

BROWN-BENDER FARM

The Jim Brown Farmhouse is a large four over four Greek revival House constructed in the 1840s. In 1845 Daniel M. Brown acquired 208.83 acres from John Wells, and the following year he purchased ninety-six additional acres in the same lot from the state of Connecticut. Title to the property was transferred to James R. Brown in 1850.

Jim Brown was a character of much local notoriety. His exploits as a tavern owner and counterfeiter were well known. He died in 1865 when he fell from a canal boat and fractured his skull.

After his death the farm passed to his son, James R. Brown Jr. In 1886 he replaced the old barn with the current barn that now stands on the site. He continued to live on the farm until his death in 1889. The Brown farm then passed to Miner H. Howe, then to Hattie and Fred Ozier.

In early 1907, Andrew Bender, dairy farmer in Coventry Township, saw an ad in the *Akron Beacon Journal* for a farm for sale. The father of twelve children, he was seeking a larger home and more land to farm. The advertisement for this farm was in fact the same farm that had previously been the property of Jim Brown, the infamous counterfeiter.

The price Andrew Bender paid for the property, and how he financed the purchase, is unknown. This property became the home of six-year old Earva Bender, who resided on this property his entire life. He was a mechanic, inventor, and master farmer. He also loved the outdoors and was a marksman hunter. Earva loved the soil and with his help, the farm produced quality produce.

In 1930, he married Kathryn Ford, a schoolteacher. During the Great Depression Earva took over the running of the farm from his father and saved it from foreclosure. With the income from Kathryn's teaching job and other major changes, he became solvent.

He sold off his father's dairy herd because it was so time consuming and ate into his profit. He went on to concentrate on raising vegetables. He built a large greenhouse to raise his own plants, which enabled him to get to market earlier in the season. To keep his used fields and wooded areas "mowed" he began to raise Hereford cattle.

In 1957, Marty and David Darst were reading the apartment for rent column of the *Akron Beacon Journal*. They answered one of the ads and went to 3491 Akron-Peninsula Road. The Benders rented the apartment to the Darsts sight unseen because Kathryn had been David Darst's sixth grade teacher. The Darsts then lived and worked at the Bender farm for 30 years.

In 1960s Earva went into the pumpkin business. They sold at the farm or wholesale to schools and businesses. Fifteen acres of pumpkins, about sixty tons, sold in four weeks of October.

In 1940 the Benders had a stand for selling vegetables on Akron Peninsula Road. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) had just finished relocation of the road from the house level to the lower field elevation. Unfortunately, this stand was destroyed by fire.

In the 1970's the Benders, with the Darsts' help, increased retail sales at the house by selling produce from a hay wagon at the driveway entrance.

In the late 1970s, Earva sold off the eastern portion of his land to Tow Path Village, Ohio Edison, and Blossom Music Center. Earva Bender passed away in 1988 at age 87. The remaining farm property was purchased in 1992 by the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Written by Melissa Arnold, museum technician, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, 2011