

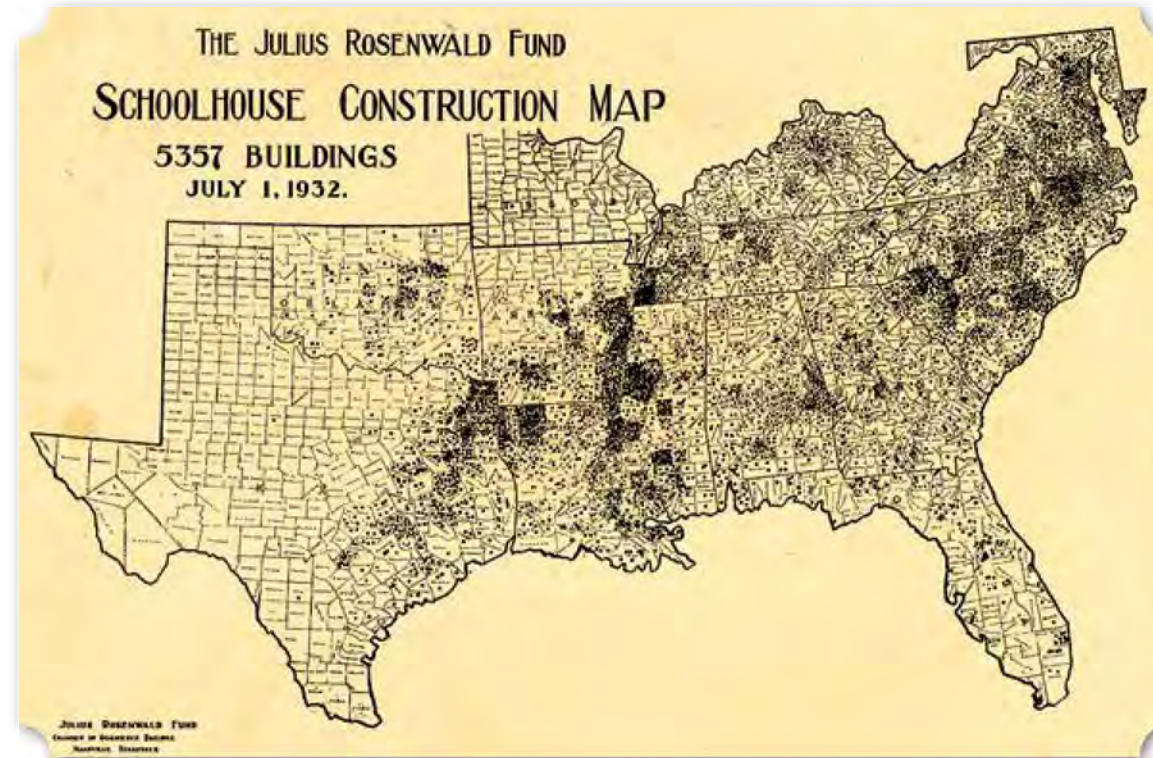
close all together. In North Alabama, the TVA was able to offset some of the effects of the depression in communities where it worked. The TVA conducted extensive studies about the needs of schools, teachers, and children throughout North Alabama. Some communities were assisted by the TVA in building schools or other community needs.

The industrial growth brought on by World War II in Alabama as a whole, and North Alabama specifically, did little to bring education back to the forefront. In 1943, the state extended the school year again to the nine-month long term. But tension surrounding funding and race, including the federal court case *Brown vs. Board of Education*, negated the economic boom of the 1940s. By the 1950s, school systems were consolidating the number of schools, especially those in rural areas. In Madison County, some 3,500 children of color were consolidated into only 40 schools with just 25 teachers of color. Many small, community schools for African American children were closed for good and teachers and students were made to travel farther to get an education. Limestone County was particularly fortunate when it came to education. In the school year of 1954-1955, there were 1,845 students at 21 schools in the county. The average daily attendance was 1,644 students, or 91% of the population.

This would only be a problem for about 15 years, because by 1970, all schools in Alabama were integrated. The schools provided for white students were larger, and better equipped and funded. This led to the closure of all public schools for African Americans. While some of the small one- and two-room schoolhouses were reused as churches or some other community function, the majority were demolished.

Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Plan

The most recognizable name in rural African American education in the early 20th century is Julius Rosenwald. Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932) was born in Springfield, Illinois. The son of German-Jewish immigrants, Rosenwald is renowned as the president of the Sears, Roebuck &



(Above) Map of the Julius Rosenwald Schoolhouse Construction, 1932 (The Ohio State University Digital Archive)

Company. However, he was a philanthropist long before he ran the commercial giant. His methods of philanthropy matched his philosophy towards public service. Rosenwald believed that communities in need should be at the heart of any project and that government assistance would only lead to a cycle of poverty.

Julius Rosenwald's School Building Fund helped to provide money to build African American schoolhouses in the rural South between 1913 and 1937. The African American communities in need of the school would be intricately involved in raising funds among their own members and the white community, as well as providing the land and labor to build the school. These communities often named the schools for the person who donated the land or the most money. Other times they named it something "poetic" and "colorful" like Thankful, Peace and Good Will, Godsend, or Rough and Ready. After the school was built, parents and local residences would help to provide for the school with wood or coal for the stove.

Because the Rosenwald Plan was centered around the idea that the community would help itself, many of the early Rosenwald school buildings looked like the vernacular, or local, architecture of churches and farm buildings. The local carpenters took what was familiar and modified it according to their notions of what was needed for a school. As the Rosenwald Fund project took off with great acceleration, a more standard construction plan was developed. Model Rosenwald schools were designed to make the most of the materials and environment that rural Southern communities had access to while providing an easy guide for communities to follow.

In 1920, Samuel Leonard Smith was appointed the General Field Agent in Nashville. He developed floor plans that fit the needs of different schools. Smith's *Community School Plan* booklet contained beautiful concept drawings and floor plans that eliminated any possible architect fees, reduced costs, and laid out materials needed for each design. Providing an exact list of materials and their costs helped to soothe any misgivings that community donors might have about how the money would be spent. Additional

(Below and Opposite) (1-3) Rural School Plans from "The Negro Rural School and its Relation to the Community," 1915, Tuskegee Institute (The Ohio State University Digital Archive)

