



Plaque Unveiling to Recognize Historic Site of Victoria Fire Department Headquarters

Date: Monday, July 5, 2010

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Where Centennial Fountain stands today was once home to the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters, which shared space with the Victoria and Sidney Railway ticket office and the Victoria Public Market for 60 years. Tomorrow morning, retired and active Department members and its Honour Guard will gather for the unveiling of a plaque that recognizes the important role the Fire Department Headquarters played in providing fire protection to Victoria's downtown from 1899 to 1959.

The media are invited to attend the unveiling ceremony and meet Eric Simmons, who at almost 90, will describe what life was like working as a fire fighter at Headquarters from 1946 until it closed in 1959. Spanning four decades, his career with the Department included serving as Fire Chief from 1967 to 1980, followed by 10 years as a Victoria City Councillor.

What: Plaque unveiling to recognize historic site of Victoria Fire Department Headquarters
When: Tuesday, July 6, 2010, from 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Where: Centennial Square (next to the City Hall archway)

During the late 1800s, Victoria's central business district grew dramatically. More "modern" buildings in size and value downtown signalled a need for increased fire protection. A decision was made to incorporate a new Fire Department Headquarters in the existing Public Market building, roughly the location where Cormorant and Broad Streets once intersected.

In 1899, a magnificent, new facility replaced the Tiger Company Fire Hall, which had been located at the southwest corner of City Hall since 1880. The new Victoria Fire Department Headquarters was the amalgamation of three separate fire companies – the Tiger Company, Union Hook and Ladder Company, and the Deluge Company.

Similar in design to the San Francisco and New York fire departments, the Headquarters' fire apparatus was originally arranged in two ranks. Upon the sounding of the alarm, the doors would open and horses would dash to the front in readiness to be hooked up to their harness. During its time at the Public Market building, the Department progressed from horse-drawn apparatus to more modern, mechanized fire engines.

In 1959, the Headquarters moved to its current home on Yates Street. The Public Market building was demolished in 1962, and Cormorant and Broad Streets were closed and covered to make way for Centennial Square.

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