



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

November 30, 2021

In partnership with Black communities, educator Booker T. Washington and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald built state-of-the-art schools for African American children across the South. The effort has been called the most important initiative to advance Black education in the early 20th century. Attending a Rosenwald School put a student at the vanguard of education for southern African American children. The architecture of the schools was a tangible statement of the equality of all children, and their programming made them a focal point of community identity and aspirations. Their innovative architecture, site placement, and fenestration made careful use of natural light, providing separate designs for buildings that faced east-west and buildings that faced north-south. When architecture and heritage intersect, stewards can more fully interpret the multiplicity of stories associated with Rosenwald Schools and Black education.

Today at the remaining extant sites, visitors experience a multilayered history and learn from stories imbued in the historic architecture and community organizing that has reimagined American education. To accurately interpret this remarkable achievement, communities must do the hard work to rescue and protect their Rosenwald School, including preserving the site's continuity of history and the evolution of school expansion, design, and change over time that reveals an often overlooked and undervalued history. Once the pride of their communities, many Rosenwald Schools were abandoned or demolished.

In 2002, the National Trust for Historic Preservation joined forces with grassroots activists, local officials, and preservationists to help raise awareness of this important but little-known segment of our nation's history, placing Rosenwald Schools on its 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list. Of the 5,357 schools, shops, and teacher homes constructed between 1917 and 1932, only 10–12 percent are estimated to survive today. Therefore, it is urgently important and timely that the community of Williamson County will relocate the vacant Lee-Buckner School, accurately position the building to conform with the Rosenwald School building plans and retain character-defining features across two different periods of significance that includes both its Rosenwald School legacy and subsequent school addition. I trust deeply that this community will uplift its full history and civic identity, through the lens of Williamson County's Black educational experience.

Sincerely,
Brent Leggs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Leggs".

Executive Director, African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and Senior Vice President, National Trust for Historic Preservation