



## McCLINTOCK ROSENWALD SCHOOL AND THE NEWELL ROSENWALD SCHOOL



Click here for a video: [Mecklenburg County Rosenwald Schools](#)

*This report was written on March 2, 1987*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the McClintock Rosenwald School is located on Erwin Rd., west of Highway 49 in Southern Mecklenburg County. The property known as the Newell Rosenwald School is located on Torrence Grove Church Rd. in the Newell community of Mecklenburg County.

**2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the property:**

The owner of the McClintock Rosenwald School is:

McClintock Presbyterian Church

c/o Rev. Robert Shirley

1838 Northcliff Dr.

Charlotte, N.C. 28216

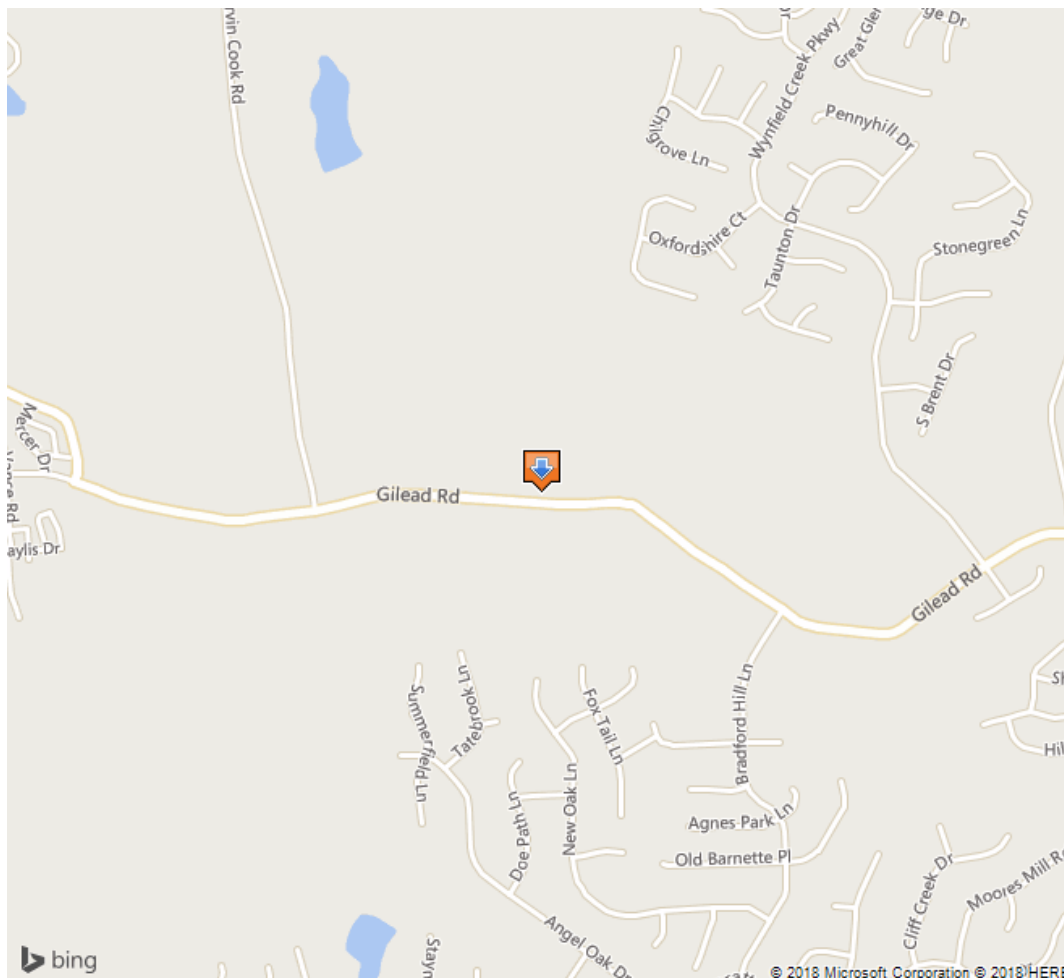
Telephone: (704) 588-2733

The owner of the Newell Rosenwald School is:  
Silver Set Lodge 327 F & AM  
Torrence Grove Church Rd.  
Charlotte, N.C. 28213

Telephone: (704) 394-0401 (Robert L. Moore)

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the McClintock Rosenwald School and the Newell Rosenwald School

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:** This report contains a map which depicts the location of the McClintock Rosenwald School and the Newell Rosenwald School.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the Property:** The most recent deed to the McClintock Rosenwald School is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1667, page 466. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is: 201-211-05. The most recent

deed to the Newell Rosenwald School is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1668, page 204. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 049-051-16.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Thomas W. Hanchett.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Thomas W. Hanchett.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:**

**a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the McClintock Rosenwald School and the property known as the Newell Rosenwald School do possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) the McClintock Rosenwald School and the Newell Rosenwald School are the best-preserved of the 21 former Rosenwald School buildings that survive in Mecklenburg County;
- 2) the former Rosenwald School buildings are the earliest black school buildings known to survive in Mecklenburg County;
- 3) the Rosenwald Schools are a reminder of the Julius Rosenwald Fund's commitment to the improvement of black education and racial cooperation in the South in the early twentieth century;
- 4) the former Rosenwald School buildings mark black farm communities which once existed in Mecklenburg County, often now vanished;
- 5) the former Rosenwald School buildings are now local examples of one of America's largest non-residential experiments in standardized architecture in the early twentieth century; and
- 6) the Rosenwald schools are testimonials to the important contributions made to black education by Dr. George E. Davis.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural descriptions included in this report demonstrate that the McClintock Rosenwald School and the Newell Rosenwald School meet this criterion.

**9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on

all or any portion of the property which becomes "historic property." The current appraised value of the McClintock Rosenwald School is \$12,380. There is no land included in the appraisal of the McClintock and Rosenwald Schools. The current appraised value of the Newell Rosenwald School is \$14,970. The current appraised value of the 1.515 acres of land is \$3,400. The total appraised value of the property is \$18,370. The property is zoned R12.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** March 2, 1987

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission  
1225 S. Caldwell St. Box D  
Charlotte, NC, 28203

Telephone: (704) 376-9115

### *Historical Overview*

*Thomas W. Hanchett*

Today few people notice the little wooden buildings scattered through the countryside. Some have been adaptively reused as houses or business. Others, particularly those that stand next to churches as community halls, retain the big banks of windows that mark them as schools. These are Rosenwald Schools, landmarks in black education from the era before federal support of local education. The schools were built with matching funds provided by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, created by the Chicago entrepreneur who directed the booming growth of Sears, Roebuck and Company. From 1917 to 1932 the building program of the Rosenwald Fund helped construct over 5300 black school buildings across the South, 813 of them in North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> Rosenwald not only provided money and architectural assistance to improve school facilities, but also promoted white-black cooperation in the era of Jim Crow. To receive Rosenwald money, the local black community and the local white community both had to contribute funds. Mecklenburg County built 26 Rosenwald schools between 1918 and 1929.<sup>2</sup> All were one-story frame buildings incorporating the most advanced theories of the day and were designed for one to four teachers. Most of the schools were phased out in the 1940s and 1950s as improved roads and

the introduction of school buses allowed consolidation of students into more efficient larger facilities. At this writing, the sites of all of the schools have been located. 10 of those buildings still stand - an important reminder of earlier era in rural education and race relations in Mecklenburg.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mecklenburg Schools Before the Rosenwald Fund**

The Rosenwald schools were by no means the first black schools in Mecklenburg County. In the city of Charlotte, the Freedmen's Bureau set up schools immediately after the Civil War, and in 1882 the city established its first "graded schools," with separate buildings for black children and white.<sup>4</sup> In the rural areas of the county, history is sketchy. Postbellum North Carolina encouraged counties to operate schools, but for many years funds were so meager that country facilities both black and white had to be subsidized by subscriptions of surrounding families. A glimpse of Mecklenburg's black schools in this early era may be seen in the diaries of young Charles Chesnutt. The Fayetteville, North Carolina, native taught school in the Charlotte area for several years before moving to the north where he won fame as "America's first black novelist."<sup>5</sup> Chesnutt's own challenge as a rural educator was finding an operating school. In July of 1874, at the age of eighteen, he was called to teach summer school at Rockwell Church (later a Rosenwald school), five miles north of town on the Statesville Railroad.<sup>6</sup> When with high hopes he reached the place, he found there was no money to pay a teacher. He then returned to Charlotte, his daughter later wrote, "hired a saddle horse, and rode down to Morrow's Turnout to find a school, but all the schools were running and no teachers were needed.... At Moore's Sanctuary he was told that the people had used up the school funds in building a schoolhouse and had no money for teacher."<sup>7</sup> Chesnutt went home to Fayetteville to teach that summer, but in 1875 he was back in rural Mecklenburg County to teach at a school held in "a church called Jonesville or Jonahville" in the Mallard Creek area:

"...by dint of stopping and inquiring at every house, and by climbing fences and growing cotton fields, I arrived at Jonesville. Where the "ville" was I am not able to say, for there was but one house within nearly a half a mile of the "church." The church itself was a very dilapidated log structure, without a window: but there was no real need of one, for the cracks between the logs furnished a plentiful supply."<sup>8</sup>

In the 1880s, Mecklenburg County evidently stepped up its support for education. During the eighties and early nineties the county purchased a number of sites for black and white schools and presumably provided some funds for construction, maintenance, and teachers.<sup>9</sup> But the situation remained much as Chesnutt had found it,

particularly for black children. Many facilities had one room. There were no school buses yet, so each building held only as many students as could arrive each day on foot. School terms were short and broken up so that children could help families with planting and harvesting, and black students' school terms were shorter than white's. Public instruction rarely extended beyond the elementary grades for white children and never for blacks. Teachers were often youngsters themselves, with only a bit more education than their charges. There was no federal presence, and not much state development in education, particularly in school construction. All buildings were locally funded. A wealthy area might have good schools, but there was no way to channel public resources to help a poor area improve its facilities. And in the South, most rural areas were poor.

### **Philanthropic Response to "Jim Crow" and Disenfranchisement**

The 1890's witnessed a rising tide of anti-black feeling in the South. Though historical evidence is strong that blacks were at no time treated equally in the decades after the Civil War, it was not until the 1890's that Southern whites began in earnest to erect the legal barriers known as the Jim Crow laws. An important step in this direction came with the landmark Plessy vs Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1895 which sanctioned "separate but equal treatment for black citizens."<sup>10</sup> Southern schools had always been separate, but never equal. The new ruling emboldened the forces intent at further curtailing black opportunity.<sup>11</sup> Legislators offered an amendment to the North Carolina Constitution requiring that black schools be locally funded only in proportion to the black share of the taxes. Since blacks were poor and paid a miniscule part of county taxes, this "equality" would ensure substandard schools. The amendment was not passed, but, nevertheless, local school outlays often reflected the tax payment differently between the races. In 1900 North Carolina joined most of the other former Confederate states in requiring that citizens pass a literacy test before registering to vote.<sup>13</sup>

It was no accident that they effectively disenfranchised most of the poor white Populists then challenging the Democratic leadership, and also disenfranchised the Populist black allies. Suddenly schooling was a very tangible sense the key to political power. Scholars have pointed out that one response to loss of voting rights was North Carolina's firm sustained grassroots drive for white public education.<sup>14</sup> Organizations such as the Women's Association for the Betterment of Public School sprang up across the state. Another response was sharply increased support by white philanthropy for Negro education after 1900. A few philanthropic agencies had contributed to black education for many years.<sup>15</sup> The George Peabody Fund, organized by coal and railroad a millionaire in 1867, set the pattern. It focused on training black teachers, and provided money for colleges and universities in the South. The John F. Slater Fund, created by a Connecticut textile tycoon in 1882, also funded teacher training,

mainly at private colleges. Church sponsored programs had the focus. A.M.E. Zion colleges, aimed at turning out teachers, sprang up at Salisbury (Livingstone College, for men) and Concord (Barber Scotia, for women), North Carolina, in the 1870's and 1880's. The Presbyterian Church, USA, set up a system of preparatory schools that fed into Charlotte's. Biddle Institute (renamed Johnson C. Smith University in the 1920s), highly regarded as a producer of teachers and preachers."<sup>16</sup>

After 1900 efforts shifted from simply training educators toward improving virtually all aspects of black schooling.<sup>17</sup> The Rockefeller-funded General Education Board, began in 1902, gave the Southern public schools grants for all types of projects "without distinction of sex, race, or creed. Among its programs was matching funding of State Agents for Negro Rural Schools. which ensured that each state education department would have full-time specialist directing efforts. The Anna T. Jeanes Fund, created by a Pennsylvania Quaker woman in 1908, provided "Jeanes Supervisors" for hundreds of black school districts. These specially trained teachers guided healthcare, childrearing, and home economics. The John F. Slater Fund, 1913, undertook research studies which guided other philanthropists. Among its products was a massive survey of Negro education conducted by Dr. Anson Phelps-Stokes and published in two volumes by the United States Bureau of Education in 1916. All these agencies shared the belief that philanthropic support of black education would promote equality. Supplementary funding would encourage states and localities to increase money spent on schools. Eventually the differences between white and black programs would disappear, and the private agencies would withdraw. As blacks achieved parity in education, the philanthropic hoped, white racism would end and whites would accept black as equals. The capstone of this effort was the Julius Rosenwald Fund, created in 1917.

### **"Mr. Sears-Roebuck" Promotes Cooperation**

Julius Rosenwald was born August 12, 1862, in Springfield, Illinois, the son of a German Jewish immigrant who had worked his way from peddler to partner in a clothing concern.<sup>18</sup> Young Julius dropped out of high school at age 17 to be an apprentice in his uncle's clothing firm. In five years he had his own business. By 1897 he had amassed enough capital that Richard Sears approached him about investing in the new, fast-growing mail-order firm of Sears, Roebuck, and Company. Rosenwald came in on a good thing. In his first three years, Sears' sales jumped from \$1.4 million to nearly \$11 million. All of America turned eagerly to the thick Sears, Roebuck catalog to order everything from furniture to fiddles. By the mid 1900's consumers could even mail-order automobiles or an entire ready-to-assemble house from the company's massive warehouses centered in Chicago. In 1909 Rosenwald became president of Sears, Roebuck. When he retired in 1924 yearly sales stood at \$200

million. Along the way he acquired a reputation as an incisive and generous industrial leader, who initiated one of America's first large profit-sharing plans at Sears in 1916.

With the personal fortune he amassed, he also became known as one of America's leading philanthropists. Rosenwald took interest in a wide range of causes, including hospitals and health care, colleges and museums, and Jewish charities. But his chief concern was Negro equality in the South, particularly in education. It seemed an unexpected calling for a wealthy white man whose life and business concerns were centered in the Mid West. Rosenwald's interest was sparked by fellow philanthropists Paul J. Sachs of the Goldman Sachs investment house and William H. Baldwin of the Southern Railway and by books, especially Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*.<sup>19</sup> After providing matching grants for a handful of black YMCAs, Rosenwald met the great black educator in 1911 and soon became a trustee of Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. It was Washington who suggested that Rosenwald's help was needed not just with higher education, as offered at Tuskegee, but with elementary schools throughout the South. Rosenwald's first effort was a one-room school near Tuskegee in 1913.<sup>20</sup> By Dr. Washington's death in 1915, Rosenwald's had already personally given matching funds for some eighty black schools in a three-state area.

Two years later Rosenwald set up his foundation to continue and expand the school-building program. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked the beginning of America's great foundations. The families who gained fabulous wealth building industrial America began to set up professionally-run organizations to direct portions of the wealth to the solution of social ills.<sup>21</sup> The age saw the creation of the Ford, Rockefeller, and Reynolds foundations, the Duke Endowment, and many others. Among the best-known foundation projects of the day was steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie's gift of matching funds for public libraries, erected in 1,412 American towns and cities.<sup>22</sup> The Carnegie Library effort aimed at communities of all races all over the United States, but otherwise was a model for the Rosenwald school effort. The Julius Rosenwald Fund was incorporated in October 30, 1917, to carry out all of its founder's charitable activities.<sup>23</sup> Fund officials recognized that the problem of black schooling in the South were very broad: Education was so poor that it was hardly worth the name. In all of the South there was not a single standard eight-grade rural Negro public school, no Negro public high school approved for even two years of high school work. The schools, such as they were, were open for an average of four months a year, were presided over by teachers whose average training was that of an eighth grade student and whose annual salary in many states was less than \$150.00.

Of all these shortcomings, Julius Rosenwald directed the Fund to attack first the most visible problem, poor elementary school buildings. In 1917, a Fund official wrote later the typical black school in the South was a one- or two- room hand-me-down, an old



white school, a rotting log cabin, or even a corncrib. For its initial decade, rural school construction was the Rosenwald Fund's major focus, accounting for all but \$600 thousand of the \$4 million spent.<sup>23</sup> Julius Rosenwald could simply have addressed the school house problem by giving money. But instead he sought to use his gifts to break down the barriers between whites and blacks which had led to the inequality: Certain definite conditions had to be met before the Fund would consider (making) a contribution:

- A school had to represent common effort by the state and county authorities and the local colored and white citizens. The state and county had to contribute to the building and agree to maintain it as a regular part of the public school system.
- White citizens had to take an interest and contribute part of the money, since it was felt that white leadership was essential to the success of the program in the South. Usually land for the school was deeded to the state or county as the gift of a local white man.
- The Negroes themselves had to show their desire for education by making gifts of money or labor, usually both. The program was projected not merely as a series of school houses, but as a community enterprise in cooperation between citizens and officials, white and colored.

Though the Rosenwald Fund was a latecomer among the interlocking array of philanthropies that underwrote black education in the South, its wide-ranging building program quickly made it the most important. Wrote North Carolina's Director of Negro Education N.C. Newbold:

School Superintendents, Jeanes teachers, General Education Board Agents, County Training School Principals, and people, all seized upon the Rosenwald school as something visible, tangible, and evidence of progress in Negro education that could not be gainsaid. It probably was the "missing link" all agencies needed to round out a complete program for Negro schools.

The program initially covered states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.<sup>28</sup> Missouri was added soon after. The border state of Delaware did not participate in the Rosenwald program, but did have a similar fund provided by industrialist Pierre S. DuPont. By 1920 the building program was so big that it could no longer be administered from Chicago. Rosenwald established a Southern office in Nashville, under the direction of S. I. Smith, an experienced administrator previously with the Tennessee state education department.<sup>29</sup> Rosenwald gave Smith direct charge of the school-building program across the South.

### **The Interstate School Building Service**

One of S. I. Smith's first actions at the Nashville office was to create an architectural department to research and draw school designs.<sup>30</sup> The move was a logical one for a foundation established

by the precedent of Sears, Roebuck and Company. Sears had included building supplies in its catalogs since 1895, and in 1908 began issuing a special catalog of houseplans for which all materials could be ordered pre-cut and ready for assembly.<sup>31</sup> The company sold so many "mail order houses" that in 1919, under president Rosenwald, Sears established its own in-house Architectural Division in Chicago. The school-house office in Nashville was almost certainly a separate entity, and it never provided building materials along with its plans, but the concept may well be traced to Julius Rosenwald's commercial involvement in residential architecture. Smith initially issued school designs one at a time in four page pamphlets, "made available upon request to white and Negro schools alike."<sup>32</sup>

Demand proved so great that in 1924 that pamphlets were reissued and a booklet entitled *Community School Plans*. The booklet included designs for seventeen schools ranging in size from one-teacher to seven-teachers. For each design the book showed a floor-plan and an artist's rendering of the exterior. There were also two plans for teacher's houses, plus a "Sanitary Privy for Community School." Along with the designs the book included sample contractor's specifications, and advice on site location and size, painting, and landscaping. Once a community chose a design, detailed blue-prints and specifications could be obtained via the state education office. In his introduction, Smith suggested the school be erected "as near the center of population as possible," preferably near a public road.<sup>33</sup> The site should be at least two acres, with the school located near one corner, to "give ample space for the schoolhouse, two sanitary privies, a teacher's home, playgrounds for the boys and girls, a plot for agricultural demonstrations, and proper landscaping." Classroom space should exceed current enrollment, since a "new school will generally attract larger numbers than the old.

A one-teacher community school will accommodate not more than 45 pupils, a two-teacher not more than 90, a three-teacher 115 to 125, etc." The designs were planned to be "simple and efficient," even omitting corridors where possible to save on costs. Construction specifications matched those of a good suburban bungalow of the day. Exteriors were usually weatherboard nailed over a sub-wall of diagonal sheathing. Three exterior color schemes were suggested: "white wood preservative stain, a nut brown trimmed in white or cream would be satisfactory." Brick chimneys carried the smoke from the coal or wood stoves that stood in each classroom. Interior featured a sub-floor topped by oiled wooden flooring, wooden tongue-and-groove wainscoting, and plaster walls. Each room had a blackboard set at a scientifically determined height. Even the smallest designs included a small porch and a pair of cloak rooms. The Rosenwald designs represented the state-of-the-art in American school architecture. The buildings were one-story tall, a characteristic which did not become prevalent in American schools until the 1950's. Correspondence in the files of the North Carolina Rosenwald office indicates that rural blacks were sometimes reluctant to build a one-story building, feeling that a two-story architecture was more prestigious. "It is a fact," noted North Carolina official W. F. Credle, "that the colored people themselves prefer the two-story type."<sup>34</sup> In a letter to Credle, Smith succinctly set forth reasons why the Rosenwald Fund disliked two-story designs:

The one-story looks better, is more convenient in organization, administration, etc., furnishes safety against fire or unexpected collapses and will cost less than the two-story, provided the

two-story is built with reasonable safety in construction and safety to life. Somehow, I would feel rather mean if I were to be party to erecting a two-story pine building in the country and later on should learn that the building had burned, causing the loss of many innocent lives. This is why we do not furnish any two-story plans from this office.<sup>35</sup>

Since there was seldom electricity available, the overriding design concern was the maximization of natural light. The architects used groupings of tall double hung sky windows oriented to catch only east-west light, rather than the less-intense north-south sunshine. Each school type as drawn in two variations, one which could be oriented north-south, the other east-west. An injunction in capital letters at the beginning of Community School Plans emphasized:

**THE BUILDING SHOULD ALWAYS BE SET WITH POINTS OF THE COMPASS, AND THE PLAN SO DESIGNED THAT EVERY CLASSROOM WILL RECEIVE EAST OR WEST LIGHT. A PLAN DRAWN TO FACE EAST OR WEST COULD NOT PROPERLY BE USED TO FACE NORTH OR SOUTH, OR VICA VERSA.**

Color schemes, seat arrangements, and even window shade arrangements were specified to make the fullest use of sun light. Tan window shades should be used rather than the traditional green, preferably with a two shades per window for more accurate regulation of light. Floor plans showed seating always arranged so that the windows were at the children's left side: that way the pupil's writing arms would not cast shadows on their desk tops (this worked only for the right-handed majority, of course). The Rosenwald Fund required that interiors not be left unpainted. This was for sanitary, aesthetic, and maintenance reasons, but mainly because, "it will materially increase the amount of light in the classroom." The Fund permitted only two interior paint schemes:

**COLOR SCHEME NO. 1 - Cream ceiling, buff walls and walnut wainscoting or dado - is very desirable for the interior of a classroom, as it is pleasing to the eye and reflects an abundance of light.**

**COLOR SCHEME NO. 2 - Ivory cream ceiling, light gray walls and walnut stain wainscoting or dado - if paint is properly mixed and applied is generally satisfactory.**

Contractors were cautioned to use non-gloss paint and, conversely, "not to mix lamp black with white paint in order to make for interior walls, as such a mixture will reflect very little light." Smith noted proudly that all Rosenwald designs provided neutral light well in excess of minimums proved by the National Education Association's Committee on Schoolhouse Planning and Construction:

The Foot-Candle meter has been used to measure the amount of daylight illumination in a sufficient number of schools built on these plans to demonstrate clearly that they have ample light at all times of the year, provided the windows are constructed according to plans, the interior painted in keeping with directions and the high sky light not shut out by dark green roll shades fastened at the top of the windows or by trees or other obstructions too near the windows.

These techniques, now being rediscovered by architects interested in "passive solar" design were not offered merely as suggestions. Warned Smith "the Fund will not aid in the construction of any building improperly lighted and painted." An important provision was an "Industrial Room" in every design, something which flowed already from Booker T. Washington writings.<sup>36</sup> According to Fund officials, the rural schools "were not to provide only formal and theoretical 'book larnin' but also practical work and to have at least one room for shop and home arts and two acres of land available for farm gardens. In addition, to their lessons, the girls were expected to learn sewing and cooking and the boys farming and simple work with tools."<sup>37</sup> Another key provision was an auditorium or meeting room. Rosenwald envisioned his schools as community centers for adults as well as children. Wrote Smith:

...the best modern school is one which is designed to serve the entire community for twelve months in the year....Whenever possible a good auditorium, large enough to seat the entire community, should be erected in connection with every community school. If there are not sufficient funds for an auditorium, two adjoining classrooms with movable partitions may be made to serve this purpose.

In fact, most Rosenwald buildings were middle-sized, designed for two to four teachers, and most incorporated the movable partition scheme, either with commercially available folding doors or sliding blackboard panels. The work of the architectural office proved extremely worthwhile. It became a division of Peabody College in Nashville, and the General Education Board and the Rosenwald Fund supported it long after the building program itself ended. Known as the Interstate School Building Service, it continued as late as 1950 to "supply plans and specifications for a variety of school buildings, together with information on such related problems as landscaping, rehabilitation of schools, playgrounds, etc."<sup>38</sup> The impact of the Interstate School Building Service on educational architecture in the first half of the twentieth century cannot be overemphasized. In addition to its original mission, it also helped to shape more than fifteen thousand white schools which otherwise had no relation to the fund.<sup>39</sup>

### **The North Carolina Division for Negro Education**

The school planning office was one important early concept of the Rosenwald Fund. Another was that Fund activities be channeled through the state education departments of the Southern states.<sup>40</sup> Rosenwald officials hoped to bring a lasting commitment to black education at the state level by creating a network of knowledgeable, dedicated administrators. In the early 1910s, the General Education Board had provided money to help states hire administrators to deal specifically with rural schools. North Carolina was the second state (after Virginia) to appropriate the required matching funds, and in 1913 the state appointed two "agents for rural schools."<sup>41</sup> N.C. Newbold was the choice for "Negro agent," and proved to be an able leader. A white man from Washington, North Carolina, he won respect of rural blacks and whites and legislators as well.<sup>42</sup>

Newbold's enthusiasm for Rosenwald schools predated formal creation of the Fund. In 1915, Newbold arranged with Julius Rosenwald for the construction of one of the first school houses

outside the Tuskegee area. On October 8, 1913, the school - a two teacher facility in Chowan County - was completed and inspected.<sup>43</sup> The black community contributed \$836, and Julius Rosenwald himself provided \$300, for a total of \$1,622. With the establishment of the Rosenwald Fund in 1917 came assistance for Newbold. Julius Rosenwald offered to pay one-half the salary of a trained Negro assistant in each southern state, on condition that the state provide at least half the salary and expenses....by 1918, Negro assistants were employed in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. They worked directly under the state agents in arousing interest among Negro schools and communities, helping them to raise money to qualify for the building of Rosenwald schools, a county training school, the employment of county Jeanes supervisors, and lengthening the school term, and whatever else the superintendent of the county might want him to do while visiting his county.<sup>44</sup>

As work increased, the state offices of Negro education began to hire white assistants as well, under a new program funded by the General Education Board. These individuals either had special training in education or were sent back to college for graduate study. Their responsibilities were quite different from the grassroots fund-raising work of their black counterparts:

[The white assistants] took special work in such subjects as curriculum development, rural education, schoolhouse planning, and sanitation, and secondary education. In this way various aspects of the Negro school program were developed on professional bases (sic). They were in a position to succeed to the position of state agent, whenever there was a vacancy."<sup>43</sup>

North Carolina was the first state to hire a white assistant under the program, in July 1919.<sup>46</sup> In 1921 the General Assembly formally created the Division of Negro Education within the State Department of Public Instruction.<sup>47</sup> The staff consisted of Director Newbold and five administrators, three black and two white, plus a secretary and two stenographers.<sup>48</sup> In addition to directing the Rosenwald program, the office supervised black state colleges and other teacher training activities, oversaw black high school and elementary school education and eventually also administered North Carolina's Jeanes program.<sup>49</sup> W. F. Credle was hired in 1921 as Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, and George E. Davis of Charlotte joined that about the same time as Supervisor of Rosenwald Buildings.<sup>50</sup> Together the white assistant and the black assistant made North Carolina the leading state in the Rosenwald building program. By 1932 North Carolina's rural black communities raised money for 813 Rosenwald school buildings.<sup>51</sup> This achievement was far ahead of second-place Mississippi, which erected 633 and third place Texas, which built 527. In part the Fund's success in North Carolina can be laid to the continuity of effort of Newbold, and the support he won in state government. North Carolina not only had one of the largest Negro Education staffs in the South, but it was one of the most sincere in its pursuit of black participation. The Office in neighboring South Carolina, for example, had only two professional staff members and never hired any black administrators.<sup>52</sup> Credit was due as well to W. F. Credle, a University of North Carolina graduate and former county superintendent who the office sent to Peabody College in Nashville for graduate courses in school-house planning. Credle was so effective an administrator that Smith brought him to Nashville in about

1929 to help direct the school house building program in its last two years. Julius Rosenwald is said to have joked with S. L. Smith, "go ahead and employ him. He is building so many schools in North Carolina we will save money by bringing him into our office."<sup>53</sup>

### **Dr. George E. Davis, North Carolina Fundraiser**

Much credit for the success of the Rosenwald program in North Carolina must also go to Dr. George E. Davis, tireless foot-soldier of fund-raising. Davis was born in 1862 in Wilmington, North Carolina, son of a policeman.<sup>54</sup> His upbringing was unusually privileged for a nineteenth century black youth, but it provided a valuable grounding for the future Rosenwald officer.<sup>55</sup> After attending Wilmington's Gregory Institute, Davis taught himself in Laurinburg in his late teens. He went on to Charlotte's Biddle Institute (now Johnson C. Smith University), which was to improve black education in the South. After graduate work at Howard's University in Washington D.C., Davis returned to Charlotte in 1885 to become Biddle's first black professor. He taught natural science and sociology for nearly four decades, served as an athletic coach, was Dean of Faculty for fifteen years, and "was at different times Secretary and President of the State Teacher's Association."<sup>56</sup> Though his focus was on the Biddle campus in this period, Davis also became involved in public schools, though his wife Marie G. Davis who was principal of the city's black Fairview School. Together the couple took a leading role in the establishment of summer institutes at Biddle, designed to provide supplemental training for the young teachers in the region's black elementary schools.<sup>57</sup> By the time he retired from teaching at Biddle in 1920, George E. Davis had five grown children, lived in a handsome two-story Victorian residence at the edge of campus, and had a number of profitable real estate investments. Many men would have simply sat on the front porch and rocked. But Davis gave up the comfort of home for a second career as a builder of schools. Raising the local black money toward the Rosenwald schools was no simple task among the cotton and tobacco tenants of North Carolina. Fund officials noted:

The lethargy and suspicion of Negroes had to be overcome. It was difficult to change old ways. Some felt that if no schooling or classes in old church buildings had been good enough for them, it was good enough for their children. Others did not trust the white philanthropists from the North. Why should they give something for nothing, and especially to colored folks? If they did raise their share of their money, would the white men keep their promise? And Negroes were so poor -- how was it possible to get so much money? One hundred dollars, two hundred dollars were fantastic sums to little communities of impoverished Negroes.<sup>58</sup>

The requirements for black support were stiff by any standards, since a four-teacher Rosenwald School could cost \$4,000, as much as a middle-class suburban house. The Rosenwald Fund seems to have simply set maximum amounts it would contribute to any building, determined according to number of classrooms, rather than mandating any particular proportion between black and white or public and private funding. The fund budgeted from \$200 for a one-teacher structure to \$2600 for a six-teacher facility.<sup>59</sup> In practice, local blacks and the Rosenwald Fund split the remainder, with local white private contributions negligible. Davis spent most of the 1920's on the road, following unpaved farm lanes from settlement to settlement to kindle the

fires of education. "Traveled approximately 1100 miles visited sixteen Rosenwald Schools. Helped in raising \$600.00 for Rosenwald Buildings. Addressed 2000 people, "reads the "Summary" at the end of his monthly report for March 1929.<sup>60</sup> Davis criss-crossed the state by automobile, seldom spending more than two days in the same place, and sometimes not returning to his Charlotte home for weeks. His itinerary for October 1922 indicates the range of his work:

Oct. 1  
Waxhaw, Union County  
Oct. 2-3  
Raeford, Hoke County  
Oct. 4  
Fayetteville, Cumberland County  
Oct. 5-6  
Raleigh, Wake County  
Oct. 7-8  
Durham, Durham County  
Oct. 8-10  
Greensboro, Guilford County  
Oct. 11-13  
Charlotte: Reports and Letters  
Oct. 14-15  
Statesville, Iredell County  
Oct. 16  
Kannapolis, and Concord, Cabarrus County Oct. 17  
Unionville, Union County  
Oct. 18  
En route Smithfield  
Oct. 19  
Smithfield - Thursday  
Oct. 20  
Other points in Nash (County) - Friday  
Oct. 21-22  
Wilson, Saturday and Sunday  
Oct. 23-24  
Wayne County, Goldsboro  
Oct. 25  
Johnson County and Smithfield  
Oct. 26  
Raleigh  
Oct. 27  
Pinehurst  
Oct. 28  
Charlotte-McClintock  
Oct. 29

Huntersville  
Oct. 30-31  
Charlotte Reports and Office Work

Sometimes an existing sub-standard school would provide the focus for Davis' efforts. Often he would begin fresh with the congregation and elders of a country church.<sup>62</sup> In a region where black participation in nearly any organized activity was discouraged, churches provided the single strong institutional framework for black endeavor. After Davis met with black leaders of the rural community and with county school officials, a community-wide rally was scheduled to kick off fund-raising efforts. "FINANCIAL EDUCATION RALLY to be held at White Store Colored School Saturday, Feb. 18, 1928 for the purpose of raising money for a new school building" trumpets one surviving handbill.<sup>63</sup> A free dinner attracted the crowd, and a "special program" of distinguished speakers talked up the need for education. At the White Store rally, these "prominent visitors" included the white Anson County school superintendent, his deputy for black education, and Wadesboro A.M.E. Zion minister. Principal speaker for the afternoon was Dr. George E. Davis. A successful rally yielded both cash donations and pledges. Finding cash-money in rural North Carolina was a challenge in that era, and it was especially difficult for black sharecroppers. These families received the necessities of life from their landlords, and paid for them at harvest with a share of the crop: often no cash ever changed hands. Money for the Rosenwald schoolhouses was gathered a penny and a nickel at a time. Wrote a North Carolina observer in 1924:

"Box parties" are often given to raise money for a school building. An acre of cotton may be planted and the profits from the sale of it applied on the school. In many sections hogs and chickens are raised by the community to obtain money for buildings. At Lumber Bridge, in Robeson County, the people gave seventy thousand feet of lumber for framing and sheathing. This was cut from their own lands, hauled by their own teams to a saw mill owned by themselves, saved by bill, and laid down on a school lot purchased with their own funds.<sup>64</sup>

Davis visited each site again and again, offering encouragement as pledges were collected, then inspecting construction to ensure it met Rosenwald standards.<sup>65</sup> In a 1931 report, Davis commented approvingly upon a return visit to Thompson's Chapel School in Robeson County: "Found that additional blackboards were added after first inspection, lattice put around the building between the pines, and considerable playground equipment placed."<sup>66</sup> Officials had also belatedly nailed chalk "channels" to the bottom of each blackboard. Davis could get tough if persuasion failed. The same report listed a project at Marshville in Union County where paint, seating, desks, and blackboards were substandard or absent. "Since it seemed that only the seating would be provided if Rosenwald money were granted, it was decided that in as much as the contract signed in application was not carried out to our satisfaction, to withdraw from the project, and the amount asked for was withheld."<sup>67</sup> Completion of a Rosenwald building was cause for a celebration, and for a bit more fund-raising, as Dr. Davis pragmatically wrote about one school: "The dedication was held mainly to have the people present, that they might secure money enough to run the school for an extra month."<sup>68</sup> Davis expressed special pleasure in the opening of Long Creek School in Pender County:



[T]he chairman of the County Board of Education, the white Committeemen of the school and the principal and faculty of the white school of the community came out and joined with the colored people in expressions of appreciation. The building was filled to capacity and perhaps as large a number were at the windows and around the doors and grounds.... I think as much satisfaction over the building was shown by the large number of white people present, most of whom were served dinner in the building, as by the Negroes themselves. I was born within thirty miles of this place and I have known the time that white people would have lost their social prestige among their fellows had they been courageous enough to come out and dine....<sup>69</sup>

Dr. Davis continued to visit after schools were in use. At the eight-year old Rockwell School in Mecklenburg County Derita community in 1927:

Sunday the 30th of January I addressed the Parent Teacher Association in the Methodist Church near the School. They are raising money to pay for painting the building, repairing windows, and building sanitary closets. This obligation is, of course upon the County, but the Superintendent is not willing to do his duty by these people. They have gone on doing for themselves. We raised about \$27.00 and turned it into the treasury of the Association.<sup>70</sup>

Davis returned to the schools more often in March for "Rosenwald Day" exercises.<sup>71</sup> The event was the brainchild of Fund officials who recognized a need to regularly "re-arouse community interest in schools, encourage the cleaning and beautifying of the school building and grounds, and to raise money for needed repairs or additions to equipment. To promote this effort, the Fund supplied the incidental expenses involved by the several state departments of education in issuing circulars and stirring up interest in this annual school festival in hundreds of communities throughout the rural south."<sup>72</sup>

### **Twenty-Six Schools in Mecklenburg**

Through the efforts of Davis, Credle, Newbold, and thousands of local citizens, Rosenwald school houses scattered thickly across North Carolina. Eventually all but seven of the state's 100 counties boasted at least one Rosenwald facility.<sup>73</sup> Rosenwald school houses were rarer -- though not unknown -- in the predominantly white counties of the Blue Ridge mountains in the western part of the state, and more common in the Piedmont and coastal plain. Concentrations were highest in two areas. One was the so-called "Black Belt" of tobacco counties in the northern coastal plains, particularly Halifax County, Edgecombe County, and Warren County, where black population sometimes equaled or even exceeded the white. Close behind the Black Belt were the counties which constituted the heart of North Carolina's cotton-growing region in the Southern Piedmont: Anson County and Mecklenburg County. Mecklenburg erected twenty-six Rosenwald buildings by July 1, 1930.<sup>74</sup>

The strong showing may have had something to do with the fact that Mecklenburg was Dr. Davis' homebase. It may also have been aided by the presence of the city of Charlotte in the

county's midst. The city's School Board was completely separate from the county's, and did not participate in the Rosenwald program. But Charlotte was a fast-growing textile and banking center, which in 1930 emerged as the larger city in North and South Carolina, and its existence may have injected additional cash money into the surrounding economy. But probably the predominant reason why Mecklenburg built so many Rosenwald schools was that the county remained strongly rural despite the city at its center. Mecklenburg had long been among the state's leading agricultural producers, particularly cotton.<sup>75</sup> In both 1920 and 1930 rural blacks numbered just over 12, 000 people, constituting around thirty percent of the non-urban population.<sup>76</sup> Many worked as tenant farmers. "In 1920," wrote University of North Carolina economist Edgar T. Thompson, "61.9 percent of Mecklenburg's farms were operated by tenants, and the percentage was higher than that of 85 other North Carolina counties."<sup>77</sup> The first Rosenwald projects in Mecklenburg came before Dr. Davis joined the state program. State records show that in 1918-1919 Mecklenburg citizens raised matching money for a pair of one-teacher schools, at Piney Grove and Zoar.<sup>78</sup> Another one-teacher unit followed in 1919-1920 at Jonesville, and in 1920-1921 four schools were funded, ranging from a one-teacher building at Ebenezer to a four-teacher facility at Rockwell. Creation of the Division of Negro Education in 1921 saw a stepped-up school building schedule, and a trend toward larger structures. No more one-teacher Rosenwald units were constructed in Mecklenburg after 1921, as the County concentrated in two-, three-, and especially four-teacher buildings.

Mecklenburg's Rosenwald Schools often stood near a church. Several of these were Presbyterian, probably thanks to Dr. Davis' long standing Presbyterian contacts through Biddle Institute. Baptist, A.M.E. Zion, and Methodist congregations also built Billingsville, for example, the black founders of that farm community, Sam and Alice Billings, sold two acres of their own land to the School Board in order to secure a Rosenwald facility.<sup>79</sup> All the schools were centers of small rural black settlements. Such communities, now disappearing, were an important characteristic of the rural landscape of the Carolinas in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Dr. Davis, the Rosenwald program played a significant part in their development: "Building good Rosenwald schools has helped to stabilize industrial and social conditions by encouraging colored people to own and build their own homes near such schools."<sup>80</sup> Some of those communities survive today in Mecklenburg County, as at Huntersville and Rockwell. Others are much altered, as at Billingsville (Grier Heights) and especially Little Hope, which have become black suburban sections of Charlotte with new brick ranch-style houses. Many have vanished as at McClintock where only fields surround the old school and church, and the descendants of the former tenant farmers now drive from homes in Charlotte to worship each Sunday. Mecklenburg Rosenwald Schools had weatherboard exteriors, with the possible exception of the Matthews and Billingsville facilities, which may have originally been sheathed in brick. Mecklenburg's oldest known Rosenwald building today is Rockwell School.<sup>81</sup> It has an "L" shaped plan unlike anything shown in Community School Plans, and it originally had a second story (which was removed after damage in a 1930's windstorm). Though the design was locally generated, it did incorporate an industrial room, and a pair of classrooms which could be thrown together as an auditorium by means of a movable partition.<sup>82</sup> Mecklenburg's other surviving Rosenwald facilities were evidently planned after S. I. Smith opened his Nashville architectural department, for they closely resemble published designs. Rosenwald requirements did not preclude some improvisation, however. McClintock School, for instance, is clearly Smith's "Three Teacher Community School to Face East or West Only," with three classrooms,

an industrial room, and ample cloakrooms.<sup>83</sup> But it has a high hip roof rather than the suggested gable, a different front porch and entrance treatment, and banks of four rather than five windows lighting each classroom. Each Mecklenburg Rosenwald school house originally had a pair of privies. Only a single such building still stands in 1987, behind Rockwell School. McClintock and Rockwell students remember "coal houses" out back as well; one still stands in poor repair at Rockwell.<sup>84</sup> Community School Plans showed designs for teachers' houses to be built near the schools, but records indicate that none were funded in Mecklenburg.<sup>85</sup> In the early years Mecklenburg's rural teachers boarded with neighbors. The automobile seems to have eventually ended this practice. A 1945 list of county school principals indicates that all but three lived in Charlotte, with the majority concentrated in neighborhoods near Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte's black intellectual center.<sup>86</sup>

### **Students and Teachers Remember Life in the Classroom**

"The devotion started about 8:30. We sang songs, and we and said the Lord's Prayer, and the 23rd Psalm was always said," recalls Shelby Foust, a McClintock pupil in the 1920's.<sup>87</sup> The schools had wooden benches and desks facing a large blackboard in each classroom. One of the county's largest Rosenwald schools, McClintock was a four-teacher facility, so the eight grades had to double up. According to George Reid, a student in the 1930's: "The teacher would have a few pupils in the second grade and a few in the third grade. While she's be teaching the second grade, the third grade would be studying." Samuel Spears remembers the same practice at Rockwell School in the 1920's: "You'd have one grade on one side of the room, and one on the other, with an aisle in between....The principal always taught the oldest grades." Says McClintock alumna Christine Luster: "There was a cloakroom where the children were disciplined, and at that time children really had a lot of pride. It wasn't the anger type of pride; they did not want their peers to see them disciplined." Fellow pupil Linwood Foust: "You really didn't need to see the discipline. You could hear the discipline." Shelby Foust: "[teachers used] a special kind of hickory stick. Down behind the church there grew some kind of red hickory that didn't break. They kept them by the dozens."

"When you got here, it was terrible. You'd be so cold your fingers, they's just ache like a toothache. Teacher, she'd get wash pan and put some cold water in it and you'd wash your hands in that cold water," remembers Lucille Stewart, who attended McClintock School 1930-1937. Dorthea Wallace, who taught at Clear Creek 1930-1944, recalls arriving half an hour before school started at 9 AM to light a fire in the stove of her classroom: "The kindling and the coal would already be inside. After you would start the fire you would have to keep it going. In the middle of winter the cold still seeped in through the big windows. We'd put benches around the potbelly stove and that's how we'd stay warm," says Clear Creek alumnus Johnnie Lineberger. "We'd usually keep our coats on." Mecklenburg's black schools opened during the summer, as well, in order to have a fall break for harvesting. Remembers Stewart, "when you're going to school in August, you could go half a day, then you went home and picked cotton." Black schools closed completely from late August to early October: white schools did not. According to long-time Clear Creek principal Paris McCorkie, "we didn't think about that much. It was just a normal thing we did at the time." But black children keenly noticed the disparities between their schools and white facilities. Christine Luster still feels it: "The thing that bothered me the

most was that I lived right behind the white school. And every day I passed that school I wondered what education was like inside."

Fellow student Linwood Foust, now a Charlotte lawyer, found out. Playing basketball at white Steele Creek School, he sneaked inside to the water fountain, only to be ordered out. "But you got to see those shiny floors. They had tile!" For many years school texts were not free. "You'd come to school the first day, and they'd write down what books were needed. Your parents would go to town and buy that book," says Robert Foust who studied at McClintock from 1924 to 1932. Lucille Stewart recalls: "We used to go out in the corn field and pick creasy greens and sell them and take the money to help get our books. By the late 1940's the School Board provided used texts, prominently stamped "Steele Creek School." Even though it was bad to have the second-hand books," says Linwood Foust, "the contents were still there, and that's what we were trying to extract." "Ten o'clock was recess, and we went outside to play," says Shelby Foust. "That gave us an opportunity to go to the bathroom. We only had outside bathrooms, and we would line up because there wasn't but two holes." At recess children played horseshoes, remembers Linwood Foust: "They weren't the horseshoes you see now. They were true horse's shoes, the little ones....We did sack races, ring-around-the-rosy, the kind of game that did not require any equipment. There was no equipment, so we created our own games."

Christine Luster remembers school lunches at the end of the 1940's: "Lunch period was a treat because the county would send big buckets of peanut butter and the students would bring biscuits from home. The biggest treat was you could have a carton of milk - cost three cents." "They're talking about the modern days," points out Wilburn Taylor a veteran of McClintock in the 1920's . "In the olden days, (your family) packed your lunch with whatever they cooked (the) night (before), and you brought it - if you didn't have a lunch box - either (in) a molasses can or a one-pound lard can. Molasses, bread and butter, or bread - whatever. You didn't have any milk or that stuff she's talking about." In the early days there was virtually no chance for high school unless there were relatives in Charlotte who would give the student a home as he attended Second Ward High School. After finishing eighth grade at Rockwell School, young Samuel Spears tried to go on to ninth grade at Second Ward by hitchhiking and walking to town every day. But one day, he recalls:

It came to snow eight inches or more. I asked the teacher to let me out early because I had such a long way to go, but the teacher wouldn't let me go. I ended up walking the whole way -- couldn't get a ride. Then I got home I was froze. I told my Mom and Dad, 'I'd like to go to school, but I can't stand this.' I'd like to been froze to death. That's why I didn't go to school no more."

Children worked hard for their eighth-grade education in the Rosenwald buildings. But they found that schooling offered little opportunity to escape the life of a tenant farmer. "When we was going, there wasn't much hope," muses Robert Foust. "The only thing a black person could do then was teach a little bit in a black school." In fact, some of Mecklenburg's leading black citizens taught in the Rosenwald schools. Robert P. Wyche, Jr. served as Principal at Murkland School in 1938. He was a son of two distinguished Charlotteans: Rev. Robert P. Wyche, long-time pastor of the prestigious downtown Seventh Street Presbyterian Church; and Isabella

Wyche, Charlotte's first black woman school principal. Nights and weekends he conducted "Jimmy Gunn and His Dixonians," a popular big band that toured the southeast and even appeared nationally on the "Red Skelton Show."<sup>89</sup> Eugene Samuel "Genial Gene" Potts also combined teaching with an entertainment career. He taught at the Jonesville School in the late 1930's and served as principal of Billingsville School 1939-1946. About the same time he debuted on Charlotte's WGIV as the region's first black radio personality.

### **The Rosenwald Fund Turns Away from School-Building**

Beginning in 1928, the priorities of the Rosenwald Foundation changed. Julius Rosenwald was nearing the end of his life, and he hired Edward Embree from the Rockefeller Foundation to take over administration of the Fund, which the old man had largely directed himself. Under Embree, the Fund moved toward investigation and amelioration of a wide array of root problems underlying black inequality.

"Within a year the Fund's program, originally concerned only with building rural schoolhouses, was enlarged to include old to high schools and colleges, fellowships to enable Negroes of unusual promise to advance their careers, help to Negro hospitals and health agencies, the development of county library services in the southern states, and activities looking toward the distribution of medical services to persons of moderate means."<sup>90</sup>

Possibly through the influence of Dr. George E. Davis, Mecklenburg County served in 1929 as a pilot county for the Rosenwald library program, one of eleven counties scattered across the South. The Fund provided money for books for both blacks and whites, on the condition that "equal service was to be given to all people of the country, urban and rural, white and Negro, and that the service be adapted to the needs of the group."<sup>91</sup> The experience of the pilot counties, chronicled by the University of North Carolina's noted Louis Round Wilson, proved that rural Southerners indeed had hunger for reading, and the library program was subsequently expanded by the Rosenwald staff. The Fund gave money for a widening array of projects. It encouraged the growth of four major Southern black universities at Nashville (Fisk), Washington (Howard), Atlanta (Atlanta University), and New Orleans (Dillard) and supported educational research efforts including the New School for Social Research in New York.<sup>92</sup> The Rosenwald Foundation underwrote extension of school terms for blacks to the standard eight months in some districts. It also provided start-up funds for transportation of rural pupils:

There were at this time no school buses for Negroes operated at public expense. The Fund therefore agreed to contribute toward bus transportation half the cost of the bus and part of the opening expenses for three years....[T]he fund helped provide 270 buses...in 128 counties of thirteen southern states."<sup>93</sup>

Though the Rosenwald Fund continued its multitudinous activities until 1948, the school-building program ended with Julius Rosenwald's death in 1932.<sup>94</sup> S. I. Smith kept the Nashville Office open for a short while longer, but it closed in 1937. In North Carolina, the Division for

Negro Education survived under Newbold and Crodle, but Dr. George E. Davis soon retired.<sup>93</sup> An era had ended.

### **Mecklenburg's Rosenwald Schools in the Era of Consolidation**

The close of the Rosenwald building program came as new theories and technological advances - - ironically fostered in part by Rosenwald funds -- were making the little wooden rural schools obsolete. From the first, Rosenwald himself had worked for larger, more centralized facilities where children could get a more complete education. He recognized that the little wooden buildings represented only a step in that direction. Within a generation, as paving of rural roads progressed and the purchase and operating costs for school buses fell, the Rosenwald buildings began to be phased out. In the mid 1930's the state of North Carolina stepped up efforts to eliminate small schools, "consolidate" students into larger facilities, and extend high school opportunities to rural children through the construction of "union schools" (grades 1-11). Mecklenburg school superintendent J. N. Wilson later explained, "The little one-, two- and three teacher elementary schools...lacked so much in the way of instruction, comfort, and sanitation, and overall were costly to operate....It was also evident, according to all available information, that the students in the small schools were farther behind than those in the larger ones."<sup>96</sup>

The School Board divided Mecklenburg County into fourteen districts and planned a system of small feeder schools from a union school "in each district for white children, and a similar school in each quarter of the county for Negro children, who comprised less than 20 percent of the school population."<sup>97</sup> In the south end of the county, Clear Creek (later J.H. Gunn) School in the east, Huntersville (later Torrence-Lytle) School in the north, and Plato Price in the west.<sup>98</sup> The one-story brick buildings were built too late to receive Rosenwald construction money, but their architecture showed the program's lasting influence. In each structure, classrooms lined a main hallway and at Pineville an auditorium projected to the rear, designs modeled closely on floor plans #60 and #7 published in S.I. Smith's 1924 *Community School Plans*.<sup>99</sup> A few Rosenwald buildings -- Fiddlers School in Sharon Township, Zoar School in Steele Creek Township, and possibly one of the Huntersville schools -- closed before the beginning of the 1938 school year, when the union schools opened.<sup>100</sup> However, consolidation efforts for both whites and blacks were not completed until the early 1950's. This was due in part to the Second World War, but more because "moving children from one building to another necessitated the provision of additional classroom space, in addition to the mammoth task of securing agreement on the part of a majority of parents involved to consent to the change."<sup>101</sup> Between 1938 and 1945 Ebenezer, Johns Chapel, and Piney Grove shut their doors.<sup>102</sup> Ben Salem, Jonesville, Lawing, Little Hope, and Murkland followed by 1952.<sup>103</sup> This eliminated all the single-teacher buildings. The biggest consolidation push came in 1952. In 1951, wrote superintendent Wilson, "all of the State bond money allocated to the County was used in modernizing and adding to the Negro union schools."<sup>104</sup> In the summer of 1952 the *Mecklenburg Times* carried the headline, "TO CONSOLIDATE 10 NEGRO SCHOOLS:"

....Davidson elementary school will absorb Lytle's Grove, Smithville, and Caldwell. Huntersville will take in Long Creek. Clear Creek will take North Charlotte [not a Rosenwald facility], Newell and Henderson Grove. Pineville will get Big Pineville [non-Rosenwald] and Henderson Grove. Plato Price will absorb the Reed School [non-Rosenwald]. All of the schools being

absorbed are small elementary plants. The schools taking over the others are all high school-elementary units except Davidson which is solely elementary.<sup>105</sup>

The moves reduced the county's black schools from nineteen to nine, and left five Rosenwald buildings still operating: Rockwell, Matthews, Paw Creek-Hoskins, and Woodland in the county, and Billingsville, which by this time had been taken into the fast-growing city of Charlotte system. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the nation's black and white students should be desegregated.<sup>106</sup> But in Charlotte, as elsewhere in the south, segregation persisted. As late as 1965, "only two percent of the black students in Charlotte - 490 out of 20,000 - were in schools with whites."<sup>107</sup> That year a black Charlotte family filled suit to allow their son to attend an all-white school in the city. The national NAACP chose to back the suit, *Swann vs Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education* as a test case, hoping that it would lead to legal measures enforcing desegregation. The Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board (the city and county systems had merged in 1960) closed its most substandard black schools in 1966 in an effort to mollify the courts.<sup>108</sup> Among those schools were all the remaining Rosenwald buildings, except for Billingsville (which survives in 1987 as one structure of a larger elementary school campus). But the strategy did not stop the suit. In 1971 the United States Supreme Court ruled on what was now a landmark case: *Mecklenburg County* became the nation's model for court-ordered busing for integration.<sup>109</sup> The concept of "black schools" was dead, and with it the inequality in facilities which had given rise to the Rosenwald program.

### **New Life for Rosenwald Buildings**

Of Mecklenburg County's twenty-six Rosenwald sites, 21 have been located at this writing.<sup>110</sup> Three are still in use by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. The original Rosenwald building still stands at Billingsville, At J.H. Gunn Elementary the old wooden Clear Creek Rosenwald building was used as extra classroom space and a media center until 1983, when School Board officials ordered it burned.<sup>111</sup> Its site is now a hilltop playground overlooking the newer brick buildings of the school campus. Pineville Negro School is today Sterling Elementary. There is no trace of the Rosenwald schoolhouse, though the 1937 brick union school structure occupies a prominent place on campus. Most of the old Rosenwald sites now belong to private individuals, civic groups or churches. In the late 1940's and early 1950's the Mecklenburg County School Board put its surplus school buildings up for sale. One at a time the Rosenwald structures and lots were advertised for bid. Those for which records survive sold for as little as \$400 and as much as \$3200, depending presumably on the size of the school, amount of land, and location. Nine of these buildings are still extant in 1987. Private buyers were sometimes nearby families who remodeled the buildings as residences. The McGee family, for example, bought the Lawing School in the early 1950's and remodeled it. Over the years new interior walls split the big classrooms, a portion of the building was removed, and a front porch was added and later enclosed. In 1987, Beatrice McGee still lives there. She grew up nearby on the 35 acre farm owned by her parents. She not only attended Lawing School as a child, but remembers walking to the one-room school which preceded the Rosenwald building.<sup>112</sup> Some of the schools continued on as gathering places for their black communities.

At Smithville, a group of black citizens incorporated as the "Better Community Club" in 1954 to buy the abandoned Rosenwald structure.<sup>113</sup> It remained a community hub for more than thirty years as the old farm settlement evolved into a black suburb of the village of Cornelius. The Newell Rosenwald School is in 1987 the meeting place of the black Silver Set Lodge 327 Free and Accepted Masons. On Dellwood Drive at the edge of the village of Huntersville, the Huntersville Rosenwald school today is being remodeled as a community center. Whites bought the old Rosenwald schools, too. Johnny Johnson, a building contractor in his thirties, now lives in the former Henderson Grove School near Mint Hill. The exterior sports new, smaller windows and the interior has been thoroughly rebuilt as a "woody" home worthy of the pages of *Southern Living* magazine. Across the county, on NC73 near present-day lake Norman, stands the old Caldwell School. It was purchased from the School Board in 1953 by T. W. Burgess, and used for many years as a storage building for Burgess Supply Company, the family's building materials business. In 1987 family-member Ben Griffith is restoring the structure as a showroom. He is proud of its past: "My teacher in school told me she used to go here. People in the area have stopped by to say they have old school books from the building. We want to fix it up as much as we can like it was, with a display on its history."<sup>114</sup>

A number of Mecklenburg's Rosenwalds became the property of the churches which had helped spawn them. The buildings became education and fellowship halls for expanding congregations, and in some cases served as churches themselves. Until recently, Rockwell A.M.E. Zion Church rented the former Rockwell School to another congregation. At Paw Creek-Hoskins, Salem Baptist Church uses the gutted school as a temporary sanctuary while a new church is erected next door. Today the best-preserved of Mecklenburg's Rosenwald school houses is the McClintock School. It is in the care of Rev. Robert Shirley, pastor of the adjoining McClintock Presbyterian Church, one of the county's initial post-Civil War black congregations.<sup>115</sup> In 1986, he began searching out the building's history and videotaping church members who had studied or taught at the school. To Shirley, the school's story is a way to communicate to church youth the value of today's educational opportunities. He plans to restore the building. Rev. Shirley hopes it will be a magnet to draw his congregation of tenant farmers' children and grandchildren, now turned city dwellers, back each Sunday to the church in the midst of the fields.

## Summary and Conclusion

The Rosenwald Fund was, as Henry Allen Bullock: acknowledged in his 1967 Harvard University Press study *A History of Negro Education In the South*, "the most influential philanthropic force that came to aid of Negroes at that time."<sup>116</sup> By July 1, 1932, a total of 5357 Rosenwald school houses, shops, and teachers stood in 883 counties of fifteen states, erected at a total cost of \$28.4 million.<sup>117</sup> The Rosenwald Fund's donation of some \$4.3 million had sparked \$4.7 million in black contributions. Local governments had in turn spent \$18.1 million, 64 per cent to the total, with private local white contributions making up the remaining 4 per cent. Julius Rosenwald's school buildings represented an important advance, even though they were largely outgrown within a generation. Thousands of rural black shanty schools were quickly replaced with structures which outshone the houses of nearby whites. S. L. Smith's architectural office introduced an entire region to new standards in country schoolhouse design, as white and blacks alike used his plans. In fact, the Rosenwald buildings may be seen as an important part of America's wider architectural history. A major trend in the evolution of the American "built environment" has been the rise of standardized architectural designs. The process may be traced



far back, to the "house pattern books," of Asher Benjamin, Andrew Jackson Downing, and many others. It shifted into high gear with the rising popularity of the automobile in the mid 1920's.<sup>118</sup>

Gasoline and restaurant chains began creating readily identifiable architectural treatments that consumers could recognize no matter where they traveled. Today much of America's non-residential architecture results from this approach. The Rosenwald Fund developed standard plans, detailed down to color schemes, for reasons of function rather than image. But still it was possible by the mid-twenties to identify Rosenwald schools by sight, no matter where they stood in the South. The Rosenwald building program ranked among America's largest non-residential experiments in standardized architecture to that time. In North Carolina, black residents had contributed more than \$666,000 toward new buildings.<sup>119</sup> These contributions plus Rosenwald money helped trigger an increase in outlays of public tax money for black education. All told, the period 1915-1930 saw spending per black student increase five-fold in North Carolina.<sup>120</sup> More of the state's black children now went to school, and they benefited from longer school years, and from better trained teachers. In retrospect, it is amazing to realize the extent to which the South relied on Northern philanthropy for the education of one-third of its citizens. The legendary appetite of white Southerners for local control of Southern affairs seems to have been temporarily suspended. One explanation is that infusion of money represented too good a deal to pass up. A better explanation is found by examining the sort of education the philanthropists provided. Rosenwald and his fellows believed they could work within the social system to change Southern white attitudes toward blacks. They took care not to offend Southern propriety. Segregation was maintained. Philanthropists provided incentives for white-controlled school boards to increase appropriations for blacks, but no punishments if they did not.

With eight-grade educations and "industrial" classes in farming and home economics, students were educated to be good farmers, rather than given the ability to leave rural life. Rosenwald and his fellow philanthropists succeeded magnificently in raising the level of black education in the South. But they failed in their larger goal of promoting equality. Despite the marked improvements in conditions, in 1930 black students were even farther behind whites by almost every important measure than they had been in 1915. Though black schools had improved, white school boards were improving white facilities much faster. North Carolina schools spent \$2.77 per white student for every \$1.00 per black student in the 1914-1915 budget year. In 1932 the ratio was \$3.11 to \$1.00.<sup>121</sup> Or, as young, Linwood Foust noted, black schools now had sanitary privies and well-built wood floors, but white schools had indoor water fountains and tile. The Rosenwald building program was a well-conceived and well-executed effort, of massive scope by private standards. But ultimately it showed the inability of private initiative to overturn racist attitudes toward black education that were deeply imbedded in the Southern social system. Money from the federal government eventually supplanted the programs of the philanthropists. And it in time provided the tool to break the lock of inequality. Real progress in ending inequality in Southern education came only when federal officials, wielding control over huge appropriation budgets, and backed up by the courts and Congress, decided to challenge the Southern educational system. By accepting confrontation, they won a measure of success in the 1960's and 1970's, where persuasion and philanthropy had earlier failed.

Representative Mecklenburg Rosenwalds must be preserved because: 1) they are the earliest black school buildings known to survive in the county, 2) they provide a window on rural black

life in the first half of the 20th century, 3) they mark black farm communities, often now vanished, 4) they are a testament to black tenacity in achieving education, 5) they are local examples of one of America's largest non-residential experiments in standardized architecture to that time, 6) they are a reminder of a private agency's attempt-if only partially successful-to improve black education and to get blacks and whites to work together in the Jim Crow South.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edwin R. Embree and Julia Waxman. *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>"Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1950," typescript in the North Carolina State Archives, Department of Public Instruction collection, Division of Negro Education, Special Subject File, box 8. This nineteen page list is organized by county and gives the name of every Rosenwald school house, with its budget year and its "type" (number of teachers?), plus the location and budget years for North Carolina's eighteen teacherages and six shops funded with Rosenwald grants to that date. A few additional Rosenwald buildings were constructed in 1931 and 1932, and are not shown on this list. Hereafter, material in the North Carolina State Archives, Department of Public Instruction collection, Division of Negro Education files will be referred to as "NC Division of Negro Education," followed by file name and box number, if any.

<sup>3</sup> It is a challenge to find the Rosenwald sites today, since neither the state nor local records give precise locations. In the period, everyone evidently knew where "Piddlers" or "Zoar" were, but today these communities have vanished except in the memories of a few. Director Dan Morrill and research Wanda Hendricks of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission played a leading role in identifying locations, along with Rev. Robert Shirley, Allan Purvis, and *Charlotte Observer* architecture critic Richard Maschal. Carrol York and Wanda Hills graciously provided access to the records of the Physical Facilities Office of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board.

<sup>4</sup> Janette Thomas Greenwood, "[The Black Experience in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 1850-1920: A Teaching Packet for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Teachers](#)," (Charlotte: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1984), section 5, p. 51. Harry P. Harding, "Charlotte City Schools," bound, photocopied typescript in the collection of the Carolina Room of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> *North Carolina Authors: A Selective Handbook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), pp. 19-20. See also: R. Walser, *Young Readers Picturebook of Tarheel Authors* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981), p. 12; Helen M. Chesnutt, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Chesnutt, "Journal I," 1874-1876, in the Fisk University archives, Charles W. Chesnutt collection. Chesnutt notes that Rockwell School is in the "Malley Creek" area: Mallard Creek today. See also Helen M. Chesnutt, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, pp. 8-11.

<sup>7</sup> Helen M. Chesnutt, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Chesnutt, "Journal I," 1874-1876, in the Fisk University Archives, Charles W. Chesnutt Collection. This school was likely "Jonahville." A black school survived into the twentieth century with this name, located not far from Jonahville A.M.E. Zion Church on present-day Browne Road just south of Dearmon Road, (north of the Derita community) which is in the Mallard Creek area. Residents today pronounce Jonahville as "Jonesville." By contrast, the Jonesville community (a Rosenwald site) was located many miles to the south off Providence Road. Jessie Young and Joe Frazier, interviews with Thomas W. Hanchett, February 20, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> "Mecklenburg County School Property," a 1940's typescript in the "Old Deeds Box," Physical Facilities Office, Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board gives the dates of purchase for school lands held at that time. Earliest were lots for white schools at Mallard Creek and Berryhill, bought in 1875 and 1877. Oldest black school sites were: Berryhill, 1881; Mallard Creek, 1882; Crab Orchard, 1888; Grier, 1888; Matthews, 1895; Hale, 1896. There of course might have been earlier sites, abandoned by the 1940's. Interestingly, a 1912 document indicates that in that year the county owned a whopping 73 white schools and 60 black schools. "Numbers, Names and Locations of Mecklenburg County Schools, 1912" typescript in the "Old Deeds Box," Physical Facilities Office, Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board.

<sup>10</sup> Louis R. Harlan, *Separate but Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States, 1901-1915*, 2nd. Ed. ? (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p.12.

<sup>11</sup> "Negro Education," in *State School*, volume 10, number 6 (March 1938), p. 1. See also Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, especially p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> An earlier law mandating proportional outlay had been judged unconstitutional but the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1886. Dennis Hargrove Cooke, *The White Superintendent in the Negro Schools in North Carolina* (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1930), p. 17. Constitutional amendments were voted down in 1901 and 1903 at the urging of Governor Charles B. Aycock who declared, "It must be manifest that such a provision as this is an injustice to the Negro and injurious to us." N.C. Newbold, "Common School for Negroes in the South," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November 1928), pp. 559-562.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh Tamalge Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), pp. 559-562.

<sup>14</sup> H. Leon Prather, *Resurgent Politics and Educational Progressivism in the New South: North Carolina, 1890-1915* (Rutherford, N.J.; Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1979). See also: Harlan, pp. 40-41; James L. Leloudis II, "School Reforms in the New South: The Women's

Association for the Betterment of Public Schools in North Carolina, 1902-1919" *The Journal of American History* (March, 1983), pp. 886-909.

<sup>15</sup> Information on the postbellum philanthropies is summarized from N.C. Newbold, "Common Schools for Negroes in the South," pp. 3-5; Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People* pp. 56-57; M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), pp.112-114.

<sup>16</sup> Ines Moore Parker, *The Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians of the United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1865-1970* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977).

<sup>17</sup> Information on the early twentieth-century philanthropists is summarized from N.C. Newbold, "Common Schools for Negroes in the South," pp. 3-5; Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People* pp. 56-57; M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), pp.112-114. For more on the Jeanes Fund, see *The Jeanes Story: A Chapter in the History of American Education, 1908-1968* (Jackson, Mississippi: Jackson State University, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> Biographical information on Julius Rosenwald is drawn from Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 5-27, and M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald*, pp. 1-136.

<sup>19</sup> M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>20</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, p.42.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-4. Skeptics claimed that interest in charity rose in proportion to increases in inheritance taxes and the imposition of federal income tax in the 1910's , and pointed out that the social problems had sometimes be aggravated by the very methods by which the industrialists had piled up their wealth.

<sup>22</sup> Between 1889-1919, 1,412 communities in every U.S. state except Delaware and Rhode Island received grants for Carnegie libraries. Susan Spaeth Cherry, "Carnegie Live," *American Libraries*, volume 12, number 4 (April 1981), pp. 184-188, 218. For more background, see George Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969).

<sup>23</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, p. 28. To the consternation of Fund officials, Mr. Rosenwald in fact did not entirely stop giving away money from his private fortune. Generally, data on amounts granted and schools built seem to refer to activities of the Rosenwald Fund, and do not include Julius Rosenwald's prior or continuing philanthropies.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39. ["Bullets" added].

- <sup>27</sup> N.C. Newbold, "Common Schools for Negroes in the South," p. 15.
- <sup>28</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, p. 40.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- <sup>31</sup> Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl, *Houses by mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Washington: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1989), pp. 20-35.
- <sup>32</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, p. 52. S.L. Smith, *Community School Plans, Rosenwald Fund Bulletin Number 3* (Nashville: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924). Editor S.L. Smith published updated editions in 1926, 1927, 1928, and 1931.
- <sup>33</sup> All quotations in this section are drawn from S.L. Smith, *Community School Plans*, pp. 1-2, 24-32, Except as noted.
- <sup>34</sup> W.F. Credle, letter to S.L. Smith, February 26, 1925: NC Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Box 1. See also W.F. Credle, letter to George E. Davis, September 14, 1923; same location.
- <sup>35</sup> S.L. Smith, letter to W. F. Credle, September 12, 1923: NC Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, box 1. See also, note 34.
- <sup>36</sup> Samuel R. Spencer, Jr., *Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1955), pp. 51-53.
- <sup>37</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, p. 59.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52. The Interstate School Building Service became part of the Division of Surveys and Field Services at Peabody College for Teachers. Peabody later merged with Vanderbilt University, and the Division of Surveys is now the Educational Services Department. Some early blueprints and records are said to remain in the Department offices; others were transferred to the archives of nearby Fisk University, along with the papers of S.L. Smith. The Interstate School building Service evolved into the still-active Interstate Building Conference, an annual summer gathering in Nashville of school facilities planners from across the U.S. Norman Moore (Educational Services Department, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University), telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, February 12, 1987.
- <sup>39</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, p. 55-56.
- <sup>40</sup> S.L. Smith, *Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950* (Nashville: Tennessee Book Company, 1950).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Newbold served longer than any other Southern administrator in charge of black schools, retiring in 1950. For a black educator's perspective on Newbold, see Hugh Victor Brown, *Quality Education in North Carolina Among the Negroes* (Raleigh: Irving-Swaim Press, 1964), pp. 93-95, 107.

<sup>43</sup> W.F. Credle, "The Julius Rosenwald Fund in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Teacher*, volume 1, circa May 1924, pp. 290-291.

<sup>44</sup> S.L. Smith, *Builders of Goodwill*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.48.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

<sup>48</sup> By 1928 the Division of Negro Education still had, in addition to Director Newbold, eight staff members, with the following salaries: Assistant Director, \$3300; Supervisor Rosenwald Fund, \$3000; Secretary, \$1800; Jeanes Fund Clerk, \$1500; Supervisor Rosenwald Buildings, \$2550; State Jeanes Supervisor, \$1950; High School Supervisor \$2950; Stenographer, \$1200. "Outline of Request to the General Education Board for Development of a Statewide Program for Negro Education in North Carolina," 1928; typescript in the NC Division of Negro Education files, Articles and Speeches, Box 1.

<sup>49</sup> Also among the noteworthy staff that Newbold gathered him in 1921 was Annie W. Holland. The black woman, initially hired as Supervisor of Elementary Schools, won praise for her work with the Jeanes teachers, and in 1924 founded the North Carolina Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers. G.H. Ferguson, "Some Facts about the Education of the Negroes in North Carolina, 1921-1960," typescript in the North Carolina State Archives, Department of Public Instruction collection.

<sup>50</sup> First agents had been A.T. Atmore, white, and C.H. Moore of Greensboro, black. S.L. Smith, *Builders of Goodwill*, p. 177. Letters, NC Division of Negro Education, General Correspondence of the Director files, box 3.

<sup>51</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>52</sup> S.L. Smith, *Builders of Goodwill*, p. 177.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> A.B. Caldwell, ed., *History of the American Negro, North Carolina Edition*, Volume 4 (Atlanta, Georgia: A.B. Caldwell Publishing, 1921), pp. 52-54. *Greensboro Daily News*, January 13, 1959. *Greensboro Record*, January 12, 1959. See also Inez Moore Parker, *The Biddle-*

*Johnson C. Smith University Story* (Charlotte: Charlotte Publishing, 1973), pp. 8-9. William H. Huffman, "[Dr. George E. Davis House: Survey and Research Report](#)," unpublished report for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1984.

<sup>55</sup> Davis was a fascinating study in contrasts: a man of almost patrician background and extensive education who could work successfully with illiterate backcountry farmers; an "active member of the Presbyterian Church" who was buried as a Catholic; a man with a deep emotional commitment to overcoming white racism, who nonetheless wrote a letter to his superior asking for time off to participate in a Confederate States of America celebration, saying that in his opinion slavery had not been central to the Civil War and that "My father was stricken with Yellow Fever while on duty at Fort Fisher in its defense in '63." George E. Davis, letter to W.F. Credle, May 17, 1929. N.C. Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, box 5.

<sup>56</sup>A.B. Caldwell, ed., *History of the American Negro*, pp. 52-54

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Davis was "conductor for twenty consecutive sessions of the North Carolina State Summer Schools." Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People.*, p. 45.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp. 41-42.

<sup>60</sup> "Report of Dr. George E. Davis....March 1929," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8.

<sup>61</sup> "Report of Dr. George E. Davis....March 1929," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8.

<sup>62</sup> In this he may have drawn on long observation of the efforts of his own Presbyterian Church, whose small system of elementary-level feeder schools across the Southeast fed into Biddle Institute (which maintained its own high school until 1919). Inez Moore Parker, *Education for Black Presbyterians*.

<sup>63</sup> Representative handbills are in NC Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, box 9.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph K. Hart, "The Negro Builds for Himself," undated and unattended 1920's magazine article, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>65</sup> In a 1935 report, Davis noted a visit to a Rosenwald School in Belmont in Gaston County that was now raising money for an addition: "On Sunday, March 11th, I met with an enthusiastic and responsive group at the school building. Good music excellent addresses by several good speakers and then I spoke concluding with an appeal to the people to pay in at once on the project. We secured in cash \$127.00.... Two more efforts will secure the amount...." Report of

Dr. George E. Davis....March 1929," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8.

<sup>66</sup> "Report of Dr. George E. Davis...May and June 1931," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> "Report of Dr. George E. Davis...May and June 1931," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "Report of Dr. George E. Davis...January 1927," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8.

<sup>71</sup> Rosenwald Days occurred at different times in March in different North Carolina counties, and Davis was often asked to visit, inspect, and speak. "Wake County Rosenwald Schools: March 20th was set aside by this county and designated as Rosenwald Day. At the invitation of Mrs. P.L. Byrd the Jeans [sic] Supervisor I spent several days in this county visiting the Rosenwald schools....Pictures of our good friend, Mr. Rosenwald, were already placed in all except one of these buildings, and we carried his picture to that one the day we spoke there." Report of Dr. George E. Davis....March 1929," NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subjects file, box 8.

<sup>72</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>73</sup> "Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1930," typescript in the NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8. See also map in "Report on Schoolhouse Construction, Transportation, and School Libraries to July 1, 1932" (Nashville: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1932).

<sup>74</sup>"Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1930," typescript in the NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8.

<sup>75</sup> United States Agricultural Census figures consistently showed Mecklenburg among North Carolina's top twenty counties in cotton, dairy, and grain showing throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1890 Mecklenburg was the state's number one cotton-producing county.

<sup>76</sup> *County Population Trends: North Carolina 1790-1960: State, Region, County, Residence, Color*. (Raleigh: published jointly by the Carolina Population Center of the University half of the nineteenth century. In 1890 Mecklenburg was the state's number one cotton-producing county.

<sup>77</sup> Edgar T. Thompson, *Agricultural Mecklenburg and Industrial Charlotte: Social and Economic* (Charlotte: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 1926), p.195. The 1920 census reported



that Mecklenburg had 150 black farm owners and 1,497 black tenant farm families: Thompson, p.171.

<sup>78</sup>"Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1930," typescript in the NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8.

<sup>79</sup> William H. Huffman, "[Billingsville School: Survey and Research Report](#)," unpublished report for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission,

<sup>80</sup> Joseph K. Hart, "The Negro Builds for Himself."

<sup>81</sup> It opened in the fall of 1919, "partly funded by the Rosenwald benevolence," according to the *Charlotte Observer*, August 15, 1919. This date is earlier than that indicated in "Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1930." The discrepancy may indicate that a school was not tallied in state records until the facility had been inspected and approved and the funds released. The structure stands near Rockwell A.M.E. Zion Church, which had long been a school site; back in 1874, Charles Chesnutt had found a school there, but no money to pay a teacher.

<sup>82</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, August 13, 1919, and Samuel Spears interview.

<sup>83</sup> S.L. Smith, *Community School Plans*, p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 7, 1983, February 16, 1986.

<sup>85</sup> "Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1930," typescript in the NC Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8.

<sup>86</sup> Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1945-1946, publication no. 254 (Raleigh, North Carolina: State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1945?), pp. 72-73.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted reminiscences in this section from former Rowenwald school students and teachers come from three sources. McClintock School alumni Shelby Foust, Robert Foust, Linwood Foust, George Reid, Christine Luster, and Lucille Stewart were interviewed by reporter Richard Maschal for a lengthy article in the *Charlotte Observer*, February 16, 1986. Former Clear Creek teachers Dorthea Wallace and Paris McCorkle and pupil Johnnie Lineberger were interviewed by reporter William Douglas for a story in the *Charlotte Observer*, February 7, 1983. Rockwell School graduate Samuel Spears was interviewed by Thomas W. Hanchett, February 11, 1987.

<sup>89</sup> "History of Schools," notebooks, Communications Office, Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board. *Charlotte News*, September 11, 1938. *Charlotte Weekly South*, February 1, 1987.

<sup>90</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 33.

<sup>91</sup> Smith, *Builders of Goodwill*, pp. 106-108. The quotation is from Louis Round Wilson, *County Library Service in the South: A Study of the Rosenwald County Library*

*Demonstrations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 81. Charlotte had earlier been the South's "first city to build a library for Negroes with its own funds." Eliza Atkins Gleason, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library: A Study of the Government and Administration of Public Library Service to Negroes in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 20, 81-82.

<sup>92</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 34, 74.

<sup>93</sup> In its first four years, 1928-1932, the school bus program of the Fund helped buy 69 vehicles for North Carolina counties. "Negro Education in North Carolina," typescript in the North Carolina Archives, Department of Public Instruction files, 1933. As can be imagined, the arrival of the school bus was a welcome alternative to long walks to tiny schools. Recent observers have pointed out, however, that the busing was used to perpetuate existing segregation patterns. White children experienced lengthy trips as they passed black schools on the way to their own, and vice versa. Interestingly, these long rides did not spur the same calls for "neighborhood schools" that recent busing for integration has.

<sup>94</sup> While the decision was made well before Black Friday, the sharp decline of the Fund's endowment with the 1929 stock market crash hastened Embree's movement away from construction funding. Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 34-35. "Believing that perpetual endowments could become a hindrance to progress of the present generation," Rosenwald had set a twenty-five year limit on the activities of the Fund. Jerry L. Cross, "Julius Rosenwald: His Fund and His Schools, A Brief Historical Sketch of the Rosenwald Fund and Black Education in the South 1917-1948," unpublished paper prepared for the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1980.

<sup>95</sup> It appears that the Division of Negro Education continued to employ Davis after the Rosenwald building program ended. Correspondence as late as 1932 survives, and Davis' obituary states that he did not retire until 1935. George E. Davis, letter to N.C. Newbold, March 10, 1932, NC Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Director, box 11. *Greensboro Daily News*, January 13, 1959. *Greensboro Record*, January 12, 1959.

<sup>96</sup> J.N. Wilson, "Mecklenburg County Schools, 1944-1960," undated, in the vertical files of the Carolina Room of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, p. 1. (Hereafter cited as: J.N. Wilson, "Mecklenburg County Schools").

<sup>97</sup> J.N. Wilson, "Mecklenburg County Schools," p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Today the 1937 Pineville Negro School building still stands as part of the campus of Sterling Elementary. The 1937 building at Clear Creek remains in use at J. H. Gunn Elementary. The Torrence-Lytle building is no longer a county school, but survives as a community center. Plato Price's 1937 building is a School Board storage facility on Morris Field Drive, near Charlotte/Douglas International Airport.

<sup>99</sup> S. L. Smith, *Community School Plans*, p. 18.

<sup>100</sup> *Charlotte News*, September 11, 1938.

<sup>101</sup> J.N. Wilson, "Mecklenburg County Schools," p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Charlotte News*, September 11, 1938. *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1945-1946*, pp. 72-73. In 1938 there were a total of 35 black schools. By 1945-46, 26 black schools and 24 white schools.

<sup>103</sup> *Mecklenburg Times*, June 5, 1952.

<sup>104</sup> J.N. Wilson, "Mecklenburg County Schools," p. 11. Wilson went on to say, "To begin with, these buildings were the newest of the older buildings, and after the additions were made, these facilities were the best of any in the County other than the new buildings." This was somewhat faint praise: all the new buildings were for white students.

<sup>105</sup> *Mecklenburg Times*, June 5, 1952.

<sup>106</sup> Bernard Schwarz, *Swann's Way: The School Busing Case and the Supreme Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p 8.

<sup>108</sup> Closing dates are from the "History of Schools" notebooks, Communications Office, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. Consolidation date is from LeGette Blythe and Charles Brockmann, *Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), p. 223. <sup>109</sup> Bernard Schwarz, *Swann's Way*....

<sup>110</sup> As noted in footnote 3, locating the Rosenwald sites is a challenge. In addition to the persons cited earlier, an important aid was the "Map of Mecklenburg County, NC, 1942: Compiled and Drawn by Orr & Cherry, Engineers and Surveyors, Charlotte, NC" (Charlotte Board of Commissioners, 1942?). This massive map, approximately 4' x 5', shows many of the church sites and school sites in the county. Though it is neither complete nor always reliable, it did point the way to a number of Rosenwald locations. A copy is in the Carolina Room of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

<sup>111</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 7, 1983.

<sup>112</sup> Beatrice McGee, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, January 19, 1987.

<sup>113</sup> The "Old Deeds Box" in the Physical Facilities Office of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education includes a carbon typewritten copy of the bid advertisement for the Smithville School, with the pencilled notation that the structure was sold to the Better Community Club for \$2200. Also included is a copy of the incorporation papers of the Better Community Club, whose trustees were Wilson Potts, E. Harwell, Oxon Brice, Mack Brice, And James Caldwell.

<sup>114</sup> Ben Griffith, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, January 19, 1987.

<sup>115</sup> The original circa 1866 building of McClintock Presbyterian Church still stands, much altered, near the school. It was one of the original four churches in the Catawba Presbytery, the first all-black presbytery of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Rev. D.G. Burke, *The Catawba Story: A Brief History of the Catawba Presbytery* (Charlotte?: Historical Committee of the Catawba Presbytery, 1981).

<sup>116</sup> Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South, from 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 139.

<sup>117</sup> Embree and Waxman, *Investment in People*, pp. 50-51. The building total black down to 4977 schools, 217 teacherages, and 163 shops: "Report on Schoolhouse Construction, Transportation, and School Libraries to July 31, 1932," (Nashville: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1932).

<sup>118</sup> White Castle Hamburger restaurants and Pure Oil gas stations were among the earliest major practitioners of standardized design. Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1985), pp. 98-102, 206-208.

<sup>119</sup> "Report on Schoolhouse Construction, Transportation, and School Libraries to July 31, 1932."

<sup>120</sup> Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South, From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 180.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

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APPENDIX I  
LOCATION AND STATUS OF ROSENWALD SCHOOLS IN MECKLENBURG  
COUNTY,

**JANUARY 1987**

*Compiled by Thomas W. Hanchett and Wanda Hendricks*

**Name**  
**Budget Year**  
**Church Affiliation**  
**Location**

## Description Survival

### **Ben Salem**

1922-23

Ben Salem Presbyterian

Sharon Amity Rd

Between Monroe Rd. & Independence

Crab Orchard Township.

"4-room frame building"

TYPE 3

No longer extant

Lot /Building sold to Leroy and Minnie Dunn, June 1954.

### **Billingsville**

1927-28

none known

124 Skyland Ave.

Off Randolph Rd. near Mint Museum, Charlotte Township

Brick

TYPE 4

Extant.

Remodeled as part of Billingsville Elementary campus.

### **Caldwell**

1924-25

none known

Highway 73, near Lake Norman, just east of Beatties Ford Road.

Lemley Township

4-room frame. Rosenwald plan #400.

TYPE 4

Extant

Sold to T.W. Burgess for \$2925, March 1953. Now part of the Burgess Supply Co., undergoing renovation

### **Clear Creek**

1925-26

none known

7520 Harrisburg Rd. off Albemarle Rd.

Clear Creek Township?

TYPE 1

Demolished

Part of J.H. Gunn School till demolished by School Board in 1983.

### **Ebenezer**

1920-21

Old Pineville Rd.?

Sharon Township

Location unidentified

1942 County map indicates it may stood at today's Ebenezer ARP Ch.

### **Fiddlers**

1920-21

Sharon Township

TYPE 2

Location unidentified

There was a pre-Rosenwald Fiddlers School, 1912. The name isn't in a 1938 list of County schools.

### **Henderson Grove**

1928-1929

Henderson Grove Presbyterian Church

8720 Blair Rd. North of village of Mint Hill

Clear Creek Township

3-room frame.

Rosenwald plan #20.

TYPE 2

Extant

Sold to John W. McDonald 1954. Remodeled as home. Johnny Johnson owner in 1986.

### **Huntersville**

1920-21

St. Phillips Baptist Church

Dellwood Dr.

Southwest edge of Huntersville, Huntersville Township

Frame. Rosenwald plan 2-C

TYPE 3

Extant

Being remodeled as a community center

### **Huntersville #2**

1925-26

Huntersville Township

TYPE 4

Location Unidentified

**Johns Chapel**

1919-1920

St. Johns Methodist Church, Colored

Beatties Ford Rd.

East Side of road, near interstate

Charlotte Township

3-room frame

TYPE 2

Demolished?

Sold 1946. Church and school for 185?

**Jonesville**

1919-20

Jonesville A.M.E. Zion Church

5527 Providence Rd. West

Providence Township

TYPE 1

Demolished.

Lot offered for sale 1949, no building included.

**Lawing**

1923-24

Church ruins are nearby

County Rd. 1665, SW corner of NC16 and Mt. Holly-Huntersville Rd.

Paw Creek Township

3-room frame?

Rosenwald plan #20?

TYPE 2

Extant

Sold in 1950's to McGee family who remodeled it greatly as a home, and still live there.

**Little Hope**

1928-29

Mt. Calvary A.M.E. Zion Church (originally called Little Hope, now Walls Memorial)

Little Hope Rd., Off Marsh Rd. behind Park Rd. YMCA

Charlotte Township

4-room frame

TYPE 2

No longer extant

Bought 1952 by Mt. Calvary cemetery now on site.

### **Long Creek**

1926-27

Mt. Olive Baptist?

Neck Road?

Long Creek Township

TYPE 3

Location Unidentified.

Sold to Floyd McClure in 1954. 1942 map shows it near Mt. Olive Baptist Church, but county records list a separate Mt. Olive School.

### **Lytle's Grove**

1927-28

Columbus Chapel (C.W. Lytle was a church trustee)

NC 73 At Poplar Tent Rd. on Cabarrus County line

Huntersville Township

TYPE 3

Demolished?

Closed 1952. May survive as part of present church.

### **Matthews**

1924-25

None known

Crestdale Rd.

Behind Rexham Corp.

Morning Star Township

TYPE 4

Demolished

Became part of Crestdale Elementary in 1960's later sold and torn down.

### **McClintock**

1922-23

McClintock Presbyterian Ch.

Erwin Rd.

West of NC near Carowinds

Steele Creek Township

4-room frame.

Rosenwald plan #3.

TYPE 3

Extant



Sold to church in 1954. Preserved in excellent condition as education bldg.

**Murkland**

1925-26

[Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Ch.](#)

Old Providence Rd.

On west side of road just north of Rea Rd.

TYPE 4

Only a stone building stood on lot in 1952

Demolished Sold back to grantor Adolphus Jones in 1952

**Newell**

1928-29

Torrence Grove A.M.E. Zion Ch.

Torrence Grove Church Rd.

Off Old Concord Rd.

SW edge of Newell.

Crab Orchard Township

4-room frame,

Rosenwald plan #3

TYPE 3

Extant

Sold by School Board.

Exterior in excellent original condition.

**Paw Creek-Hoskins** (misnamed Haw Creek in state records)

1928-29

Salem Baptist Ch.

5318 Salem Church Rd.

Off Rozelles Fry Rd.

Near Charlotte-Meck Utility HQ

Paw Creek Township

4-room frame

Rosenwald plan #3

TYPE 3

Extant: Threatened

Exterior excellent, interior gutted as temporary church. To be demolished when new church is completed?

**Piney Grove** (misnamed Pine Grove in state records)

1918-1919

None known

Piney Grove Rd.  
South off Idlewild Rd.  
Crab Orchard Township  
1-teacher in 1938  
TYPE 1  
Demolished  
Deeded to John Mayes, July 6, 1942, \$250.00. Used as houses, now demolished for Ryan subdivision.

### **Pineville**

1924-1925  
None known  
Old Pineville Rd.  
Pineville Township  
TYPE 4  
Demolished?  
Seems to have been on site of Sterling Elementary, whose oldest bldg. today is 1937. (see also Big Pineville School, end of list)

### **Rockwell**

1920-21  
None known  
Derita Rd. at Chesire Rd.  
Derita Community  
Mallard Creek Township  
3-room frame?  
NOT a Rosenwald plan!  
TYPE 4  
Extant  
Sold by School Board.  
Excellent 1930's condition. Now Christian Missionary Baptist Church.

### **Smithville**

1922-23  
None known  
Southhill Rd.  
Smithville Community at east of Cornelius.  
Lemley Township.  
6-room frame (with addition)  
Rosenwald plan #3?  
TYPE 3  
Extant

Sold 1954 to Better Community Club (col.) of Cornelius for \$2200.00 Now run-down, for sale

**Woodland**

1924-25

Woodland Presbyterian Church

Moore's Chapel Rd.

Paw Creek Township

TYPE 4

No longer extant?

Present Pawtuckett Elementary was black Woodland School, but oldest building is brick, from 1930.

**Zoar**

1918-1919

Zoar Rd.?

Off NC 160 North of Tega Cay?

Steele Creek Township

TYPE 1

Location unidentified

County had had a Zoar school since 1888. Closed before 1938.

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Among the county's early schools NOT funded by Rosenwald:

**Big Pineville** -- At 15401 Marvin Rd. just south of Providence Rd. W., extant as rental housing

**Davidson (Ada Jenkins)** -- West of the tracks in Davidson, extant as a community center

**Grier/Miranda** -- North Charlotte -- At the railroad on Sugar Creek Road, near Tryon Mall, demolished

**Plate Price** -- Morris Field Rd., near airport, extant as storage facility for School Board

**Joe Reid** -- Built in the 1910's on E. Rocky River Road, east of Davidson, extant as Ferman Hills home

**Torrence-Lytle** -- Created in 1937 near Huntersville, extant as a community center

In the 1920's Mecklenburg County had more than thirty small black schools. As late as publication of the 1945-46 Educational Directory of North Carolina, the county still had 26 black schools.

### *Architectural Description*

**Name: McClintock School**

**Budget Year: 1922-23**

**TYPE: 3**

**Address: Steele Creek Township**

**Erwin Rd. (west of Hwy. 49, near Carowinds.)**

#### **History:**

McClintock School is Mecklenburg County's best-preserved Rosenwald example. It is located next to McClintock Presbyterian Church, one of the county's most historic black congregations. The church is part of the Catawba Presbytery, the first all-black presbytery founded by the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. after the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> In Mecklenburg's rural McClintock, Murkland, and Woodland churches and downtown Seventh Street Presbyterian church were the presbytery's original four congregations, funded in 1866. Today the early wooden McClintock church building survives, heavily remodeled, with a recent brick veneer. McClintock's strong Presbyterian background made it a logical target for Dr. George E. Davis, who raised local money for black schools throughout North Carolina in his job as the state's Rosenwald Building Agent. Davis was himself a Mecklenburg County resident and a Presbyterian, a former professor at the denomination's Biddle University, which had long sought to promote black elementary and secondary education. The fundraising efforts of Davis and the church elders were successful. In March of 1922 J.L. Milwee and his wife sold a parcel of land near the church to the school system for \$225.00, and over the summer the school building was erected.<sup>2</sup> Dr. George E. Davis himself was on hand for the opening of McClintock School in October of 1922:

"MECKLENBURG COUNTY: MCCLINTOCK: The end of the month finds us in Mecklenburg County to take part in the dedication of the beautiful Rosenwald School here. The occasion was one of inspiration. The school has already become the social center of the section. It has brought to the community some of the very best talent to speak to them, college men and women who know the best things in education."<sup>3</sup>

In 1938 the *Charlotte News* listed McClintock's staff as Junious K. Diamond, principal, and teachers Ora Ruth Oglesby and Sara Falls Byers.<sup>4</sup> In 1952 the facility was merged into Pineville School.<sup>5</sup> McClintock Church acquired the old Rosenwald building for use as a fellowship hall, and it remains in use virtually unchanged to this day.<sup>6</sup> In 1986 McClintock's Rev. Robert Shirley launched a project to document the history of the school and preserve the building. His efforts

led to a story in the *Charlotte Observer*, and a videotape of former students sharing their memories.<sup>7</sup> Shirley's work reawakened interest in Rosenwald schools countywide.

### **Architecture:**

Today the tenant farms that once clustered near McClintock are gone, and the church, cemetery, and school stand alone in the midst of the fields near highway NC49 at the southern edge of Mecklenburg County. A paved county road, Erwin Road, passes on the south side of the school building. The school is prominently sited near a curve, so that the visitor driving west from NC49 gets the temporary illusion that the road leads directly to the school's front door. The school's design was adapted from "Floor Plan No. 3: Three Teacher Community School, to Face East or West Only" - shown on page eight of the Rosenwald Fund's 1924 booklet *Community School Plans*.<sup>8</sup> The interior closely followed the Rosenwald prescription of three classrooms, an industrial room, and cloakrooms, opening off a short corridor. Local builders improvised somewhat on the exterior, however. They used a high hip roof rather than the suggested gable.

A wide porch was substituted for the plan's gable-roofed recessed vestibule. The banks of windows have four rather than five units apiece. Nonetheless, the McClintock School is instantly recognizable as a Rosenwald design. The standing-seam metal roof is pierced by three plain brick chimneys, as indicated in *Community School Plans*. Rafter ends are left exposed in the eaves for a Bungalow-influenced ornamental effect. The double front doors, each with six glass panes over horizontal wooden panels, are sheltered by a hip-roofed porch carried on four simple square columns. On either side of the entrance is a bank of four nine-over-nine-pane double-hung sash windows. Walls are weatherboard. The rear of the building is similar to the front, except that there is no porch or entrance. Here the upper portions of the windows have been covered with planking, but the original sash appears to survive underneath. The south and north side facades have no openings. The building rests on brick piers, the customary foundation for rural buildings in Mecklenburg County in the 1920's. Inside, the building has seen few substantive changes. There are plaster walls and ceilings, tongue-and-groove wainscoting, and wooden floors throughout. Recent stoves are still vented through the old stove-pipe holes at the chimney flues. Blackboards are gone. Floor coverings and dropped ceilings of acoustical tile in metal grids has been added in some areas. New kitchen equipment and counters are in the old industrial room. The sliding or folding doors that converted the two rear classrooms into an auditorium are gone, but the low wainscoted wall that they sat on is still in place. The only original walls that appear to have been removed are the small ones within the cloakroom area and a portion of the ones separating the cloakrooms from the corridor.

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### **McClintock School Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Rev. D.G. Burke, *The Catawba Story: A Brief History of the Catawba Presbytery* (Charlotte?: Historical Committee of the Catawba Presbytery, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Data on land acquisition, site acreage, and township were compiled by Wanda Hendricks from information in the "Old Deeds Box," Physical Facilities Office, Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board. Information on budget year, name, and type was compiled by Thomas W. Hanchett from "Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, from the Beginning Until July 1, 1930," typescript in the North Carolina State Archives, Department of Public Instruction collection, Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8.

<sup>3</sup> "Report of Dr. George E. Davis ... October 1922," typescript in the North Carolina State Archives, Department of Public Instruction collection, Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Charlotte News*, September 11, 1930.

<sup>5</sup> *Mecklenburg Times*, June 5, 1952.

<sup>6</sup> Mecklenburg County Tax Office: tax number 201-211-05

<sup>7</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 16, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> S.L. Smith, *Community School Plans, Rosenwald Bulletin Number 3* (Nashville: Rosenwald Fund, 1924).

## **Newell School**

### **History:**

Among the best-preserved Rosenwald schools in Mecklenburg County is the one on Torrance Grove Church Road at the Southwest edge of the unincorporated village of Newell. The Newell community was one of a number of farm villages that sprang up along the new railroad lines in the second half of the nineteenth century. Founded by the white Newell family, it had some 100 citizens by the mid 1890's, including enough blacks to warrant a black church.<sup>1</sup> Torrance Grove A.M.E. Zion church erected its sanctuary in 1894.<sup>2</sup> By 1922 the congregation had grown enough to require the remodeling of the sanctuary. Not long after, the church became the focus for a successful fund-raising effort to build Rosenwald school. In February of 1928 the Mecklenburg County School Board purchased a site adjacent to the church from Sarah P. Newell. She was paid \$200.00 for 1.80 acres.<sup>3</sup> Newell School was built with three classrooms and an "industrial room," where such practical skills as cooking and woodworking were taught. By 1938, according to a *Charlotte News* article, Newell was a four-person operation.<sup>4</sup> Principal A.F. Corley was in charge of teachers Creola Moore, Beatrice Johnson Brown, and Abiah L. Miller Winston. In 1952 Newell was merged into Clear Creek (later J.H. Gunn) School, and the Newell Rosenwald building was closed.<sup>5</sup> Today the Newell school house still stands next to the old cemetery and the recently rebuilt sanctuary of Torrance Grove Church. It is used as a lodge hall, and is owned by Silverset Lodge #327, Free and Accepted Masons, part of the predominantly black Prince Hall branch of the international Masonic organization.<sup>6</sup>

### **Architecture:**

To reach the Newell Rosenwald school, one turns west off busy Old Concord Road onto dirt Torrence Drove Church Road. The lane winds through a small black community, whose modest houses appear to postdate the school building. The road ends in about half a mile at the school and church, which are located on a small knoll. The design of the Newell school house is closely modeled on "Floor Plan No. 3: Three Teacher Community School, to Face East or West Only," shown on page 8 of the Rosenwald Fund's 1924 booklet *Community School Plans*.<sup>7</sup> It is a one-story, gable-roofed, weatherboard structure with center front entrance and symmetrical front and rear facades. Today the exterior is in very good original condition. The roof is covered with standing-seam sheet metal, pierced by three plain interior chimneys of red brick. Rafter ends are left exposed under the eaves, giving a Bungalow-style decorative effect. The front entrance (which faces due east) is recessed, and is sheltered by a shallow-gabled portico supported by two Doric columns. On either side of the entrance is a bank of five tall windows. These nine-over-nine-pane double-hung sash units provided ample natural light for the classrooms. The rear facade is similar to the front, with two banks of windows but with no entrance. The south side facade is almost blank (per Rosenwald instructions), except for a pair of wooden louvered attic vents in the gable, and a pair of asymmetrically placed six-over-six-pane double-hung sash windows which lighted an interior cloakroom. The north facade is also almost blank, with attic vents and an asymmetrically placed door which is probably not original. The building rests on a continuous foundation of red brick, which appears to be original.

The interior has seen more changes over the years than the exterior, but much of the original material survives. One enters through the double front doors, which each have six panes of glass above horizontal wooden panels, and which are flanked by similar but narrower sidelights. Inside is a short corridor, off which all the rooms open. It is finished with painted tongue-and-groove wainscoting, plaster walls, and a painted tongue-and-groove ceiling. The visitor is struck here (and throughout the building) by the height of the ceilings: approximately fourteen feet above the wooden plank floor. The right front and right rear classrooms remain in almost original condition. Each classroom has one horizontally panelled door, topped with a three-pane transom which still functions. Inside the classroom, wall and ceiling finishes are the same as those in the corridor. The molding which originally surrounded the blackboards is still in place, though the blackboards are gone. In a corner of each room is a chimney flue, with a high hole that once held the stovepipe. Between the front room and line back room, a pair of "breeze windows" are still intact. These transoms- like interior windows, located high up in the wall, are shown in the Rosenwald plans. The left rear classroom is now the meeting hall of the Masonic lodge. It was enlarged by removing two walls which originally enclosed the school's cloakrooms, and by extending two other walls partway into the corridor. This remodeling was carefully done, with original doors and wainscoting retained or reused throughout. But the reasons for it are a bit mysterious; did this school lack the movable partition between rear classrooms that would have allowed easy creation of a large meeting space? The industrial room which occupied the left front part of the building has also seen changes. Its walls remain intact, but inside them have been constructed new bathrooms with dropped ceilings.

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## **Newell School Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> LeGette Blythe and Charles Brockmann, *Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), pp. 424-425.

<sup>2</sup> Old cornerstone placed in the wall of the new Torrence Grove Church building. The phone number of the church is 597-0291.

<sup>3</sup> See Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 701: 217. Data on land acquisition, site acreage, and township were compiled by Wanda Hendricks from information in the "Old Deeds Box,- Physical Facilities Office, Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board. Information on budget year, name, and type was compiled by Thomas W. Hanchett from Rosenwald School Building in North Carolina, From the Beginning Until July 1, 1930," typescript in the North Carolina State Archives, Department of Public Instruction collection, Division of Negro Education, Special Subject file, box 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Charlotte News*, September 11, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *Mecklenburg Times*, June 5, 1952.

<sup>6</sup> Mecklenburg County Tax Office: tax number 049-151-16. Mailing address is: Silverset Lodge #327, P.O. Box 481, Newell, N.C. 28126. Current head of the lodge is Worshipful Master Robert L. Moore, 2531 Old Steele Creek Road, Charlotte, N.C. 28202, telephone 394-0401. Lodge member Joe Frazier, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, February 20, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> S.L. Smith, Community School Plans, Rosenwald Bulletin Number 3(Nashville: Rosenwald Fund, 1924).

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Thanks to Alan Purvis, 1814 Sterling Road, Charlotte 28209, phone 333-8976 for bringing the Newell School to the Commission's attention.