Organized tennis existed in Richmond Hill well before the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club was created. Courts were located on Wright Street, where the old Richmond Hill Public Library stood and across from the old Richmond Hill High School. Janet (Paris) Girdler can remember playing at those courts as a 16 year old girl in 1950 and helping to maintain the courts in exchange for her membership dues. In the fall of 1959, after the courts on Wright Street were torn up in preparation for building the library, a group of dedicated community members discussed the idea of the creation of a new club. They met with the town’s Parks and Recreation Committees on Wednesday, April 6th, 1960 and established the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Association. They also elected its first executive. From the thirty-five people present, the following people were chosen:

President – Frank Walsh  
Secretary – Kal Holbek  
Treasurer – Bernie Crane  
Publicity – Dennis Lamb  
Research – Sue Fraser  
Junior Members Committee – Judith Uren

The new executive worked diligently to make the new club come to life. Sites for the club were surveyed and eventually the area in the northwest corner of Town Park was chosen for development. The inaugural meeting of the RHLTA was called for Tuesday, May 10, 1960 at McConaghy Public School. All interested citizens were invited to attend: adult players, juniors, and parents. The community was keen to learn more about the club and sixty-eight people turned out for the meeting. Frank Walsh outlined the plans for the club. The estimated cost for three courts, fencing around the courts, and lights for night play was $12,000.00. Membership rates of $15.00 for adults, $10.00 for juniors, $25.00 for couples, $35.00 for families, as well as lifetime memberships for $100.00 were approved. To foster the growth of the game, the club wanted to provide coaching for the development of beginners and junior players. The hope was to have the courts ready for play by mid-June. Several new members joined the club that night.

“Someday, tennis will be a big thing in Richmond Hill and wouldn’t it be nice if you could feel that YOU helped to make it that way?” (The Liberal, May 19, 1960, p. 12) Those words would prove to be prophetic as the club undertook an intense campaign for new members, including posting signs all over town and printing an application in The Liberal that could be cut out and mailed in along with membership dues. To draw even more people to the game, it was decided that junior members under the age of 12 would have to pay only $1.00 in membership dues and that coaching would be provided free of charge.
RICHMOND HILL
LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

INVITE APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

PLAY TENNIS THIS YEAR
-- JOIN NOW --

DUES:
Junior (under 65) $10
Married Couple $25
Life, per person $100
Senior $15
Family $35

Treasurer, Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Association,
75 Rockport Cresc., Richmond Hill. Phone TU. 4-3904
TU. 4-1766

CLIP & MAIL THE APPLICATION BELOW TODAY
TO: RICHMOND HILL LAWN TENNIS ASSOC.

FROM: ..................................................

ADDRESS: ................................. Phone ..........................

Please enroll me/us as member(s) for the 1960 season

I enclose $..............................

Signed: ......................................
Excitement in the club rose dramatically after Mayor Ken Tomlin officially broke ground on the new club in June 1960 prior to the heavy machinery moving in to clear the land. The club had the full support of the town and its local paper: “The executive members of the Lawn Tennis Association are to be congratulated on their efforts to date and we would wish them nothing but well for any and all future operations.” (The Liberal, June 8, 1960, p. 12) Nothing could stop the momentum of the club, except for Mother Nature!
The Spring of 1960 was somewhat soggy and Frank Walsh announced at a membership meeting on June 14th that while construction of the new courts was steady, it would be the last week of June before they would be ready for play. John Graham was added to the executive at the same meeting. It was not until Saturday, August 13th that the club was officially opened. Councillor John Bradstock, Chairman of the Parks Committee, and instrumental in the creation of the club, represented the town. Only two courts were completed by opening day and the lights were still not installed, but that did not dampen the spirits of the many dedicated members who saw their vision become a reality.
The town allowed a small booth adjacent to the courts to be used as a clubhouse. Now almost everything was in place. “From nothing last year to courts and a clubhouse this year is a tremendous forward step and the dynamic club executive have done a very praiseworthy job.” (The Liberal, August 19, 1960, p. 7)

By early September the club’s membership exceeded 100 adult members and 65 junior members. Instruction was provided for the juniors on Saturday mornings. The executive decided that club championships would be held and draws were made for all events. Winners were declared and the inaugural season wrapped up at a weiner roast at the club on October 15th. Club champions for 1960 were:

Men’s Singles – Dennis Lamb
Ladies Singles – Ann Holbek
Men’s Doubles – Dennis Lamb and Frank Walsh
Ladies Doubles – Ann Holbek and Margaret Walsh
Mixed Doubles – Ann and Kal Holbek

In creating a new executive, it was decided that it would be a combination of original executive members and newly elected members in order to maintain some continuity. Frank Walsh assumed the position of Past President while Kal Holbek, Judy Uren, and Dennis Lamb retained their positions. Francis Redelmeier, James Hunter, and Bill Jones were elected to the executive while Phil Limpert was appointed to be the club’s auditor. The lights for the courts were installed by the end of the 1960 season and the third court would be completed in due time. It was full steam ahead towards 1961 and the club’s sophomore year. “What last fall seemed to be just a nebulous idea has burgeoned and become reality. It only shows what an interested group working toward a common goal can accomplish. Congratulations to members and to the executive of the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Association.” (The Liberal, June 23, 1960, p. 12)