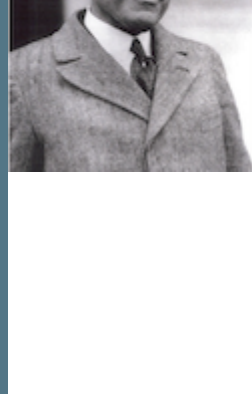


# Creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park



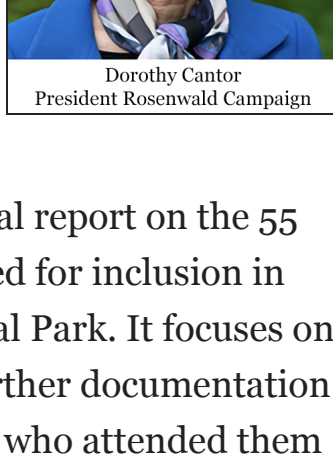
"All the other pleasures of life seem to wear out, but the pleasure of helping others in distress never does."

JULIUS ROSENWALD



## President's Message

The Summer 2021 newsletter continues the series of profiles on Campaign Board members, this one on Carol Shull, an expert on historic preservation and former Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. It also contains an article on the unique history of Mobile County Training School in Alabama. *A Did You Know?* article tells a surprising, little-known story relating to the design standards for Rosenwald Schools.



Dorothy Cantor  
President Rosenwald Campaign

The Campaign plans to issue this week the electronic version of the final report on the 55 Rosenwald Schools and one teacher home that have been recommended for inclusion in the planned Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. It focuses on the 34 facilities that Campaign representatives visited and provides further documentation of the significance of Rosenwald Schools to the education of the pupils who attended them and to the cohesiveness of the communities that played a highly important role in their establishment and preservation. Stay tuned!

I am pleased to announce that since mid-July 11 more non-profit organizations have become official supporters of creating the National Historical Park. The total is now 66! Included among those organizations are the support groups for eight Rosenwald Schools, one of which is the Mobile County Training School Alumni Association. My personal goal is to have 100 supporting organizations by December 31, 2021. Please help the Campaign reach this goal by emailing me at [dorothycantor@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:dorothycantor@rosenwaldpark.org) with your recommendations of additional organizations to contact.

Interest in and support of Rosenwald Schools and the life and legacy of Julius Rosenwald continues to build. Articles are appearing about more schools that are being restored and about the impact of Julius Rosenwald's legacy. Campaign representatives are giving more presentations to a broad range of groups. With your continued support we will create the National Historical Park together!

## Profile of Board Member Carol Shull

As a child growing up in Austin, Texas, Carol Shull used to love visiting her grandparents' rambling Victorian house in the nearby town of Bastrop, the home where her great-grandparents had also lived and where, in the very same room, her mother had been born and would later die. It was there, says Carol, that her love of and respect for history first emerged.

At the University of Texas in Austin, Carol earned both a Bachelor's degree in education with an emphasis on social studies and a Master's degree in American history. She then accompanied her husband, Joe, on military service in Würzburg, Germany, and Seoul, Korea, and loved the opportunity that afforded them to travel and explore new places. At the end of their time in the military, returning to the U.S. in 1972, Joe and Carol decided that the most exciting place to work was Washington, DC; so they bought a used car and headed to the capital city. Rather quickly, Joe found work as a lawyer, and Carol was offered a job as a historian at the National Park Service working on the National Register of Historic Places.

It was an exciting time to be entering the field of historic preservation. The 1966 National Preservation Act had recognized the toll being taken on urban neighborhoods, small towns, and open countryside by the explosion of development that followed the end of WWII. The Act authorized a National Register of Historic Places to include places of national, state, and local significance. The Register is part of a program to coordinate and support efforts, both public and private, to identify, evaluate, recognize, and help protect America's historic and cultural treasures from encroaching highways, shopping malls, housing, and other developments. Eventually appointed Keeper of the Register, Carol worked to ensure that the list reflects the tremendous variety and diversity of our national heritage. Today there are over 90,000 entries on the Register – places that include everything from the Statue of Liberty and nine different sites in the Grand Canyon to historic districts in communities throughout the nation – even Carol's grandmother's house and quite a number of other historic places in Bastrop.



Carol Shull

Among the additions to the National Register are an ever-expanding number of Rosenwald Schools. Carol sees the story the schools tell as emblematic of the whole purpose of the work the National Park Service and the National Register set out to do. "So many Americans are woefully uneducated about our history," she says. "They do not understand the problems African Americans faced in trying to obtain a quality education." Carol is particularly proud of the part she played in creating the Teaching with Historic Places online lesson plans and the Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary series, both designed to promote interest in and knowledge of history.

Shortly after her retirement in 2015, Carol enthusiastically joined the Board of the Rosenwald Park Campaign. She has loved visiting some of the schools, meeting men and women who attended them, and hearing their proud and affectionate memories. It was a particular pleasure for Carol to see the Hopewell Rosenwald School nominated by the Texas State Historic Preservation Office for possible inclusion in the park. It's in Cedar Creek, a rural community in Bastrop County -- not far from where years ago she used to visit her grandparents.

**"I feel very fortunate to be part of the Campaign. Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the nearly 5,000 African American communities in 15 Southern states formed a remarkable partnership that helped change America. This story needs to be told in a National Park,"** she says.

By Stephanie Deutsch

## Did You Know?

In 1928 the acclaimed American architect Frank Lloyd Wright submitted architectural drawings for a ten-teacher Rosenwald School to be associated with the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia. Following the directions included in the Rosenwald Fund's standardized *Community Building Plans*, Wright emphasized the school's use as a year-round community resource. But he moved the auditorium from the front to the rear of the building and created an enclosed courtyard patio with a swimming pool. The new amenities increased the cost, but Wright argued that it would be worth it – "physical culture should be 3/5 of 'Education.'" He also substituted fieldstone on concrete for the brick stipulated by the plans and added distinctive exterior design elements.



Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives

The Community Building Plans that the Julius Rosenwald Fund started developing in 1920 documented the program's shift from simply providing needed schoolhouses to establishing model schools, designed with professional expertise. The plans provided directions for selecting school grounds, determining the size of the schoolhouse, where it should be located and which building plan to use.

The 1924 Bulletin stipulated that considerable attention should be devoted to "planning these buildings with a view to furnishing modern schoolhouses meeting all the requirements for lighting, sanitation, classroom conveniences, etc."



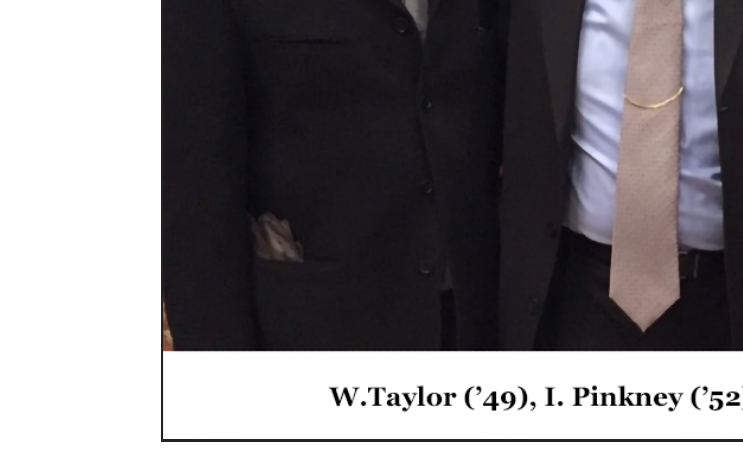
And it was clear that the schools were to be modest, as well as modern and utilitarian. They were not to compete with white schools. The Bulletin states **"Great care has been taken to provide a maximum space for instruction at a minimum cost."**

Frank Lloyd Wright's design for a school was not adopted. But his proposal is evidence of the concern he shared with the Rosenwald Fund in using design to facilitate the purpose of the school building – not just as an educational facility for children but "to serve the entire community for twelve months in the year."

**Note:** The above architectural drawing was included in the 2017 Museum of Modern Art exhibition: *Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive*.

## The Unusual Story of Mobile County Training School

Mobile County Training School in southern Alabama has a history unlike that of any other Rosenwald School. What is today a campus with several buildings had its beginning in a Baptist church in 1880 as a class created by local residents determined that their children would receive the education they had been denied. By 1910 the school was a going concern called The Plateau Normal and Industrial Institute with a new principal, I. J. Whitley, a disciple of Booker T. Washington. The school was destroyed by fire in 1915. Mr. Whitley secured partial funding from the Rosenwald School Building Program and the donation of several acres of land from local African Americans for a new 18-teacher school named Mobile County Training School (MCTS). That building burned in 1938 but was, once again, rebuilt. Originally a school serving African American students from elementary grades through 12th grade, and later a high school, MCTS has been a middle school since 1970.

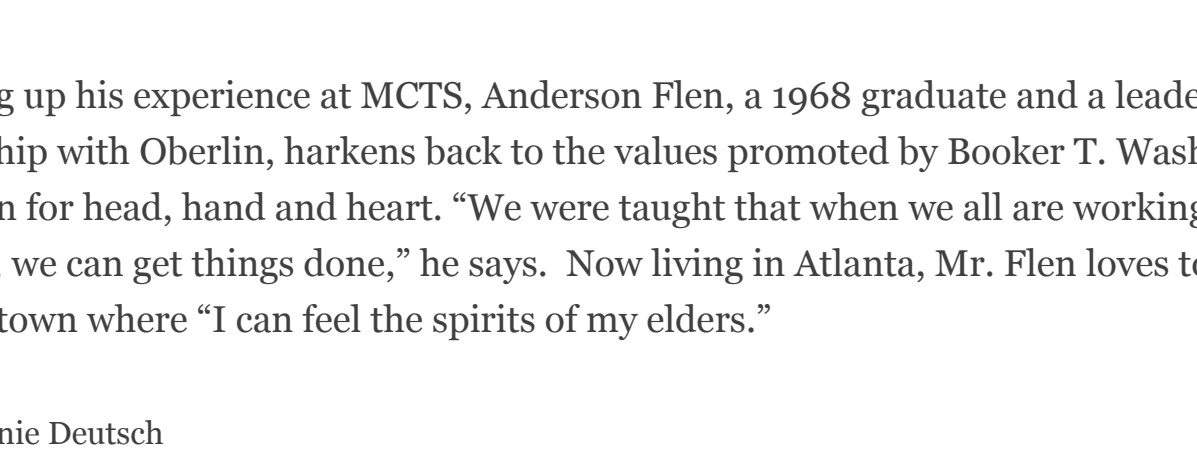


Recent view of Mobile County Training School

Among those who attended the school were descendants of the last Africans brought to this country as enslaved people. In 1860, over fifty years after the end to the legal importation of slaves, the ship *Clotilda* brought 110 men and women from what was then the kingdom of Dahomey to Alabama. Seeking to evade the law, the owners unloaded their illegal cargo at night and scuttled the ship in the waters of the Mobile River. The survivors of the *Clotilda* were freed in 1865. They wanted to return to Africa but could not afford the passage. So, pooling their meager resources, they managed to buy land and create a community just north of Mobile. They called it African Town or Africatown.

One of the descendants of the *Clotilda* is 85-year-old Doris Lee. She recalls that her grandfather, Pollee Allen, was one of the original residents of Africatown. He died before she was born, and the story of the *Clotilda* was rarely talked about in her home. She attended "County," as the alumni call MCTS, as did her mother, sisters and brothers. She studied English and physical education at Alabama State College (now University) and went on to teach for thirty years at Mobile's Central High School, a rival to County. Her mother's devotion to County was such that at the annual Thanksgiving Day football games she refused to sit with her daughter on the Central side of the field. "County was her school," Mrs. Lee remembered.

Dr. Washington Taylor graduated from County in 1949 and remembers strong academics and strict discipline. "If you did not pass a class," he says, "you stayed in that grade until you passed. If you got good grades in English, you could sign up to take journalism. But if your grades fell, you'd be switched right back to regular English."



W. Taylor (49), I. Pinkney (52), S. Deutsch and E. Johnson (55)

For Isaiah Pinkney, a 1952 graduate, the most memorable part of his experience at County was the opportunity to participate in the strong student government association and in service clubs, and the nurturing commitment of his teachers. "They were genuinely interested in our progress," he remembers. "They lived in the community." The "camaraderie" of the students, their families and their teachers still exists in County's active 100 member alumni association.

The intertwined stories of the *Clotilda*, Africatown and MCTS are still unfolding. In 2018 the book *Barracoon* was published. Written ninety years earlier by Zora Neale Hurston (a 1935 recipient of a Rosenwald Fund fellowship), it is a vivid account of her many interviews with Cudjo Lewis, the last known survivor of the *Clotilda*.

The whereabouts of the *Clotilda* were debated for years. In one of his last speeches, Booker T. Washington mentioned that on a fishing trip in Mobile Bay he had seen a local landmark there -- the remains of the ship *Clotilda* which at low tide, could be seen sticking out of the water. In 2019 a diving team discovered and retrieved remains that were authenticated as the *Clotilda*.

Documenting this rich history, the Africatown Heritage House museum is expected to open this fall, across the street from MCTS.

Since 2014 students from Oberlin College in Ohio have worked in partnership with residents of Africatown to document the proud history of MCTS and to fight environmental threats to the area. They have recorded more than 30 interviews, capturing the voices of students and teachers who fondly remember the school as a place of safety, nurture and sharing.

Summing up his experience at MCTS, Anderson Flen, a 1968 graduate and a leader in the partnership with Oberlin, harkens back to the values promoted by Booker T. Washington – education for head, hand and heart. "We were taught that when we all are working together, we can get things done," he says. Now living in Atlanta, Mr. Flen loves to return to Africatown where "I can feel the spirits of my elders."

By Stephanie Deutsch

*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

D O N A T E

**We need your support to continue.**

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