

## Early Public Education in Dayton, Texas

Prior to Mrs. Annie Colbert's arrival in Dayton in 1892, a number of small one-room schools accommodated African American students in local neighborhoods around the town. Churches and community members hired teachers, such as Mr. Boney Hayden and



Mrs. Gertie Harris. Mrs. Colbert was the first African American teacher officially hired by the Dayton Public School system. She and some of her older students built a 30 by 40 foot one-room school at the corner of Luke and Prater Streets. Mrs. Colbert was recruited away from Dayton around 1914 or 1915.

This picture, taken around 1911, shows an example of the small community schools in the Dayton area in the early part of the 20th century. Members of the community who attended school in this building, stated that it was near an area called the "Devil's Slide".



**Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington** The absence and poor quality of school buildings for African Americans in rural, southern communities, led Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, to seek the help of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, CEO and President of Sears, Roebuck & Company. Around 1911 or 1912 the two were introduced to each other by Paul



Julius Rosenwald  
Aug. 12, 1862 – Jan. 6, 1932  
President and CEO of  
Sears, Roebuck & Co.

Sachs. Julius Rosenwald had read Booker T. Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, and was impressed by Washington's story.

Professor Washington

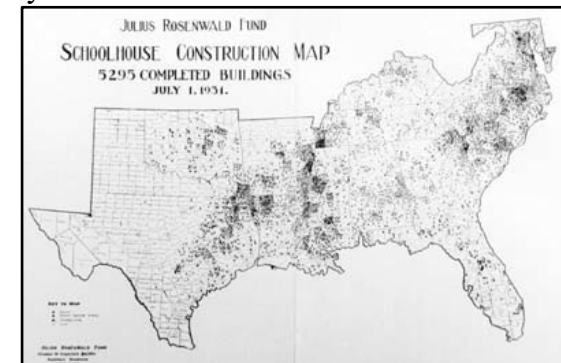
secured funding from Mr. Rosenwald to support the construction of

a few small schools in Alabama. The success of the project led to the establishment of the Julius Rosenwald Fund in 1917. Ultimately, the fund supported the construction of over 5600 schools, teacherages, and industrial shops from Maryland to Texas. This massive undertaking required the combination of:



Booker Taliaferro Washington  
April 5, 1856 – Nov. 14, 1915  
Founder of Tuskegee Institute

- Seed grants provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund (The communities were required to match the amount of grant money provided.)
- Building plans created by Tuskegee students
- Land, labor, and maintenance provided by the African American community
- Funds contributed by citizens of the entire community
- Money from the General Funds of the states



This photo of Mr. Rosenwald and Professor Washington was taken on the campus of Tuskegee Institute on February 22, 1915. Julius Rosenwald was a member of the Tuskegee Board of Trustees. Sadly, Professor Washington passed away in November of 1915 at the age of 59.



**The Colbert- Rosenwald School** One of over 570 Texas buildings partly funded by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, the Dayton school was constructed in the early 1930s. Initially called the Dayton



Colored School, it was renamed the Annie E. Colbert School during the 1934-1935 school year. The school represented the classic four-room Rosenwald building with accordion doors in the east section. During the school day, the accordion doors would remain closed to form two of the four classrooms. The doors would be opened for community events. The classroom in the southeast section of the building also has a stage. The building's north-south orientation accommodates the large windows on the east and west sides of the building, allowing the classrooms to benefit from the morning and afternoon sunlight.

## Colbert-Rosenwald School Museum

231 S. Colbert Street  
Dayton, Texas 77535

