

“Step Back in Time: Huntsville Heroes”

A need exists to attract a new generation to an appreciation of history.

The inaugural 2024 **“Huntsville Heroes” Outdoor Exhibit** celebrates American Emancipation and Independence on the grounds of the Gibbs-Powell House/ Walker County Museum at 11th Street (Highway 30) and Avenue M in Huntsville Texas.

Featured are little known facts about black and white patriots who helped advance the causes of education, opportunity and achievement. Patriots whose actions affected generations of African American Texans in the Huntsville area.

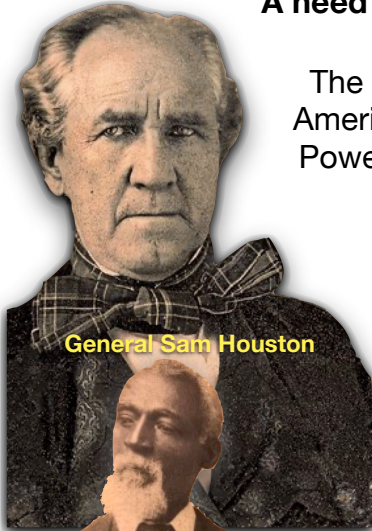
2024 Honorees:

General Sam Houston; Joshua Houston; the millionaire philanthropist Julius Rosenwald and the Tuskegee Institute; Samuel Walker Houston, Rosenwald School#1, its Master Educator Esther Bridges and Dr. Naomi Ledé.

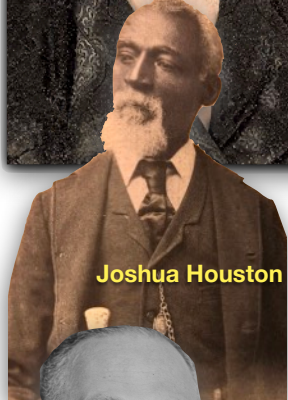
Visitors are reminded to consider two popular historical books about Walker County's Black achievers, including **“From Slave to Statesman”** by Patricia Smith Frazier and Jane Clements Monday (with a foreword by Dan Rather) and Dr. Naomi Ledé’s book **“Pathfinders.”** *Pathfinders* is on a sale in the Museum.

This unique “edutainment” approach to generating public interest in inspiring stories of the past is a perfect fit for the history-loving hometown of General Sam Houston!

Special Thanks to Lee Ann Wiseman and the board of the Walker County Museum, Linda Moten, Lajuana Glaze, Lajuan Law, Tweed Smith, Aundra Fusilier, Dr. K.G. Bell, Earl and Mary Kittrell, Dr. Bob Galloway, Robbie Lee, Neal Brooks, Ronnie Moore, Larry Williams, Ethel Wilson, One Eleven Printing, Gingartum LLC, The Wiseman Company, The Samuel Walker Houston School Alumni Organizations, Tap Truck Outlaws, Wischnewsky Dodge, K-SAM, the Huntsville Item, Texas Coffee News, Houston Informer Foundation, Inc, Universe Purpose and all unmentioned history-loving inspiration catalysts!



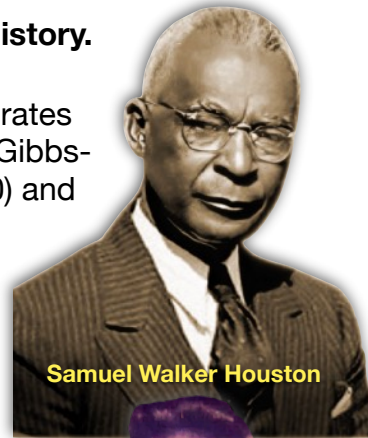
General Sam Houston



Joshua Houston



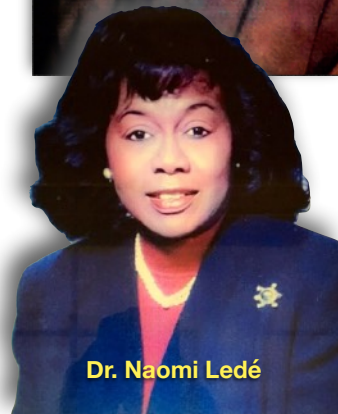
Julius Rosenwald



Samuel Walker Houston



Esther Bridges



Dr. Naomi Ledé



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Texas' Inaugural Juneteenth Emancipator...

General Sam Houston

03/02/1793 - 07/26/1863

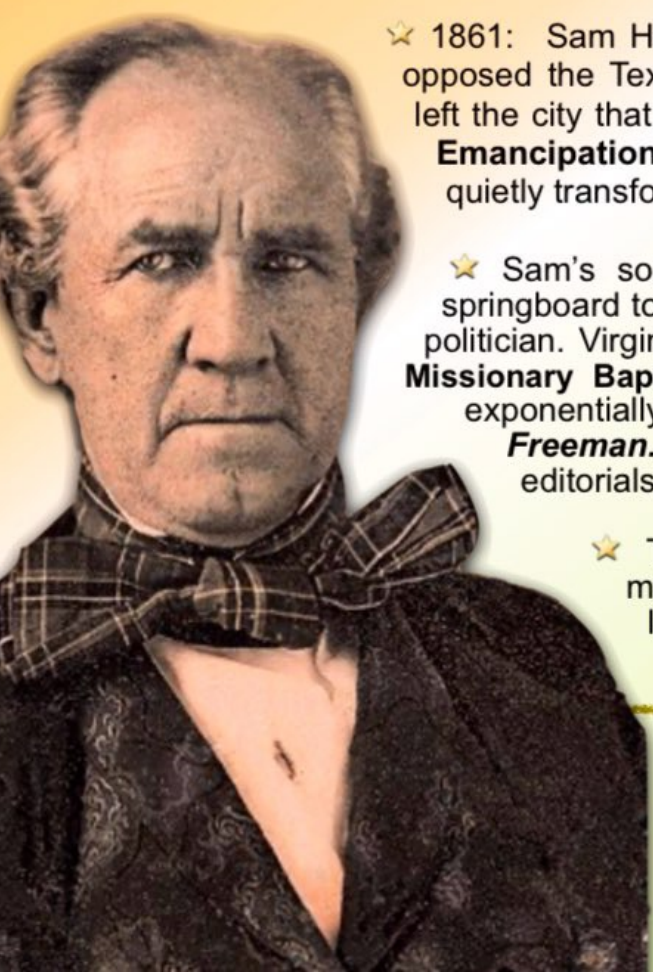
★ **General Sam Houston**, born in Virginia, was an adopted member of the Cherokee nation; sixth Governor of Tennessee; patriot of both the War of 1812 and Texas Revolution; first president of the Republic of Texas; United States Representative and Senator; and third Governor of the State of Texas. Sam and his wife, **Margaret Lea Houston** owned slaves for most of their lives but both have a special place reserved in the hearts of Texans of all races for their kindness and unprecedented humanity in the care and sponsorship of their enslaved "servants."

★ General Houston relocated his young mulatto daughter, **Virginia Houston** from Galveston to Huntsville and adopted both her and **Joshua Houston**, making them brother and sister. In defiance of local laws, he encouraged them to help his other servants learn to read and write. The Houstons also engendered marketable skills in their servants, allowing them to be hired out, but secretly keep and manage their earnings—actions unprecedented at the time. *Joshua saved over \$2,000!*

★ 1861: Sam Houston was deposed as Governor of Texas, when he opposed the Texas legislature's decision to join the Confederacy. He left the city that bore his name, returned home and defiantly read the **Emancipation Proclamation** to his 12 slaves, freeing them. He then quietly transformed them all into wage-earning sharecroppers.

★ Sam's socio-economic education of his servants provided a springboard to prosperity... Joshua Houston became a financier and politician. Virginia Houston-Wilson was a founder of the **Friendship Missionary Baptist Churches**. In 1893, the hunger to read spiked exponentially with the advent of the **Houston Informer and Texas Freeman**. Their Huntsville Edition's "Without Fear or Favor" editorials helped win elections and change discriminatory laws.

★ Today, the **City of Houston** is the fourth largest municipality in the USA. It is a tribute to Sam Houston's legacy that — with 2.3 million people speaking over 140 languages — it is also one of the most diverse.



Source: "Pathfinders: A History of Pioneering Efforts of African Americans, Huntsville, Walker County Texas" (2005) by Dr. Naomi Lede

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Houston
Research; Oral Tradition; Centenarian Interviews
<https://www.understandinghouston.org>



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Texas' African American Political Pioneer...

Joshua Houston

1822 - 01/08/1902

★ **Joshua Houston**, the famous ex-slave of General Sam Houston and his wife, Margaret Lea Houston, rose to become a respected businessman, alderman, financier, college trustee and Walker County Commissioner.

★ Joshua learned to read as a boy with his young mistress, Margaret Lea. Armed with that forbidden capability, he became an invaluable asset. Becoming a skillful negotiator while handling affairs for General Houston. This business savvy allowed him to prosper as a freedman blacksmith.

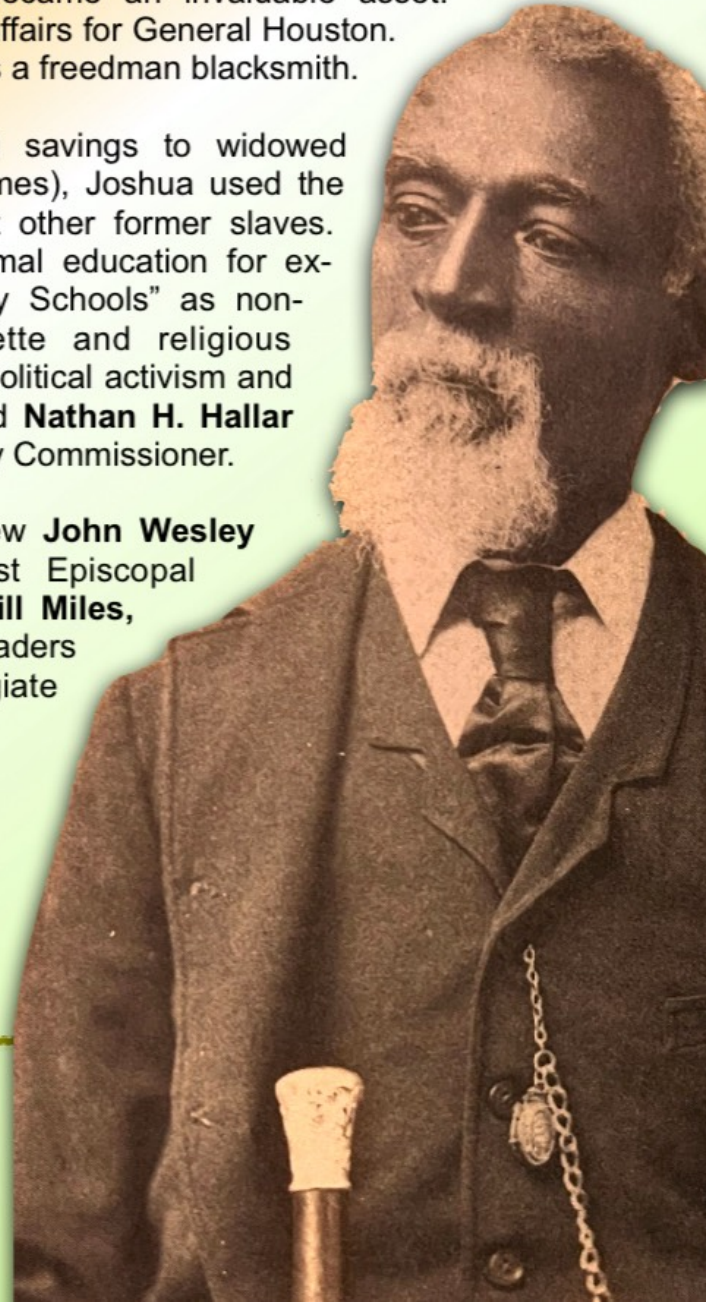
★ After unsuccessfully offering his \$2,000 savings to widowed Margaret Houston (when she fell on hard times), Joshua used the money to support his family and help uplift other former slaves. Aware that Jim Crow advocates feared formal education for ex-slaves, he helped establish church "Sunday Schools" as non-threatening conduits to education etiquette and religious principles. Also offered skills for "The Talk," political activism and economic advancement. In 1878, he followed **Nathan H. Hallar** coming Walker County's second Black County Commissioner.

★ 1883: Joshua Houston, with his nephew **John Wesley Wilson**, cousin **William Kittrell**, Methodist Episcopal Church elder **C.W. Porter**, **Alex Wynne**, **Will Miles**, **Strother Green**, **R. P. Dorsey**, and other leaders opened Bishop Ward Normal and Collegiate Institute on Smith Hill.

★ Joshua had three wives and eight children. His most famous son, **Samuel Walker Houston**, continued his father's legacy of perseverance, social commitment, integrity and academic excellence for Black Texans.

Source: "Pathfinders: A History of Pioneering Efforts of African Americans, Huntsville, Walker County Texas" (2005) by Dr. Naomi Lede

"From Slave to Statesman: The Legacy of Joshua Houston, Servant to Sam Houston," (1993) by Patricia Smith Prather and Jane Clements Monday





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Funding Public Schools for African American Children...

Julius Rosenwald & The Tuskegee Institute

★ **Julius Rosenwald** (1862-1932) was a Chicago businessman, philanthropist, and president of Sears, Roebuck and Company. Though he was born in Illinois, Julius' German-Jewish family had fled persecution in Europe. He established the Rosenwald Foundation, using his personal income, for *"the well-being of mankind"* because he believed that all Americans deserve the opportunity to an education.

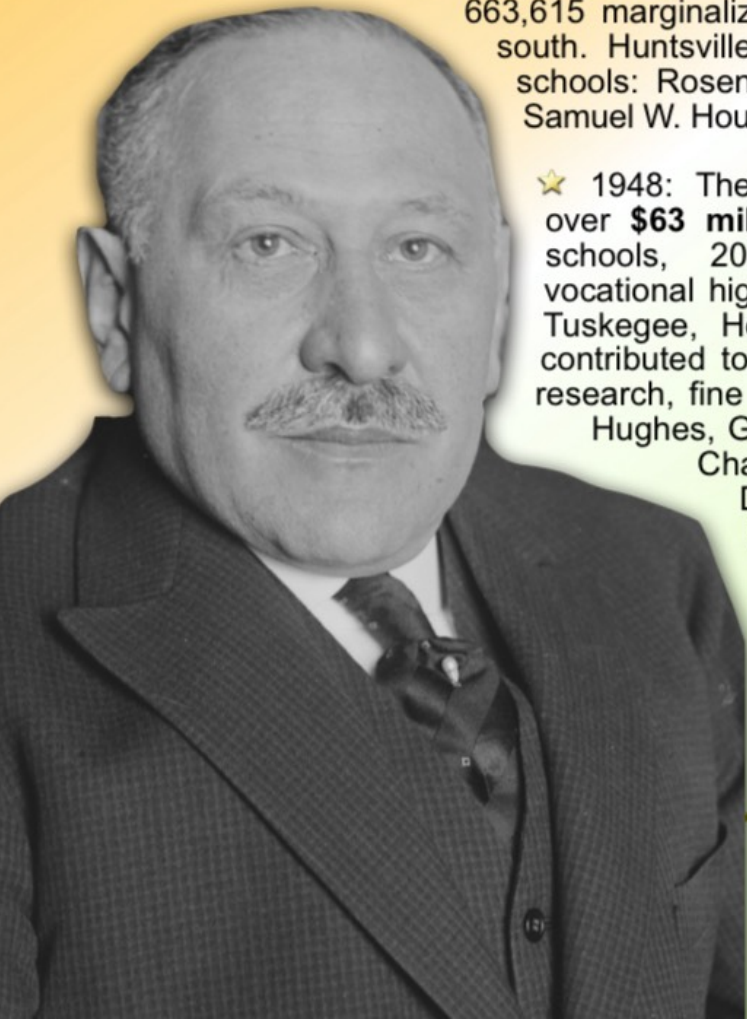
★ 1912: When, as a new trustee of the **Tuskegee Institute**, Julius discovered that Black children in the rural south were not provided a free public education, Rosenwald worked with educator and former slave, **Booker T. Washington** to use the **Rosenwald Fund** to increase African American educational opportunities.

★ 1917: **Tuskegee-Rosenwald Schools** enriched the lives of over 663,615 marginalized children in 15 states across the Jim Crow south. Huntsville was the only Texas ISD with 2 Rosenwald schools: Rosenwald School #1 on Rosenwald Road and the Samuel W. Houston Industrial and Training Institute on Hwy 30.

★ 1948: The Rosenwald Fund was depleted, having donated over **\$63 million to philanthropy**: helping to build 5,357 schools, 200 teacher's residences, 163 workshops and 5 vocational high schools. It also supported colleges such as Tuskegee, Howard, Fisk, Atlanta and Dillard Universities; contributed to museums, hospitals, relief agencies, scientific research, fine arts and notable fine artists such as Langston Hughes, Gordon Parks, Sidney Poitier, Claude McKay, Dr. Charles Drew, Mahalia Jackson, Marion Anderson, Dorothy Danbridge, W.E.B. DuBois, Ralph Ellison, James Weldon Johnson and many others.

★ 2021: The US Congressional **Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Act** became law on January 13, 2021. The Act chronicles sites associated with Rosenwald's legacy. A committee is tasked to turn a Rosenwald School site into a national park.

Source: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenwald_Fund
<https://rosenwaldacres.com/the-rosenwald-legacy>
<https://www.rosenwaldpark.org/campaign-3>





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Texas Pioneer of African-American Education...

Samuel Walker Houston

02/12/1864 - 11/19/1945

★ **Samuel Walker Houston**, son of Joshua and Sylvester Houston, was a Navy Veteran and skilled musician; a follower of Booker T. Washington; student of W.E.B. DuBois, and founding publisher of *The Huntsville Times* Newspaper.

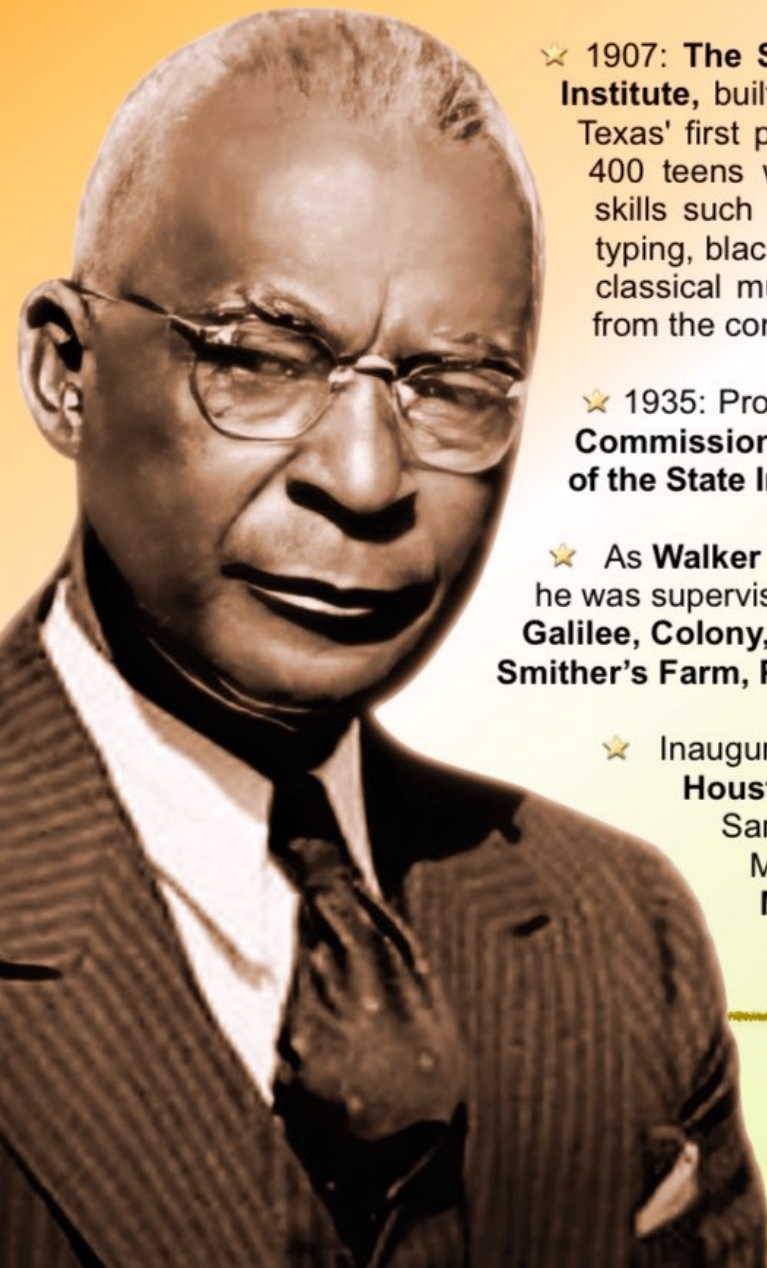
★ 1906: Founded the church-based **Galilee Community School**— a private academy for children of color in grades 1- 6.

★ 1907: **The Samuel W. Houston Industrial and Training Institute**, built on land donated by the Williams family, was Texas' first private boarding school for Black youth. Up to 400 teens were housed with a curriculum that included skills such as carpentry, plumbing, sewing, cosmetology, typing, blacksmithing; additional instruction was offered in classical music, humanities and etiquette. Funding came from the community, the Julius Rosenwald Fund *and others*.

★ 1935: Professor Houston was appointed to serve as the **Commissioner of Interracial Cooperation**; and **Director of the State Interracial Commission of Texas**.

★ As **Walker County Superintendent** for persons of color he was supervising principal of nine Walker County schools: **Galilee, Colony, Cotton Creek, Cumberland, Ollie Hill, Smither's Farm, Phelps, Sand Hill and Mount Prairie**.

★ Inaugural principal of the aptly named **Samuel Walker Houston High School** (which later became the Samuel Walker Houston Elementary School, then Museum.) **The Samuel Walker Houston Museum and Cultural Center** is named in his honor.



Source: "Pathfinders: A History of Pioneering Efforts of African Americans, Huntsville, Walker County Texas" (2005) by Dr. Naomi Lede



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Walker County's First Public School for Negro Children...

Esther Bridges & Rosenwald School #1

★ Walker County's first free public school for children of color was founded by **John Wesley Wilson** (8/12/1860 - 4/20/1948) and his wife, **Amarintha Kittrell Wilson** (8/9/1864 - 4/20/1948) in the Kittrell Woods just north of Huntsville, Texas. John, (the son of General Sam Houston's mulatto daughter **Virginia Houston Wilson** and **George Wilson**) was an English professor at Sam Houston College. Amarintha was the granddaughter of General Houston's physician and Walker County's largest land owner, **Doctor Pleasant William Kittrell**.

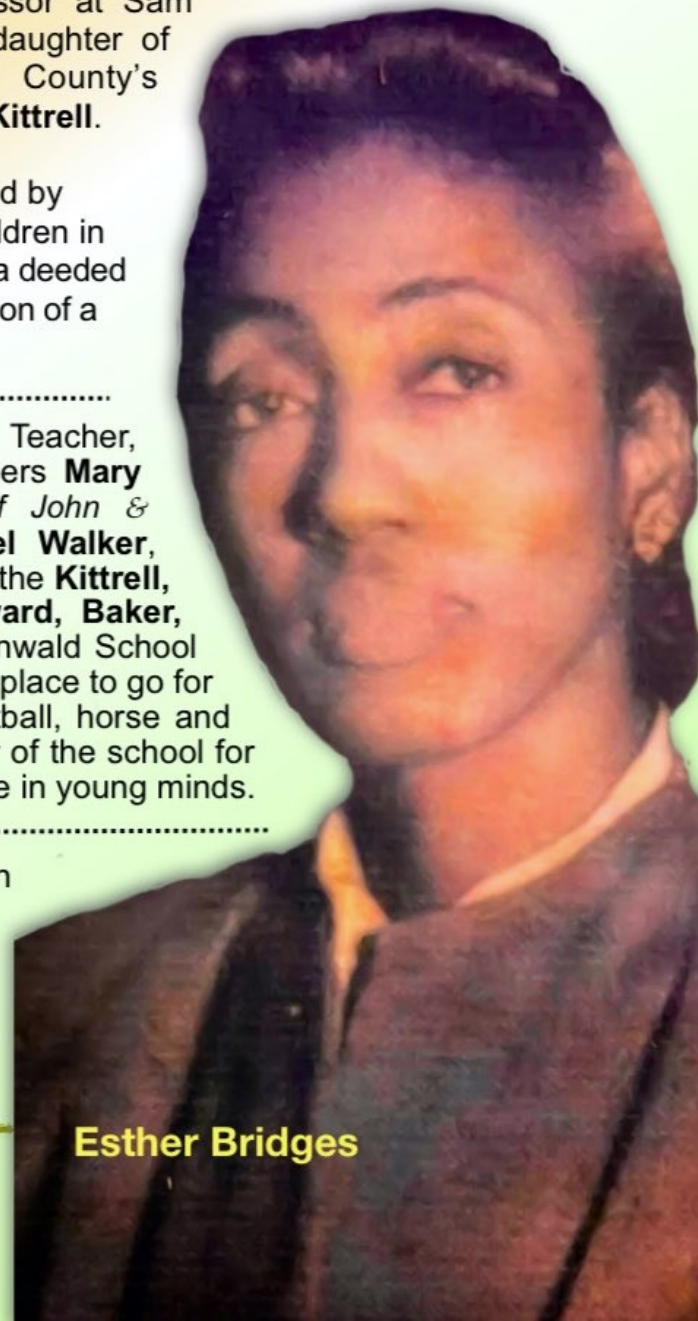
★ 1915: The Rosenwald Fund was implemented by Tuskegee Institute to build schools for rural children in 15 southern states. In 1920, John and Amarintha deeded 2 acres of land to the Huntsville ISD for the creation of a two-room school house, **Rosenwald School #1**.

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★ 8/14/1921: With the expertise of Head Teacher, **Esther Bridges** (shown here), alumni teachers **Mary Helen Wilson Wiseman** (granddaughter of John & Amarintha), **Thelma McGuire**, **Maddy Jewel Walker**, and other fine educators; plus volunteers from the **Kittrell, Wilson, Spivey, Cotton, Wiley, Vann, Howard, Baker, Crawford, Houston** and other families, Rosenwald School prospered. "Rosenwald School Road" was the place to go for meetings, events, Juneteenth, picnics, basketball, horse and foot races, etc. Mrs. Bridges was headmaster of the school for over 40 years, molding and inspiring excellence in young minds.

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★ Though Rosenwald #1 was demolished in the early 1960s, decades later, the road leading north past the prison farm was still affectionally called the "Old Rosenwald School Road." This name was eventually shortened on modern signage and inaccurately spelled as "Rosenwall Road."



Esther Bridges

Source: *The Samuel Walker Houston Museum Archives, Oral Tradition, Research, Alumni & Neighbor Interviews.*



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Author, Historian and Texas "Transportation Czar"...

Dr. Naomi Ledé

MARCH, 1934 - PRESENT

★ **Dr. Naomi Williams Ledé**, daughter of Tenolia and Elzine Houston Williams, attended Samuel Walker Houston High School in Huntsville, Texas. In 1907, her family was instrumental in the furtherance of local education by donating land for two churches and for the **Samuel Walker Houston Industrial and Training Institute** Walker County's first secondary school for African-American students.

★ Graduating with honors from **Mary Ellen College**; and later from **Bradley University** in Peoria, Illinois, Ledé received her first Master's in arts and social psychology from **Texas Southern University**, followed by her second Master of Arts with a specialization in urban affairs from the **University of Texas–Arlington**. In 1979, Naomi Ledé was awarded a Doctorate of Education degree by the **University of Houston**.

★ This "distinguished alumni" and international scholar in transportation planning and management is the author of ten books and more than three hundred research studies, articles, professional papers on urban planning, community development, education, and inner city transportation challenges.

★ She has been appointed by Texas Governors, **Bill Clements, Ann Richards and George Bush** to serve on various urban planning and transportation boards. The **Metropolitan Transit Authority of Houston** named her an "Outstanding Leader of the Century" in February 2000. In 2001, the **Southwest Region University Transit Center** established a scholarship in her honor for students pursuing their Master's degree in Transportation Engineering. She is a member of the **Gamma Phi Sigma Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority**.

★ Dr. Ledé married Wilson Andrew Ledé Jr. in 1964. They have two children: Paul Bernard Ledé and Susan Ledé-Fretty York.

Source: "Pathfinders: A History of Pioneering Efforts of African Americans, Huntsville, Walker County Texas" (2005) by Dr. Naomi Ledé

