

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Merion Cricket Club

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number Montgomery Avenue and Grays Lane not for publication

city, town Haverford vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code county Montgomery code

**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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: recreation

**4. Owner of Property**

name Merion Cricket Club (c/o Mr. Earl Vollmer, Manager)

street & number Montgomery Avenue & Grays Lane

city, town Haverford vicinity of state Pennsylvania 19083

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number Swede and Airy Streets

city, town Norristown state Pennsylvania 19401

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### Summary

The Merion Cricket Club occupies a 20-acre rectangular plot just off Montgomery Avenue. Its clubhouse, the main section of which was designed by Frank Furness in 1896, is on the portion of the plot nearest Grays Lane and is aligned to a northeast-southwest axis that conforms roughly to the shape and orientation of the land.

### Merion Cricket Club Grounds

The Clubhouse faces Merion's majestic front lawn, which can be set up into courts for lawn tennis. This great lawn was the setting for the Davis Cup competition in 1939.

Since moving to Haverford in 1892, the club has acquired no new land at this site, except for 3 acres adjoining the northeast side of the original grounds, which were purchased in 1920. This land included an existing residence, soon dubbed the "Lodge," that provided living space for members residing at the club until it was torn down in 1969.<sup>1</sup>

### Main Building

Furness designed a great Victorian cut stone pile, 3 stories in height over a raised basement. The front facade is highly symmetrical, almost mirror-image in appearance.

The central portion of the facade is 16 bays on the second level, the central 8 of which project slightly forward, supported at the projected corners and in the center by great stone and brick piers that join single arches, each supporting 4 bays. On the first floor, a massive veranda runs the full width of the central portion; the second-floor rooms over it are supported in the recessed section by narrower arches and smaller stone piers.

Each keystone, including those over the basement half-windows, is ornamented with a fleur-de-lis. Under each window on the second level is a recessed and highly decorated panel bearing the club's name. Single openings in the third-floor gables of the central bays are centered over the keystones of the two large arches on the first level.

Beyond the 16-bay central section, the veranda continues in wood to both left and right. Its roof, which sports open porches on both sides on the second level, is supported by three sets of paired wood columns along the front. Both levels are balustraded.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1896-97      **Builder Architect** Frank Furness

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Summary

The Merion Cricket Club is significant in the history of cricket, tennis, squash, and golf in the United States. Also, its clubhouse, which has survived generally intact, is of considerable architectural interest as one of the few surviving works of Philadelphia's premier Victorian-era architect, Frank Furness.

The Merion Cricket Club is one of the handful of surviving properties that illustrate and continue the history of the traditionally English sport of cricket in America. Although cricket today is confined regionally and tends to be regarded as the preoccupation of a social elite, it was a major sport in the United States in the 19th century that valiantly, though vainly, contended with baseball for supremacy among "ball" games. Philadelphia was the most important center for its play, and it was particularly popular among immigrant English factory workers, as well as the well-to-do.<sup>1</sup>

Cricket in the United States declined precipitously after 1900. Merion's members, however, had by then already assumed a vigorous role in the new sport of lawn tennis, in which they were to win major distinction. They also took a leading role in golf, building a celebrated course near their clubhouse, and have excelled in squash racquets. The club today provides a rich variety of recreational activities for its members.<sup>2</sup>

#### Cricket at Merion

In 1865, some 15 young men from Merion and nearby Radnor, aged 14 to 22, banded together as the Merion Cricket Club, pledging to meet to play cricket at least once a week. The club soon began accepting challenge matches. Enthusiasm grew and the club's membership increased rapidly along with it.

The club at first played on the estate of the father of one of its members. In 1873, it moved to land in Ardmore, Pa., that was owned by two of the members; a clubhouse and grounds were soon prepared. By 1888, when the club first won the Halifax Cup (since 1874 the leading trophy in North American cricket), the club was well established, and was outgrowing the Ardmore site.

Thus, in 1892, the Club moved to its present site in Haverford. A clubhouse was completed the same year. In 1896, however, fire destroyed the clubhouse and it was decided to retain Frank Furness to design the replacement. In the new location, cricket continued to be a focus of the members' interest, although other sports, notably tennis, were eventually to displace it: indoor bowling was introduced in 1895, and the club's first golf course was laid out the following year.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 20

Quadrangle name Norristown

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>474620</u>	<u>4429500</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>18</u>	<u>474510</u>	<u>4429160</u>
E	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
G	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>

B	<u>18</u>	<u>474810</u>	<u>4429340</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	<u>18</u>	<u>474340</u>	<u>4429300</u>
F	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
H	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The tract of land bounded by Montgomery Avenue to the southwest, Grays Lane to the northwest, an unnamed lane on the northeast, and Cheswood Street on the southeast, being the tract occupied by the Merion Cricket Club since 1920.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date May 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

# 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

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

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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The northeastern section of the structure, which is set back from the main mass, is asymmetrical, but continues the same principal motifs and materials. The ends and rear of the structure are simpler versions of the front facade. The most important feature of the rear elevation is a large porte-cochere in a wing at a right angle to the main mass; the single arch in the porte-cochere is executed in much the same manner and size as the large arches on the front facade. A large Palladian window is positioned above the porte-cochere in the wing.

Merion's main clubhouse has been extended to the northeast and is much modified on the interior. Notably, in 1928, the club conducted a major remodeling of the main building. The main dining room and kitchen were moved from the second floor to the first and three private dining rooms were added. A low-slung locker building was also constructed, to the north; it included three squash rackets singles courts and a doubles court. Eight years later, further alterations were made to the ballroom and second floor of the main clubhouse; a new Sun Lounge was placed in the southern half of the former dining room on that level.

Other Changes

Exclusive of the interior changes and northeast additions to the historic core of the main clubhouse, which have affected its exterior appearance little, changes and additions elsewhere in the complex have occurred over the years, reflecting accommodations to the members' needs and the introduction of new sports favored by them.

In 1900, three squash racquets singles courts were constructed adjoining the main clubhouse. A doubles court was erected next to them in 1923 and reconstructed by 1950. In 1965 two new singles squash racquets courts and one new doubles court replaced badminton courts that had been built in 1937 in part of a 1923 garage on the earlier stables site.

Merion's tennis courts have also been revamped over the years. Eight dirt courts were laid out in 1920. Four Teniko courts were installed in 1945 and two more in 1947-48; four more Teniko courts (three on the site of the "Lodge" in 1971-72) and three all-weather have subsequently been added, bringing the total to 13 hard-surface courts. Two platform (paddle) tennis courts were added in 1961; they were redecked with aluminum in 1974 and an additional court was constructed.

The largest facility added is the indoor tennis building, which was completed in 1974; it is near the northeast end of the complex. The new ladies locker room in this structure replaced one in the "Cottage" behind the porte-cochere.

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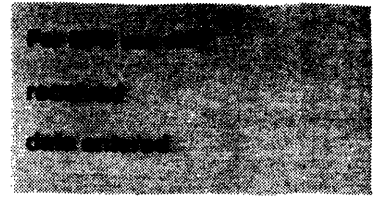
3

Footnote

<sup>1</sup>Data in this description that are not derived from onsite inspection are taken from the history of the club that appears in Merion Cricket Club, The Merion Cricket Club Members Guide (Haverford, Pa.: [1985]), pp. 9-16, and Paul A. Casey et al., The Merion Cricket Club, 1865-1965 (Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1965), unpaginated.

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The grounds formally opened with a Halifax Cup Match on May 13, 1893. In other international cricket matches on the Haverford field, Merion faced teams from Cambridge University and Marylebone in Great Britain, Australia, and India. Cricket continued to be important at the club through the first decade of the new century. The 1924 visit of the Incogniti, a foreign cricket team, however, was the last such event.

The club has intermittently revived its ancestral sport, generally for local play. In the late 1970s, however, the sport enjoyed a modest revival that has continued to the present.

Tennis at Merion

Lawn tennis was first played by Merion's members at the club's earlier site in 1879, just 5 years after it was introduced into the United States at Staten Island, N.Y. It gained rapidly in popularity, and the club's members achieved prominence in the sport. The club grounds also became the site of notable tournaments, including the National Intercollegiate Tournaments (1900-34, 1937, except in 1917-18) and the Pennsylvania State Tournaments (from inception in 1894 to the present, except in 1932-36 and 1942-45).

Mens' national singles champions from Merion include William J. Clothier (1906), R. Norris Williams, Jr. (1914, 1916), and E. Victor Seixas (1954); Seixas also won at Wimbledon the previous year.

One of the great highlights of tennis at Merion was the Davis Cup Challenge Round in September 1939, in which Australia's John Bromwich and Adrian Quist captured the Cup 3-2 over Robert Riggs and Frank Parker of the United States.<sup>3</sup> On that occasion, stands holding 8,000 people were erected on Merion's front lawn.

Squash

Merion has produced a phenomenal number of national champions in both singles and doubles competition in this sport; some of the competitions have been held on the club's courts: in men's singles (Donald Strachan, 1939; A. Willing Patterson, 1940; Charles M.P. Brinton, 1941, 1942, 1946, 1947 [with no tournaments held in 1943-45, inclusive]; Hunter Lott, 1949; G. Diehl Mateer, Jr., 1952-54, 1961; Samuel P. Howe, III, 1962; Benjamin Heckscher, 1963; and Ralph Howe, 1964); and in mens' doubles (Hunter Lott, 1938-42 inclusive; Charles M.P. Brinton and Donald Strachan, 1946; David McMullin, 1947; Charles Brinton, 1948; Hunter Lott and G. Diehl Mateer, Jr., 1949, 1950, 1953; G. Diehl Mateer, Jr., 1951; and John F. Hentz and G. Diehl Mateer, Jr., 1961). [In 1961, the club swept all five major mens' championships.]





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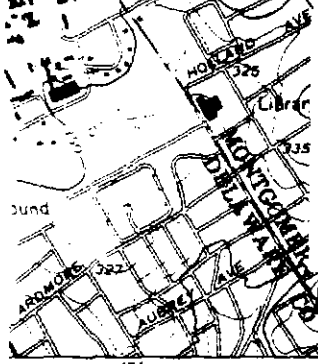
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Philadelphia Real Estate Reporter and Builders' Guide, XI, 3 (January 15, 1896); XI, 40 (September 30, 1896); XXI, 20 (May 16, 1905).



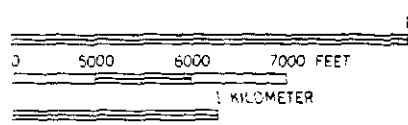
Merion Cricket Club, Haverford, Pennsylvania  
 Norristown Quadrangle

- UTM References:
- A 18/474 620/4429 500
  - B 18/474 810/4429 340
  - C 18/474 510/4429 160
  - D 18/474 340/4429 300



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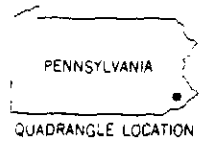
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F E E T  
 I M OF 1929

**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

Heavy-duty		Light-duty	
Medium-duty		Unimproved dirt	
	Interstate Route		U. S. Route
	State Route		



**NORRISTOWN, PA.**

ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 ESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 SOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial photographs taken 1981 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1983

40075-A3-TF-024  
 1966  
 PHOTOREVISED 1983  
 DMA 5984 III SE-SERIES V831