

# 1955 ~ 2007



## A brief history of North Lawn

Riverview Hospital's North Lawn Unit opened in the spring of 1955. But the roots of the North Lawn story actually go back to the late 1930s, when tuberculosis became a significant problem for Riverview (then known as Essondale). About 5 per cent of the hospital's population was being diagnosed with this infectious and difficult to treat respiratory illness. Segregating those with TB from the other patients was an ongoing challenge. One 52-bed ward at West Lawn was designated for this purpose in 1937.

By 1951, the patient population had increased dramatically, surpassing 4,000. And although the diagnosis and treatment of TB was improving, there were still more than 200 Riverview patients with the disease. So, plans were laid to build an entire new unit just for TB patients – a “tubercular-mental hospital,” as it was called at the time.

The following is a timeline of events in the history of North Lawn...

**1955** North Lawn officially opens on May 4, with a bed capacity of 230. Most of those beds

are for treating TB patients from the other buildings. The bottom floor is divided into small units for the early isolation of patients suffering from other infectious diseases.

- 1960** Patients and staff from unit R2 at Colony Farm are transferred to South 3. At that time the starting salary for a nurse was \$281 per month.
- 1961** North 3 and South 3 are converted into infirmary wards, and infirmary patients from Centre Lawn are transferred there.
- 1963** With gender integration among Essondale staff still a new concept, the first male nursing supervisor is assigned to North Lawn.
- 1964** Thanks to advances in medicine, the incidence of TB is greatly reduced, and now only one 26-bed ward on South 1 is needed for this purpose. The other wards are renovated and reorganized to provide short and long-term medical care for sick or infirm patients from the other buildings. Meanwhile the Physiotherapy Department moves from Crease Clinic to North Lawn.
- 1969** Piped-in oxygen and suction are installed in the building. An “environment management” program is developed, and a window dressing project is launched to provide drapes for all ward areas.
- 1970** The Poison Control Information Centre is established in North Lawn. The continuing decline of TB results in the TB unit being reduced to six beds. It's announced that some beds will be converted for the use of patients suffering from “Chronic Brain Syndromes.”



*North Lawn under construction, March 1954*

**1973** The Nursing Staff Development Program is founded at North Lawn, and forms the basis for the improvement of the quality of patient care throughout Riverview.

**1974** The Organic Brain Syndrome Project is established in a 42-bed ward. This is the start of what would become the Neuropsychiatry Program. Also during this time, North Lawn Unit Director Dr. A.C. Greiner (who has achieved international attention for his research papers on psychiatric medications) is advocating the concept of the "nurse practitioner," who would be trained to handle routine medical procedures rather than calling in a physician for every task. The concept did not gain the support of senior administration.

**1976** West 2 relocates from Crease Clinic to North 3, which would become the post-surgical and surgical consultant ward. A Respiratory Therapist joins the treatment team on the medical ward, South 3 – probably a first in a psychiatric hospital.

**1977-79** All surgical and general medical services, acute and long term, including consultation services and Radiology, are centralized at North Lawn.

**1986** The Organic Brain Syndrome Program now encompasses all North Lawn wards except North 1, which has become the post-surgical/medical care ward. The Back Check Program is started, and "stretch bars" installed for staff to do back exercises.

**1987** The staff lounge is completed...along with the new morgue.



*One of the nursing units at North Lawn in 1956. Obviously space was at a premium, and privacy non-existent.*



*The North Lawn float in the annual Essondale Sports Day parade, July 1962. Note the costumed staff members on the tailgate, dressed in an "Arabian Nights" theme.*



*North Lawn in June, 1955, a month after it opened.*



*North Lawn building and grounds, winter 1989.*

- 1988** The Riverview Laboratory moves from Crease Clinic to the former kitchen area of North Lawn.
- 1990** The majority of female developmentally disabled patients are transferred to North Lawn from East Lawn. South 1 is renovated to accommodate nursing administration offices.
- 1991** The Geriatric Research Program moves from



*From left, Vi McGinn, Dianna Klassen and Norma Smith at a staff tea, early 1980s.*



*Dr. Walter Goresky, Medical Director, in 1979.*



*Ruth Crawford, OT Department, enjoying the begonia bed on the hospital lawn (date unknown, early '80s).*

6Y (Valleyview) to North 2.

- 1993** Valleyview Unit 5 is moved to North Lawn as part of the OBS (Neuropsychiatry) program.
- 2005** North 1 is renovated to accommodate patients from the SIWI program, moved from East Lawn when that building closed.
- 2007** As part of the phased devolution of Riverview Hospital, North Lawn's remaining patients are moved to other units, and the building is closed.

Over the years, North Lawn has been home for thousands of patients, a busy and fulfilling workplace for hundreds of staff, and the site of important progress in the science of psychiatry. A lot of good work—and good care – has happened within its walls.



*North Lawn OT staffer working with a patient; name and date unknown.*

