

# THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF Fairy Chasm and the Fox Point Club Part 2

By Douglas H. Frazer



**Jac. Donges and Fred Usinger** supplemented the Fish Creek Park Company land holdings with individual property purchases south of the county line down to Brown Deer Road. On this stretch each built a grand home on the Lake Michigan bluff. In 1911, the two men constructed a large stone entrance to their "retreat" at Lake Drive and Fairy Chasm Road known as the "Lion Gates." On one gate is etched "Fred Usinger, County Life in Donges Bay," and on the other "Jac. F. Donges, Gardens and Chasms in Donges Bay." The Lion Gates still stand. Milwaukee County has designated the site an historical landmark.

The Lion Gates were one of several important construction projects in the area. A few years earlier in 1907, the Fish Creek Park Company constructed a dam across the creek just to the west of its confluence with Lake Michigan. The purpose was recreational; to create an artificial lake for the cottage owners. In 1908 the residents strengthened the dam with layer of concrete reinforced with railroad rails. However, the dam's poor design and construction saw water over the top in January of 1909. The Fish Creek Park Company completed a third section, the top four feet, in summer of the following year. The structure still did not function well: The sluice gates became inoperable and more concrete was needed on the sides of the dam where the water washed away the soil. The lake behind the dam extended back about three-quarters of a mile and was 1000 feet wide at its widest point, presumably where some of the side ravines branched off from the creek. Cottage owners constructed boathouses on the water's edge.

The dam broke in 1923. The Fish Creek Park Company did not repair it.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ordered removal of the ruins in 1993 for safety reasons.

Construction was occurring in Fox Point as well. In 1911, the Calumet Land Company, the developer of the area along the bluff, privately built a bridge across a large ravine between what is now Barnett Lane to the south and Bridge Lane to the north. It was sufficiently wide (12 feet) to accommodate vehicles. The artery was called the Fox Point Road. Its creation was significant. Lake Drive between Green Tree and Calumet Roads did not exist. The way north required descending the bluff at Green Tree Road, traversing Beach Drive, and then ascending the bluff below Fox Lane. The Spring Road, now North Beach Drive, connecting the terrace to Lake Drive, is first mentioned in a September 28, 1913, land sale ad in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*.

The Fox Point Road, therefore, was a major north-south shortcut and a more direct route to the Fox Point Club and the Donges Bay (Fairy Chasm) resort.

Former village president Mike West, current village president Douglas Frazer at ribbon cutting 11-16-14



In about 1931, the bridge was restored or rebuilt, and continued to accommodate pedestrian traffic until 2011 when the village closed it as unsafe. The village and residents organized a public-private partnership to fund a new bridge that opened in 2014.

In the next installment we will discuss the final years of the Fox Point Club and the evolution of South Fairy Chasm into the neighborhood that exists today.

*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.*

## ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

### February 2021 Community Events

Online Worship Services  
Sundays, 11am  
Zoom ID:  
955-1679-2115

Red Cross Blood Drive  
Friday, February 26th  
Sign up on  
www.redeross.org

Online Morning Prayer  
Wednesdays  
10 am  
Zoom ID: 756 491 180

[www.stchristopherswi.org](http://www.stchristopherswi.org)

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