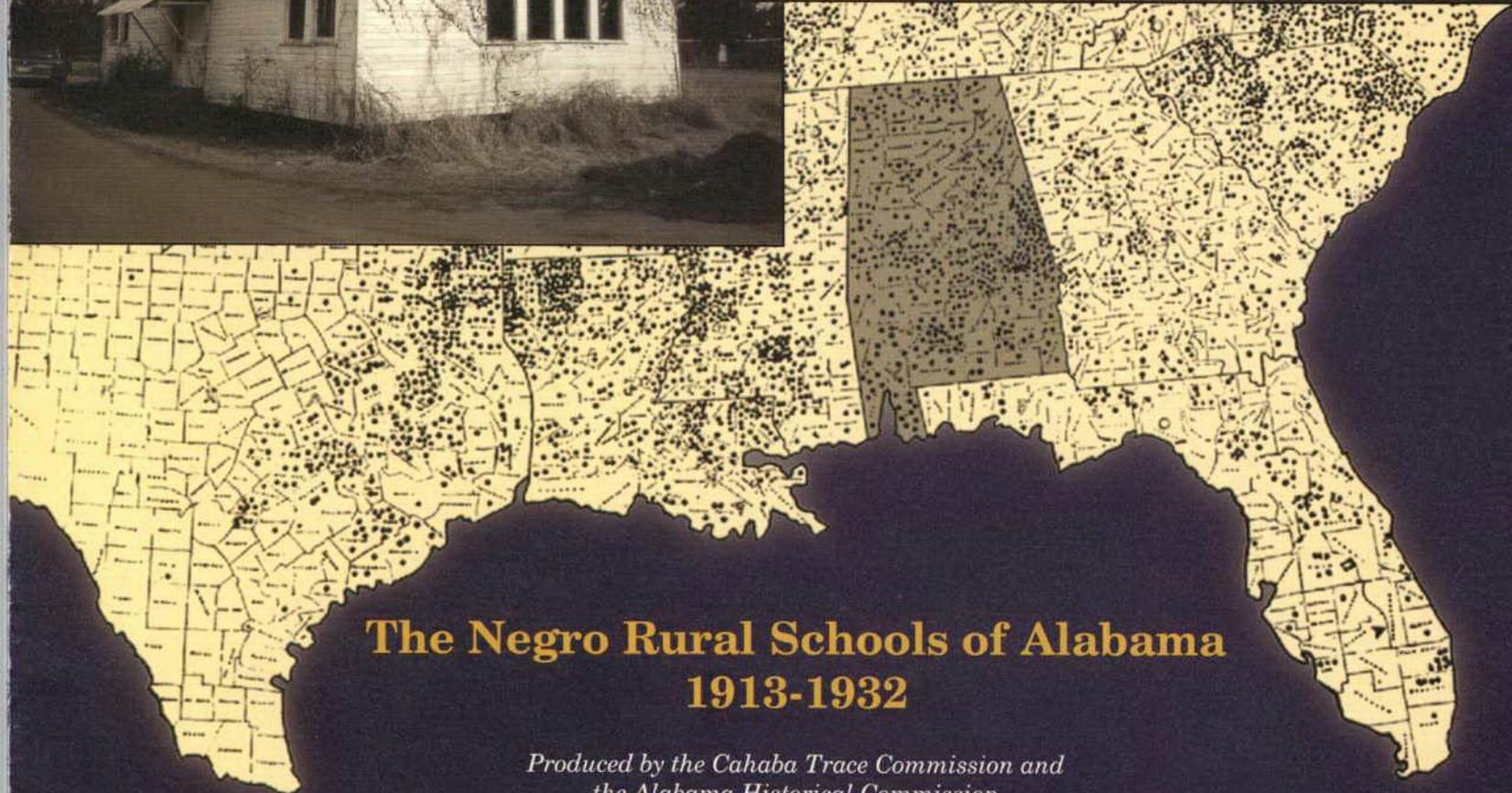


# Rallying!

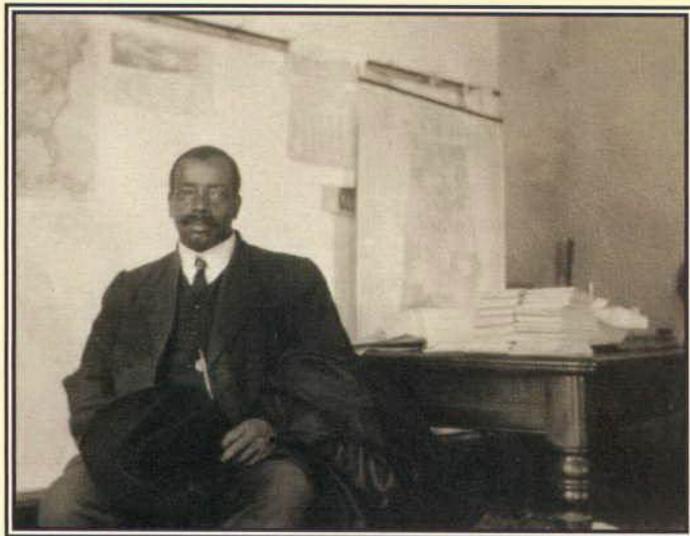
— for —  
**Rosenwald School  
Buildings**



**The Negro Rural Schools of Alabama  
1913-1932**

*Produced by the Cahaba Trace Commission and  
the Alabama Historical Commission*

# Rosenwald Schools in



*BLACK SOUTHERNERS' ENDURING BELIEF IN UNIVERSAL SCHOOLING MADE POSSIBLE AND SUSTAINED THE ROSENWALD SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAM.*

The Rosenwald schools have an interesting history. On the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in 1912, Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, presented Booker T. Washington a check for \$25,000 to aid black colleges and preparatory academies based on the Tuskegee Institute model. Like a number of other northern philanthropists, Rosenwald was attracted to Booker T. Washington and his philosophy of black self-help, as well as the Tuskegee Institute's industrial education program. Finding \$2,100 left over in 1913, Washington persuaded Rosenwald to use the unused funds as grants to African American communities that wanted to build rural elementary schools. Rosenwald agreed but stipulated that each community had to match his gift with monies Rosenwald hoped would be raised through a cooperative effort on the part of local blacks and whites and the state school board.

Rosenwald's next step was a \$30,000 gift in 1914 for construction of 100 rural schools in Alabama, administered by Tuskegee. He followed this with gifts for up to 200 additional schools in 1916. Some of these funds were made available for rural school construction in other states beginning in 1915. In the same year, Rosenwald started paying the salary of a Rosenwald building agent who organized school building projects in Alabama. In 1917, Rosenwald consolidated his financial contributions

in a philanthropic foundation, the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

The Rosenwald Fund continued to operate its school building program out of Tuskegee Institute until 1920, when Rosenwald opened the Southern Office in Nashville, Tennessee. To administer the fund, Rosenwald hired Samuel Smith, a person keenly interested in rural school design and had administered the rural Negro school program in Tennessee. Smith drew up a series of school plans, ranging in size from "one-teacher" to "seven-teacher" schools. As a result of Smith's careful work, Rosenwald schools were the most up-to-date rural educational facilities in America. Smith's plans for elementary schools were quickly adopted across the nation by blacks as well as whites. School plans and specifications dictated the building's orientation on the site, construction materials, floor plans, exterior and interior finishes, color schemes, and appropriate landscaping materials. Today, Smith's plans are recognized as a benchmark of modern design for educational facilities.

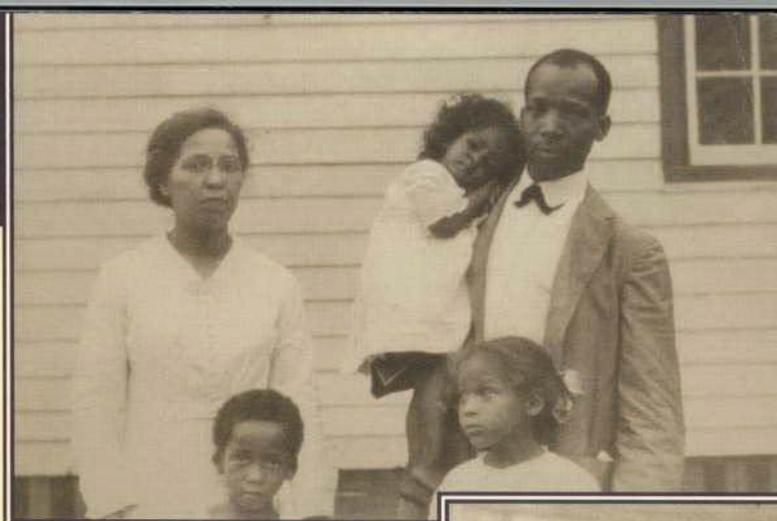
The school building requirements also reflected the Rosenwald Fund's philosophy of industrial education for rural black southerners. All schools had to stand on at least two acres of land to allow for school gardens as well as playgrounds. Every school plan included an industrial room in addition to the regular classrooms, and the fund offered plans for separate shop buildings and teachers' homes where home economics lessons could be practiced. The Rural School Building Program did reinforce rural African Americans' involvement in education through fund-raising drives, construction work, and beautification projects. Reports from Rosenwald agents and state Negro school agents recount many stories of sacrifice and determination by rural black southerners that wanted new schools for their children.

By the time the organization ended its building program in 1932, the Rosenwald Fund had provided matching grants for over 5,300 school buildings, teachers' homes, and vocational shop buildings in 15 Southern states, including 389 sites in Alabama. Many Rosenwald schools continued in operation until the 1954 Supreme Court ruling against racial segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was implemented during the 1960s.

# n Alabama

Many of the Rosenwald schools were destroyed while others were simply abandoned. Surviving Rosenwald schools, however, are still indispensable parts of their communities; they are often used as community centers or to house social service agencies. Even if abandoned, they offer testimony to the vision of countless rural black southerners and their white supporters. Julius Rosenwald remarked to Samuel Smith, "We built better than we knew." Probably no one knows this more than those who built, taught, and learned in these buildings and who find uses for them today.

Portions of text taken from  
**"We Built Better Than We Knew: The Julius Rosenwald Fund Rural School Building Program"**  
 By Mary Hoffschwelle, Ph. D.  
 Middle Tennessee State University



↑ **THE SUPERVISING TEACHER, OFTEN A TUSKEGEE GRADUATE, AND HIS WIFE NOT ONLY TAUGHT THE LOCAL CHILDREN BUT ALSO WORKED IN THE COMMUNITY, ORGANIZING FARMER COOPERATIVES AND MOTHERS CLUBS.**

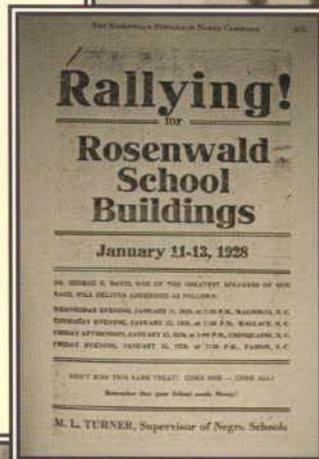
➔ **IN ADDITION TO READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC, BOYS WERE TAUGHT HOW TO BE GOOD FARMERS AND MECHANICS, WHILE YOUNG GIRLS WERE TAUGHT THE BASICS OF "DOMESTIC SCIENCE," LATER KNOWN AS HOME ECONOMICS.**

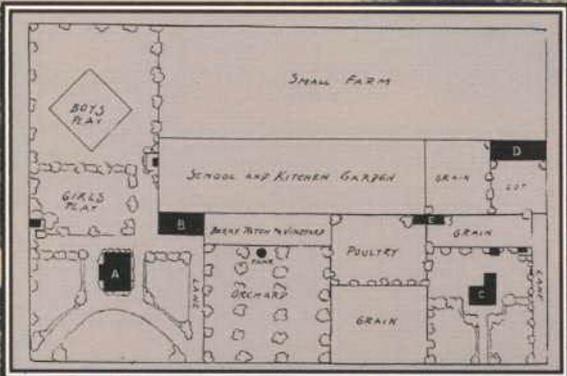
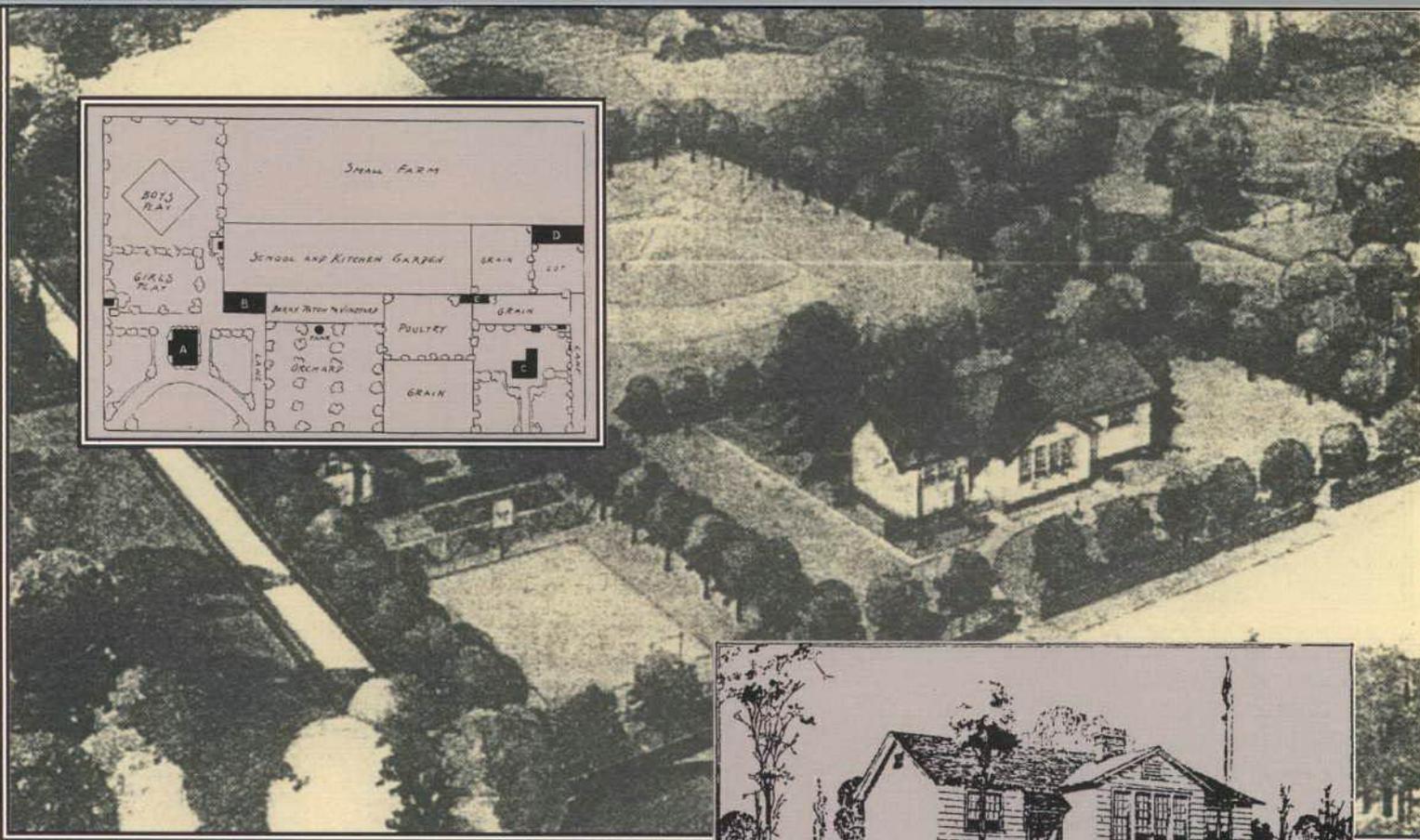


↑ **SCHOOL SPECIFICATIONS DICTATED NOT ONLY THE FLOORPLAN BUT ALSO INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR COLOR SCHEMES, BLACKBOARD PLACEMENT, LIGHTING DEVICES, AND DESK ARRANGEMENT.**

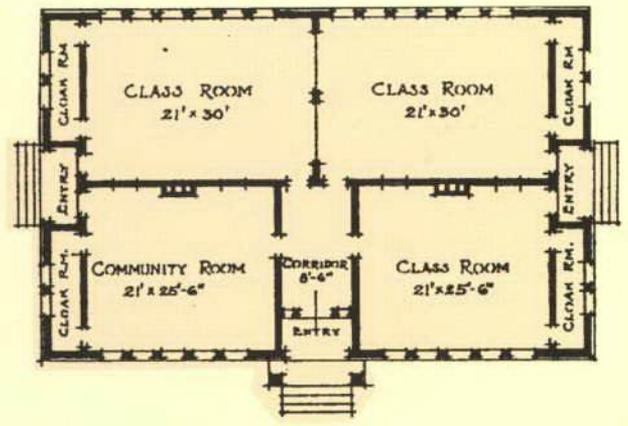
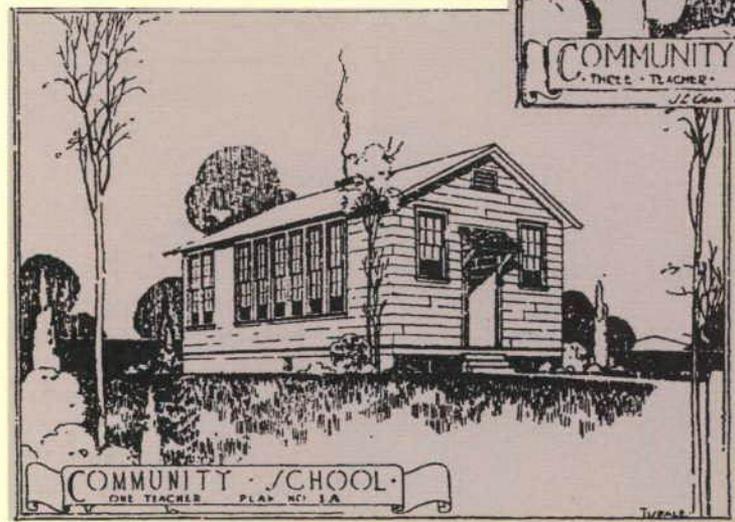
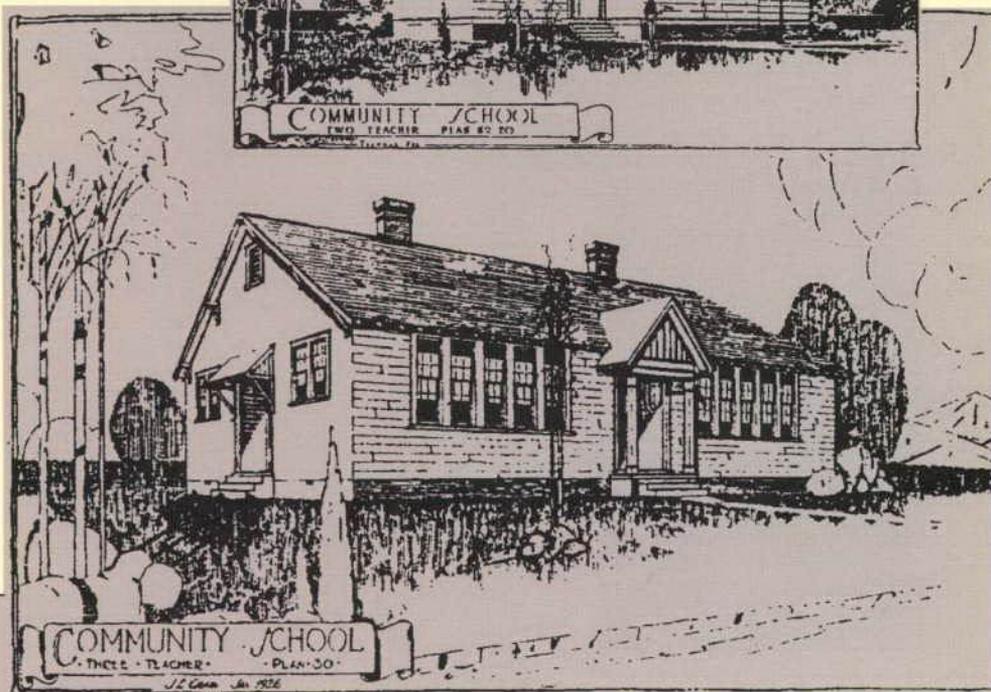
➔ **BY 1913, THE ANNA T. JEANES FUND HAD PLACED EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISORS IN 134 COUNTIES IN SOUTHERN STATES; JEANES TEACHERS WERE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE ROSENWALD SCHOOL BUILDING MOVEMENT.**

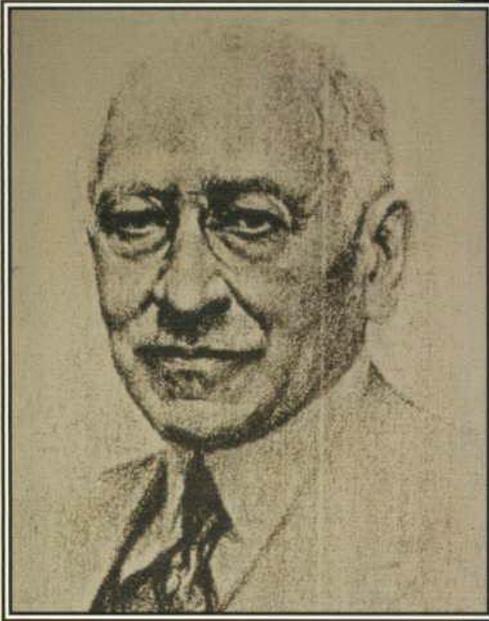
➔ **RALLYING FOR ROSENWALD SCHOOLS BROCHURE. SCHOOLS WERE ENCOURAGED TO HOLD "ROSENWALD DAYS" WHERE PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND LOCAL CITIZENS WOULD MAKE NECESSARY BUILDING REPAIRS AND RAISE MONEY FOR CONTINUED MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP.**





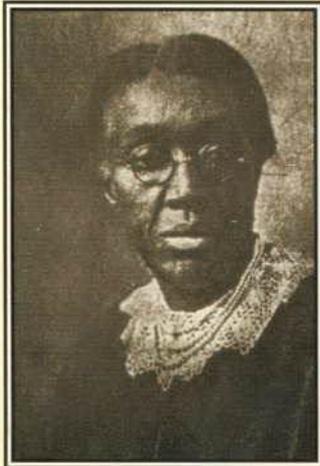
FIRST DEVELOPED BY SAMUEL L. SMITH FOR THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, COMMUNITY SCHOOL PLANS INCLUDED DESIGNS FOR ONE-STORY SCHOOL BUILDINGS HOUSING ONE TO TWELVE CLASS-ROOMS. SCHOOL SPECIFICATIONS DICTATED THE BUILDING'S ORIENTATION ON THE SITE, CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS, FLOOR PLAN, EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR FINISHES, AND FURNITURE. PLANS FOR TEACHERS' HOMES, SHOP BUILDINGS, AND SANITARY OUTHOUSES WERE PROVIDED AS WELL.





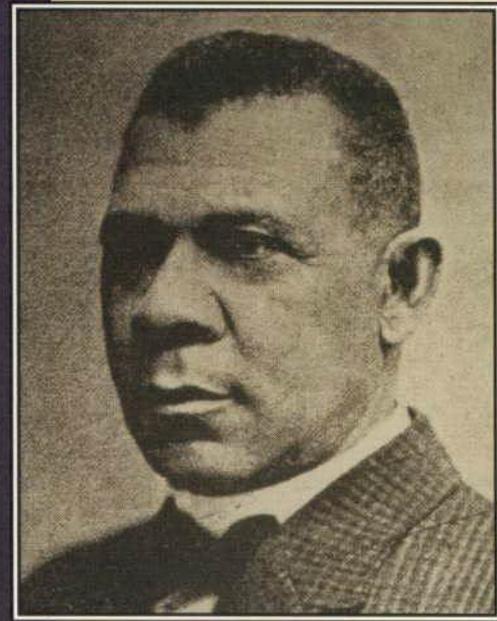
ALTHOUGH DURING HIS LIFETIME, JULIUS ROSENWALD, PRESIDENT OF SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY, DISTRIBUTED \$63,000,000 TO VARIOUS CAUSES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDIVIDUALS, HE IS BEST REMEMBERED FOR THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAM.

MRS. FANNIE WHEELIS LED THE MOVEMENT FOR THE FIRST ROSENWALD SCHOOL BUILDING AT NOTASULGA, MACON COUNTY, ALABAMA.

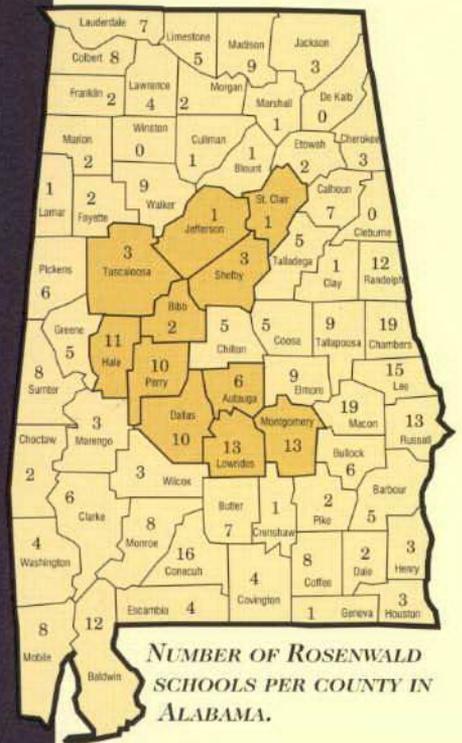


# The Rosenwald School

Thousands of white-frame school buildings, known as the Rosenwald schools, once dotted the rural landscape of the Deep South. Built for African Americans and constructed over a twenty-year period (1912-1932), these innovative structures were the result of one of the most ambitious school building programs ever witnessed in the United States. Between 1913 and 1932, the Julius Rosenwald Rural School Building Fund contributed to the creation of over 5,300 school buildings in 883 counties in 15 Southern states. Today, only a fraction of the Rosenwald school buildings remain. Of these, most are abandoned, although a few are used as houses, barns, and community centers. Recognizing the importance and historic significance of the Rosenwald school movement, the Cahaba Trace Commission, with funding assistance from the Alabama Historical Commission, is attempting to identify the remaining Rosenwald schools in Alabama and assist agencies in nominating these structures to the National Register of Historic Places.

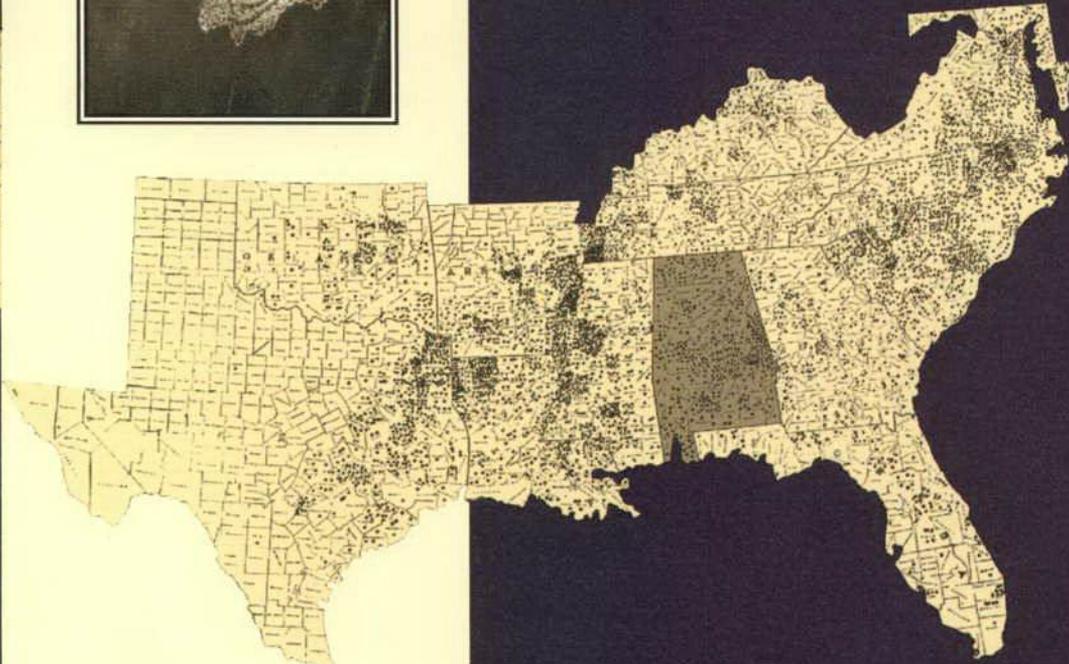


IN THE EARLY 1900S, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, THE WIZARD OF TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION FOR RURAL AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE SOUTH.



HIGHLIGHTED COUNTIES ARE "CAHABA TRACE COUNTIES"

By 1932, the Julius Rosenwald Rural School Building Fund had produced 4,977 new schools, 217 teachers' homes, and 163 shop buildings in 883 counties of 15 Southern states.





# Cahaba Trace Commission



Created by the Alabama legislature in 1985, the Cahaba Trace Commission is charged with promoting the natural, cultural, and historical resources of the Cahaba River Valley region. Since 1990, in an attempt to locate and record culturally significant sites located within its boundaries, the Cahaba Trace Commission has been conducting an intensive survey of architectural and historical resources. While conducting this survey, architectural historians and field surveyors discovered some of Alabama's last remaining Rosenwald schools. Recognizing the historical and architectural significance of these

schools and their roles in regard to African American education, the Cahaba Trace Commission, in conjunction with the Alabama Historical Commission, is attempting to locate and nominate existing Alabama Rosenwald schools to the National Register of Historic Places. If you or your organization would like assistance in listing a Rosenwald school to the National Register of Historic Places, please contact the Cahaba Trace Commission or the National Register Coordinator, Alabama Historical Commission.

## *Traveling Exhibit and Videotape*

A small traveling exhibit prepared by the Cahaba Trace Commission and the Alabama Historical Commission uses the text and photographs of this brochure. The traveling exhibit consisting of five panels measuring 22" x 39" is available on loan for the cost of shipping to schools, libraries, and other nonprofit organizations. An accompanying videotape, "How Firm a Foundation," is also available for \$21.00. Produced by Alabama's Center for Public Television, this 30 minute documentary chronicles the Julius Rosenwald School Building Fund and its work in Alabama. Applications to borrow the exhibit and order the videotape may be obtained by contacting the Cahaba Trace Commission at (205) 665-7982.

**Cahaba Trace Commission**  
13728 Montevallo Road  
Brierfield, Alabama 35035  
(205) 665-7982

**Alabama Historical Commission**  
National Register Coordinator or  
Black Heritage Council Coordinator  
468 South Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900  
(334) 242-3184

This publication is made possible by a grant from the Alabama Historical Commission.