



Historic



Russell



School

# Durham's Last Rosenwald Schoolhouse

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Following the Civil War, in 1890, unjust Jim Crow Laws legalized “separate but equal” racial discrimination. These laws legalized discrimination in education. To fight these discriminatory policies, Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald created a matching grant program to help empower communities to build African-American schools. To be eligible for the grant, patrons of the school had to raise funds and the public school district had to agree to maintain the school.

Through the Rosenwald Fund, over five thousand schools were built throughout the South. North Carolina had the most Rosenwald schools of any state. This exhibition tells the story of the Rosenwald schools, with particular focus on the Historic Russell School—the last surviving Rosenwald School in Durham County.

# History of the School

The story of the Historic Russell School is one of intercultural collaboration, resilience, and self-reliance. The school was built through funds donated by Julius Rosenwald, a generous Jewish philanthropist, and the local black and white communities. The school was constructed shortly after July of 1927. It remained in operation until 1945, when it was converted to a community center.

## Did You Know?

Black community's contribution	+	\$270
Rosenwald Fund's contribution	+	\$700
Durham County School Board's contribution	+	\$2,725
<hr/>		
School's total cost to build	=	\$3,695



1) *Booker T. Washington*  
1856 – 1915  
Photo Library of Congress

Booker T. Washington was a civil rights advocate, educator, and head of the Tuskegee Institute, an African-American teacher training school. Washington collaborated with Julius Rosenwald when Rosenwald served on the Board of Directors at Tuskegee Institute. Together, they began developing the concept of Rosenwald Schools. Unfortunately, Washington died before the fund was fully established in 1917.

2) *Julius Rosenwald*  
1862-1932  
Photo Library of Congress

Julius Rosenwald was a philanthropist and a businessman. He helped build Sears, Roebuck & Co and gave money to many different organizations.

Julius Rosenwald's great grand-niece lives here in Durham, NC. She is an honorary member of the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Russell Rosenwald School.



Charles Dunnegan and John Mangum of Russell colored school appeared to ask an additional room for their school. On the suggestion of Mr. Mason this matter was postponed for decision at the July meeting.

Durham County School Board Minutes  
June 6th, 1921

Photo of Charles  
Dunnegan  
1946  
Courtesy of Cain's  
Baptist Church



Gep Mack, a patron of the Russell colored School, appeared before the Board and asked that the Board make some arrangement to lengthen the Russell School term for the school year 1927-28. The Board informed Mack that the only way of lengthening the school term beyond the six months school term was voting special tax in the district. He was also informed that this matter was being worked out now, and within a very short time he would be given a chance to vote on same.

Durham County School Board Minutes  
May 2nd, 1927

### 3) Board Minutes

June 6, 1921 and May 2, 1927

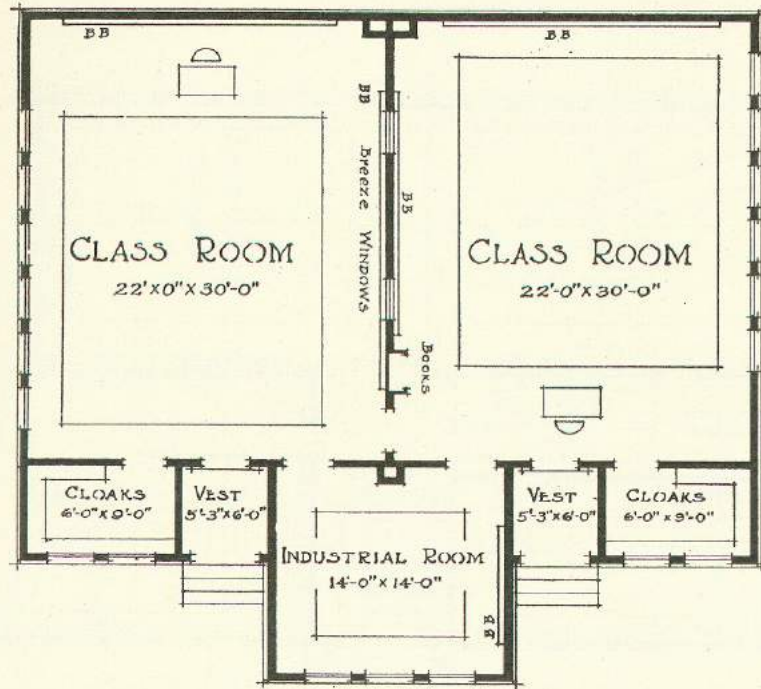
Courtesy of Durham County Library

“Russell School” is mentioned in two different Board minutes. The dates of the minutes indicate that the “Russell School” to which they refer must be an older likewise named “Russell School” that predates our Russell School. The minutes also mention Charles Dunagan, John Mangum, and Gep Mack. Some of the descendants of these individuals are alumni of the Russell School and current members of the site's Board of Directors.

#### 4) *Map of Rosenwald Schools in Durham County* Courtesy of Durham County Library

This map shows the location of the Rosenwald Schools in Durham County. Today, only the Historic Russell School survives, making it an important cultural landmark for our community. It is located near the crossroads of Guess Road and St. Mary's Road.





FLOOR PLAN NO 2-C  
 TWO TEACHER COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
 TO FACE NORTH OR SOUTH ONLY

5) *Two-Teacher Plan, 2-C*  
 1924  
 Community School Plans,  
 Bulletin no. 3

The schoolhouse is a two-teacher structure, following the 2-C plan of the Rosenwald Community School Plans. These plans were designed to create consistency among schools and to ensure high-quality facilities.



# People of the School

Teachers, students, and community leaders made the Russell School a pillar in the local community. Today, dedicated community members work to preserve its legacy. Above is a photo from 1946 showing the Russell School when it functioned as a community center.

## Did You Know?

School started at 8 AM, but the boys would arrive earlier to start the wood-burning stoves. This ensured that the building would be warm by the time classes started.

**6) Alumni of Russell School  
*Carolina Country***

**Volume 46, No. 9 September 2014  
Courtesy of Mrs. Phyllis Mack  
Horton**

The Historic Russell School was featured in the magazine *Carolina Country* in 2014. The cover of the magazine shows alumni of the school.

*Back row from left* - Lillie Whitten, Russell Mack, Juanita Shaw, and Amos Umstead.

*Front row from left* - Pearl Holman and Bessie Pearly



In Loving Memory  
Of  
**MISS LILLIE MAE ROGERS**

(July 27, 1906 - February 22, 1993)



Thursday, February 25, 1993  
1:00 P.M.

West Durham Baptist Church  
1901 Athens Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27707

The Reverend Dr. Harold J. Cobb, Pastor  
Officiating

**7) Lillie Mae Rogers' Funeral  
Program**

Date Unknown

Courtesy of Mrs. Valor Mack

Ms. Rogers was one of the teachers of the Russell School. She taught from 1927-1945. This is the front cover of her funeral program.

Alumni recall she drove a two-seat car and would have to spend the night with families in the community when the weather was bad.

8) *Inaugural Board Members'*  
*Document*

2014

Courtesy of Historic Russell School

This document presents the names and positions of the founding members of the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Russell Rosewnald School, the nonprofit organization overseeing the site. The Board has been instrumental in helping to restore the school. Moreover, they have provided leadership and have been a driving, energetic force behind the organization.

THE RUSSELL SCHOOL



Circa 1926

**FRIENDS OF RUSSELL**  
**ROSENWALD SCHOOL**

**INAUGURAL**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**2014**

**PHYLLIS MACK HORTON, CHAIR**

**DORIS DUNNEGAN, VICE CHAIR**

**ALICE LUNSFORD, SECRETARY**

**RUSSELL MACK, TREASURER**

**CYNTHIA LONG, COMMUNITY LIAISON**

**JOANNE ABEL**

**GERALD COLEMAN**

**EDDIE DAVIS**

**PEARL HOLMAN**

**ERNEST LUNSFORD**

**DOUGLAS MACK**

**VALOR MACK**

**JUANITA SHAW**

**HELEN ROSENWALD STAHL - HONORARY BOARD MEMBER**



**9) *Cain's Chapel Baptist Church***  
**Present day**  
**Photo by Stephanie Pryor**

When the school closed in 1945, Cain's Chapel Baptist Church purchased the building from the Durham County school system. Throughout the years, the church has maintained the school and given it new life as a community center. Today, the church still owns the building.

# Interior of the School

The Historic Russell School is extremely well-preserved and a great example of a Rosenwald School. Above is a current photo of the school's interior. The original hardwood floors, slate chalkboards, wooden partition doors, and other artifacts have survived intact.

## Did You Know?

Because schools often lacked electricity, the Community School Plans called for schools to face either east-west or north-south and to have large sashes of windows to take advantage of the natural light. The Russell School faces north.

10) *Child's School Desk and Chair*

Date Unknown

Wood and Metal

Photo by Yea Jee Bae

This is the sole surviving desk from the Russell School. It is a typical school desk and chair used by students of the period for their daily lessons. Alumni tell stories of reciting Bible verses, singing songs, and completing school lessons at their desks.





11) *Partition*  
ca. 1927  
Wood and Metal  
Photo by Yea Jee Bae

Historic Russell School is fortunate to still have both of its original partition doors. When opened, the expanded space can be used as an auditorium.





" Buy a CHAIR CAMPAIGN "

Dear Friends

In September of 1946 twenty five faithful members of the Russell Community were eager to do something to develop the recreational and educational phases of their community. With this in mind, they purchased a school in the community which was made possible through consolidation.

In order for us to complete our program it will be necessary for us to launch a drive which will be known as the " BUY A CHAIR CAMPAIGN".

I am asking you as a friend and staunch supporter of community developments to donate a chair ( NEW ) or the price of one which will be \$3.50. The names of the donors will be placed on the chairs which will in turn serve as a living memorial.

Any consideration you can give us will be greatly appreciated, and long remembered in the history of our organization.

You may send your contribution to Mr. John Mack  
Route 11, Hickory, N.C.

Thanking you in advance,

Mr. John Mack



Photo of Mr. John Mack and his wife Graco Mack  
Date Unknown  
Courtesy of Ms. Pearl Holman

Ms. Pearl Holman, daughter of John Mack and current member of the Board of Directors for the Historic Russell School, fondly remembers sitting with her father as he prepared the "Buy a Chair Campaign" letters.



## 12) Buy a Chair Campaign (Document and Chair)

1946

Courtesy of Historic Russell School

This fundraising campaign of 1946 sought to raise money for educational and recreational activities at the school. The original chairs from this campaign can be found at the school. As pictured, the donors' names were displayed on the backs of these chairs.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following groups and individuals. Without their help and support, this exhibition would not have been possible. *Historic Russell School: Durham's Last Rosenwald Schoolhouse* is made possible by exclusive sponsorship of PNC.

**Stephanie Pryor**  
Exhibition Curator, Executive Director  
*Historic Russell School*

**Board of Directors, in particular:**  
**Doris Dunnegan, Pearl Holman, Phyllis Mack Horton,**  
**Cynthia Long, Valor Mack, and Russell Mack**  
*Friends of the Russell Rosenwald School*

**Yea Jee Bae**  
Graphic Design Intern  
*Historic Russell School*

**Cain's Chapel Baptist Church**

**Katie Spencer and Patrick Mucklow**  
*Durham History Hub*

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**Peggy and Kitora Mack**

**Rev. Joyce Daye Clayton**

**Katherine Beery**  
*North Carolina Museum of History*

