

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received MAY 31 1983

date entered

1. Name

historic Racquet and Tennis Club Building

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 370 Park Avenue not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of congressional district

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Private Club

4. Owner of Property

name Racquet and Tennis Club

street & number 370 Park Avenue

city, town New York vicinity of state N. Y. 10022

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office, Surrogate's Court

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state N. Y. 10007

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION (LP-1000) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date May 8, 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION 20 Vesey St.

city, town New York state N. Y. 10007

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Racquet and Tennis Club Building occupies the entire west side of Park Avenue between 52nd and 53rd Streets, and, in accordance with Beaux-Arts principles, it is carefully scaled to the width of the avenue. Because of that width, the broad facade may be seen to great advantage. A powerful yet restrained rectangular block, fully visible on three sides, the building rises five stories on a rusticated granite base. The use of such a base is a characteristic feature of Italian palazzi. The large stone blocks forming the base are very carefully sculpted and joined. The excellence of Workmanship is a tribute to the firm of Marc Eidlitz and Son, the builder and contractor for the building. The base is pierced by large arched openings. Those flanking the club entrance open onto commercial facilities, an innovative feature at the time of construction.² The voussoirs of these arches create a pointed profile, a feature which seems to have been adopted from the Palazzi Spannochi and Antinori in Florence.³ Smaller rectangular openings pierce the base of the side walls. The end arches in these walls provide access to the vaulted driveway running through the building at ground floor level. Stone quoins mark the corners of the building above the ground floor, contrasting with the smooth beige brick of the upper walls. As is appropriate for the floor housing the main rooms--lounges, dining room, library--of the club, the second floor is treated as a piano nobile. Full-length windows with rusticated enframements and cornices light the principal rooms. A distinctive feature, recalling the original design of the Century Club, is a central loggia recessed behind three arched openings. The piers supporting the arches have Corinthian capitals incorporating racquets into the foliage--a witty allusion to the purpose of the club--and the club shield is placed above the center arch. French doors provide access to the loggia from the inside hall lounge. Small, simply enframed windows mark the third floor. A denticulated string course separates the third and fourth stories. The major courts for racquets, tennis, and squash are located on the upper floors,⁴ and their location is indicated on the exterior by the placement of large blind arches with rusticated enframements at the fourth story. This type of functional expressionism reflects another principle of Beaux-Arts design. The terra-cotta frieze at the fifth floor, which is pierced by unobtrusive small windows, incorporates racquets into the pattern, another allusion to the club's purpose. A balustraded roof parapet above a decorative cornice provides a fitting and appropriately scaled termination to the design. If reminiscent of an Italian palazzo, the club building is, however, an original design, planned for a specific site and purpose; it is one that reflects its time and place in the city of New York, and it is a fitting symbol for the prestigious club that commissioned it.

On the first floor much of the space is occupied commercially. Within the entrance, a long narrow hallway leads to the vaulted main entrance hall, which is octagonal in plan. Off this hall is a large vaulted billiard room. The second floor is occupied by the principal social rooms of the club. These include two lounges, the main dining room, and the library. The centrally placed hall lounge opens onto the groin-vaulted open-air loggia. The detail of these principal rooms is neo-Georgian in style as exhibited in the chimneypieces, wall paneling and pilasters, and ceiling cornices. The third floor contains gymnasium and dressing room facilities and squash courts. Tennis courts and racquet courts extend two stories from the fourth floor to the fifth floor. The courts are lit by clerestory windows at the fifth floor level and skylights in the roof.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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Minor changes have occurred in the dining rooms and lounge areas. According to records in the New-York Historical Society, these were carried out by the firm of McKim, Mead & White, architects for the original structure.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1916-18 **Builder/Architect** McKim, Mead & White

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Racquet and Tennis Club Building, a superb example of the work of the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, was built in 1916-18 as the third home of the Racquet and Tennis Club. Dominating the west side of Park Avenue between 52nd and 53rd Streets, the building is a notable essay in neo-Italian Renaissance architecture, embodying the principles of Beaux-Arts design to create a structure which is appropriate to the site and to the needs of the Racquet and Tennis Club.

The club, first organized in 1875 as the Racquet Court Club, occupied a building at 55 West 26th Street. However, it was incorporated on February 21, 1890, as the Racquet and Tennis Club "to encourage all manly sports among its members."⁵ From its beginnings the club was considered to be one of the wealthiest and most exclusive of New York's social and athletic organizations. In 1891 the club moved to a new building designed by architect Cyrus L. W. Eidlitz specifically for its purposes and located at 27 West 43rd Street. This section of the city soon became known as the clubhouse district. Among the club's distinguished neighbors on West 43rd Street were the Century Club, the Columbia Club, and the Academy of Medicine (now demolished), while on West 44th Street were the Harvard Club, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, and the New York Yacht Club.

Within a few years, however, the commercial development of the city began to encroach upon the area. After the construction in 1912 of Aeolian Hall, an eighteen-story office building on the south side of West 43rd Street, blocked the sunlight to the courts of the Racquet and Tennis Club, the organization began considering a move to a new location. The West 43rd Street site was seen as potentially very valuable, but the club was uncertain about being able to sell it at a high enough price to finance a new building. Moreover, some members wished to remain in the West 43rd Street building because so much had been invested in the playing courts, which were valued at \$200,000.⁶ In 1916, Robert Walton Goelet (1880-1941), a member of the club, offered to erect a new club building on Park Avenue between 52nd and 53rd Streets on land which he owned and to lease both the land and the building to the club.⁷ Goelet had inherited most of the Park Avenue properties proposed for the new Racquet and Tennis Club site from his father Robert Goelet and had purchased the remainder in 1915 from the New York State Realty and Terminal Co., an affiliate of the New York Central Railroad.⁸

On June 27, 1916, the membership of the Racquet and Tennis Club voted to accept the Goelet proposal. Also, a syndicate of club members was formed to take over the club property on West 43rd Street and hold it until it could be sold at an advantageous price.⁹

(See Continuation Sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Central Park

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 8	5 8 6 6 4 0	4 5 1 2 2 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property occupies Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1288, Lot 33, and is approximately 100 by 200 feet. As outlined on the attached map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
			NA

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne B. Covell, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

organization Agency I Building, Empire State Plaza date 8/82

street & number _____ telephone 518-474-0479

city or town Albany state New York 12238

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Allen E. Carver

title Deputy Commissioner and Counsel

date 5/3/83

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Linda McClelland

date 7/13/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Not only was Goelet's proposal thought to be financially favorable for the club, but the Park Avenue site was felt to be a most desirable location. For many years Park Avenue had been occupied by the below-grade tracks and tunnel of the New York Central Railroad and spanned by bridges. Spurred by legislation which would require the electrification of all passenger trains within Manhattan by 1910, the New York Central Railroad decided to build a completely new Grand Central Terminal and to place all tracks below ground. Construction began in 1903 and was completed in 1913. The scheme enabled Park Avenue to be transformed into an elegant boulevard with a central landscaped mall, thus making it one of the most valuable and desirable sections of the city. Luxurious apartment buildings, the new mode of living for affluent New Yorkers, were soon built as far north as 96th Street. St. Bartholomew's Church acquired its site on Park Avenue and 51st Street, and plans for its construction were underway in 1916. Since the club was leaving West 43rd Street because of commercial encroachments, Park Avenue, "where the permanency of the present residential character of the section is assured,"¹⁰ was seen as especially desirable. In keeping with the prestige of its new location, the club, acting through Robert Goelet, commissioned a design for the new building from the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White.

By 1916, McKim, Mead and White had enjoyed a position of great prestige for over thirty years. Founded in 1879 by Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909), William Rutherford Mead (1846-1928), and Stanford White (1853-1906), the firm began to achieve a national reputation with its designs for the Henry Villard Houses (1882-86) and the Boston Public Library (1887-95). This reputation was consolidated and expanded by the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 in Chicago, which set a trend for monumental neo-Classical architecture and formal urban planning. Through the skill of its members and the breadth of its resources, the firm was able to produce a vast number of designs in a variety of classical styles for many types of buildings, ranging from residences to monumental public edifices. Due to the sheer number of executed commissions, as well as to the important role the office played in the training of younger architects, the firm exerted a tremendous influence on American architecture during the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th centuries. Writing in 1925, the British critic C. H. Reilly characterized the work of McKim, Mead & White as "sum[ming] up the finest aspirations of a great people at a great epoch."¹¹

In 1906--several months before the death of Stanford White--William Mitchell Kendall, Burt Leslie Fenner, and William Symmes Richardson, all of whom had been with the firm for many years, were made full partners. Partnership was granted to Teunis J. Van der Bent in 1909 and to Lawrence Grant White, the son of Stanford White, in 1920. Many of the important buildings of the firm from 1904 on were the work of the younger partners.¹²

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The firm had already designed many of the most important club buildings in New York, including the Century Club, the Harvard Club, the Lambs Club, the University Club, the Players Club, the first Colony Club and the Metropolitan Club, and, appropriately, it was given the commission for the new Racquet and Tennis Club Building.¹³ William Symmes Richardson is credited with the design.¹⁴

William Symmes Richardson (1873-1931) joined the firm in 1895, following his studies at the University of California, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He became White's principal assistant and later assumed design responsibility for such important commissions as Pennsylvania Station, the Hotel Pennsylvania, the National City Bank on Wall Street--all in New York--and the Girard Trust Co. Building in Philadelphia and the Bank of Montreal, Winnipeg.

In his design for the Racquet and Tennis Club, Richardson employed the forms of Italian Renaissance architecture which the firm had first helped popularize in its earlier designs for the Villard Houses and the Boston Public Library. An earlier club design which effectively employed the 16th-century Italian palazzo mode was the University Club (1897-1900). In its creative synthesis of these Italian Renaissance forms, the Racquet and Tennis Club design is a reflection of the principles taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where the partners of the firm, including Richardson, had studied. Beaux-Arts theory of the 19th century advocated the continuity of contemporary architectural design with that of the past. As a means of achieving that continuity, the architectural student was instructed to learn from examples of the past and to combine creatively architectural elements from those examples. In addition, the firm advocated the use of Renaissance forms for their symbolic associations--linking the glories of the Italian Renaissance with the new "American Renaissance" that they and their contemporaries were helping to create in the United States.

The Racquet and Tennis Club officially moved into its new quarters on April 15, 1918. It was praised as "one of the finest clubhouses in this city,"¹⁶ and as having "the advantage of imposing situation and of architectural suitability to its purpose and its surroundings."¹⁷ In addition to expanded playing courts and other athletic facilities, the club was able to broaden its activities into other related directions, building up an extensive library devoted entirely to sporting books and also a collection of art works devoted to sporting subjects.¹⁸

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Ironically, that "permanent" residential character which had made Park Avenue so desirable a location began to change after World War II, as the apartment buildings began to be replaced by large office buildings. With the advent of two modern glass skyscrapers on Park Avenue--Lever House of 1950-52 by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and the Seagram Building of 1954-58 by Mies van der Rohe in association with Philip Johnson--critics and journalists of the Modern Movement began to take notice of the adjacent Racquet and Tennis Club Building. Far from scorning its neo-Italian Renaissance design, these writers praised its subtlety and classical composition as a complement to Lever House and the Seagram Building.¹⁹ Most thought-provoking are the comments of Reyner Banham:

Few architectural confrontations can be as fascinating, or as inscrutable, as that between the Seagram Building and the Racquet Club, facing one another across Park Avenue, and Lever House, oblique from Seagram but flanking the Racquet Club. The club is a most expert exercise in Beaux-Arts expertise by McKim, Mead & White, the American partnership who showed the French in the nineties that the Ecole des Beaux-Arts could be beaten at its own game of brilliant cliché-mongering. The Racquet Club is an exercice de style, and a skill in resolving visual problems that still strikes a chord in the architects of today. Indeed, this dialogue is a discourse upon style in the grandest manner, in which the club puts down a basic proposition of traditional skill, and the other two discourse upon it in modern terms.²⁰

Because of such qualities as its monumental scale, its refined and restrained detail, and its functional expressionism, the Racquet and Tennis Club Building has continued to attract the attention and admiration of the architectural profession, and many others. It continues to dominate its Park Avenue site and is in scale and harmony with the width of the street. As a reminder of the early residential character of Park Avenue, the Racquet and Tennis Club Building has special distinction. Among the many distinctive works of McKim, Mead & White in New York City, it remains outstanding.

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Footnotes for # 7 and #88

¹The text of this report was taken almost in its entirety from the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report, Racquet and Tennis Club Building (LP-1000), May 8, 1979, by Marjorie Pearson.

²George Mead Rushmore, Racquet and Tennis Club: Some History and Some Memories (New York: Racquet and Tennis Club, [1964]), p. 37.

³Leland Roth, The Urban Architecture of McKim, Mead & White: 1870-1910 (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1973), p. 761. Roth also suggests that an American source for the design may be the University Club in San Francisco by Bliss & Faville, an architectural firm which was associated with McKim, Mead & White on a number of San Francisco projects. The club was published in Brickbuilder, 10 (1910), pl. 160, 161.

⁴The playing courts were constructed by Bickley, Mineral, Black of London, the foremost specialists in that field.

⁵Racquet and Tennis Club, Club Book (New York, 1892).

⁶New York Tribune, April 21, 1916.

⁷New York Evening Post, April 20, 1916; New York Press, April 21, 1916; New York Sun, April 21, 1916; New York Times, April 21, 1916, p. 6; New York Tribune, April 21, 1916. In his will Goelet made provision to transfer the title to the club, see New York Times, July 12, 1941, p. 15.

⁸New York County, Liber Deeds, Register's Office, New York County, Section 5, liber 58, p. 61; Section 5, liber 190, p. 398.

⁹Boston Evening Transcript, April 21, 1916; New York Evening Post, April 20, 1916; July 15, 1916.

¹⁰New York Evening Post, April 20, 1916.

¹¹C. H. Reilly, McKim, Mead & White (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1924), p. 24.

¹²Leland Roth, The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White, 1870-1920: A Building List (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1978), p. xxxvi.

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Footnotes for #7 and #8 (cont.)

¹³It must also be remembered that Robert W. Goelet commissioned the building on behalf of the club, and the association of the Goelet family with the McKim, Mead & White firm was a long one. Buildings by the firm for the family include "Southside" in Newport (1882); the Goelet Building, 900 Broadway (1886); and the Goelet Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery (1899).

¹⁴Leland Roth makes this attribution in "Notes on the Plates," A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915 (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1973), p. 73- and in Urban Architecture, p. 76]. Curiously, in his Building List, p. 128, Roth credits Kendall. In the McKim, Mead & White Archives (File 265) at the New-York Historical Society is a letter, dated May 1, 1962, from M. B. Steinmann of the McKim, Mead & White firm, stating that W. S. Richardson was the member of the firm in charge of the design of the Racquet and Tennis Club.

¹⁵American Art Annual 28 (1931), 416; New York Times, April 7, 1931, p. 27; "Richardson, W(illiam) Symmes," Who Was Who in America, (1897-1942).

¹⁶New York Evening Post, July 15, 1916.

¹⁷C. Owen Lublin, "An Imposing New Clubhouse on Park Avenue," Town and Country, 74 (October 10, 1918), 27.

¹⁸Racquet and Tennis Club, Catalogue of Books, Pictures and Sporting Prints (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1916); Racquet and Tennis Club, A Guide to the Library of the Racquet and Tennis Club (New York, 1942).

¹⁹Arthur Drexler, Architectural Record (July 1958), 140; William H. Jordy, American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 251.

²⁰Reyner Banham, Age of the Masters (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 114.

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2

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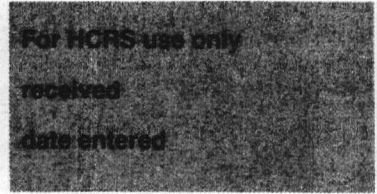
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Inventory—Nomination Form**

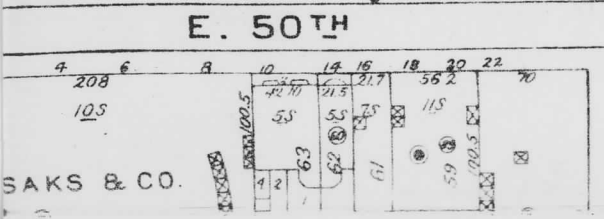
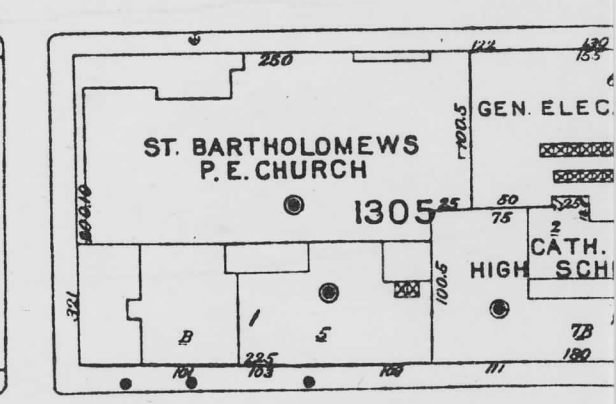
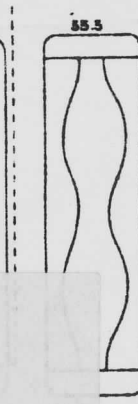
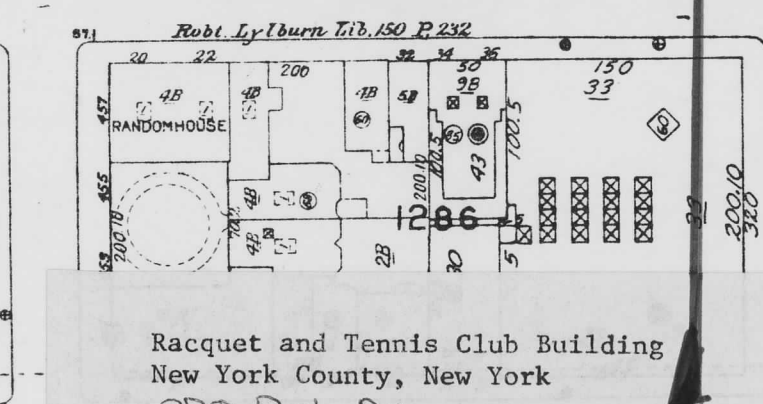
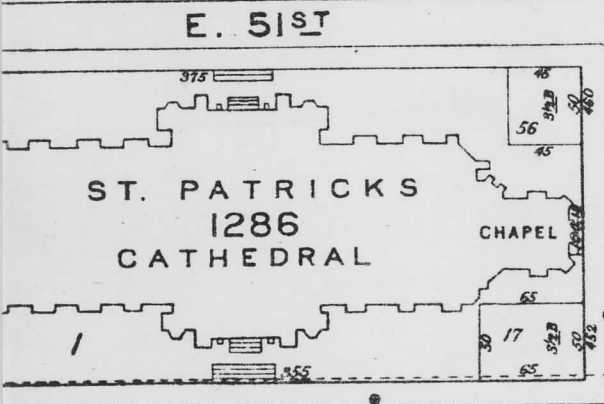
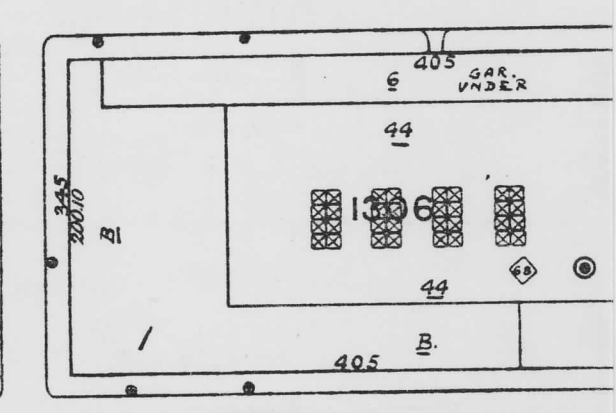
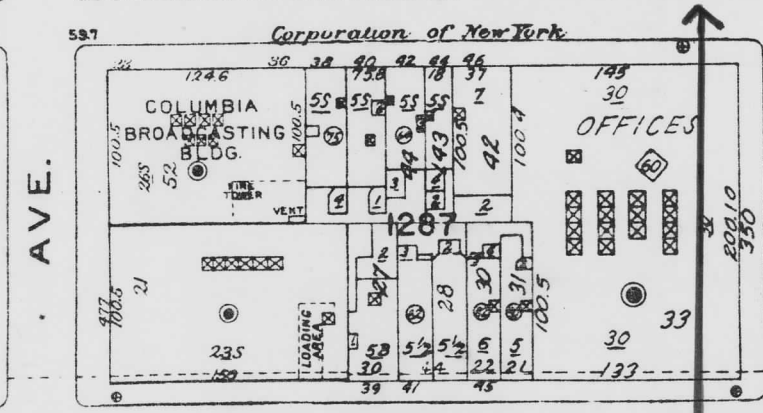
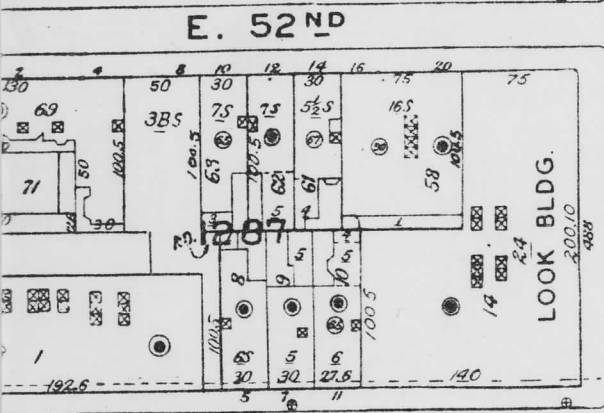
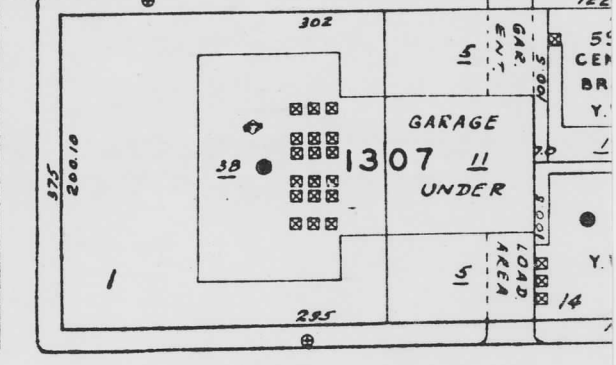
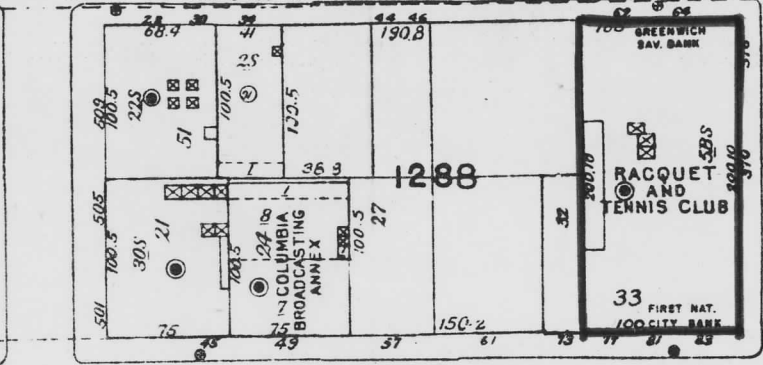
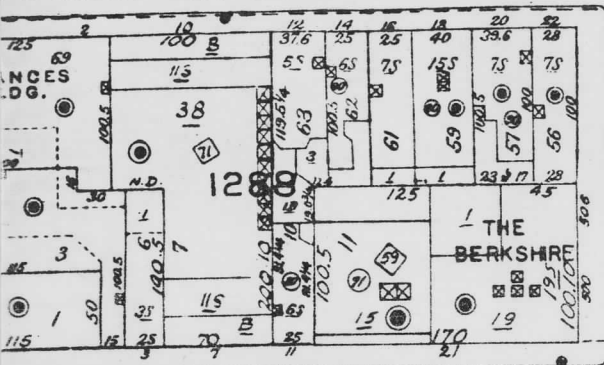


Continuation sheet Racquet and Tennis Club Item number 11 Page 2
Building
New York County, NY

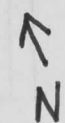
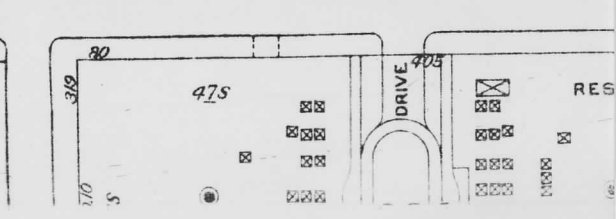
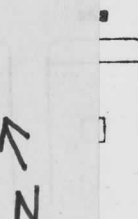
Form Prepared By:

Marjorie Pearson, Director of Research
Landmarks Preservation Commission
20 Vesey Street
New York, NY 10007
212-566-7577

WAY E. 53RD STATION Charles McEvers Lib. 80 P. 355 140 405 Corporat



Racquet and Tennis Club Building
New York County, New York
370 Park Avenue
Manhattan Land Book of the City of
New York
Sanborn Publishing Co., 1978-79.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Substantive Review

Racquet and Tennis Club Building
New York County
NEW YORK

Working No. 5/31/83
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84
Date Due: 6/30/83 - 7/15/83
Action: ACCEPT 7/13/83
 RETURN
 REJECT

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Federal Agency: _____

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Note: owner notified by did not object upon notification

*Beaux-Arts Renaissance Revival Club
by McKim, Mead, &
White. Good repres.
example of their
work*

Recom./Criteria Accepted
Reviewer L. McClanahan
Discipline A. Hist.
Date 7/13/83
 see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category Ownership Status Present Use
Public Acquisition Accessible

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition: excellent deteriorated good fair
Check one: unaltered altered
Check one: original site moved data

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UMIT References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Title _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



1. Racquet and Tennis Club Building

370 Park Avenue

New York, N. Y. Co.

Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1980.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission.

View of Main Facade from across
Park Avenue.



2. Racquet and Tennis Club Building

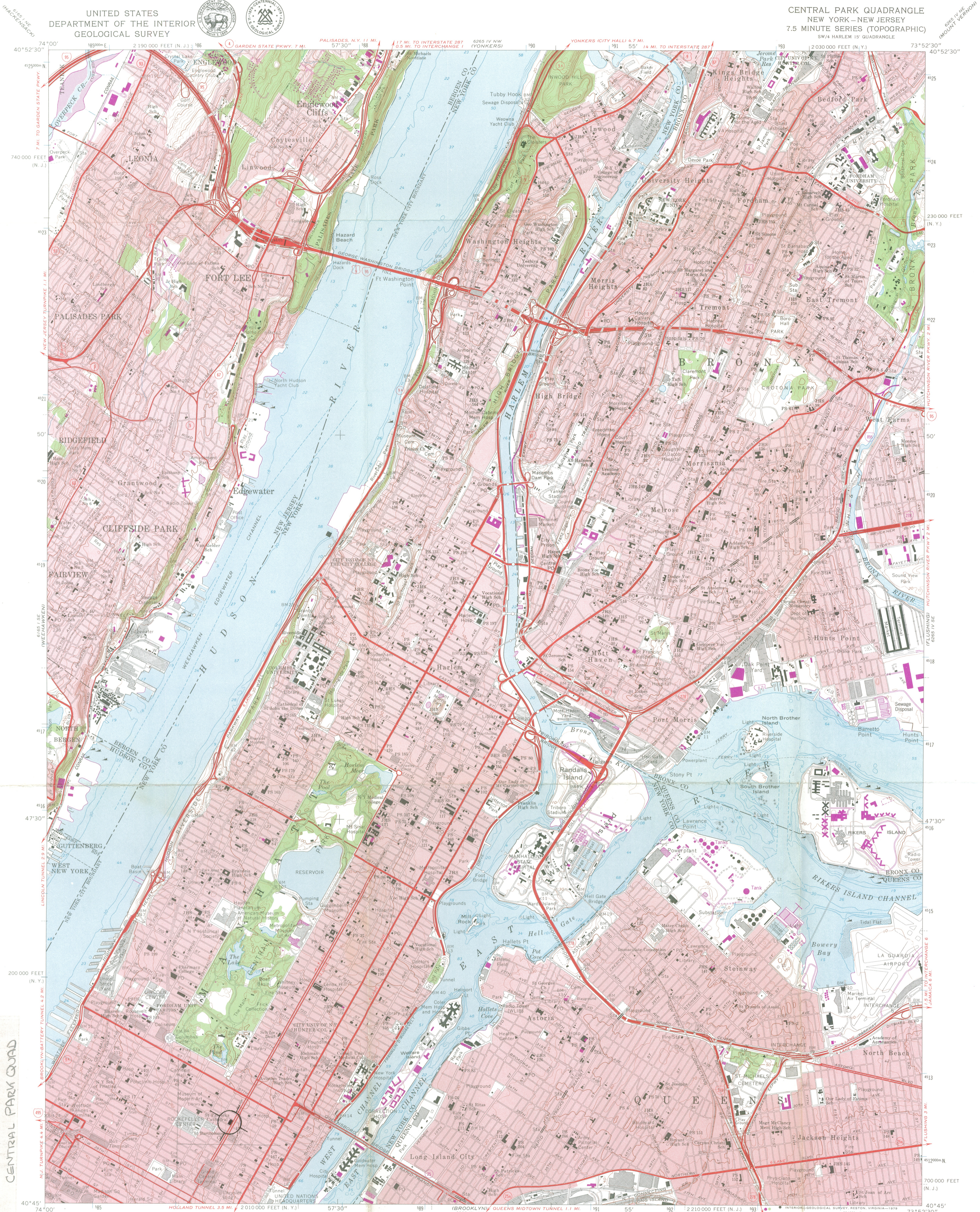
370 Park Avenue

New York, N. Y. Co.

Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1980.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission.

East West and South Facades.



Racquet and Tennis Club
370 Park Avenue
New York, NY
UTM Reference: 18/ 586640/ 4512360

CENTRAL PARK QUAD

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York
Department of Transportation
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and New Jersey Geodetic Survey
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and from USC&GS Charts T-4567,
T-5089, T-5264, T-5278, T-5448, T-5449, T-5451, T-5452, T-5453, T-5458,
and T-5773. Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1954 and planimetric surveys 1956.
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1966
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 226, 274, 745,
746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
100-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone,
and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

SCALE 1:24 000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE AVERAGE RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2 FEET
4 FEET IN THE HUDSON RIVER AND 5.7 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— U.S. Route ——— State Route ———
CENTRAL PARK, N.Y.—N.J.
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE
N4045—W7352.5/7.5
1966
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6265 IV SW—SERIES V821
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1977 and other source data. This information
not field checked. Map edited 1979
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map

BENJAMIN M. ROBINSON
MATTHEW SILVERMAN
SAUL PEARCE
ALAN J. B. ARONSOHN, P.C.
STANLEY BERMAN
LAURENCE A. SPELMAN
EDWARD B. SCHOEN
JAMES F. GILL
MICHAEL N. ROSEN
CHARLES M. KOTICK
ALAN S. PEARCE
EDWARD S. COWEN
GEORGE B. YANKWITT
MICHAEL B. LEVY
BARTLEY F. FISHER
STEVEN D. BLOOM
EDWARD LOWENTHAL

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ALLAN S. HECHT
JERRY W. BAIRD
BARRY CARL ROSS
STEPHEN M. CHARME
MYRA E. KARBAN
ALAN S. KLEIMAN
WALTER H. CURCHACK
ANDREW IRVING
DENNIS I. HELLMAN
BRIAN B. SMITH
KES NARBUTAS
JOHN D. HIRSCHFELD
MARK JON SUGARMAN

ROBINSON, SILVERMAN, PEARCE, ARONSOHN & BERMAN

230 PARK AVENUE · NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

(212) 687-0400 · CABLE: "ROSILPE"



June 3, 1980

F.S.
Spokez Mr. Aronsohn on 6/12/80

Ms. Ann Webster Smith
Deputy Commissioner for
Historic Preservation
New York State Parks & Recreation
Agency Building
1 Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

REGISTRATION
JUN - 6 1980
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Dear Ms. Smith:

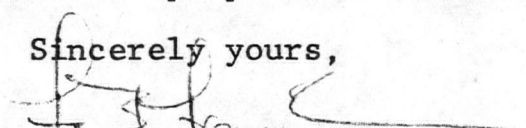
We are the attorneys for Racquet and Tennis Club, 370 Park Avenue, Manhattan, New York County. In your letter to Mr. John D. Soutter, President of Racquet and Tennis Club dated May 9, 1980, you stated that the Club's building at 370 Park Avenue will be considered by the Committee on Registers of the New York State Board for Historic Preservation for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Your letter indicated that a draft copy of the proposed nomination was on file in your office and would be made available upon request.

Pursuant to the instructions set forth in your letter, our office telephoned the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau and requested a draft copy of the proposed nomination. We were told that one would be mailed to us.

We have not to date received a draft copy of the proposed nomination.

Since we may wish to comment as to whether the property should be nominated to the National Register and since your letter indicated that comments must be received by June 11, 1980 in order to be considered at the Committee's next meeting, we respectfully request that the Committee postpone consideration of the nomination of the Racquet and Tennis Club building until we have had an opportunity to examine the proposed nomination and comment thereon.

Sincerely yours,


Alan J. B. Aronsohn

cc - Commissioner Orin Lehman
Mr. John D. Soutter

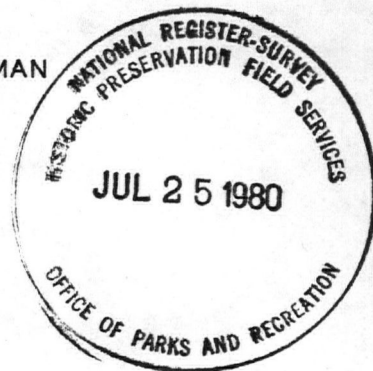
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ROBINSON, SILVERMAN, PEARCE, ARONSOHN & BERMAN

230 PARK AVENUE · NEW YORK, N. Y. 10169

(212) 687-0400 · CABLE: "ROSILPE"



July 21, 1980

New York State Parks & Recreation
Department
Division for Historic Preservation
Agency Building 1
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12230

Attention: Ms. Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph

Re: Racquet and Tennis Club Building
New York, New York

Dear Ms. Spencer-Ralph:

We are writing this letter, as attorneys for the Racquet and Tennis Club, to oppose the proposed nomination of the club's building in New York City to the National Register of Historic Places. In our judgement, the purported architectural and social significance of the building are insufficient to merit the inclusion of the building in the National Register.

Despite its designation as a landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1979, the building's architectural significance remains highly questionable. It is generally recognized that the Racquet Club is one of the less noteworthy buildings designed by McKim, Mead and White. At least seventeen other structures designed at least in part by that firm (including the University and Harvard Clubs) were designated as landmarks prior to the designation of the Racquet Club. In designing the Racquet Club, the firm essentially followed, without improving, the Renaissance style of at least eleven of its more famous works. A recent book by the architecture critic of the New York Times emphasizes the lack of creativity in the design: "Very mediocre McKim, Mead and White - this time the Italian palazzo has come out looking rather like a warehouse, and one yearns for the delicate touch of Stanford White, whose death twelve years before this commission put an end to what sprightliness this great firm's work may have had." The City Observed: A Guide to the Architecture of Manhattan by Paul Goldberger, page 182 (1979). Another current publication, The Essential New York by John Tauranac (1979) simply omits the club altogether from the notable buildings described in the book. Many older guidebooks to New York City's architecture

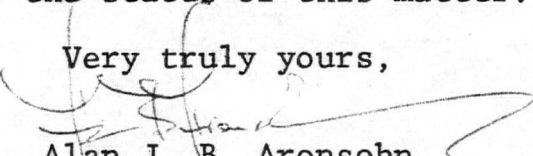
either completely omit any reference to the Racquet Club or mention it only in passing. See, for example, The Historic American Buildings Survey by the Department of the Interior (1938), The Romance of Park Avenue by F.A. Collins (1930); The New York City Guide and Almanac, published by New York University Press (1958) and New York Proclaimed by V.S. Pritchett (1964).

The nomination form does not include any basis for the claimed social significance of the building. Surely the fact that the members of the club (like the members of many other clubs) have played tennis and squash and participated in other activities is a grossly inadequate basis for establishing that the building has sufficient social significance to merit inclusion in the National Register.

Aside from the alleged architectural and social significance of the building, the nomination form does not set forth which of the other specified criteria for evaluation of potential entries for the National Register the nomination is predicated upon. Choices A (association with events contributing to a broad pattern of American history), B (association with significant American leaders) and D (likely to yield important historical information) are clearly inapposite. Thus, the only possible basis is item C. As shown above, the building is an inferior product of a famous firm. We submit that a register of historic structures throughout the country should only contain the most outstanding work of any particular architectural firm.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please call me if you require any further information and kindly keep me advised of the status of this matter.

Very truly yours,


Alan J. B. Aronsohn

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

TELEPHONE REPORT

DATE

6/22/83

TIME OF CALL

2:35

AM
PM

1. CALL TO: FROM (Name)

2. ADDRESS (Tel. No. if needed)

Kathleen LaFrank

SHPS Office
NY

3. SUBJECT, PROJECT NO., ETC.

Laquet & Tennis Club Bldg.
NY Co., NY

4. DETAILS OF DISCUSSION

Called her regarding copies of old correspondence from owner regarding opposition to listing. She said that they have not received any correspondence from recent notice sent and is asking for approval for listing.

(Bruce - she said you can call her if you have any problems)

NAME OF PERSON PLACING/RECEIVING CALL

TITLE

OFFICE

M. Byers

NR