Rosenwald Schools in Virginia, Southern Workman, 1922



A TYPICAL FOUR-ROOM ROSENWALD SCHOOL
The Hollins School at Roanoke, Virginia

ROSENWALD SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

BY WILLIAM D. GRESHAM

State Supervisor of Negro Education

THE colored people of Virginia are indebted to Mr. Julius Rosenwald of Chicago for some of the very best buildings in the State; indeed, in some counties these Rosenwald schools are the best in the county for either race. This statement was made recently by the superintendent of one of these counties which had just erected a $4900, two-teacher building for Negro children, the Negroes and the Rosenwald authorities contributing a little less than one-third of this amount.

This Rosenwald aid has helped school construction in many parts of Virginia. It is interesting to see how one community will catch the contagion from another section which has constructed a handsome building according to Rosenwald plans: "Why can't we colored folks do the same thing?" they say; and so they go to work raising funds, and soon that community also has a handsome structure. How proud they are of these fine school buildings! They take more interest in educational matters; they send their children more regularly; they are willing to make sacrifices so that their children may get some of the training which is so necessary for good citizenship. One can always tell a Rosenwald school as soon as one beholds it. There are always two acres of land in the school lot (Mr. Rosenwald believes in giving the children plenty of room) and in most cases

this has been carefully cleared up by the patrons and children, a fact which makes the new school show to the greatest advantage. In course of time, there will doubtless come little gardens and little projects of various kinds on this lot, and trees will be set out. Mr. Rosenwald does not want any school building to which he contributes erected on a site which does not contain at least two acres of land. This is the first requirement; and a very important one it is.



THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE AT CLOVER

In a great many cases the colored people have given the land for the school. This must be deeded to the local school board; for the Rosenwald authorities always insist that this be the next step after the necessary two acres have been obtained. This means that the Rosenwald school becomes the property of the whole community and is not owned and operated by any private individual. The next step consists in the selection of certain definite plans upon which the school building is to be constructed. If this matter were left entirely to the judgment of local school officials no uniformity would be secured. Rosenwald schools would lose

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that air of personality which differentiates them from all other schools; they would cease to be distinctive. The authorities in charge of the Fund have solicited and obtained the aid of the best experts in construction in the country; they have submitted their plans to them for criticism, so that these are thoroughly up-to-date and modern. The chief consideration with respect to construction must be given to the lighting. Here again one sees that they are concerned with one of the most important factors in school hygiene. They want the very best and will have nothing less. Therefore they ask for unilateral lighting, claiming that bilateral lighting is injurious to the eyes of the students. This lighting must come from the east or west. The windows should extend to within six inches of the ceiling in order that as much light as possible shall penetrate to all parts of the room.



THE NEW ROSENWALD SCHOOL AT CLOVER, HALIFAX COUNTY

Schoolhouse construction is now regarded as a matter of fundamental importance. Its relation to health and its connection with the regular processes of teaching are more clearly understood than ever before. Much money has been wasted in the past because simple laws of schoolhouse construction have been ignored. There are schools for white and Negro children in many parts of Virginia built without observing even in the most elementary manner the ordinary laws of lighting, floor space, or ventilation.

The Department of Education has prepared standard plans of several types of schools and these are now being widely used all over the Commonwealth. Particular attention is called to the standard school building of six, eight, and ten rooms or more. The force in the Department will not permit the preparation of individual plans nor the suggestion of special additions to



THE OLD DAHLIA SCHOOL

buildings to be erected; the saving affected by setting up standard plans has been no small sum.

When the Rosenwald buildings which are already under process of construction are finished, there will be more than one hundred schoolhouses erected with Rosenwald aid and constructed with due regard to the rules of schoolhouse construction. Toward these buildings more than $100,000 has been contributed through the Rosenwald Fund. The Negroes have shown great interest and zeal in contributing to these buildings, both in money and in labor and material. Among the counties which have the largest number of Rosenwald schools are Greensville and Halifax. Gloucester is making application for about five at the present time.



THE OLD SCHOOL AT STEPHENS CITY

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NEW TWO-ROOM SCHOOL AT DAHLIA, GREENSVILLE COUNTY

The allotment from the Rosenwald Fund is now appropriated to the State Board of Education of Virginia and the expenditures are made on approval of the Supervisor of Negro Education and in accordance with plans and specifications furnished through the Rosenwald Foundation. Care is always exercised to see to it that buildings constructed under this Fund meet the requirements set up and this insures health, convenience, and satisfactory structures.

That teacher who is content to remain several years in an old, patched-up schoolhouse without making any effort to improve conditions can hardly be considered successful; the teacher who is wide-a-wake will strive to awaken her patrons to a desire for better facilities; will use her energies to enlist their cooperation to the end that a new school building may be erected.



NEW ONE-ROOM SCHOOL AT STEPHENS CITY, FREDERICK COUNTY

In this way she may become a blessing to the community which she is serving and leave her "footprints on the sands of time."

It is highly important for those who wish to secure Rosenwald aid to make sure that they have the plans in hand before



EIGHT-ROOM ROSENWALD SCHOOL, MARTINSVILLE, HENRY COUNTY



THE SCHOOLHOUSE REPLACED BY THE ONE ABOVE

beginning to build rather than to get the building under way and then make application for aid. In many instances it will require fundamental changes to meet Rosenwald conditions, necessitating the expenditure of more money perhaps than could be secured from the Rosenwald Foundation. This is a very important consideration and one well worth noting. There is no special limit to the number of Rosenwald schools any county may construct. All that is asked is that they fulfill Rosenwald conditions with respect to the necessary amount of land and with respect to following the Rosenwald plans of construction.

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Rosenwald Schools in Virginia, Southern Workman, 1922

Transcription (page 1 of 3)

[page 169; photograph caption:] A Typical Four-Room Rosenwald School The Hollins School at Roanoke, Virginia

Rosenwald Schools in Virginia by William D. Gresham, State Supervisor of Negro Education

The colored people of Virginia are indebted to Mr. Julius Rosenwald of Chicago for some of the very best buildings in the State; indeed, in some counties these Rosenwald schools are the best in the county for either race. This statement was made recently by the superintendent of one of these counties which had just erected a $4900, two-teacher building for Negro children, the Negroes and the Rosenwald authorities contributing a little less than one-third of this amount.

This Rosenwald aid has helped school construction in many parts of Virginia. It is interesting to see how one community will catch the contagion from another section which has constructed a handsome building according to Rosenwald plans: “Why can’t we colored folks do the same thing?” they say; and so they go to work raising funds, and soon that community also has a handsome structure. How proud they are of these fine school buildings! They take more interest in educational matters; they send their children more regularly; they are willing to make sacrifices so that their children may get some of the training which is so necessary for good citizenship. One can always tell a Rosenwald school as soon as one beholds it. There are always two acres of land in the school lot (Mr. Rosenwald believes in giving the children plenty of room) and in most cases

[p 170] this has been carefully cleared up by the patrons and children, a fact which makes the new school show to the greatest advantage. In course of time, there will be doubtless come little gardens and little projects of various kinds on this lot, and trees will be set out. Mr. Rosenwald does not want any school building to which he contributes erected on a site which does not contain at least two acres of land. This is the first requirement; and a very important one it is.

[photograph caption:] The old schoolhouse at Clover.

In a great many cases the colored people have been given the land for the school. This must be deeded to the local school board: for the Rosenwald authorities always insist that this be the next step after the necessary two acres have been obtained. This means that the Rosenwald school becomes the property of the whole community and is not owned and operated by any private individual. The next step consists in the selection of certain definite plans upon which the school building is to be constructed. If this matter were left entirely to the judgment of local school officials no uniformity would be secured. Rosenwald schools would lose

[page 171] that air of personality which differentiates them from all other schools; they would cease to be distinctive. The authorities in charge of the Fund have solicited and obtained the aid of the best experts in construction in the country; they have submitted their plans to them for criticism, so that these are thoroughly up-to-date and modern. The chief consideration with respect to construction must be given to the lighting. Here again one sees that they are concerned with one of the most important factors in school hygiene. They want the very best and will have nothing less.

Therefore they ask for unilateral lighting, claiming that bilateral lighting is injurious to the eyes of the students. This lighting must come from the east or west. The windows should extend to within six inches of the ceiling in order that as much light as possible shall penetrate to all parts of the room.

[photograph caption:] The new Rosenwald School at Clover, Halifax County.

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The Department of Education has prepared standard plans of several types of schools and these are now being widely used all over the Commonwealth. Particular attention is called to the standard school building of six, eight, and ten rooms or more. The force in the Department will not permit the preparation of individual plans nor the suggestion of special additions to

[page 172] buildings to be erected: the saving affected by setting up standard plans has been no small sum.

[photograph caption:] The old Dahlia school.

When the Rosenwald buildings which are already under process of construction are finished, there will be more than one hundred schoolhouses erected with Rosenwald aid and constructed with due regard to the rules of schoolhouse construction. Toward these buildings more than $100,000 would have been contributed through the Rosenwald Fund. The Negroes have shown great interest and zeal in contributing to these buildings, both in money and in labor and material. Among the counties which have the largest number of Rosenwald schools are Greensville and Halifax. Gloucester is making application for about five at the present time.

[photograph caption:] The old school at Stephens City.

[page 173; photograph caption:] New two-room school at Dahlia, Greensville County.

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[photograph caption:] Eight-room Rosenwald School, Martinsville, Henry County

[photograph caption:]The schoolhouse replaced by the one above

In many instances it will require fundamental changes to meet Rosenwald conditions, necessitating the expenditure of more money perhaps than could be secured from the Rosenwald Foundation. This is a very important consideration and one well worth noting. There is no special limit

[page 175] to the number of Rosenwald schools any county may construct. All that is asked is that they fulfill Rosenwald conditions with respect to the necessary amount of land and with respect to following the Rosenwald plans of construction.

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