

Creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park



"All the other pleasures of life seem to wear out, but the pleasure of helping others in distress never does."

JULIUS ROSENWALD



President's Message

The Campaign has received considerable good news since our last newsletter, most significantly from the National Park Service that it is starting the special resource study mandated by Congress. See the article below for details.



Dorothy Canter, President Rosenwald Campaign

May is Jewish American Heritage Month. On April 27 the Washington Jewish Week published my Op-Ed on honoring Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools during the month of May and also on commemorating their legacies by creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. It may be viewed at <https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/preserving-julius-rosenwalds-profound-story/>. Other Board members have also submitted articles for proposed publication in May to media outlets in different areas of the nation, written from different perspectives but emphasizing Julius Rosenwald's unwavering commitment to social justice. Newsletter editor Stephanie Deutsch's thoughtful appreciation of the influence of Rosenwald's Jewish identity on his philanthropy appears below.

As of April 30, 136 nonprofit organizations have expressed official support for creating the National Historical Park, up from 109 at the start of the year. At this rate we will exceed our goal of 160 organizations by the end of 2022. Numerous Campaign volunteers have brought in new organizations. We appreciate their sustained support and welcome additional recommendations of organizations at info@rosenwaldpark.org.

The Campaign is looking to offer in-person and virtual events in August 2022 to celebrate the 160th anniversary of Julius Rosenwald's birth. I would welcome suggested venues, programs and co-sponsors for events in which you, your family and friends could participate.

Last week I visited the St. George Rosenwald School in South Carolina, and met with representatives of organizations that are restoring this six-teacher school. I also visited the site in Cave Spring, GA, that once included four schools for African Americans, one of which was a Rosenwald School. The only remaining school has been restored as a museum/community center. Visiting these schools and experiencing firsthand the devotion of the support groups is invariably an uplifting experience that reinforces my commitment to creating the National Park.

The Rosenwald Park Campaign is an all-volunteer, small non-profit organization that is supported solely by private donations. We are grateful to all who are helping to advance our mission of creating the National Park.

Dorothy Canter

May 3, 2022

IMPORTANT GOOD NEWS!!

Significant progress has been made on the journey to creating a Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park.

On April 13 National Park Service (NPS) staff informed the Campaign that the agreement needed to conduct the special resource study of the sites associated with Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools had been signed and that it would begin the study shortly. The study was mandated by the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Act of 2020, which became law on January 13, 2021. Since March of 2021 the Campaign has interacted regularly with NPS staff, submitting the three reports it has prepared and all background material.

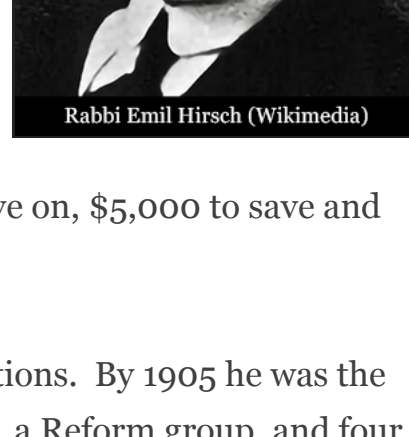
This study is an important step in the path to the legislation that will ultimately create the National Historical Park. We are prepared to assist NPS staff in any appropriate way to help expedite the study.

Julius Rosenwald and Jewish American Heritage Month

Judaism was central to who Julius Rosenwald was. He was keenly aware of what his parents had left behind when they fled Europe – antisemitism and lack of opportunity – and appreciative of what their new home in America offered – safety and the chance to benefit from their labors. As Julius reaped more rewards from his work than he could ever have imagined, it was his Jewish identity that guided his response to this success.

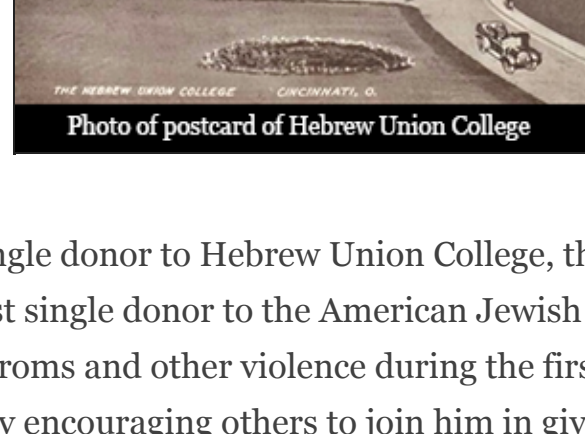
In Springfield, Illinois, where he was born in 1862 and grew up, Julius was part of a small Jewish community. He and a handful of Jewish children received religious instruction in a room above a grocery store. At 13 he was a Bar Mitzvah. The following year he was confirmed in a ceremony that was part of the dedication of a new temple building, built with an impressive \$7,500 that his father had helped raise. The sustaining power of community and the ancient teaching of tzedakah – giving that is an imperative motivated by an understanding of justice – were lessons he absorbed at an early age and never forgot.

As a young man in Chicago, Julius joined the Sinai Congregation led by a charismatic Rabbi, Emil Hirsch, widely known for his rousing sermons preaching that Jews must be engaged in their communities and work towards eliminating social injustices. His message, he said, was "for this world...If present conditions are not as they should be, a kingdom of God, these conditions are an accusation against us. They ought to be answered by us." One of Hirsch's themes was the special obligations of those who had wealth towards those who were in need, an obligation not simply to assuage want in a temporary way but to build up the needy so they could be self sustaining. Julius Rosenwald, who regularly attended services, was paying attention. Years before Sears made him a rich man he was making regular contributions to Sinai. He is said to have confided to a friend that the goal of his life was to have an income of "\$15,000 a year -- \$5,000 to live on, \$5,000 to save and \$5,000 to give away."



Rabbi Emil Hirsch (Wikimedia)

Rosenwald's earliest contributions were to specifically Jewish organizations. By 1905 he was the largest single contributor to the Associated Jewish Charities of Chicago, a Reform group, and four years after that he became president of the organization. He was instrumental, too, in the creation of the Federated Orthodox Jewish Charities of Chicago and donated not just money but his time and influence, serving as president and pushing for greater collaboration between the two organizations, which merged in 1923 to form the Jewish Charities of Chicago, the forerunner of the Jewish United Fund.



Rosenwald was the largest single donor to Hebrew Union College, the Reform seminary in Cincinnati. He was the largest single donor to the American Jewish Committee's 1917 campaign to help European victims of pogroms and other violence during the first World War, and he traveled widely throughout the country encouraging others to join him in giving. For his extraordinary generosity and leadership he was given a silver loving cup by the Committee.

But he was also a caring donor to lesser entities. In her book, *Julius Rosenwald, Repairing the World*, Hasia Diner recounts that a very small Jewish congregation located on the Iron Range in Minnesota approached Rosenwald for a donation. He made one and promised the congregation leadership that if they could show him that the community had pulled together and paid off outstanding debts, he would make a larger one.

Nine years later a member of the congregation returned with proof of the debt's cancellation and Rosenwald made good on his promise of another, larger contribution.

Despite these – and many other – donations to Jewish activities and causes, it was the well-being of America's Black population that ultimately became the primary focus of Julius Rosenwald's exceptional philanthropy. As the first decade of the twentieth century neared closure with a 1908 race riot in Rosenwald's hometown, as he read the memoir *Up From Slavery*, and then actually met its author, Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald became more and more convinced that extending equal opportunity to African Americans was both a practical and an ethical obligation. Speaking in 1913 at the dedication of the Wabash Avenue Black YMCA which he had helped finance, Rosenwald said, "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...."

In the same speech, drawing inspiration from Abraham Lincoln, he said this:

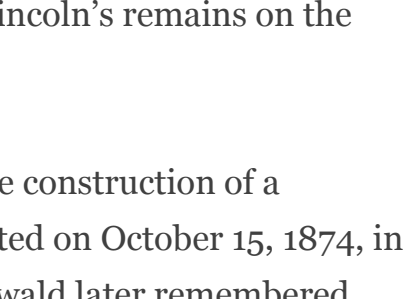
We should dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work, to the great task before us of removing race hatred, of which, unfortunately, so much exists and of bringing about a universal acceptance that it is the individual and not the race that counts.

By Stephanie Deutsch

The Hammerslough-Lincoln-Rosenwald Connection

Julius Hammerslough, a German Jewish immigrant, is believed to have been the first Jew to settle in Springfield, Illinois, opening a branch of his family's clothing business there in 1855. He was part of a successful merchant family in Baltimore where his sister, Augusta, married a more recent immigrant named Samuel Rosenwald in 1857. The opportunity to share in their business success was the wedding gift he and his brothers gave their sister and new brother-in-law. Starting in 1861 Samuel Rosenwald became manager of the Springfield business, which he purchased in 1868. It was in Springfield that Samuel and Augusta's second child – Julius, most likely named for his uncle – was born in 1862.

Local lawyer Abraham Lincoln often shopped at the store and became friendly with Julius Hammerslough, who attended Lincoln's inauguration in 1861 and visited the White House often. In 1865, he was part of a delegation of people from Springfield that accompanied Lincoln's remains on the mournful train trip home from Washington to Springfield for burial.



Julius Hammerslough (Gemi)

Shortly thereafter Hammerslough headed an appeal among Jews for the construction of a National Lincoln Monument in Springfield. The monument was dedicated on October 15, 1874, in a lavish ceremony attended by President Ulysses S Grant. Julius Rosenwald later remembered that as a twelve-year-old boy he had "peddled" pamphlets and lithographs that day to people in the crowd.

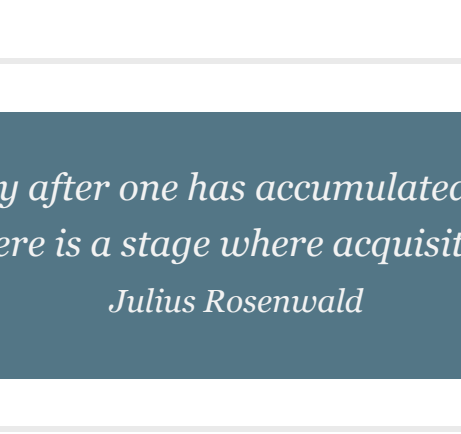
Around 1865 Julius Hammerslough left Springfield for New York and the wider opportunity there to expand his business from retail into manufacturing. In 1879 Julius Rosenwald left high school early, without graduating, and moved to New York to learn more about the clothing trade from his wealthy and successful Hammerslough relatives. The rest is history.

Rosenwald had grown up across the street from Lincoln's home and, though he never met the martyred president, he greatly admired him. Lincoln and Rosenwald came from very different backgrounds, and their career paths were totally unrelated. But both men were characterized by honesty, modesty and lives of commitment to democratic ideals.

Both the Lincoln and Rosenwald residences are now part of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, operated by the National Park Service.

Stanton Receives William Penn Mott, Jr., Park Leadership Award

On April 6 Robert G. Stanton, 15th Director of the National Park Service and Vice President of the Rosenwald Park Campaign, received the William Penn Mott, Jr. Park Leadership Award at the National Parks Conservation Association Salute to the Parks gala. The award recognizes the accomplishments of a Member of Congress or other public official who stands as a strong



Courtesy of Dorothy Canter

advocate of the National Park System. Stanton received the award for his distinguished career and work as a transformational park advocate whose contributions have forever changed the National Park Service for the better. During the program Stanton emphasized the need for the National Park System to preserve and interpret all of the nation's rich cultural and natural heritage and assure that it is accessible to all.

It is a crime to pile up money after one has accumulated all that he needs for himself and his family. There is a stage where acquisition becomes a vice.

Julius Rosenwald

Stephanie Deutsch, editor

DONATE

We need your support to continue.

For questions and suggestions, please write to info@rosenwaldpark.org.