

TWO BILLBOARDS INSIDE FOX POINT, WISCONSIN

By Douglas H. Frazer



The aftermath of a serious crime plays out in the 2017 film *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*. The Village of Fox Point, by contrast, has two, and only two, billboards...and much less drama.

You have probably noticed them. They are owned by Clear Channel Outdoors and are located on the southeast corner of North Port Washington Road and West Bergen Drive. The parcel is triangle-like of about one-third acre, except the hypotenuse is an arc. The arc was to be the western boundary of a street never built.

These billboards may represent the longest continuous business activity in Fox Point. The story goes back to when the parcel was part of the Town of Milwaukee.

Beginning in 1835, the Town of Milwaukee embraced land in Milwaukee County north of Greenfield Avenue. Over time, this territory was subdivided into other unincorporated townships or newly incorporated municipalities, including the north shore communities. In 1953, Fox Point annexed the land within which the billboard parcel sits, and in 1955 the final remnant of the Town.

Caroline M. Wehe owned the parcel and surrounding lands, which she subdivided in 1923. On May 19, 1932, the mortgage holder, Zingen & Braun Bond and Mortgage Corporation, foreclosed on the parcel. Zingen & Braun may also have been a real estate developer since it held the property until 1951. Photography from 1937 does not appear to show a billboard on the parcel. However, an aerial photograph from 1951 reveals what looks like a billboard.

The billboard likely was constructed between those two years or shortly thereafter. On January 22, 1951, The Seasea Co. acquired the property. On July 15, 1954, Cream City Outdoor Advertising Company bought the parcel from Seasea.

On February 3, 1961, Cream City sold the property to Naegele Outdoor Advertising Company of Wisconsin, Inc.

On March 20, 1969, Delta Oil Products Corporation acquired the parcel. It held it until July 14, 1976, at which point Hansen Advertising Companies Inc. acquired the property. Hansen Advertising reconveyed the property to Metro Media, Inc., a Delaware corporation, on the same date.

There is more. On September 30, 1986, Metro Media sold the property to PMG Holdings Inc., a Delaware corporation. At a certain point PMG Holdings began doing business as Clear Channel Outdoors.

Finally, on October 16, 2003, Milwaukee County acquired .059 acres of the parcel for purposes of widening Port Washington Road.

That's a long history of activity. According to Jim Bernklau at Clear Channel Outdoors, these two "old school" nondigital billboards are still profitable.

Douglas H. Frazer is a Fox Point resident and neighborhood contributor as well as the village president. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.



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