

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

With 2021 rapidly drawing to a close, the Campaign looked back on what we accomplished this year and developed goals for next year.

The Campaign has maintained regular contact with the National Park Service (NPS) since The Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Act became law in January. We were pleased to learn on November 8 that the NPS is working on a project agreement to commence the special research study mandated by the law, with a projected start date in early 2022.



Dorothy Canter, President Rosenwald Campaign

The issuance in August of the Campaign's report on the 56 Rosenwald School facilities recommended for possible inclusion in the planned Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park was a major accomplishment. The report and all background data were submitted to the NPS, as was a summary the Campaign prepared of seven additional Rosenwald Schools that have requested to be considered by the NPS as well.

This year 55 more organizations representing a broad range of constituencies have expressed support for creating the National Park, bringing the total to 96. The Campaign greatly appreciates the efforts of the many volunteers who brought in more supporters.

Campaign Board members gave 15 presentations to interested groups in 2021. And there are now nearly 850 subscribers for our newsletters and updates.

Looking ahead to 2022, the Campaign plans to expand significantly the number of people nationwide who know the inspiring story of Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools and support establishing the Park. To do this we will increase the number of supporting organizations to 150, organize visits to Rosenwald Schools, give more presentations and hold friend raising events, expand the number of subscribers and increase our management capabilities. We are also considering organizing traveling exhibitions and helping to fund a book on the Rosenwald Fund fellowship program.

Learning about Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools has greatly enriched my life. I am very grateful to the members of the Campaign Board who are committed to making the park a reality. And the Board and I are so appreciative of all our donors and subscribers for their continuing support and recommendations.

Together we will establish a new National Park!

All best wishes for a joyous holiday season and for a happy, healthy and safe 2022.

Profile of Howard Morse, Campaign Board Member and Treasurer

Howard Morse is a natural fit with the Campaign to create a National Historical Park honoring Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools. Like Julius Rosenwald, he is descended from German Jews who came to this country as immigrants and found new lives as merchants in the Midwest. He values the Jewish commitment to making a better world via philanthropy and personal endeavor.

He has long been an enthusiast of National Parks -- from the grandeur of Yellowstone, Grand Teton and Glacier visited as a child to the C&O Canal near his home where he often walks. And he has been pleased to visit more recently created parks honoring not just America's natural beauty but its historical and cultural heritage as well. Howard serves on the Mid-Atlantic Council of the National Parks Conservation Association.

The son of a federal government lawyer, Howard grew up in the DC area. After college at Dartmouth, he attended Harvard Law School. He served for ten years at the Federal Trade Commission where he was Assistant Director of the Bureau of Competition, and is now a partner at the Cooley law firm specializing in antitrust and competition, including mergers and acquisitions, particularly in high-tech industries. His legal expertise and practical know-how make him a valuable member of the Campaign Board.

Howard is also the immediate past president of the Capital Jewish Museum where he led a \$34.5 million capital campaign for the museum, which is expected to open next winter. The new museum is being constructed around the oldest synagogue building in Washington, built in 1876, which was moved a few blocks in 1969 to save it from demolition and moved again in 2019 to the corner of Third and F Streets. The museum will tell the story of Jews in Washington, DC including stories of Jews and Blacks working together in the face of challenges -- restrictive covenants in housing, prejudice and hatred.

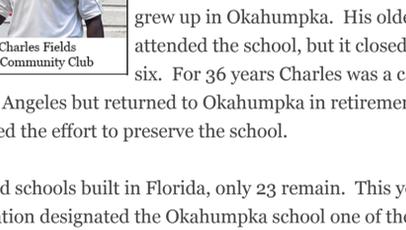
Like the story of Jews in the District of Columbia, the relationship between Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald and what they accomplished together is a chapter of our national history that Howard strongly believes we need to remember and celebrate. Washington and Rosenwald were from different backgrounds but were drawn together by their practical approach to the pressing issues of their day. Each was deeply committed to the extraordinary power of education, and in particular of public schools, to improve lives and bring communities together. This legacy is still being celebrated in the many communities working to restore their Rosenwald schools and preserve their story.

A quote of Rosenwald's that particularly resonates with Howard is "All the other pleasures of life seem to wear out, but the pleasure of helping others in distress never does." Howard is inspired by Rosenwald's dedication to the Jewish value of "tikkun olam," of repairing the world.

Okahumpka Rosenwald School: Nearly Abandoned But Now Reclaimed

By Stephanie Deutsch

In 1930 a two-teacher Rosenwald school opened its doors in the central Florida farming town of Okahumpka. It stood on land donated, in part, by neighbors Virgil and Josephine Hawkins. Thirty years later, in 1960, the school closed as integration became the law of the land. At that time, the Hawkins' son, Virgil Jr., was ending a ten-year court battle that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, begun when he was denied admission -- on the basis of his race -- to law school at the nearby University of Florida. His success in that multi-year lawsuit eventually opened the University's doors to Black law students.



Front of Okahumpka School
Courtesy of Chip D'Amico

The school building, now owned by the Okahumpka Community Club, served for many years as a site for Meals on Wheels and other activities but in recent time had been vandalized and was deteriorating. The Club was even considering tearing it down when two law enforcement officers of very different backgrounds injected renewed energy to the effort to preserve it. Chip d'Amico is a retired police sergeant from upstate New York whose hobby of metal detecting brought him to the school grounds and his role as the Club's fundraiser. Charles Fields grew up in Okahumpka. His older sister and brother attended the school, but it closed the year he turned six. For 36 years Charles was a case manager for the FBI stationed in Los Angeles but returned to Okahumpka in retirement and enthusiastically joined the effort to preserve the school.

Of the 105 Rosenwald schools built in Florida, only 23 remain. This year the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation designated the Okahumpka school one of the 11 most endangered sites in the state. The Community Club is hopeful that a grant from the state will help jump-start its restoration activities.

On Saturday, November 13 about 65 neighbors and friends gathered to dedicate a historic marker in front of the schoolhouse and to celebrate the renewed commitment to it. The marker was created with funding from the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation represented by its president Jerry Klinger. He told of his father being liberated from Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945 by American GIs and of his commitment to building a stronger country in part by commemorating the contributions of Jewish Americans like Julius Rosenwald.

Harriet Hawkins Livingston represented the Hawkins family, describing her uncle Virgil as "the South's most patient man." He eventually practiced law in nearby Leesburg and was revered as someone who rarely, if ever, turned down a client for inability to pay regular fees. Mr. Hawkins died in 1988.

And I was there representing the Campaign to create a Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park, to honor Virgil Hawkins and the way he took his sense of citizenship out into a hostile world with determination and dignity, and to share the moment with members of my family. My son Noah and grandsons Julius and William are descendants of Julius Rosenwald. But it was also a particular joy to be with my daughter-in-law, Megan Cogburn, and her parents. Dianne Lasher Cogburn grew up in Okahumpka; her parents and the live-stock feed company they ran are well remembered. Will Cogburn is from neighboring Leesburg.

In my remarks I said, "the fact that we are all here together, with our various connections to this place, is testimony to the commitment we share to the ongoing work of building a strong and inclusive country, one where everyone benefits from the promises of freedom and opportunity -- promises made real, then and now, in this building."

The light rain that had been falling when we all arrived at the school stopped in time for the program to move outside for the uncovering of the marker. The ceremony concluded with the crowd singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" -- an anthem written by Floridians James Weldon Johnson, a three-time Rosenwald Fund fellow, and his brother Rosamund. The sound was one of joyful, hopeful harmony.

The Rosenwald Park Campaign is working to preserve and share the inspiring story of Julius Rosenwald's visionary philanthropy and the commitment he and Booker T. Washington made to providing education to African American children in the face of relentless prejudice and injustice. The Okahumpka School is part of that legacy.

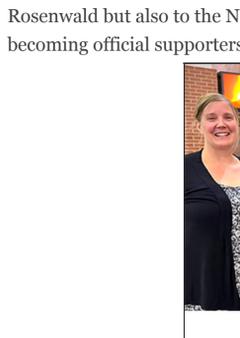
Stephanie Deutsch is the author of "You Need A Schoolhouse: Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald And the Building of 'Schools for the Segregated South'" and a committed member of Rosenwald Park Campaign Board.

Chattanooga IMAX Presentation: Uncovering Forgotten Connections

On October 4, as part of an annual lecture series sponsored by the National Park Partners Chickamauga Chattanooga Moccasin Bend (NPP), Dorothy Canter gave a presentation on the Rosenwald Park Campaign at the IMAX Theater in Chattanooga, TN. The series is endowed by Tennessee State Representative Greg Vital, a key supporter of National Parks and historic preservation, and a committed member of both the NPP and Campaign.

Chattanooga is where Adolph Ochs, the son of German Jewish immigrants, got his start as an owner of newspapers. At age 19, he bought a controlling interest in the Chattanooga Times; in 1896 at age 38 he purchased the struggling New York Times at a greatly reduced price and through astute management placed it in a strong and lasting financial position.

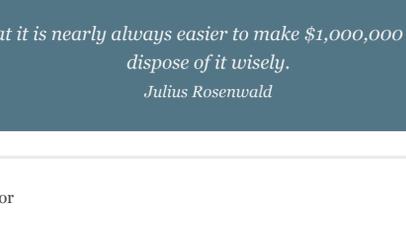
Hmmm...sounds like Ochs had quite a bit in common with Julius Rosenwald!



But why mention Ochs? When Greg Vital heard at the lecture that Rosenwald's death in January 1932 was front-page news in the New York Times, he surmised that Ochs and Rosenwald, both leaders in the Jewish community, must have known each other.

That started the NPP's Jennifer Crutchfield on a search to establish a connection between the two men. She soon found an article in the December 12, 1921, issue of The Washington Star that identified Rosenwald and Ochs as members of a national committee to raise funds to carry on the work of the Jewish Publication Society of America, an organization dedicated to promoting Jewish literacy and self-understanding and which published the most widely read English translation of the Hebrew Bible for the last 100 years.

The October 4 lecture led not only to recovering the connection between Ochs and Rosenwald but also to the NPP and the Jewish Federation of Greater Chattanooga becoming official supporters of creating the National Historical Park.



Tricia Nims, Greg Vital, Dorothy Canter, John Edwards, III

The Campaign welcomes groups in other cities to request presentations. They may lead to further interesting discoveries! More importantly, they will help gain support for creating the National Historical Park and ensure that it will happen more quickly.

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

Stephanie Deutsch, editor

DONATE

We need your support to continue.

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