


Impotence and the murder of George Floyd

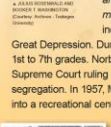
Norbeck Rosenwald School

County-funded elementary education for African American children did not exist until 1872. Until then, small black enclaves, like Mount Pleasant, pulled community resources to establish schools. A significant boost in financial assistance came in 1917 with the establishment of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Between 1920 and 1929, fifteen Rosenwald Schools were built in Montgomery County – collectively covered by African American residents contributing \$7300 to match the \$8200 donated by Jewish philanthropist and Sears founder Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932). The remaining \$61,360 came from tax revenue. Nine schools, including Norbeck, were constructed between 1927-1928. This two-teacher, two-room, one-story structure cost \$5300 to build.


Classroom instruction included the basics – reading, writing, and arithmetic, and followed the Tuskegee model established by educator Booker T. Washington (1856-1915). The emphasis was on self-help and gender-specific vocational training. Conditions inside were not always ideal for learning as former pupil Mabel D. Jackson recalled, “There were no inside facilities, water, or central heat. We had free books but never any new ones. These books were dirty, ragged, marked in, and often had pages missing.” These inequities only increased as the school entered the Great Depression. During World War II, Norbeck had 65 students from 1st to 7th grades. Norbeck closed in 1951, three years before the 1954 Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned school segregation. In 1957, M-NCPPC developed plans to convert the school into a recreational center, a function that continues today.



Julius Rosenwald
1862-1932
Jewish Philanthropist

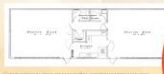


Booker T. Washington
1856-1915
Black Educator




▲ FORMER NORBECK TEACHERS ALL HAVE BEEN REINTERRED. “MY TEACHERS WERE ALL WHITE AND I WAS THE ONLY BLACK CHILD IN THE CLASSROOM. I REMEMBER THEM ALL.”

▲ TEACHERS WERE PAID AND OVERSEEN BY THE COUNTY AND WERE SUPERVISOR OF SCHOOLS. THIS POSITION WAS ORIGINALLY HELD BY A JEWISH FROM 1817 TO 1928, AND HIS REPLACEMENT, GEORGE W. TAYLOR, REPRESENTED THE FIRST BLACK TEACHER IN CALHOUN COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA.









Norbeck was one of over 5,000 Rosenwald Schools built in the American South, and one of 156 schoolhouses established in twenty Maryland counties between 1918 and 1932.

▲ THIS SMALL PART OF NORBECK SHOWS THE ROSENWALD SCHOOL, WHICH IS ALIGNED WITH THE COUNTRY AND THE GROUND, INDICATED BY A DASHED LINE.




▲ THE ORIGINAL TWO-ROOM SCHOOL, CONSTRUCTION INTO THE 1920S, WAS USED FOR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION. WHILE THE COVER WAS COVERED AS A GYM CLASS AND RECREATION FOR THE SCHOOL, IT WAS USED FOR THE BASKETBALL COURT AND A GYMNASIUM. THE SCHOOL WAS BUILT BY THE ROSENWALD FOUNDATION AND A SYSTEM (GIVING HISTORY).


Mount Pleasant

Following Emancipation in 1864, freedmen communities developed throughout Montgomery County. Formerly enslaved laborers acquired small parcels of land, creating the community of Mount Pleasant. In 1872, A.D. Wadsworth sold 0.5 acres to help establish one of the first segregated schools in Montgomery County. The original two-room frame school burnt down in 1925. The Rosenwald School replaced it in 1927. On Sundays, Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church used the school next door for worship services. By 1885, the church purchased land for a permanent sanctuary. Behind the school is the community cemetery on land acquired in 1883 “exclusively for a burying lot for the colored people.” The Mackall’s Tabernacle operated as a lodge that once stood on land behind the church during the first half of the 20th century. Today, the Waves of Glory Worship Center occupies the ca. 1890s chapel. The Jerusalem-Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church still owns and stewards the cemetery.



▲ A HOUSED BUILT BY THE MACKALLS AND USED AS A LODGE. TODAY, THE WAVES OF GLORY WORSHIP CENTER OCCUPIES THE CA. 1890S CHAPEL.

▲ THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHAPEL OF THE MOUNT PLEASANT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WAS ACQUIRED IN 1883 BY A.D. WADSWORTH.

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 Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation
www.jewish-american-society-for-historic-preservation.org

I, like millions of others in the U.S., are feeling impotent, distressed, confused about the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota. Some, far too many, are violently expressing their anger. Some are criminally expressing themselves as rioters, looters, and even murderers of police. A minority have taken advantage of the chaos to promote chaos for political purposes. Most, the vast majority of street protestors, are peacefully expressing their down hearten, fears of self-evident, excessive, deadly, police force. Floyd was an unarmed Black man, in the process of arrest, was horrifically murdered by four Minneapolis cops, three whites and one Laotian.

What could I do? I wanted to protest. I did not want to be caught up in a riot amongst people who were seeking to cause societal destruction. I do not want to destroy the system. I do want to change it for the better.

The answer was already in front of me. I was already trying to change the system for the better. I had not realized it.

About a year ago, I, as the president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, had funded one more historical marker. It recognized the collaborative efforts of Julius Rosenwald, a Chicago retail industrialist philanthropist and Booker T. Washington, the Black American educator, and President of Tuskegee University in Alabama.

The two men had come together as Americans, as equals. They joined to work for the mutual betterment of Black Americans through education and educational opportunity.

The premise of the American educational system practiced racial segregation as separate but equal. The reality was anything of the sort.

Black Americans, long after Emancipation and the legal ending of slavery, were kept in slavery by being denied the benefits of education and educational opportunity. The doctrine of separate and equal was in truth separate and not equal. Blacks, especially in the 13 states of the South were vastly underfunded when it came to allocating State educational resources.

The doctrine of separate but equal did not end until 1954 when the Supreme Court decided the matter in *Brown V. Board of Education*. Until the *Brown* decision that affected the entire United States, racial discrimination in education and educational opportunity was national in scope. It was not just the South that practiced educational slavery. But it was the South that practiced it the fiercest.

Booker T. Washington approached Julius Rosenwald, the two of them from two victimhood backgrounds, slavery and virulent antisemitism. They chose to work together to could change America for the better.

Washington shared with Rosenwald his idea of building small local schools for Black children. Rosenwald understood his money, which was a vast fortune, had no worth to secure his and his fellow Jews safety in American unless he used his fortune to change America for the better for all its citizens.

Over the years of Washington's and Rosenwald's association, Rosenwald provided the seed money for the building of over 5,200 schools in the South. Rosenwald did not believe in giving all the funds without the community behind the effort. Dependent charity was destructive. Collaborative support raised everyone.

By the time the Rosenwald fund had depleted its resources, 1/3 of all Black American children had educational opportunity and the possibility for upward mobility because they attended a Rosenwald school.

The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation had funded the marker in a collaborative effort with the Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Parks. The marker was to be placed at one of the last remaining Rosenwald school buildings, now repurposed as a senior center, in the County. Few knew what the building had been. Few knew the role of the Norbeck Rosenwald School in changing Maryland.

Ironically, though Montgomery County had only 15 of the 5,200 schools, they had been a key origin of the later *Brown V. Board of Education* 1954 Supreme Court Decision.

I had not heard from Montgomery County Parks since we funded and fabricated the marker for them about a year ago. The County wrote the text for the marker. It included two requests from us. The first and most important to us was that Julius Rosenwald's Jewish identity be recognized.

Rosenwald did what he did because his Jewish values required him to hear the cry of help from his fellow human beings. Rosenwald appreciated that discrimination against Blacks was only a short

distance from discrimination against Jews. He spent the vast majority of his fortune helping Booker T. Washington transform the Southern Black American experience for the better because he was a Jew.

For unknown reasons, most markers for Rosenwald schools do not mention that Rosenwald was Jewish. Our markers specifically recognize Rosenwald's Jewish identity.

The second request we had was would they permit our logo on the credit line. Our logo is a Star of David, against a red, white and blue circled coloring. The County considerately included our logo, our name and our email for added recognition of us as the funders.

I called the County to ask about the disposition of the marker. Had they put it up?

They had. It had been done quietly with no programming. Until I asked about the Rosenwald marker today, I did not know it was done.

The George Floyd story is not over. It will offer transformative possibilities for the U.S.

For JASHP and our part, the transformative effort is a positive to teach, to remember the past, to shape the future. We, in our small way, contributed to understanding between peoples that mutuality, cooperation for our common betterment is possible. Destruction of property and society are not inevitable if people of good will are willing to come together.



The key text from the Norbeck Rosenwald School reads:

Norbeck Rosenwald School

“County-funded elementary education for African American children did not exist until 1872. Until then, small black enclaves, like Mount Pleasant, pulled community resources to establish schools. A significant boost in financial assistance came in 1917 with the establishment of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Between 1920 and 1929, fifteen Rosenwald Schools were built in Montgomery County – collectively covered by African American residents contributing \$7300 to match the \$8200 donated by Jewish philanthropist and Sears founder Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932).”

JASHP is engaged in placing Rosenwald markers outside State Departments of Education in Virginia, Florida, Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Jerry Klinger is the president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation.

www.JASHP.org