



THE PLAIN DEALER

Demolition crew uncovers long-hidden Philco sign in Shaker Heights

1930s ad for Philco a pleasant surprise

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Shaker Heights- A demolition crew has salvaged a page of local history.

The crew recently razed a small commercial building on Chagrin Boulevard near Lee Road and uncovered a long-hidden Philco sign painted on the wall next door.

"The sign was a nice little surprise," said John Vanderplough, an associate with the buildings' owners, Allegro Realty Advisors. He had thought the two 1930s-era buildings had arisen at the same time. Checking the records, he found an 18-month gap.

The sign was painted on second-story bricks to advertise radios sold downstairs. Big signs are rare in Shaker Heights, known then and now for strict housing and building codes.

"I've joked that we're going to get a violation notice," Vanderplough said.

Indeed, the sign might have been illegal, and the owners might have escaped punishment by quickly covering it up with the new building next door, said Planning Director Joyce Braverman. But don't worry: She loves this touch of yesteryear and hopes it survives.

Allegro is renovating the building with the sign, at 16814 Chagrin Blvd., to lure a restaurant. The company razed the adjoining structure for a patio. It may need to break through the first story of 16814 Chagrin for a patio door.

But Vanderplough sees no need to block the sign or cut into it because it starts 10 feet up. He always liked the small building's colonial style and neighborhood feel. He thinks the sign is a good complement.

The surviving building, raised in 1934, was the first home of Shaker Hardware and a recent home of a Sherwin-Williams Co. store. The razed building hosted the Gorman family insurance agency.

All three businesses are still in the shopping district, called Shaker Town Center.

The district, which lines Chagrin and Lee roads, is undergoing a \$60 million renovation, which includes about \$15 million in city funds and \$45 million in private money.

Some locals haven't noticed the sign. Others are enjoying it.

Said neighbor Frank Vinson, "That's history right there."

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