



The Edwin Washington Project

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November 29, 2016

Subject: Memorandum of Understanding on Data Access

To: Rachel Johnson, Supervisor, Information Management and Data Security

From: Larry Roeder, Principal Investigator, The Edwin Washington Project

First of all, we feel honored to be using the “lost records” in order to understand the evolution of education in Loudoun since just before the Civil War and of the public school system since 1870. We are especially honored that the Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate passed a joint resolution supporting the preservation effort.

The approach we discussed with Donna Kroiz at the start was to use the records to fully understand the impact of segregation on African-American pupils, parents and instructors. Such an in-depth study hadn’t been done before. To that end, we are developing an annotated catalog and an analytical study, which we hope to complete fully by mid-2018. In addition, because the records are of great historical value, Donna asked me to develop a preservation program, which we have begun.

This is a project we can achieve. As you may know, I have degrees in History and Library/Information Science and our volunteers are also well trained and educated. One is a PhD candidate in education and another is an expert on digital preservation who used to work at the Smithsonian and Oatlands Plantation. We are also incorporated in the State of Virginia and have been granted 501© (3) status by the IRS. We also have a Board of Directors and one those is the Chairman of the Board of Oatlands Plantation.

The project is now in an advanced stage. One thing we discovered is that the Superintendent of the Public Schools in Loudoun served from 1917 to 1957 and was an innovator who brought into the school system modern thinking on management and record keeping. His period of service also covers the world wars and the depression, as well as Jim Crow. We can see in him a desire to be fair to the African-American community, in the context of the times. Much of his career took place during difficult

economic stress and in fairness, the community supported segregation, which was the law under the Virginia constitution. So our study will not only show the impact on segregation on African-Americans, it will also explain how the overall system evolved, something which would have been impossible without access to the records. That said, while we believe what we learn will teach others in the world why segregation is a bad idea, our focus is intended to be positive in nature, not an attack on historical figures.

Petitions: Some records could be considered of national importance, such as a large number of handwritten petitions by parents asking the government for improvements in the schools, toilets, repairs, new teachers, better discipline in some cases, as well as civil-rights related topics. One is likely the earliest petition asking for an accredited high school for African-Americans. We have scanned those documents and are transcribing them in order to post it all on our website and create a Roll of Honor. But we also feel that at some point those petitions might be offered to the new National Museum of African American History and Culture. We hope you agree that's a worthy goal.

The Database and the Catalog: We are also designing a database to list all of the students in "colored" schools, who instructed them, where they learned and what they learned. We can't do that without access to the records, and we wish to make the database public; but will protect private information. A detailed catalog already under development will also show what records are in the archives.

Teachers: We only want to post information now available to the public at the Library of Virginia, Name, Age, Race, Sex, Certificate(s), Schools of Education, Schools at which they instructed, Home town(s) and Salaries, as well as number of years of instruction, topics taught and grades, etc. However, if we find derogatory information on a teacher, we won't share that, without permission. We won't share test results, either, though we do want to list if they took exams. We are gathering up biographical information on some of them from the internet and interviews. We also plan to develop a statistical study showing across the decades levels of education, the evolution of salaries and other data. That part of the research won't reveal names.

Schools: We want to post any historical information available, especially construction data. There has never been a comprehensive list of the schools. We propose to develop one, listing when schools were built, closed, burned down, what they were made of and where they stood, etc. Some still stand, so we plan to photograph them. We also plan to delve into their contents, e.g. pianos and toilets, that sort of thing.

Students: The local community wants to know where their ancestors studied, so we wish to post who attended the "colored schools," what grades they were in, how old they were at various stages, how far they lived from school and if they were given public transport. We also want to post what they studied and if they had access to medical services; but we will not reveal performance data, tests results, results of medical exams. We do however need access to such information so that we can do statistical analysis. In other words, we want to know how many children of different ages took

Virginia, vs US History, music, etc. and how well they did; but no names will be revealed in the statistical reports.

Transportation: There is a wealth of information on how students went to school, by horse, walking, wagons, buses, shared POV's, etc. Our plan is to develop a web-based GIS tool that show how this system evolved for all students, regardless of race. We don't plan to link this tool to any particular names. It's more about understanding that students from village X had to go to which schools and how they went there over time. The same product will show the schools, when they rose and fell. To accomplish this, we will use a cartographer volunteer who recently was employed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Digital Preservation: Most of the records are fragile, so we have been scanning them and placing them on a special drive. We also plan to place them in acid-free folders and boxes so that they will last indefinitely. Scanning will also reduce the need for physical contact.

The plan is to also post the records; but to protect sensitive data by redacting it. That way, if there is ever a fire, the actual information is protected for future researchers. Again however, we will not provide more information than one might already find in the archives of the Library of Virginia and to never post sensitive information without specific permission.

Thanks again for allowing us to provide this service to the community. I can assure you we will follow your instructions and guidance as we conduct our research.