



June 24, 1978 Despite an increase in women with an addiction to alcohol, many were still avoiding seeking help due to feelings of guilt and shame, family disgrace or rationalizing their addiction.

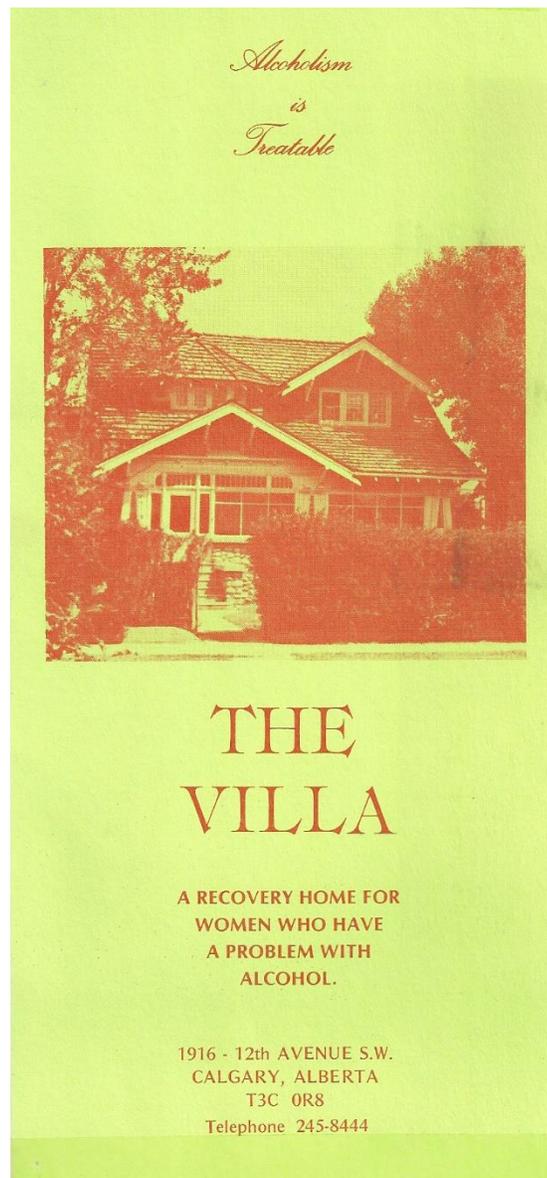
At that time, more than 80% of residents came from financially-comfortable backgrounds and ranged in age from 24-76. All too often in the late seventies, doctors would rarely ask a woman how much she was drinking. Women were often viewed as emotional, so when they displayed symptoms like fatigue, nervousness and depression, doctors prescribed other drugs. Eventually the addiction to alcohol was clouded with drugs and a cross-dependency developed. Statistics showed 3 males to 1 female in Calgary were addicted to alcohol. More and more, women were working fulltime, and lunch-hour cocktails were an accepted part of society. The stress of a competitive job on top of family responsibilities in the home were taking a toll, yet Calgary still only had one addiction treatment centre for women, with a maximum capacity of 12 residents.

Counsellors in Calgary reported that a quarter of their Clients were now women, compared to about 1 in 10 just a few years prior. But while the number of women seeking treatment increased, the number of treatment programs did not. At this time, Alberta did have two co-ed facilities; David Lander Centre in Claresholm and Henwood near Edmonton, however most of their Clients were men.

The Villa provided educational support to help give women time to be introspective and reflect on what life experiences had contributed to their addiction, but the organization was not properly equipped to provide a comprehensive therapeutic program, teach work skills or life skills programs. The Villa required Clients to have three days sobriety prior to enrolling, and in many cases, detox was handled through Renfrew Recovery Centre. The one month program at The Villa was felt to be not long enough to meet the needs of women working to overcome their addiction. The Salvation Army was offering a 3 month treatment program for men at this time.

Alcoholics Anonymous held a conference in Calgary in August 1978 attended by women from all over Alberta, and it was estimated that 1 in 4 women of those attending the conference had gone through The Villa's treatment program.

October 2, 1978 Evelyn Penny, newly appointed Director at The Riverside Villa, was putting forth some very progressive plans for the centre. Trained as a nurse, her vision included helping women to achieve sobriety by developing a self-awareness and increasing their knowledge of alcohol and other related drugs. By this time, 800 Clients had attended The Villa. *"It is well worth the effort and gratifying to see women back in the stream of society with a new determination. These ladies appreciated not being sent to a hospital."* said Betty Avery, Executive Secretary.



The Villa brochure circa 1978