

## The Edwin Washington Project

### I. Strategic Overview

The Edwin Washington Project began as a result of the discovery of thousands of documents in the Loudoun training center building. This discovery was made in 2004 by members of the LCPS archives office, specifically Donna Kroiz, Sue..., and Cheri...(others?). After their discovery, the documents were cleaned and collected into boxes and stored in the archives building in Round Hill, VA.

In 2015, Donna Kroiz asked Larry Roeder to look at the documents and he initiated a project to inventory, catalog, and preserve them, and eventually, to make them available to researchers.

In September 2015, Larry put out a call for volunteers to help on the project. In March 2016 Loudoun Now reporter Danielle Nadler produced a front-page story on the project and the resulting publicity generated a large group of volunteers. At around the same time, Larry and Tony Arciero established contact with the Loudoun School for the Gifted. That relationship has continued and several students are now beginning to explore project ideas.

Preservation, inventory, cataloging, and scanning efforts are ongoing. Several volunteers are analyzing relevant themes that run through multiple documents and cover a span of years, sometimes decades.

The 501(c)(3) organization for Diversity Fairs was reactivated in Virginia and the Edwin Washington Project is its principal project. There are five directors:

Larry Roeder  
Hari Sharma  
Randy Ihara  
Doug Miller  
Tony Arciero

The Edwin Washington Project is led by an executive committee. This committee synchronizes the multiple tasks and integrates the disparate efforts of the volunteers. The Executive committee members are:

Larry Roeder  
Tony Arciero  
Julie Goforth

The Edwin Washington Project currently has 9 volunteers. The volunteers have each taken on a project that will individually and collectively move the overall project forward. The volunteers are: Larry Roeder; Tony Arciero; Julie Goforth; Dolores Grigsby; David Caldwell; Kent Hardcastle; Student volunteers are Sofi Conway and Katie Knipmeyer. Professor Alistair Kwan (in New Zealand) has offered to support as requested.

## II. Current Status.

As in any startup situation, there are a number of pressing priorities. Three main categories of effort will be discussed: The charitable organization, document preservation; and future needs.

1. The Diversity Fairs organization. The federal and state paperwork is complete and the organization is a legal entity. **Bank account? Officers' positions?** The primary area of focus for the board of Directors is fundraising. The initial draft budget will be briefed to the board shortly and then published for the volunteers' insight as well as for potential funders. The budget is based partly on the goals and priorities expressed in this document, and partly on the experience of the executive committee and volunteers. An additional task for the Directors is to cultivate relationships with other **historical societies, the friends of the Balch Library, and the LCPS**. We need to work in partnership with others to preserve the materials and make them available to researchers in perpetuity. One way to ensure that goal is to secure dedicated space to house the materials. That would allow for temperature-controlled storage, long-term protection, and easy access by researchers.

2. Document Preservation. Larry created an executive committee to help organize the growing team of volunteers. Through this committee, the individual tasks are synchronized to ensure that as a team, we are focused on the overall goals and are making progress on the highest priority actions. The executive committee, working through the volunteers, is heavily engaged in preserving the documents. As funding becomes available, we will purchase additional storage boxes, folders, and plastic sheet protectors to safely store these fragile documents. We are currently exploring options to build a relational database to make the data accessible to the public. Additionally, we will purchase a scanner and backup storage to digitally preserve the documents that are scanned. In the interim, we have been using a hand scanner, cell phone cameras, and a digital camera to scan documents. If dedicated space becomes available, we intend to purchase furniture and equipment to facilitate research. This includes several mobile storage carts, desks, tables, chairs, lamps, and computers.

3. Future Needs. Once the documents are safely inventoried, cataloged, and stored, we intend to conduct additional research, including accessing documents in the **state library at Richmond**, at Swarthmore College, the Loudoun Circuit Court, and the Balch Library. We will continue to collaborate with the contacts we made the Country Schools Association of America conference in June 2016. Attending future conferences is considered a good investment based on this year's results. There will also be continuing administrative costs for operating the 501(c)(3). These include insurance, legal fees, accounting, etc. Eventually, we intend to pay people for their time devoted to this project.

### III. Some accomplishments of the previous year:

- Received recognition through a joint resolution of the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates
- Established the federal and state requirements for a 501(c)(3).
- Grew from two to nine volunteers.
- Was the subject of a front-page story in the "Loudoun Now" newspaper.
- Completed an initial sorting of all documents.
- Digitized 60 years' worth of African-American teacher data.
- Created a listing of all African-American ("Colored") schools in Loudoun County.
- Developed a new, professional website.
- Developed and refined an annotated catalog (currently 180 pages, but continues to grow).
- Scanned approximately one thousand documents.
- Attended and presented at the Country Schools Association of America national conference.
- Established a relationship with Loudoun School for the Gifted.

### IV. Goals for the remainder of 2016:

#### 1. Board of Directors:

- Raise funds for immediate needs.
- Help secure a dedicated space.
- Develop partnerships with other historical societies, libraries, universities, and funders.

#### 2. Executive Committee/volunteers:

- Develop the database.
- Scan all books and other critical documents.
- Digitize all student data.
- Sort, protect, and individually file each document.
- Enter all documents into the annotated catalog.

These goals and priorities are captured in the proposed budget. As goals are achieved, we will move to next highest priority action. One item only briefly mentioned above is additional data collection. There are many related documents at various locations and we will ask volunteers to access that data after the physical documents we are managing are properly cared for. From time to time, we are provided the opportunity to interview former students and teachers in the African-American schools and their families. As these opportunities arise, we will continue to capture their living history.