

In 1973, The Riverside Villa enrolled its 200<sup>th</sup> Client and remained the only gender-specific Alcohol Recovery residence in Alberta. Three years had passed since The Riverside Villa's inception and the residence was still run by volunteers, and sustained by donations from businesses, church groups and individuals across Alberta.

Group counselling was provided by counsellors from AADAC, however, it was becoming apparent the small facility could no longer meet the needs of its residents; the building was too small and could only accommodate 8 women at a time, the site was too far from AADAC, where residents were going for their daily group counselling sessions, and the agency was facing increasing budgetary problems due to piecemeal financing. The lack of professional Staff meant that Clients were not receiving the kind of therapy that should be made available.

The new Villa opened on **October 1, 1973 at 737 – 13 Avenue S.W.** The site had been previously used by AADAC as a clinic and was able to accommodate 20 women in a home-like atmosphere. The official Grand Opening for The Villa was held on **January 16, 1974.** Canadian Blood Services now occupies a new building on that site.



#### VILLA OPENING

A new recovery home for alcoholic women, The Villa was officially opened Wednesday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Ellen Todd, Chairman of the Board of The Riverside Villa Association, held the ribbon for Mrs. R. J. Robb who did the honors. Mrs. Robb and her husband (far right) were instrumental in establishing the original Villa in east Calgary. Also participating in the ceremonies were (back row; left to right): Father P.A. Tessier, Jack Quigley, regional director of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission; Alderman Ed Oman; and Mrs. J. A. Bastedo, Association Vice-Chairman. The new residence is located at 737 – 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.W.



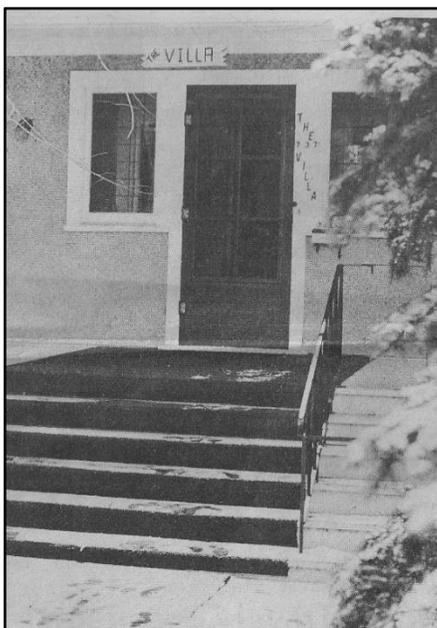
**In December 1973**, The Villa's program was extended from 21 – 28 days and provided Clients with support through educational films, lectures as well as individual and group counselling in conjunction with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). Clients were introduced to AA and the Villa remained the only recovery home of its kind in Alberta. Clients were referred by AA, social workers, hospitals, doctors, family and friends. The Villa started an Alumnae where women could return to visit or for support. Many of the women had medical concerns; they were not eating properly or suffering from malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, issues with proper hygiene or needed to see a dentist. In an effort to look after their entire well-being, all Clients were given a medical assessment. In addition, many residents had a dual addiction such as tranquilizers or sleeping pills prescribed by their own doctors. Then, as now, there women with addictions are often stigmatized, which can lead to guilt and shame, fear and a delay in seeking help.

At that time, the Calgary area had accommodation for 500 males with an addiction to alcohol, but only 16 places for women; unfortunately, there are still not enough live-in addiction program beds for women in today's world. In 1973, with more and more women entering the workforce and becoming more independent, they were competing for positions with greater responsibilities and pressures. They were also finding themselves more involved in the male-dominated cocktail circle that was accepted part of much of the business world. The number of women facing addiction was steadily on the rise and with it, the need for more options and more addiction treatment services for women.

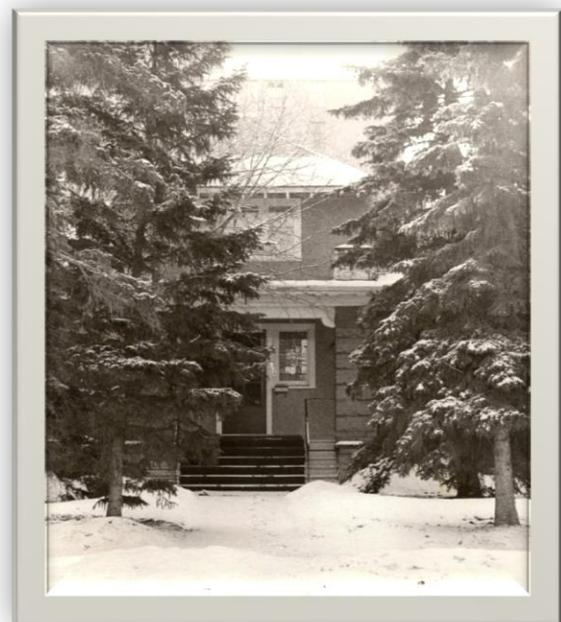
A study from the United States in the mid seventies found that 2/3 of alcoholic women had husbands who were also alcoholics, and a third of them were daughters of alcoholic fathers. Audrey Gough, Program Director, said *"Most of them had very poor relations with their families or husbands. They are very fearful and feel like misfits. They can't live up to expectations – theirs, their families, their friends, their bosses."*

Ellen Rodd, Chairman of The Riverside Villa Association, described the agency's vision for their residents as *"a good foundation of recovery before they leave; an introduction to a whole new way of life."*

The Villa created an Alumnae Association for continued Client support, and Luella Moir, Supervisor, added that *"they're never really stranded again. We will always be supportive."*



Close up of The Villa front door



The Villa 737 – 13 Avenue S.W.