A brief history of Edison

Originally known as the Seventeenth District, Edison School opened its doors in 1894. By 1904, the school had doubled in size and was renamed to honor inventor Thomas Alva Edison. Increasing student populations led to expansions in 1922, 1954, 1957 and 1966.

During its 116-year history, Edison has been the victim of two major natural disasters: The 1913 Dayton flood left eight feet of water in the building’s first floor, while a fire destroyed five classrooms in 1968, leaving 300 students without facilities.

In 1986, Edison was one of more than 270 public and private schools nationwide to receive the designation of “National School of Excellence” by the US Department of Education. President Ronald Reagan mentioned Edison during a speech he delivered on April 26, 1988, in the East Room at the White House:

“When we’ve looked at schools that work across the country, we’ve found that the key to what works is not money or being a prosperous neighborhood but establishing a direction, that is, setting standards. And that’s why Edison Primary School in the inner-city area of Dayton, Ohio, does. When (students) first enter the school, many suffer from ... problems associated with poverty. Principal Brenda Lee ... combats that with love and caring and by teaching each child to do his or her best.”

Edison was home to two children’s museums – “Who Am I?,” which encouraged students to learn about themselves by viewing and interacting with a series of art and artifacts, educational games and props, and everyday items; and “New Visions,” where students learned about African, Asian, Appalachian and Native American cultures through hands-on contact with art and artifacts from those traditions.

In January 2005, Edison was named a Neighborhood School Center. These centers, based in five Dayton Public Schools buildings, serve as neighborhood anchors, acting as community centers that offer after-school activities for students and the surrounding community. The program is a part of the return to neighborhood schools, and seeks to assist schools in fostering strong partnerships with public and private groups.

Information provided by a narrative for the Montgomery County History Project.