



Rosenwald Schools Trail Study

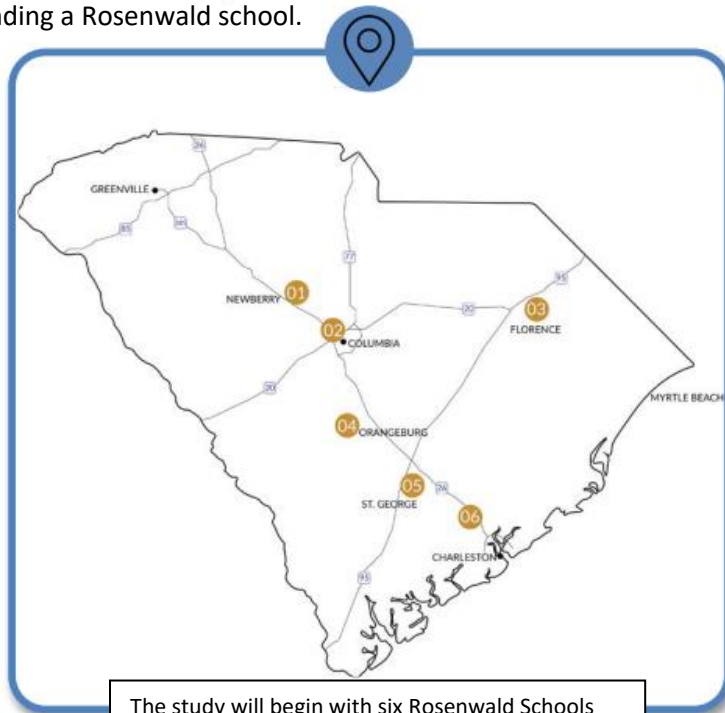
To be completed June 30, 2025

The WeGOJA Foundation, in partnership with the Conservation Voters of South Carolina and other organizations, has launched a study of extant Rosenwald School structures across the state to determine the feasibility of a historic trail for the State Park Service.

The goal is to preserve, protect, and interpret the historic significance of these schools to fill gaps in the history of education for South Carolina’s African American children.

About Rosenwalds

About 500 Rosenwald Schools were built in the remote landscapes of South Carolina in the early 20th century as part of a national program that made formal education more accessible to rural children. The program was established in 1913 by Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, AL, in collaboration with Julius Rosenwald, noted philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck & Co. headquartered in Chicago, IL. Although it was one of several initiatives that supported education for African American children during the Jim Crow / Segregation Era, the Rosenwald Schools program was considered the most robust and effective philanthropic project in the nation's history. Nearly 5,000 schools were constructed across 15 Southern states and, when the program ended in 1935, about one-third of all African American children had attended or were attending a Rosenwald school.



The study will begin with six Rosenwald Schools located from Newberry to Charleston counties.

1. Pomaria Hope School in Newberry County
2. Pine Grove Rosenwald School in Richland County
3. Mt. Zion Rosenwald School in Florence County
4. Orangeburg Teacherage in Orangeburg County
5. St George Rosenwald School in Dorchester County
6. Lincolville Rosenwald School in Charleston County

The schoolhouses built in the early years of the program were white clapboard one- or two-teacher structures that followed architectural designs offered by the Tuskegee Institute. In later years of the program, designs included 7-teacher schools (or larger) to meet growing interest in the "best environment for learning" and to respond to trends in consolidating rural schools.

All Rosenwalds were partially funded with a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Building Fund. Local communities -- often agricultural and poor -- raised additional funds to pay for school construction. Families and churches donated land, building materials, and supplies as well. They also helped provide school supplies and meals when schools were in session, and covered other costs associated with operating the school. In some cases, the effort also motivated local school boards to commit more resources to educating black children in their districts.

In South Carolina today, there are perhaps fewer than 100 Rosenwald schools still standing -- some in various stages of neglect and ruin, others repurposed as community centers, town halls, historic attractions, private homes or other uses. They stand tall, however, as symbols of community pride, resilience, and commitment to education, as well as symbols of an important era in South Carolina's history.

Without proper recognition of these sites, the threat of development is high. With South Carolina's population expanding rapidly, many of these once-rural locations are now on the front lines of suburban development.

Nationally, there's an effort to develop a Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park to celebrate Julius Rosenwald's philanthropy and to provide interpretation of this under-told story. Currently, none of the dozen sites selected for this new national park are in South Carolina. The WeGOJA Foundation, the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, the SC Department of Archives and History, select Rosenwald School communities and organizations, and other partners are collaborating to offer ideas on how a trail could be managed at the state level. A master plan is expected to be delivered to the State Park Service in June 2025.

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PROJECT TIMELINE

