



20 years

We're Growing. TOGETHER.

The history of a community hospital

by Lee Ann Waterman

Although Markham Stouffville Hospital is celebrating its 20th anniversary this month, its history reaches back much further than 20 years; nearly six decades in fact.

It began like so many community projects do with discussions among residents about the needs of the community — in this case, the need for emergency medicine, critical illness care and diagnostic services at a hospital closer to home.

The discussions of a handful of community leaders — among them Howard Cosburn, John Cattanach, Dr. James Scott and Russell Beare — led to the support of organizations including the Markham Unionville Lions Club, the Jaycees, Kiwanis, the Markham District Veterans' Association, the Markham Fair Board and Markham Rotary Club and in 1964, a volunteer committee was formed.

The province was slow to back the idea of a local community hospital. In the 1950s and 1960s, the government was of the opinion that Markham and Stouffville were serviced well enough by the existing hospitals in surrounding communities.

In 1967, the hospital overcame a major hurdle, when Stouffville philanthropist Arthur Latcham bought and donated to the hospital committee 50 acres of land at Ninth Line and Church Street.

But there was still the matter of provincial approval. At the time, the government established hospitals based on a ratio of beds to population and a set minimum number of beds. It was a moving target. In 1968, when Markham's population approached the threshold of 20,000, proponents learned the requirement had increased to 35,000. In 1974, that number shot up again to 50,000.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, support for the hospital continued to grow, with residents pledging membership fees and volunteering time to the cause.

In 1982, the province finally gave its approval and the board's efforts switched from petitioning for a hospital to planning for a hospital.

Job one was fundraising. The province would fund two-thirds of the cost of the hospital. Of the one-third funded by the region, \$5 million was to come from the community.

The board was able to surpass its commitment and secure donations of over \$5 million in a very successful fundraising drive, says Mac Cosburn, son of early proponent Howard Cosburn and board chairperson when the hospital opened in 1990.

The largest task for the 24-member volunteer board was overseeing the building

— not only the physical structure, but the organization within.

Board members were involved in every part of the process, from hiring construction contractors and gathering input from health-care professionals on hospital design to hiring a CEO and recruiting the nearly 1,000 people needed to operate the community hospital to establishing policies and procedures.

"It was an incredibly challenging and fascinating time," says Cosburn, who speaks highly of the early staff, including "a group of physicians beyond our expectations."

The hospital first opened its doors on March 5, 1990 to a community of 77,000 residents.

The mood that day, says Cosburn, was one of elation.

"It had taken a great deal of perseverance and we were finally there," he recalls. "Everyone was incredibly excited."

Over the years, Markham Stouffville Hospital has seen many challenges and changes — among them serving a population that has quadrupled in size, keeping abreast of advances in medical technology and bringing the Uxbridge Cottage Hospital under the MSH banner.



Stouffville philanthropist Arthur Latcham presents the deed of land to Don Deacon, first chair of the hospital board of directors.

The hospital now has 275 physicians, 1,700 staff and serves a population of more than 300,000 people. This includes residents of the towns of Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Uxbridge, and a catchment area that draws from North Scarborough and East Durham.

But one thing that hasn't changed, says Cosburn, is the commitment of its people — the nurses and doctors, administrative and support staff, the

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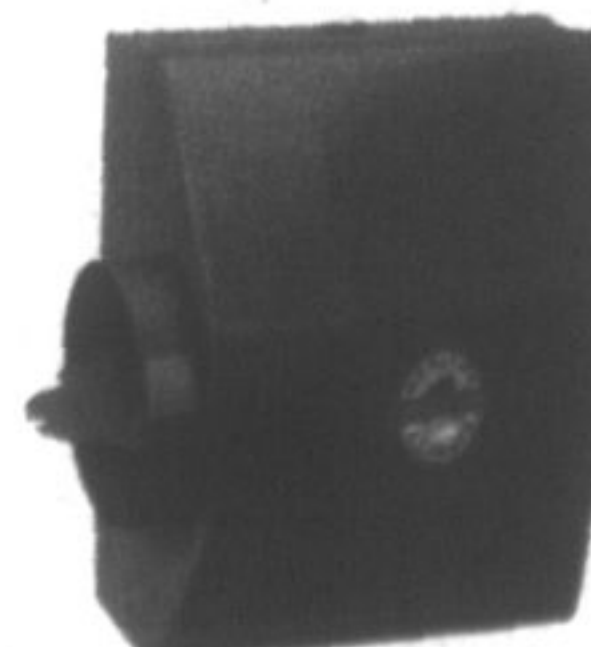
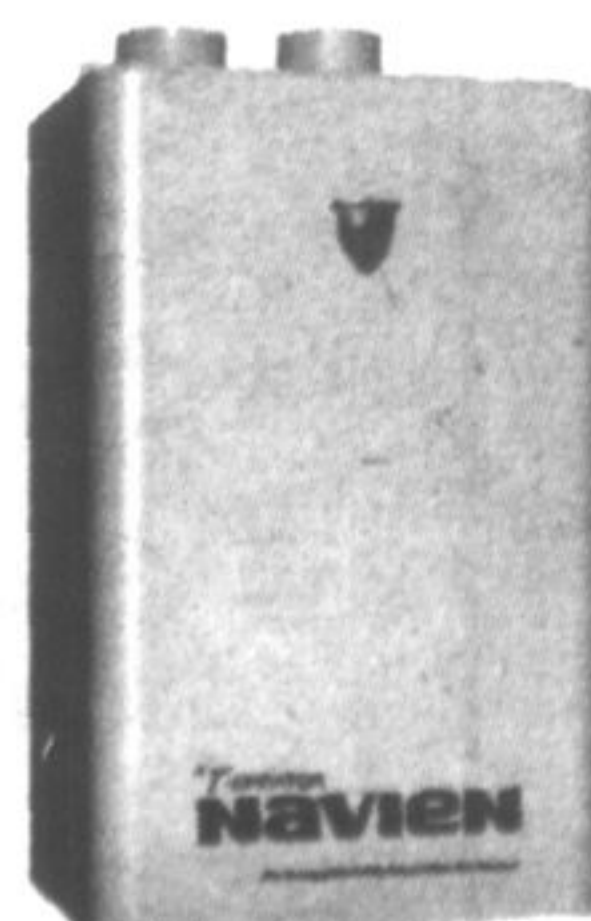
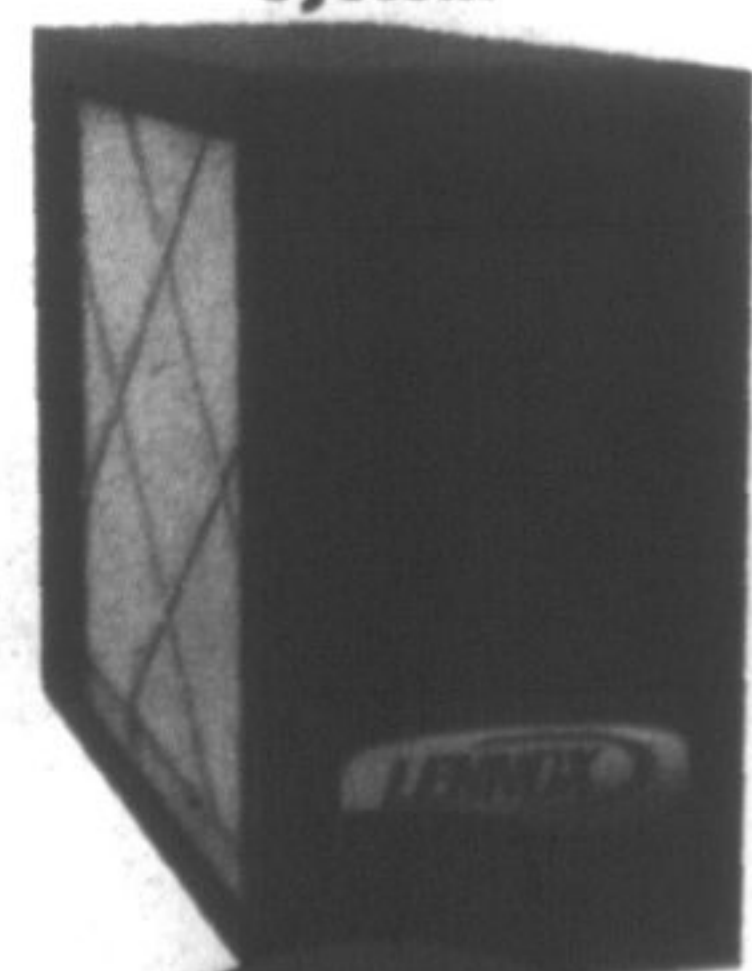
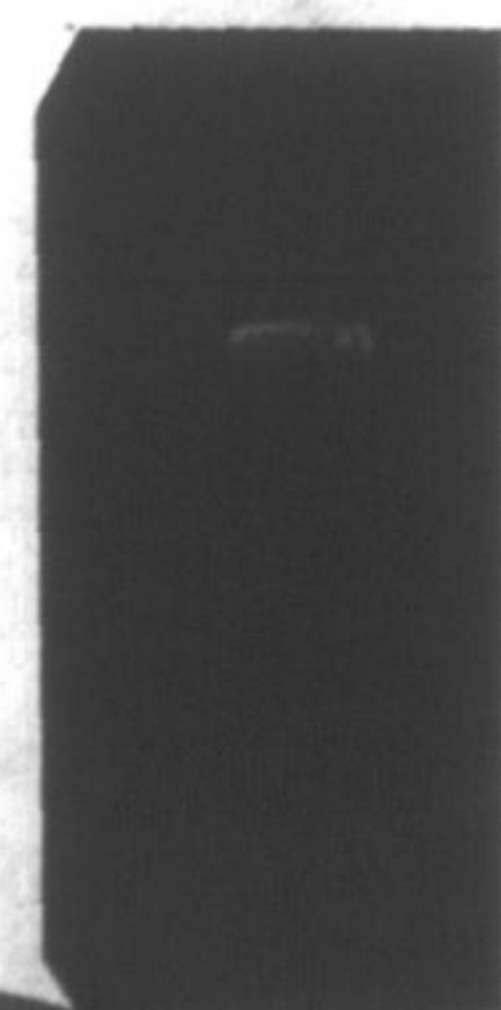
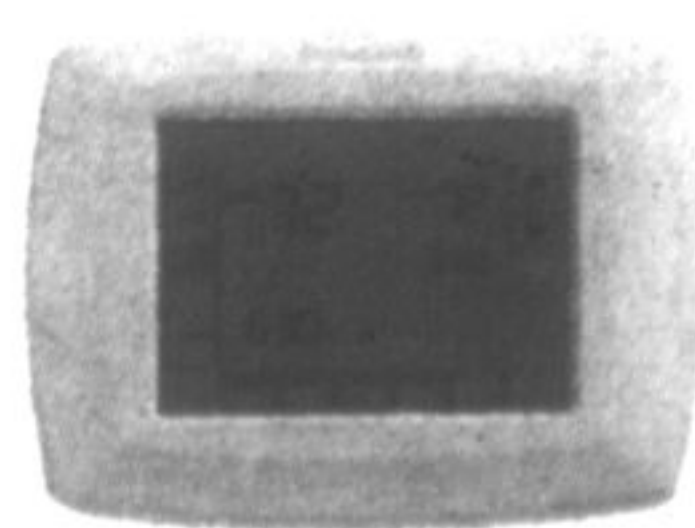
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