

Racquet and Tennis Club  
370 Park Avenue  
(between East 52nd and  
East 53rd Streets)  
New York  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5466

HABS  
NY,  
31-NEYO,  
73-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
801 19th Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

ADDITIONAL  
10-10-00

## RACQUET AND TENNIS CLUB

Address: 370 Park Avenue; between East 52nd and East 53rd Streets; New York; New York County; New York.

Present Owner: Racquet and Tennis Club.

Present Occupant: Racquet and Tennis Club.

Present Use: Private club.

Statement of Significance: Designed by McKim, Mead & White in an eclectic, Italian Renaissance style, the Racquet and Tennis Club is representative of the ornate private clubs constructed in New York during the early twentieth century. Today it performs an important architectural role on Park Avenue as a foil to the Seagram Building and the Lever House.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: The Racquet and Tennis Club was built on what was originally Lots 33-40 1/2. These lots were later combined and numbered Lot 33.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
2/11/1915 Liber 190, page 402.	Goelet Robert W. N.Y. Central R.R. Co.	Agreement
2/11/1915 Liber 190, page 398.	N.Y. State Realty & Terminal Co.	Goelet Robert W.
2/16/1942 Liber 4146, page 387.	Goelet Robert Walton (Exrs. & Trus. of) Cary Guy Carroll Philip (Trustees)	Racquet and Tennis Club
2/16/1942 Liber 4146, page 385.	Goelet Anne Marie (Widow of) Goelet Robert Walton	Racquet and Tennis Club

2. Date of erection: Construction was begun on December 20, 1916, and completed on September 7, 1918; a certificate of occupancy was issued September 13, 1918.
3. Architects: McKim, Mead & White; Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909), William Rutherford Mead (1846-1928), and Stanford White (1853-1906).
4. Builder: Mark Edlitz, 30 East 42nd Street.
5. Original plans and construction: On June 2, 1916, McKim, Mead & White submitted New Building Application 214, which was approved on October 2, 1916. This application specified the following construction, at an estimated cost of \$400,000:

Foundations: concrete, 25 feet deep below curb, resting on rock.

Foundation walls: brick.

Upper walls: brick and stone, mortar of Portland cement.

Floors: cinder concrete reinforced.

Roof material: slag.

Interior floor material: cement and wood.

Interior trim, sash and doors: wood.

Outside window sash and frames: wood.

At the Buildings Department, Municipal Building, New York, New York, there are 33 sheets of blueprints, dated from September 2, 1916, through January 23, 1917, and all labeled "Racquet and Tennis Club. Park Avenue. 52nd to 53rd Street. McKim, Mead and White, Arch'ts 107 Park Ave., New York City, N.Y." These blueprints include plans, framing and plumbing plans, sections, and elevations.

6. Alterations and additions: On April 19, 1937, Alteration Application 1448 was submitted by architects Cross & Cross, 515 Madison Avenue, and was approved on June 17, 1937. The alterations were estimated to cost \$25,000 and included the following work:

The present bank will be enlarged only on the first floor for an area of 47'-0" x 53'-0". The basement will not be enlarged. Certain new interior partitions will be added and some interior structural steel changes made as shown on Drawing F-1. There will be a new passenger elevator from basement to 1st floor. Also two new toilet rooms to be mechanically ventilated with present system. The main entrance is to be enlarged for addition exit means.

This work was begun on June 18, 1937, and finished on September 18, 1937.

On February 1, 1956, Alteration Application 2016, submitted by the office of Alfred Easton Poor, 787 Fifth Avenue, was approved. This work was estimated to cost \$60,000, not including electrical changes and painting, and involved the following changes:

Space now occupied by two shops on Ground Floor and Basement will be merged by removing existing partitions. Two existing stairs between Basement and Ground Floor will be removed and wells floored over; new stair will be located in space originally framed to receive it. Existing toilets in Basement to be removed, and new toilets and air conditioning equipment will be installed there. New bank counter, and glass and metal vestibule will be installed on ground floor.

This work was completed by July 5, 1957.

On May 24, 1957, Alteration Application 617, submitted by Fellheimer and Wagner, 155 East 42nd Street, was approved. The estimated cost of the work was \$80,000 and the following alterations were to be made:

New Banking Room Fixtures on First Floor.  
New Mezzanine Work Area of 2000 sq. ft. over First Floor.  
Re-arrangement of Toilet and Coat Rooms in Basement.  
Installation of New Air Conditioning System.

This construction was begun on May 28, 1957, and completed by September 9, 1958. In 1963 alterations to a store front was made by Superior Metal Store Fronts Corp.

7. Important old views: See illustrations listed in bibliography below.

B. Sources of information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Records at the Plans Desk, Buildings Department, Municipal Building, New York, New York.

2. Secondary and published sources:

[Advertisement by Wm. H. Jackson Co.] Architecture, XXXVIII (August, 1918), i.

A Monograph of the Work of McKim, Mead & White. Student's ed. New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1925.

Racquet and Tennis Club, Club Book for 1918. New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1918 (?).

"The Racquet and Tennis Club, New York," The American Architect, The Architectural Review, CXXXI (May 24, 1922), 1 plate.

"Racquet and Tennis Club, Park Avenue, New York," Architecture, XXXVIII (August, 1918), plates CXXVI-CXXLI.

3. Likely sources not yet investigated:

Files of the Racquet and Tennis Club. It was not possible to obtain permission to see this material.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural interest and merit: Designed by McKim, Mead & White in an eclectic, Italian Renaissance style, the Racquet and Tennis Club is representative of the ornate private clubs constructed in New York City in the early twentieth century. Today it performs an important architectural role on Park Avenue as a foil to the Seagram Building and the Lever House.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories: Five stories.
2. Number of bays: The front (east) facade is eleven bays wide; the side (north and south) facades are each five bays wide.
3. Over-all dimensions: The front and rear facades measure approximately 200'-10"; the sides measure approximately 100'-0".
4. Layout, shape: In plan the building is rectangular with slight projections at the north and south ends of the west side.
5. Foundations: According to the original building application, the foundations were to be of concrete.
6. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls of the first story are of rusticated stone; above, the walls are of yellow brick, laid up in running bond with occasional headers randomly placed. There are stone quoins at the corners of the building and a belt course between third and fourth stories. There is a stone cartouche with the club's insignia and a flagpole in the center bay between the third and fourth stories.

7. Structural system, framing: Structural steel.
8. Porches: There is a two story, three bay wide loggia at the second and third floor levels at the center of the Park Avenue facade.
9. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The center doorway, the club entrance, has a revolving door with two small windows and a grille above. A canvas canopy extends to the street. The remodeled doorways to the office and bank both have modern double glass and metal doors. In the most westerly bay of the East 52nd Street facade is a round-headed opening with iron gate which opens into a drive through to a similar opening on East 53rd Street. Opening onto the loggia on the Park Avenue facade are pairs of eight-light glass doors with transoms.
  - b. Windows: Park Avenue facade: On the first floor the windows of the four most southerly bays have been replaced with modern windows with metal sash. The windows in the bays flanking the central entrance have one-over-one light double-hung sash. In the four most northerly bays the original wooden sash has been partially replaced with modern aluminum windows. On the second story in each bay there is a pair of windows with one-over-one light double-hung sash and single-light transoms, having rusticated stone architraves and sills. On the third floor level the windows have one-over-one light double-hung sash, with some having louvres instead of glass; all windows have stone architraves and sills. On the fourth floor there is a rusticated blind arcade; in the center five bays there are small windows which have one-over-one light double-hung sash, with brick lintels and stone sills. On the fifth floor the windows have one-over-one light double-hung sash and stone sills; there is a stone frieze with crossed-racquet motif between windows.

East 52nd Street facade; On the first floor level the window in the most easterly bay is similar to the adjoining ones on the Park Avenue facade; the next two windows have two-over-two light double-hung sash; and the most westerly window has one-over-one light double-hung sash. Windows on the second floor level are similar to those on the Park Avenue facade. On the third floor the windows have one-over-one light, with possibly fixed sash. There are no windows on the fourth and fifth floors. At the fifth floor level there is a stone frieze with crossed racquet motif.

East 53rd Street facade: On the first floor the window in the most easterly bay is similar to the adjoining window on the Park Avenue facade; windows in the other bays have one-over-one light double-hung sash and iron grilles. On the second floor in the most easterly bay there is an adjoining pair of windows, each with one-over-one light double-hung sash and transom, flanked by smaller windows with one-over-one light double-hung sash and transom. Windows in the next two bays have one-over-one light double-hung sash; the two most westerly bays each have a pair of ten-light windows, with possibly fixed sash, and a four-light transom. On the third floor in the second and third bays from the east there is a total of three one-over-one-over-one light windows; in the next bay to the west is a horizontal single-light window. On the fourth floor level in the fourth bay from the east are two windows, one above the other, with one-over-one light double-hung sash. At the fifth floor level there is a stone frieze with crossed racquet motif.

10. Roof:

- a. Shape: Flat.
- b. Cornice: There is an ornately carved stone cornice with a stone balustrade above.

C. Description of Interior

Note: It was not possible to obtain permission from the club to see the interior. The description of the original plan of the building given below is taken from plans published in "Racquet and Tennis Club, Park Avenue, New York," Architecture, XXXVIII (August, 1918).

1. Floor plans, by floor: On the first floor there were shops on the east side, a billiard room in the southwest corner and two dining rooms in the northwest corner; there was a central stairway. On the second floor there was a library in the southwest corner, a card room in the northwest corner, and lounges, a cafe and a dining room along the east side. On the third floor there was a dressing room on the south side, a gymnasium and a "plunge" on the east, and three squash courts at the northwest corner. On the fourth floor there were two tennis courts, two racquet courts, and one squash court. Plans of the fifth floor were not published.

D. Site and surroundings:

1. Orientation and general setting: The entrance facade faces

east onto Park Avenue.

2. Sidewalks: Concrete, contiguous to building.

Prepared by Diana S. Waite  
Architectural Historian  
April, 1968

ADDENDUM TO:  
RACQUET & TENNIS CLUB  
370 Park Avenue, East Fifty-second-Fifty-third Streets  
New York City  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5466

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
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