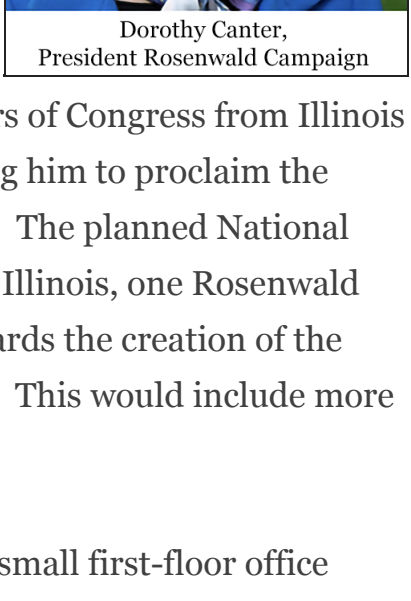


President's Message

2024 has started off well. The Campaign has learned that the National Park Service (NPS) expects to complete the special resource study of sites associated with Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools by the end of May 2024. Thereafter, leaders of the Department of Interior will go over the report with NPS staff to generate the final report that will be submitted to Members of Congress and to the Executive Branch.



Campaign representatives have begun meeting with the staff of Members of Congress from Illinois and Maryland to request that they write letters to President Biden urging him to proclaim the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Monument in 2024. The planned National Monument would consist of Rosenwald's boyhood home in Springfield, Illinois, one Rosenwald School and, we hope, a site in Chicago. This would be the first step towards the creation of the National Historical Park shortly thereafter by Congressional legislation. This would include more Rosenwald Schools and a site for a visitor center in Chicago.

The Campaign is in the final stages of negotiating a one-year lease for a small first-floor office space in the tower of the former Sears, Roebuck & Company merchandising facility in Chicago. Now called the Nichols Tower in honor of the family that contributed significantly to its restoration, the Tower houses nonprofit organizations. The lease is scheduled to commence on February 15. This is an important undertaking as it will give the Campaign a presence in Chicago where we can meet with community leaders and other interested parties and share information on the Campaign's activities.

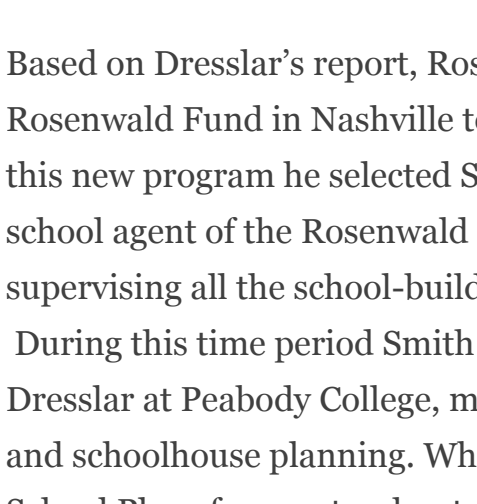
The Campaign has started a strategic planning process to identify its most important priorities for the next three years.

The Campaign's award-winning film will be screened at two more film festivals – the Beaufort International Film Festival on February 23 and the Miami Short Film Festival on March 10. And we continue to give programs at venues in multiple states at which the film is screened.

In this issue of the newsletter we are introducing a new section entitled SNAPSHOTS, which will consist of brief articles and notices submitted by support groups for Rosenwald Schools and other interested parties. In addition to being a way of sharing information with our 1,250 subscribers, we hope that it will be the first step in developing an informal network of Rosenwald Schools. We invite you submit brief articles on relevant activities and accomplishments to info@rosenwaldpark.org.

Thank you all for your ongoing support. Together we WILL create the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park.

Remembering Samuel Leonard Smith



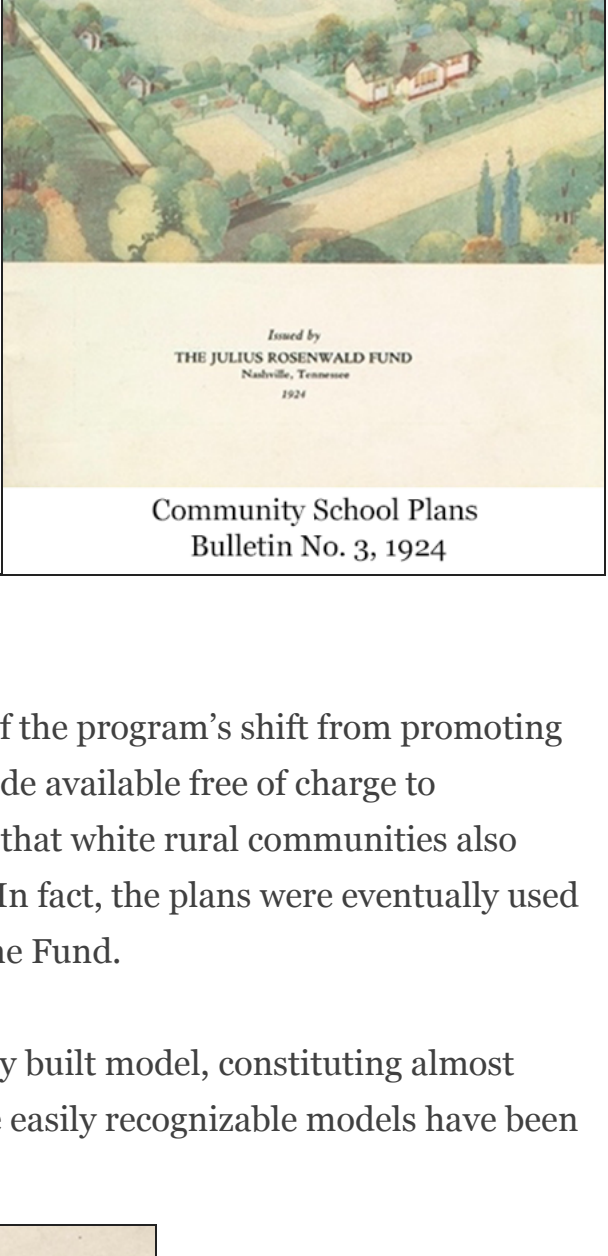
Samuel L. Smith
Courtesy of Ronald Kidd

Samuel Leonard Smith is a little-known but significant part of the story of the Rosenwald Schools. A native Tennessean who had been educated in a one-room schoolhouse, he led the Nashville office of the Rosenwald Fund between 1920 and 1937 and coordinated the building of over four thousand new schoolhouses in 15 Southern states.

The school building program began in 1912 when Booker T. Washington asked Rosenwald if \$2,800 of his \$25,000 donation to Tuskegee Institute could be used to assist in building schools for African-American children in six rural communities near Tuskegee. Rosenwald agreed, stipulating that he would give \$300 to each community that would make a donation equal to that amount through contributions of land, labor, materials and/or funds. The six schools were quickly built.

Word of the new school-building opportunity quickly spread and requests poured in to Tuskegee for more schools. In 1914 Rosenwald gave \$30,000 to help build an additional 100 schools. In 1916 not long after the unexpected death of Booker T. Washington, he gave an additional \$60,000 to build 200 more schools. By 1919 there were about 600 schools, many of which were not far from Tuskegee. Throughout this period Tuskegee managed the rapidly expanding building program.

In 1919 Rosenwald hired Floyd B. Dresslar, the leading rural school architect of that era, to evaluate the existing schools in the program. A professor of health education at the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Dresslar specialized in schoolhouse design, reform of rural schools, and school hygiene. Dresslar's report on the schools he visited was critical of the architectural plans and in some cases of the buildings themselves, noting that greater oversight of the program was needed.

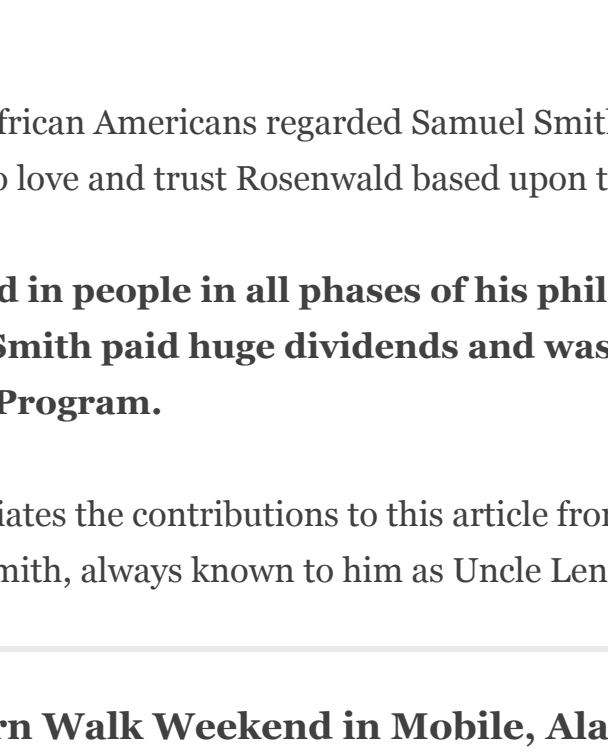


Based on Dresslar's report, Rosenwald decided in 1920 to open a southern district office of the Rosenwald Fund in Nashville to provide hands-on management of the School Program. To direct this new program he selected Samuel L. Smith who, between 1914 and 1920, had been a rural school agent of the Rosenwald School program in Tennessee and then General Field Agent, supervising all the school-building projects in that state. During this time period Smith had also been a student of Dresslar at Peabody College, majoring in school hygiene and schoolhouse planning. While there he developed School Plans for one-teacher to six-teacher rural schools in Tennessee.

Smith developed new architectural designs that appeared in book form in 1924 as Community School Plans. His plans made careful use of natural light, providing separate designs for buildings that faced east-west and buildings that faced north-south with huge banks of windows that became a distinctive feature of Rosenwald Schools. The buildings ranged in size from one-teacher to seven-teacher schools and had to be built on at least two acres of land. There were also plans for privies, industrial buildings, and teacher cottages. In order to receive grants from the Rosenwald Fund, the Schools had to be built in accordance with these specifications.

The Community School Plans were a concrete expression of the program's shift from promoting better schools to creating model schools, and they were made available free of charge to participating communities. These plans were so successful that white rural communities also started requesting them for the schools for their children. In fact, the plans were eventually used for 15,000 white schools that had no other connection to the Fund.

The two-teacher Rosenwald School was the most commonly built model, constituting almost 1,950 of the nearly 5,000 schools. Today a number of these easily recognizable models have been restored and can be spotted across the south.



Smith remained head of the Nashville office until it closed in 1937, five years after the termination of the School Program. Upon the conclusion of his work for the Rosenwald Fund, Smith received a letter from President Franklin Roosevelt thanking him for his faithful service to the promotion of education of African Americans.

He then served as provost of Peabody College from 1938 until his retirement in 1947.

In the book "Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund" authors Edwin Embree and Julia Waxman had the following to say about Samuel Smith's leadership of the School Program:

Mr. Smith was just the man for the job. He knew the South and its needs and he knew its people. Moreover, he had a gift for establishing friendly relations with people of all levels, even the most difficult and disagreeable, and of transferring his enthusiasm to community leaders...Dismaying, sincerely friendly, instinctively tactful, he refrained from raising unnecessary problems but managed nevertheless to point out glaring faults without giving offense. And because he was so generous in recognizing the finer qualities even of men who were base and reactionary, he encouraged them to be better than they were and obtained their support almost in spite of themselves.

The authors also noted that African Americans regarded Samuel Smith as a personal symbol of Julius Rosenwald and came to love and trust Rosenwald based upon the example set by Smith.

Julius Rosenwald invested in people in all phases of his philanthropy. His investment in Samuel L. Smith paid huge dividends and was an important factor in the success of the School Program.

NOTE: The Campaign appreciates the contributions to this article from Ronald Kidd, the great nephew of Samuel Leonard Smith, always known to him as Uncle Len.

Lantern Walk Weekend in Mobile, Alabama

By Stephanie Deutsch

Last fall, I was delighted to participate in the "Lantern Walk Weekend" at Mobile County Training School (MCTS) in Alabama. I had been to Mobile in 2016 when the documentary "Rosenwald" was screened at the Mobile Jewish Film Festival. On that occasion I spoke after the film and met three graduates of the School, a rare Rosenwald building that was (and is) still in service to its community as a school. Since that visit I have become aware of Mobile as not just the setting for a Rosenwald school but as home to Africatown, the settlement established after the Civil War by survivors of the Clotilda, the last known ship to illegally bring captives from West Africa to Alabama. Since then, remains of the ship, which had been intentionally burned and sink, have been found, and Africatown has received considerable publicity.



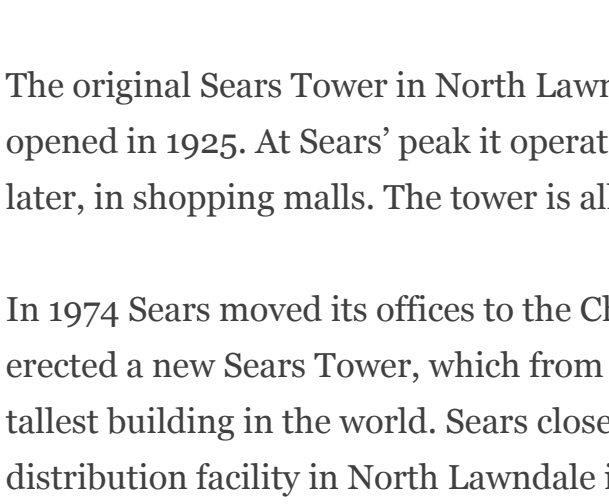
On the sunny morning of Friday, November 3, I went to MCTS – a sprawling campus that has been built up around the original Rosenwald building, the first Black public high school in Mobile and in 1912 an early recipient of Rosenwald funding – and met with about 50 eighth grade students who had all received copies of my book. Their teacher, Ms. Cori Baldwin, asked me about the book's title – "You Need a Schoolhouse." I noted that this is a quote from a speech by Booker T. Washington, the man who had risen "Up from Slavery" to become the founder of Tuskegee Institute (now University) and the most well-known Black of his generation. Washington's career was built on the conviction that becoming educated was essential to creating the better lives that former slaves had longed for since emancipation. He knew that many Black children, if they went to school at all, were going in small church buildings or the cramped living quarters of individuals. He believed the schoolhouse itself was important.

In 1911, when he met Julius Rosenwald, the very wealthy president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, Washington explained to him that there were many places in Alabama and all across the South where there were simply no schools for Black children. In many of these places men and women who had very little were working hard to raise money to build schools. This caught Rosenwald's interest. As someone who had left high school without graduating so he could learn about business and get to work, he understood the thirst for education. He decided to help Southern Black communities build schools.

After my talk I signed copies of the book, writing "This history matters" in most of them. There is so much to be proud of in the story of how the communities partnered with Washington and Rosenwald to build the schools. I told the students about the plan to create the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park to make sure that this important piece of history does not get lost.

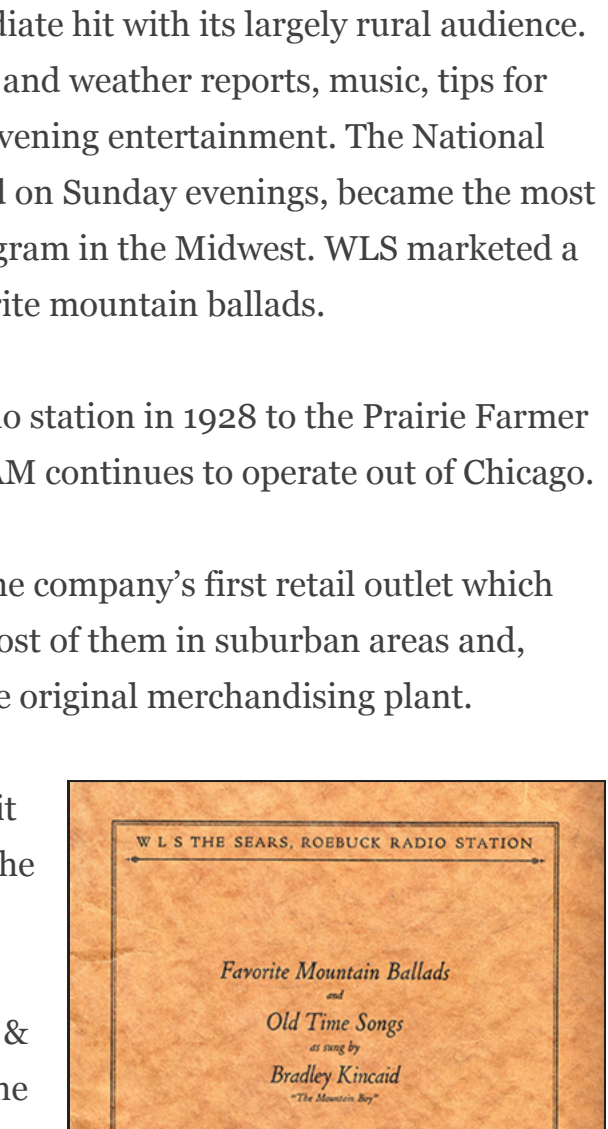
Saturday morning found me back at MCTS for brunch with alumni of the school. I emphasized that now, as antisemitism is again in the news and the teaching of Black history has emerged as a cultural battleground, this story of cooperation and community is more important than ever.

That afternoon I gathered with alumni and current students outside the building to ring its bell and join in two verses of "Lift Every Voice and Sing." From there, several dozen of us set out carrying lighted lanterns, walking down the narrow ways of Africatown to the cemetery where, amongst the magnificent ancient oaks and acres of gravestones, I admired the bust of Cudjoe Lewis, a man transported to Mobile on the Clotilda who became a much respected elder and one of the last surviving original settlers of Africatown. I was thrilled that afternoon to hear his voice via a recording at the Africatown Heritage House.

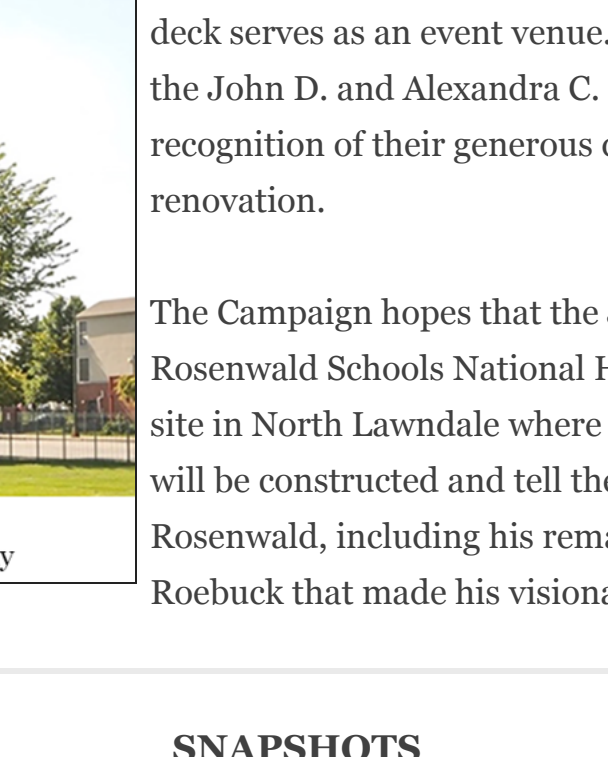


Stephanie Deutsch and Darron Patterson, a Clotilda descendant

Sunday morning there was a sunrise service at the cemetery where a circle of friends and acquaintances, old and new, young and old, Black and white, held hands and gave thanks for blessings received and asked for the strength to finish restoring the cemetery, to continue honoring the elders and building on the powerful legacy of the founders of Africatown and of those who constructed the school. To which I added my own thanks and hopes.



It was an inspiring end to a remarkable weekend, a powerful reminder to me of the significance of what we are doing through the Campaign to create the National Historical Park – bringing people together to remember, to celebrate and to share.



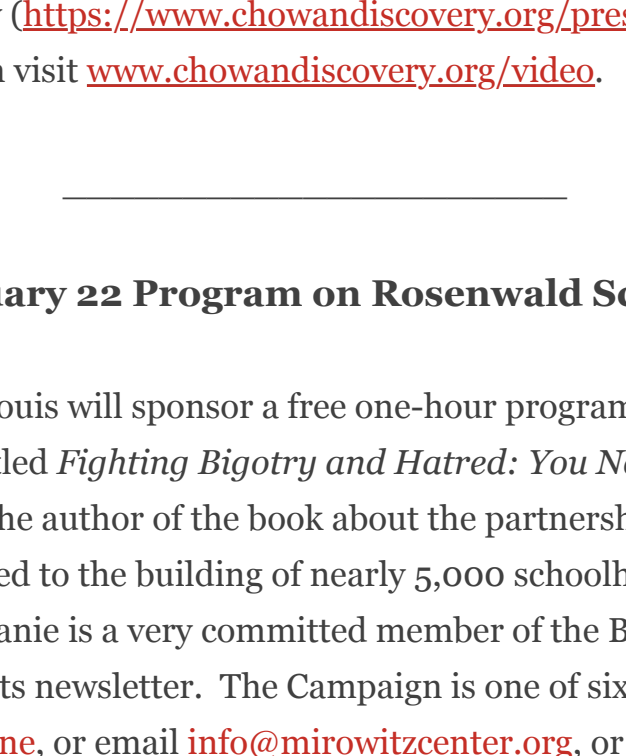
Deutsch next to statue of Cudjoe Lewis

For more information see [Africatown, America's Last Slave Ship and the Community it Created](#) by Nick Taber [Barracoon, the Story of the Last "Black Cargo"](#) by Zora Neale Hurston [South to a Very Old Place](#) by Albert Murray

Photos courtesy of Stephanie Deutsch

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that Sears, Roebuck & Co. had a radio station? It originated out of the original Sears Tower, a 14-story building that was part of the three million square foot Sears merchandising facility completed in 1906 in the North Lawndale section of Chicago?

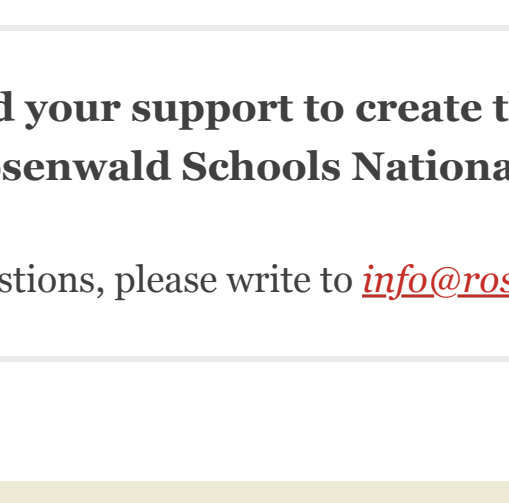
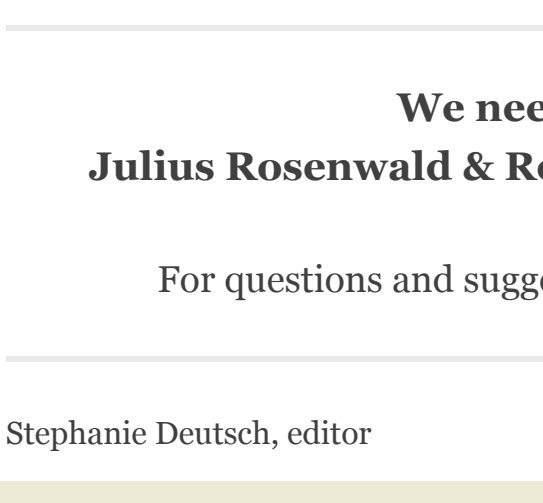


Sears, Roebuck merchandising facility and tower, circa 1906
Courtesy of Library of Congress

In the early 1920s Sears, Roebuck bought time on radio stations to reach the lucrative farming market, a mainstay of its business. Among the vast array of merchandise that it advertised for sale by mail-order were radios. Concluding in late 1923 that it needed its own radio station, Sears created the Sears-Roebuck Agricultural Foundation, designed to be a clearinghouse for information and assistance through its Farm and Home Service Departments. Sears president Julius Rosenwald approved the plan for the Foundation to construct its own radio station.

On April 9, 1924, Sears signed on as WES (World's Economy Store) with its small studio on the 11th floor of the Sears Tower. For three nights Sears aired a series of test programs. The Sears switchboards reportedly "lit up like Christmas trees" with listeners checking in after hearing the broadcasts.

After changing its name and call letters to WLS, the station officially went on the air on April 12th and was an immediate hit with its largely rural audience. It broadcast farm and weather reports, music, tips for housewives, and evening entertainment. The National Barn Dance, heard on Sunday evenings, became the most popular radio program in the Midwest. WLS marketed a song book of favorite mountain ballads.



Postcard advertising WLS
Rosenwald Park Campaign collection

WLS song book
Rosenwald Park Campaign collection

The original Sears Tower in North Lawndale also housed the company's first retail outlet which opened in 1925. At Sears' peak it operated 3,500 stores, most of them in suburban areas and, later, in shopping malls. The tower is all that remains of the original merchandising plant.

In 1974 Sears moved its offices to the Chicago Loop where it erected a new Sears Tower, which from 1974 to 1988 was the tallest building in the world. Sears closed down the entire distribution facility in North Lawndale in 1987. The Sears Tower is now called the Willis Tower. And Sears, Roebuck & Co. -- well, that is just another sad story of success and fame followed by decline and replacement.

But the original Sears Tower in North Lawndale has been renovated and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It now provides office space for nonprofit organizations. The 14th floor observation deck serves as an event venue. The building is now called the John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Tower in recognition of their generous donation that underwrote its renovation.

The Campaign hopes that the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park will contain a site in North Lawndale where the ultimate visitor center will be constructed and tell the overall story of Julius Rosenwald, including his remarkable leadership of Sears, Roebuck that made his visionary philanthropy possible.

SNAPSHOTS

Preserving Brown Auditorium

By Marvin Tupper Jones, Chowan Discovery

At 10,000 square feet, the Greek Revival-style Brown Auditorium is one of the largest of the Rosenwald School buildings. Located in Winton, Hertford County, North Carolina, it was built in 1926 and included six classrooms, two offices, a stage and auditorium space and served as the C.S. Brown School until the 1970s. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For close to a century, it has remained a vital institution to the region.

Courtesy of Chowan Discovery

Brown Auditorium was restored in 1986 and has since housed the C.S. Brown Cultural Arts Center and Museum. The Center hosts history rooms, performances, art displays – including an African art collection – meetings, receptions, weddings, memorial services, seasonal events and reunions. Recently, two of the four Tuscan-style columns were replaced and activities to replace the remaining two are underway (<https://www.chowandiscovery.org/reservation>). For a video history of Brown Auditorium visit www.chowandiscovery.org/video.

February 22 Program on Rosenwald Schools

The Mirowitz Center of St. Louis will sponsor a free one-hour program at 3:00 pm ET on Thursday, February 22, entitled *Fighting Bigotry and Hatred: You Need a Schoolhouse*. It will feature Stephanie Deutsch, the author of the book about the partnership of Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington that led to the building of nearly 5,000 schoolhouses for African American children in the south. Stephanie is a very committed member of the Board of the Rosenwald Park Campaign and the editor of its newsletter. The Campaign is one of six cosponsors of this event. You may [register online](#), or email info@mirowitzcenter.org, or call 314-723-9813.

Milestone for Woodville Rosenwald School, Gloucester County, VA

By Roberta Ray

The Woodville Rosenwald School Foundation (WRSP) will welcome the public to an "OPEN SCHOOL HOUSE" event on Sunday, February 25, 1-4 p.m., to celebrate a significant milestone in the renovation of the historic building—receiving its official Gloucester County Occupancy Permit. The Woodville School was built as a two-teacher school in 1923-24 and is the only remaining one of six Rosenwald Schools that were constructed in Gloucester County, Virginia, in the 1920s.

In 2019, the WRSP purchased the building from the Gloucester Economic Development Authority in order to preserve it as a museum of African American history and a community resource for educational programs and activities.

PHOTO COURTESY OF R. RAY

The Foundation received donations from community members and local businesses to match a generous grant of \$75,000 from Gloucester's Cook Foundation to support the renovation of the interior of the schoolhouse. Please visit the Woodville Rosenwald School Foundation's website to learn more about the history of Gloucester's Rosenwald Schools: www.woodvillerosenwaldschool.org

"I do not see how America can go ahead if part of its people are left behind."
- Julius Rosenwald

We need your support to create the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park.

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