NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior 309 National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

| 1. Name of Property | |
|---|---|
| historic name: <u>New Haven Lawn Club</u> other names/site number: N/A | |
| | |
| street & number: <u>193 Whitney Avenue</u> city or town: <u>New Haven</u> state <u>Connecticut</u> code <u>CT</u> county <u>New Haven</u> | not for publication: N/A vicinity: N/A code 009 zip code 06511 |
| 3. State/Federal Agency Certification | |
| 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X determination of eligibility meets the documentatic properties in the National Register of Historic Pla and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR F property X meets does not meet the National recommend that this property be considered signific statewide _X locally. (See continuation sheet | on standards for registering aces and meets the procedural Part 60. In my opinion, the Register Criteria. I cant nationally for additional comments.) 3/13/03 |
| Signature of certifying official I | Date |
| <u>Director, Connecticut Historical Commission</u> State or Federal agency and bureau | |
| In my opinion, the property meets does no criteria. (See continuation sheet for additiona | ot meet the National Register 1 comments.) |
| Signature of certifying official I | Date |

State or Federal agency and bureau

| 4. National Park Service Certification | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------|
| <pre>I, hereby certify that this property is entered in the National Register See continuation sheet determined eligible for the See continuation sheet See continuation sheet determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register other (explain):</pre> | : Jahr Sage | 511/03 |
| 5. Classification | Signature of Keeper | Date of Action |
| Ownership of Property (Check as many box <u>X</u> private public-local public- Category of Property (Check only one box <u>X</u> building(s) district site structure object Number of Resources within Property: Contributing Noncontributing | State public-Federal | |
| 11buildings13sites13structures24TotalNumber of contributing resources previou | sly listed in the National | |

Register: ____

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

New Haven Lawn Club, New Haven New Haven County, Connecticut

| ===== 6. Fi | nction o | r Use | | | | من کور چار میں کو میں میں کی میں میں میں میں اور | |
|----------------|---|---|---|------|---|--|--|
| Histo | oric Func | tions (Enter ca | ategories from | ins | tructions) | | |
| Cat: | SOCIAL RECREAT | ION | S | ub: | clubhouse sports facility | | |
| Curre | ent Funct | ions (Enter cat | cegories from | inst | ructions) | | |
| Cat: | At: SOCIAL Sub: clubhouse sports facility | | | | | | |
| ===== 7. De | escriptio | n | | | ======================================= | | |
| Colo Art | itectural onial Rev Moderne cials: | Classification rival foundation roof walls other | concrete slate brick wood limestone | | | | |

Narrative Description

| Describe | present | and | historic | physical | appearance. | X | See | continuation |
|----------|---------|-----|----------|----------|-------------|---|-----|--------------|
| sheet. | | | | | | | | |

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| Description | New Haven Lawn Club, New Haven | 7-1 |
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Narrative Description

The New Haven Lawn Club is located slightly north of downtown New Haven, on a 6.38-acre interior lot with driveways providing access to Whitney Avenue to the northwest and Humphrey Street to the northeast (Figure 1). The clubhouse sits approximately in the center of the lot, its main entrance facing northwest. The principal rooms face the tennis courts in the southern portion of the property. The land slopes gently, exposing the basement on the south and southeast sides.

The clubhouse, completed in 1931, is constructed of brick and hollow tile, with roofs covered with Vermont slate. Trim is of wood, painted white, and limestone. The building's plan is an irregular W (Figure 2). The central block is two stories high, with an exposed basement on the southern side, facing the tennis courts. It is flanked by two smaller wings containing the ballroom and the members' lounge, also two stories high and connected to the main block by one-story hyphens. A one-story section containing the kitchen is located along the north side of the central block.

The main entrance faces northwest, toward Whitney Avenue (**Photograph** 1). One end of the central block is visible, flanked by two arms that reach out toward the parking lot, forming a forecourt surrounded on three sides by arcaded walkways. At the end of each arm is an open pavilion that serves as a porte cochère. The central block's façade bears four pilasters with stone capitals incised with a Greek key motif (**Photograph 2**). Wooden urns sit atop the two inner pilasters. Entry is through a tall brick arch with a stone keystone. Located behind the arch, the double door has a leaded-glass transom and, above that, an arched wooden panel incised with a Greek key, vertical flutes, and stars. Above the brick archway is an octagonal window, then a stone panel carved with a Greek key design, and, between the urns, a wooden tablet with low-relief carvings. Two shorter arches flank the tall entry arch; like it they open onto the arcade. Above the side arches are rectangular windows with 6/6 glazing. Tall, narrow chimneys rise from either side of the central block.

From the tennis courts, the central block, side blocks, and one-story connectors appear most clearly (**Photograph 3**). On this side the central block is three stories high. The basement has a series of seven arched openings, originally an open loggia but now filled with modern glazed doors and semicircular transoms. The end bays on this level have circular windows. The middle level is marked by a row of seven very tall windows

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with 20-over-20 glazing, wooden hoods, and iron railings. The end bays have blind arches. The upper floor has a row of shorter rectangular windows with six-over-six glazing. A limestone belt course runs at the floor level of the middle level, and pilasters flank the end bays on the middle and upper levels. Old photographs show a Chinese fretwork railing along the ridge of the roof; it has been removed.

The ballroom and lounge wings are similar to each other, but slightly different in width and pattern of openings. The lounge wing is the narrower. Facing the tennis courts, it has a bay window of wood, flanked by single pilasters topped with urns. A small window with a grille sits atop the bay window's roof. Another bay fills the front of the hyphen. The ballroom wing is wider; it too has a bay window facing the courts, but with four pilasters. The upper two levels of the wings sit back from the basement level, creating terraces overlooking the tennis courts. The terraces continue along the southwest side of the lounge and the southeast side of the ballroom. At the south corner of the ballroom terrace, brick stairs provide access to the ground level.

The southwest side of the lounge wing has two more bay windows of the type described above, plus pilasters, and urns. The southeast side of the ballroom wing has a row of double-height windows with segmental-arched tops and stone keystones. A later iron stair runs down along the side of the building from the northeast end of the terrace on this side, partly obscuring an open arcade on the lower level.

A separate entry for the ballroom faces northeast along the axis of the Humphrey Street drive (Photograph 4). This is the opposite end of the central block from the main entrance. At ground level is the entry: double doors with glazing and a leaded-glass transom (Photograph 5). The entry is sheltered by a semi-octagonal porch of iron filigree with slender finials at the angles, a concave roof of copper, and an anthemion-like finial at the peak of the roof. Rectangular lanterns flank the porch; each has a white glass shade and a metal overlay in the form of an anthemion. A Diocletian window appears high in the wall above the entry. Paired pilasters outline the block. The outer ones are rusticated, the inner ones plain and capped with urns. A wooden tablet similar to the one at the main entry lines the roof between the urns.

To the left (east) of the ballroom entry is the northwest side of the ballroom wing. It resembles the southeast side, except that there is no

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terrace. The tall windows have stone balconies with iron railings and on the lower level are three blind arches, one containing a door.

On the north side of the clubhouse is a one-story kitchen with a flat roof (**Photograph 6**). Above this is seen a row of rectangular windows lighting the second floor of the central block. Brick walls form a triangular service court for the kitchen.

Entering the clubhouse by the main entry, one first encounters a small vestibule with plastered walls and ceiling and a star-shaped ceiling light said to be of Lalique glass. A non-original window provides access to a receptionist's office.

The lobby is an unequal octagon, a shape repeated several times through the building (**Photograph 9**). A continuous molding runs around the room at the tops of the doorways; above it, moldings divide the wall into panels and there are circular plaster medallions. The angled walls are shorter; one bears a fireplace with a brick surround and bolection molding. The longer walls bear wide openings to various rooms and passageways. The floor is of terrazzo in a starburst pattern of red, black and off-white.

To the northeast of the lobby is the private dining room (**Photograph** 10). It features a coved ceiling with a Greek key motif running along the bottom of the cove. A fireplace at the southwest end has a black marble surround and a simple mantel shelf. To one side of the fireplace is a built-in china cupboard. There is a chair-rail and a plaster wainscot below it. The floor is oak. The light fixtures are original; each has four coneshaped lights with clear glass globes, mounted on a circular frame.

To the southwest of the lobby is a passageway leading toward the members' lounge. The right (northwest) side is lined with openings leading to stairs and the card room; the left (southeast) side has a bay window opening to the terrace. The floor is terrazzo in a checkerboard pattern.

The card room has a window looking out onto the arcade and three double doors opening to the passageway. A dentilled cornice lines the ceiling, and a chair-rail and paneled wainscoting run along the lower part of the walls. A fireplace on the southwest wall has a surround that incorporates a cupboard.

The members' lounge is a large rectangular room paneled in knotty pine with fluted pilasters and a stenciled frieze in which blue, black, and green predominate (**Photograph 11**). The fireplace, flanked by pilasters, has a brick surround and a simple bolection molding (**Photograph 12**). A painting

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of flowers fills a crossetted overmantel panel. The room has four bay windows, one on each of the short sides and two on the long side. Sheet metal wall sconces hang on the walls.

From the southeast side of the entrance lobby a short, curved passage leads to a long corridor overlooking the tennis courts. The original plans call this the Porch (**Photograph 13**). The ceiling is covered with acoustical tiles and light is provided by a series of flush light fixtures with strings of crystals. The original light fixtures, shown in old photographs, had shallow bowls of opaque glass on a simple framework of slender pipes. One side of the Porch is lined with tall windows overlooking the tennis courts, the other is screened from the main dining room by a line of piers. The piers are fluted on the sides facing the Porch and the dining room, while the other two sides are flat. Every other opening is filled with a small built-in bench with a Chinese fret back. The walls have a chair rail, a picture rail, and a cornice. Boxed-in radiators are located between the windows. The floor is of terrazzo in a checkerboard pattern. The western end of the Porch has been walled off to create a coat room.

The main dining room, located behind the Porch, is a long rectangular room with slightly beveled ends (Photograph 14). Acoustical tile has been added to the ceiling. Three crystal chandeliers provide lighting. Old photographs show four-armed Moderne fixtures with a rectangular lantern at the end of each arm; each lantern had a metal overlay in an anthemion pattern similar to those on the lanterns flanking the ballroom entry. The walls display a chair rail with plaster wainscot, a picture rail, and a cornice. On the long wall opposite the porch are five shallow, arched recesses; the outer two contain doors to the kitchen while the center three are lined with mirrors above the chair rail. In old photographs they are lined with patterned wallpaper. At each end is a fireplace with a facing of Siena marble and a surround featuring fat pilasters with fluted capitals, each flanked by two half-pilasters with stylized Corinthian capitals (Photograph 15). Above each fireplace is a mirror framed and divided into sections by narrow fluted moldings. There is a keystone at the top center of the mirror. Architectural Forum describes the room as having "a color scheme of warm gray and gold ... the mirror frame is gold ... [and] The wood

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floor is stained black. The effect is one of quiet richness."¹ The slightly angled walls flanking each fireplace each have an arched niche. The floor is now carpeted.

The ballroom wing has a separate entry on the lower level, though it can also be reached via the Porch. The lower entry leads to a lobby, a rectangular room with a stair leading up to the ballroom on the right, and the corners opposite it cut off with two short diagonal walls. Doors on this side lead to rest rooms and the squash courts. The ceiling is low, so the light fixtures hug it tightly. They are starbursts with three exposed light bulbs each. A dentilled cornice lines the ceiling and the floor is checkerboard terrazzo. Several benches originally from the Ballroom stand against the walls.

The stair rises to the ballroom in three flights with a curved rear wall. The treads are travertine and the railing wrought iron. A chair rail and a paneled wainscot line the wall. At the top is a square lobby with openings leading to the Porch and to the ballroom foyer. The lobby ceiling has a cornice, and the chair rail and paneled wainscot continue. Between the cornice and chair rail, narrow strips of fluted molding divide the wall into panels. A segmental arch leads to an intermediate vestibule with a door to the terrace and a stair leading up to the ballroom balcony. Another segmental arch leads to the foyer. In vestibule and foyer, dentilled cornices line the ceiling, and the wainscot and chair rail continue. From the foyer, a bay window overlooks the terrace and tennis courts, and fluted pilasters with five-pointed stars in their capitals frame two entrances to the ballroom.

The ballroom is the most elaborate room in the Lawn Club (**Photograph** 16). A large, rectangular space, it is entered from one narrow end. The ceiling is a segmental barrel vault, a stage is at the northeast end, and both sides are lined with tall windows. Circular ventilation grilles pierce the ceiling; from four of them hang large crystal chandeliers in the form of potted palms (**Photograph 17**). A cornice runs along the top of the wall; in its frieze low-relief cast-plaster stars and shooting stars alternate. These were originally silver. More stars appear in the tympana at each end

¹ "New Haven Lawn Club, New Haven, Connecticut," The Architectural Forum 57/2 (August 1932): 128.

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of the room; at the entry end are also rectangular openings for a projection booth. At the bottom of the wall is a chair rail and a paneled wainscot. The windows have reeded surrounds and segmental-arch tops. Between them are sconces in the form of a crown with an arrow sticking up through the center and four strings of crystals. The stage has a reeded proscenium and a raised floor; its walls are covered with raised panels. On the southwest wall are two openings to the vestibule; these have reeded surrounds that continue up to two small balconies. The balconies' fronts are covered in mirrors, but the openings themselves have been blocked up for air-conditioning vents. Between the openings is a fireplace (**Photograph 18**). Its wooden mantel is supported by two fluted consoles; the frieze between them is incised with a floral pattern. A tall mirror above the mantel is made up of small rectangular panes held in place by rosettes at the corners. The frame is of wood, originally silver, in the form of clustered plant stalks and drapery. The Ballroom floor is of maple.

A stair leads from next to the Card Room to the lower level, where it ends in an octagonal lobby with plaster walls and a tile floor. The lobby provides access to the locker rooms, the Grill Room, and a loggia. Plaques listing Club champions hang in the small passage leading to the loggia (Photograph 20).

The locker rooms retain their original configuration, but have been redecorated with new lockers, carpeting, and plumbing fixtures. The Grill Room also has been redecorated and reconfigured several times. It currently has a ceiling of stained wood boards, plaster walls, and a wainscot of narrow wood strips, also stained (**Photograph 19**). The fireplace has a wooden mantel, stained to match the other woodwork. Beyond the Grill Room, a serving pantry and the original Squash Lounge have been combined into a bar with wainscot and woodwork to match the Grill Room's (the building, constructed during Prohibition, originally had no bar). An original fireplace remains on one wall. Both the Grill Room and the bar open onto the Loggia, which has been enclosed to serve as a dining area. The loggia has modern glazed doors in the original arches and a wooden ceiling matching that of the Grill Room.

Also on the lower level are a boiler room, storage and service spaces. A workroom under the ballroom vestibule has been converted to a pro shop. It opens onto the lower terrace. Under the ballroom are four squash courts, reconfigured from the original five.

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The upper level of the central block contains a series of small rooms off a central corridor. Two, identified as card rooms on the original plans, are now used as offices, as are some of the guest rooms. Another guest room is now used as a board room. All the rooms have plaster ceilings and walls and carpeted floors.

The principal elements of the grounds are the parking lot and eight tennis courts, plus one half-court. The courts have been resurfaced with an artificial material that imitates the properties of clay courts and have new fencing, but their configuration matches the original site plan (**Photograph 7**). Because they retain the historic layout, the tennis courts are considered a contributing structure. Of more recent date are two paddle tennis courts, considered a noncontributing structure.

A swimming pool was added to the east of the ballroom and the north of the tennis courts in the 1950s; it was rebuilt in 1989, and a new, L-shaped bath house was added at the same time (**Photograph 8**). The pool and bath house are both considered noncontributing. A concrete-block shed, located beyond the pool, is also considered noncontributing.

Plantings have always been simple; a plan in the Orr papers shows barberry hedges at the two forecourts, a few shade trees, and a mix of evergreen shrubs and flowering plants such as lilacs, azaleas, wisteria, and cherry trees. Most of the property not given over to other uses simply had grass. Although little if any original plant material survives, the current landscape continues to reflect this simplicity.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

 $\underline{\mathbf{X}}$ A . Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

 $\underline{\mathbf{X}}$ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

 $\rm G$ less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance:

Architecture

Social History

| Period of Significance: | 1891 - 1952 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Significant Dates: | 1931 |
| | |
| | |
| Significant Person(s): | N/A |
| Cultural Affiliation: | N/A |
| Architect/Builder: | Douglas W. Orr |
| | William Douglas |

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) X See continuation sheet.

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Summary

The New Haven Lawn Club has played an important role in the social life of upper-class New Haven for nearly 120 years. The founding and development of the club represents late nineteenth century enthusiasm for clubs for athletic and social activities, and it has continued to provide a setting for sports as well as for social activities.

The Lawn Club's clubhouse is a significant work of architecture that exhibits an innovative approach to tradition, combining elements of the Colonial Revival and Art Moderne styles to create a stylish setting for social events. The designer of the clubhouse was Douglas W. Orr (1892-1966), a prolific and prominent architect whose firm played a leading role on the New Haven architectural scene from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Historical Background

Tennis originated as a sport played by medieval aristocrats that involved hitting a ball over a net inside an enclosed courtyard. The game (now known as 'court tennis' to distinguish it from modern 'lawn tennis,' which has come simply to be called 'tennis') died out with the *ancien régime*, but in 1874 an Englishman, Major Walter Clopton Wingfield (1833-1912), introduced a variant that he called "Sphairistikè or Lawn Tennis." The game caught on quickly and by 1878 had crossed the Atlantic to the United States.

The popularity of lawn tennis has been linked to search of the growing leisure class for suitable amusements. One attraction was that tennis was deemed suitable for women -- a change from earlier times, when, as one contemporary writer put it, "croquet was the only inducement for girls to venture in outdoor games."¹ It also benefited from a general interest in sports and outdoor amusements and enthusiasm for the formation of clubs and associations for pursuing them. In the late nineteenth century, American communities saw an explosion of athletic and country clubs for cricket, yachting, rowing, and cycling, in addition to tennis. Other

¹ Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 81, 94. W. D. Freer, "Golf Clubs in Connecticut," Connecticut Magazine VI (1900): 255.

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organizations -- men's and women's clubs, singing and special interest groups -- proliferated all up and down the social scale. Scholars have connected this phenomenon to the growth of the cities and the consequent loss of informal social patterns that characterized smaller communities.

New Haven in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one such growing city. Manufacturing formed the largest part of the city's economy, and the thriving factories attracted new workers, swelling New Haven's population from 62,882 in 1880 to 164,443 in 1950. On the social scene, the city participated in the nationwide proliferation of clubs. Dozens were formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ranging from the Winchester Rod and Gun Club to the Women's Choral Society, from the Young Men's Institute to the Saturday Morning Club.²

The same year that it was incorporated, the Lawn Company purchased an interior lot with access to Whitney Avenue, a developing upper-middle class neighborhood. A clubhouse was erected almost immediately; it was expanded several times in the ensuing years. In addition to regular play, the Lawn Club held tournaments, both among its own members and with other

⁴ New Haven Lawn Club Association, Bylaws, 1904, p. 3.

² Arnold Guyot Dana, "New Haven Old and New, 1641-1947," scrapbooks in the collection of the New Haven Colony Historical Society. Volume 97 and 98 contains information on clubs and other social organizations.

³ Information on the history of the New Haven Lawn Club comes primarily from E. J. Shumway, Floyd M. Shumway and Richard Hegel, New Haven Lawn Club Association, The First One Hundred Years (New Haven: New Haven Lawn Club Association, 1991).

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clubs, including those from Hartford, Springfield, and Bridgeport, and hosted the New England Tennis Championship Tournament several times between 1886 and 1901. Other sports were also offered, including bowling, squash, and sledding and skating in the winter -- the latter on the flooded tennis courts. The clubhouse also housed non-athletic activities. It was the site of dances, weddings, debuts, and an annual Christmas party that actually dated to before the founding of the Lawn Club. And from the first it could be rented for private functions.

The first clubhouse burned on 21 September 1929. A committee was formed almost immediately, and commissioned a design for a new clubhouse from Douglas W. Orr, a prominent local architect and a member of the Lawn Club. The new clubhouse was opened on 31 March 1931.

Membership of the Lawn Club rose quickly from incorporation to almost 200 in 1900. It reached 700-800 in 1930s and peaked at 1,175 in 1955. Today there are just below 500 memberships.⁵

Social Significance

The New Haven Lawn Club provided opportunities for social interaction for its members. Though athletics provided and continue to provide the Lawn Club's raison d'être, from the first it was also seen as a setting for a broader range of social activities.

The formation and growth of the Lawn Club coincides with other tennis clubs and country clubs in Connecticut. Tennis courts and a clubhouse were included in the layout of Beaver Hills, a suburban development on the western side of New Haven (listed on the National Register as the Beaver Hills Historic District), in 1908. Even a small town such as Granby has had a tennis court on its green since 1892. An article published in *Connecticut Magazine* in 1900 listed golf clubs in 23 Connecticut communities. One of them, the New Haven Golf Club, was organized in 1894 as an offshoot of the New Haven Lawn club.⁶

⁵ Lawn Club statistics record the number of member*ships*, which include families, not individual members.

⁶ "Beaver Hills," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1986. "Renovate The Tennis Court," Hartford Courant, 27 February 2002. Freer, "Golf Clubs," 255-284.

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Tennis games, lessons, and tournaments have played a central role in the Lawn Club's activities. The 1897 Bylaws specify that tennis follows the United States national Lawn Tennis Association rules. In 1904 the Saturday Evening Chronicle mentioned an open tournament for members and nonmembers, as well as a ladies' tournament for members only. Plaques bearing the names of tournament winners still decorate the entry to the Grill Room (Photograph 20). But not all members even played tennis: in 1951 the Men's Tennis Committee reported some 50 active tennis-playing members, out of a total membership of 999. Thus, the clubhouse also contained facilities for other sports, which at various times have included bowling, badminton, squash, paddle tennis, swimming, and exercising.

The Lawn Club not only provided athletic facilities and activities. It was a social center where members could be assured of meeting carefully chosen social peers. The Clubhouse contains rooms for overnight stays by out-of-town members and the guests of in-town members. It contained facilities for social events such as weddings. Lounge areas and card rooms provide space for informal relaxation and socializing. Always considered more social than the Quinnipiack Club, a downtown men's club heavily used for networking, the Lawn Club nonetheless could also provide opportunities for business and political or civic interactions. Social education took place at the Club, too. Children could be instructed in sports or social graces; dance classes in particular were a longstanding tradition.

Like most such private organizations in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the Lawn Club was intended for members of a particular social group -- in this case, upper-middle-class professional, educational, and business classes. Members were White, Anglo-Saxon (or at least Northern European), and Protestant. The sixteen original incorporators illustrate this profile: they included three Yale professors, six attorneys, one banker, and four industrialists (city directories give no occupation for the other two), and bore such old-line New Haven surnames as Hotchkiss, Bristol, Daggett, Hooker, and Whitney.

The Bylaws never overtly discuss membership requirements, and the official club history does not address the topic. But the Bylaws did include provisions for careful screening of prospective members and traditionally allowed a small number to turn down prospective members -- provisions that could be used to exclude members of undesired social groups. Surnames are not a foolproof indication of ethnic origin, but they

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can suggest trends. A partial inspection of the membership lists shows Italian and Irish names beginning to appear in the mid-1940s, and names that appear Jewish only later. In the past thirty years, membership has broadened; as one member put it, "the whole tenor of the club has changed."⁷ These changes parallel social changes in American society as a whole, in which social class came in the late twentieth century to be determined more by education, occupation and income than by nationality, race, or religion.

The Architect

The architect of record for the clubhouse was Douglas William Orr, FAIA (1892-1966), who, according to architectural historian William A. Wiedersheim, "left a stronger architectural imprint on commercial, social and religious New Haven than any man since Henry Austin."⁸ A graduate of Yale's School of Fine Arts, Orr practiced in partnership with George H. del Grella until establishing his own firm in 1926. Orr served as national president of the American Institute of Architects from 1947 to 1949, and from 1949 to 1952 was vice-chairman of the Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion, which oversaw the reconstruction of the White House.

Orr and his firm designed a wide variety of buildings throughout New Haven that included private houses, commercial buildings, churches and other religious facilities, and institutional structures. For Yale, Orr not only designed building on his own but also served as associated architect for out-of-town designers of university buildings, including Paul Schwiekher and Louis Kahn. Early in his career Orr landed the Southern New England Telephone Company as a client; he designed forty-some local telephone exchanges across Connecticut as well as, with R. W. Foote, the company's headquarters building (individually listed on the National Register). Other works are located farther afield, including the Robert Taft Memorial Carillon in Washington, D.C.

But to refer to Orr as the architect of all these buildings obscures

⁷ Interview with Fred Danforth, 28 October, 2002.

⁸ William A. Wiedersheim, "Douglas Orr's New Haven," Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society 26/3 (Summer 1979):3.

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| Significance | New | Haven | Lawn Clu | ıb, l | New | Haven | 8-6 |
|--------------|-----|-------|----------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| | New | Haven | County, | СТ | | | |

the changing nature of architectural practice in the twentieth century. As programs became more complex, buildings came more and more to be the work of several people, each specializing in some aspect of their design. Often, the principal concentrated on client relationships and firm administration, and played only a supervisory role in designing buildings. This seems to have become the case with Orr. Trained in the Beaux-Arts manner, he favored traditional styles, and most of the firm's later works were designed by his partners or associates. , although under his oversight. This situation was recognized in the late 1930s, when the firm name was changed to Douglas Orr and Associates, but at the time that the clubhouse was designed, the firm's works appeared under Orr's name only.

The person responsible for the basic design of the Lawn Club's clubhouse and of much of its distinctive detailing is said to have been an associate named William Douglas, a gifted designer who later became director of the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London. Douglas is known to have designed the Chapel of Saint Thomas More in New Haven (1938) while working for Orr. One of the firm's most successful designs, the chapel resembles the clubhouse in its streamlined traditional style and in several details, including the carefully detailed brickwork, and similarly inventive light fixtures (now removed).⁹

Architectural Significance

The design of the Lawn Club's clubhouse embodies architectural currents of the era and Orr's (that is to say, his firm's) own work -- eclecticism, experimentation, and the tension between tradition and modernity -- and provides a setting for play and socializing that blends comfort and elegance, familiarity and originality, formality and animation.

At first glance, the clubhouse appears as a piece of traditional architecture, designed in the Colonial Revival manner that had gradually come to dominate American architecture over the preceding fifty years. Though called "Colonial," this movement in fact drew inspiration from the early American, Georgian, Federal, and even Greek Revival periods. The Lawn

⁹The attribution to William Douglas was reported by Jared I. Edwards, FAIA, who worked in Orr's office in the 1960s. Additional information was provided by New Haven architectural historian Elizabeth Mills Brown and by Widersheim, "Douglas Orr's New Haven," 12.

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Club exhibits this eclecticism, mixing elements and motifs for expressive or decorative effect. Sometimes the choices seem to express function: unpainted wood sheathing in the members' lounge, resembling that of early Colonial houses, creates a homey, relaxed atmosphere (Photograph 11), while the predominantly Federal décor of the private dining room suggests greater formality (Photograph 10). In the ballroom, classical consoles frame the fireplace, but their sobriety is tempered and made chic by the carved flowers of the mantel frieze, the Regency-inspired clustered cornstalks of the mirror frame, and the shooting stars of the cornice (Photograph 18). Sometimes the mixing seems to be purely for visual effect, as in the arched panel over the main door, which combines Colonial rosettes with a Greek Revival meander or the juxtaposition in the main dining room of bulky mantel piers and exaggeratedly slender mirror frames (Photograph 15).

In addition to a variety of traditional forms and motifs, the clubhouse also draws on the Art Moderne, a decorative approach to modernizing architecture that was popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Dismissed by progressive advocates of European modernism as merely a veneer of new ornament applied to traditionally planned and constructed buildings, the style was more popularly seen as up-to-date and sophisticated, and it was these qualities that the use of Moderne elements imparts to the clubhouse. Such elements include:

- flat, hard surfaces and exaggeratedly attenuated forms, seen in the smooth brick walls (Photographs 1-4), the porch at the ballroom entry (Photograph 5) and the thinness of many moldings;
- traditional motifs streamlined or abstracted, such as the pilasters in the members' lounge, which are merely vertical grooves suggesting classical pilasters (**Photograph 12**); and

 zigzag shapes and references to machinery, as seen in the members' lounge frieze, where flowers are made to resemble gears (Photograph 12). This combination of the Moderne style with traditional elements appears in other works of the Orr firm as well. At the Southern New England Telephone Company headquarters (opened in 1938), the balance tilts more toward the Moderne, perhaps to project an image of technological modernity. On the other hand, the Quinnipiack Club, a downtown New Haven men's club completed the year before the Lawn Club, is more traditional.

Both decorative ingenuity and the blending of tradition and innovation

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are seen in the lighting fixtures designed for the clubhouse, many of which remain. The lanterns flanking the ballroom entry bear metal overlays that repeat the Greek Revival-inspired acroterion crowning the porch roof (**Photograph 5**). Sconces in the members' lounge resemble Colonial fixtures, although their jagged tops could also read as Art Moderne zigzags (**Photograph 11**). The lighting design reaches its acme in the fantastic ballroom chandeliers, improbably designed as potted palms of glittering crystal, dangling over the dancers' heads (**Photograph 17**).

Finally, a sense of movement animates the clubhouse, a characteristic also seen in some of the firm's houses, but more fully developed at the clubhouse, thanks to its larger scale.¹⁰ The layout appears at first glance to be needlessly complicated (**Figure 1**), but it allowed the building to address both the tennis courts, oriented north-south to keep the sun out of the players' eyes, and the nearby streets, which run at approximately 45 degrees to the cardinal compass points. This created a long circulation system that is articulated with angled turns accentuated by archways and changes in decoration. The path to the ballroom from the lower entry, for instance, becomes a grand procession: into a lobby, up the stair -- its curved wall seemingly propelling visitors around the corner -- then through another lobby, an intermediate space set off by wide arches, and the foyer, before reaching the ballroom (**Figure 2**).

This sense of movement also appears in the planning of the major rooms. Each is basically symmetrical, but they are entered off-center (Figure 2) -- the lounge and private dining room from corners, the ballroom from either of two doors that flank the on-center fireplace, and the main dining room at an oblique angle from the porch (Photograph 13). Whereas onaxis entry would make the rooms static, this creates a sense of movement and animation that tempers the formality implied by their symmetry and décor, and creates a festive setting for the social events they were designed to accommodate.

¹⁰ Anne C. Crovatto, "Douglas Orr and Carina Milligan: Houses on Ogden and Bradley Streets" (unpublished typescript, New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1982), 8.

| 9. Major Bibliographical References |
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| |
| x See continuation sheet |
| Previous documentation on file (NPS): |
| preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. |
| previously listed in the National Register |
| previously determined eligible by the National Register |
| designated a National Historic Landmark |
| recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # |
| recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # |
| Primary Location of Additional Data |
| State Historic Preservation Office |
| Other State agency |
| Federal agency |
| Local government |
| University |
| <u>x</u> Other Name of repositories: New Haven Lawn Club, New Haven Colony Historical Society |
| 10. Geographical Data |
| Acreage of Property 6.38 |
| UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet) |
| Zone Easting Northing |
| 1 18 674140 4575710 |
| See continuation sheet. |

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Wiedersheim, William A. "Douglas Orr's New Haven." Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society, 26/3 (Summer 1979):3-22. Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries for the property are those currently established for 193 Whitney Avenue in the City of New Haven, and identified on New Haven assessor's records as Map 222, Block 0370, parcel 0100.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The boundary includes the property acquired by the New Haven Lawn Company between 1891 and 1930 and historically associated with the New Haven Lawn Club and its activities.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christopher Wigren, Architectural Historian reviewed by John Herzan, Connecticut Historical Commission

organization: N/A date 7 March 2003

street & number: <u>360 Bellevue Road</u> telephone: <u>203.624.2063</u>

city or town: <u>New Haven</u> state: <u>Connecticut</u> zip code: <u>06511</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.) name: New Haven Lawn Company street & number: 193 Whitney Avenue telephone: 203.777.3494 city or town: New Haven state: Connecticut zip code: 06511 Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended(16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Photographs New Haven Lawn Club, New Haven 1 of 1 New Haven County, CT

All photographs taken by Christopher Wigren, July, 2002. Negatives on file at the Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106.

- 1. Entry façade: camera facing south.
- 2. Entry façade, closeup: camera facing southeast.
- 3. South façade: camera facing northeast.
- 4. Ballroom wing and entry: camera facing southeast.
- 5. Ballroom entry: camera facing southwest.
- 6. Kitchen: camera facing southeast.
- 7. Tennis courts: camera facing southeast.
- 8. Pool house: camera facing east.
- 9. Lobby: camera facing northeast.
- 10. Private dining room: camera facing southwest.
- 11. Members' lounge: camera facing northwest.
- 12. Members' lounge, fireplace: camera facing northeast.
- 13. Porch: camera facing east.
- 14. Dining Room: camera facing east.
- 15. Dining room, fireplace: camera facing west.
- 16. Ballroom: camera facing northeast.
- 17. Ballroom, chandeliers.
- 18. Ballroom, fireplace: camera facing southwest.
- 19. Grill Room: camera facing north.
- 20. Plaques in Grill Room loggia: camera facing west.



WHITNEY AVE.

Figure 2 -- Original Floor Plans

From "New Haven Lawn Club, New Haven, Connecticut," Architectural Forum 57, 2 (August 1932), pages 122, 123. See Section 7 for alterations.



