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How has the growth of the population effected the North Vancouver City firehall?

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Throughout this paper I am going to further my research based on the North Vancouver City Firehall. I chose to research this topic because my dad has worked for the fire department for over 20 years and I was interested in learning how it has transitioned over the years. I will use some of the research materials from the previous assignment in liberal studies 200 that was based on the firehall and the city of North Vancouver. My goal was to research how the fire hall has adapted and evolved as the city expands and the population continues to substantially increase. I want to extend my research to include more of a focus on comparing the North Vancouver city firehall and BC firefighters in a broad sense, focusing on how their jobs have transitioned and why.

Both of the photos below were taken across the street from the city firehall on 13th and St. Georges street. The black and white photo on the left was taken on June. 8 1953 and the photo beside was taken present day of 2019. The North Vancouver city fire hall is situated directly in the middle of the city of North Vancouver to optimize response time and increase speed of reaching all points of the City



As you can see by comparing the two photos above, the fire hall has increased substantially in size. The structure has not only increased in size, but in terms of the building itself the plot of land that the building is situated on has increased in size. According to the population census for 1951 and 2016 the population of North Vancouver has increased by a

staggering 37, 211; in 1951 it was recorded that the population was 15,687 (bcstats) and by 2016 it significantly increases to 52, 898 (statcan).

By viewing these photos I can make the claim that there are more firetrucks at the buildings disposal present day as the building is larger. There are four doors photographed in the present day photo (and there are four in the rear of the building) and only three doors photographed in 1953 which further proves my line of thinking that there is more space allocated for the fire engines. In both photographs above there is a tower attached to the back of the building, having no previous knowledge of the purpose or reason for the tower it peaked my interest to further my research. According to Calderone the towers were historically used for spotting fires, and although that is no longer the use, the purpose of them has evolved over time. Although these towers are now primarily used for fire training as well as drying out the hoses, they seem to hold character and sustain the history of the firehall (1998). As everything is changing around us and transitioning to more modern architecture it is refreshing to see some old character kept alive.

Industrialization and densification in the world has increased substantially over the years and North Vancouver is no exception to that. From the pictures above, the amount of buildings that have been added as well as the additional vehicles in the second photo makes it evident how much has changed. With the increase of materials in furnishings and lighter building construction materials, buildings and contents tend to burn hotter and faster than ever before. Many people still do not realize that many furnishings that they put in their house tend to be easily combustible. As Lorenzi explains with the increase of these various combustible and flammable items everywhere we turn, the job has transitioned from a focus on fighting fires to fire prevention. Not to say that fighting fires isn't a priority, but it seems that with the modern day

technology that we have, the ability to prevent horrendous fires has increased. This technology gives us the potential to prevent fires from occurring as well as the ability to detect fires early enough that they don't have the opportunity to worsen (2019). The difficulty is that fire



prevention is a time consuming process to educate people and it tends to be more difficult to get funding for than firefighting.

These two photos were accessed by the North Vancouver archives.

The first photo in black and white was taken in 1936 and the second photo was taken in 1969. As you can see when referring to the two photos, in the newer photo the fire trucks have increased in size. It also seems that there has been a ladder truck added which is a large improvement and increases their ability to help with the highrise buildings. With the growth of North Vancouver as a community, there has been an increase of quantity and size of buildings, as you can imagine more equipment is needed that fits these roles. As Caldane discusses the “fire truck” has experienced many transitions, beginning with horse drawn fire equipment, moving to steam powered engines (pictured in the black and white photo above), and finally moving to the modern day fire truck photographed beside (1998). Along with the horse drawn fire equipment, Dalmatian dogs played a role in the fire department until they were no longer needed. Dalmatians were utilized in many ways by the firehall, they protected the horses and they were used as an alarm to let everyone know when the trucks were pulling out. Melina goes on to say that although Dalmatians are no longer around for the same uses, some firehalls keep Dalmatians

around the department “as companionship” (2011). This is another way that they are able to sustain their history and character.

Comparing the two photos above that I accessed through the north Vancouver archives, it seems to me that the first photo looks much more like a home whereas the second photo looks as if it is more of an institution. The oxford dictionary defines institution as “An established law, custom, usage, practice, organization, or other element in the political or social life of a people; a regulative principle or convention subservient to the needs of an organized community or the general ends of civilization” (oxford). Hensler goes on to explain the transition from volunteer to paid firefighters and how professionalism came shortly after that (2015). The push for volunteer fire fighters to be replaced was due to “the unorganized groups of men” that the volunteer fire fighters seemed to be, and according to Hensler “these men needed bosses” (2015). Another large reason as to the transition to paid fire fighters was insurance for the community. People wanted the assurance that firefighters had the equipment that they needed and were able to be attended to quickly (Hensler, 2015). As fire departments transitioned to paid jobs and their professionalism increased, uniforms were worn to show that they were there to protect and serve their community. Fire training was also incorporated into their jobs, so my perspective that the fire department transitioned to more of an institution was correct.

Throughout my research paper I proved my claims that the fire department has had to increase in size as well as members due to the increasing population as well as industrialization and densification. I furthered my research and discovered that the fire department has transitioned to a professional institution from a more volunteer based service due to the worries and needs of the community. It is clear that with the increased needs of the community the department needs increased technology in order to fight fires more safely as well as increase the

amount of prevention. As technology increases with modern day, it is important that they have the funds to keep up. With the increase of professionalism, the city fire department has become highly trained. Keep in mind our location with the mountains, the ocean and rivers, the terrain varies substantially and the fire department must be trained for it all. Our local firefighters are no longer just trained to fight fires, They are now experts in High angle and confined space rescue, swift water rescue, Hazardous Materials and emergency medical care. There is also an entire division dedicated to fire prevention, public education and fire investigation. There are three fire departments on the North Shore with eleven strategically located firehalls. There is a lot of land to be covered and the city fire department alone has 51, 000 community members to protect and keep safe (cnv.org). With all that being said it seems fair to say that as the community and population continues to increase, the size of the firehall has to be closely associated.

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