

The Campaign to Create the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park



Why a National Park honoring Julius Rosenwald?

What is a Rosenwald school?

The Campaign seeks to promote the establishment of a multi-site National Park celebrating the life and legacy of Julius Rosenwald, the son of Jewish immigrants who, after achieving great wealth leading Sears, Roebuck and Company, became a visionary philanthropist.

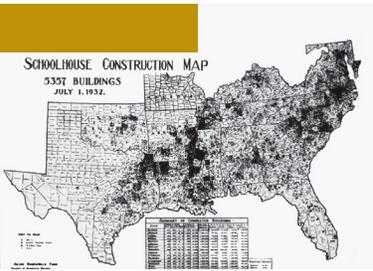
Julius Rosenwald partnered with African American communities across the South to build school houses for children who otherwise would have had extremely limited access to the public education to which they were entitled. As envisioned by the Campaign, the park will include a visitor center in Chicago to focus on Rosenwald's overall contributions and a number of restored schoolhouses in several states to be selected by the National Park Service.

Two things came together to create the impetus for the proposed park - the ongoing work of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which in 2002 named the Rosenwald Schools of the American South to its annual list of most endangered

historic places in America, and the 2015 documentary film, "Rosenwald," directed by filmmaker Aviva Kempner. Inspired by the film, representatives of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and the Trust began meeting, exploring the possibility of a National Park. Other highly dedicated volunteers soon joined the Campaign.

Today Julius Rosenwald is barely remembered, in part because, unlike others who created philanthropic funds, he did not believe in perpetual endowments. Each generation, he felt, should create wealth and direct that wealth in ways appropriate to the time. In keeping with Rosenwald's wishes, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which he created in 1917, put itself out of business in 1948.

And yet, across 15 states of the American South, there are places where the name Rosenwald IS remembered. Steeped in the traditional Jewish teaching of tzedakah - the importance of treating every human being with both righteousness and justice - Rosenwald



identified African Americans as particularly in need of and deserving aid.

After reading “Up From Slavery,” meeting its author, Booker T. Washington, and joining the Board of the Tuskegee Institute in 1912, Rosenwald enthusiastically embraced the idea of partnering with African American communities in the South, many of them extremely rural, that were already raising money to build the schoolhouses that state school systems were not reliably providing.

Their enthusiasm and enterprise helped encourage state school systems to begin to more adequately meet their responsibilities to provide education.

These buildings - many of them one or two-room schoolhouses on country roads surrounded by fields and woods - were a source of pride and affection in their communities. The schools educated one-third of the African American children of the South in the years before the legal end to segregation. Following the Brown v. Board of Education ruling many fell into disrepair or passed into private hands.

In more recent times communities from the suburbs of Washington, DC, to East Texas have come together to restore and preserve these simple structures, familiarly referred to as “Rosenwald Schools.”

With the goal of creating a Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historic Park consisting of a site in Chicago and schools in several

states, the Campaign has received input from a variety of historians, educators, philanthropists and preservation experts.

State Historical Preservation Officers from 14 states recommended to the Campaign that 55 Rosenwald Schools and one teacher home be considered for inclusion in the park. To date Campaign representatives have visited 35 School facilities and gathered important data on them for a report that it will prepare on the Schools in early 2020.

The Campaign also has had a historic context study prepared to examine the legacy of Julius Rosenwald and of the schools, and the feasibility of incorporating them into a Park.

The imaginative and far-reaching philanthropy of Julius Rosenwald is an essential part of the American story in the

twentieth century as the nation, wrestling with the legacy of slavery and continuing inequality, reached for ways of achieving a more perfect union.

Rosenwald’s funding of schools and later awards of fellowships to highly qualified and promising African American artists, scholars, writers and scientists, many of whom played important roles in the Civil Rights movement, deserve to be interpreted and celebrated in a National Park. ■

“I can testify that it is nearly always easier to make a \$1,000,000 honestly than to dispose of it wisely.”

JULIUS ROSENWALD

For more Campaign information, contact info@rosenwaldpark.org and visit the website rosenwaldpark.org

To make a tax-deductible donation Send checks to:

**Rosenwald Park Campaign
19 Maplewood Park Court
Bethesda, MD 20814**

Other donation options are found on the Website.