CAPSULE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey No.: M:35-121 **Construction Date:** 1922-1923

Name: Burning Tree Club

Location: 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda Vicinity, Montgomery County

Private Ownership / Present Use: Entertainment / Occupied / Condition: Excellent / Restricted Access

Description:

The ca. 221-acre Burning Tree Club is located in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of the Capital Beltway and River Road in Montgomery County; the property is bounded on the east by Burdette Road, on the north by Bradley Boulevard, and on the west in part by the Capital Beltway. Its Tudor Revival clubhouse is a modest-sized recreational building designed to provide basic services and dramatic vistas of an outstanding 18-hole golf course, both dating to 1922-23. Slightly enlarged and modified over the years, the building retains much of its architectural character and setting. The course was designed by an internationally recognized team of golf course architects and remodeled somewhat by equally notable designers. Constructed in Montgomery County at a time of trends in both national country club development and suburban development that often included amenities such as country clubs with recreational facilities, Burning Tree Club served a wealthy non-location-based membership. The ensemble of extant architectural and landscape-architectural features, coupled with its social significance, represents a preserved example of the exclusive, male-only golf club typical of the 1920s.

Significance::

Beginning in the 1920s and continuing through the 1940s, planned suburban developments capitalized on the affordability of the automobile, designed on the outskirts of cities to offer a healthful, recreational environment for families wanting to escape a congested city existence. Also in the 1920s, country club development across the nation soared. Montgomery County was developing at a rapid pace during this period, with the construction of residential communities and a host of country/golf clubs where residents could find restorative open space. Because of the wealth base in the area, several exclusive clubs were formed during the 1920s to provide private havens where political and business connections would become the subtle byproduct of a round of golf. Such institutions were commonly restricted to white males until the 1970s when issues of equal rights and sex/racial discrimination were introduced in Maryland. Burning Tree was at the core of the legal battle that resulted in most clubs bowing to public and political pressure, and diversifying memberships to include women and minorities. In contrast to changing times, however, the 78-year-old Burning Tree Club has maintained its original tenets and facilities: its Tudor-Revival clubhouse and renowned golf course constitute a largely preserved landscape, and its membership remains a male domain that is socially rare.

Preparer
KCI Technologies, Inc.
May 2000

Survey No. M:35-121

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Burning Tree Club (Preferred)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number: 8600 Burdette Road ☐ not for publication

city, town vicinity of Bethesda congressional district

state Maryland county Montgomery

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☐ private residence
☐ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	☒ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
	☒ not applicable	☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Burning Tree Club, Inc.

street & number: 8600 Burdette Road telephone no.: (301) 365-1200

city, town Bethesda state and zip code: MD 20817

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Judicial Center liber: 324

street & number 50 Maryland Avenue folio: 436

city, town Rockville state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. M:35-121

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☒ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site	
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved	date of move

Resource Count: 2 (Clubhouse and designed landscape)

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Summary:

The ca. 221-acre Burning Tree Club is located in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of the Capital Beltway and River Road in Montgomery County; the property is bounded on the east by Burdette Road, on the north by Bradley Boulevard, and on the west in part by the Capital Beltway. Its Tudor Revival clubhouse is a modest-sized recreational building designed to provide basic services and dramatic vistas of an outstanding 18-hole golf course, both dating to 1922-23. Slightly enlarged and modified over the years, the building retains much of its architectural character and setting. The course was designed by an internationally recognized team of golf course architects and remodeled somewhat by equally notable designers.

General:

The Burning Tree clubhouse, the primary structure on the property completed in 1923, was designed by architect Harry Francis Cunningham and Manning F. Stead. The Tudor Revival structure is relatively small for a clubhouse serving 500 members, with an irregular plan that is predominantly two stories tall with two wings: rear/west and front/northeast. The structure is brick and stone composite, with small areas of half-timbering flanking the entry porch on the east elevation and on a small area of the second floor on the north elevation. Rough-cut stone dominates the first-floor structure and continues moving upward into the second-story brick walls for an ornamental effect; it is used around door and window openings, often with keystones, and as quoining. The complex roof features gable, gable-on-hip, and pyramidal forms with complex intersections; all roof areas are covered with ¾" slate except the flat, asphalt-covered porch roof along the south elevation, which covers spaces that are not original to the structure. The building is served by a system of copper guttering. According to architect Cunningham, the design of the club was noteworthy for its "combinations of old brick and local stone, as well as trusses of a particular type unusual in the USA." (FAIA nomination form)

The gable ends of the main block are dominated by a first-floor wall, composed of fixed, floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows. The south end includes two single doors. The second floor of the main block contains two large, half-round window with a third, smaller half-round window located on the south elevation of the west wing. The two larger windows contain a combination of glazing; the northern example has two stone mullions, the southern example is a combination of multiple small lights and a single, large plate glass window.

The rear/west wing off the main block is a series of connected one-story units. On the south elevation, the wall is dominated by six, nearly full-height plate glass windows set in wood frames, which illuminates the bar inside. Moving westward is a partially enclosed breezeway linked to a one-story pyramidal-roofed space, housing the pro shop and storage area for members' golf bags and related gear. The north elevation of the west wing provides minimal fenestration, mostly small, contemporary and fixed; inside are showers/locker room facilities.

7. Description (continued)

The formal entrance to the clubhouse faces onto the oval driveway loop; the brick one-story, hip-roofed entry porch has three open archways, with the fourth containing the building's doorway. The exposed wooden ceiling overhead supports a single suspended iron and glass chandelier. The double, glazed doors are topped by a glazed transom containing an image of the club seal. Metal railings are in the two side arches. The balance of the building entries--at least six--are unobtrusive single doors located: at the south end of the main block, on the north side of the rear wing, on the west side of the bar in the rear wing, on the rear elevation of the northeast wing, and on the second-story rear wall of the main block accessing the roof.

Built exterior features include an approximately 7' high composite brick and stone wall with double wooden gates, which angles northeastward from the rear of the northeast wing to hide the kitchen, delivery, and waste-disposal areas. Portions of a similarly tall and substantial stone wall indicate a nearby entrance to the golf course. A low stone retaining wall meanders along areas of the north elevation of the west wing.

Alterations to the building exterior includes: the replacement of the rustic wooden balustrade around the flat porch roof with same metal railing installed in the entry porch; a cantilevered porch on the south elevation of the main block may have been added, along with modifications to the entire south elevation of the west wing. Other than the plate glass like windows, most first-floor fenestration has been covered and sealed with wood shuttering.

The interior of the structure appears to contain much of its original character. The first floor of the main block is fronted by a vestibule with a barrel-vaulted ceiling and rounded openings, and three small management offices. The main interior space is open, with recessed arches along areas of the walls and an exposed-beam wood ceiling that is braced at the mantle of the large stone fireplace mantle. There are two inspirational inscriptions painted in gold onto facing ceiling beams overhead:

> '"Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." – Psalm 132, Verse 15' *and*
>
> '"But certain issue strokes must arbitrate." --Macbeth, Act V, Sc. 4, 1.20'

A small stone mantle is extant on the rear wall of the north end of the space. A plaque on the east wall states the date the club was organized December 8, 1922. The undivided room is carpeted and the walls are painted. The southern end of the building was enlarged through the enclosure of an open porch in the 1960's. This space serves as a small dining and lounge area.

The second story of the main block contains an open truss roof with exposed beams. The north portion of this undivided space houses supplementary lockers and seating; the south end contains a large table and chairs and serves as a conference space. A combination of contemporary track lighting and chandeliers illuminate the area. Suspended from the ceiling as décor are colorful flags donated by members, reflecting their professional affiliations. Two sets of small, turned stairways connect the first floor with the basement and the second story of the main block/northwest wing, which are located adjacent to the north end of the main block. An unfinished basement extends the full length of the original main block, and contains components of the water, electrical, and HVAC systems.

7. Description (continued)

The first floor of the northeast wing contains the kitchen, probably the laundry room, and other service functions. The second floor contains about five staff-changing rooms that are extremely small and unadorned, along with a bathroom. The slope of the roof on the exterior elevations of the building cuts sharply into the area of these rooms.

The west wing contains the club's bar, primary locker room, showers, and pro shop/golf equipment storage area. The bar room was added in the 1950's and is appointed with carpeting, contemporary faux-wood wall paneling, and a dropped acoustical-tile ceiling; the bar itself is covered with tufted leather(ette). The walls are covered with framed sketches of club members. The locker room is located in the space covered by the steep gable-on-hip roof; the ceiling, like the second floor of the main block, contains an open truss roof with exposed beams, from which flags are suspended. Next to this block is the pro shop a self-contained building unit that has been remodeled recently and completely: floors are carpeted, walls are papered, and there are no apparent historic features extant. From this commercial space is a passageway to a utilitarian room where club members store their golf bags.

The systems in the clubhouse have been modified. Electric wiring is contained in metal piping affixed to the walls/ceilings. Contemporary equipment for HVAC is located on the roof of the porch along the south side of the west wing; exterior ducts are visible on the second-story of the main block, entering windows on the east side of the building. Interior ducts are visible along the open ceilings.

In addition to the clubhouse, the superintendent's house was constructed in the mid 1920's. Located, approximately 500 yards southwest of the clubhouse, is a single-story stone structure with a slate-covered hip roof.

Nearby, the superintendent's house is a collection of four contemporary service structures that make up the maintenance yard, housing golf carts, lawn chemicals, etc.; they are built of concrete block, wood, and/or metal. The Burdette Road entrance to the club grounds features a pair of brick gate posts flanking the road, which are were a gift from the club's first president. Elsewhere on the course is a circular Roman temple form structure containing a drinking fountain, donated by a member in the 1960s.

The grounds consist of an 18-hole course designed by the London firm Colt, Mackenzie and Alison. The course was built on hilly terrain and there are water hazards on three holes. The signature hole is #18, a 412-yard, par 4, requiring a tee shot over a pond to an elevated fairway, then an approach shot to a small, well-bunkered green. In addition, the view of the clubhouse from the tee box on hole#18 is spectacular. The course has been rated among America's 100 "Best Classical Courses" by *Golfweek*.

8. Significance

Survey No. M:35-121

Period	Areas of Significance – Check and justify below				
☐ prehistoric	☐ archaeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☒ landscape architecture	☐ religion	
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science	
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture	
☐ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☒ social/ humanitarian	
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music		
☐ 1800-1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater	
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation	
	☐ invention			☐ other (specify)	

Specific Dates 1922-1923 **Builder Architect** Harry F. Cunningham and Manning F. Stead (Clubhouse)
Colt, Mackenzie and Alison (Golf Course)

Check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support

Summary:
Constructed in Montgomery County at a time of trends in both national country club development and suburban development that often included amenities such as country clubs with recreational facilities, Burning Tree Club served a prominent and wealthy non-location-based membership. The ensemble of extant architectural and landscape-architectural features, coupled with its social significance, represents a preserved example of the exclusive, male-only golf club typical of the 1920s.

Beginning in the 1920s and continuing through the 1940s, planned suburban developments capitalized on the affordability of the automobile, designed on the outskirts of cities to offer a healthful, recreational environment for families wanting to escape a congested city existence. Also in the 1920s, country club development across the nation soared. Montgomery County was developing at a rapid pace during this period, with the construction of residential communities and a host of country/golf clubs where residents could find restorative open space. Because of the wealth base in the area, several exclusive clubs were formed during the 1920s to provide facilites which afforded the social amenities of a game of golf in an atmosphere of slective political and business connections. Such institutions were commonly restricted to white males until the 1970s when issues of equal rights and sex/racial discrimination were introduced in Maryland. Burning Tree was at the core of the legal battle that resulted in most clubs bowing to public and political pressure, and diversifying memberships to include women and minorities. In contrast to changing times, however, the 78-year-old Burning Tree Club has maintained its original tenets and facilities: its modest Tudor-Revival clubhouse and renowned golf course constitute a largely preserved landscape, and its membership retains its exclusive, male constituency.

General:
Burning Tree Club was organized in 1922 with Isaac T. Mann as president and John B. Henderson and Walter R. Tuckerman as directors (Farquhar, 66). It was one of a several social and recreational organizations founded amid the burgeoning suburban landscape of Montgomery County during the 1920s, which included Indian Spring Country Club (1921), Woodmont Country Club and Congressional Country Club (1922) and, a few years later, Bannockburn Country Club and White Flint Golf Course (McMaster and Hiebert, 266). The 1920s were a period of growth for country clubs across the nation. In 1915 there were 1,000 clubs, but by 1927 that number rose to 5,500, with an estimated 2.7 million members (Mayo, 134). Burning Tree is purportedly named for a majestic tree—whether mythic Indian legend or real is undetermined—whose colors suggested that it was afire. According to Tuckerman, "They called it Potomac, the Place of the Burning Tree." (Offutt, 312)

8. Significance (Continued)

According to Tuckerman, an area developer, the club "grew out of the impatience of a foursome at the Chevy Chase Club. One of those four, Marshall Whitlatch, found a pair of 100-acre farms near River Road for about $300 an acre, and Tuckerman added thirty acres of his own. Under a 1922 agreement, each member subscribed $10,000." The laborers who cleared the heavily forested land earned $3.20 a day. The course was slated to open in summer 1923; the clubhouse was completed the same year. By May 1924, the "Founders" had contributed $242,000 to the club; the largest monetary support came from president Mann, however, who held the second mortgage on the property and paid for the construction of the gate posts, driveway and parking area. By the end of that year, Burning Tree boasted 77 members, but not enough to retire the mortgage debts as projected—with 500 members paying $1,000 in annual dues, (Offutt, 311-12; Mayo, 154-55). Like a handful of the most exclusive clubs—but in contrast to the more accessible clubs such as Indian Spring, Argyle, and Kenwood—Burning Tree's membership depended on the prominent personalities throughout the Greater Washington area and beyond, not the convenience of location.

The Burning Tree clubhouse, the primary structure on the property completed in 1923, was designed by architect Harry Francis Cunningham (1888-after 1955), and Manning F. Stead. Between ca. 1911 and the 1950s, Cunningham worked alone and in partnership with other architects as Cunningham & Bullock, Cunningham & Stead, and Cunningham, Stead & Cunningham (Scott, 45). He served as secretary of the D.C. chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1923-24 when the organization was lobbying for professional licensing (Bushong, 47, 53). Elsewhere in the area, he designed the Chancery of the Brazilian Embassy (1937) and the Heatherington Apartments (1938) in the District of Columbia; he also designed the tower of the Nebraska State Capitol and its interior Memorial Room (1934). Cunningham founded the Department of Architecture at the University of Nebraska in 1930, and served as its chairman for four years (FAIA nomination form). He co-authored *Measured Drawings of Georgian Architecture in the District of Columbia* (1914), and was sole author of *Lincoln, Nebraska Capital: An Architectural Masterpiece* (ca. 1954).

By the 1920s, the design of American clubhouses had developed into a handful of forms, against which Burning Tree's layout appears to conform. For efficiency, club functions would be logically clustered together: kitchen, dining room and grill; and entrance lobby, manager's office, and great hall. This is largely the case at Burning Tree where aspects of the "finger" and "corridor" plan types are seen. The finger plan places central functions, such as the lounge and dining rooms, in a central block, attached to angular wings housing other activities: locker rooms, guest rooms, and in this case, food preparation. The corridor plan was considered most adaptable to small clubs, so that a number of functions were aligned next to one another (Mayo, 143).

Burning Tree's praiseworthy 18-hole course was designed by the London firm Colt, Mackenzie and Alison. The principals of this firm were Harry Shapland Colt (1869-1951), Charles Hugh Alison (1882-1952) and, briefly, Alister Mackenzie, M.D. (1870-1934). Although this professional partnership technically lasted from 1918 to about 1928, in reality the work from 1921 forward was predominantly that of Colt, who trained and then worked with Alison for more than 20 years. Even then, these two men typically worked independent of each other. The design of Burning Tree Club is generally considered the work of only Alison, who worked extensively in North America and the Far East; Colt—a lawyer who gave up his practice to become one of the world's leading golf designers—designed courses throughout Great Britain and Europe. Their collective work, much of which dates to the 1920s-1930s, is found through out the United States and the world, especially England, France, Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands. In America, they designed nearly two-dozen courses in Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Wisconsin, and several in New York, in addition to Burning Tree. In 1924, the firm also remodeled the course at Maryland's Chevy Chase Country Club, their only other work in the area. Alison and Colt authored *Some Essays on Golf Architecture,*1920. (Cornish and Whitten, 190-91, 224-25, 331-32).

8. Significance (Continued)

Two of the firms works are among the most prostigous private clubs in America: Pine Valley Golf Club in New Jersey and Augusta National in Georgia.
Even prior to its opening, which occurred in May 1924, the Burning Tree course was highly praised in the local press:

> At least three of the golf courses about Washington now...rank as tests as fine as any in the country....These courses are Columbia, Chevy Chase, and Indian Spring.... At least three other courses, now under construction, will join the [aforementioned] three named as leading tests of the game about Washington. These are those of the Burning Tree Club, the Washington Golf and Country Club, and the Congressional Club. Without question the Burning Tree course will immediately take rank as one of the best of the east after its opening next month. No expense has been spared to make this course a model in every respect.... (*Washington Evening Star*, 29 April 1923).

The course was later credited for "fine greens and challenging holes laid out for the accurate hitter, not the long ball." Supervision of the course was the pastime of Dr. Walter Harban, the first president of the D.C. Golf Association (Offutt, 311-12). Over the years, it was remodeled three times by three significant golf course architects, although the degree of change to the layout is undetermined. The construction of the Capital Beltway forced some minor redesign of the 10th tee and the realignment of the 11th hole during the 1963 remodeling (Briggs interview, 12 April 2000). The course was remodeled by William S. Flynn (1890-1954), Robert Trent Jones (1906-), and Edmund B. Ault (1908-89); without specific information, "remodeling" can encompass the gamut of minor revision to a new layout. Flynn worked throughout the area in the 1920s-30s, when the work was probably accomplished; in addition to Burning Tree, he remodeled the courses at Columbia and Woodmont country clubs in Montgomery County, and East Potomac Park and Rock Creek Park golf clubs in Washington. Jones, perhaps the most recognized name in course architecture, remodeled aspects of Burning Tree in 1963—at the same time as Ault—perhaps related to the Capital Beltway intrusion, and again in 1977; he similarly worked at the nearby courses of Chevy Chase, Congressional, and Suburban country clubs. Ault, a designer native to the Washington area and prolific, Today the course is a par 71, 18-hole course, 6,400 yards and slope of 122, with a rating of 70.0 (*Washington Golf Monthly*, April 2000)

The facility has always been solely a day-use golf club with shop, a modest dining area and bar. Once constructed, the club has continued largely unchanged over the years except, like other American recreational facilities, during the World War II years when non-critical resources and travel were limited. In 1941, Edward R. Murrow was playing a second round at Burning Tree when news of the Pearl Harbor bombing was brought to him; he purportedly finished the round because the source of the report was Reuters, and apparently suspect; but later, when the news was confirmed, he sat in a locker alley and cried (Offutt, 494). In January 1943, all U.S. pleasure driving was banned due to tire and gasoline rationing, and the suburban country and golf clubs inaccessible by public transportation felt the pinch. Some closed, others served by bus or streetcar lines, or within walking distance, continued to operate. The isolated Burning Tree sometimes went a week with no golfers. When possible, manager Joseph Langer would provide a bus service of sorts on his way to work, especially on Sundays. To help survive these lean years, the club extended war memberships to approximately 35 men stationed nearby in connection with national defense. Other clubs made similar efforts: Chevy Chase accepted flag rank officers, and Woodmont accepted Naval Hospital, National Institute of Health, recovering patients in need of therapy, and other military personnel at this time (cited in Offutt, 552).

It maintains a roster of 500 resident and non-resident members whose ages average in their 60s, and a long waiting list for those interested in joining. Members must be male, at least 40 years old, and can only be invited to join (Briggs interview, 12 April 2000). The length of the waiting list is irrelevant if the individual "will add to the club's stature." (*Washington Star,* 4 July 1979)

8. Significance (Continued)

Burning Tree boasts an impressive number of former politicians, pillars of the community, and especially presidents, most of whom since Harry Truman have been members at least during their terms of office: Dwight Eisenhower was a member, and Richard Nixon sponsored Jack Kennedy in the mid 1950s. Members have also included former vicepresidents Spiro Agnew and Gerald Ford; former Chief Justice Warren Burger, Army General Omar Bradley, former secretaries of commerce, treasury and state; and the heads of Reynolds Metals, Hearst Corporation, General Electric, Martin Marietta, Firestone, and the Marriott Corporation.

Burning Tree currently ties with Bethesda Country Club and Chevy Chase Country Club for the area's second-highest initiation fee, $50,000, after Congressional County Club's $65,000 fee. Annual dues are the highest in the area at, $525 per member (*Washington Golf Monthly* website, April 2000).

In an era of political correctness and non-discrimination, Burning Tree is a rare remaining male-only organization in the greater Washington area and beyond. Women, must remain in the car when they pick up their husbands, and are only allowed to visit the pro shop at Christmas time for the purpose of shopping (*Washington Star,* 4 July 1979). The daughter of one club founder, Laura Tuckerman Triest, recalled why the no-female policy came to be so staunchly defended. She said that during the Depression, the club had planned to vote to allow women to join for twice weekly visits, but she and her mother predicted that would mean that by the end of three months, "We'll be there everyday" and her father would ruin the club. She describes it "as an escape from [Tuckerman's] household of women, which he needed immensely," adding, "I can't imagine the wives getting along anyway. It is not the right membership for a family club." (cited in Offutt, 311)

For many years, the gender of membership was a not an issue because many area clubs barred women and minorities from membership without controversy. The anti-discrimination efforts of the 1970s were triggered by a taxation issue that dated to 1965, when the Maryland legislature passed H.B. 555, permitting country clubs to obtain a tax break under open spaces assessments. Based on the law, in 1965, Burning Tree entered a 10-year agreement with the state to maintain its golf course as open space in return for the tax reduction. Roy N. Staten sponsored the legislation at the behest of Blair Lee, at the time a registered lobbyist for the Montgomery County country clubs. The purpose of the bill, Staten recalls, "was to provide an incentive for the growth of country clubs and the expansion of open spaces, even open spaces admittedly dedicated to private purposes." Rejecting a question that the tax break was introduced to offset future taxation indicated by rising real estate values and growing commercial/residential development in the area, he went on to assure "with a reasonable degree of certainty that, because the [Ways and Means Committee] did not view it as a problem or potential problem at the time, the question of the tax loss was not scrupulously examined....no one truly envisaged the tax subsidy in one county growing to such proportions in 1965." Between 1971 and 1979, it was calculated that the tax subsidy in Montgomery County for country clubs grew from $133,050 to $1.2 million. In 1966, the market value of Burning Tree's 221 or so acres was $935,000; the tax break represented a revenue loss of $8,154 to the county. By 1979, the club's value climbed to just over $8 million, representing a loss of state and county tax revenue of just over $119,000. (Letter and attachments, Roy Staten to Luiz Simmons, 6 September 1979, vertical files, Rockville Library).

8. Significance (Continued)

In 1974, the Maryland legislature amended Article 81 of the law tax-break provision so as to deny it to any clubs that discriminate--but excluded single-sex country clubs and clubs that exclude certain sexes on certain days and times. In 1975 Burning Tree entered into its second 10-year commitment to the state to preserve its course as open space for the tax benefit.

At the same time, the state launched an investigation into eleven Montgomery County golf and country clubs to determine if discriminatory practices were apparent. This resulted in many clubs—such as Chevy Chase and Columbia—signing consent agreements to change their membership practices, without admitting actual discrimination. Kenwood Country Club, which was exonerated in 1976, had been the site of an incident that "was one of the most important in promoting legal changes in the mid-1970s," according to state legislators. "In 1968, then D.C. Mayor Walter Washington, an African-American, had been invited to a meeting of the Wellesley College Alumnae Association at Kenwood, an all-white club. The club replied that it could not accommodate the meeting because Mayor Washington is a Negro." (*Montgomery Journal*, 31 May 1983)

In the meantime, Bainum and his sister, Barbara Bainum Renschler, filed suit against the State of Maryland and Burning Tree in August 1983, with Renschler seeking club membership. On September 3, 1984, Judge Irma Raker, the only woman on the Montgomery County Circuit Court, ruled that the tax break Burning Tree enjoyed was a violation of the state's Equal Rights Amendment, which had been passed in Maryland in 1972. Support for Bainum's bills and the ruling came from the National Organization for Women, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Anti-Defamation League (*Montgomery Journal*, 23 March 1984). Burning Tree successfully appealed the decision, and in December 1985 the Maryland Court of Appeals struck down parts of the law and its amendment, which allowed Burning Tree to keep its tax benefit and continue to discriminate (305 Md. 53, 501 A.2d 817 (1985).

Within six weeks, Maryland passed a bill (Ch. 334) whose only exception to discrimination was the heretofore unchallenged exception that allowed clubs to reserve courses at certain times for men and women. Burning Tree immediately took the case to Maryland's Circuit Court making several assertions, but the one concurred with by the court, ironically, was that the "periodic discrimination" provision violated the state's Equal Rights Amendment and therefore was unconstitutional (*Washington Post*, 23 July 1987).

At the same time, in a high-profile case taking similar legal direction toward breaking down the doors of same-sex clubs, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on May 4, 1987, that the all-male Rotary International clubs must admit female members, upholding a California case decision. The impact of this case on the Burning Tree effort would depend, according to Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., "on whether a particular club or organization is 'sufficiently personal or private' or more open and business-related in its activities (*Washington Post*, 5 May 1987)." In the Rotary Club case, the court specifically found that the admittance of women would not "affect in any significant way the existing members' ability to carry out those activities," and introducing women to the club would not "interfere unduly with club members' freedom of private association." (481 U.S. 537)

Following the state's 1987 defeat, and cross appeals by both Burning Tree and the state, the Court of Special Appeals ruled that the "periodic prohibition" clause was both invalid and severable from the larger law. Subsequently, in March 1989, the Maryland Court of Appeals "upheld the framework of a 1986 law aimed at excluding Burning Tree from a state-sponsored program that gives country clubs lower tax rates" for preserving open space. (*Washington Post*, 29 May 1989).

8. Significance (Continued)

Burning Tree petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review its case during the term commencing in October 1989, but the request was rejected and the club's legal remedies were officially exhausted. All that remained was for Burning Tree to decide whether or not to drop its restriction on female membership or pay several years worth of back taxes (*Washington Post*, 3 October 1989). On the heals of the Supreme Court's decision not to hear the case, the Maryland Commission on Human Relations recommended the elimination of "tax breaks and licensing privileges for private clubs and associations...that discriminate against women or blacks." The study grew out of court rulings elsewhere determining that local jurisdictions can regulate private clubs, according to officials, as well as the 1987 Burning Tree ruling by the state Court of Appeals (*Washington Post*, 5 December 1989).

Subsequent to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision not to hear the case, the state of Maryland assessed Burning Tree Club $938,000 in back taxes for the years 1986-89, based on a revised, higher rate exclusive of any tax exemptions or reductions because it chose to continue its discriminatory practices. Although the club initially challenged the bill, it soon paid the hefty sum. Burning Tree continues to bar women from its membership, and is one of the few organizations anywhere to continue to do so (*Washington Post*, 4 October 1989, 23 July 1990).

National Register Evaluation:

Burning Tree Club is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

Eligibility under Criterion A, association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, is found in Burning Tree as an exclusive, male-only social institution devoted to the pastime of golf, an example of a type of recreational organization that flourished during the 1920s. Further, through a series of legal challenges in the 1970s-80s, Burning Tree was rendered one of the last enclaves to continue the male-only tradition, when other private and historically male-only institutions modified membership rules to admit women and minorities. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that character-defining features of architectural design and setting be extant. The Burning Tree clubhouse and 18-hole course have both been altered somewhat since 1923; however, these modifications are minimal, in keeping with the scale and style of the original design, and do not alter the architectural or landscape architectural integrity of the property. Therefore, the property is eligible under Criterion C as a good example of a 1920s private golf club and course. For the property to be eligible under Criterion B would require association with significant persons; while important individuals have been members of this club during its history, these persons are not individually the source of its significance, therefore it is not eligible under Criterion B. Investigations have not been conducted to determine whether the property has the potential to yield information important in history or pre-history; therefore National Register Criterion D cannot be assessed at this time.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Eligibility recommended XX

Eligibility Not Recommended:

Comments:

Reviewer, OPS: [signature] Date: 9/11/00

Reviewer, NR Program: [signature] Date: 10/12/00

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. M:35-121

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 221.45 acres

Quadrangle name Falls Church, VA-MD and Rockville, VA-MD Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification
See Continuation Sheet

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sara Amy Leach	
organization KCI Technologies, Inc.	date May 2000
street & number 10 North Park Drive	telephone 410-316-7800
city or town Hunt Valley	state/zip Maryland, 21030

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposed only and do not constitute any infringement of individual

Return to:

Maryland Historical Trust
DHCP/DHCD
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

9. Major Bibliographical References (Continued)

"American Institute for Architects' Nomination for Fellowship--Harry Francis Cunningham," 15 September, 1954. Located in the archives of the American Institute for Architects, Washington, DC.

Barnes, Robert. "Burning Tree Wins Round in Tax Battle," *Washington Post*, 23 July 1987.

Barnes, Robert. "Court Deliberates Burning Tree Battle," *Washington Post*, 23 May, 1988.

Bushong, William, et.al. *A Centennial of the Washington Chapter of the AIA, 1887-1987.* D.C.: Washington Architectural Foundation Press, 1987.

Cahill, Regina. "Burning Tree: Exclusively a Male Precinct," and "It's the Names of Members that Give Clubs Status," *Washington Star,* 4 July 1979.

Cornish, Geoffrey S., and Ron E. Whitten, *The Architects of Golf.* New York: Harper Collins, 1981/1993.

"Discrimination Charges Dog Clubs," *Montgomery Journal*, 31 May 1983.

Durcanin, Cynthia. "Club must let women in or pay more tax," *Montgomery Journal*, 14 September 1984.

Farquhar, Roger Brooke. *Old Homes and History of Montgomery County, Maryland. Silver Spring, 1962.*

Interview with Charlie Briggs, Burning Tree Club golf pro, 12 April 2000.

Kamen, Al. "Rotary's Prohibition of Women Voided..." *Washington Post*, 5 May 1987.

Leff, Lisa. "Burning Tree Club to Appeal Ruling," *Washington Post*, 29 May 1989.

Leff, Lisa. "Burning Tree Must Admit Women or Lose Tax Break, Supreme Court Declines to Hear Appeal," *Washington Post*, 3 October 1989.

Leff, Lisa. "MD. to Dun Burning Tree, Club Could Owe $1.2 million in Back Taxes," *Washington Post*, 4 October 1989.

Leff, Lisa. "Loss of Tax Break has All-Male Club Facing Huge Bill," *Washington Post*, 23 July 1990.

Letter and attachments, Roy N. Staten to Luiz Simmons, 6 September 1979. Located in the vertical files, Rockville Regional Library.

McCallum, Walter. "Washington has Fine Golf Courses," *Washington Evening Star*, 29 April 1923.

9. Major Bibliographical References (Continued)

McMaster, Richard, and Ray Eldon Hiebert. *A Grateful Remembrance- The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1776-1976.* Rockville, 1976.

McQueen, Michael. "Maryland's Private-Club Tax Breaks Left Intact," *Washington Post*, 23 March 1984.

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Offutt, William. *Bethesda: A Social History.* Bethesda: Innovation Game Publishers, 1995.

Scott, Pamela. "A Directory of District of Columbia Architects, 1822-1960." Washington, D.C., September 1999. Photoreproduction, located in the Washingtonian Room, Martin Luther King Library.

United States Geological Survey (USGS). 1917 Washington and Vicinity Topographic Map. Washington, D.C.: USGS.
----. 1944. Washington and Vicinity Topographic Map. Washington, D.C.: USGS.
----. 1956. Kensington, MD, Quadrangle Map. Washington, D.C.: USGS.
----. 1965. Kensington, MD, Quadrangle Map. Washington, D.C.: USGS.

Valentine, Paul. "Tax Penalty Urged for Some MD. Clubs...." *Washington Post*, 5 December 1989.

Washington Golf Monthly web site, April 2000

Court Cases:

"Board of Directors of Rotary International v. Rotary Club," 481 U.S. 537 (1987).

"Burning Tree Club v. Bainum," 305 Md. 53, 501 A.2d 817 (1985).

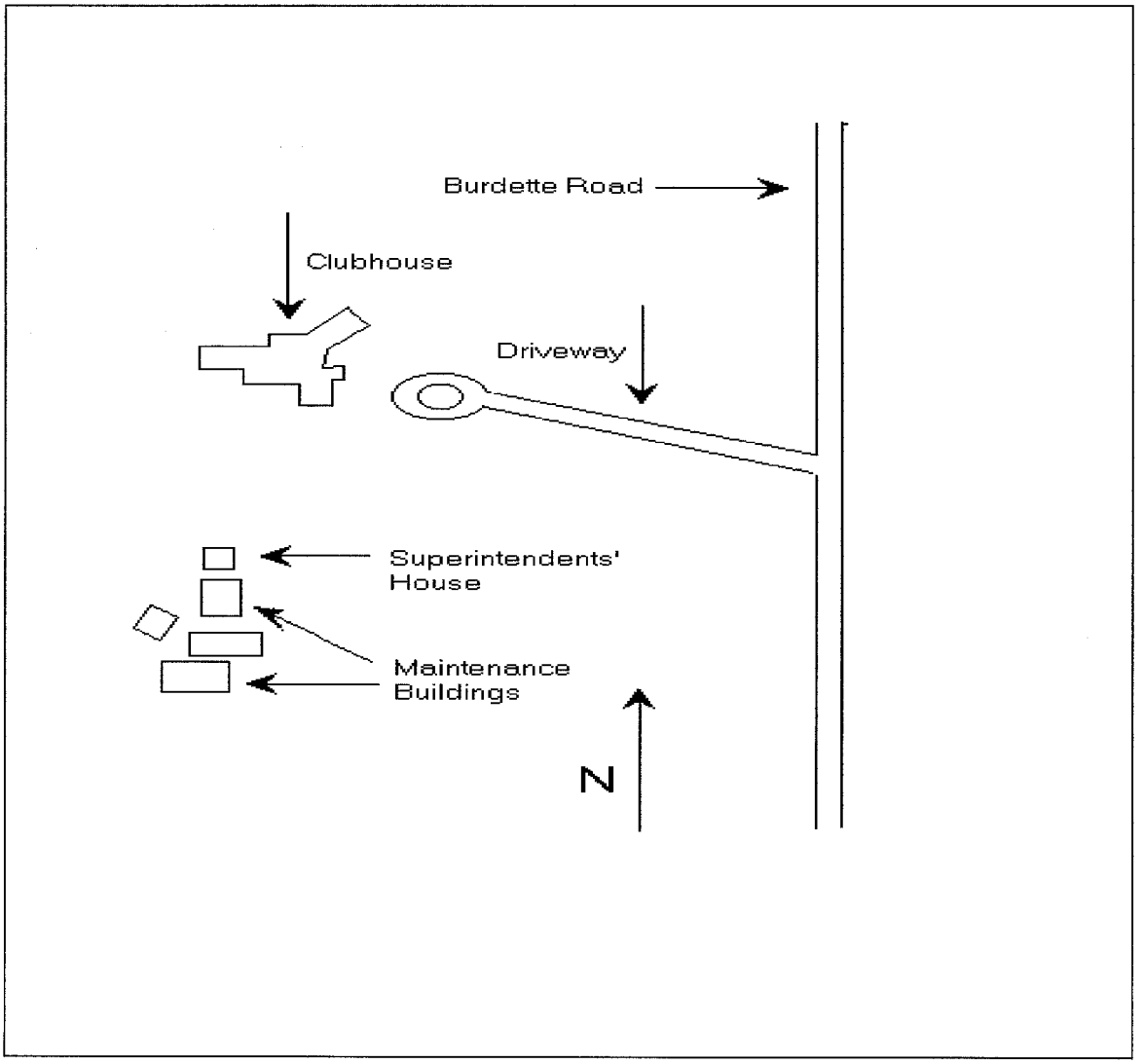
"Burning Tree Club Inc. et al. v. Maryland, et al.," 315 Md. 254, 554 A.2d 366 (1989), Certiorari denied by MD Court of Appeals.

"State v. Burning Tree Club," 493 U.S. 816, 110 S.Ct 66, 107 L.Ed.2d 33 (1989).

"State v. Burning Tree Club," 301 Md. 9, 32, 481 A.2d 785, 797 (1984).

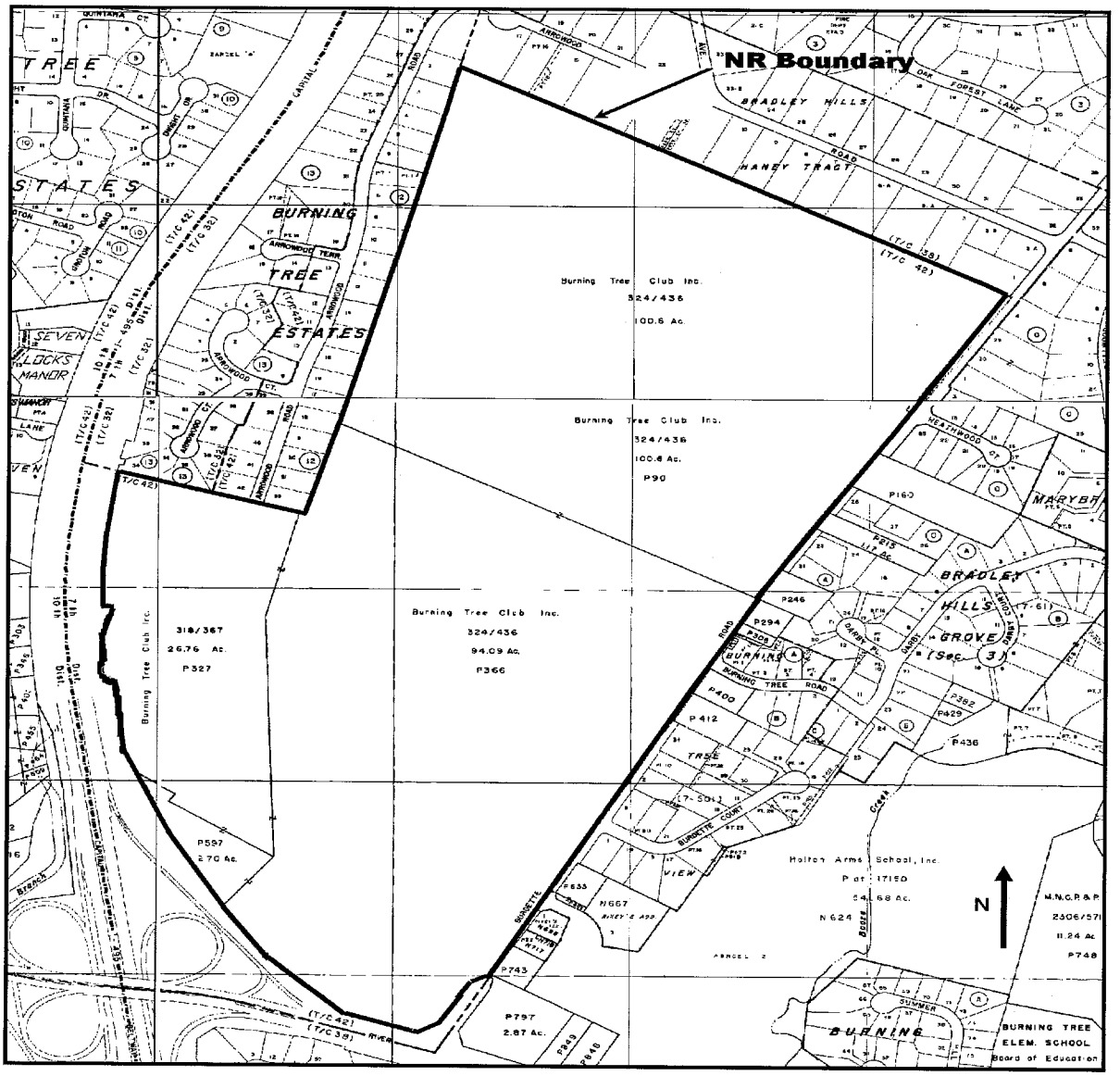
10. Geographical Data(Continued)

Resource Sketch Map:



10. Geographical Data (Continued)

National Register Boundary Map:



10. Geographical Data (Continued)

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

The National Register boundary of the Burning Tree Club property includes the entirety of its tax parcels (GN343-). It is bounded on the east by Burdette Road, on the south and west by the Capital Beltway. This is the historic boundary of the club, except for approximately 20 acres lost to the Capital Beltway construction in the 1960s, and it encompasses the complete, nationally recognized 18-hole golf course.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM
RESOURCE NAME: Burning Tree Club
SURVEY NO.: M:35-121
ADDRESS: 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda Vicinity, Montgomery County

Maryland Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan Data Sheet

Historic Context:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PRESERVATION DATA

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological/Development Period Theme(s):

Modern

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Community Planning
Social/Education/Cultural

RESOURCE TYPE:

Category (see Section 3 of survey form):

Building, Site

Historic Environment (urban, suburban, village, or rural):

Suburban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

Entertainment, Golf club

Known Design Source (write none if unknown):

None

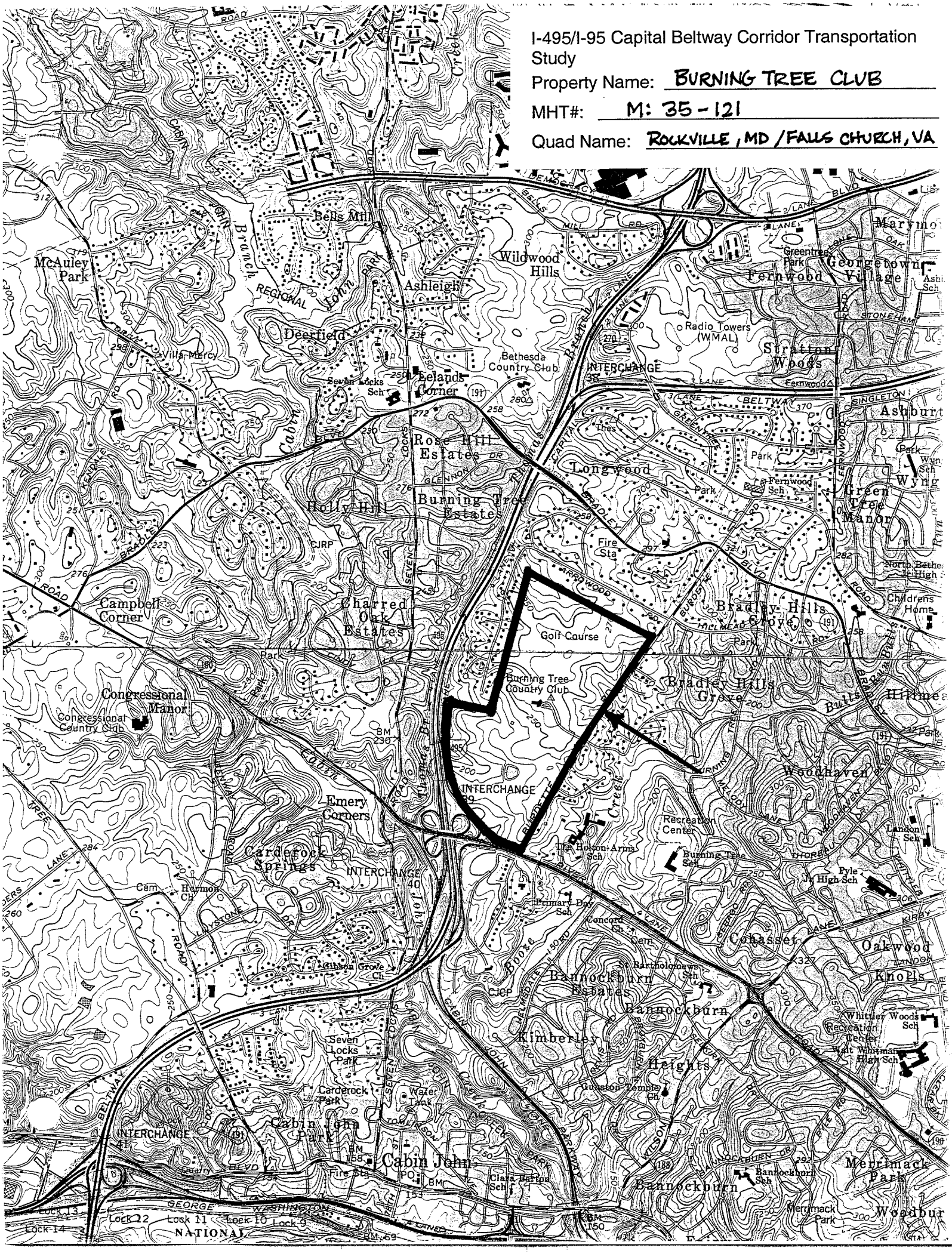
Preparer
KCI Technologies, Inc.
May 2000

I-495/I-95 Capital Beltway Corridor Transportation Study

Property Name: BURNING TREE CLUB

MHT#: M: 35-121

Quad Name: ROCKVILLE, MD / FALLS CHURCH, VA



1 M:35-121

2 BURNING TREE CLUB

3 MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

4 SARA LEACH

5 4/00

6 MD SHPO

7 8600 BURDETTE ROAD, BETHESDA
NORTH ELEVATION OF REAR WING, VIEW SW

8 1 OF 16

1. M:35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Distant view of rear wing, South elev. View N
8. 2 of 16

1. M:35-121

2. Burning Tree Club

3. Montgomery County, MD

4. Sara Leach

5. 4/00

6. MD SHPO

7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
To rear of Pro Shop & Bar, rear wing, View E

8. 3 of 16

1. m: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Roof of Proshop & breezeway, View NW
8. 4 of 16

1. M: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County: Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Distant View to rear wing; North elev.; View S
8. 5 of 16

1. M: 35-121

2. Burning Tree Club

3. Montgomery County, Bethesda

4. Sara Leach

5. 4/00

6. MD SHPO

7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
N. elevation of rear wing, view SE

8. 6 of 16

1. m: 35-121

2. Burning Tree Club

3. Montgomery County, Bethesda

4. Sara Leach

5. 4/00

6. MD SHPO

7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
E. elevation w/entry porch and view of NE wing. View SW

8. 7 of 16

1. m: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Front Entry & S. end of main Block, View NW
8. 8 of 16

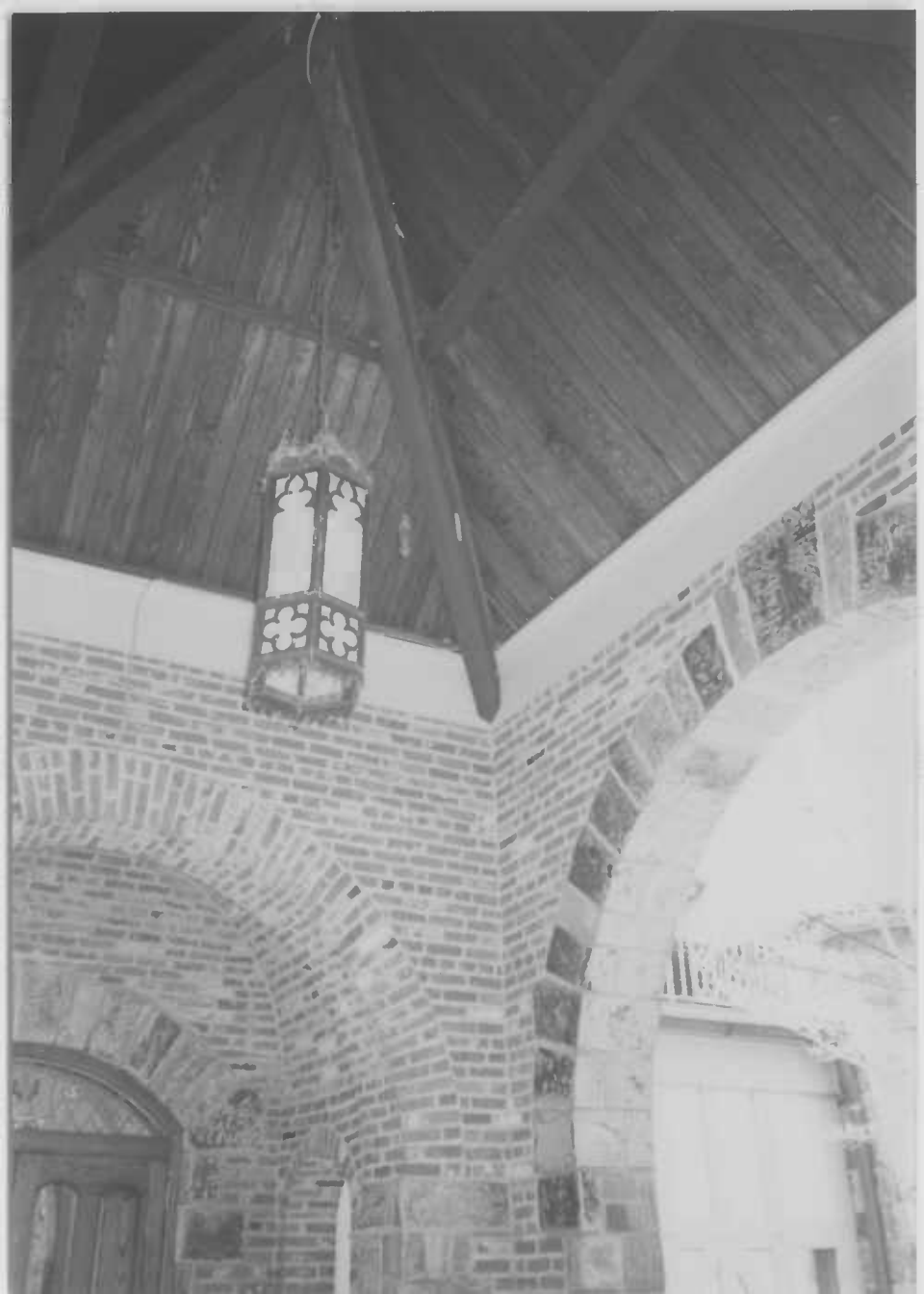
1. M: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Roof of main block, South end, View E.
8. 9 of 16

1. M: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County. Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Roof of rear wing (over locker room) View NW
8. 10 of 16

1. M: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Roof of Pro Shop & Breezeway, View NW
8. 11 of 16

1. M:35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
2nd Fl., main block, South end View S
8. 12 of 16

1. M: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   View of locker room ceiling, rear wing. View N. up
8. 13 of 16



1. m: 35-121

2. Burning Tree Club

3. Montgomery County, Bethesda

4. Sara Leach

5. 4/00

6. MD SHPO

7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
Ceiling of entry Porch on E. elev., View Up

8. 11 of 11

1. m: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4. Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   View of bar, rear wing. View E.
8. 15 of 16

1. M: 35-121
2. Burning Tree Club
3. Montgomery County, Bethesda
4 Sara Leach
5. 4/00
6. MD SHPO
7. 8600 Burdette Road, Bethesda
   Interior of great hall, from vestibule. View N
8. 16 of 16