

Julius Rosenwald



JULIUS ROSENWALD (1862-1932), the son of immigrant German-Jewish parents, was born in a house one block from Abraham Lincoln's in Springfield, Illinois. Perhaps it was this proximity to "Honest Abe, the Great Emancipator," that helped to shape two of Rosenwald's most outstanding contributions to American life: honesty in business and a concern for the education of Black Americans.

Although he helped the Chicago mail-order firm of Sears, Roebuck and Company achieve a respected position in the American business community, accumulation of wealth was not Rosenwald's major concern. This point was made clear by the Black poet, James Weldon Johnson, who, in a memorial address at Fisk University, a Black college Rosenwald had aided, said: "Julius Rosenwald used his brains in disposing of money. Had he used them only in acquiring it, we should not be gathered here today."

Rosenwald was a philanthropic giant of his time. The feeling

that he was obliged give derived out of a basic background in the Jewish tradition of charity. He taught other wealthy businessmen how to give, insisting that money be donated without any strings attached. Although Rosenwald gave significant sums of money to Jewish organizations in America and Europe, his greatest contribution was in the area of Black education. He aided the construction of over five thousand public schools, shops and teacher's dwellings connected with the education of Black children and young adults in the South.

As a young man in the 1890's, Julius Rosenwald stated that the aim of his life was to have an income of \$15,000 a year—\$5,000 for personal expenses, \$5,000 to be laid aside and \$5,000 to go to charity. At his death, he had come remarkably close to meeting that goal—a personal fortune that once totaled \$200 million dollars, Julius Rosenwald had given away over \$63 million dollars to charitable causes