

CABLE AVENUE MUNICIPAL HERITAGE DISTRICT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description of Historic Place

Cable Avenue Heritage District is located within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Bay Roberts. Cable Avenue dates back to 1913, when construction of staff housing by Western Union Telegraph Company began along the street. The designation encompasses the street known as Cable Avenue, the houses which front that street, 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 street lights and the chestnut trees which line the street. The residence at the end of the avenue which replaced the Western Union Staff House after it was demolished is not included in the district.

Heritage Value

Cable Avenue Heritage District has been designated a municipal heritage district by the Town of Bay Roberts due to its historic, aesthetic and cultural value.

Cable Avenue Heritage District has **historic value** due to its association with Western Union Telegraph Company. In 1910 the company chose Bay Roberts as the repeater station site for their 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. For a while it also relayed messages between Italy and South America. 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 which fronted onto Water Street, duplexes for married staff along both sides of Cable Avenue and a staff house for unmarried staff at the top of the street. These buildings were modern for the era and had such amenities as electrical service and water and sewer systems. Eventually the new street boasted set-back sidewalks, curbs, street lights and chestnut trees.

Cable Avenue Heritage District has **aesthetic value** due to its deliberate design and the style of the buildings. The district encompasses a compact area that was deliberately chosen and designed by Western Union Telegraph Company to house its offices and staff. It is distinctive within Bay Roberts and the district is a physical reminder of Western Union Telegraph Company and the impact it had on the town. The buildings constructed by Western Union are of various styles. Western Union Cable Building is a good example of an early 20th century commercial building with Classical Revival elements. The staff duplexes on the upper portion of Cable Avenue were built in the Dutch Colonial Revival style. Other staff

duplexes are more vernacular in design and feature low pitch gambrel roofs. The superintendent's house is also vernacular in style but is orientated and designed to be distinctive from the duplexes. Other design features which make the district unique include the set-back sidewalks, the curbs and the uniform setback and spacing of houses. Other streets in Bay Roberts from the same era do not show such uniformity, as at the time the town was very much a rural settlement with no development restrictions. The addition of chestnut trees and concrete pillar street lights added another layer of distinctiveness to the street in relation to other residential areas in the town from the same time period.

Cable Avenue Heritage District has **cultural value** as a representation of the economic and social influence Western Union Cable Company had in Bay Roberts. The establishment of Western Union in Bay Roberts brought new jobs to the town and was a boon to local businesses. In addition, Western Union contributed to the social and cultural development of the town through its involvement in community service, sports and the arts in Bay Roberts. 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.

Character Defining Elements

The character defining elements that embody the heritage value of Cable Avenue Heritage District include:

- location off Water Street across from Bay Roberts Harbour
- the relationship of the buildings to each other and to the open spaces between and around them.
- residential two story houses that are similar but have some differences
- regularly spaced buildings with regular setbacks and front yards
- original door and window openings and locations
- horizontal siding
- duplex unit housing
- gambrel roof lines
- verandas
- street lined with chestnut trees
- curb and set-back sidewalks separated by green space
- poured concrete street lights
- fences and outbuildings that do not detract from streetscape

Notes of Interest

Community Bay Roberts

Civic Address

Construction Date 1913-1915

Architect

Builder - William Dawe, W. T. & I. Bowering,

Style

Building Plan

Web site Link