

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Rumson Road at Tennis Court Lane not for publication
city, town Rumson vicinity
state New Jersey code 034 county Monmouth code 025 zip code 07760

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>21</u>	<u>14</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>22</u>	<u>14</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>15</u> objects
			<u>22</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 22

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and culture: sports
facility
Social: clubhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and culture: sports
facility
Social: clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Shingle Style
Tudor Revival Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation
walls wood: clapboard
wood: shingle
roof asphalt shingle
other porch: wood with concrete
deck

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club is situated at the northeast corner of Rumson Road and Tennis Court Lane in Rumson, New Jersey. The significant components of the resource include the Shingle/Tudor Revival Style clubhouse, set toward the northwest corner of the Seabright property, and a total of twenty-one tennis courts laid out prior to 1941.

Clubhouse

The original design for the Seabright clubhouse was drawn by the firm of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell. The Seabright trustees let the building contract for the clubhouse on April 10, 1886, and it was ready for use that July. Between 1886 and c. 1907 a number of changes were made to the structure. The architect, or architects, for the early alterations cannot be identified from surviving club records. Further alterations were carried out in 1923; the plans for this program were drawn by Creighton Withers. Since 1923 there have been only a few changes in the clubhouse, and these have had relatively little effect on the building's historic character.

Principal documentation on the original appearance of the clubhouse consists of four surviving drawings by Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell (figures 1-4) and the firm's specifications for the building. The drawings include views of the south (front), east and north elevations and a ground plan. The west elevation is shown in a sketch that was printed on the invitation to the club opening (photo 1). There are some significant differences between the architects' drawings and the 1886 sketch. Where these occur the following description relies on the Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell materials unless there is other evidence to support the sketch. Several early-twentieth century photographs in the collection of the Seabright Club show that part of the 1886 fabric survived the subsequent alterations. Original elements can also be identified in the building as it now stands, particularly on the interior.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

National Historic Landmark Criteria: 1

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation
Architecture

Period of Significance

1886-1941

Significant Dates

1886
1923

NHL Theme: XXXIV: Recreation

A: Sports

V: Tennis

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell
Creighton Withers (1923 alterations)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary:

The Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club derives its national significance from the role it has played in the history of the sport of tennis in the United States. It therefore meets National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 under Landmark Theme XXXIV (Recreation). Seabright was organized by 1877, formally established as the Seabright Lawn Tennis Club in 1878, and incorporated under its present name in 1886. At the time of Seabright's fiftieth anniversary, officials of the United States Lawn Tennis Association recognized it as the oldest continuously active tennis club in the country.(1) Although a few other clubs may dispute that claim, Seabright is clearly one of the oldest tennis clubs in the United States. Over the years, Seabright has been host to many of the best-known American and international amateur tennis players. The Seabright Invitational Tournament was held annually, with only three short lapses, from 1884 through 1950. It became a major event on the eastern U.S. tennis circuit and the traditional prelude to the national championships held at Boston's Longwood Cricket Club and New York's Forest Hills.(2) The Seabright clubhouse was designed by the firm of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell. Although the building does not meet the National Historic Landmark Criteria for architecture, its physical character is directly related to its function as a communal gathering place for recreation, entertainment, and social activities. The building is a variation of a larger type, the casino/clubhouse, which appeared at summer resorts throughout the United States in the period from 1876 to c. 1910.(3) Although smaller in scale than other properties that have been designated National Historic Landmarks for their association with tennis (including the Newport Casino, Newport, RI, and the Merion Cricket Club, Haverford, PA), Seabright is comparable to them in

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 6.6 acres

UTM References

A

18	518,613,0,0	4,46,87,2,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

--	--	--

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

D

--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Polly A. Matherly, Associate Director
organization Heritage Studies, Inc. date April 22, 1992
street & number 20 Seminary Avenue telephone (609) 466-9606
city or town Hopewell state New Jersey zip code 08525

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As shown in the architects' drawings, the exterior design of the Seabright clubhouse combined elements of the Shingle and Tudor Revival styles. The building consisted of three parts. The largest section was a 1 1/2-story rectangle. Rectangular 1-story wings were set at either end of the rear elevation and projected beyond the main block to the east and west (figure 4). All three sections were set on low brick piers. The principal sheathing for the exterior walls consisted of 1 by 6 inch clapboards. Roofs were gable-form, covered with wood shingles. The peaks of the gable ends on the main block and of the pedimented cross gables centered on the front and rear elevations were parged and decorated with wide wood battens, giving the appearance of half-timbering. An interior chimney of brick broke through the ridge of the main roof near its east end.

A 1-story, hip-roofed porch ran across the front elevation of the building and wrapped around both ends to the wings (figures 1, 2 and 4). (The configuration of the porch as shown in the 1886 sketch, photo 1, is incorrect.) The porch had a low wood deck, square posts with chamfered corners, and plain curved brackets that gave the impression of Tudor arches. At the center of the front elevation the porch projected to form the base for a small balcony (figures 1,2). A stairway with carved newel and turned balusters led up from the porch to the balcony. The cross gable of the main roof projected over the rear half of the balcony. The corners of the cross gable were supported on heavy turned posts that rested on the balcony railing; brackets on the balcony had the same arched shape as those on the porch. In addition to the parging and battens used on the other principal gables, the front cross gable was also decorated with dentil bands. A simple eyebrow dormer was set into the main roof at either side of the cross gable; these dormers are not shown in the architects' drawings, but they appear in the 1886 sketch and in archival photographs in the Seabright collection. The principal entrance to the clubhouse, consisting of glazed and paneled double-leaf doors, was centered on the south elevation under the balcony. The doorway was flanked by sash windows, set so that they had the appearance of sidelights. Beyond these at either side of the main block was a pair of sash windows. Entrances were also located on the south face of the wings; each consisted of a five-panel door.

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Fenestration on the east elevation of the main block consisted of a pair of sash windows at the south side of the ground floor, a single multi-light window on the north at that level, and two square 9-light windows at the gable peak, one on either side of the chimney (figure 2). A row of six square single-light windows was set into the east side of the east wing. Another entrance to the main section of the clubhouse was located on the west elevation. This consisted of a paneled single-leaf door flanked by sash windows set as sidelights (photo 1). A row of three windows was set into the west wall of the main block just above the porch roof. The 1886 sketch shows these units with 6/6 configuration, but later archival photographs in the collection of the Seabright Club show large-paned 9/9 sash. On the rear elevation, a large multi-pane window was set into the wall beneath the cross gable; details of this feature are not shown on the architects' drawing (figure 3), but it is referred to in the construction contract for the building. Three 4/4 windows were used in each of the gables of the rear wings.

A single large room occupied the entire main block of the building (figure 4, photos 6-8). The floor was pine, tongued and grooved. The walls were articulated by plain pilasters with simple molded caps, an intermediate molding running across the top of the doors, and a crown molding. Above the crown molding, the room was open to the ridge of gabled roof and was sheathed in matchboard. A gallery extended above the double-leaf doors at the south side of the room; this was supported at either end by a heavy bracket with a simplified console shape, and had a paneled railing and soffit. There was no interior stairway to the gallery. Multi-light doors opened from the gallery to the adjacent balcony on the front elevation of the building. At either side of the gallery and of the large window in the north wall the crown molding terminated in decorative console brackets. At the northeast corner of the room was a small office. The fireplace with inglenook took up the remainder of the east wall. The mantel consisted of a molded shelf supported on brackets, and ran the full width of the chimney breast. The architects' plan shows only one bench, at the north side of the fireplace, but the specifications describe "seats" with turned legs and paneled backs. The fireplace was the only source of heat in the clubhouse; because the building was not intended for year-round use, no heating system was installed.

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Paneled single-leaf doors at either end of the north wall of the main club room led to the men's and ladies' dressing rooms, located in the east and west wings respectively. Both spaces were utilitarian in character; lockers lined the walls. Lavatories were located at the north side of both dressing rooms.

The exact date of the first major alterations to the clubhouse is not known. The 1926 Seabright history implies a date between 1890 and 1895, but a description of the building in Gustav Kobbe's New Jersey Coast and Pines, published in 1889, suggests that the work had already been done by that date. In this project, the office, the inglenook and fireplace, and the chimney were removed, and the building was extended to the east to allow space for a stage at that end of the main club room. A new balcony and cross gable were constructed at the east end of the front elevation. These were similar to the existing balcony and front cross gable, except that the front railing of the new balcony was set flush with the outer edge of the porch. Triple windows similar to those at the west gable of the main block were installed at the new east gable. The porch was again wrapped around the east end of the building.

There is little information about the appearance of the stage itself; a few details are noted on the Withers plan for the 1923 alterations (figure 7). The stage apparently had a simple proscenium arch, but no apron. Steps led up to the platform from the floor of the main club room. Behind the arch was a single rectangular space; there were no dressing rooms or other backstage areas.

Electricity was installed throughout the clubhouse in 1902. There were two other early alterations of note, neither of which can be precisely dated. The large window on the north elevation was replaced by a shingle-clad polygonal bay (photo 4). Windows in the bay were 8/8 and 12/12, set beneath 4-light and 6-light transoms respectively. The footprint for the clubhouse shown on the 1907 Sanborn map for Rumson Road indicates that the new bay was already in place by that date (figure 6). The other change was the creation of a kitchen in the west wing. The eastern portion of the ladies' dressing room was used for the new space; comparison of the 1886 and 1923 plans for the clubhouse (figures 4 and 7) suggests that the wing may have been expanded to the

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west to compensate for this. No other substantial work was done on the building until the alterations and additions of 1923.

The 1923 project, designed by Creighton Withers, essentially brought the clubhouse to its present form. On the exterior, the greatest change was made in the front elevation (photos 2 and 3). The projecting central bay of the porch, the balconies and cross gables were all removed (the rear cross gable was retained). A single balcony, set into the porch roof, was constructed across the full width of the facade. The new balcony had square posts, set on line with those of the porch. Posts matching those on the balcony replaced the original bracketed posts on the porch, and the wood floor of the porch was replaced by a concrete deck. The balcony was covered by a central shed roof flanked by cross gables. The solid balcony railing and the sides of the cross gables were sheathed with shingles; the gable peaks were once again decorated with wide battens but there was no parging. Two stairways to the balcony were constructed within the porch; these were placed just to the east of the main doorway into the clubhouse (figure 7). The original club sign, which had been mounted on the front of the 1886 balcony, was moved to the center of the new balcony, and a flagpole was set at the ridge on each of the new cross gables. All of the existing roof surfaces of the clubhouse were re-shingled at this time.

The other exterior alterations affected the two wings of the building. The rear wall of the east wing was moved north four feet to allow expansion of the men's lavatory. Five new windows were installed in the west wall at the men's locker room. These were roughly square and had opaque glazing in the lower half, clear glass above. On the other wing, approximately the western two-thirds of the south wall was moved several feet toward the front of the building; this left the entrance to the wing in a recess at the east side of the wall (figure 7). Windows that had been removed from the east wing of the clubhouse were installed in the wall of the west wing below the new gables; these consisted of a row of square units flanked by larger rectangular sash. The original gable and triple window at the west side of the wing were replaced by two parallel gables with solid peaks. Two ventilators, in the form of small square cupolas with

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pyramidal roofs, were installed in the wing roof. There are no views that would show whether similar ventilators were added to the east wing.

The most significant change on the inside of the clubhouse in the 1923 project was the dismantling of the stage. The arched opening and steps were removed from the east end of the main club room and the wall was finished to match the other walls in that space (photo 8). The stage area was converted to an additional men's locker room (figure 7, photo 9). The floor level was dropped, the lower walls were finished with a wainscot of vertical matchboard, and the upper walls were sheathed with horizontal matchboard. A large opening was cut in the north wall to connect the old and new locker rooms. Original lockers, simple wood units with two-panel doors, were removed from the old locker room and installed along the east, south, and west walls of the converted space. The new locker room had three pairs of 4/4 windows in the upper portion of the east wall; these were presumably part of the original stage construction since they are not identified as new on the 1923 drawing.

Interior alterations in the two wings were of less importance (figure 7). Moving the wall at the north end of the east wing allowed the installation of a second toilet cubicle and three shower stalls in the men's lavatory. In the west wing, a small vestibule was created in the kitchen by blocking the doorway between that space and the women's locker room and adding an east-west partition at the north side of the former opening. The existing paneled door between the kitchen and the main club room was replaced by a dutch door with a serving shelf at the top of the lower half. Two porcelain sinks with a connecting drainboard were installed in place of the original single sink on the west side of the kitchen, and some storage cabinets were added. An ice box was placed at the northeast corner of the room; an opening was made in the north wall so that ice could be delivered directly into the box. The existing boiler and gas range were retained. In the women's locker room, four dressing rooms were created along the relocated south wall. The arrangement of the north wall was modified; an existing toilet cubicle at the east corner was retained, and a second toilet cubicle and two showers with attached dressing areas were added. New wash basins were set against the east wall of the locker room.

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Since 1923 there have been only minor alterations to the Seabright clubhouse. The south men's locker room (former stage area) has been converted to a pro shop, but this work has had little effect on the building fabric. A doorway leading to the porch was created at the south side of the room; the opening that had been made in the north wall in 1923 was blocked; and the wooden lockers were returned to the original men's locker room (photo 10). A simple clock has been installed at the peak of the east cross gable on the front elevation (photo 2). The club sign that now hangs on the balcony railing at the center front of the building is a replica; the original has been mounted on the east wall in the main club room (photo 8). Seabright's extensive collection of photographs and tennis artifacts is displayed on the walls of the club room (photos 6-8). Photographs in the collection show that much of the present furniture in the club room, including the large refectory table and wicker armchairs and side tables, was already in place in the 1920s. In the kitchen, cabinets dating from 1923 and earlier have been retained, but modern appliances have been installed. There is still no heating system in the building.

Grounds

The site purchased for the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club in 1886 was comprised of approximately five acres of land. These grounds were developed in several stages. The first playing facilities, located adjacent to the clubhouse, consisted of a cricket field and three tennis courts. Turf for the field was imported from England, but native turf appears to have been used for the courts. Although baseball is cited in Seabright's statement of purpose and the club's emblem is a bull's-eye target, there is no record of a baseball diamond or an archery range on the club grounds. In 1890 the club converted the cricket field to a second tier of turf tennis courts. The third and fourth tiers were laid out in 1900 and 1910.

Large trees lined the outer edges of the property. The tiers of courts extended east-west across the grounds and, except for a small lawn in front of the clubhouse, occupied the entire area between that building and Rumson Road. In all there were twenty-two individual courts in the four tiers. Play was alternated

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among them to avoid damage to the turf, and only eighteen courts were in use at any given time. By 1926 three ancillary buildings had been constructed at the rear of the clubhouse. One of these was a maintenance building and garage, and another contained two squash courts, but the function of the third is not documented. All three were subsequently demolished.

In 1947 Bernon S. Prentice, former president of the Seabright organization, gave the club a strip of land lying along the eastern side of the original property (compare figures 6 and 8). Six clay courts, the first of their kind at Seabright, were installed in that area. In 1960 the fourth tier of grass courts, lying along Rumson Road, was converted to Teniko courts; that fast-drying surface made it possible to extend play on those courts from early spring until the first frost. During the mid-1960s, the six clay courts on the Prentice donation were resurfaced with Teniko, and three new courts of that material were added. In 1970 Seabright purchased additional land at the northeast corner of the club property (figure 8); the house and garage on that parcel are occupied by the club's caretaker.

Despite those changes, the Seabright grounds continue to look much as they did in earlier years (photo 5). Rows of trees still stand at the edges of the property along Rumson Road and Tennis Court Lane. The circular driveway at the west end of the clubhouse has existed in essentially the same form since the club first developed the site (figure 5). The four tiers of courts between the clubhouse and Rumson Road retain their original configuration, although chain-link has replaced the wood fencing that once divided them, and the fifteen courts in the first, second and third tiers retain their historic grass surface. The club's fifteen Teniko courts, six in the fourth tier and the remainder on the Prentice donation, are still referred to as "clay courts" by the Seabright members.

Since the creation of the original cricket field, Seabright has given particular attention to maintaining the quality of its turf. These efforts have been so successful that other groups frequently come to Seabright for advice, and the club was one of the principal stops on a "turf tour" conducted by Rutgers University in 1980. The Seabright grass courts are planted with specially developed strains, cut to a uniform 5/16-inch height.

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The courts are top-dressed twice a year. Because of this treatment, the original turf is buried approximately a foot below the level of the present playing surface. The grass courts are watered by a semi-automatic system comprised of above-ground pipes and sprinkler heads located along the backlines of the courts and sub-surface piping connected to a sprinkler at the center of each court; in the summer of 1991 the water system was fitted with computerized controls linked to a rain gauge. Natural percolation and a very slight pitch on the playing surface together provide adequate drainage for the grass courts.

Equal attention is paid to the condition of the club's clay courts. These are constructed on a base of crushed stone and sand. The surface of clay/Teniko courts must be kept moist to prevent the material from disintegrating and to ensure that balls play "true". At Seabright this is accomplished by a fully-automated sub-surface watering system. As on the grass courts, the combination of natural percolation and a slight pitch on the playing surface provides the necessary drainage for the clay courts.

Contributing and Non-Contributing Elements

The National Historic Landmark boundary for the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club is identical to its National Register boundary; it has been drawn to enclose the original property acquired in 1886 and the 1947 Prentice donation (see Item 10, boundary justification). Contributing elements are the clubhouse and a total of twenty-one tennis courts, fifteen grass and six clay/Teniko, laid out before 1941. The clay/Teniko courts are considered to be contributing because they retain their historic configuration even though their surface material has been altered. Non-historic facilities within the Landmark and Register boundary include an all-weather court, a 1-story brick maintenance building/garage, and the four wood decks for paddle tennis. These are all set along the north property line, and do not affect the primary views from Rumson Road and Tennis Court Lane toward the clubhouse and the historic tennis courts. The nine courts created after 1941 are also considered non-contributing. Land at the northeast corner of the original grounds, purchased by Seabright in 1970, has been excluded from the National Historic Landmark and National Register boundary.

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FIGURES AND PHOTOGRAPHS:

Figures:

1. Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, Architects. Drawing of front (south) elevation of Seabright clubhouse, 1886.
2. Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, Architects. Drawing of side (east) elevation of Seabright clubhouse, 1886.
3. Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, Architects. Drawing of rear (north) elevation of Seabright clubhouse, 1886.
4. Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, Architects. Ground plan of Seabright clubhouse, 1886.
5. Wolverton and Bredu. Atlas of Monmouth County, Plate 6, 1889.
6. Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of the New Jersey Coast, Sheet 82, Rumson Road, 1907.
7. Plan drawn by Creighton Withers, Architect, "Proposed Alterations and Additions to the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Sea Bright, New Jersey" [c. 1923].
8. Site plan: "Revised Minor Subdivision, Lands of Gillen, Situate Borough of Rumson, Monmouth County, N.J., February 3, 1970".

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Photographs:

Photographer: Constance M. Greiff

Date: September 19, 1990

Negatives filed at: Heritage Studies, Inc., Hopewell, N.J.

1. Invitation to club opening, July 5, 1886, showing original appearance of the clubhouse, south (front) and west elevations.
2. South (front) and east elevations.
3. South (front) and west elevations.
4. North (rear) elevation; kitchen wing at right.
5. View southwest across tennis courts at front of clubhouse.
6. Main club room, view southwest.
7. Main club room, view northwest.
8. Main club room, view east.
9. Pro shop (formerly stage and backstage area) at east end of clubhouse, view northeast.
10. Men's dressing room, view southeast; note original lockers still in use.

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level of integrity. Seabright's Shingle/Tudor Revival Style clubhouse was originally constructed in 1886; it underwent a number of subsequent alterations, but had essentially achieved its present form by 1923, well within the period of significance defined for the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club. Throughout its history, Seabright has been noted for the quality of its grass courts; part of the original turf was imported from England, where the game of lawn tennis originated. The twenty-two grass courts at Seabright were created in four stages between 1886 and 1910; some have been replaced but fifteen of them survive at the club site.

(Note: the name of the shore community from which the club takes its name was originally "Seabright", but is now generally written "Sea Bright". For clarity, "Sea Bright" will be used to identify the community throughout this nomination. "Seabright" will indicate the tennis club.)

Historical Background:

The first American game of lawn tennis was played at the Staten Island Cricket and Baseball Club in 1874. That organization was disbanded around 1920.(4) Because collected documentation is scanty, neither the United States Lawn Tennis Association nor the International Tennis Hall of Fame can presently state with certainty which of the early American tennis clubs that have remained continuously active is the oldest.(5) The Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club dates its founding from the playing season of 1876. During the celebration of Seabright's fiftieth anniversary in 1926, the club received a number of letters of congratulation. Jones W. Mersereau, then President of the United States Lawn Tennis Association, described Seabright as the oldest tennis club in the national association, while Julian S. Myrick, Chairman of the Davis Cup Selection Committee, recognized it as the oldest active club in the country.(6) G. Peabody Gardner, President of the Longwood Cricket Club, stated that Seabright and Longwood "are I believe the oldest tennis organizations in this country"; he dated the founding of Seabright, like Longwood, to 1877.(7) More recently, the Guinness Book of Tennis Facts & Feats has given the title of oldest surviving club to still another organization, the New Orleans Lawn Tennis Club, which was

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formally organized in December 1876.(8) Whether or not Seabright is the oldest of the active clubs, it was among the earliest of them to be founded and has made a significant contribution to the sport of lawn tennis.

Although other claimants are sometimes mentioned, an Englishman, Major Walter C. Wingfield, is generally recognized as the inventor of modern tennis. For the new game, which he introduced to guests at a garden party at his estate in Nantcwyd, Wales, in 1873, Wingfield adapted royal tennis, played indoors, to an outdoor court, and incorporated elements of badminton, squash racquets and other games.(9) Wingfield initially called his game "Sphairistiki" (Greek for "ball playing"), but that name was soon replaced by the term "lawn tennis". In July 1874, Wingfield was granted a British patent for tennis equipment and for rules for playing on grass courts.(10) By that time, lawn tennis was already gaining wide popularity, and had spread from Great Britain to the British colonies and to other countries.

The game reached the United States by way of Bermuda. While on a vacation there early in 1874, Mary E. Outerbridge of New York was introduced to lawn tennis by a friend of Major Wingfield. She returned home with a net, balls and rackets for the new game. With the help of her brother, A. Emilius Outerbridge, who was a director of the Staten Island Cricket and Baseball Club, she gained permission to set up a court on the club's grounds. The first American game of lawn tennis was played there in the summer of 1874.(11)

In the United States as elsewhere, lawn tennis spread rapidly. Through the end of the nineteenth century, however, the game would be limited essentially to the eastern part of the country and played primarily by the wealthy, who had the leisure time for it and could afford to develop and maintain courts, either at their homes or at sport clubs.(12) The first American lawn tennis tournament took place in 1876 on private courts at Nahant, Massachusetts.(13) New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Newport quickly became centers for the game. In addition to the Staten Island facilities, other important early courts included those established at Boston's Longwood Cricket Club in 1877; the Merion Cricket Club, near Philadelphia, in 1879; and the Newport Casino 1880. In the summer of 1880 the country's first "national"

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tournament was played at the Staten Island Cricket and Baseball Club.(14) In May 1881 thirty-three sports clubs joined to found the United States Lawn Tennis Association.(15)

The community of Sea Bright grew out of a fishing village called Nauvoo, and was developed as a shore resort in the years immediately after the Civil War. The adjacent Rumson Neck, a peninsula between the Shrewsbury and Navesink Rivers, had been known for its summer residences and large estates since the late eighteenth century. The two communities were physically linked by the Jumping Point Bridge, constructed across the Shrewsbury River in 1869.(16) They were also closely connected socially. Soon after the first American court was laid out at Staten Island, a group of Sea Bright and Rumson Neck residents took up lawn tennis; the history of the Seabright Club written by Bernon S. Prentice indicates that the first playing season was in 1876. Tennis equipment that the group had ordered from England arrived in the spring of 1877 and was used in matches played on courts at the residences of Robert Rutherford, James W. Alexander and William Shippen. The number of players grew steadily and more private courts were built. On July 25, 1878, the first formal meeting of the Seabright Lawn Tennis Club was held at the Rutherford house. In August of 1879, the club's first championship was played; William Shippen won the men's singles and Bessie Shippen the women's singles. The first mixed doubles championship, held the next year, was won by Alice Shippen and Frank L. Henry.(17)

By 1880 the Seabright Lawn Tennis Club's activities were centered chiefly on the courts at the homes of William Shippen in Sea Bright and of Antonio and Alfonso de Navarro on Rumson Neck. Members gathered every Saturday morning during the playing season, alternating between the Shippen and de Navarro courts. In 1884 the club held its first Seabright Invitational Tournament, a men's singles event; the prize, a silver pitcher, went to Joseph S. Clark of Philadelphia.(18) This men's singles tournament would be continued as an annual event through 1889.

Another British sport, cricket, had been imported to the United States in the 1850s and appealed to many of the same people who enjoyed lawn tennis. When George C. Kobbe and Herman Clarke proposed to the other Seabright members early in 1886 the

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formation of a joint lawn tennis and cricket club that would have its own grounds and clubhouse, the idea was immediately approved. The new entity, incorporated as the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, was essentially an expansion of the existing club. The incorporators were John L. Riker, Charles Macdonald, Robert L. Crawford, George Wood, William Shippen, Robert W. de Forest, Antonio F. de Navarro, George C. Kobbe and Herman Clarke; Riker was elected president, Kobbe secretary, and Clarke treasurer.(19)

The purpose of the club, as stated in its by-laws, was "the practice of Lawn Tennis, of Cricket, and of Baseball, by the members of the Club, and the encouragement of the practice among others in the State of New Jersey; and to foster and maintain the highest ideals of sportsmanship".(20) Although not cited in the by-laws, archery was also a Seabright activity, and the club adopted a bull's-eye target in black, red, gold and white as its emblem; the black, red and gold were inspired by the colors of the Zingari Cricket Club of England.(21)

The Seabright Club incorporators also subscribed most of the funds for the grounds and building. The site selected, part of the former estate of Seabury Tredwell on Rumson Neck, lay on the north side of Rumson Road midway between Ward and Navesink Avenues. George Kobbe and Herman Clarke acquired the property on February 20, 1886, and conveyed it to the club on April 9.(22) The firm of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell of New York City had been chosen to design the clubhouse. On April 10, 1886, Clarke and Kobbe, as trustees for the Seabright incorporators, signed a contract with Henry C. Livesey of New York City for construction of the building at a cost of \$5,500.(23) The clubhouse and grounds, with three grass tennis courts and a cricket field, were formally opened for use on July 5, 1886.(24)

That same year the Seabright Club was the site of an international cricket match between an All Canada and an All United States Team, which was won by the latter. The club's cricket field, for which the turf had been imported from England, was considered one of the best in the United States. A guidebook published in 1889 stated that "the American tours of foreign cricket teams always [include] a visit to Seabright".(25) However, interest in cricket was already declining at the club, while tennis was becoming steadily more popular. In 1890 the

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cricket field was converted to a second tier of tennis courts. The club added a third tier of courts in 1900, and expanded its membership at the same time. Although the courts were open daily, most of Seabright's male members commuted to city offices during the season and could only visit the club in late afternoon and on week-ends. Eventually the demand for courts became so heavy that women were not permitted to play tennis at Seabright on Sunday afternoons or weekdays after the arrival of the first afternoon boat from New York. The situation improved in 1910 when a fourth tier of courts was created; these, like all the earlier courts at Seabright had a turf playing surface. The club's principal emphasis was always on sport, but the Seabright clubhouse also became a social center, with weekly dances and other events. During the 1890s some of the members formed an amateur theatrical group, the Round Robin Club. Plays were presented on the stage that had been added at the east end of the main room of the clubhouse; the proceeds were donated to local charities. (26)

For many years the most important event of the season at the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club was the Seabright Invitational Tournament. This event was resumed in 1894 after a five-year lapse and, with the exception of two brief interruptions during World Wars I and II, was held annually until 1950. (27) In 1917 and 1918, the regular tournament was replaced by special "Patriotic Tournaments". Proceeds from admission fees for those events were used to purchase two ambulances for service at the war front in Europe. In the years 1943 through 1945 there were no tournaments.

In its early years the Seabright Invitational Tournament had been limited to men's events, but women's competitions were added in 1920. By 1926 there were five tournament divisions: men's singles and doubles, women's singles and doubles, and mixed doubles, all running simultaneously over a one-week period. The trophies put into competition at the tournament included the Challenge Cup, 1902; the Achelis Cup, 1903; the Seabright Bowls, 1917; the Women's Bowl, 1920; the Singles Bowl, 1923; and the Doubles Bowl, 1925. (28)

The invitational tournament brought to the Seabright courts some of the most famous singles players and double teams in the

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history of American and international tennis. Among the men were Henry W. Slocum, Richard Stevens, Malcolm D. Whitman, William A. Larned, Beals C. Wright, Raymond D. Little, William J. Clothier, Karl H. Behr, William T. ("Big Bill") Tilden II, and Vincent Richards. The notable women included Mrs. Marion Jessup; Molla Mallory, Helen Wills, Eleanor Goss, Elizabeth Ryan and Helen Jacobs. Famous doubles teams that played at Seabright include Sears and Slocum, Sears and Dwight, Hovey and Hobart, Chase and Wrenn, Ward and Wright, Hackett and Alexander, Johnston and Griffen, Williams and Washburn, Patterson and O'Hara-Wood, and Tilden and Richards.(29)

Another noted player who competed at Seabright, and eventually became an honorary member of the club, was Dwight F. Davis, donor of the international tennis trophy that bears his name. Members of the Davis Cup Selection Committee of the United States Lawn Tennis Association regularly attended the Seabright Invitational Tournament to watch the play of candidates for the U.S. Davis Cup Team. In 1932 and 1933, Bernon S. Prentice, then president of the Seabright Club, also served as chairman of the Davis Cup Selection Committee. Over the years, members of Davis Cup Teams from Spain, France, England, Canada, Australia, Mexico, South Africa and Japan played in Seabright tournament matches. All of the leading college players also competed at Seabright, including teams from Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Cambridge Universities.(30)

Among Seabright's own members, the most distinguished player was Holcombe Ward, who was a prominent figure in American tennis for over half a century. In 1899 Ward and his partner, Dwight Davis, won both the national intercollegiate doubles championship and the national doubles title. In 1900 the two paired again on the first team to defend the Davis Cup; they also won the national doubles title for the second time that year and retained it in 1901. With Beals C. Wright as his partner, Ward won the doubles championship three times more, in 1904, 1905, and 1906. In the latter two years, Ward also played in both singles and doubles events in the Davis Cup matches. Ward was named to the Executive Committee of the United States Lawn Tennis Association early in the century and served in that capacity for a number of years; he later served as chairman of the Amateur Rule Committee (1924-31) and of the Davis Cup and International Play Committee (1931-36), and was president of the Association from 1936 to 1947. Ward

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held a life membership in the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club. He won the annual club singles championship from 1917 through 1921, and paired with Bernon S. Prentice to take the club doubles title eight times in the ten years from 1916 to 1925. From 1938 to 1944, Ward served as president of the Seabright Club. (31)

Activity at Seabright declined during World War II, but afterward picked up quickly. The invitational tournament was resumed in 1946. The following year, because of the need for additional courts to satisfy increased interest in women's and junior events, Bernon S. Prentice, who had served as Seabright's president from 1922 to 1938, gave the club a strip of land running along the east side of the Seabright grounds. Six clay courts, the first non-grass playing surfaces in the history of the club, were installed in that area.

In 1950 the club decided to discontinue the Seabright Invitational Tournament. Several factors influenced this decision, chief among them the wear and tear on the courts. In addition, because the club had never constructed permanent stands, temporary seating for those attending the matches had to be erected and dismantled every year. Since hotel accommodations in the immediate vicinity of the club were limited, by custom most of the visiting players had stayed in the homes of Seabright members for the tournament week. As many of the larger residences were replaced by smaller houses, it became difficult to provide enough rooms for all the guests. Finally, the Seabright members, in the words of Time Magazine, "simply decided that the tournament was becoming too much fuss", and that "All in all, ...it was more fun to play tennis than to watch it, even when it was good". (32)

Seabright is the owner of an extensive collection of photographs and artifacts illustrating the history of the club and of the game of lawn tennis in the United States. Bernon S. Prentice assembled the original collection and presented it to the club in the 1920s. (33) It has grown steadily since then. Most of the items are displayed on the walls of the main room in the clubhouse.

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Architectural Background:

In the decades following the Civil War, industrialization spurred the development of a variety of new building types in the United States to serve specific functions, not all of them directly related to commerce or manufacturing. An important by-product of industrialization was the wealth and leisure it provided to an increasing number of people. This leisure class needed a place to spend free time and, as had often happened in the past, looked to Europe for a precedent that could be adapted to American conditions. Buildings for entertainment and recreation, called casinos, could be found at all the spas and resorts of England and Europe. The word "casino" is Italian, and originally meant a small summer house, or a pavilion designed for pleasure and located in a garden. By the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, the word had appeared in English and French and had come to mean a set of rooms or a clubhouse used for social activities such as dancing, music, theatrical performances and, in many cases, gambling. The casino at Monte Carlo is perhaps the most famous of the hundreds of European examples of the type.(34)

The first American casino was probably the one at Nahant, Massachusetts, designed by J.P. Putnam and erected c. 1876.(35) Between then and about 1910, casinos or clubhouses were constructed at resorts and summer communities throughout the United States. Many of those buildings served the same functions as their European prototypes, with the notable exception of gambling, which did not become associated with casinos in this country until later in the twentieth century.(36). The American casinos varied in size and design, but nearly all featured a large auditorium or hall with a stage at one end. Ancillary spaces in the casino might include reading rooms, lounges, a billiard room, dining room and kitchen facilities. A variation of the main casino type was the clubhouse designed for an organization where sports were added to or took precedence over more purely social activities. These clubhouses, like the true casinos, were usually centered around a large hall, but provided, in addition to the usual ancillary spaces, more utilitarian facilities such as locker rooms and showers. The Seabright clubhouse is an example of this variation on the casino building type.

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McKim, Mead & White became the acknowledged leaders in casino design, but other major firms, such as Peabody & Stearns and Lamb & Rich, also worked with this building type. Among the better-known representatives of the American casino are those at Newport (1879-80) and Narragansett Pier (1883-86), RI, Short Hills, NJ (1880), and Stockbridge, MA (1887), all designed by McKim, Mead & White, and the casino at Elberon, NJ (1883), by Peabody & Stearns. With the exception of the Newport Casino, all of the examples cited have been either destroyed or substantially altered. (37)

In the early years of American casino construction, the Shingle Style was perhaps the most popular design vocabulary for that building type. It was considered equally appropriate for major projects like the Newport Casino and small-scale structures such as Seabright. In fact, there were similarities between some of the elements in the original Seabright design, in particular the treatment of the original balcony and the gable peaks, and corresponding features of the Newport building. There is no evidence that the Newport Casino had a direct influence on the design of the Seabright clubhouse, however, and later alterations at Seabright have obscured the similarities between them.

The firm responsible for the original design of the Seabright clubhouse was a distinguished one. Its founder was James Renwick (1818-1895). The architect who introduced the Second Empire style into the United States, Renwick is best remembered for his designs executed in the two decades before the Civil War. Among his major works are the "Castle" of the Smithsonian Institution and the Corcoran (now Renwick) Gallery in Washington, and St. Patrick's Cathedral and Grace Church in New York. Socially well-connected, he is also known to have designed numerous country houses for a wealthy clientele, but few of them have been identified. At the time the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club was designed, he had recently, in 1883, taken into partnership two young relatives, James L. Aspinwall (1854-1936), a nephew by marriage, and William Hamilton Russell (1854-1907), a great-nephew, both of whom had worked in the firm since the 1870s. The firm thereafter was known as Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell. (38) Because the drawings are not signed, it is impossible to determine which of the partners had design responsibility for the Seabright clubhouse.

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Footnotes:

1. Jones W. Mersereau, President, United States Lawn Tennis Association, to Bernon S. Prentice, President, Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, April 9, 1926; Julian S. Myrick, Chairman, Davis Cup Selection Committee, United States Lawn Tennis Association, to Bernon S. Prentice, April 13, 1926. Collection of the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

2. "Too Much Fuss", Time, August 14, 1950.

3. Richard Guy Wilson, "From Informality to Pomposity: The Resort Casino in the Later 19th Century", in Nineteenth Century, 8, Nos. 1-2, p. 111.

4. Bernon S. Prentice, "The History of the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club", in Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club Jubilee Year Book (Rumson, N.J.: Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, 1926), p. 9.

5. Jan Armstrong, Museum Director, International Tennis Hall of Fame, to Polly A. Matherly, Associate Director, Heritage Studies, September 10, 1990. Heritage Studies, Hopewell, N.J.

6. Mersereau to Prentice, April 9, 1926; Myrick to Prentice, April 13, 1926.

7. G. Peabody Gardner, Jr., President, Longwood Cricket Club, to Bernon S. Prentice, President, Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, June 23, 1926. Collection of Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

8. Lance Tingay, The Guinness Book of Tennis Facts & Feats (Enfield, Middlesex, England: Guinness Superlatives Limited).

9. Malcolm D. Whitman, Tennis Origins and Mysteries (New York: The Derrydale Press, 1932), p. 103.

10. Ibid, p. 106.

11. Ibid, pp. 112-113.

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12. Angela Lumpkin, Women's Tennis (Troy, N.Y.: Whitson Publishing, 1981), p. 5; Fifty Years of Lawn Tennis in the United States (New York: United States Lawn Tennis Association, 1931), p. 9.

13. Whitman, p. 117.

14. Fifty Years, p. 19.

15. Ibid, p. 21.

16. Gustav Kobbe, The New Jersey Coast and Pines (Short Hills, N.J.: Gustav Kobbe, 1889), p. 18.

17. Prentice, p. 9.

18. Ibid, pp. 9-10.

19. Ibid, p. 11.

20. Ibid, p. 33.

21. Jane McCosker, "Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club: Grass Courts Par Excellence," p. 5. Photocopy of manuscript, collection of the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

22. Monmouth County Deeds, Book 403, pp. 123 and 126.

23. "Agreement between Henry C. Livesey and Herman Clarke and George C. Kobbe, Trustees, April 10, 1886." Construction contract for Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club. Archival Department, Monmouth County Library, Freehold, N.J.

24. Invitation in the collection of the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

25. Kobbe, p. 18.

26. Prentice, p. 13.

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27. Ibid, p. 15; Time, August 14, 1950
28. Prentice, pp. 15-17.
29. Ibid, p. 17.
30. Ibid.
31. "Holcombe Ward, Tennis Star, Dies," New York Times,
January 24, 1967.
32. Time, August 14, 1950.
33. Prentice, p. 19.
34. Wilson, p. 111.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid, p. 112.
37. Ibid, pp. 115-116.
38. Adolf K. Placzek, ed., Macmillan Encyclopedia of
Architects (New York: The Free Press, 1982), vol. 3, pp.541-547.

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National Historic Landmark Nomination Forms: Merion Cricket
Club, Haverford, PA.; Newport Casino, Newport, R.I.;
Manheim (Germantown) Cricket Club, Philadelphia, PA.
History Division, National Park Service, Washington,
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"Specifications Carpentry and Mason Work of Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club accompanying the Agreement between Henry C. Livesey and Herman Clarke and George C. Kobbe, Trustees." Specifications for the Seabright clubhouse prepared by Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, Architects. Archival Department, Monmouth County Library, Freehold, N.J.

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G. Peabody Gardner, Jr., President, Longwood Cricket Club, to Bernon S. Prentice, President, Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, June 23, 1926. Collection of Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

Jones W. Mersereau, President, United States Lawn Tennis Association, to Bernon S. Prentice, President, Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, April 9, 1926. Collection of Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

Julian S. Myrick, Chairman, Davis Cup Selection Committee, United States Lawn Tennis Association, to Bernon S. Prentice, President, Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, April 13, 1926. Collection of Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, Rumson, N.J.

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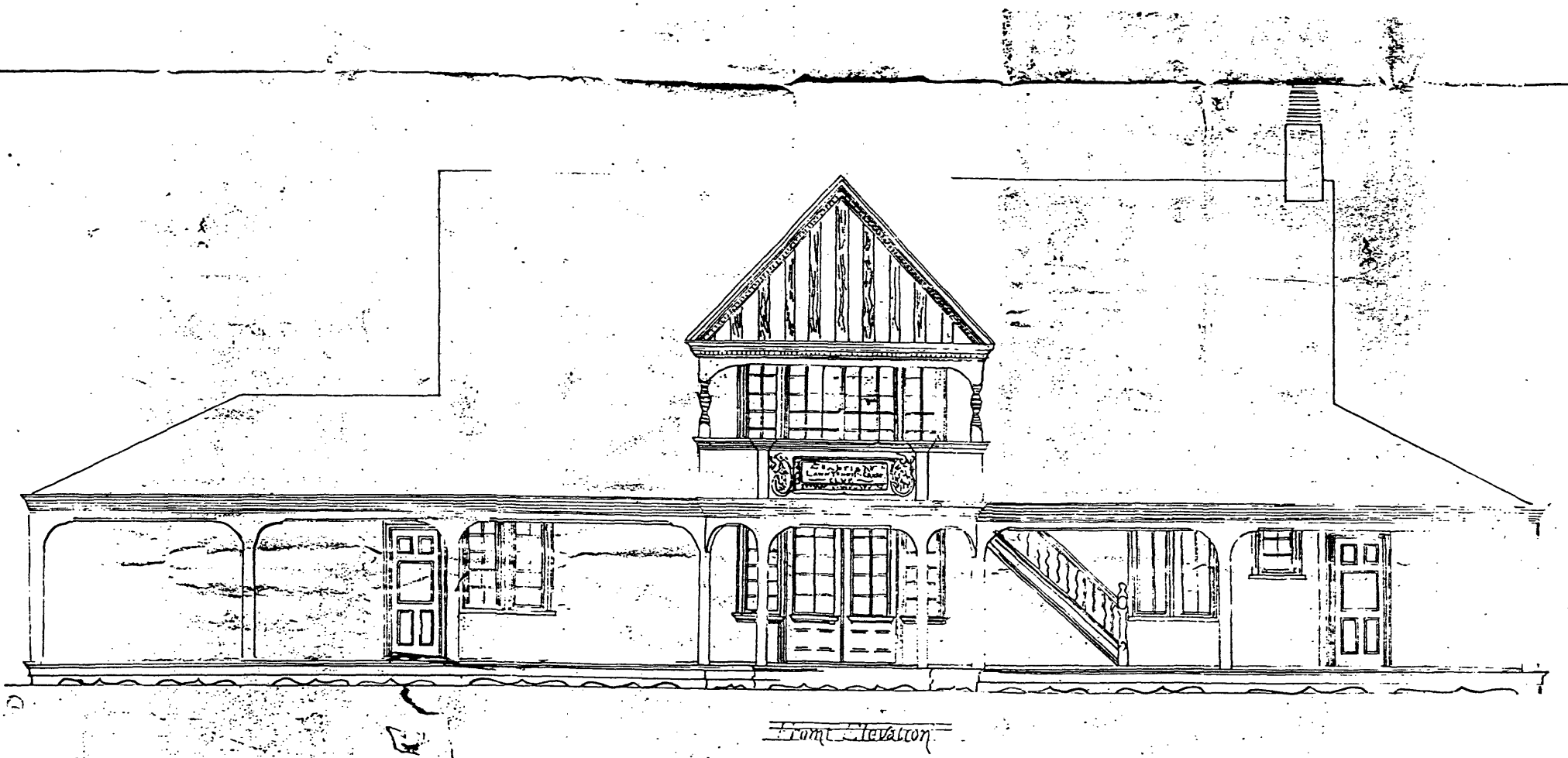
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Boundary Description:

The National Historic Landmark boundary for the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club is identical to that used for the National Register listing for that property. The lines are those of the existing Lot 3, Block 47, as shown on a map titled "Revised Minor Subdivision, Lands of Gillen, Situate Borough of Rumson, Monmouth County, N.J.", dated February 3, 1970 (Figure 8).

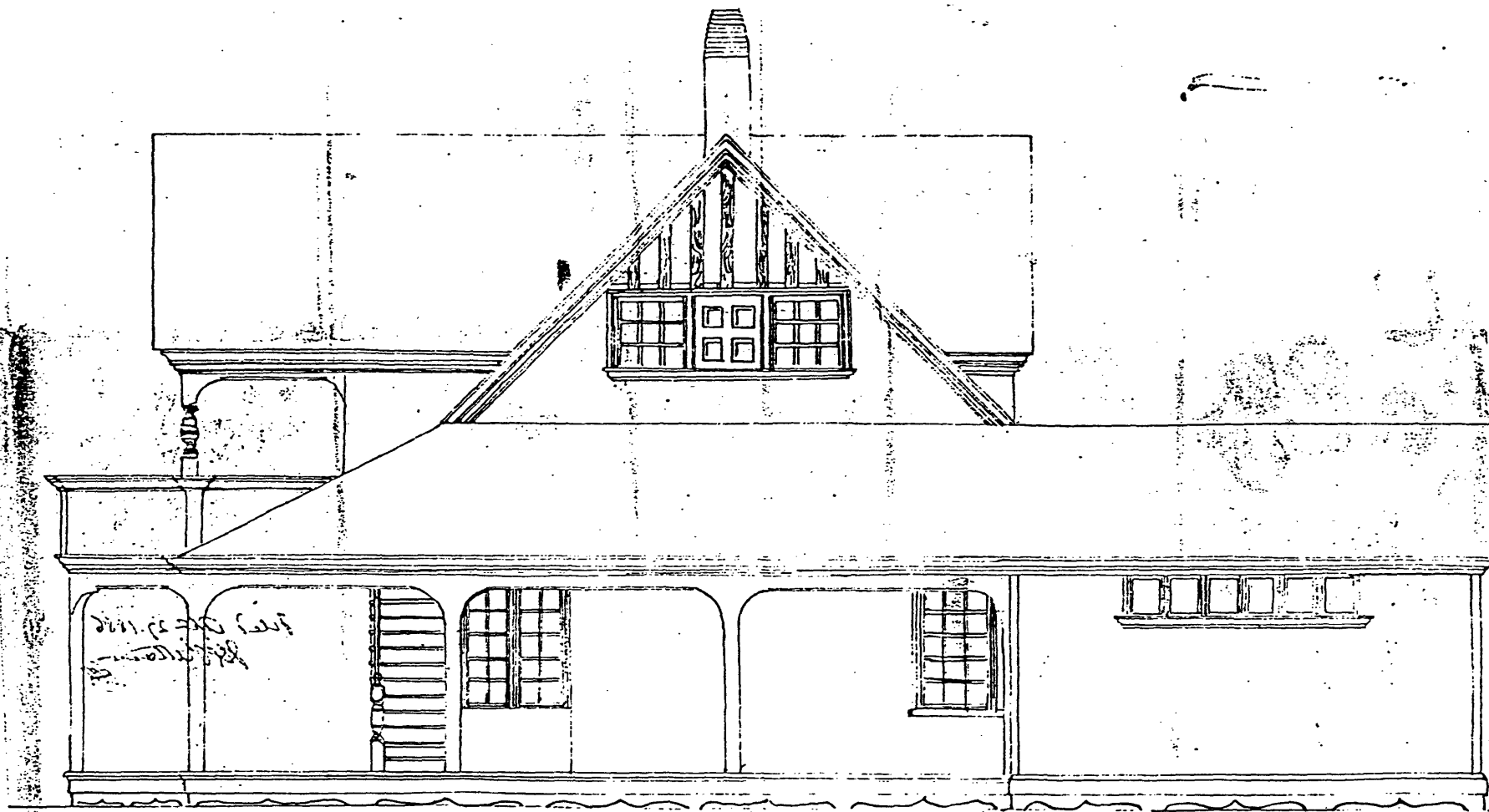
Boundary Justification:

The National Historic Landmark and National Register boundary for the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club has been drawn to enclose both the original property acquired in 1886 (site of the clubhouse and the historic tennis courts) and the parcel donated to the club in 1947 (along the east side of the 1886 grounds). The latter land is visually of a piece with the original Seabright property; it has been included in the boundary for that reason, even though the tennis courts in that area must be considered non-contributing since they postdate 1941. The parcel at the northeast corner of the 1886 grounds (area on Figure 8 labeled "TO BECOME PART OF LOT 3"), which Seabright purchased in 1970, does not have as direct a visual link with the historic property and so has been excluded from the Register boundary for Seabright.



SEABRIGHT LAWN TENNIS AND CRICKET CLUB
RUMSON, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

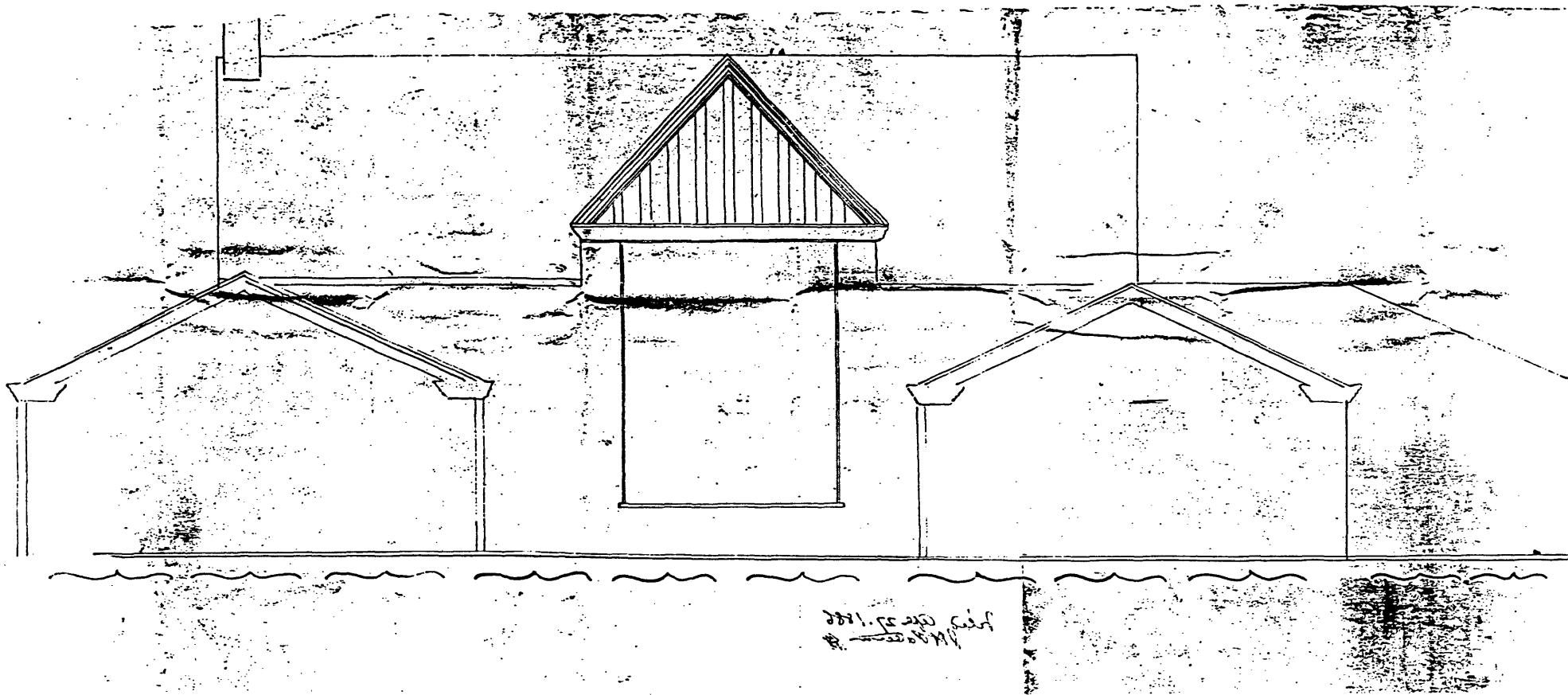
Figure 1: Front Elevation,
Renwick, Aspinwall and
Russell Architects [1886]



Side Elevation

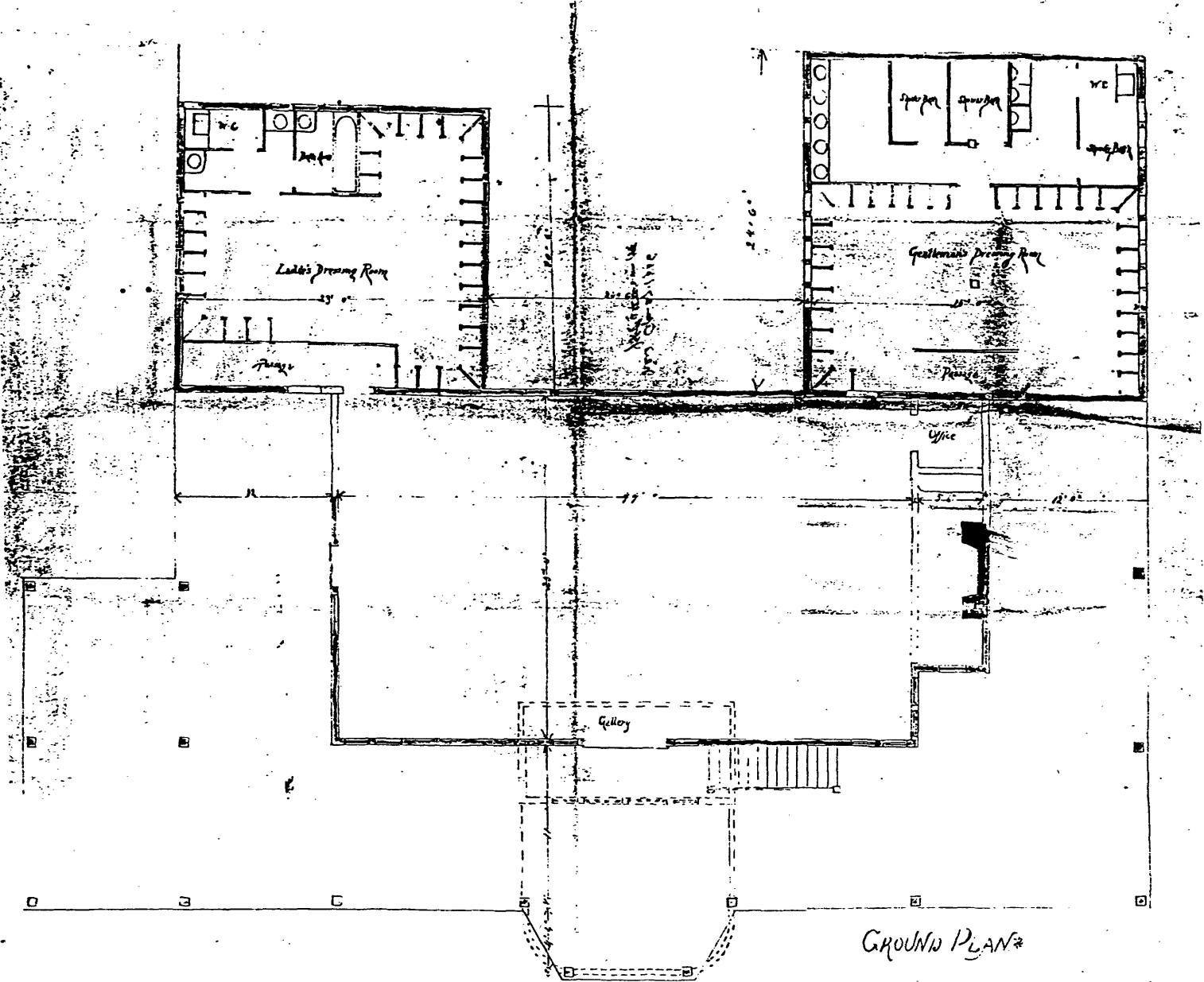
SEABRIGHT LAWN TENNIS AND CRICKET CLUB
RUMSON, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Figure 2: Side Elevation [East],
Renwick, Aspinwall and
Russell Architects [1886]



SEABRIGHT LAWN TENNIS AND CRICKET CLUB
RUMSON, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Figure 3: Rear Elevation,
Renwick, Aspinwall and
Russell Architects [1886]



GROUND PLAN

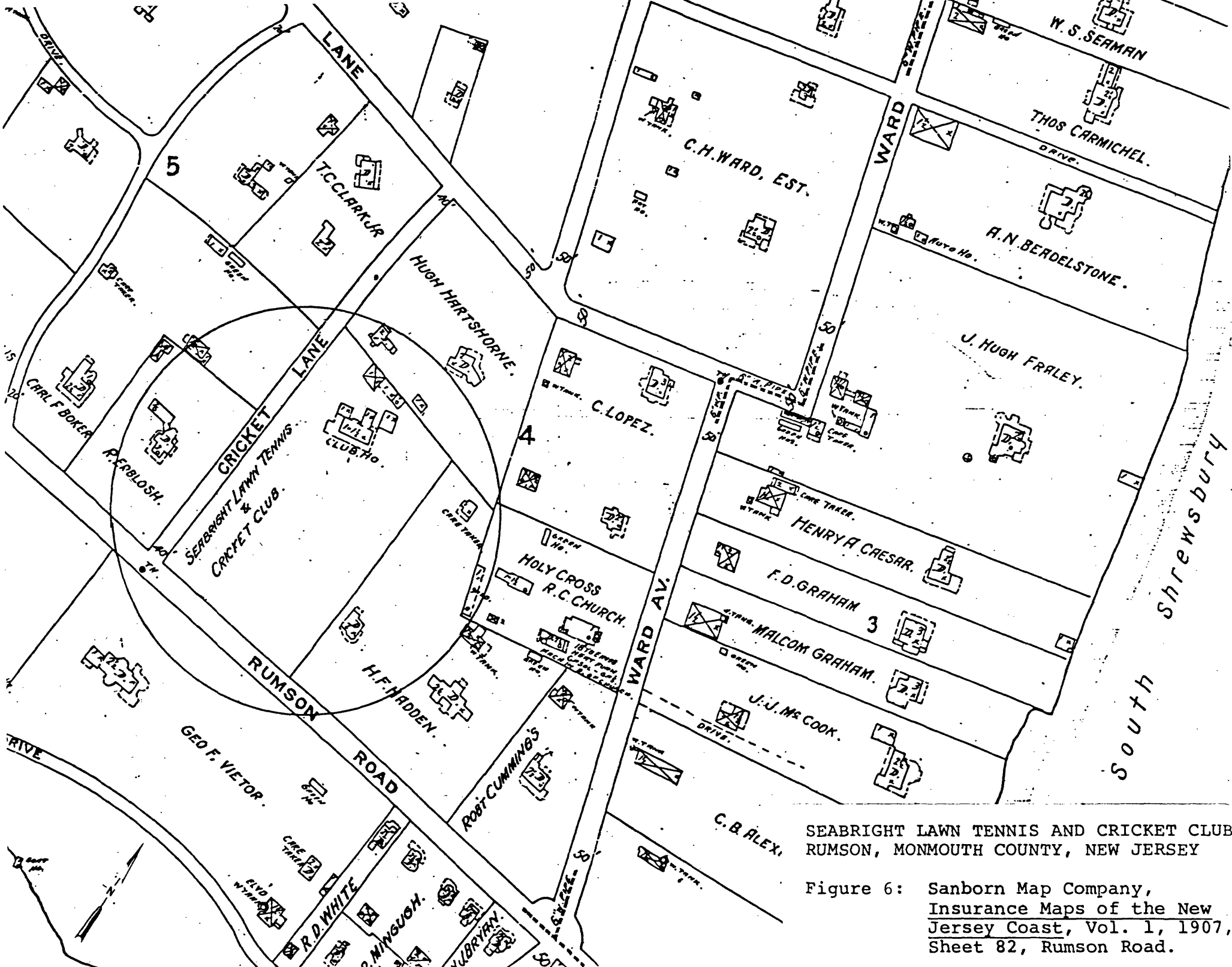
SEABRIGHT LAWN TENNIS AND CRICKET CLUB
 RUMSON, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Figure 4: Ground Plan,
 Renwick, Aspinwall and
 Russell Architects [1886]

PLATE 6



SEABRIGHT LAWN TENNIS AND CRICKET CLUB
RUMSON, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
Figure 5: Wolverton and Bredu,
Atlas of Monmouth County,
1889.



SEABRIGHT LAWN TENNIS AND CRICKET CLUB
RUMSON, MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Figure 6: Sanborn Map Company,
Insurance Maps of the New Jersey Coast, Vol. 1, 1907,
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