A look back at E.J. Brown history

The original E.J. Brown School was built as a result of a group of mothers who got together and promoted the idea of building a new school north of the Van Cleve School.

It was 1911; as Dayton was growing, Van Cleve was becoming crowded. Families who lived in the newer neighborhoods to the north met at the old Fairview Amusement Park Clubhouse and put together a plan, which they successfully presented to the Board of Education.

The board considered four sites on which to build the new school. One was outside the city limits, on the grounds of the shuttered Fairview Amusement Park. In 1916, they bought 6.96 acres of the old amusement park grounds and began the new school’s construction.

Built at a cost of $173,827.52, the school opened its doors to nearly 200 students on Sept. 4, 1917. The name honored Edwin Joel Brown, who had served as a teacher, principal, board member and superintendent with Dayton Public Schools.

To many people, the land on which the school was built seemed to be out in the middle of nowhere. There were few houses; in the 19th century, the area had been farmland. But Dayton was growing. People began living outside the downtown area. By 1897, the North Main Street trolleys traveled all the way to Fairview Avenue. It was there that the trolley line’s owners built an amusement park.

The park had a clubhouse, a roller coaster and a spring-fed recreational pond. The big event each Sunday afternoon was to watch an elk jump into the Fairview Lake from a platform. By 1915, the park was closed.

Once the school was planned, the surrounding neighborhood started to take shape. Developers bought nearby farms, divided the land into lots and built houses. The houses were sold to people who wanted to live near the school. The city annexed the area in 1918.

E.J. Brown operated as both an elementary and middle school, closing for one year in the 1980s.

Information courtesy of the Hillview Neighborhood Association, the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority and the Southwest Ohio Amusement Parks Historical Society. Memorabilia and other information graciously provided to DPS by Jane Applegate and Sandy Lowery.