

# My Proud Legacy

## From Betsy Scott Kleeblatt

I believe you all agree that education is a key to personal dignity and has always been a launching pad for opportunity. So, I'm proud to share the most recent recognition of my great grandfather, Julius Rosenwald's legacy, and the story of the Rosenwald schools. Together with Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute, my great grandfather built state-of-the-art schools for African American children across the South. The effort has often been called the most important initiative to advance Black education in the early 20th century for an underserved population. Julius Rosenwald's philanthropy and vision were transformative and I'm thrilled that so many communities are now collaborating with the Foundation to ensure the preservation of the remaining schools.

Attending a Rosenwald School put a student at the vanguard of education for southern African American children. [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. The Rosenwald Program improved education for African Americans in the South, including such American heroes as John Lewis and Maya Angelou.

Two important recent events provided impetus for a campaign to create the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park—first, the addition in 2002 of the Rosenwald Schools to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of most endangered historic places in America, and the release in 2015 of the documentary film "Rosenwald," by filmmaker Aviva Kempner.

Inspired by the film and several books, representatives of the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Trust began meeting in 2016 to explore a way to honor the legacy of Julius Rosenwald and protect the Rosenwald schools. Dedicated volunteers soon joined to form the Rosenwald Park Campaign, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

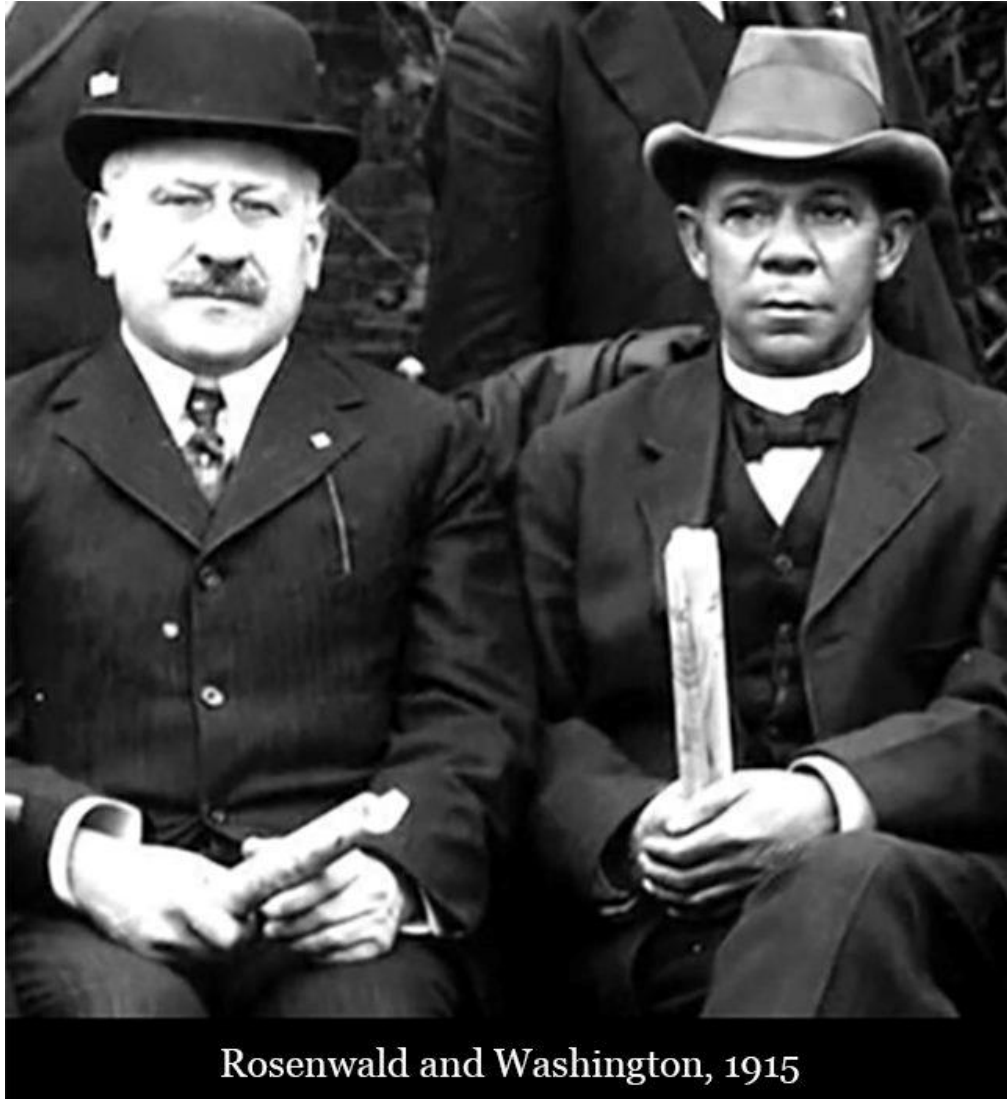
The campaign envisions a National Historical Park, with a visitor center in Chicago that would interpret Rosenwald's overall legacy. The National Historical Park would also include a number of Rosenwald School sites throughout the south, all to be selected by the National Park Service (NPS).

An October 2018 historic context study report concluded that Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools are of national historic significance and that a National Historical Park would be an important enhancement to the National Park System. An August 2020 report evaluated five sites in Chicago associated with Julius Rosenwald that may be candidates for the planned visitor center for the park. In 2021 the Campaign issued a report on 56 recommended Rosenwald School facilities.

In June 2019 Senator Richard Durbin and Congressman Danny Davis, both of Illinois, jointly introduced The Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Study Act, directing the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a special resource study (SRS) of the sites associated with the life and legacy of Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools. It quickly developed bipartisan support.

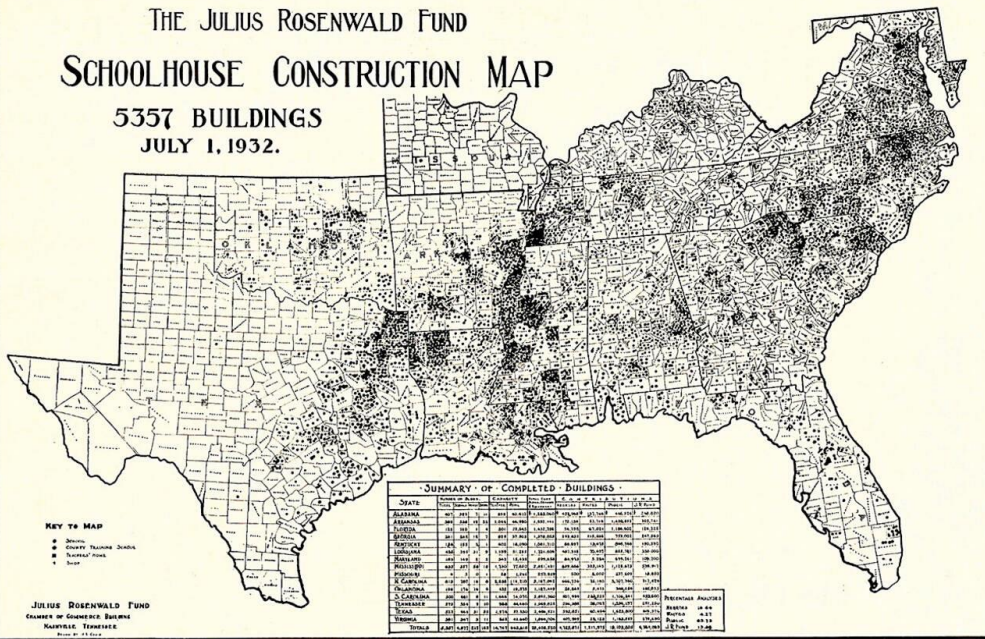
In December 2020 the final bill passed overwhelmingly in both Houses and was signed into law (Public Law 116–336 ) on January 13, 2021.

The National Park Service believes it will complete all studies this spring in a critical step towards the legislation that will ultimately establish a National Historical Park. For anyone who wishes to learn more, the book, *YOU NEED A SCHOOLHOUSE*, by Stephanie Deutsch is an excellent read. Of course, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your interest.



Rosenwald and Washington, 1915

THE JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
**SCHOOLHOUSE CONSTRUCTION MAP**  
 5357 BUILDINGS  
 JULY 1, 1932.



**SUMMARY OF COMPLETED BUILDINGS**

STATE	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Alabama	107	2.0	107	2.0	107	2.0	107	2.0	107	2.0
Arkansas	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
California	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Florida	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Georgia	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Illinois	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Indiana	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Iowa	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Kentucky	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Louisiana	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Michigan	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Mississippi	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Missouri	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Nebraska	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Nevada	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
New York	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
North Carolina	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Ohio	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Oklahoma	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Texas	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Virginia	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
West Virginia	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Wisconsin	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
Wyoming	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9	100	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>5357</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5357</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5357</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5357</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5357</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-rosenwald-schools-progressive-era-philanthropy-in-the-segregated-south-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>