

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Longstreet Rosenwald School, DeSoto Parish, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

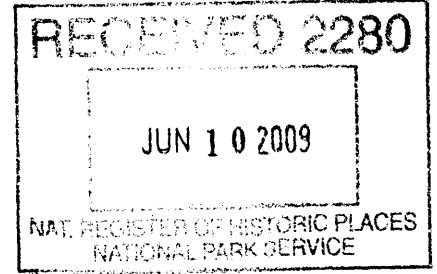
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Longstreet Rosenwald School

546

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number Louisiana Rt. 5

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Longstreet

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: DeSoto Code: 031 Zip Code: 71050

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: Statewide: X Locally:

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Scott Hutcheson

Date 6/9/09

State Historic Preservation Officer

Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register
Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper: [Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action: 7-22-09

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private:
Public-Local: X
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
2

Non contributing
1 buildings
sites
structures
objects
1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: education

Sub: school

Current: vacant

Sub: not in use

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: no style

Materials:

Foundation: brick

Walls: weatherboard

Roof: metal

Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Built in the 1923-24 school year, the simple one-story wood-frame Longstreet Rosenwald School faces east in a rural setting a few miles north of the village of Longstreet in DeSoto Parish. It faces Louisiana Route 5, with a generous setback (some 100 feet or so). To the rear and side of the school, but not in the immediate setting, is a historic outhouse for pupils' use. While some windows have been covered and interior cosmetic modernizations have been made, the school still easily retains enough of its character-defining elements to convey its historic identity as a Rosenwald school and hence its National Register eligibility under Criterion A.

The Longstreet Rosenwald School is sheathed in narrow gauge clapboards and is raised slightly off the ground on brick piers (some replaced with concrete blocks). The lower edge of the building obviously suffered some rot over the years. It is presently covered with plywood (some two feet on the façade and about one foot on the other elevations). The metal-covered roof features simple exposed rafter tails.

Rosenwald schools were built to a series of plans provided by the Rosenwald Fund. The candidate is clearly Plan #20 for a two-teacher school (see attached), both in plan and overall exterior appearance.

Façade (facing east)

The symmetrically articulated school has a main gable-end roof (roof ridge running parallel to Route 5), with a projecting gabled section at the façade midpoint. Originally a band of four nine-over-nine windows pierced the projecting gable to light a small classroom. Today the center two windows are covered with plywood. At the top of the gable is a louvered vent. To each side of the gable is a recessed entry, complete with the original shed roof above the door supported with bungalow-style brackets. Beyond each entry were two small windows placed fairly high on the façade to light small cloakrooms. Today these windows are covered (but still clearly evident) on the north side and partially covered on the south side. All façade windows feature plain board surrounds.

Side elevations (facing north and south)

The gable end side elevations feature a louvered vent in the peak. Otherwise, they were originally without any openings. These end walls provided for blackboards, and at one end, a stage. Today the north side elevation has been pierced by a very small window – at the edge, near the façade. The south side has an opening for a fan at the center. Both side elevations have thin

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boards applied in a V shape, presumably for bracing.

Rear elevation (facing west)

Originally two bands of six, nine-over-nine wooden windows with plain board surrounds pierced the rear elevation. Eight of the twelve remain today. Four have been covered with plywood, although their locations are clearly evident.

Interior:

The floorplan provides for two large classrooms in the main body of the building, with a third smaller classroom in the forward-projecting gable. Small cloakrooms are to the side of each entrance. The two large classrooms, as shown on Plan #20, were separated by a very wide opening fitted with a folding partition. The opening survives, but the folding partition is long gone. The large classroom on the north side ends with a stage with a blackboard above. The wooden stage was raised at some point, although the original height is still evident.

Since the building's last known use as a school (1959), it has undergone various uses and has received cosmetic alterations. The original flush board interior walls and ceiling are covered with plywood paneling. At present the building is vacant, and the long-term leasee, the DeSoto Police Jury, has begun the process of removing the substitute materials. They have also removed partition walls to restore the original floorplan.

There are a series of eight doors along the façade wall, each with a hinged transom – two for each cloakroom, two entrance doors, and two doors leading to the small front classroom. Most of the doors are original. They feature multiple horizontal panels. Door and window frames are made of simple boards.

Alterations/Assessment of Integrity:

To recapitulate, alterations are as follows: (1) some covered windows on the façade and rear; (2) the addition of a small window on the north side elevation and a fan opening on the south side elevation; (3) plywood along the lower edge of the building; (4) covering original flush board walls and ceilings; (5) the replacement of some of the original doors; and (6) raising the stage.

Despite the alterations mentioned above, the Longstreet School still readily conveys its historic identity as a Rosenwald school. Students from the historic period would easily recognize their old school, and scholars of the Rosenwald school building program would immediately tag it as a Rosenwald school should they drive the back roads of DeSoto Parish looking for survivors. As a very rare survivor, within Louisiana, of a most important school building program for African-American youth, the Longstreet School is clearly eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

Contributing/Non-contributing elements:

The small wood-frame outhouse (typical of rural schools of the period) is being counted as a contributing element. Next to it is a small concrete block building of unknown date (but clearly not original). It is being counted as non-contributing for the purposes of this nomination.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B C D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): NA A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance: education; ethnic heritage: black

Period(s) of Significance: 1924-1959

Significant Dates: same

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Longstreet Rosenwald School is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A: History because it represents the most ambitious school building program in the state for African-American children in the early twentieth century. Of the 393 Rosenwald schools built in Louisiana between 1914 and 1932, there are only 3, possibly 4, known survivors (at least in recognizable form). The three surviving documented Rosenwald schools are: Plaisance School, St. Landry Parish (National Register), the candidate, and the Community Rosenwald School, also in DeSoto Parish. Final documentation is pending on another school moved within the last few years to Donaldsonville from elsewhere in Ascension Parish. The period of significance for the Longstreet School spans from 1924, the year it opened, to 1959, its last known use as the only public elementary school for blacks in the Longstreet area.

Termed "the largest school building program for African Americans in the South since Reconstruction," the Rosenwald Fund's benefactor was Julius Rosenwald of Chicago, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company. While Rosenwald provided the all important funding, the program was actually the brainchild of famed African-American educator, Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Washington had already established several rural schools near Tuskegee when in 1913 he sought Rosenwald's permission to use \$2,800 remaining from a gift to Tuskegee to construct six more schools. Rosenwald visited the "model" rural schools, was impressed with what he saw, and soon provided funding for an additional 100 schools in Alabama. Named the Julius Rosenwald Rural School Building Program, the work expanded to other states by 1915. It operated out of Tuskegee until 1920, when an independent office was established in Nashville, Tennessee. Each state hired an African-American Rosenwald building agent. By the time the fund closed in 1932, over 5,300 schools had been built in 15 states at a total cost of \$28.4 million. One in every five rural schools for blacks in the South was a Rosenwald school. (The ratio was higher in Louisiana - one in four.)

The Rosenwald Fund provided matching grants to construct school buildings, teacher cottages and/or shops. Schools were built to a variety of standardized plans provided by the fund, ranging from small one and two teacher units to the largest, which

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housed seven teachers. The school plans recommended proper site orientation, construction materials, finishes and furniture. Rosenwald schools were almost entirely of wood frame construction. Most were very plain, with no attempt at styling. A minority featured modest Bungalow or Colonial Revival details.

The Rosenwald Fund came with numerous guidelines, including minimum school year requirements and local financial support for the matching grants. Essentially the schools were public-private partnerships with the major players being the Rosenwald Fund, local school authorities, and the black community. The sites and buildings of all schools aided by the fund had to be the property of the local school board. To receive aid, the people of the community in question had to secure a cash match, whether it be from school funds, private contributions or a combination thereof. Labor, land and material could be counted toward the match.

Of the \$28.4 million total cost for Rosenwald schools in fifteen states, the Rosenwald Fund provided \$4.3 million, blacks \$4.7 million, local governments \$18.1 million, and private contributions from whites 4%. Given their generally impoverished state, for rural Southern blacks to have raised \$4.7 million is quite remarkable. Quite simply, the desire for education was that fervent. From all over the South Rosenwald agents reported stories of great sacrifice and ingenuity in raising funds.

There is no question that the need for decent school buildings was great. Not since short-lived experiments in Reconstruction had there been such an ambitious program for African-American education. Louisiana's story by and large parallels that of many a southern state. After Reconstruction, when white Democrats regained control of the state, retrenchment was the watchword of the day. Funding for public education in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century was insufficient for even a single school system, let alone the dual system mandated by segregation. In short, white schools received little funding and schools for blacks even less. The situation was at its worst in rural areas.

So-called public schools for blacks in Louisiana were typically a public-private effort, with school authorities providing some funding and local sources (often churches) providing a building and other resources. Schools were often located in churches or lodge buildings, and teachers were poorly qualified. As T. H. Harris, State Superintendent of Education from 1908 to 1940, observed in his autobiography: "In most cases Negro churches were used for schoolhouses and the only equipment in these churches were the benches used for church services. The school term was from two to four months and the teachers were uneducated and wholly unequipped to instruct children."

And while public funding for black education increased in the early twentieth century, it remained most definitely a separate but unequal system. In the first three decades of the twentieth century public education for whites improved dramatically as "modern brick schools" were built in town after town. But such fine facilities were virtually unknown to blacks. Funding statistics per child tell the tale. A September 1918 Board of Education report observed that in twenty-three parishes in Louisiana less than one dollar was spent on each black child, while in the same parishes between fourteen and twenty-nine dollars was spent on each white child.

The gap was filled in many private ways. In South Louisiana, the Catholic Church provided parochial schools. And, most importantly, educating southern blacks became the focus of various northern philanthropic foundations, with huge sums of money being poured into the cause. The largest of these by far, indeed a name synonymous with black education in the rural South, was the Rosenwald Fund. Rural Louisiana received its first Rosenwald school in 1916, and by 1932, there were 393 in the state. Of the fifteen targeted states, there were only four with more schools funded than Louisiana (Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas). Given the breadth of the project in Louisiana, it is little wonder that the name Rosenwald remains a special one to older African-Americans. Many recall a picture of Rosenwald next to that of Washington and Lincoln being common in the schools, and the annual Rosenwald Days held at namesake schools throughout the South are well documented.

The official Rosenwald Fund archives, held at Fisk University in Nashville, show that Louisiana's 393 schools (roughly one of every four rural black schools) were located all over the state and came in various shapes and sizes. The funding breakdown of the 393 schools plus 31 teacher cottages and 9 shop buildings was: \$457,318 from blacks; \$70,407 from private white sources; \$855,781 from public sources; and \$338,000 from the Rosenwald Fund. The schools had a combined capacity of 51,255 pupils. Distribution ran from five or six per parish to as many as 37 (Caddo Parish). DeSoto, where the candidate is located, had five Rosenwald schools. There were generally fewer schools per parish in heavily Catholic South Louisiana, particularly in the Mississippi River parishes. But even Catholic areas needed Rosenwald schools. (There were not enough parochial schools, and there were Protestants in need of better schools.)

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Tragically, all available research indicates that Louisiana has lost almost all of its Rosenwald schools. The author of this document, with 30 years of historic preservation experience in the state, has been looking, on and off, for extant Rosenwald schools for the last several years. She knows of only three, possibly four, survivors: the candidate; the Community Rosenwald School, also in DeSoto Parish; the Plaisance School (National Register), St. Landry Parish; and a school moved within the last few years to Donaldsonville to save it from demolition by neglect. The candidate is quite well documented in Fisk Rosenwald Fund Archives as a Rosenwald School. The school now in Donaldsonville looks like a Rosenwald school model. Final documentation is pending as to whether it was funded through the Rosenwald program.

Rosenwald Fund records show that the Longstreet School was built in the 1923-24 school year at a total cost of \$2,350, with the fund providing \$700; blacks raising \$1,250; and \$400 provided from public sources. During most of the historic period grades one through seven (sometimes eight) were taught there. According to a State Department of Education document titled "Public Schools for Negro Children, 1943-44 Session," in that year two teachers at the Longstreet School taught grades 1-7 to a total enrollment of 81 students. Interviews with former students indicate that the candidate remained in use as the only public black elementary school until at least 1959. It appears that it was later used as an auditorium as other buildings were added to the campus.

Today the Longstreet School is one of relatively few surviving Rosenwald schools in the fifteen states where the Rosenwald Fund operated. States across the region are seeking to identify and recognize Rosenwald schools. In fact, Rosenwald schools are now "high on the radar screen" among preservationists in general. Sadly, far more have been lost than survive. In 2002 the National Trust for Historic Preservation placed Rosenwald schools on its "11 Most Endangered List" and launched a Rosenwald School Initiative to help identify and preserve the relatively few known survivors.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Anderson, John D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Embree, Edwin R. and Waxman, Julia. *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund*. Harper and Brothers, 1949.

Hoffschwelle, Mary S. *Preserving Rosenwald Schools*. National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2003.

Hoffschwelle, Mary S. *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*. University Press of Florida, 2006.

Interviews with former students, Queenie Dickson Rogers, Annie Dickson Collins, Dina Harris, Hazel Nichols, and Edith Williams, conducted by Donna Fricker, 2005, 2006.

Mansell, Jeff and Brinkley, Trina. "The Rosenwald School Building Fund and Associated buildings." This is a National Register multiple property cover form for Rosenwald schools in Alabama.

Porter, Betty. "The History of Negro Education in Louisiana." M.A. thesis, Department of History, LSU, 1938.

Rosenwald Fund Archives, Fisk University, Nashville, Tn.

Rosenwaldplans.org. This website reproduces various primary sources, including the school plans.

"Special Report on Negro Education in Louisiana, Session 1923-1924." Bulletin No. 104, Louisiana State Department of Education, November 1924.

Williams, J. E., State Supervisor, Negro Education. "Public Schools for Negro Children, 1943-44 Session." Bulletin No. 534, Louisiana State Department of Education, July 1944.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University (Fisk University)
- Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreege of Property: approx. 6 1/4 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	410630	3552820

Legal Property Description:

“A certain parcel and plot of land, described as beginning at the NW corner of the N half of the NE 1/4 of Sec. 18, T13, R15, run E 12 1/2 chains, then S 20 chains, then W 12 1/2 chains, then N 20 chains, to place of beginning, containing 6 1/4 acres, more or less, being all of that part of above described tract which lays E of H & S RR R/W.”

Justification:

Boundaries follow property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the school.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Donna Fricker, Fricker Historic Preservation Services, LLC

Address: 6810 Jefferson Hwy., Apt 1206, Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Telephone: 225-246-7901

Date: March 2009

PROPERTY OWNERS

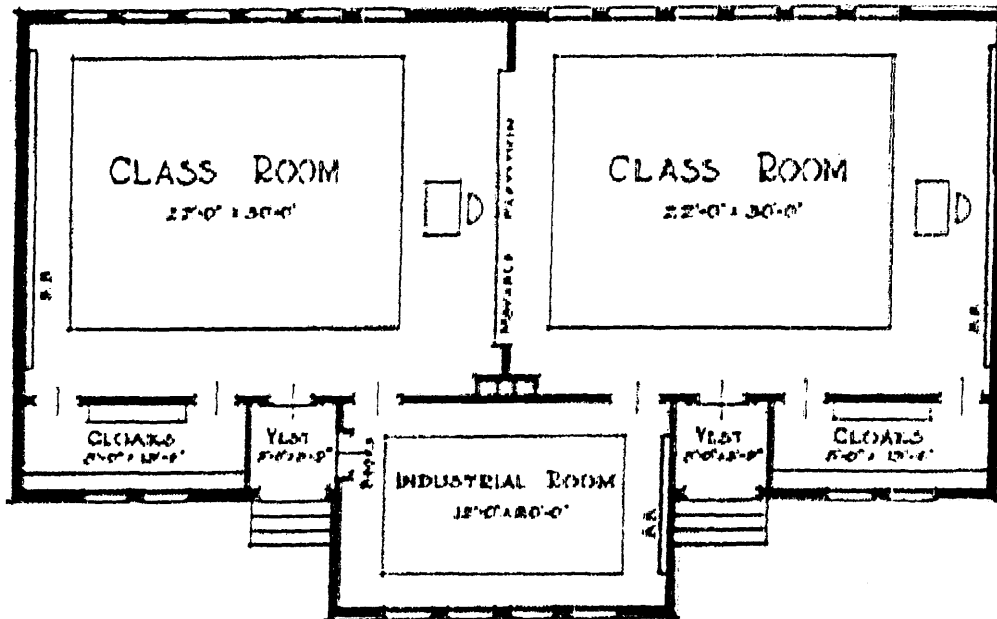
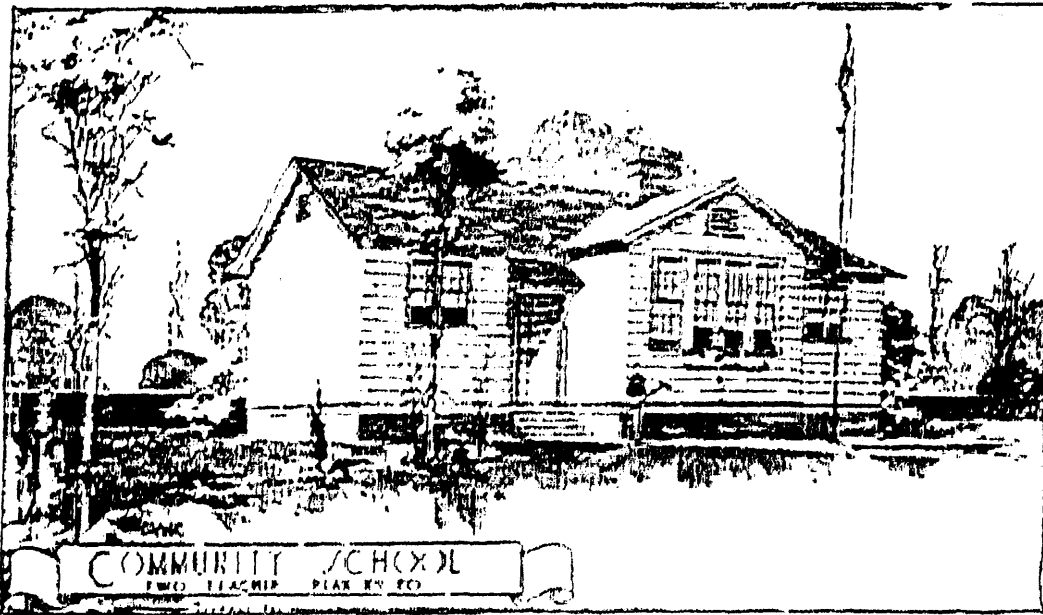
DeSoto Parish School Board (with 99 year lease to DeSoto Parish Police Jury)

Dudley Glenn, President
DeSoto Parish School Board
201 Crosby Street
Mansfield, LA 71052
(318) 872-2836

B. D. Mitchell, President
DeSoto Parish Police Jury
P. O. Box 898
Mansfield, LA 71052
(318) 872-0738

Two Teacher Plan to face East or West

Rosenwald Foundation



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

Longstreet Rosenwald School
Longstreet Vicinity, DeSoto Parish, LA

