

wanted the money to be spent on the educational needs of the people of the day, while future generations would attend to their own needs with their own means. He did not want officers and trustees to take over and attempt to conserve capital.

While the Rosenwald School Building Fund eventually reached across the South, it began in Alabama. The first Rosenwald school was in Notasulga, a dozen miles from Tuskegee. The first 79 schools were all in Alabama. In the end, the Rosenwald Fund helped to create a total of 5,358 school buildings constructed in 883 counties throughout 15 Southern states. The Fund went beyond schoolhouses to include support buildings, homes for teachers, and vocational training facilities for young adults. Ultimately, there were 382 schools built in Alabama, reaching 64 out of 67 counties.

By the time that Julius Rosenwald died in 1932, the Fund had put forth a total of \$4.4 million to build schools throughout the South. The African American community contributed \$4.7 million to the schools and the state governments provided an additional \$18.1 million. Other foundations added \$1.2 million to make a total of nearly \$30 million.

In North Alabama, the most Rosenwald schools were built in Madison County – a total of nine – probably due to the presence of Huntsville and a relatively large community of African American landowners. There were eight schools built in Colbert County, seven in neighboring Lauderdale County, five in Limestone County, four in Lawrence County, three in Jackson County, two in Morgan County, and one in Marshall County.

While the Rosenwald Fund came to an end upon Julius Rosenwald's death in 1932, most of the schools built in the two decades of philanthropy remained in use into the 1950s. After World War II, the state took more responsibility in education, including the building of schools, staffing teachers, and providing transportation. Alabama consolidated and reorganized its school systems, in the process incorporating all existing schools including Rosenwalds. Some of the schoolhouses were eventually reused as community centers or churches, but many fell into disrepair from disuse or lack of means for upkeep.

Other Educational Reforms

Another of the notable organizations to assist in the education of freedmen and future generations of African Americans was the American Missionary Association (AMA). During the Battle of Athens, a white woman from Wisconsin and member of the AMA named Mary Frances Wells attended to the injured as a nurse. While there she noticed the many recently freed slaves and took particular interest in the children. In 1865, Wells organized and opened Trinity School for the education of freedmen and their children. The Trinity School created a particularly significant foundation for African American education in Limestone County and North Alabama. Similarly, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began Oakwood University in Madison County in 1894.

Well into the 20th century, schools and education were often tied to faith and religion. While some of these connections were immediately evident as with the American Methodist Association and Trinity School, almost a century later Christian values were still the foundation of African American education. In the Limestone County Archive's Trinity collection is a document about the 1955-1956 school year. Included among the mission statements and statistics are "Ten Commandments for the Teacher," a list of actions and values teachers are expected to exhibit via a biblical reference.

(Below) Poem about Education, Limestone County Negro Schools Progress Report, 1955-1956 (Limestone County Archives, Athens, Alabama)

