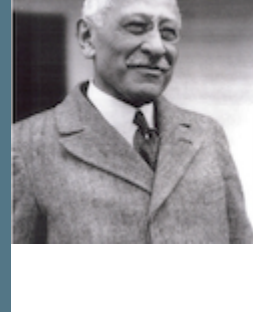


# Creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park



"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

Thanks to the leadership of Bob Stanton, former National Park Service (NPS) Director and Campaign Vice Chair, Bob and other Campaign representatives had a most productive meeting with Acting NPS Director Shawn Bengel and key NPS staffers on March 1. The discussion centered on the NPS plans for performing the special resource study of the sites associated with Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools mandated by the Rosenwald legislation, which became law on January 13, 2021, and the accomplishments of the Campaign that will assist NPS staff in conducting the study. We were heartened to hear that the NPS plans to start the study in the Fall of 2021 and to interact with Campaign representatives in early to mid-summer on the data we have compiled and additional activities that could be helpful.



Dorothy Canter, President, Rosenwald Park Campaign

In January the Campaign hired a contractor to prepare a report on the 56 Rosenwald School facilities in 14 states recommended to the Campaign for possible inclusion in the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park, 34 of which Campaign representatives have visited, and the process used to obtain the recommendations and collect information on the facilities. I am working closely with the contractor and will seek input from the NPS on how to make the report the most useful to NPS needs.

Momentum continues to build in support of the Campaign. A number of Campaign Board members have participated in webinars on Rosenwald, the Rosenwald Schools and the Campaign. More webinars have been booked for March and April. If you are interested in having a program, please contact me at [dorotheacanter@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:dorotheacanter@rosenwaldpark.org).

Thank you for your support for the National Historical Park. It is making a difference!

## PROFILE OF BOARD MEMBER KATHERINE STEVENSON

By Stephanie Deutsch

Katherine Stevenson came to the Campaign to create a National Historical Park honoring Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools from a long career with the National Park Service. Although her academic work had been in fine arts and art history, she quickly found her niche at the Park Service where her first job was helping to expand the National Register of Historic Places, a listing of nationally important sites that now has some 90,000 entries. That was, she remembers, a "great education" and a terrific opportunity to begin to appreciate the tremendous variety and significance of the country's cultural heritage.



Serving in field offices in Denver and then in Philadelphia before returning to work in Washington, DC, Kate visited all 50 states, toured innumerable historic, cultural and natural sites, testified before Congress about, among other things, preserving endangered historic lighthouses, and worked with state historic preservation offices with their requests for recognition on the National Register. Her favorite wilderness National Park is Glacier in Montana, but she says she can't choose among cultural and historic sites. There are so many, and they are all so interesting.

Along the way, Kate processed several nominations for the National Register for homes that had been ordered as kits between 1909 and 1929 from the iconic Sears, Roebuck catalog. This piqued her interest. She traveled to the Sears archives in Chicago to learn more about the houses, more than 100,000 of which were sold and many of which can be found today in various places all over the country. She learned that the houses came in a tremendous variety of styles from cozy cottages and bungalows with porches to grand colonials and Tudor-style houses. They were shipped in pieces via railroad for assembly on the owner's lot. The catalog also made available the services of an interior decorator. "You could order a decorating scheme and all your furniture from Sears as well as the house," Kate says in amazement. The result of her research was *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck & Company*, published in 1996.



Among the discoveries that particularly intrigued her, Kate says, was finding that "Mr. Rosenwald never foreclosed on any of the mortgages of owners of Sears homes, some of which were Sears employees." When her friend and walking companion, Dorothy Canter, told her about her plan to work toward the creation of a National Historical Park honoring Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools and invited her to join the planning committee, she was immediately enthusiastic. Since then her respect for the legacy of Rosenwald has grown. "His impact was so broad and significant in sales," she says. "But it's even broader and more significant in philanthropy and race relations."

Visiting Rosenwald schools in several states and meeting with alumni there has increased her enthusiasm about the future park and the story it will tell. "The country is now vastly divided," she says. "But the story of the Rosenwald schools celebrates people working together. It's about the tremendous thirst for knowledge of families without access to schools and the remarkable generosity that led to their creation." It's a story, she says, that people will find both interesting and inspiring.

## COLLECTING MEMORABILIA

With the goal of bringing Julius Rosenwald to life, the Campaign has begun to purchase memorabilia. The first item was a Sears stereopticon with the original set of 50 stereo views dating from around 1906. The slides provide extensive photographic and historical information on the then brand new, state of the art Sears, Roebuck plant in Chicago. At the time it was unique -- the largest such facility in the country and, probably, the world. The slide views sold for 35 cents and the stereopticon 15 cents.



The Campaign then purchased a number of vintage postcards showing color images of the Sears merchandising plant including the clock tower, all that remains today of the original plant, as well as the Administration building and elaborate sunken garden with fountains. That building is one of the sites under consideration for a possible visitor center for the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park.

Another postcard shows the enormous crowd at the Sears annual field meet, which took place on a strip of land one block wide by a mile long reserved for employees. About 20,000 people attended those events.



Also purchased were three newspapers - The New York Times, the Chicago Daily Tribune and The Times Picayune of New Orleans - all published on January 7, 1932, the day after Rosenwald's death. His passing was front page news in all three papers and the banner headline in the hometown paper. Testimonials from numerous dignitaries were included, reflecting his importance during his lifetime.



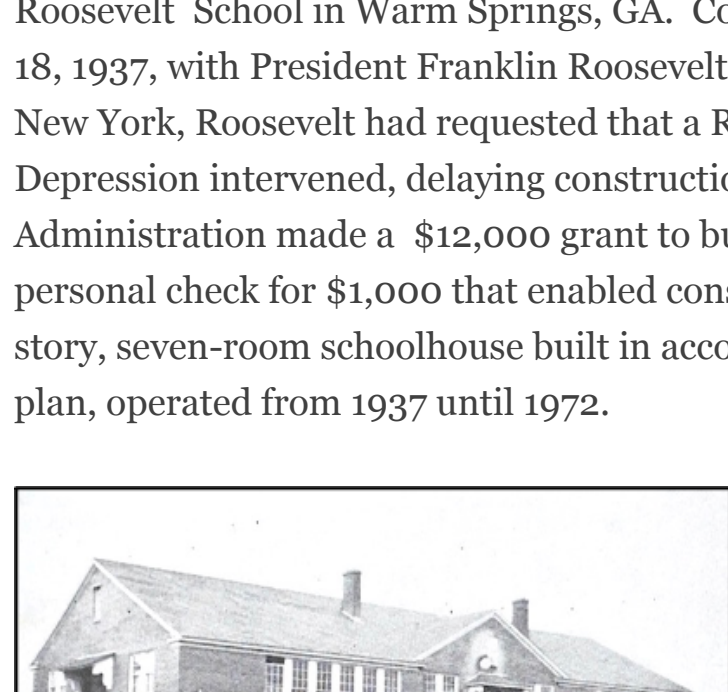
The most recent purchase was a copy of The New York Times October 25, 1928, which reports on a dinner for nearly 2,000 guests at the Hotel Astor honoring nine "Pioneers of American Industry." They included Thomas Edison, Orville Wright, Henry Ford, George Eastman, Harvey Firestone and **Julius Rosenwald**. The dinner was called the "billion dollar banquet."

The newspaper articles attest to how well known and respected Rosenwald was both for his business acumen and far reaching philanthropy.

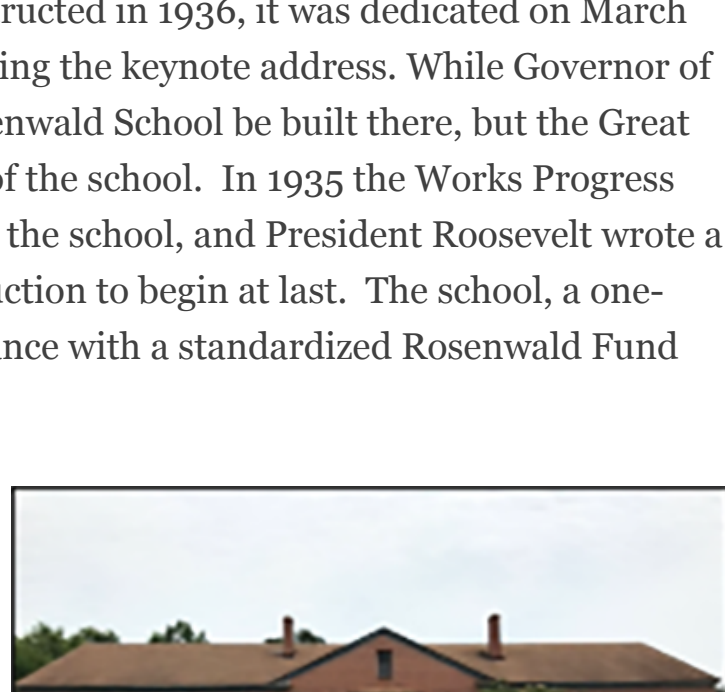
The Campaign will continue to seek out memorabilia that contribute to telling the story of Julius Rosenwald's life and his contributions to our nation, as well as items relating to the 4,997 Rosenwald Schools. They will be contributed to the National Historical Park upon its creation.

## THE LAST ROSENWALD SCHOOL

Although the Rosenwald Schools building program officially ended in 1932, the last school built with partial funding from the Julius Rosenwald Fund was the Eleanor Roosevelt School in Warm Springs, GA. Constructed in 1936, it was dedicated on March 18, 1937, with President Franklin Roosevelt giving the keynote address. While Governor of New York, Roosevelt had requested that a Rosenwald School be built there, but the Great Depression intervened, delaying construction of the school. In 1935 the Works Progress Administration made a \$12,000 grant to build the school, and President Roosevelt wrote a personal check for \$1,000 that enabled construction to begin at last. The school, a one-story, seven-room schoolhouse built in accordance with a standardized Rosenwald Fund plan, operated from 1937 until 1972.



Eleanor Roosevelt School - 1937



Eleanor Roosevelt School - Present Day

A native of Atlanta, GA, Debron Walker first saw the Eleanor Roosevelt School on a visit to The Little White House in Warm Springs. Realizing that the school is a national treasure, he contacted Voncher Walker to become a partner in its purchase. Working with The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, they acquired the property in February 2020. They plan to restore the school to tell the story of how all the Rosenwald Schools "set the foundation of early education for African American children and prepared many to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities throughout the country." The target completion date is March 2022 at which time it will welcome visitors.

Stephanie Deutsch, Editor

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We need your support to continue.

For questions and suggestions, please write to [info@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:info@rosenwaldpark.org).