



Town of Orleans

Community Preservation Committee
9 School Road Orleans MA 02653-3699
Telephone (508) 240-3700 – Fax (508) 240-3388

FY27 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROJECT APPLICATION

(for consideration at Annual Town Meeting in **Spring 2026** or Special Town Meeting in **Fall 2026**)

SECTION A

Project Title: French Cable Station Museum:

Submission Date: 11/16/25

Applicant (note if Town, individual or non-profit): French Cable Station Museum, Inc.

Mailing Address: 41 South Orleans Road, Orleans, MA 02653

Co-Applicant, if any (note if Town, individual or non-profit):

Mailing Address:

Project Contact Person(s): Duane Chase

Telephone: (860) 388-7378

E-mail: duanechase42@gmail.com

Federal Tax Identification Number (if non-profit): 237-133-747

Project purpose (Check all that apply):

Open Space Historic Preservation Community Housing Recreation

Project Location/Address:

Community Preservation Funding Request: \$ 15,980.00

Brief Project Summary, including justification of project category checked above:

The French Cable Station Museum was recognized and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and in 2018 it was the recipient of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Milestone Award. The original Station building houses what is likely the most comprehensive collection of undersea telegraphic equipment and documents to be found anywhere in the world.

This proposal seeks to create access to Museum history that has been hidden in 100-year-old letters, bound books, and files and to raise local awareness with on-site educational displays. We are also seeking funding for restoration of the antique cable reel in the rear of the Museum.

SECTION B

Please attach the following information with all applications:

- **Detailed Narrative:** A detailed but succinct description of the project including goals and objectives, consistency with Community Preservation Act goals, compatibility with the Orleans Community Preservation Plan and the Orleans Comprehensive Long Range Plan, and relevance to the community and its needs.
- **Action Plan and Timeline:** Note the estimated dates for project commencement and completion and list (with an explanation) all action and steps that will be required for project completion, including any legal requirements or any impediments to implementation.
- **Financial Data:** Provide financial information for the project including detailed and total cost, additional revenue sources (public, private, in-kind, volunteer time and services), basis for the fiscal estimates and any other fiscal details currently available. Costs relating to historical rehabilitation/renovation should be clearly identified (if possible) compared to other costs, such as code compliance or accessibility improvements. Applicants are encouraged to submit more than one quotation from potential contractors.

GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT SUBMISSION

- For early assistance**, complete Section A, and submit it to the CPC via email, **between July 1 and Oct. 31, 2025**. You will be contacted by the CFC regarding detailed information to fully complete the application by the November 17, 2024 deadline as described in Guideline B below.
 - Fully completed applications need to be submitted **by Nov. 17, 2025** for consideration at the Annual Town Meeting. **Applications should be received by July 1, 2026** for consideration at the Special Fall Town Meeting. Late applications may be accepted at the discretion of the CPC.
 - Submit **two (2) complete paper copies** of the application and other materials to the Community Preservation Committee, c/o Town Administrator, Town of Orleans, 19 School Road, Orleans, MA 02653. Applications can be dropped off at the front desk.
 - **Applicants must also email complete applications in PDF** format to Jennifer Fountain, Administrative Assistant, at jfountain@town.orleans.ma.us. A **single PDF file** which appends materials described in item 3 (below) to the application form is preferred.
- Complete Applications must be received by Monday, November 17, 2025 to be considered for recommendation at the Annual Town Meeting** in the Spring of 2026. Complete Applications must be received by July 1 2026 for consideration at the Special Town Meeting in the Fall of 2026.
 - Funds for approved projects will be available on approximately July 15th following the Annual (Spring) Town Meeting 2026 and about six weeks after the Special Town Meeting in the Fall of 2026 upon submission of appropriate invoices and accounting and a signed grant agreement from the CFC.
 - Applicants may be asked to include any maps, diagrams, and/or photographs pertaining to the project. Letters of Support for the project from community organizations or other sources may also be submitted. Clear, concise presentation of materials is appreciated by the Committee.
 - The Community Preservation Committee may require additional (or more detailed) information or further clarification for a submitted application including the advice of legal counsel or the Historic Commission.
 - Prior to submission of funding applications, applicants should review the Community Preservation Act (MGL, Chapter 44B, through the Community Preservation Coalition website), the Orleans Community Preservation Plan and the Orleans Community Preservation Bylaw, copies of which are available on the Town Web site at <https://www.town.orleans.ma.us/community-preservation-committee>. Nonprofit organizations applying for historic preservation funds for historic structures should obtain an opinion from the Orleans Historic Commission about the suitability of their proposal under Orleans historic building guidelines. All historic preservation or rehabilitation must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation.
 - Eligible projects must address one or more of the uses outlined in the Community Preservation Act, Sections 2 and 5 (2), as follows:

Open Space: Acquisition, creation, and preservation of land to protect existing water supply/aquifer areas, agricultural and forest land, coastal lands, frontage to inland water bodies, wildlife habitat, nature preserves and scenic vistas.

Community Housing: Acquisition, creation, preservation, and support of community housing defined as housing for low and moderate income individuals and families, including low and moderate income senior housing. The Community

Preservation Committee is required to recommend, wherever possible, the reuse of existing buildings or construction of new buildings on previously developed sites.

Historic Preservation: Acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic structures and landscapes that have been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the Town or that are listed on the State Register of Historic Places. Plans for restoration and rehabilitation must comply with Secretary of the Interiors' standards.

Recreation: Acquisition, creation, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of land for active and passive recreational uses, including land for community gardens, trails and noncommercial youth and adult sports and the use of land as a park, playground, or athletic field and for preservation and restoration of recreational facilities. (Community Preservation funds cannot be used for a stadium, gymnasium, or similar structures or for the acquisition of artificial turf for athletic fields.)

The French Cable Station Museum in Orleans, Inc.
Application to the Orleans Community Preservation Committee
Transcription of digitized documents, interior and exterior educational displays,
& equipment restoration

Project Description

This is a request for \$ 15,980.00 in funding for :

1. Interior and Exterior Educational Displays
2. Restoration of Cable Reel
3. Transcription of digitized documents

CPC Criteria

The organization acquired the title to the French Telegraph Station property in Orleans on December 31, 1971. In April of 1972, the Museum was accepted for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

This project application is for the eligible funding category of historic preservation. The Station has met the criteria for historic significance through its inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In accordance with Chapter 12 of the Orleans Comprehensive Plan (2006), this project is consistent with goals to preserve historic and cultural features in Orleans.

Project Narrative

In the past few years many improvements have been made to the museum, funded by grants from the Orleans Community Preservation Committee. These include removal of environmental hazards, installation of a new HVAC system, conversion of a room in the basement into a library, exterior painting, restoration of windows and exterior doors. We appreciate the funds we have received from the CPC since our first application in 2019. The improvements to the building inside and out, enhanced exhibits, and a library that provides a safe place for storage of archived documents help to ensure that students, researchers, and the public will continue to be able to learn about the station's history and impact on the local community.

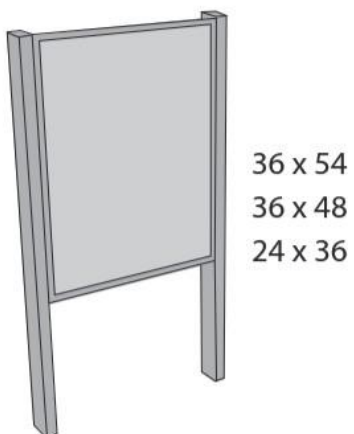
1. Educational/Interpretive signage

Often when the museum is not open, people are seen looking through the front or back door windows, trying to get a peek inside. We have made simple signs with Museum Hours, contact information and our website address, but we realize we are missing an opportunity to attract new visitors and explain to the public what the Museum is all about.

We would like to take advantage of this untapped potential by installing two interpretive outdoor signs of the same sort used at Snow Library, Theresa's Way, Depot Square and other historic sites. One cantilevered low-profile sign is proposed for the front entrance and one upright single sign in the rear parking area near the back entrance. We contacted Ron Petersen, formerly on the Orleans Historical Commission, to give us the name of the company they used for the markers that are already placed in town.

Having an upright sign in the back would also allow people to learn about the Museum when they are on site for other cultural events. For years, as a gesture of goodwill, we have invited our neighbors at Addison Art Gallery and The Orleans Yacht Club to use the museum parking area for special events when we are closed.

Upright single unit



Cantilevered Low- Profile sign
at Parish Park, Orleans

These signs will help us show visitors walking through our parking area just what the Museum is all about with the hopes they will enthusiastically return.

2. Telegraph cable reel

At the rear of the museum to the left of the entrance is an eye-catching piece of hardware original to the cable station. It is the first thing visitors see when they get out of their vehicle in the parking area, and many people go right up to have a close look at it before walking to the front door for a tour. Museum records dated June 16, 1994, noted that Mr. Quinn reported that Jeff Norgeot (Anchor Marine) was going to dismantle and refurbish the structure. This was done, but time, weather and exposure to salt air have taken a toll and the structure needs to be restored once again.



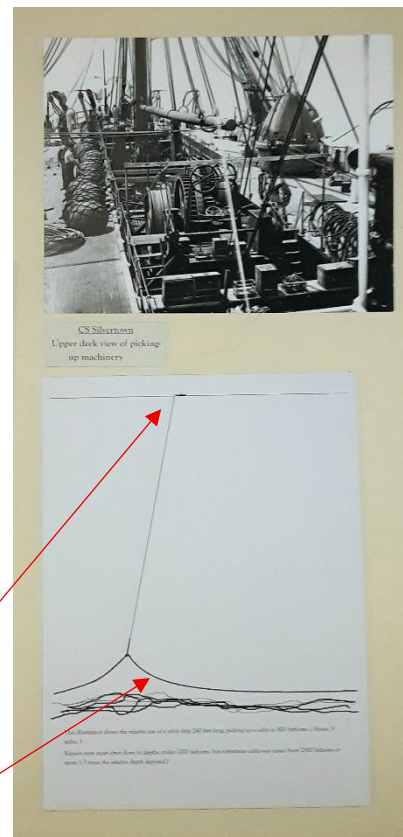
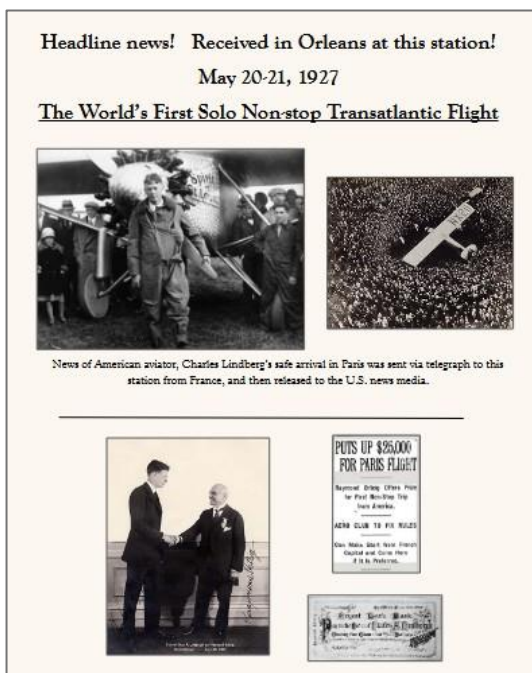
This will require lifting the cable spool from the frame and repairing the concrete surface beneath the spool. The wood frame appears to be in good condition, so it will just need to be pressure washed before repositioning the cable spool into the cradle.

3. Interior displays

Our visitors' experience in each room of the museum has been greatly enhanced by the addition of updated photographs, display tags, descriptive posters and videos funded by the CPC and executed by volunteers. These displays and the enticement of beautiful antique

instruments have attracted new volunteers whose enthusiasm and effort has enhanced the museum. Dedicated volunteers meet weekly to repair antique instruments. Some instruments have been repaired and made operable as educational displays.

This poster below was created to tell the story of the Lindberg flight and its relevance to the Station without overwhelming the viewer. The picture to the right shows it on display in the Museum beneath another photo of the event.



This is the ship

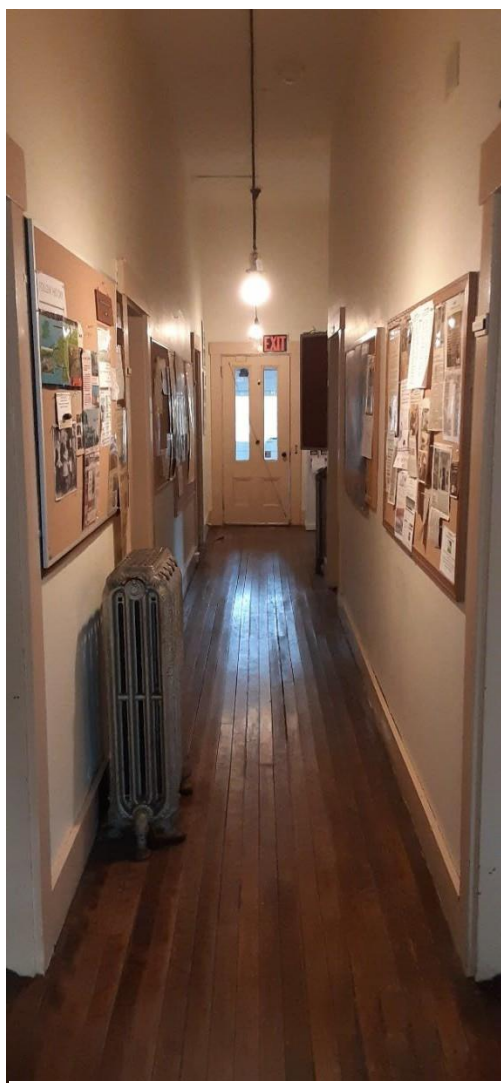
This is the cable

This is part of a display on the wall in the Test Room. The photograph of the deck of the CS Silvertown is printed on aluminum and is 16" x 20". Below it is a scale illustration of the ship hooking the cable to repair it.

The French Cable Station Museum is similar to a "house museum." The term "house museum" refers to a house that is furnished as it was during a certain time period. Nearby examples would

be the Caleb Nickerson Homestead and parts of the Atwood House, both in Chatham, and the Swift-Daley House in Eastham.

The Museum is full of the actual telegraphy equipment that was used by the French Telegraph Cable Company from 1879-1959. When the doors closed in 1959, the employees sent the last telegraphic message from the Station and locked the door behind them, leaving everything in its place right down to the coffee in the cabinet. The founders of the Museum decided the authenticity of the Station was of prime importance and to leave the rooms set up as they were when the Station was operational. While it is indeed an authentic experience, it leaves little room for educating visitors on the history of undersea cable or why this business was so important to the Town of Orleans.



*Entrance hall
French Cable Station Museum*

The main hallway is the first thing a visitor sees upon entering the museum. The length of the hallway is perfect for creating a detailed timeline. This timeline would visually explain the stations' history within the greater timeline of telegraphy. We are envisioning a fixed timeline on one wall and space for dynamic exhibits on the other. Both sides would form a cohesive look as the guest enters the Museum.

Thanks to the CPC grants, we are now in a better position to educate the public. The material we have uncovered tells us so much about not only the science of how the Station functioned, but how international business was conducted in the decades before fiber optics. We have discovered stories about personnel and life in Orleans as early as 1891, through both World Wars, and into the 1950's. This information could be shared in the hallway on the opposite wall.



Cable Hut, Snow Point, 1898

One of these recent discoveries was found in an online archive in a French library in Brest. In 1898, a French engineer on the cable ship *Silvertown* took photos of Orleans we have not seen before, including the newly built Snow Point Cable Hut and Cable Station, local kids, and people boarding the train. These images are a treasure to the Town as well as this Museum.

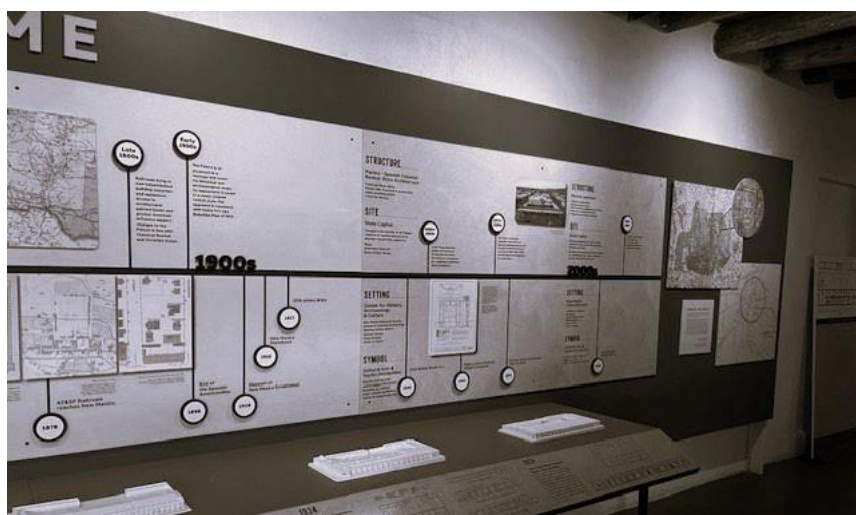


Cove Road facing east, 1898



Boarding the train in Orleans, 1898

127 years is a huge step back in time. It is difficult to grasp, especially for our younger visitors. A timeline would help them see where they are in relation to the first days of the Orleans French Cable Station. It will also illustrate how long the Station was operating and how the cables have evolved into the fiber optic cables used today.



Timeline display, New Mexico Museum, Santa Fe

4. Digitized Document Transcription

Thanks to dedicated volunteers and funding from a prior CPC grant, we have scanned over two thousand pages of documents. There are records of all sorts including expenses, inventories, medical and sick leave, daily measurements of the condition of the cables, repairs made to breaks in the cables, operator message error logs, personnel & payroll records, and monthly reports from the superintendents to their managers in NY and Paris. There are copies of letters written almost daily by or to various superintendents and their managers. These span a period of 80 years and ten superintendents.

Together these letters and other documents form a narrative of the history of the station including everything from the most mundane purchases to employee reprimands and firings, staff hiring, layoffs and even a strike in 1934 over disputed pension funds. The superintendents were fiercely protective of those of their staff who worked hard and conscientiously as directed. They were also very blunt in criticism of staff who did not conduct themselves as expected. The superintendents consistently made recommendations to their superiors regarding what they considered unfair criticism or treatment of staff, or station performance. Their attention to detail is evident and shows that the superintendents were very responsible, thoughtful, and respectful representatives of the company.

Transcription

Handwritten records are very difficult to read, and the style of conversation has changed a lot over time. Approximately one third of the letters in this collection are written in French. French cursive in the late 1800's is remarkably different than today's handwriting, adding to the difficulty of reading them. Transcription is the next step in making these documents accessible.

We have experimented with AI transcription and found that it can be helpful with typewritten text. AI proponents would have you believe it can do everything, however, handwriting still requires a human eye and brain to accurately translate and understand the proper context. For example, a human will transcribe a word letter for letter, and they will acknowledge when they don't know a word. Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) will attempt to find a word that makes sense to the context it thinks it understands, sometimes just spewing gibberish. A human acknowledges that the word in question can't be understood, marking it – {illegible}- which helps the reader more than trying to make sense of gibberish.

The most useful application of technology for this type of transcription is crowd sourcing. The Library of Congress and the National Records Archive have been utilizing the power of crowd sourcing with great results through their respective programs – *We The People* and *Citizen Archivist*. Over 2 million pages have been transcribed in the *Citizen Archivist* program and 780,000 pages in *We The People*. It is a wonderful way to engage people from all over the world with history and at the same time make our unique history accessible worldwide.

There are several crowd-sourcing platforms that are designed for smaller institutions or projects. These platforms are impressive, with thousands of volunteer transcriptionists selecting projects themselves and working on them whenever it is convenient. The sites send out updates of newly started projects and material to their enormous network.

This would help to bring a new level of awareness to The French Cable Telegraph Company Station's history in Orleans and its incredible 18th century technology in a manner we could never do alone.

The first requirement is to digitize the material. We currently have more than enough material to get started. We anticipate the digitization of the rest of the material we have identified as high priority will be complete by April 2026.

The next step is to work out the details of how the material will be presented:

- develop clear rules for consistency in the transcriptions
- design a workflow for the transcriber that could include adding metadata
- create a plan for maintenance of the project and support for the volunteers
- develop a plan for reviewing the documents

Transcribing is not translating, so French to English translation would be a separate phase. We intend to use local volunteers for that task. After the volunteers complete the translation, those documents would also need to be reviewed before placing them into the record.

Crowd-sourcing will be a wonderful way to reach out to our local community and a broader group of people beyond Orleans. Once all this material is added to the database, the complete history of the station will be accessible to students, researchers and the public.

THE MUSEUM TODAY

The museum was incorporated in 1972, and is operated entirely by volunteers, admission is free. We provide guided tours from June through September. With the recent addition of a new HVAC system, we can provide tours all year round, by appointment. We especially encourage schools and other special groups to visit the museum and invite young people to intern. They help with digitization of documents, improving our exhibits, and performing other tasks enhancing our visitors' experience.

We are fortunate to have volunteers with a family connection to the Station - it greatly enhances the visitor experience. Our volunteers are a small but dedicated group, logging about 325 hours each year on guided tours alone. Another team meets weekly to work on repairing equipment – another 114 hours. Volunteers also took on the task of locating period exterior doors for the basement, a full 8-hour day to pick them up off Cape and another 35 hours to strip, prime and paint them. This does not account for the time spent on accounting, door to door promotion, scheduling, and grant writing!

We hope that through the funding of this grant, we will be able to attract more interest and more visitors to this very important piece of Orleans' history. We would also like to use the new exhibit space to cross-promote other museums' stories, not only to expand our reach, but to offer a more complete glimpse into the past

ATTACHMENTS

1. Budget
2. Timeline
3. National Register of Historic Places Documentation
4. Examples of Letters in the French Cable Station Museum Archive

BUDGET

1. INTERPRETIVE SIGNS

Estimate from Hopewell Manufacturing - the same company the Historic Commision used

Cantilevered low profile frame for 24" x 18" sign	\$ 635.00
Upright single unit frame for 24" x 36" sign	\$ 685.00
24" x 36" HPL Panel	\$ 520.00
24" x 18" HPL Panel	\$ 385.00
Design 6 hrs/sign at \$75/hour	\$ 900.00
Shipping estimate	\$ 300.00
Installation	\$ 500.00
Interpretive Signs Total	\$ 3,925.00

2. CABLE REEL

Lift cable reel, repair cement, pressure wash, reposition cable reel	\$ 1,800.00
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3. INTERIOR DISPLAY

.Lab..Qr

Removal of current bulletin boards	volunteer
Paint panels	volunteer
Paint wall (too high for volunteers)	\$ 1,100.00
Install homesote	\$ 1,000.00
Design/content research	volunteer
Informational signs/labels for timeline (includes printing)	\$ 1,200.00

Materials

Homesote- 5 - 4' x 8' sheets (at \$48/sheet)	\$ 240.00
Hardware	\$ 50.00
Paint for panels - 1 gallon paint and primer	\$ 120.00
Racks for holding laminated sheets	\$ 45.00
Aluminum prints 6 -8 x 10 (at \$60 each)	\$ 600.00

Interior Display Total	\$ 4,355.00
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3. TRANSCRIPTION OF DIGITIZED DOCUMENTS

Platform test phase:

- design the page with photos and text - select materials (20 hours)	\$ 1,000.00
- create workflow plan and run trial tests with groups (40 hrs)	\$ 2,000.00
- Finalize details and upload materials (10 hrs)	\$ 500.00

Live platform phase

- Interact with volunteers-respond to queries, etc (1 hr/mo x 6 mos)	\$ 300.00
- download transcribed files, organize and integrate into archive (30 hrs)	\$ 1,500.00

Platform template and resources \$ 600.00

Promotion of project volunteer

Transcription Total \$ 5,900.00

TOTAL REQUEST \$ 15,980.00

PROJECT TIMELINE

July – August 2026	design and order exterior interpretive markers
August - October 2026	prepare transcription platforms and beta test
October 2026 – April 2027	design and execute hallway educational exhibit
November 2026 – June 2027	go live with crowdsourcing, maintain site and review/download documents
May 2026	Cable reel restoration

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES DOCUMENTATION



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Secretary
State House, Boston 02133

John F. X. Dunne
Secretary of the Commonwealth

April 26, 1972

Chairman, Board of Selectman
c/o Town Clerk Jean B. Deschamps
Town Hall
Orleans, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Board:

It is a pleasure for me to be able to inform you that the United States Department of the Interior through the Director of the National Park Service, George B. Hartzog Jr., has placed on its National Register of Historic Places the French Cable Station in Orleans.

This site was nominated by the Massachusetts Historical Commission of which I have the honor to serve as Chairman.

I am enclosing herewith an informal pamphlet prepared by the Federal agency which will explain in detail the significance of this designation.

Please accept my congratulations and those of my associates on the Historical Commission.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN F. X. DUNNE
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Chairman, Massachusetts Historical Commission

JFD:cad

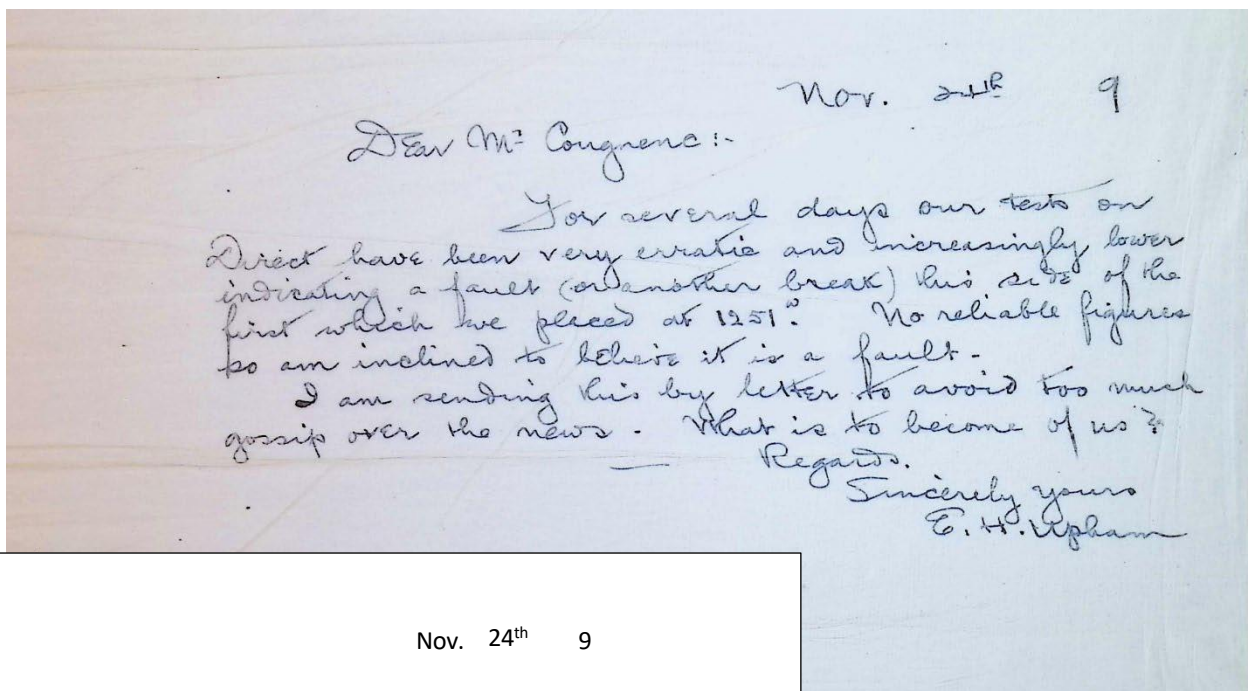
TOWN OF
ORLEANS
RECEIVED
MAY 08 1972

EXAMPLES OF LETTERS IN THE FRENCH CABLE STATION MUSEUM ARCHIVE

Unknown to people on both sides of the North Atlantic, there was a huge undersea earthquake on November 18, 1929 that damaged most of the cables.

Supt. Upham wrote this letter (vs. sending a cable message) to his manager in NY on November 24. In context we can understand that he did not want to cause panic amongst his staff.

Sometime shortly after, the discovery of the earthquake was announced:



Nov. 24th 9

Dear Mr. Cougrens:

For several days our tests on Direct have been very erratic and increasingly lower indicating a fault (or another break) this side of the first which we placed at 1251⁰⁰. No reliable figures so am inclined to believe it is a fault.

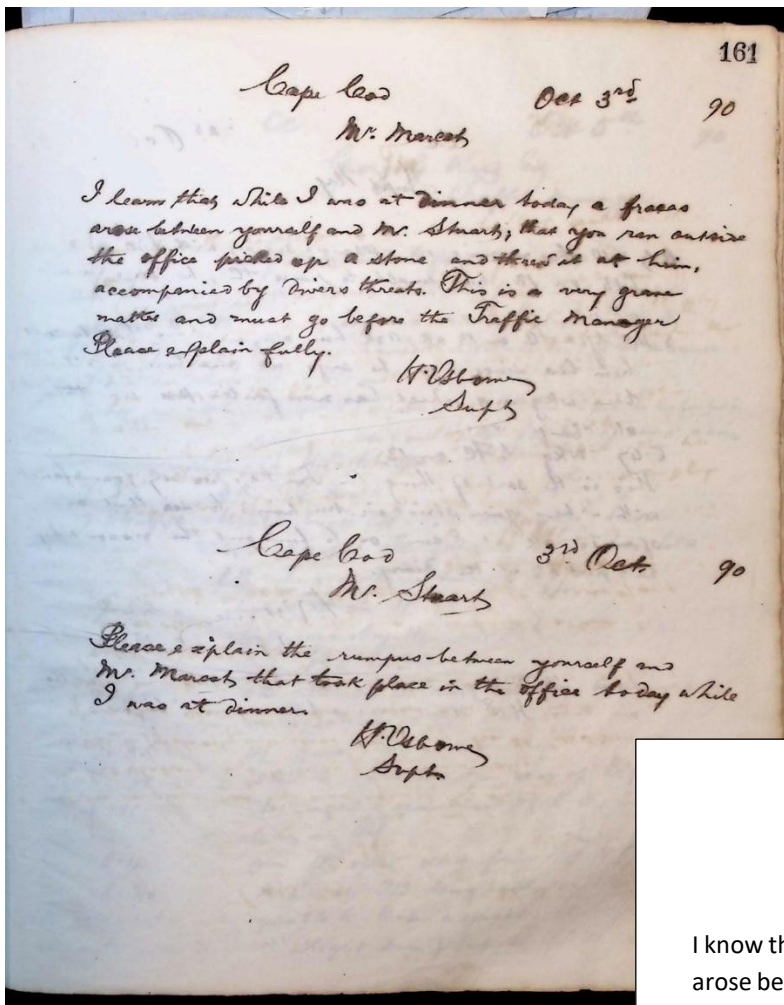
I am sending this by letter to avoid too much Gossip over the news. What is to become of us?

Regards.

Sincerely yours

E.H. Upham

1890 Letters from Supt. Osborne to Mr. Marcot and Mr. Stuart regarding "a row" in the office:



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Cape Cod Oct 3rd 90

Mr. Marcot,

I know that while I was at dinner today a fracas arose between yourself and Mr. Stuart, that you ran outside the office picked up a stone and threw it at him, accompanied by [illegible] threats. This is a very grave matter and must go before the Traffic Manager. Please explain fully.

H. Osborne
Supt

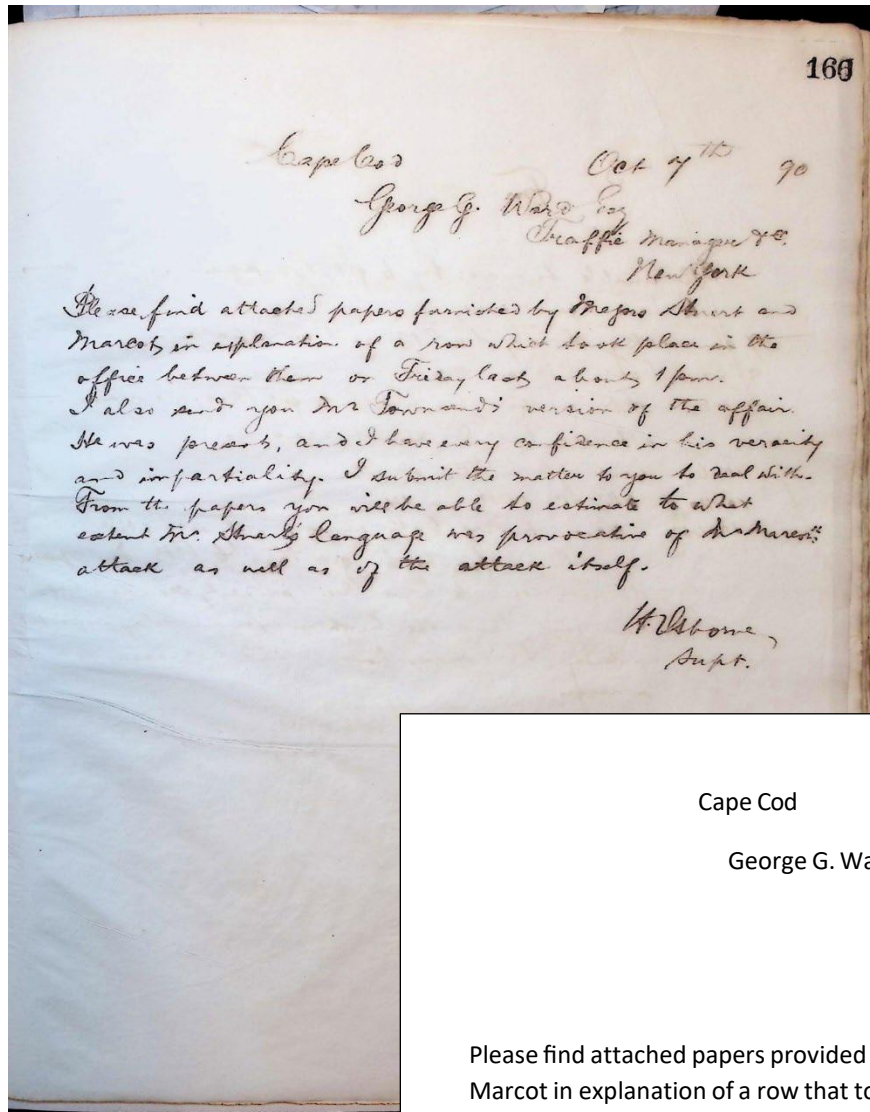
Cape Cod Oct 3rd 90

Mr. Stuart,

Please explain the rumpus between yourself and Mr. Marcot that took place in the office while I was at dinner.

H. Osborne
Supt

...and Osborne's letter to NY manager Ward regarding "the row":



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Cape Cod

Oct 7th 90

George G. Ward, Esq.

Traffic Manager [illegible]
New York

Please find attached papers provided by Mesors [sic] Stuart and Marcot in explanation of a row that took place in the office between them on Friday last about 1 pm.

I also sent you Mr. Townsend's version of the affair.

He was present, and I have every confidence in his veracity and impartiality. I submit the matter to you to deal with.

From the papers you will be able to estimate to what extent Mr. Stuart's language was provocative of Mr Marcot's attack as well as the attack itself.

H. Osborne

Supt

August 1939, Letter in French suggesting that the writer thinks, "Hitler is bluffing":

end of August 1939

Pendant que vous tapez la première partie de ma lettre je la termine rapidement en vous donnant quelques ^{ou quelques} informations précises. J'étais encore auprès de ma mère fin août lorsque je reçus un télégramme me priant de repasser Paris le plus tôt possible. On ne croyait pas encore à la guerre, bien qu'on eût assez de la période de tension qui ne pouvait se terminer sans avoir recours aux armes. Dès mon arrivée à Paris le 28 août, je dis prendre les dispositions utiles pour repasser mon port le plus vite possible et j'obtins un billet de passage sur le Ile de France qui devait partir le vendredi. J'avais compté fournir toutes les fins à Paris, mon passage dans la capitale fut réduit à 4, fois au grand port de discussions rapides, Do! Hausmann et Rue d'Antin - Je partirai samedi le vendredi matin, on pensait encore que Hitler bluffait et la surprise fut grande lorsqu'on nous annonça au Havre qu'il avait attaqué la Pologne et que la mobilisation générale était décrétée. Nous restâmes à Oran du vendredi midi au samedi 4 heures. Il y avait 1797 passagers à bord et si nous laissons à penser combien s'entraient eux étaient surpris. Le seul fait qu'il y avait 1500 américains m'avait convaincu que les boches n'oseraient pas nous forcer. Mais le Commandant ne "fit aucune chose" et après avoir fait escale la nuit à Southampton, il prit la route nord, chercha le mauvais temps

Re. M. Conger's trip to France