

Cable Avenue Municipal Heritage District, Bay Roberts

Description of Historic Place

Cable Avenue dates back to 1913, when construction of staff housing by Western Union Telegraph Company began along the street. The designation includes the houses on the east and west sides of Cable Avenue, the house on the corner of Cable Avenue and Water Street, Western Union Cable Building on Water Street and the grounds associated with these structures. Other principal physical elements of the district include the set-back sidewalks, curbs, original streetlights and the chestnut trees which line the street.

Heritage Value

In 1910 Western Union Telegraph Company chose Bay Roberts as the repeater station site for transatlantic cables connecting England and New York. Western Union Cable Building was built in 1913 as a cable relay station for the telegraph cables between Sennen Cove, Cornwall, England and Coney Island, New York, USA. The building was heavily guarded during World Wars I and II because of the vital communications link it provided. During World War II, seventy-five percent of all transatlantic cable messages went through Western Union Cable Building, including messages from the Canadian Government to the Canadian Command in Europe. It also housed a direct line between Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In addition to the cable station, Western Union built residences for their employees on a new street called Cable

Avenue. Buildings on this street included a superintendent's house, duplexes for married staff and a staff house for unmarried employees. These buildings were modern for the era and had such amenities as electrical service and water and sewer systems.

Cable Avenue Heritage District is aesthetically distinctive within Bay Roberts. The buildings constructed by Western Union are of various styles - from Western Union Cable Building with its Classical Revival elements to staff housing built in Dutch Colonial Revival and vernacular styles. Design features which make the district unique include the set-back sidewalks, the curbs and the uniform setback and spacing of houses. The addition of chestnut trees and concrete pillar streetlights added another layer of distinctiveness to the street in relation to other residential areas in the town from the same time period.

Western Union Cable Company had great economic and social influence in Bay Roberts, as it brought new jobs to the town and was a boon to local businesses. Western Union also contributed to the social and cultural development of the town through its involvement in community service, sports and the arts. The company formed the Bay Roberts Athletic Association, constructed tennis courts and eventually created a tennis club. Staff were involved in live theatre, local churches and lodges and organizations such as the Boy Scouts and the Church Lads Brigade.



**Municipal Heritage Designation by
Town of Bay Roberts
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