

Pleasant View School

(Was a Rosenwald School)

This African American Elementary School was located in the Walnut Grove Community of Sevier County Tennessee.

The land the School was constructed on was donated by James, Newton and Fred McMahan. They were African American brothers living in the Walnut Grove Community.

The school was contracted with the financial assistance from the Joles Rosenwald Foundation's regional office. Julius Rosenwald¹, President of Sears Roebuck and Company, was interested in developing - self sufficiency in rural black communities in fifteen southern states. These schools were known as Rosenwald Schools.

The Rosenwald School Program provided its own school designs in a book called Community School Plans, published in 1921. Fred McMahan was provided with a copy of the book to design a two teacher community school.

The Rosenwald School had to meet very specific requirements such as placing of the doors, windows. The building was required to be facing either east or west in order for the school to receive proper lighting (in the absent of electricity. Pleasant View School was built to face east. Lamps (oil) were provided for emergencies.

Pleasant View School was the only one of the Rosenwald's school that was constructed of brick. This could have been because the J.F.N. Construction firm and the volunteer workers from the Black community were also brick masons.

Sevier County applied to the Rosenwald foundation for funds and received \$ 800.00. The Black Community matched the Rosenwald fund. Rosenwald required the State and Local governments to match his contributions. These governments gave a total of \$2,200.00. The grand total cost for the Pleasant View School construction and interior furnishing was \$ 3,800.00 in around 1921. The free donation of land and free labor of the

¹ In 1917, Julius Rosenwald, President of Sears, Roebuck and Company, initiated a school building program that was to have a dramatic impact on the face of the rural South and in the lives of its African-American residents. Through the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, more than 5300 schools, shop buildings and teachers houses were built by, and for, African-Americans across the South and Southwest until the program was discontinued in 1932. The Rosenwald School program has been called the "most influential philanthropic force that came to the aid of Negroes at that time." In all, the Rosenwald Foundation contributed more than \$4.3 million to construct schools across the regions, and more than \$4.7 million was raised by African Americans to build the schools. <http://www.rosenwaldschools.com/>

Parents of the children also the quality of teachers who taught there, the African American children were recipients of a good elementary education in Sevier County.

There was no provision set aside for children who wanted to attend or get a high school education. Many families moved to other counties or the children who remained in Sevier County at the time in our history, Pleasant View School was the only school they attended.

Pleasant View School operated as a three classroom with one teacher. Two of the rooms were separated by a movable partition wall. This was helpful and served as curtains when the school presented programs and plays. The building was used from time to time for community gatherings. The third room in the 1950's was used as a dining room. There was a partial basement used to house equipment and coal for the winter heat. Originally the grounds had a tennis court used by students and community. There was a large play ground, a well with a pump for the water supply and two outhouses. Pleasant View School was the largest African American school built in Sevier County. In the 1950's a small library was constructed in one corner of the classroom which contained three hundred thirty-five books donated by the Sevier County Library.

Mary Bond McMahan was the second teacher to teach at Pleasant View School. She was the first teacher with a Master's Degree in Sevier County. She was an innovative teacher always introducing new methods and social skills with music and drama. She was a leader in education always taken courses to update her career. She was a leader in the black community. When her students completed the eighth grade and those who wanted to continue their secondary education, Mary on her on would teach them some ninth grade class work.

Mary B. McMahan, wife of Fred McMahan grew up in Kentucky; she received her B.S. Degree from Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1918. She received her Master's Degree from the University of Cincinnati Ohio.

Pleasant View School was her third teaching assignment and remained in that position until she retired. She taught two generations of Burden, Rimel's, Moulden's, McMahan's, Martins, and Turners. Under her leadership at Pleasant View school her students were able to travel far and wide working as professionals in fields of education, medical and business.

In 2008 Pleasant View School was demolished without any notification to the Black community. Plans had been discussed to look into placing the building on the National Register of Historical Places in Sevier County.

Martha B. Bowden
Knoxville, Tennessee
2008





Figure 1-53. The Pleasant View Rosenwald School was built in 1923 near Sevierville and is the county's only example of a Rosenwald-funded school for African Americans.

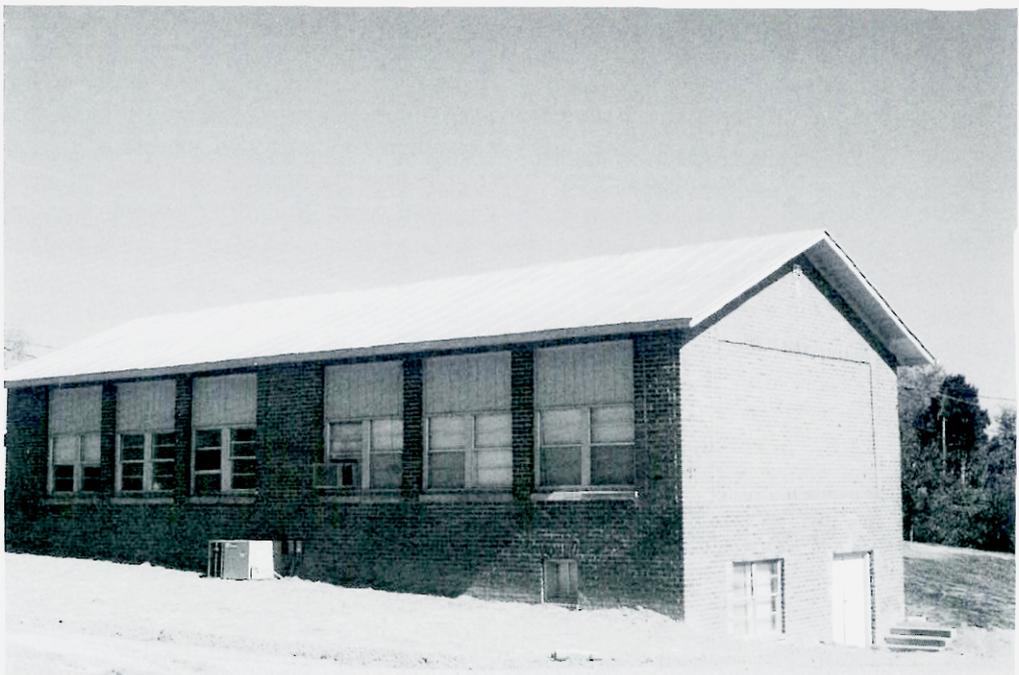
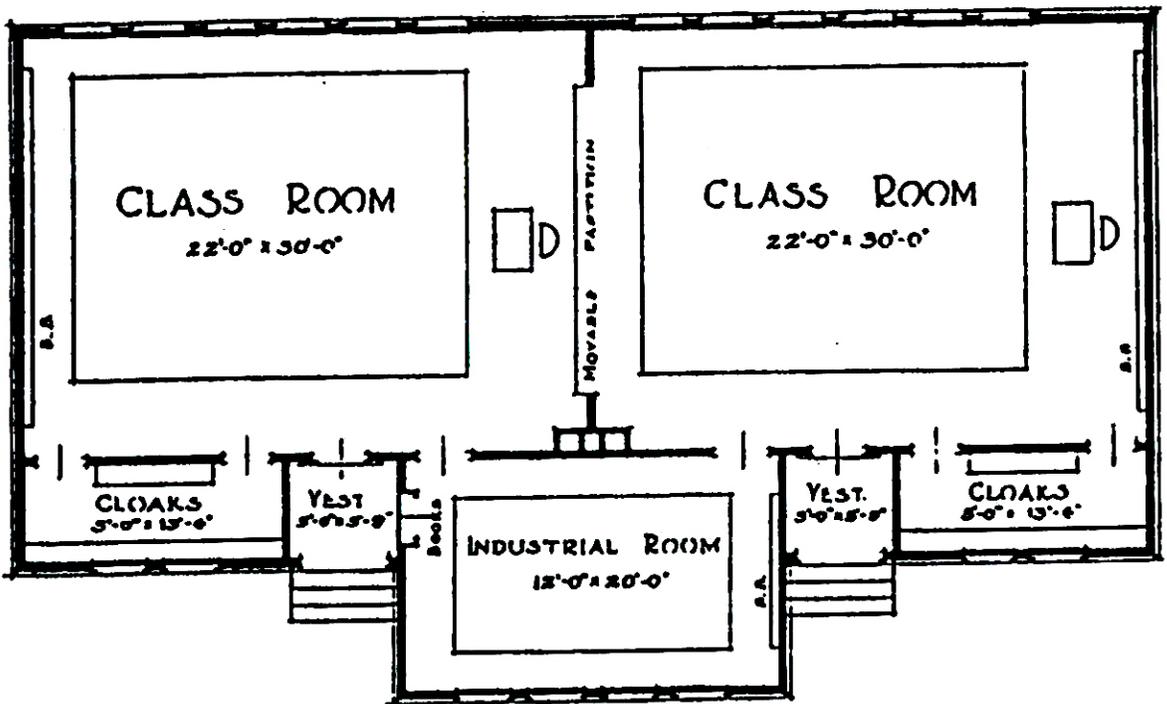
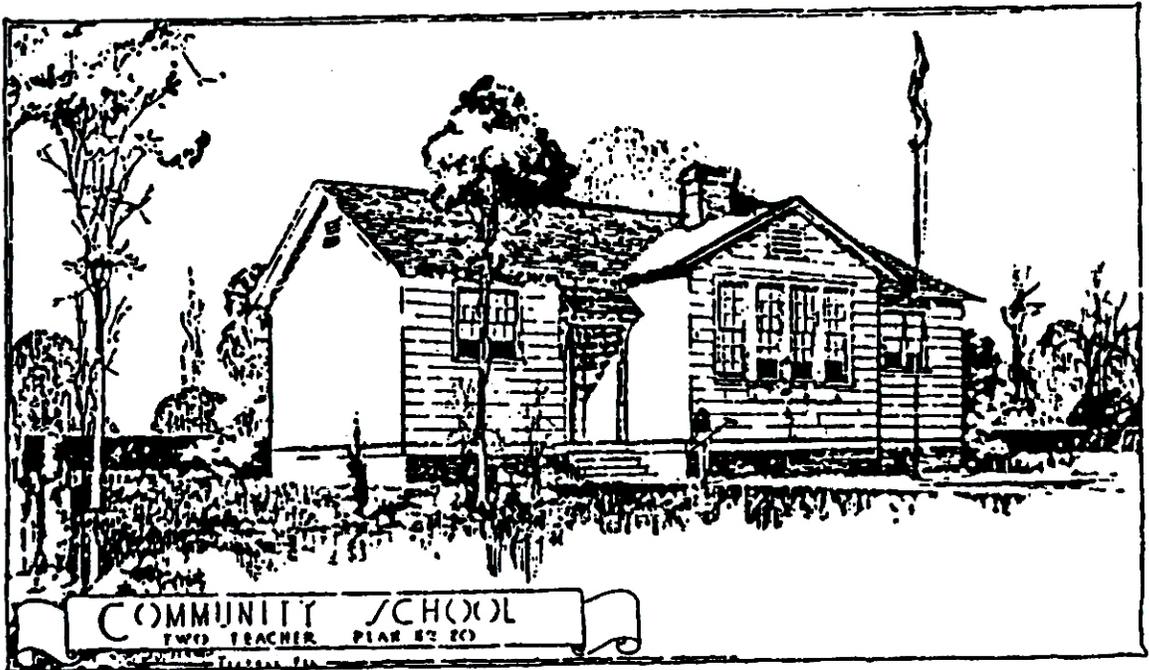


Figure 1-54. The rear facade of the Pleasant View Rosenwald School, which was built by the J, F & N McMahan Construction Company with donated labor and materials.



FLOOR PLAN No 20
 TWO TEACHER COMMUNITY SCHOOL
 TO FACE EAST OR WEST ONLY

Figure 1-55. Plans for a two-room Community Rosenwald School (1920) which the Pleasant View Rosenwald School was based on.