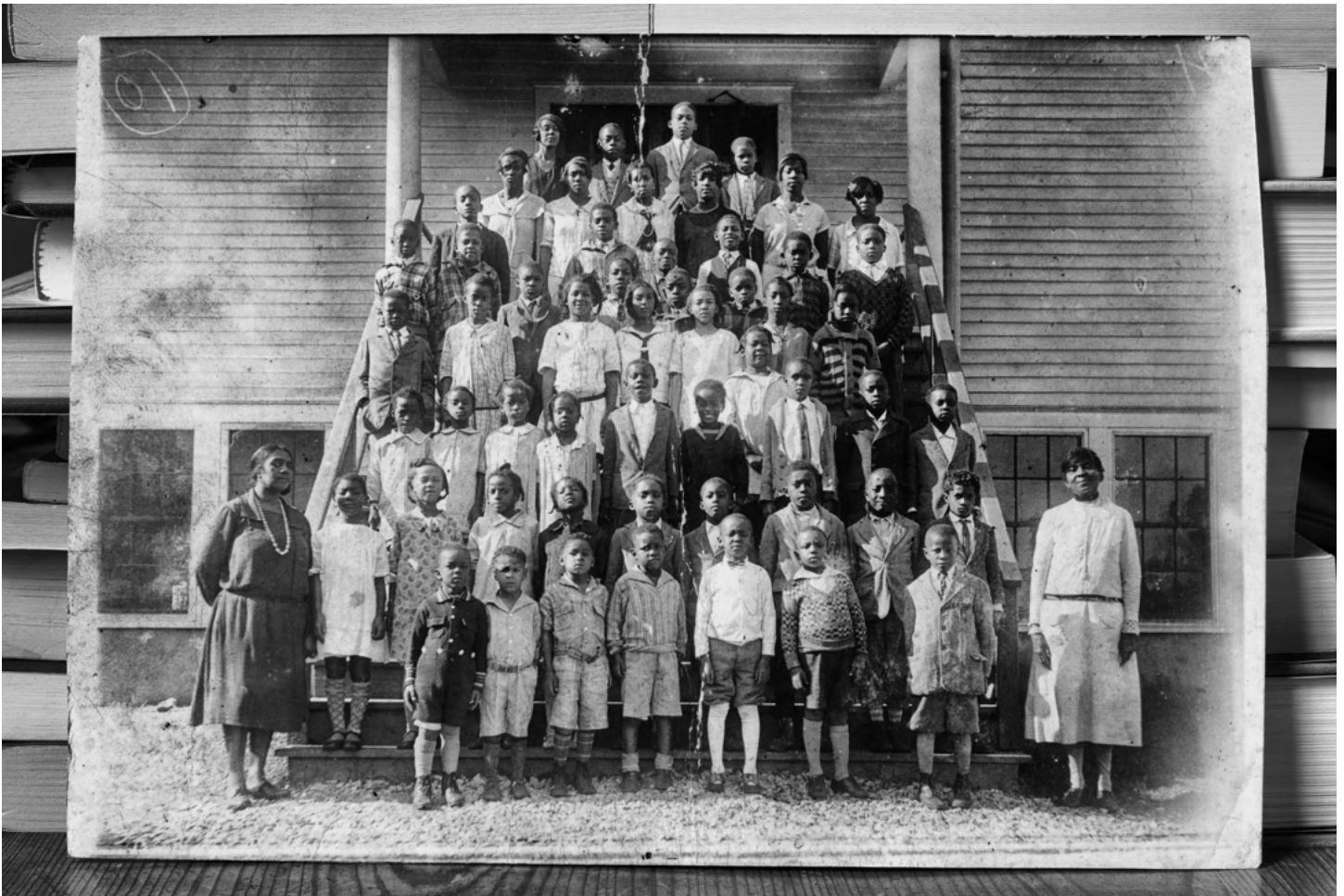
INTERIOR, EMORY SCHOOL—HALE COUNTY, ALABAMA, CIRCA 1915-1962

The Emory School was constructed around 1915 and is likely the oldest surviving Rosenwald school. It illustrates the progressive design features that were central to the Rosenwald School program. Large double-hung windows let in lots of light, since most schools initially lacked electricity. The windows also provided ventilation during the warmer months. In colder months, potbelly stoves heated the rooms. These vented through brick chimneys. Cloakrooms served to keep muddy outer garments separate from the learning spaces.

The interior includes the larger main classroom. A smaller room at the rear was for industrial education, such as agriculture and other trade skills for boys, as well as home economics and other domestic skills for girls.

These spaces were separated by a movable partition—usually a series of doors—that could be retracted so that the full space could be used as a community center outside classroom hours.

These design features were laid out by a team of Tuskegee architects led by Robert Robinson Taylor, the first accredited African American architect. The Emory School is a rare surviving example of the architectural team's initial one-teacher design.



STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT JEFFERSON JACOB SCHOOL, 1920S—THE FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Two teachers and fifty-five students were photographed in the 1920s in front of the Jefferson Jacob School (Jefferson County, Kentucky, 1917-1957). Early in the school building program, Booker T. Washington sent Julius Rosenwald photographs like this of schoolchildren and teachers standing proudly in front of their schools. Rosenwald was deeply moved by these images, and they contributed to his decision to expand the initiative.

Making such photographs became a widespread practice and they are a prominent visual component of the Rosenwald school story. These black-and-white images powerfully convey the pride, dreams, and commitment of an entire community, old and young. They are a reminder of the ultimate focus of the Rosenwald School effort: students, teachers, and education.



ROSENWALD HALL—SEMINOLE COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, 1921-1966

In the 1830s and 1840s, the U.S. government forcibly relocated five Native American tribes—the Choctaw, Seminole, Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee—from the southeastern United States to reservations in what would later become the state of Oklahoma. These forced migrations are known collectively as the Trail of Tears; less well known is that the tribes had Black slaves and took them on the arduous journeys west.

After emancipation, many African Americans found physical safety and economic security by congregating together. From 1865 to 1920, they, along with other Blacks who moved to the area, created more than fifty all-Black towns across Oklahoma. These farming communities supported a variety of Black-owned businesses, and some towns advertised and recruited in the

South to encourage Blacks to move to these “promised lands.” But in one of the first official acts after statehood in 1907, Oklahoma adopted a series of Jim Crow laws. These actions drove many Blacks out of the state, a trend accelerated by the Great Depression.

Oklahoma was brought into the Rosenwald program in 1920, and at least eleven all-Black towns built Rosenwald schools. Of these, only Rosenwald Hall in the town of Lima remains. The four-teacher school was built in 1921 and features unusual brick and granite construction. The school closed in 1966. Still owned by the Lima School District, the building is unused and deteriorating. Only thirteen of Oklahoma's fifty all-Black towns currently survive.



PLEASANT PLAINS SCHOOL—HERTFORD COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, 1920-1950

One of the core design principles of Rosenwald Schools was that they were to be modest. Such humility was in part to control costs and in part to avoid provoking a backlash, specifically arson, from the local White citizenry. But despite being offered architectural plans and design guidelines, Black communities often adjusted designs in an expression of agency.

This dynamic is on display at the Pleasant Plains School. The community wanted a cupola, and they built a cupola. But cupolas were particularly anathema to Fletcher D. Dresslar, a professor of architecture at George Peabody College in Nashville, who was hired by the Rosenwald Fund in 1919 to review the school building program.

Dresslar felt strongly that civic institutions should have an architectural idiom distinct from that of churches to honor the separation of church and state. When he came across a cupola on a schoolhouse, Dresslar railed that such niceties needed to be firmly prohibited on future schoolhouses as “these are remnants of church architecture!” Pleasant Plains, however, kept its cupola.

Pleasant Plains is a T-shaped, three-teacher school. After the school closed in 1950, it was acquired by Pleasant Plains Baptist Church, which is located across the street. The building served as a fellowship hall, community center, and senior citizens’ center. The schoolhouse is now used for storage.



ELROY AND SOPHIA WILLIAMS—SOPHIA WILLIAMS'S GRANDPARENTS, FORMER SLAVES, ACQUIRED AND DONATED LAND FOR A ROSENWALD SCHOOL

Martin McDonald and Sophia Veal (in framed photograph) were born into slavery. In 1850, he was sold and brought to Bastrop County, Texas, where he labored on a sheep farm. Freed in 1865, he started raising farm animals, bought some land, and eventually accumulated twelve hundred acres. As his granddaughter Sophia Williams (right) said, "My grandfather never went to school a day in his life. He couldn't read, but he could count money."

Martin and Sophia McDonald married in 1874. He was twenty-six; she was sixteen. Eight of their fourteen children survived to adulthood. Martin McDonald died in 1912. In 1919, after word of the Rosenwald program reached Bastrop County, Sophia McDonald donated land for a school. Her daughter, Artelia McDonald Brown, was the Hopewell School's first

teacher. Brown's daughter, Sophia Williams, was a Hopewell student. Sophia Williams's husband Elroy Williams (left) attended a different Rosenwald school in the county, but neither of them knew the history until, when he was in college, Elroy Williams visited Tuskegee. There he learned the Rosenwald School story. Elroy and Sophia Williams returned to Bastrop after college and became teachers, but Elroy Williams also brought a passion for preserving Hopewell and its history. He started by laying tin on the roof to protect the building, persisting in the task even though prairie winds kept blowing off the sheeting. He attended workshops on Rosenwald Schools, got involved in other preservation efforts, and applied for grants. Hopewell is in the final stages of renovation as a community center.



FRANK BRINKLEY AND CHARLES BRINKLEY SR.—EDUCATORS, BROTHERS, ROSENWALD SCHOOL FORMER STUDENTS

Many Rosenwald schools displayed a portrait of their benefactor. The original photograph of Julius Rosenwald still hangs above the doorway of the Cairo School (Sumner County, Tennessee, 1923-1959).

Brothers Frank Brinkley and Charles Brinkley Sr. were students in the one-teacher school. Their father was the principal and sole teacher. Both brothers later served on the committee that spearheaded the renovation of the school and now oversees its use as a community center.

After high school, Frank Brinkley went to college, earned two graduate degrees including one from Tuskegee, and taught high school math and science in the local public schools. Charles Brinkley Sr. went to college, earned a master's degree, taught middle school science, and served as a middle school principal. They have four sisters, all of whom attended the Cairo School, and all went to college. Among the six siblings they have ten children. All ten went to college.



PIANO, BIBLE, AND AMERICAN FLAG, SHILOH SCHOOL—MAGON COUNTY, ALABAMA, 1922-1964

The town of Notasulga, a few miles from Tuskegee, was home to one of the original six Rosenwald schools. The Notasulga School opened in 1913; nearby, the Shiloh School opened in 1922.

On a stand inside the Shiloh School is a Bible used for the devotional that began each school day. Next to the Bible are the refurbished original piano and an American flag. This scene, however, belies a more sinister past, for the school and the neighboring church are linked to a disgraceful episode in American history, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

Between 1932 and 1972, the U.S. Public Health Service enlisted hundreds of rural, poor Black men to participate in a study of untreated syphilis. The public health workers lied to the participants about their condition and the nature of the study, and participants with the disease were intentionally not treated even after penicillin was identified as effective in the 1940s. The church next door to the school was a principal recruitment site for the experiment, and the doomed participants periodically met in front of the schoolhouse to be examined or transported to Tuskegee for examination. In 1997, President Bill Clinton formally apologized to the victims of the study on behalf of the United States.



JULIUS ROSENWALD AND BOOKER T. WASHINGTON—QUILT CELEBRATING RESTORATION OF THE PINE GROVE SCHOOL

One of the few photographs of Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington together dates from 1915 on the campus of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The image was printed on fabric and sewn by Evelyn Albert into a quilt that commemorates the restoration of the Pine Grove School (Richland County, South Carolina, 1923-1950). At the reopening ceremony, former students, former teachers, and their descendants were invited to sign the quilt. It hangs inside the renovated schoolhouse.

Julius Rosenwald was president or chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Company from 1908 until his death in 1932. He helped turn Sears into the world's largest retailer, and he became one of the earliest and greatest philanthropists in American history.

Booker T. Washington was one of the most prominent African American voices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born into slavery in Virginia, he became an educator and was invited to become founding principal of Tuskegee Institute. He led the college for more than thirty years.

Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington met in 1911. The next year the two men created the program that became known as Rosenwald Schools. From 1912 to 1932, the Rosenwald Schools program built 4,977 schools for African American children across fifteen southern and border states. One final school was added in 1937. Hundreds of thousands of students walked through these doorways.



LINCOLN PORTRAIT, WARFIELD SCHOOL—MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TENNESSEE, 1922-1968

In 1922, a tornado destroyed the one-room schoolhouse that had served African American children of Montgomery County, Tennessee, since the 1880s. The Black community worked in earnest to raise funds to meet the match requirement of the Rosenwald program. Holding barbecues, pie suppers, and concerts, they raised the required contribution under the leadership of Edward Warfield. The school was named in recognition of Warfield's leadership.

A former teacher at the Warfield School, Bertha Quarles, reflected in a short memoir that the curriculum went well beyond the "three Rs (of) reading,

'riting and 'rithmetic. Many phases of complete living was taught," she remembered, "such as health, science, art, home economics, music and deportment. Deportment meant how one walked, talked, dressed, sat, ate and, in short, how one behaved in civilized society."

The Warfield School is owned by Montgomery County, which undertook an extensive renovation to create a particularly nice community center. One classroom, preserved to celebrate the schoolhouse's heritage, includes school desks, schoolbooks, attendance records, and a portrait of Abraham Lincoln.



VALERIE COLEMAN AND MARIAN COLEMAN—CURATORS, DESCENDANTS OF ROSENWALD SCHOOL BUILDER WEBSTER WHEELER

The Great Migration was the movement of six million African Americans out of the South to the urban centers of the North, Midwest, and West. Motivated by segregation, violence, and lack of economic opportunity, it was one of the largest internal movements of people in world history. At the migration's outset in the mid-1910s, 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South. By the end of the 1960s that figure had fallen to 53 percent.

Webster Wheeler left Cassville, Georgia, and arrived in Detroit as part of the migration. The photograph of him that is in the frame dates from his time in his new city. As Isabel Wilkerson points out in *The Warmth of Other Suns*, her Pulitzer Prize-winning treatise on the Great Migration, to have one's photograph taken was "a ritual of arrival that just about every migrant did," for it proved that one had reached a promised new land. Trained as a carpenter, Wheeler spent his career working for the Ford Motor Company.

Upon hearing that his hometown had been awarded a Rosenwald grant, he returned in 1923 and, along with community member Daniel Harris, built the new school.

The Noble Hill School (Bartow County, Georgia, 1923-1955) today serves as a cultural heritage center with a focus on Black life in North Georgia. It hosts picnics, weddings, meetings, and numerous educational tours for students from elementary school to college. The center is curated by Valerie Coleman (left), great-great-granddaughter of Webster Wheeler. Marian Coleman, one of the last graduates of Noble Hill, is the great-granddaughter of Wheeler. She preceded her niece as curator. They stand, holding the photograph of Webster Wheeler, in front of an original blackboard and under the gaze of Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and President Barack Obama.



RESTORED CLASSROOM, PINE GROVE SCHOOL—RICHLAND COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1923-1950

Around fifty students in grades one through seven crowded into the two-teacher Pine Grove School when it opened in 1923. Economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago have conducted five studies quantifying the effects of Rosenwald schools. Bhashkar Mazumder and Daniel Aaronson have found that prior to World War I, there was a significant, persistent gap in educational attainment between Blacks and Whites in the South. In the period between the First and Second World Wars, however, that gap narrowed significantly. Mazumder and Aaronson conclude that Rosenwald schools were the largest single driver of that achievement.

The economists also found that Rosenwald schools drove significant, quantifiable improvements in school attendance, literacy, and test scores. They further concluded that Rosenwald education increased relative wages

for Blacks who stayed in the South, while Rosenwald education made it substantially more likely that the recipient would migrate out of the South to an area where economic prospects were stronger. In addition, they found that these effects carried over to the next generation. Parents who had a Rosenwald education went on to have children who experienced “sizeable increases in completed schooling.”

Said Mazumder, “We often think of problems as pretty intractable, especially those related to race. Our research presents a compelling case that actions can have a large impact.”



DENBIGH SCHOOL—WARWICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA, CIRCA 1920-CIRCA 1950

Beatrice Combs had been a student at the two-teacher Denbigh School in the 1920s. Years later when the school closed, her husband Henry Combs bought the building, intending to turn it into a “beer joint.” But Beatrice Combs made clear she wanted no part of such a disreputable operation. For a while they rented the schoolhouse to two families, one in each room. Then Beatrice Combs, in the words of her daughter, “accepted the Lord,” and the family rented the building to the newly formed Holy Tabernacle Church of Deliverance.

As the church thrived, it purchased the schoolhouse from Combs. The congregation later added on a new sanctuary and converted the school into the Beatrice Combs Fellowship Hall, where her portrait proudly presides.

Combs was an active member of the church for the rest of her life, serving for many years as secretary and usher. Several of her children remain members of the church.

The Denbigh School is just one example of how finding new uses has helped to preserve Rosenwald schools. Of the original 4,978 schools, roughly 500 are thought to survive. Only about half have been restored. Of these, a handful are still used for education purposes. The most common reuses are as community centers, church halls, and museums. Other adaptations have involved more creativity and include daycare centers, apartments, senior residences, private homes, the offices of a truck rental company, and in the case of Turin, Georgia, a city hall.



JOHN LEWIS—CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER, U.S. CONGRESSMAN, ROSENWALD SCHOOL FORMER STUDENT

Rosenwald schools were a meaningful force in the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. Many of the leaders and foot soldiers of the movement were educated in these schools. Rosenwald school former student Medgar Evers became Mississippi field secretary for the NAACP. He was later murdered for his activism. Poet and writer Maya Angelou became the northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She would later write about her days in an Arkansas Rosenwald School in her memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Carlotta Walls LaNier, and several of her fellow members of the Little Rock Nine, attended a Rosenwald School before walking into history to integrate Little Rock Central High School.

John Lewis, who attended a Rosenwald School, was known as “the conscience of the U.S. Congress.” As a young boy growing up in rural Alabama, he was inspired by the activism of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He went on to organize sit-in demonstrations at segregated lunch counters, participated in the Freedom Rides, helped organize activities during Freedom Summer, and served as chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He was a keynote speaker at the March on Washington in 1963, and in 1965, he, along with civil rights leader Hosea Williams, led voting rights marchers across Selma, Alabama’s Edmund Pettus Bridge into the confrontation that became known as “Bloody Sunday”. In 1986, Lewis was elected to Congress and represented Georgia’s Fifth Congressional District until his death in 2020.



SAINT LUKE SCHOOL—PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS, 1924-CIRCA 1960

In Turkey Scratch, Arkansas, the Saint Luke School rests in a small wood surrounded by farmland. When the two-teacher school closed around 1960, it was refitted and used for grain storage. As farming grew in scale and sophistication, the modern grain bins were built next door. The schoolhouse is now used for dry storage.

The fields adjacent to the school have been farmed by the same family for four generations. Today the crops are cotton, corn, soybeans, and rice. Mack Reed acquired the first acreage in the 1940s. His Latinx foreman used to drive down to the U.S. and Mexico border to recruit Latinx farm help. The farm help lived on the farm, helped to clear the land, and planted cotton.

One Latinx family living and working on the farm had a son and daughter and, understanding that the Rosenwald school served minorities, sent their children to Saint Luke. Unfortunately, the Black community was unable to see beyond the hierarchy that placed Whites at the top, Blacks second, and Latinxs at the bottom. Within days they sent the Latinx children away, saying that they were not welcome at the school.



BAY SPRINGS SCHOOL—FORREST COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, 1925-1958

Vernon Dahmer Sr.'s grandfather donated land for the two-teacher Bay Springs School in 1925. Ownership reverted to Dahmer when the school closed in 1958.

Dahmer, who had attended the school, was the owner of a grocery store, a sawmill, and an expansive cotton farm. He was also head of the Forrest County NAACP. The school, off the main road and secluded behind trees, became a locus of civil rights activity. When Dahmer drove Blacks to town to attempt to register to vote, he would ask them to park at the school so that they could not be identified by their vehicles. The NAACP and SNCC held meetings there, and during Freedom Summer of 1964 the Dahmers hosted a huge July Fourth picnic for the Black community and the voter registration volunteers, White and Black. Dahmer's son Dennis, then

eleven years old, marveled that it was the first time he had witnessed Blacks and Whites socializing together. Dahmer's activism, however, drew the ire of the Ku Klux Klan. On the night of January 10, 1966, Klansmen attacked his home, firing shotguns and throwing gas cans through the windows. The house burst into flames. Dahmer returned fire from inside, attempting to distract the attackers while his wife, Ellie, got the children out. Severely burned, Dahmer died from his injuries.

Just past the tree line behind the school, Ellie Dahmer lives in a newer home on the site where the earlier house was destroyed. An historic marker stands in tribute in the front yard. Dahmer's son Dennis led the restoration of the school, which once again serves as a community center.



ELLIE J. DAHMER—WIDOW OF SLAIN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER, ROSENWALD SCHOOL FORMER STUDENT AND TEACHER

Ellie J. Dahmer, widow of slain civil rights leader Vernon Dahmer Sr., attended a Rosenwald school in Jasper County, Mississippi. After college she taught home economics at the Bay Springs School (Forrest County, Mississippi, 1925-1958) from the early 1950s until it closed in 1958. That year, African American students were sent to a new consolidated, but still segregated, school. Refused a position at the new school because of her husband's activism, she obtained a job teaching elementary school thirty miles away in Jasper County. She taught there for twenty-one years.

Teachers during the civil rights era played several important, but often underappreciated, roles. As historian Vanessa Siddle Walker has

documented in *The Lost Education of Horace Tate*, Black teachers in segregated schools taught their students about equality and democracy. In doing so, they helped to set expectations and aspirations that were foundational for the Civil Rights Movement.

Walker also illuminates how Black teachers played another critical role: they supported the work of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF). While Thurgood Marshall and his team were the face of the legal fight to end school segregation, it was associations of Black teachers that funneled school-level data to the LDF. That data was invaluable in helping the LDF to make the case that separate but equal was inherently unequal.



HANNAH SCHOOL—NEWBERRY COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1925-1960S

The Hannah School stands on Deadfall Road, a poetic name since a cemetery would come to envelop the schoolhouse. Opened in 1925, the three-teacher school was originally named after its neighborhood and called the Utopia School. Across the street is Hannah A.M.E. Church, namesake for the school, whose graveyard now surrounds the schoolhouse.

Newberry County, South Carolina, originally had twenty-six Rosenwald schools, which speaks to the density of the African American population

across the agricultural expanses of the South. In total, South Carolina had 481 Rosenwald schools with at least one in each of its 46 counties, an average of more than ten schools per county. North Carolina had 787 schools in 93 of 100 counties, more than eight schools per county in the program. Across the fourteen principal states of the program—excluding Missouri, which joined late and only had three schools—two-thirds of all counties, and 85 percent of counties with Black school-age children, had Rosenwald schools.



LINCOLN SCHOOL—BLEDSOE COUNTY, TENNESSEE, 1926-1965

All the walls and ceilings of the Lincoln School are covered with decorative pressed tin, an illustration of the pride that the Pikeville, Tennessee community had in their school. Though the Rosenwald Fund had laid out more detailed standards for school buildings in the 1920s and had tightened compliance, the people who built and used the schools found ways large and small to express their taste and show community pride.

The Lincoln School opened in 1926. Local churches would come together for dinners to raise funds to purchase school supplies. When the school closed, it was purchased by a local carpenter and used for many years to store lumber. Former students came together, purchased the building, and led a restoration. Today it serves as a community center, hosting birthday parties, funerals, and a variety of civic dinners.



ELEANOR ROOSEVELT SCHOOL—MERIWETHER COUNTY, GEORGIA, 1937-1972

Franklin Roosevelt was impressed when he saw a Rosenwald school near his home in Warm Springs, Georgia. In 1929, he asked Samuel Smith, then leading the Rosenwald program, to build another school in Meriwether County. The local school board demurred, however, having just funded a new school for White students. Five years later, Roosevelt asked Rosenwald Fund president Edwin Embree to fulfill Smith's "commitment." Although the school building program had ended in 1932, Embree agreed to contribute to this one final school. A \$12,000 grant from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) helped to secure the plan, but then the final funding came up \$1,000 short. Roosevelt wrote a personal check to close the gap.

The Eleanor Roosevelt School, a five-teacher plan, opened in 1937 with President Roosevelt presiding at the dedication. Peeking out from behind the building's right side is a structure from a later era. In the early 1950s, several southern states began to foresee the outcome of

litigation challenging school segregation. Attempting to demonstrate that they could deliver on "separate but equal," they launched programs to build new African American schools. These structures became known as equalization schools.

Georgia's equalization school program was the most extensive. To fund it, Governor Herman Talmadge pushed through the state's very first sales tax. From 1952 to 1962, about 1,200 new schools were built in the state, 700 for Whites and 500 for Blacks. The addition behind the Eleanor Roosevelt School was one of these, but the majority were new construction with brick veneer, horizontal metal windows, and low flat roofs. Equalization schools were ultimately ruled unconstitutional. As integration was implemented, most of the new Black schools closed because the White community was unwilling to send their children to what had once been schools for African Americans.