

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Archmere

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Archmere

other names/site number The Patio; N-1526

## 2. Location

street & number 3600 Philadelphia Pike N/A not for publication

city or town Claymont N/A vicinity

state Delaware code DE county New Castle code 003 zip code 19703

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Archmere  
Name of Property

New Castle, Delaware  
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☒ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
2	0	objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic; Single Dwelling  
Domestic; Secondary Structure  
Landscape; Street Furniture/Object  
Transportation; Road-related

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion; Church School  
Landscape; Street Furniture/Object  
Transportation; Road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Limestone  
roof Terra Cotta  
other Stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attached continuation sheets.

Name of Property

## 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.)

- ☐ 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.
- ☒ 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.)

Property is:

- ☒ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

## Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

## Period of Significance

1916-1932

## Significant Dates

N/A

## Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

John Jakob Raskob

## Cultural Affiliation

N/A

## Architect/Builder

Alexander James Harper and Clay McClure

## Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

## Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- N/A preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- N/A previously listed in the National Register
- N/A previously determined eligible by the National Register
- N/A designated a National Historic Landmark
- N/A recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- N/A recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

## Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Archmere  
Name of Property

New Castle, Delaware  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Approximately 15 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Not available at this time.

1 

Zone	Easting	Northing
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2 

Zone	Easting	Northing
------	---------	----------

3 

Zone	Easting	Northing
------	---------	----------

4 

Zone	Easting	Northing
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☐ See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Steven H. Moffson, Architectural Historian

organization State Historic Preservation Office date March 1992

street & number 15 The Green telephone 302-739-5685

city or town Dover state DE zip code 19901

**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.

Not available at this time.

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Archmere Academy, Inc.

street & number 3600 Philadelphia Pike telephone 302-798-6632

city or town Claymont state DE zip code 19703

**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 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Archmere

Other Property Owners:

Mark A. McNulty  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 778  
Dover, Delaware 19903

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Slippery  
Arch  
Affirming

Archmere was designed as the Italian Renaissance-style country estate of John Jakob Raskob by the Wilmington architects Alexander James Harper and Clay McClure. The Patio, as the house is known, was built in 1916-18 and is located in the town of Claymont in northern Delaware, overlooking the Delaware River. Harper and McClure's design was modelled after the palazzi of fifteenth-century Florence, which were organized around a courtyard. At Archmere, the south and west sides are devoted to service rooms and circulation spaces with the north and east sides given to large rooms for formal gatherings. The second floor contains bedrooms opening onto the courtyard and the third floor above contains smaller servant's quarters. In 1932, the property was purchased from Raskob by the Norbertine Order which conducts the present Archmere Academy. Following the establishment of the academy, The Patio functioned both as an academic building and a boys dormitory. More recently, five academic halls have been erected on the property. The Patio is reserved for special functions and also serves as a dormitory for the Norbertine teaching staff.

The exterior of the Patio is designed in the Italian Renaissance style of architecture. It is a block of white Kentucky limestone that is supported by a framework of structural steel and brick piers and rests on a poured concrete foundation. Eight symmetrically-placed limestone chimneys rise from the orange-tiled hip roof. The first floor windows maintain a twelve-over-twelve configuration and have plain stone surrounds and hoods. A limestone balustrade, like that on the second floor loggia, is located below the windows. The high ceilings of the first floor create an awkward space between the first and second floor windows which has been filled with various string courses and decorated panels. The second floor windows contain eight lights-over-twelve and have surrounds similar, though smaller, than those of the first floor. The cornice is molded with two courses of dentils and a frieze that includes two alternating types of rosettes. Located between the windows and incorporated into the

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frieze, are limestone shields bearing the image of stylized oak trees, symbol of Pope Julius II's delle Rovere family lineage.

The symmetrically arranged main or west facade (while not a true west, the design intent was to orient the estate to the north-south flowing Delaware River) is comprised of an eleven-bay, three-part elevation with a seven-bay central pavilion. The one-story porte cochere is a rectangular block with a central-arched opening which is flanked by paired, fluted pilasters. The entire block is again flanked by paired, fluted pilasters and supported by eight composite columns. It is crowned with a balustrade like those which are situated below the windows.

*used originally doors?*

In keeping with the symmetry of the west elevation, the south facade is a seven-bay, three-part arrangement with two projecting corner pavilions. These pavilions feature a Palladian window at ground level and, on the second floor, a balustraded double window above. Reflecting the five bays of the music room, a one-story arcaded porch with groin vaults projects from the center of the east facade. Balustrades crown the porch and line the semi-circular fence that forms its base.

The eight-bay north and south elevations contain Palladian windows at each end with a second-story balustraded window. An entrance is contained on each of these elevations, though there is no central design element, such as the porches that exist on the east and west facades.

*which once the fountain?*

At the heart of the Patio, encased within the white limestone walls, is the two-story, arcaded courtyard. This grand interior space is patterned after the courtyards of Florentine palaces and is the defining element of the Raskob estate. Measuring forty-eight feet square, Archmere's courtyard features a tiled mosaic letter "A" in the center of its Euville-limestone floor. It is surrounded on all sides by Corinthian columns and corner piers which support a two-story loggia. Marble piers with

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Corinthian capitals at the second level support the trabeated wooden roof. Each of the loggia's five-bay elevations is accentuated at the first floor level with Formosa marble rondels of the Rose of Riario in the arch spandrel. A marble balustrade lines the second level.

The north, south, east and west loggias each consist of seven groin vaults which are corbelled into the flanking wall and are supported by marble pilasters. Together with the Corinthian columns, they define the nine foot vaulted unit. The vaults are painted cobalt blue with red checkered highlights and contrast sharply with the pink marble floor, columns, pilasters and walls. Lining these walls at regular intervals are both arched doorways and blind arches which include delicate mosaic panels and rondels. These rondels featured relief portraits of the Raskob children but have since been removed from the estate.

The upper loggia is no less ornate with its marble floor, posts, pilasters and dado. Marble also comprises the heavy door surrounds which include a plain entablature with an egg and dart ovolo molding. Red and green stenciled patterns are employed extensively on the second level. These abstracted foliated forms are found at cornice level and outlining doorways. The ceiling is constructed of heavy, dark oak beams and, like the groin vaults below, contrasts with the color of the surrounding materials. The cornice is also constructed from this dark wood and consists of heavy brackets and carved details. Above this, several courses of terra-cotta roof tile can be seen from the courtyard and loggia.

The courtyard is sheltered from inclement weather by a fifty-foot-square, stained-glass skylight which is ornamented with a sunburst and various foliated forms. The mechanical systems, which were modelled on the Pan American Union Building in Washington, D.C. of 1910, allow the glass enclosure to be retracted and placed in lofts on the third floor. These lofts



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are hidden by the hip roof and still contain the mechanical equipment. In 1977, however, a protective, though transparent, covering was placed over the skylight which prevents it from being retracted.

As one enters the Patio from the main entrance, the first major room encountered is the den. Measuring 16 X 17 feet, the den functioned as one of Raskob's offices. It has a wood floor, corner fireplace and wood dado. Above the dado is a band of fabricoid, an artificial leather product manufactured by Du Pont for use in automobile interiors. The den, however, is actually part of a complex of rooms that include a reception room, or secretary's office, a vestibule and bathroom.

The children's playroom is located on the northwest corner of the building and measures 35 x 23 feet. It is primarily used as a storeroom and, except for a Colonial Revival mantel, retains little of its original ornamentation.

Adjoining the playroom is the library, one of the grandest interior spaces in the house. The 33 x 23 foot room is fully panelled in the Corinthian order with American walnut. Pilasters and bronze sconces flank the doorways, bookcase and grey Formosa marble mantel. The entablature is complete with triglyphs and metopes, dentils and modillions and a cyma versa molding. The barrel-vaulted ceiling contains gilded coffer-like forms which are highlighted with rosettes, urns and foliated designs. The library's two richly carved, Renaissance-style tables date from the Raskob period of ownership.

The living room, which is now used as a chapel, is situated on the northeast corner of the building and measures 33 X 26 feet. The room is fully panelled in American white oak and has a marble mantel like that found in the library. The ceiling is encrusted with ornamental plasterwork. Large beams, which bear

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decorative foliated forms, divide the ceiling into nine sections, each containing more delicate foliated plasterwork.

The music room is the largest of these primary rooms and measures 41 X 26 feet. It is located on the east side of the building and can be entered from either the living room or the dining room. The music room opens onto the courtyard, like all of the major rooms, and is also on axis with the main entrance to the west and the semi-circular terrace to the east. Glazed walls on the east and west sides contain five pairs of French doors, providing abundant natural light. A Wette-Mignon pipe organ, which dominates the north wall, is the central focus of the room. Its ornately-carved wood screen rises from the floor to the ceiling and is in the form of a triumphal arch. The pipes, which were set in the walls during construction, have since been removed. A marble mantel similar to those of the library and dining room is located on the south wall, opposite the organ. The floor is quarter-grained oak laid in a parquet pattern and the chandelier and matching sconces are fashioned from brass and bronze. Heavy wood beams divide the ceiling into rectangular units that are ornamented with painted rosettes and other floral designs. The actual beams contain images of cherub-like figures, urns and floral decoration. This dark ceiling, with its beige and green decoration, is set-off against the purple walls.

The dining room, which measures 34 X 26 feet, occupies the southeast corner of the house and is richly panelled with English oak. Pilasters rise from the dado level and, like the cornice, are ornamented with a rich variety of foliated and classical motifs. The north wall contains a Levanto marble fireplace which is more austere decorated than most other mantels in the house. It consists of two flat pilasters and two large volutes which support the entablature. The wood floor is laid in a herringbone pattern and the ceiling is constructed with cast pewter which forms a pattern of interlocking squares. These squares are overlaid with burnished gold leaf accented with hues of green and

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orange. The room is illuminated by eight pairs of pewter sconces and the table and two sideboards are original to the house, having been commissioned by Mrs. Raskob. Much of the Raskob's furniture, which was produced by Thomas D. Watleton of New York, survives at Archmere. *18 Chairs*

First floor service spaces are grouped on the south and west sides of the building and are considerably smaller than the large rooms they serve. The butler's pantry, which measures 17 X 22 feet, adjoins the dining room and opens onto the courtyard. It contains wood and glass cabinets for the Raskob's china and crystal, and a large silver safe for their flatware. A callboard above the entrance to the scullery informed the servants of the room from which they were summoned. *Warning Over*

The 11 X 19 foot breakfast room also opens onto the courtyard and features an unadorned mantel and a barrel-vaulted ceiling with flat plasterwork designs. The scullery, which measures 11 X 12 feet, has been greatly altered since the Raskob period of ownership. The kitchen is the largest service room and measures 18 X 23 feet. Few of the original elements remain except for the white tile walls and the orange hood above the stove.

A third pantry is located west of the kitchen and, at the southeast corner of the house, is the servants' dining room. The servants' bathroom lies to the north and opens onto the butler's bedroom and the coat room. Each of these rooms have been significantly altered, most serving different functions than those for which they were designed.

The entrance hall is a 10 X 25 foot barrel-vaulted passage which links the porte cochere to the courtyard. The marble floor is echoed in the marble dado and composite pilasters and contrasts sharply with the ocher-colored walls. The vault features plaster coffer-like ans are decorated with classical and foliated

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forms. The barrel-vaulted stair halls which flank the main entrance also feature coffer-like plasterwork.

*Raskob*  
The second floor contains what were once the bedrooms of the Raskob family as well as smaller servants' rooms, all of which were are used as sleeping accommodations for the Norbertine teaching staff. Mrs. Raskob's suite was located at the northwest corner of the house. Almost as large as the dining room below, the bedroom includes a fireplace with Colonial Revival mantel and wainscoting with adjoining private bath and dressing area. Situated at the southeast corner of the house, Mr. Raskob's suite also contained a fireplace and mantel, wainscoting and adjoining bath and dressing area. *Living Room to Underneath*

The third floor is small and hidden from view on the exterior elevations by the tiled hip roof. It is recessed and is not visible from either the first or second floors of the loggia. The skylight is visible from the main landing of the third floor and many surrounding third floor rooms. These rooms are small and were originally designated as servants quarters, the nurse's room and the infirmary. The original brass lamps can still be seen in many of these rooms.

The basement, now used largely for storage, originally contained the Raskob's service and entertainment rooms. As one enters the basement, the first rooms encountered are the guest bathrooms. Other service rooms include the boiler room, with intact furnace, the laundry room and the well room from which cool air was taken and recirculated throughout the house during the summer months. Little of the original appearance of these rooms survives.

The bowling alley, located along the north wall, contained three lanes with an automatic ball return. These lanes, as well as the mechanical elements, have been removed due to water and

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termite damage. However, ample small-width wood flooring and fragments of the ball return survive.

The smoking room is located at the northeast corner of the house and is separated from the bowling alley by a large fireplace. One enters from either side of this hearth. The room is furnished in a masculine manner with heavy wainscoting, panelled walls and a wood beam ceiling. Unlike the smoking room, the adjoining billiard room has been significantly altered during its service as a Norbertine classroom. Elements of the billiard table are presently located in the smoking room.

The two-story, seven-bay, limestone garage is located southwest of the main house, to which it is connected by an underground tunnel. The Manor, as the garage is now known, is a U-shaped building with two, one-story, three-bay, cross-gable wings on the south side. These establish a rear courtyard. The north facade of the building contains seven arcaded bays, which spring from decoratively carved stone piers. Large, cast iron electric lamps are located in the spandrels, and above each of the arches is a twelve-light casement window. The orange-tiled hip roof matches that of the Patio.

An auto repair shop, of which the service pits are still in place, a car wash, furniture repair shop and laundry facilities were located at the basement and first floor levels of the garage. Servants quarters were located on the second floor. The building presently serves as the academy's art studio and has subsequently undergone several minor alterations. The seven northern bays, three south-facing bays and several windows have been filled in with a combination of block, glass block and casement windows. Modern lighting and various teaching apparatus, such as chalkboards, have also been added to the interior. Most of the interior spaces, however, have not been altered and retain the vaulted ceilings and beige-tiled walls and floors which reflect the Raskob period of ownership.

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The thirty-six acre estate is bounded on the west, along the Philadelphia Pike, by an eight-foot ornate cast iron fence and limestone piers. The fence is interrupted at its center by the main entrance which is composed of a recessed, elliptical limestone wall capped with balls and urns. The main automobile gate is flanked by two pedestrian entrances at the center of the curved wall. This gate is in line with the main west-west axis of the house. A smaller, south entrance gate is on axis with the garage. The drive, which circles around the north side of garage before winding through the porte cochere of the main house, is paved with lavender bricks laid in a herringbone pattern. The gates and fence and the drive are contributing elements to this historic resource.

According to photographs taken shortly after the construction of the main house, the estate was landscaped in a picturesque manner with numerous large, mature trees as well as smaller trees, shrubs and hedges planted during this period. Many of the larger trees survive though much of the less substantial foliage has been removed. Elements of the Roskob's small, formal garden, located southeast of the house, still exist. A stand of large evergreens on the north side of the garage, planted during its construction, survive. Several dwellings and outbuildings existed on the estate prior to the construction of Archmere.

The south side of the estate has experienced the greatest change and is presently the center of the Archmere Academy's campus. Six buildings are organized around the main parking lot: St. Norbert Hall, an administrative and academic building; the Performing Arts Center; the Manor (art department); the Justin E. Diny Science Center; the Gymnasium; and the Field House. The Academy's football field and track are located east of the Patio and the tennis courts are located on the site of the earlier Roskob tennis courts, northeast of the house. The main lawn,

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west of the house, is a level expanse of well-manicured grass similar in appearance to that maintained during the Raskob period of ownership.

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As a financial officer in the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Company and the General Motors Corporation, John J. Raskob reorganized accounting and auditing procedures and developed new business strategies and techniques, making possible the great expansion of these companies which followed World War I. Raskob's financial achievements enabled him capture the Democratic national chairmanship, assisting Alfred E. Smith's 1928 presidential bid. Campaign headquarters were located at Archmere, Raskob's Claymont, Delaware estate. The house was designed in the Italian Renaissance style and, through ornamentation and room usage, articulates both the owner's wealth and his interest in numerous leisure pursuits. In many ways Archmere is representative of the country houses which were erected in the Brandywine River valley and throughout America from 1890 to 1940. As an example of the country house and through the numerous accomplishments of Raskob, Archmere is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion B and C and contributes to The Delaware Statewide Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan under the themes of individuals and architecture for the period 1880-1940+/-.

John Jakob Raskob was born March 19, 1879 in Lockport, New York to Anna Frances (Moran) and John Raskob, a cigar maker. The oldest of four children, he was reared in a Catholic household. After graduating high school, Raskob attended a local business college where learned accounting and stenography. After several brief secretarial jobs, Raskob entered the office of Arthur Moxham, head of a steel company in Nova Scotia and former business associate of Pierre S. du Pont. Upon returning to the United States, Raskob was hired by du Pont as a bookkeeper and, later, his personal secretary.

In 1902, Pierre du Pont and his cousins Alfred I. and T. Coleman du Pont assumed control of the family firm, E. I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Company. Raskob, demonstrating his financial acumen, worked closely with Pierre to transform the small



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explosives company into a modern enterprise. They purchased their largest competitor, Laflin and Rand and, by 1904, controlled two thirds of the black powder and dynamite capacity and all of the smokeless powder capacity in the United States.

Following this expansion, Pierre S. du Pont accepted the post of treasurer and Raskob continued as his assistant. Strengthening the company's financial offices, they created large accounting and auditing departments and encouraged stockholder reinvestment. In 1909, Pierre became acting president of the company and Raskob assumed the post of treasurer, managing the company's expansion following the outbreak of World War I.

In 1914, both Pierre and Raskob invested in the General Motors Corporation. As market turned downward following the war, Raskob arranged for the Du Pont Company to buy \$25 million worth of General Motors stock. In return, General Motors president William C. Durant agreed to turn over the financial management of the company to Du Pont interests. Raskob then resigned as treasurer of the Du Pont Company to become the chairman of the finance committee of the General Motors Corporation. Raskob introduced modern accounting and auditing procedures into General Motors and the American automobile industry. In 1919, he established the General Motors Acceptance Corporation which provided credit to dealers and customers. This program encouraged the installment buying of automobiles and, for the first time, made the purchase of a motor vehicle affordable to large number of Americans.

Raskob launched an aggressive expansion program following the World War I, raising capital from the Du Pont Company, Nobel Explosives Trades and J. P. Morgan and Company. When the September 1920 recession hit, Raskob was able avoid bankruptcy by using these funds to cover current debts. However, this could not sustain the auto maker which had incurred \$30 million in dept. Raskob arranged for the Du Pont Company and J. P. Morgan

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and Company to supply the needed capital in exchange for a large block of Durant's stock holdings and his retirement as president.

Pierre du Pont became president of General Motors and appointed F. Donaldson Brown, successor to Raskob as Du Pont treasurer, to manage the company's finances. Though Raskob continued to shape dividend policy and the company's financial structure, he was given little involvement in the massive reorganization which soon made General Motors one of the largest manufacturing companies in the world. Raskob turned to outside investments, to accepting directorships of various corporations and to cultivating an interest in politics.

In 1928, Raskob resigned from General Motors to become the Democratic national chairman with Alfred E. Smith's presidential campaign headquarters located at Archmere. Raskob remained close to Smith, following his loss to Hoover, and both men joined to build the Empire State Building in 1929, then the world's tallest building. Raskob remained active in politics, attempting to block Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 party nomination and then opposing the New Deal. At this time, he began to travel widely, reorganize his investments and contribute to civic and Catholic causes. These contributions led to his appointment of Private Chamberlain in the Papal Household in 1928 and he was later twice knighted by the Pope.

Raskob married Helena Springer Green of Galena, Maryland on June 18, 1906. They had thirteen children: John Jakob, William Frederick, Helena Mary, Elizabeth Ann, Robert Pierre, Inez Yvonne, Margaret Lucy, Josaphine Juanita, Nina Barbara, Catherine Lorina (who died in infancy), Patsy Virginia, Mary Louise and Benjamin Green. Raskob died on October 15, 1950 at Pioneer Point Farms, his Centreville, Maryland estate, and he is buried in New Cathedral Cemetery in Wilmington, Delaware. At the time of Raskob's death, Pioneer Point Farms was purchased by the Union of

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Soviet Socialist Republics and is now owned by the Republic of Russia. It serves as country retreat for the embassy staff.

In 1873, George Troutman purchased the land on which the present Archmere Academy is situated. He named the parcel "Archmere," after a natural arch formed by trees along the Delaware River. After Troutman's death, his daughter, Virginia Smith, sold the property, which consisted of approximately seventy acres, to Raskob for \$27,000. Improvements were made upon the two-and-one-half-story Gothic Revival Mansion House of 1840 and the Raskob's moved in on August 1, 1910. After their fourth child was born in Mansion House, it became apparent that the Raskobs needed a larger residence. It was decided to raze Mansion House and construct a larger residence on that site overlooking the river. On February 2, 1916, the Raskobs temporarily relocated to Woodsedge, an adjacent property which was purchased from Ida Carr Addicks. The Patio, as the new residence at Archmere was called, was begun that same year and completed in 1918.

By 1930, Raskob's ties to Wilmington and the du Ponts had loosened and in 1932, as Archmere was becoming encircled by development, Raskob sold the estate for \$300,000 and moved to a larger estate on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The property was purchased by the Norbertine Fathers of St. Norbert Abbey in DePere, Wisconsin with the purpose of establishing a Norbertine school for boys.

Norbert of Xanten established a religious community in Premontre, France where priests could cultivate an ascetic life and set forth to preach spiritual renewal and administer the sacraments in parish churches. Forty priests professed their vows at Premontre in 1121, marking the inception of the Premonstratensian Order. During the Middle Ages, several hundred Norbertine abbey's and priories were established throughout Europe and, by the end of the nineteenth century, in India and

*Building  
now  
used  
for  
school*

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the United States. On September 28, 1898, the first Norbertine priory in the United States was founded in Depere, Wisconsin and St. Norbert College was established that same year.

By 1930, the Norbertine Order was working toward underwriting an east coast venture and, in 1932, Abbot Bernard Pennings happened upon Archmere. Its cloistered halls were ideal for religious teaching and Abbot Pennings travelled to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago meet with Raskob and settle on a price. This was approved by the Diocese of Wilmington and the new school opened on September 14, 1932. The present Archmere Academy is a Catholic, college preparatory school for men and women in grades nine through twelve.

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American country houses were erected by the upper class from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the outset of World War II. Fueled by the increased wealth in this country and various "back to nature movements," these large estates were essentially symbols of status, designed to guarantee one's place in a given caste. Built in clusters and situated on large tracts of land, these grand houses functioned as foils against against the lifestyles of this new American elite.

Between 1870 and 1900, the national wealth in this country rose from \$30,400 million to \$126,700 million and, by 1914, it had doubled again to \$254,200 million.<sup>1</sup> This dramatic increase in capital was controlled by a small group of individuals (40,000 families in 1910 or less than 1% of the population) and defined a growing upper class. By 1910, there were 15,190 families with incomes of more than \$50,000, a figure which could easily support

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<sup>1</sup>E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment (New York: Random House, 1969), 110.

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the construction and maintenance of a country house.<sup>2</sup> This affluence also allowed the upper class to spend considerably more time on leisure pursuits such as travelling to Europe or collecting art. Moreover, as Mark Alan Hewitt, observed "this new plutocracy began to acquire land on a grand scale during the late nineteenth century--and land was the oldest standard of wealth and status."<sup>3</sup>

Modelled after English baronial estates, the country houses of America's new landed gentry were often situated on hundreds or thousands of acres of land. Unlike their English counterparts, these estates were not dependent upon agricultural production but were purchased for leisure pursuits such as playing polo, racing, yachting and hunting driven game. Biltmore, George Washington Vanderbilt's North Carolina estate of 1888-95, maintained a large-scale agricultural complex but most country estates featured fanciful farm complexes to satisfy a bucolic sense of nostalgia as well as an interest in agriculture. The du Pont farm at Winterthur, Delaware included a pedigree Holstein herd, 250 Herefords, 100 dogs, 100 Dorset sheep, 45 horses and over 2,000 poultry.

Country houses primarily served as manifestations of wealth and leisure, usually accommodating only seasonal residence. "Incessant travel--around the United States, Europe, the Far East and even South America--was a condition of existence for many of America's wealthiest families at the turn of the century. After the fall opera season in New York, a wealthy family might winter in Florida or Georgia, return to the Hudson River or Newport in the Spring, sail for Europe in the early summer and finally

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<sup>2</sup>Mark Alan Hewitt, The Architects and the American Country House, 1890-1940 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 12.

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return to New York via Bar Harbor or Newport."<sup>4</sup> At home, entertainment was found in abundance as America's wealthy elite developed a passion for indoor sporting games. William Astor's New York estate, Ferncliff, featured a "playhouse" consisting of an indoor tennis court, two squash courts and a swimming pool. Bowling was extremely popular with both women and men and alleys were common to large estates including Biltmore, Lyndhurst in New York and Alfred I. du Pont's Nemours in Delaware. By 1910, automobiles were objects of enthusiasm among the wealthy and were housed in a new building type, the motor house or garage. Usually located near the stable, the garage was large enough for a machinist to work in and was generally executed in the same architectural style as the house.

Selection of the appropriate architectural style was among the most important considerations in building a country house. There was never a universally accepted design program for this new type of building, however, by the first decades of this century, the Beaux-Arts, Tudor, Colonial Revival and Mediterranean styles were favored by the upper class. French classical designs from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were blended by American architects to create opulent country houses. Popular among the wealthy, this style was at once "contemporary and yet connected to a grand tradition."<sup>5</sup> The Elms, designed by Horace Trumbauer in Newport, Rhode Island in 1899-1901 and Nemours, designed by Carrere and Hastings in 1910, number among the finest examples of this exuberant and sculptural mode of architecture.

Numerous country houses were based loosely on English models. Commonly referred to as Tudor, these houses blended more

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 73.

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easily into woodland settings, liberated from the symmetry of the Colonial Revival, and linked their owners with the landed aristocracy in England. Killenworth, the Long Island home of George D. Pratt of 1913, designed by Townbridge and Ackerman, and Lawbridge, the Robert J. Law house in Port Chester, New York, designed by Dwight James Baum in 1921, are among the more grand designs in this style. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, this mode was equally popular with less affluent Americans.<sup>6</sup>

The Colonial Revival idiom was a popular style for country house design and the eighteenth-century plantation or manor house was viewed an appropriate model. During a period of great immigration, these houses established a continuity between the owner and America's early landed gentry as well as expressing pride in this nation's homegrown architectural achievements. Generic brick Georgian block with dependencies and those modelled after Mount Vernon were the most common examples though the definition of Colonial was broad enough to include, during the 1880s and 90s, English Georgian, English Neoclassical, Federal, Greek Revival and vernacular architecture of the colonies. Following World War I, when sources became more diverse and regionalized, Dutch Colonial, New England, Pennsylvania and Louisiana modes, for example, became more popular.

Spanish Colonial architecture was a logical extension of America's interest in Colonial Revival styles and, similarly, featured a variety of idioms. The Mediterranean styles, as they were called, took root in the construction of country houses in the 1920s. This diverse style encompassed Spanish Provincial, Portuguese, Italian and Moorish as well as work inspired by Spanish missions and haciendas, New Mexico adobes, regional Mexican and Caribbean styles. The gardening movement, which

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 89.

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emphasized outdoor living, and the formal simplicity of its forms, led its to popularity not only in warm climate regions such as California and Florida but throughout the entire United States.<sup>7</sup>

Though the country house was built to appear as a family estate several generations old, its building materials, method of construction and building systems were thoroughly modern. Concrete block, terra-cotta tile, structural steel and reinforced concrete were among the innumerable new technologies that reduced labor and material costs and allowed for a shorter construction schedule. Julia Morgan's San Simeon of 1919 was built entirely of poured concrete prior to the advent of mechanical devices for mixing, moving and pouring concrete. Often, the appearance of these new technologies conformed to that of traditional building materials, as was the case with asbestos roof shingles and metal casement windows.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike English estates, boilers for providing central heat were a necessity in most American country houses as their open plans made controlling heat from room to room quite difficult. Many houses also featured a system for producing and circulating cool air during the summer months. Often, this was nothing more than a large fan which forced air over a deep well and then throughout the house. Water closets and bath tubs appeared in the late 1880s and, by 1900, many country houses included showers. The pipe organ was common to most large country houses. As the "ultimate status symbol", the pipe organ was extremely expensive and often had to be integrated into the initial design

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 120.



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of the house.<sup>9</sup> Machines and appliances of a more practical nature were made possible by the introduction of electricity into the home. The electric range and hood, vacuum cleaner, fan, washer and wringer and telephone eased the lives of servants and middle-class housewives who could now dispense with domestic help. More exotic devices, for example, are featured at Nemours and include compressors for the production of ice and a waterwheel for pumping water through the gardens.

Though often established as something akin to a feudal fiefdom, country estates tended to be built in clusters near social centers, in family or caste enclaves, close to places of business or resort areas. The more preeminent regional enclaves are located on the East coast and include Bar Harbor, Maine, Newport, Rhode Island, Long Island, New York.

Delaware's Brandywine River valley is the largest familial enclave in the Mid-Atlantic region. In 1801, Eleuthere Irenee du Pont de Nemours founded the company, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., which was to become the largest producer of black powder in the country and, ultimately, one of the largest chemical firms in the world. As the business expanded, succeeding generations of du Ponts established large estates in the Brandywine River Valley, also known as the Chateaux Region. The original Greek Revival house at Winterthur was built by James Antoine Biderman, an early investor in the powder works, and dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. Changes to the roof were made in 1884 and 1902 and a wing was added to the estate in 1929 by Henry Francis du Pont to house his collection of American decorative arts. Granogue, the country house of Irenee du Pont, was designed in 1921-23 by Albert Spahr. Situated on a hill overlooking the estate, Granogue is a rambling manor loosely

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<sup>9</sup>Clive Astin, The American Country House (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 97.

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themselves entirely to this one project.<sup>10</sup> The architects, Harper and McClure of Wilmington, were paid 10% of the costs of construction, or \$44,035, with a \$10,000 bonus upon completion of the house.<sup>11</sup> A generous sum as Raskob believed he was continually being overcharged by Harper and McClure.<sup>12</sup> An itemized list of building materials submitted by the architects at the outset of the project in November 1915 indicates the approximate cost of the Patio at \$411,000, with the garage totalling \$56,150.<sup>13</sup>

This list also reveals the variety of building materials, their comparative costs and the economy of modern methods of construction. As indicated in construction photographs, extensive use is made of poured concrete and the entire house is framed with structural steel. During construction, the second-story loggia remained cantilevered on steel beams until the marble columns were set in place and the arcades and vaults were built up to the height of the second story. The concrete work and structural steel were estimated to cost \$3,000 and \$14,000, respectively, versus the more traditional crafts of mason work at \$22,000 and the exterior stonework at \$46,000. As in most country houses, the Patio was equipped with modern heating and

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<sup>10</sup>Raskob to Harper and McClure, 18 October 1917, John Jakob Raskob Papers. Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

<sup>11</sup>Harper and McClure to Raskob, 29 April 1916, Raskob Papers.

<sup>12</sup>On Harper and McClure see Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1970), 265.

<sup>13</sup>Harper and McClure to Raskob, 13 November 1915, Raskob Papers.

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ventilating systems, estimated to cost \$22,000, and plumbing, which the architects listed at \$15,000.<sup>14</sup>

*illegible*  
The Patio features several of what Harper and McClure refer to as "special rooms."<sup>15</sup> These rooms, which include the dining room, music room, billiard room and living room, were designed on a grand scale and their functions remained outside the realm of everyday domestic life. Rather, they provided both entertainment and a place to entertain. The rich ornamentation which was lavished on many of these recreational spaces conveyed both wealth and leisure to visiting guests. Similarly, the various mechanical systems and devices designed to serve these rooms, such as the dumb waiter, pipe organ and bowling ball return, impressed visitors and satisfied the American fascination with new technology.

Decorative arts figure prominently in the design scheme of Raskob's Claymont estate. The most visible and colorful work of art is the fifty-foot-square, stained-glass skylight, designed by Henry Keck, a student of Tiffany. The design, which incorporates over 120,000 pieces of glass and two tons of lead, consists of a central sunburst surrounded by a grape arbor. Sculptor Charles Keck, brother of Henry and a student of Augustus Saint Gaudans, executed a marble fountain, which has since been removed, for the center of the courtyard which depicts an ancient processional. Lining the walls of this courtyard are delicate mosaic panels.

Harper and McClure designed the Patio in the Italian Renaissance style of architecture which, as a European classical style, was not unusual for an early twentieth-century country

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<sup>14</sup>Raskob to Harper and McClure, 24 July 1917, Raskob Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Harper and McClure to Raskob, 13 November 1915, Raskob Papers.

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house. The architects, however, chose to produce a fifteenth-century Florentine palazzo on the shores of the Delaware River, a form unique to the Chateaux Region, with its numerous Beaux-Arts du Pont estates. Modelled after such palaces as Michelozzo Di Bartolomeo's Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence begun in 1446 and Luciano Laurana's Palazzo Ducale in Urbino of ca. 1465 and 1472, the Patio is organized around a two-story, central courtyard. This interior, arcaded space is emphasized over the regular rhythms of the limestone facades and, indeed, defines the house. Circulation throughout the house is gauged by the courtyard. Every major room and many of the service rooms open onto this space which offers the most direct path between non-adjoining rooms.

The palazzo, in essence, is an urban form which has turned inward to escape the bustle of the crowded city streets. As a country house, Harper and McClure punctured the north, south and west walls with numerous windows and glazed the east wall of the music room, which overlooks the Delaware. Rich architectural detail and the ability to retract the skylight intensify the feeling of a Renaissance palace. The two-story, skylit, arcaded courtyard of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore of 1904-09 is a replica of the cortile of Genoa's Palazzo Balbi, deigned in the 1630s by Bartolomeo Bianco, and is similar to that at Archmere.

Specific motifs were borrowed freely from various Italian Renaissance sources. The porte cochere was inspired by Filippo Brunelleschi and Giuliano Da Maiano's Pazzi Chapel of Santa Croce in Florence of 1433-1461. The resemblance is striking and Mrs. Raskob wrote in 1921 that anyone having travelled in Italy will immediately recognize the Pazzi Chapel to be the source of the design.<sup>16</sup> Reverend Stephen J. Rossey of Archmere Academy has

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<sup>16</sup>Helena Springer Green Raskob, Raskob Green Record Book (Claymont, DE: John Jakob Raskob, 1921), 136.

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identified numerous other design sources for such elements as the soffet decoration above the main entrance, which was derived from the Castello Nuovo in Naples and the capitals of the columns which line the courtyard are modelled after those found in the cloister of Santa Croce in Florence.<sup>17</sup>

Raskob had planned to landscape Archmere in a manner commensurate with the grand design of the Patio. He had contracted Fernuccio Vitale to plan and execute \$125,000 in landscape projects annually over a period of five years. This interest in landscape architecture may have been inspired by Pierre du Pont's work at Longwood and du Pont's landscape architect, Fernucio Vitale. Raskob's monumental plans were never completed and the estate was landscaped in a picturesque manner with mature trees, shrubs and a small, formal garden on the southeast corner of the house.

Though Raskob never amassed a fortune comparable to that of his du Pont associates, his estate at Archmere was designed and built to compete, if in a sporting manner, with the grandest country houses in Delaware's Chateaux Region. Designed in a fashionable European classical style and richly ornamented, Archmere was intended to impress visiting guests with the large-scale interior spaces, rich ornamentation and leisure activities that defined many of these rooms. The estate was built by Raskob as he was reaching the apex of his career and is a refection of his own self esteem and what he perceived to be his place in the upper-class society of the Brandywine River valley. Archmere is a product of this society, and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, both for its architectural merit and its association with an individual of national significance, John Jacob Raskob.

<sup>17</sup>[Stephen J. Rossey,] "Archmere, The Estate" (Claymont, DE: Archmere, n.d.), n.p.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: ARCHMERE,  
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE

The National Register boundary for Archmere near Claymont is a figure that describes and includes all of the eligible elements of the complex. The boundary begins at the northeast intersection of Philadelphia Pike and Myrtle Avenue. It then proceeds in an easterly direction along the edge of the road surface of Myrtle Avenue for a distance of approximately 825 feet to a point that is opposite a straight line drawn along the west facade of the mansion house. It then proceeds in a southerly direction along this line towards the mansion house for a distance of 240 feet. It then proceeds in an easterly direction for 420 feet to a point that is at the end of the present tennis court that is excluded from this bound and along the contour line of the land surface as it moves from north to south just prior to the track and football field that are both excluded from the bound. The bound then proceeds in a southerly direction along this ridge line for a distance of about 510 feet, just prior to the volleyball court. The bound then proceeds in a westerly direction for approximately 400 feet to the east edge of the historic herringbone-pattern brick drive. The bound then proceeds along the edge of this brick drive in a westerly direction to a point opposite the east edge of the historic garage that is included as a contributing element to this resource. The bound then proceeds along the east edge of the garage in a southerly direction to the rear drive and parking surface of herringbone-pattern brick. The bound then follows in a southerly direction along the east edge of the historic lane to the Manor Avenue gates. At the curb line of Manor Avenue, the bound extends to the south and to the north of the historic gates and entrance for a distance of twenty feet. The bound then returns in a northerly direction along the west edge of the historic drive from Manor Avenue to a point that is opposite the north facade of the garage. The bound then proceeds in a westerly direction past the non-contributing baseball field for a



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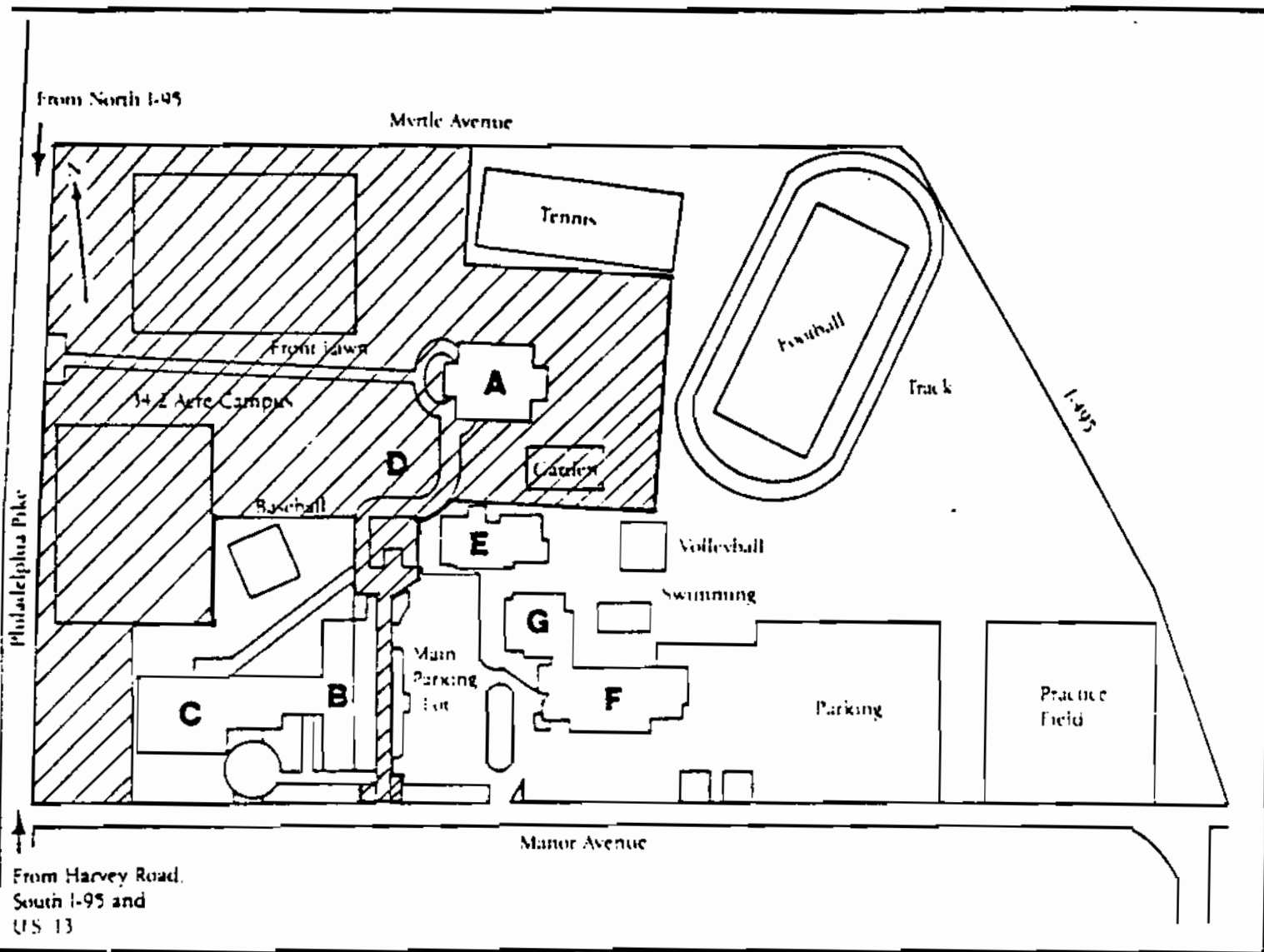
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distance of approximately 190 feet. The bound then turns in a southerly direction along the lawn area for approximately 150 feet. The bound then turns in a westerly direction and proceeds in that direction for about 110 feet. The bound then proceeds in a southerly direction for about 240 feet, just past the west wall of the modern Performing Arts Center that is not included within this historic resource. This last portion of the bound extends to the curb line of Manor Avenue. The bound then proceeds in a westerly direction along that curb line for approximately 200 feet to the east curb line of Philadelphia Pike. The bound then proceeds in a northerly direction along this line across the front of the property to the point of beginning. This bound is marked on the attached map of the school and its grounds.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: ARCHMERE, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE**

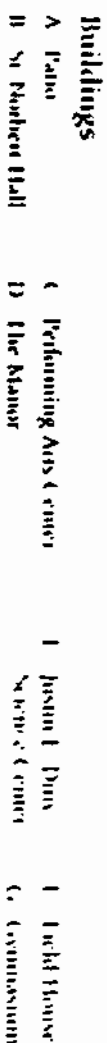
The above described bound for Archmere encloses the historic portion of the estate as developed by Raskob and his architects. The bound excludes the modern school buildings and athletic fields which date to after the end of the period of significance. The boundary also includes the Delaware Department of Transportation right-of-way along Manor Avenue, Philadelphia Pike, and Myrtle Avenue. This is specifically included because that right-of-way includes the historic gates and fences that are a contributing element of this National Register property.

ARCHMERE,  
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE

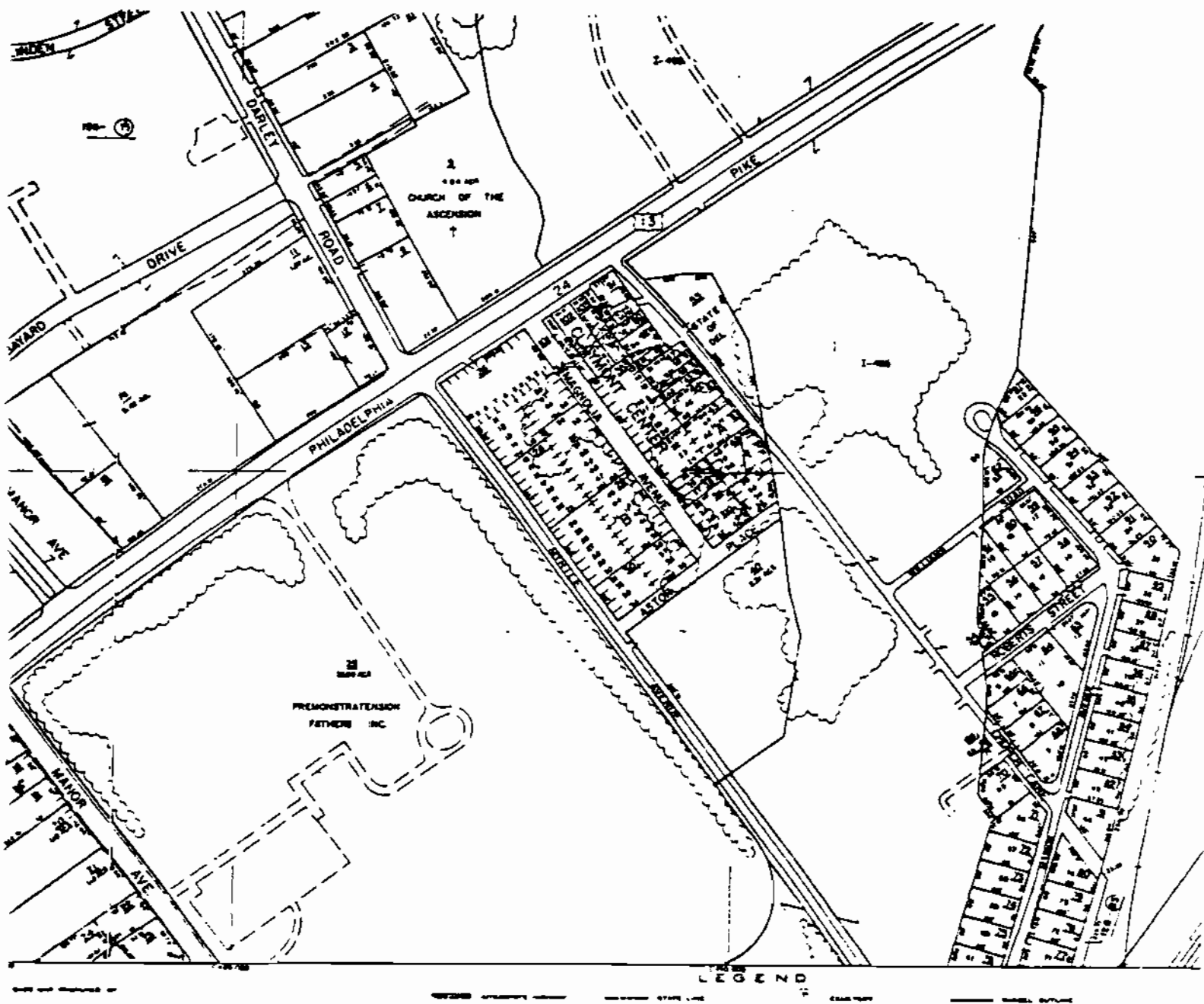


De: 1" = 140 '  
 nds: 

**ACCOMPLISH:**



ARCHMERE,  
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE



New Castle County Tax Parcel #06-072.00-025