

Western Union Cable Building Municipal Heritage Site, Bay Roberts

Description of Historic Place

Built by Western Union Cable Company in 1913, Western Union Cable Building is a two-storey, hipped roof, brick building that employs a variety of Classical Revival elements. Western Union Cable Building is located on Water Street in Bay Roberts, NL. The designation is restricted to the footprint of the building.

Heritage Value

Western Union Cable Building is a physical representation of technological advancements in telecommunications. Western Union Cable Building was built in 1913 as a cable relay station for telegraph cables between Sennen Cove, Cornwall, England and Coney Island, New York, USA. It was built near the water to meet the cable that was laid between Cornwall and New York. During World War II, seventy-five percent of all trans-Atlantic cable messages went through Western Union Cable Building. The building was heavily guarded during this period, not only because it held an important communication link between the United Kingdom and the United States, but because it housed a direct line between Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Western Union Cable Company played a significant social and economic role in the community of Bay Roberts. After building the Cable Station, Western Union built residences for the employees near the Cable Station, including a modern street complete with sidewalks, street lights and chestnut trees. The Western Union Cable Company created new employment in Bay Roberts and also became involved in community service, sports and the arts in the community.

Western Union Cable Building is a good example of an early 20th century commercial building with Classical Revival elements. The exterior of the building employs a number of Classical elements including a triangular pediment over the main door and a symmetrical bay pattern on all facades of the building. The exterior brick was imported from England, which is indicative of the affluence of the Western Union Cable Company. The transom window over the main door is typical of commercial buildings of this era. Other architectural features of Western Union Cable Building that contribute to the aesthetic value of the building include the dormer windows and the vaulted poured concrete roof of the building.



Municipal Heritage Designation by
Town of Bay Roberts
July 7, 2009

Deborah O’Rielly
Provincial Registrar
Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador



Canada's
Historic Places

Lieux patrimoniaux
du Canada

Our Heritage.
Worth Promoting.
Worth Protecting.

