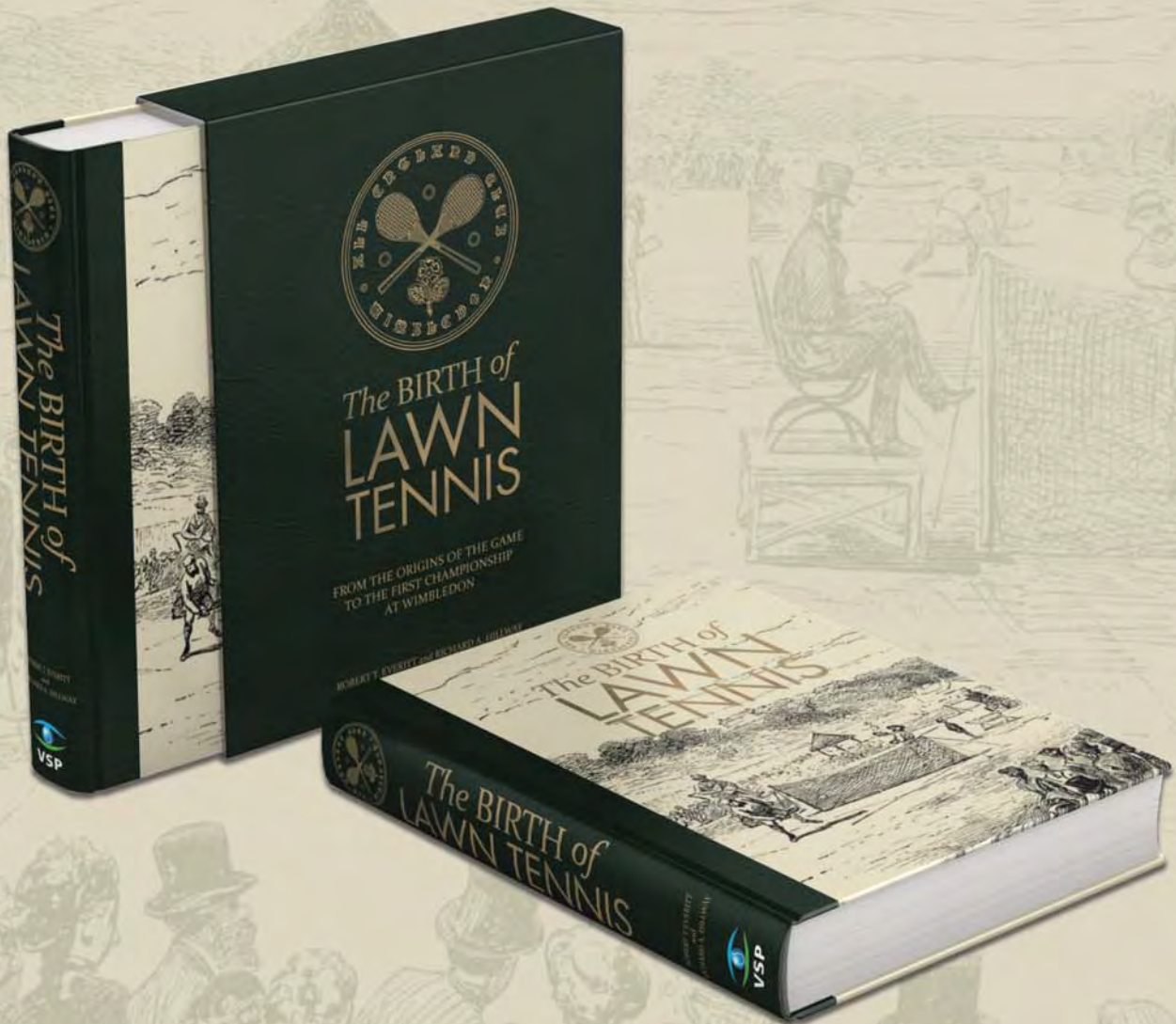


The Early Years of Lawn Tennis

a GUIDE for
**HISTORIANS
& RESEARCHERS**

Richard A. Hillway



The Birth of Lawn Tennis - Robert T. Everitt & Richard A. Hillway



The picture that graced both the front and back covers of all five editions of Major Wingfield's rules' booklets. He had named his game lawn tennis or Sphairistike. On the covers, the Greek term "Sphairistike" appears in small letters while the English term "LAWN TENNIS" appears in large letters.

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Introduction

This booklet provides a brief overview of the early years of the game we now call "tennis," originally called "lawn tennis." It has been produced to assist historians and researchers, and draws upon the much detailed and fully referenced information contained in the book ***The Birth of Lawn Tennis: From the Origins of the Game to the First Championship at Wimbledon*** by Robert T. Everitt and me, Richard A. Hillway (Vision Sports Publishing, UK, 2018).

When researching our book, Bob Everitt and I found that many earlier accounts of tennis history were flawed by information that was factually incorrect. The big majority of our research came from early written documents as it had for many tennis historians before us. But we also had the advantage of the internet to access online archives such as 19th century newspapers and periodicals. As a result, we were able to confirm or disprove important statements that past historians had written about lawn tennis. Unfortunately, we found that many myths and false stories from the past continue to be written into present tennis history books.

Bob and I tried to rigorously follow the most important principle for any lawn tennis researcher: examine contemporary written documents, primary sources, those written at the time events took place. We had each spent over 20 years researching largely separate aspects of the game prior to collaborating on our book in 2011. Our research reaffirmed Major Walter Clopton Wingfield's pioneering role as the inventor, introducer and popularizer of lawn tennis. It also dispelled the myths that had been included in many earlier tennis books concerning Harry Gem, Augurio Perera, the Leamington Club and Mary Outerbridge.

It is the myths, the false stories, the inaccuracies and the controversies that I have focused on in this booklet. Significant conclusions from our research concerning these controversies are examined in this booklet.

- **Richard Hillway**

- 1. Lawn tennis was first introduced to the world by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield in London early in 1874.**
- 2. Major Wingfield initially gave his game the name of "lawn tennis" and later changed its name for a few months to the Greek name of "Sphairistike," before changing it back to its original name.**
- 3. The British Patent Office and the US Patent Office both have stated that lawn tennis was an invention and the inventor was Major Walter Wingfield.**
- 4. Major Wingfield wrote the first lawn tennis rulebook which was also the first book ever published on lawn tennis.**
- 5. Lawn tennis was the first racket game to require the use of the hollow rubber ball.**

The following statements correct errors of fact commonly found in earlier tennis books:

- 6. Extensive study of detailed contemporary newspaper accounts of the Nantclwyd party of December 1873 attended by Major Wingfield has produced no evidence to support that lawn tennis was played there.**
- 7. Not a single contemporary report has been found that supports the story that Harry Gem and Augurio Perera of Birmingham, England played some form of lawn tennis as early as 1859, or indeed at any time prior to Major Wingfield's game being launched in 1874. Hopefully that uncorroborated story will not appear in any future histories!**
- 8. Gem and Perera helped found the Leamington Club in 1874, not in 1872. The identity of the world's first lawn tennis club is not known, although some of the leading candidates, including the Leamington Club, are discussed in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*.**
- 9. Mary Outerbridge could not have been the first person to bring lawn tennis to America in late January of 1874 as Wingfield did not introduce the game to the public until a month later.**

All these topics are discussed in this booklet, and in much greater detail in ***The Birth of Lawn Tennis***.

1. What is the best primary source on lawn tennis in its early years, 1874-1877?

The Field, The Country Gentleman's Newspaper is the best primary source. Its first-ever mention of lawn tennis appeared in its issue of 21 March 1874, when it printed Major Walter Clopton Wingfield's initial lawn tennis rules. No mention of lawn tennis had appeared in this weekly newspaper at any time prior to that date. But during the rest of 1874, more than 50 letters concerning lawn tennis were printed in *The Field*. Once introduced, the popularity of the game had accelerated wildly. It was a new game, so the letters dealt with questions such as the shape and size of the court, the height of the net, the size and weight of the balls, were only one or two serves allowed, could ladies play the game, why was it so expensive, and other things. Six gentlemen had questioned whether Wingfield's game was really new, thinking they had seen or heard of such a game before. Their stories are discredited in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*. No earlier issues of *The Field* had contained any news of lawn tennis because the game had not been introduced to the public prior to 1874.

2. What is the best secondary source on the beginnings of lawn tennis?

At the risk of being immodest, the most complete and accurate account of the first few years of lawn tennis by far is found in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis* (2018), noted in the Introduction. It was edited by John Barrett, Wimbledon's official historian, and was published with the active support of The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. The book contains decades of research by tennis historians. It is based upon contemporary documents, those mostly from 1874-1877. It describes racket games that preceded lawn tennis; the game's invention by Major Wingfield; subsequent competing lawn tennis games; and the roles of John Hale, Harry Gem, Augurio Perera, Henry Jones, Julian Marshall, the Heathcotes, the Leamington Club, the Marylebone Cricket Club, and the All England Club. The book also describes the very earliest lawn tennis clubs; the AEC's years as a croquet club; the initial 1877 Wimbledon Championships and, for the first time, its 22 players; early implements used in the game; the first lawn tennis manufacturers and retailers; 6 early lawn tennis rulebooks; a comparison of the early rules on 32 different issues (of interest to umpires); a detailed timeline; and a full bibliography and index. Including 562 pages and more than 500 pictures, it presents a single location in which to discover many aspects of early lawn tennis. Each of the co-authors spent more than 20 years researching the beginnings of lawn tennis independently, before collaborating on their book.

3. What racket sports existed prior to lawn tennis?

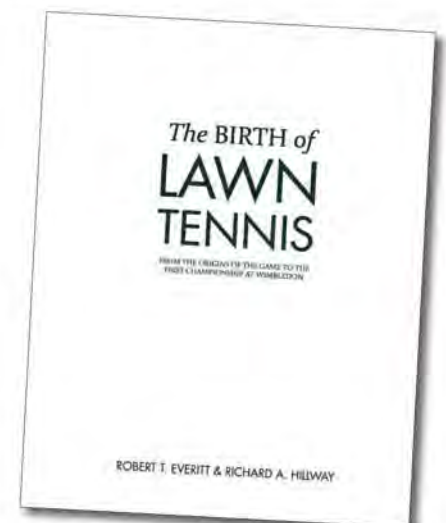
Lawn tennis was the newcomer among racket sports when it first came on the scene during 1874. A number of other racket sports had existed prior to the introduction of lawn tennis, some going back centuries. Tennis (now called real tennis, court tennis, or royal tennis) was the grandfather of all the other racket games, having been traced back to France and Italy as early as the 12th century. Though first played with the hand and later with a glove, tennis began using strung rackets in about 1500. Other racket sports that preceded lawn tennis included rackets (open court and closed court rackets), bat fives, field tennis, open tennis, long tennis, longue paume, battledore and shuttlecock, and badminton. All of these games that existed before lawn tennis were played with either solid balls or shuttlecocks.

(for more details, *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 5-28)



Above: An original bound edition of *The Field* from the 19th Century.

Below: The title page of *The Birth of Lawn Tennis* (2018), written by Robert T. Everitt and Richard A. Hillway, edited by official Wimbledon tennis historian John Barrett, and supported by The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.



Above: A print showing a small tennis (real Tennis) court entitled "Tennis-play" from *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, London, 1658.

4. How was lawn tennis different from earlier racket games?

Though rarely stated in other tennis history books, I came to this conclusion a decade ago which seems a simple and obvious truth. It was different from all earlier racket games in one unique way. It was the first racket game that required the use of HOLLOW RUBBER BALLS in its written rules. There is a simple reason why earlier racket games had not used hollow rubber balls. A hollow rubber ball that could withstand the impact of a sturdy racket blow was not available in the world for a long time. *The Leeds Times* of 8 August 1840 advertised the sale of "the newly-invented India Rubber Balls." But the next sentence revealed that "These balls are of solid India Rubber..." They were not hollow. Then 24 years later, on 16 July 1864, *The Leicestershire Mercury* newspaper advertised "solid and hollow India-rubber balls." But were these hollow balls strong enough for lawn tennis? Or were they balls for children, or perhaps small balls used occasionally in outdoor badminton? It is uncertain exactly when these balls had improved enough to be ready for lawn tennis. Perhaps they were ready for such a use by the late 1860s, or by 1870. Major Wingfield, as late as 1874, was forced to procure his hollow rubber balls from Germany, apparently because he could not find adequate ones in England at that time. Even those were fragile, easily broken, barely adequate, and came in various weights and sizes. No one today knows which German company manufactured the first lawn tennis balls sold by Wingfield. Malabar Coast (probably George Cayley) wrote from Africa a letter published in *The Field* of 24 October 1874. He claimed that of 10 balls purchased, it was difficult to find any two of which were identical in weight and size. James Buchanan of London, whose company sold lawn tennis balls, noted in *The Field* of October, 1874, that many customers had complained of "the ball now in use being easily destroyed by a blow from the bat, or any sharp object it comes in contact with on the lawn." One thing is for certain. The new game with hollow rubber balls was far different from those played earlier with solid balls made from materials other than rubber. Also, besides the hollow lawn tennis ball, lawn tennis differed from some of the earlier racket games by being played outdoors, being inexpensive, and in encouraging women to take an active part in the game as players.

(*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 139-147)

Below: A photograph of three very early hollow rubber lawn tennis balls, one of which has been covered in melton cloth, another in calf-skin.



5. In what year was the term "lawn tennis" first seen in print?

The answer is 1874. The term "lawn tennis" first appeared in print on 25 February 1874 in Major Wingfield's first rules' booklet titled, *The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis*. *The Oxford English Dictionary* confirms that 1874 was the first year that term was seen in print. This was Wingfield's new game. He had started working on it in 1873, and had tested it on the lawns of various British country estates in that year. In a letter to Major Harry Gem of the Leamington Club, dated 8 December 1874, Wingfield explained that he had been working on his new game "for the past year and a half." This means that he began working on lawn tennis about May or June of 1873. In his first lawn tennis booklet, published in February of 1874, Wingfield stated, "This game has been tested practically at several Country Houses during the past few months, and has been found so full of interest and so great a success, that it has been decided to bring it before the Public..." Although Wingfield had tested his game for a "few months," he did not introduce lawn tennis to the public until late February or early March of 1874. It was advertised in British newspapers by early March of that year. No mention of the game of lawn tennis, or any game that could be mistaken for it, has been found in any document prior to 1874 - no rules, no players, no courts, no photographs, no letters, no books or articles, no illustrations or etchings, and no diaries. So the world's public, starting with the English public, initially learned of Wingfield's new game in 1874. The multitude of lawn tennis books that have claimed

lawn tennis was being played in 1872, in 1859, or even earlier, are not backed up by contemporary documents.

(The Birth of Lawn Tennis, p. 41, p. 47)

6. What was Major Walter Clopton Wingfield's contribution to lawn tennis?

Major Wingfield was the most significant individual of all in the history of lawn tennis. He invented lawn tennis. First, he experimented with his new game in the latter half of 1873. He then patented "a portable court for playing tennis" on 23 February 1874. It had the shape of an hourglass and could be set up on any level surface. Two days later, on 25 February 1874, he published the first ever lawn tennis book in the form of a booklet. (This date was unknown until 1973 when American George Alexander discovered it.) It was 8 pages long and included the first written rules of lawn tennis, a total of only 6 rules. His first rules' booklet was titled *The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis*. In it, the term "lawn tennis" appeared in print for the first time. Only 4 copies of his original booklet are known to exist today. He later followed this up with 4 more editions of his rulebook from late 1874 through 1876. Wingfield also was the first to advertise lawn tennis through British newspapers. His game was publicized on 7 March 1874 in both the *Army and Navy Gazette* and in *The Court Journal*. Then, on 21 March 1874, *The Field*, *The Country Gentleman's Newspaper* ran a much larger notice on lawn tennis, including all its rules. Wingfield became the first person to sell the game. By March of 1874 he was offering boxed sets of lawn tennis for sale, as well as lawn tennis implements such as rackets and balls sold separately. He sold these goods through his agent in London, French & Co. Each boxed set included 4 rackets made by Jefferies and Malings Co., a bag of balls, netting, poles, pegs, a mallet, a brush and a rulebook. A buyer of such a box could set up his own court and play the game. These items were purchased not only by British citizens but by foreign visitors and military personnel who rapidly spread the game across the globe. Wingfield contributed in other ways. He was the first to encourage women to play his game; wrote several letters to *The Field* explaining lawn tennis to the public; played in the first public lawn tennis exhibition match in early May of 1874; and played a key role in the rules' conference at the Marylebone Cricket Club in early March of 1875. Wingfield was the starting point. It was from his original game that subsequent individuals retained, changed and added rules, to eventually arrive at the wonderful game of tennis that we play today.

(The Birth of Lawn Tennis, Chapter 2, pp. 35-53)

7. On what surface was Wingfield's game first played?

Lawn tennis was first tested and played on lawn or turf, especially on the lawns of country estates surrounding London. Croquet, which had been the rage during the 1860s, had lost popularity by 1874 due to its tameness and disputes over rules. So many of the earliest lawn tennis courts were set up on the now abandoned croquet lawns of country estates, since they were not only flat but well prepared. Lawn tennis also spread quickly to the lawns of public parks; clubs that already offered cricket, croquet and archery; new clubs created for lawn tennis; and private homes. Stories in many books that lawn tennis was first played on the lawn of Rhysnant estate in Wales, owned by Major Wingfield since 1858, are surely false since Wingfield had rented out that property except for a short time during 1864. Written evidence does indicate that the Earnshill estate owned by Wingfield's cousin was one of the estates where the Major had demonstrated his game in 1873. Roller skating had been popular prior to lawn tennis and many indoor roller skating rinks existed in England. That sport, often called rinking, had, as croquet, lost much of its following by 1874. So lawn tennis courts were put up in a number of the



Above: An original part-set of Major Wingfield's original game, above which can be seen the decorative label which was pasted onto the front of the box.



Above: A very rare photograph showing the Major's original tennis net (along with side nets) set up on the lawn of a house at Betsham in Kent, England.

recently vacated rinks with their level and hard surfaces. Of course, the game spread rapidly to other surfaces such as clay, dirt, asphalt, concrete and wood. One early example is that in France, the climate was not conducive to grass courts, so lawn tennis spread early to sand courts on the beaches of French hotels, and to clay courts, also called hard courts. Another example is California where asphalt and concrete became the favorite court surfaces. Today, grass courts make up only a small minority of the courts worldwide. Therefore, over time, the original name of "lawn tennis" has been generally replaced by the name "tennis" for that largely outdoor game. In the same way, the indoor game originally called "tennis" is now known as "real tennis," "court tennis," or "royal tennis."

8. Was lawn tennis first played at the December 1873 Nantclwyd party in Wales?

Numerous histories of lawn tennis state that the game was first demonstrated and played at the Nantclwyd party in Wales. However, this story is not supported by written contemporary reports. That story surely got started because Major Wingfield had dedicated all 5 of his rulebook editions to "The Party Assembled at Nantclwyd in December, 1873." That party had taken place on Monday through Wednesday, December 15-17, 1873. Major Wingfield was among the guests who attended the party. Major Thomas Naylor-Leyland and his wife, friends of Wingfield, had invited over 200 friends and neighbors to celebrate their newly acquired Nantclwyd estate. The activities of that 3-day event, which included a grand ball and two plays performed by the guests, were reported in two local weekly newspapers on Saturday, December 20th. Each of these papers also printed a complete list of the guests present on that occasion. The newspapers were the *Wrexham Guardian* and the *North Wales Chronicle*. Neither of these mentioned any lawn tennis being a part of that winter party. The weather in Wales at that time of the year would have worked against the game being played outside. In fact, no contemporary document has yet been found that listed lawn tennis as a part of the festivities. However, written documents do show that Wingfield had demonstrated and played his game of lawn tennis at various country estates as early as 6 months prior to the party. So if lawn tennis had been played at the party, and no evidence indicates that it had, it would still not have been the first time lawn tennis had been played. Wingfield had simply dedicated his rulebooks to his friends at the party where he had found so much camaraderie and had such a good time. So contemporary primary evidence indicates that no lawn tennis was played at the winter party at Nantclwyd. But a later story is at least interesting. Secondary sources are often inaccurate and may not be fully trusted, but a magazine article from 1947, more than 70 years after the party, reported a story supposedly confirmed by 2 Nantclwyd party guests. The story was that Wingfield's "game was invented and a drawing of a court made" at the party. Since Wingfield was preparing to introduce his game to the public only 2 months later, in February, it seems likely that he mentioned it to some of the party guests who would become prospective purchasers. However we know that Wingfield's game was not invented at the Nantclwyd party. The full story of that article, not a primary source, is nevertheless related in (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 45-46)

9. Lawn Tennis or Sphairistike? Which term did Wingfield first use?

Scores of books on the beginnings of lawn tennis have mistakenly reported that Wingfield first called his game sphairistike and later, at the urging of others, changed it to lawn tennis. In fact, the order was reversed. Wingfield first called his game lawn tennis, after which, for a short time, he referred to it as sphairistike. Then, several months later, he returned to calling his game by its original name of lawn tennis. Both terms appeared on the front and back covers of all 5 editions of Wingfield's rules' booklets - LAWN TENNIS written



Above: The front cover of the original four-page brochure covering events at the Nantclwyd party. These brochures were given to guests attending the second day of the 3-day Nantclwyd party of 16 December 1873. The grand ball was held on this second day.

in English in large letters, and Sphairistike written in Greek in smaller letters. This can all be easily explained. What was the name of Wingfield's very first booklet? It was ***The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis***, published on 25 February 1874. Inside that booklet, the term lawn tennis was used 6 times and the term sphairistike not used at all. Shortly thereafter, a number of subsequent imitators used Wingfield's original term "lawn tennis" for their own versions of his game. Two examples of such pioneers who adopted Wingfield's term for their own games were John Hinde Hale who named his game "Germain's lawn tennis," and the Leamington Club that called its game "lawn tennis or pelota." Probably to separate his own game from those of his imitators, Wingfield published his second edition in November of 1874, changing the title to ***The Game of Sphairistike***. No imitators copied that name. This second edition contained 12 rules, double the number that were in the first edition. Within the main part of the text, the first 17 pages, the term sphairistike appeared 5 times while the term lawn tennis appeared only twice. There is more evidence regarding this point. The Day-Book of Wingfield's French & Co. which recorded his lawn tennis sales, referred to his game as lawn tennis until 12 September 1874 when it began writing his game as sphairistike. ***The Field*** newspaper in London headed its columns at first with the term lawn tennis, but by mid-August began heading its columns with the term sphairistike. This continued for a time. So a number of contemporary documents show that Wingfield initially called his new game lawn tennis, but after about 6 months started calling it sphairistike instead. Later, on 3 March 1875, the Marylebone Cricket Club hosted a conference for lawn tennis enthusiasts to hear and compare their rules' proposals. Almost 3 months later, on 24 May 1875, the MCC officially announced their new rules. They had adopted Wingfield's original name for their own game - lawn tennis. Wingfield happily agreed to and accepted the new MCC set of 25 rules, especially because they included his hourglass court. At that point, Wingfield resorted back to using his original name of lawn tennis in his last 3 rulebook editions. He included all 25 of the MCC rules in his own 3rd edition (June 1875), his 4th edition (later in 1875), and in his 5th edition (1876). Each of these 3 editions was basically identical. Each was titled, ***The Game of Sphairistike; or, Lawn Tennis***. Inside each of these booklets, the game was called lawn tennis. Some wonder why Wingfield ever used the word "sphairistike" for his game. During Victorian times, the British upper classes, educated at the finest schools and universities, had generally studied Greek and enjoyed using classical names and titles. However, Wingfield's use of that term for his game appears to have been unpopular.

(***The Birth of Lawn Tennis***, pp. 134-135)

10. What were Major Wingfield's original rules of lawn tennis?

Major Walter Clopton Wingfield's first edition lawn tennis book, ***The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis***, the first book ever written on lawn tennis, was published on 25 February 1874, and appeared in ***The Field*** on 21 March 1874. It offered only 6 rules and was 8 pages long. Here are its 6 rules.

- I. This Game can be played by two or four players.
- II. The Game consists of 15 aces (points) and the outside have the option of setting it, if they should happen to be 13 or 14 all, to either three or five. (This was a tie-break in the very first lawn tennis rulebook.)
- III. The sides having been made, and the one to go in having been determined on, as in Racquets, they place themselves in court G, the first player standing in the service crease in the centre of the court, and serves, which he does by throwing up the ball with his left hand into the air, and while falling striking it with his bat (racket) and sending it over the net

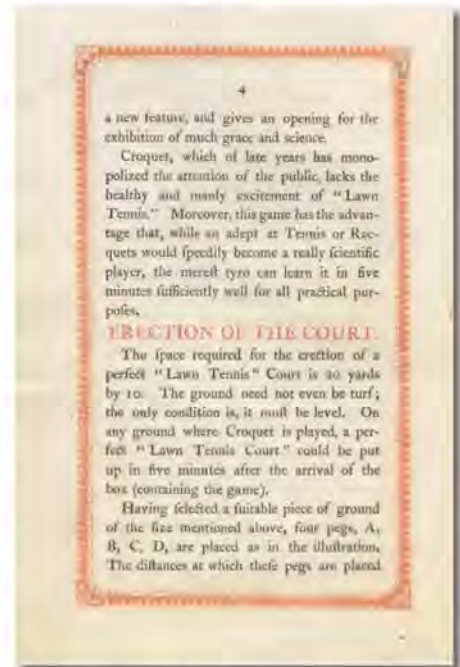


Above: The title page of Walter Wingfield's first "Lawn Tennis" rules booklet published on 25th. February 1874. It was the first book ever written on lawn tennis, and demonstrates that the Major named his game lawn tennis before later changing it to sphairistike.

Below: Major Walter Clopton Wingfield - dressed for winter at Ruthin?



Below: An engraving of mixed doubles from Wingfield's first rules' booklet. It shows the plan of Wingfield's original court and his short lived "serving-crease."



Above: Page 4 of Wingfield's first rules' booklet, *The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis*.

between E and F (the net posts), first into one court and then into the other. The out-side stand one in the right, and the other in the left court of side K; if they fail to return the ball served to them during its first bound, or by a "volley," that is, hitting it before it has touched the ground, the in-side score an ace; but if they do return it, the ball is hit backwards and forwards over the net till one side fails to do so, or hits it out of Court.

IV. The outer hand can never score an ace, he can merely put his opponent's hand out; the score can only be made by the side that is in.

V. If the server does not hit the ball over the net between E and F, or sends it out of Court, or fails twice running to serve it into the proper Court, his hand is out.

VI. With four players, the side that goes in has only one hand the first round.

The first rulebook also contained other remarks to help the players understand the game. "*The space required for the erection of a perfect 'Lawn Tennis' Court is 20 yards by 10. The ground need not even be turf; the only condition is, it must be level. On any ground where Croquet is played, a perfect 'Lawn Tennis Court' could be put up in five minutes after the arrival of the box.*" Wingfield also required side nets or wings in his first two editions. "*The two wings or side-nettings will then be secured to the posts E and F, by the loops and strings attached for the purpose, and the extremities drawn tight in the direction of the pegs A, B, C, D (the 4 corners of the court), forming thereby the side-walls of the Court, and also the guy rope to support the posts and centre netting.*" Wingfield added, "*The boundaries of the Court, and the service crease, which is one yard square, may be marked in white, for which purpose a brush will accompany the box, and a mixture of chalk or lime and water should be made in a bucket.*" (The side netting was reminiscent of the side walls in real tennis.)

Rules that were not printed in the initial rulebook came to light through the discussions or debates published in *The Field*. These, added to what had been written in Wingfield's patent of a portable court, revealed that Wingfield's first court was shaped like an hourglass, 60 by 30 feet with a net in the middle that was about 21 feet wide. The height of his net was about 5 feet at the posts and 4 feet 8 inches in the center. Since every lawn tennis boxed set included a net, and the purchaser only had to take it out of the box and set it up on a court, Wingfield had originally failed to publish his net's dimensions. He also published in *The Field* the dimensions and weights of his lawn tennis balls. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 41-43, p. 503)

11. Did Major Wingfield patent his game of lawn tennis or sphairistike?

No. Major Wingfield did not patent his game. Although numerous tennis history books have written that Wingfield patented his game of lawn tennis or sphairistike, they are wrong. Wingfield was not able to patent his game, nor a set of rules for his game, because at that time, 1874, the British Patent Office did not allow patents for games. Therefore, Wingfield received only a 6-month provisional patent numbered 685 in England on 23 February 1874. It was a 4-page document. He also received a separate but nearly identical patent in the United States in November of 1874. But what was his patent for? It was for "*a portable court for playing tennis.*"

Wingfield's purpose for his patent was to take the indoor game of tennis (real tennis) that had been played by a limited number of players, mainly the well-to-do, indoors, and move it outdoors to the open air, and thus make it affordable and available for all to play, including women. He wrote that

because of his portable court, "the old game of tennis, which has always been an indoor amusement, and which few can enjoy on account of the great expense of building a brick court, may be made an outdoor one, and played within the reach of all." He added that by his method, "The ancient game of tennis is much simplified, can be played in the open air, and dispenses with the necessity of having special courts erected for that purpose." He wrote that his court could "be erected in a few minutes on a lawn, on ice, or on any suitable sized space either in or out of doors."

Wingfield explained the steps in setting up his "New and Improved Court for Playing the Ancient Game of Tennis" and included a diagram of the court. The only requirement for his court was a level surface. On one side of the court was, in its centre, a diamond-shaped crease in which the server stood while serving. All serves were attempted from one side, the service side. On the other side of the net was the receiving side, with 2 service boxes, left and right, into which serves were aimed. Both were located between the baseline and service line, at the back of the court. The boundaries could be made by paint, cord or tape. Strangely, triangular nets formed side nets or wings that stretched from one service line to the other. This was taken from the idea of the solid side walls used in real tennis. It was legal to hit the ball off of the side net and into the other court.

Wingfield's patent document seems to have an inconsistency. His written directions for setting up the court stated that the side nets were at right angles to the central net. That indicated that the court was rectangular. But, on the other hand, the diagram clearly pictured an hourglass-shaped court. With the printing of his first rulebook 2 days later, it became clear that his diagram was correct and his written description was wrong.

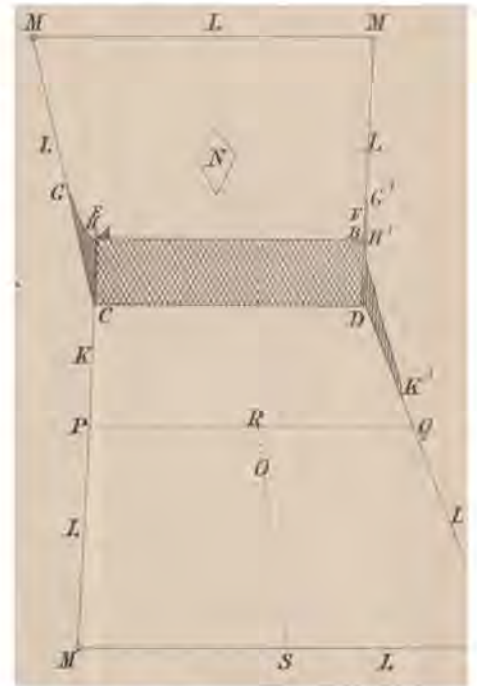
His patent did not explain Wingfield's game of lawn tennis. In fact the terms "lawn tennis" and "sphaeristike" did not appear anywhere in the patent. Only the term "tennis" was used. Although the patent noted that the net was "about twenty one feet" wide, it did not define the size of the court, the scoring system, the height of the net, the size and weight of the balls, nor other rules of the game. Some of those details were explained 2 days later with the publication of his first rulebook. That is where his terms "lawn tennis" and "sphaeristike" would first appear. Perhaps Wingfield had applied for his patent several months before he had written his first rulebook. Other rules were clarified later in *The Field*.

Wingfield was issued a full patent on 22 August 1874, 6 months after his provisional patent. Although no one registered a protest against his patent, nevertheless, he did not renew his patent when it became due 3 years later, in February of 1877. That is largely because, by that time, Wingfield had turned away from lawn tennis and had interested himself in other things. Also, parts of his patent such as the side netting and the 21 foot net had become outdated by 1877. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 38-41, p. 44)

12. Was lawn tennis an invention?

Lawn tennis was an invention. It was an invention and also part of the evolution of racket sports that had begun with real tennis. Tennis books have written that lawn tennis was not an invention, but only part of an evolution. However, an evolution is merely a series of separate inventions over a period of time. Most inventions are minor ones which have little impact upon society. But Wingfield's lawn tennis was a major invention that resulted in a significant and almost immediate advancement in racket sports, totally overshadowing earlier ones such as real tennis and rackets. By the 1870s the hollow rubber ball had finally been improved enough to be used successfully

Below: An almost identical drawing of Wingfield's court which appeared in his patent application document.



Above: Wingfield's Royal Letters Patent No. 685, his provisional patent granted on 23 February 1874 for "a portable court for playing tennis." The original document may be found in the Museum at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, R.I.

in lawn tennis. No earlier racket sport had included the hollow rubber ball in its written rules. Now lawn tennis became the first racket sport that did so. Their use was the key part of the invention, along with the portable court. The hollow rubber balls bounced much higher on outdoor grass and other surfaces than had the solid balls used in earlier racket sports. They made lawn tennis a completely different game from those that had gone before it.

Below: Examples of 19th century lawn tennis rackets, including tilt-top or asymmetrical rackets. Also early lawn tennis balls.



How could one determine whether or not lawn tennis was really an invention? Surely the experts on answering that question would be found in patent offices. Two investigations were carried out to determine whether lawn tennis was really an invention. During the 1980s, the late American tennis historian George Alexander corresponded with a patent expert who had worked 35 years for the British Patent Office. His name was James Harrison. He explored the question of whether lawn tennis was an invention. After sorting through the evidence, he concluded that lawn tennis, a game first played on Wingfield's patented portable court, was indeed an invention. About 3 decades later, in March of 2016, the present author met with the Supervisor of Examiners of the Regional Office in Denver, Colorado, part of the US Patent Office. After examining the question, she stated that lawn tennis was not only an invention, but that it was a rare invention in that it had almost an immediate impact in not just the country of England, but in the world. Also she said that it had subsequently resulted in thousands of later patents or inventions such as improvements in tennis balls, rackets, strings, nets, clothes, shoes, etc. In 1983, the British Patent Office published a brochure that highlighted 8 significant patents over the years. One of the 8 highlighted was Wingfield's portable court that led to lawn tennis.

Not all inventions are patented. In the United States, patent-eligible subject matter falls into four categories - an article of manufacture, a machine, a process or a composition. Then each candidate for a patent must meet four requirements. **First**, it must be novel, a new discovery. **Second**, it must be "unobvious" at the time, even though later, looking back, it might have seemed as though it should have been obvious. **Third**, it must work. For example, Leonardo da Vinci documented the idea of a flying machine centuries ago, but he never built one that worked. **Fourth**, the inventor must provide a clear description of the invention so that knowledge of it may be understood by the public. To be considered an invention, it must be introduced to the public. Wingfield's game met all these requirements. In Victorian England, during the early 1870s, the landscape was ripe for a sport such as lawn tennis. That is why it took off like a rocket as soon as it was introduced. Croquet had been popular earlier but by 1874 had lost much of its following. Many croquet lawns had become vacant and abandoned. What would fill the vacuum? Lawn tennis filled it nicely. The well-to-do had leisure time and were looking for pleasant ways to spend it. A new sport such as lawn tennis appears to be just what they were looking for. If Wingfield had not started lawn tennis, someone else may have introduced a similar game in the near future. But in reality, it was Major Wingfield who did invent the game of lawn tennis and who introduced it to the public in 1874.

(The Birth of Lawn Tennis, Chapter 7, pp. 139-153)

13. Which subsequent racket game posed the only serious threat to Wingfield's lawn tennis?

After Wingfield introduced his game in early 1874, it did not take long for competing lawn tennis games using different rules to sprout up across England. By 1875, all of England was playing lawn tennis of one form or another. Oswald Crawford spent the summer of 1875 travelling and observing lawn tennis throughout England. Under his nom de plume, John Latouche, one of his articles, "Lawn Tennis" appeared on 31 January 1876 in



Above: Wingfield's provisional patent specification document, dated 23rd. February 1874. The original includes an additional inserted, folded diagram of his court.

WINGFIELD

Edwardian Gentleman



by George E. Alexander
Foreword by Herbert Warren Wind

Wingfield - Edwardian Gentleman, the biography of Major Walter Clopton Wingfield, written by the late American tennis historian George Alexander and published in 1986. Wingfield is in full uniform.

The New Quarterly Magazine. "Those who travelled at all extensively in England by road or rail this past summer (1875) as the present writer did, had ocular evidence enough of the broad acceptance by all Englishmen of the capital game. Everywhere one saw on the smooth turf of commons, on village greens, in retired meadows, on the lawns of villas and country homes, the 'quaint mazes' of the Lawn Tennis court marked out in white lines." Not all of these locations played the game by Wingfield's rules. But did any of the competing games pose a real threat to replace Wingfield's game for the future?



Above: John Hinde Hale was an active player of cricket and croquet who in late 1874 offered his own game of Germain's lawn tennis as an alternative to Wingfield's game.

John Hinde Hale's Germain's lawn tennis (named after his home) was the only game that seriously threatened to replace Wingfield's lawn tennis. Hale first introduced his game with its 18 rules to the public through **The Field** newspaper on 24 October 1874, eight months after Wingfield had brought out lawn tennis. Even though Hale started late, by early 1875, just prior to the Marylebone Cricket Club's lawn tennis conference, Hale's game had gained much popularity. Many British players, including AEC member Henry Jones (who would become the great lawn tennis rule maker), thought that the Germain's game might be the game of the future. It differed from Wingfield's game in many ways. First was the court. Germain's lawn tennis copied the dimensions of Wingfield's first court - 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, with a net that was only 21 feet wide. But strangely enough, Hale's court was not shaped like an hourglass as Wingfield's was. Instead it was a rectangle. With only a 21-foot net, that meant that to the left and right of the net, there were two 4½ foot strips of court with no net. It was legal for a player to drive the ball down the 2 sidelines and into the opponent's court. In fact, Hale described that stroke hit outside of the net posts as one of the "prettiest" ones. Hale's doubles court was 72 by 30 feet, 12 feet longer than Wingfield's. (Wingfield used his one size of court for both singles and doubles.) Hale's net was 4½ feet high all the way across. However, for experts it was only 4 feet high. Hale recommended a perforated hollow rubber ball to be used in dry weather, different from Wingfield. Germain's lawn tennis also only allowed one service per point, instead of two as Wingfield allowed.

Most significant, one of the rules of Hale's Germain's lawn tennis was very different from Wingfield's game. It was taken from the earlier game of real tennis, even though Hale's game was played without the four walls that surrounded and were part of a real tennis court. On both the service and other strokes, when allowed to bounce twice (when the opponent did not volley it or play it on one bounce), the second bounce of the ball was required to land within the boundaries of the court. So instead of allowing the ball during a stroke to bounce a maximum of only once inside the court's boundaries as in Wingfield's game, Hale's game permitted the ball on a stroke to bounce twice inside the court. In fact, the second bounce of a stroke was required to land within the boundaries. There was the same requirement for a serve, although at that time, the service box was located for all the lawn tennis games between the baseline and the service line. Hale termed the first bounce of the ball the "pitch," and the second bounce of the ball the "first bound."



Above: The cover of the eight-page booklet *Rules of Germain's Lawn Tennis*. This is the only known copy of the Germain's booklet that exists today. It is likely from late 1874 and today resides in the Kenneth Ritchie Wimbledon Library of the All England Club.

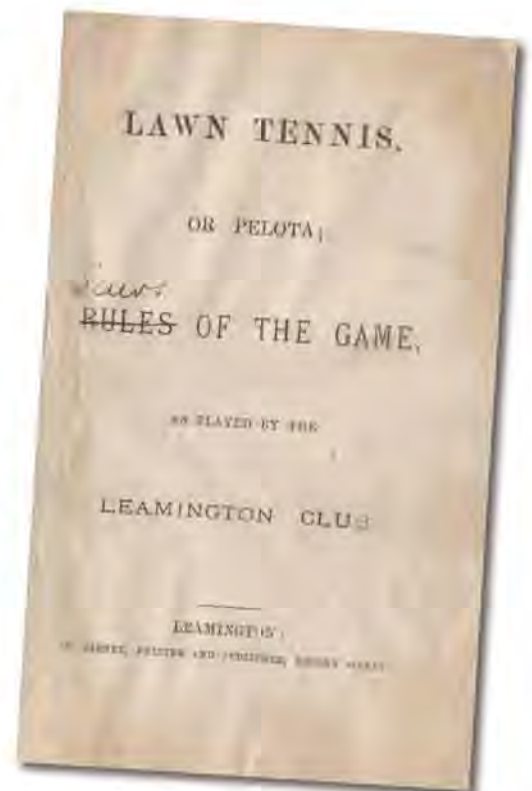
However, Hale's game of Germain's lawn tennis did not last long. The Marylebone Cricket Club's lawn tennis conference on 3 March 1875 marked its downfall. Hale's game failed and disappeared from the scene shortly after the MCC had drawn up its new set of unified lawn tennis rules which were announced on 24 May 1875. The MCC had rejected almost every part of Germain's lawn tennis. This included its rectangular court, the 2-bounce rule, the limit of one serve per point, and the perforated lawn tennis ball. (**The Birth of Lawn Tennis**, pp. 89-100, p. 504)

14. What was the role of Gem, Perera and the Leamington Club in the beginnings of lawn tennis?

Major Harry Gem and Augurio Perera were friends and sportsmen who became pioneers in lawn tennis by establishing their own form of lawn tennis during 1874, not long after Major Wingfield had invented lawn tennis. Though influenced by Wingfield, as others, they were creative in devising their own particular rules. They borrowed Wingfield's original name of lawn tennis for their own game, but also called it pelota. Gem stated that pelota stood for "any game played with a ball." In early 1875, they changed its name to lawn racquets or pelota. Gem had served as a solicitor and law clerk in Birmingham while Perera was a Spanish merchant who ran a business in Edgbaston. They later both moved their families to Leamington Spa by late 1873. There, along with 2 younger doctors, Frederic Haynes and Arthur Tomkins, in 1874, they founded the Leamington Club, a lawn tennis club at the Manor House Hotel. The club had a single court on its lawn. Their rules differed from those of Wingfield and others. *The Field* of 21 November 1874 printed their rules. Their court was rectangular and large, 90 by 36 feet. Rule 3 stated, "The game may be played with a racquet, five's bat or with the hand." Rule 4 stated that, "The ball should be made of india-rubber or other substance answering the purpose, punctured or not." These rules showed the heavy influence from the games of rackets and fives. The Leamington Club's net was 4 feet high and level all the way across. There were no service lines or special service boxes, but players served into the left and right halves of the court, each of which was 45 by 18 feet. When ladies played, the rackets could be smaller, the balls lighter, and the court smaller. It appears that the Leamington Club's form of lawn tennis, which Gem credited to Perera, was basically private, never spreading to any other clubs, nor having much, if any, influence on the future game.

Two questions arise concerning the games played by Gem and Perera. **First**, what was their 1874 game? **Second**, what game did they play in 1859, fifteen years earlier? That second question will be answered in the next section. Concerning their 1874 game, it is surprising how few contemporary documents have been found that confirm the Leamington game. Not a single document describing it prior to 1874 has been discovered. Only 6 documents from 1874 and early 1875 have surfaced that link Gem and Perera to lawn tennis those years. Two Harry Gem letters describing the Leamington Club's game appeared in *The Field* on 21 November and 5 December 1874. Also, there still exist 2 Leamington Club rulebooks once owned by Gem. One was published in 1874 which offered 15 rules, was 8 pages long, and called their game lawn tennis or pelota. The second was from 1 January 1875, was 12 pages long, including 15 rules, and called their game lawn racquets or pelota. A fifth item was an 8 December 1874 letter from Wingfield to Gem, stating that Wingfield had been working on his game "for the past year and a half." Finally, at the end of the first lawn tennis season at the Leamington Club, on 19 October 1874, Gem wrote his tune, "The Wearing of the Green," reminiscing about the great time members had experienced playing lawn tennis. And that is it - only 6 contemporary documents linking Gem and Perera to lawn tennis, compared to the vast number of documents from that year linking Wingfield with the game.

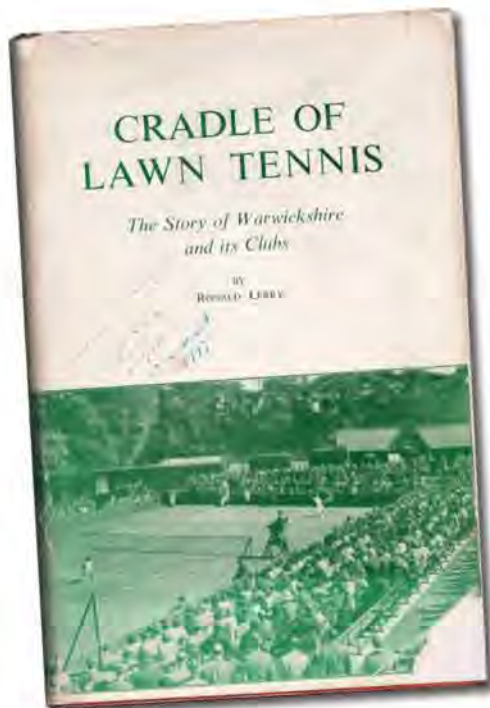
We know today that the Leamington Club of Gem and Perera was founded in 1874. So how did the false story, which has been told in so many books, originate that Gem and Perera played lawn tennis at Leamington in 1872, two years prior to Wingfield's introduction of the game? The story came from secondary sources published years later. It probably started with Eliezer Edwards when he published a Harry Gem obituary that appeared in the December 1881 issue of *Edgbastonia*, a monthly magazine in Edgbaston.



Above: Front cover of the Leamington Club's first (eight-page) rules booklet printed in 1874. Proof-read and hand-corrected by T.H.G. - "Harry" Gem.

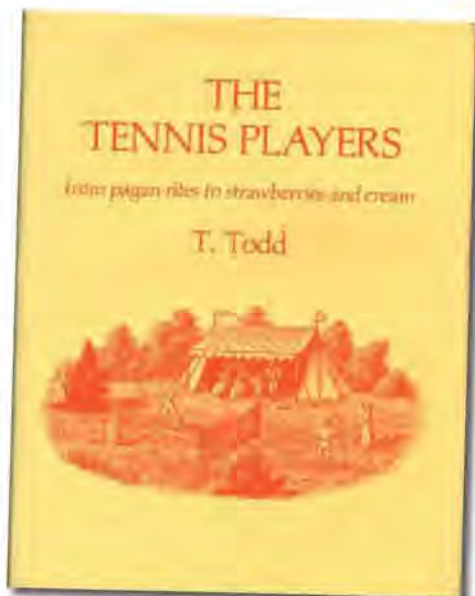


Above: An illustration executed by Major Harry Gem during 1874 or later. It pictures a men's doubles lawn tennis (or pelota) match on the Leamington Club court at the Manor House Hotel.



Above: Ronald Lerry's *Cradle of Lawn Tennis*, published in 1946.

Below: Tom Todd's *The Tennis Players* published in 1979. Both of these books reported the false stories that the Leamington Club was founded in 1872 and that it was the world's first lawn tennis club.



He reported that Gem and Perera had moved to "Leamington, which was ABOUT 1872" and had "established a club there." This was the only Gem obituary that mentioned Gem's role in lawn tennis. Three later key lawn tennis books apparently misinterpreted what Edwards had written. First, Ron Lerry's *Cradle of Lawn Tennis* (1946) printed that Gem and Perera "...in 1872...formed the world's first club, which played on the lawn in the grounds of the Manor House and the name of the game was changed to Lawn Tennis." Then Tom Todd in his *The Tennis Players* (1979) wrote that two doctors "joined with Gem and Perera in forming the Leamington Club, the first lawn tennis club in the world, in the summer of 1872." W.G. Gibbons followed in 1986 with his *Royal Leamington Spa, The Seeds of Lawn Tennis*, printing the same false story. The story had changed from Gem and Perera moving to Leamington in "about 1872" to their creating a lawn tennis club there "in 1872." Scores of other authors, without any independent research, have carried this untrue story along over the years.

Influenced by these authors, for decades many believed that Gem and Perera had been playing lawn tennis at least as early as 1872 and that they had founded the first lawn tennis club in 1872, the world's first lawn tennis club. It would have been very significant had they founded a lawn tennis club in 1872, two years before Wingfield introduced the game. It would have meant that he was not the inventor. But the 1872 event had never happened. Those pushing the Leamington story had absolutely no proof that the club there had played lawn tennis in 1872. In fact, no one knew when the Leamington Club had been founded or first played their game. That all changed in 2012 when English lawn tennis historian Bob Everitt discovered an article in *The Leamington Spa Courier and Warwickshire Standard* of 24 May 1875 which explained that the Leamington Club "though recently established, this being only the SECOND YEAR of its existence, is in very flourishing condition." That showed the club had begun in 1874, not in 1872. Confirmation came in 2013 when Everitt found another article in the Leamington paper of 2 April 1898. The Leamington Club had recently broken up. The paper noted that the club "had been in evidence at the Manor House close on a quarter century." That meant the club was not quite 25 years old. So Tom Todd and the others who had written the club began in 1872 were wrong. It had started in 1874. The Leamington Club was probably not the first lawn tennis club in the world, since the Prince's Club and the Polo Club at Lillie Bridge, both in London, played lawn tennis in early May of 1874. The exact date that the Leamington Club hosted lawn tennis is unknown, though their game first appeared in *The Field* in November of 1874.

(*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 100-122, pp. 504-505)

15. What game had Gem and Perera played in 1859?

I apologize for the length of this answer, but this has been a complex and highly contested topic in the past that is worthy of a full explanation.

The most surprising thing happened regarding the role of Gem and Perera in lawn tennis. Numerous tennis books have portrayed them not just as early pioneers, but as the inventors of lawn tennis who had played the game, or something very similar, as early as 1859. It likely all started with a simple statement made by Harry Gem in his letter printed in *The Field* on 21 November 1874. In referring to his friend Augurio Perera, Gem wrote, "He introduced the game fifteen years ago..." What game? What game had Perera introduced fifteen years ago in 1859? And to whom had he introduced it? To help one understand the context of that statement, here is the full paragraph in which it occurred.

"The (Leamington) club has for its founder Mr. Perera, a gentleman of Spanish

family, and well known as a racquet player in the days of John Mitchell, George and Frank Erwood, Sam Young, and Patrick Divett {Lord Eglinton's marker}. He first introduced the game fifteen years ago, and it has recently received the name of Pelota, a Spanish word in compliment to its originator (Perera), and signifying any game played with a ball."

So what was "the game" in that paragraph. Some think it was a form of lawn tennis, since the last part of the paragraph refers to the 1874 game at the Leamington Club. But no contemporary document has been found to support the claim of a lawn tennis type game in 1859 - no name of the game, no location, no rules, no other players, no court, nothing. And in 1859 Gem and Perera lived not in Leamington but in Birmingham and Edgbaston respectively.

Could "the game" have been open court rackets? The beginning of the paragraph was all about the game of rackets, and then Gem immediately stated, "He first introduced the game..." Bob Everitt and I both think that they were playing open court rackets. Without more contemporary evidence, neither side can prove its case. But let's examine the written documents from 1874 that support lawn tennis or rackets as their probable early game.

The first supporting document that argued they were playing early lawn tennis was the Eliezer Edwards' obituary of Gem in December 1881, a secondary source. Edwards wrote that Gem, "although not a resident of Edgbaston (Perera was), was connected with it by so interesting an incident - the invention of Lawn Tennis." Edwards continued that "Major Gem was the first to bring that game before the public,..." and that it was "at first called Pelota." He went on, "The first game was played by Messrs. Gem and Perera in the garden attached to the latter gentleman's residence, 'Fairlight,' Ampton Road, Edgbaston, about fifteen or sixteen years ago (1865 or 1866)." Written 7 years after Wingfield had introduced the game, no other early written documents have been found that back up Edwards' contentions. Nothing from 1874 or earlier indicated that Gem had invented lawn tennis or introduced it to the public. The early documents show that Wingfield did those 2 things. Also, no contemporary documents back up the story that Gem and Perera played their game at Perera's home. Had Perera invented a new game in 1859, it would have likely been described in *The Field* that was always looking for new games. Also, Edwards mentioned 1865 or 1866 as the year for their early game, not 1859 which Gem claimed.

What contemporary documents indicated that Perera had introduced rackets, likely open court rackets, in 1859, probably to Gem and his friends? There are a great number of those. Here are some of them.

1. What do we know for certain happened in 1859? By early 1859, Gem and Perera had become members of the Bath Street Racket Club in Birmingham that had recently opened. They were definitely playing closed court rackets in 1859.
2. During 1859, documents show that Perera was playing competitive open court rackets. It is likely that Perera had introduced that game to Gem by then, and that Gem was playing as well. Of course there would have been no reason for newspapers to publicize Gem being one of thousands of Englishmen playing rackets at that time. It was not a new game.
3. In October of 1873, Gem wrote a 6½ page article titled, "Racket Reminiscences," that appeared in print the following year, 1874, in *Baily's Magazine*, Volume 25. Here Gem extolled the benefits of open-court rackets, regretted that its popularity had declined over the years, encouraged its



Above: Originally known as 'Ampton House,' Perera's new residence at 8 Ampton Road, Edgbaston, was eventually given the name 'Fairlight.' The alleged location of a racket game in 1859, despite there being no evidence to support that story.



Above: An engraving of the Manor House Hotel in Leamington, printed for the proprietor, Mr. Lamplough, in 1906. From 1874 until 1898 this hotel was the site for the Leamington Club's lawn tennis court.

revival, and stated, "It is not likely that rackets will be numbered with the dead for some time to come..." Gem wrote there about hand-fives, bat-fives, the open-court or Queen's bench game, the English, and the Irish or military game. But no mention was made about lawn tennis, or anything similar to it. Had Gem been playing a form of lawn tennis, it is likely he would have mentioned it here. Also, had lawn tennis existed, there might have been no need to bring back open court rackets.



Above: An amusing 1827 hand-colored image drawn and etched by Theodore Lane picturing open-court rackets played against a wall inside one of London's debtor's prisons. This game was played as early as the 16th century and became popular in prisons.



Above: Thomas Henry "Harry" Gem was a rackets player in Birmingham during 1859 who later became a prominent member of the Leamington (Lawn Tennis) Club during 1874.

4. This is a very significant point. Gem stated that lawn tennis was pelota, and that pelota was "any game played with a ball." To Gem, both lawn tennis and rackets were pelota, games played with a ball. They were different forms of the same game, both played with rackets and a ball. So the Leamington Club's game of lawn tennis, he considered a form of rackets. Logically, it is hard to believe that Gem would not perceive a big difference between rackets where players hit the ball against a wall with both players facing it, and lawn tennis where the players hit a ball over a net while facing each other. Nevertheless, in reading Gem's own written words, this seems to be the case. Remember, lawn tennis was a new game and many did not fully understand what it was at first. Even two years later, an 1876 US newspaper confused lawn tennis with badminton.

5. Here are **four** out of a number of examples from Gem's letter printed in *The Field* of 5 December 1874 that indicate Gem saw lawn tennis as a form of rackets.

5A. Gem wrote that the Leamington game did not distinguish between a "let" or a "fault." He wrote, "A fault is, I believe, more applicable to tennis than to RACQUETS...With us they are synonymous."

5B. Henry "Cavendish" Jones complained that the Leamington court was so large (90 by 36 feet) that "two first rate (lawn tennis) players would never put a ball near each other." Gem wrote that Jones was accusing the Leamington players of having had "few opportunities of seeing in perfection a game (lawn tennis) that is not yet developed..." In response, Gem claimed that "there are those among us who have seen the finest racquet play in the world..." and that they had played against the best men. Where had Gem and others from Leamington seen these fine lawn tennis players? Gem noted, "The groundwork of our system is the OPEN-COURT RACQUET game, as played at Pentonville, Kennington Oval, and in the Queen's Bench and Fleet prisons in former days. We do not profess to be tennis players, and, as 'Cavendish' admits that the game (lawn tennis) is nearer in principle to RACQUETS than tennis, there is no reason to apologize but I humbly beg to indorse his opinion." There was no lawn tennis played at the sites Gem mentioned. They were all centers for the game of rackets, including open court rackets. Gem indicates here that seeing good rackets players in action was the same as seeing good lawn tennis players playing.

5C. In defense of his long tennis court (90 feet) at the Leamington Club, Gem stated, "...for hitting, the court must be a long one, and without it there is no game of RACQUETS worthy of the name." This shows that Gem considered lawn tennis as rackets, or at least a form of rackets.

5D. In discussing his lawn tennis game, Gem wrote, "When we say that a ball must be played into the adversary's list, we mean, what will be understood by any OPEN-COURT RACQUET player, that it must fall from the racquet within the lines, and the player must hit it before it falls again."

6. In January of 1875, Gem and the Leamington Club finally changed the name of their game from lawn tennis to LAWN RACQUETS in their new

rulebook. Gem considered their game a form of racquets. Based upon all these written statements from Gem in 1874, it appears that the game that Gem and Perera played in 1859, introduced by Perera in that year, was rackets, probably open court rackets. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 106-113)

16. What role did the Marylebone Cricket Club play?

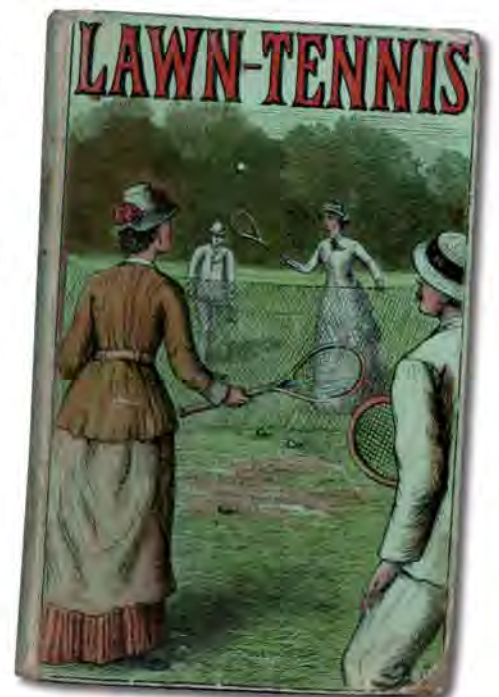
The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) of London, founded back in 1787, was an important and powerful club in the field of sport during Victorian times. English cricket had thrived after an MCC committee of gentlemen had centralized its regulations. Then in 1872, the MCC Tennis Committee had codified the rules of real tennis. Now, during 1874, lawn tennis appeared to be in trouble. After Wingfield had advertised his lawn tennis, it didn't take long before courts could be spotted throughout the country. But each location seemed to play the game by its own separate rules. An outsider visiting a club for the first time might hear the expression regarding a rule - "Oh! We never do that here." To solve the problem which threatened to lead to the extinction of lawn tennis, the secretary of the MCC, in *The Field* of 28 November 1874, suggested a "properly constituted committee to lay down fixed rules of the game." This seemed strange to some readers since, while a number of London clubs had offered lawn tennis to their members for months and displayed their own courts, the MCC had never offered lawn tennis nor had courts. This changed on 3 March 1875 when the MCC hosted a meeting for all those interested in the future of lawn tennis. Various lawn tennis games were demonstrated on the MCC grounds and then discussed in their Pavilion. Those present with their input included Major Wingfield, John Hale, Henry Jones, John M. Heathcote, and other British lawn tennis leaders. The MCC Tennis Committee, which had revised the real tennis rules 3 years earlier, took the advice given there under consideration and after almost 3 months, announced their new official set of rules on 24 May 1875. Five days later their rules appeared in *The Field* for the public to read. The new MCC rules were titled, *Laws of Lawn Tennis - Revised by the M.C.C.* Prior to the final decision on the MCC rules, on 2 May 1875, Wingfield had mailed a letter to the club secretary, giving the MCC permission to use his hourglass court in its rules. Today that letter is housed in the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport. Sadly, many books on tennis history have printed factual errors when describing the MCC rules. Sometimes they have credited the MCC for rules which were actually formulated two years later by the All England Club. This is particularly true in regards to moving from the hourglass court to the rectangular one. Here are some of the MCC's 25 rules, all of which may be found in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*.

1. The name chosen for the game was "lawn tennis." (Wingfield's original term)
2. The hourglass-shaped court was KEPT. (Wingfield's original shape)
3. The MCC kept the 15 point games of Wingfield and the others in which only the service side could win points. A change was created so now 14-points-all was called deuce, and a player had to win by at least 2 points. (No longer was there a tie-break at 13 or 14-all to 5 or 3 points as in Wingfield's game.)
4. The size of the court was changed to 78 by 30 feet for singles; a doubles court could be larger.
5. The net was now 24 feet wide, an increase from Wingfield's net that had been "about 21 feet wide."

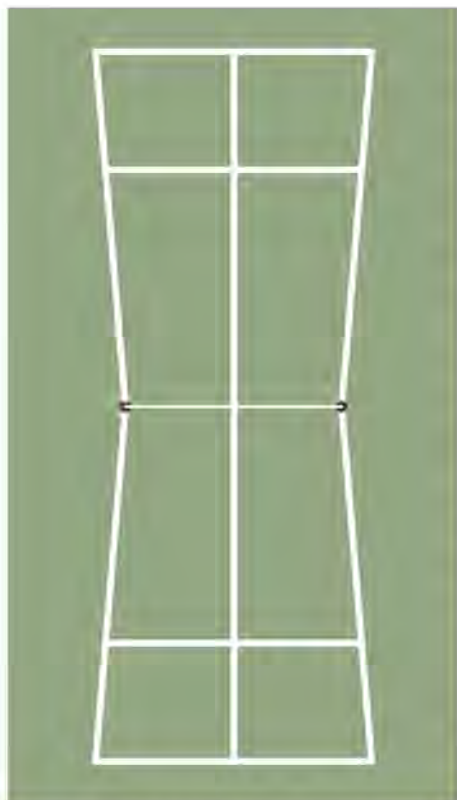


Above: The 1876 M.C.C. rules' booklet which contained their 1875 revised lawn tennis rules. This booklet was one of the very first lawn tennis books with a hard cover, perhaps the first one.

Below: The attractive cover of *Lawn-Tennis* by Jasper Smythe published in 1878, a very early instructional book on lawn tennis.



6. The net height was set at 5 feet at the posts and 4 feet at the center.
7. Each net post was 7 feet high.
8. The service line was set at 26 feet from the net.



Above: The M.C.C.'s first court plan from May 1875. The dimensions were 78 feet long, 30 feet wide at the baselines, and 24 feet wide at the net.

Below: Henry 'Cavendish' Jones, from an article entitled 'Whist in America' from *The Cosmopolitan* magazine, Volume XIX, May-October 1895, p. 194. Jones, largely responsible for the modern rules of lawn tennis, is probably the second most important individual in the history of the game after the inventor Wingfield.



9. The MCC abolished at least 4 of the rules of John Hale's Germains lawn tennis. The MCC rejected his rectangular court, allowed 2 serves per point instead of only one, got rid of Hale's punctured hollow tennis ball in dry weather, and allowed the ball to bounce only one time within the boundary lines per stroke, instead of twice.
10. "A STROKE OF GENIUS." The MCC offered one very significant improvement which remains today. Wingfield's and the other lawn tennis games had located their service boxes between the BASELINE and the service line. Now, for the first time in lawn tennis, the MCC located each service box between the NET and service line. This was new. It diminished the tremendous advantage that the server had held over the returner.

Major Wingfield willingly approved these MCC rules and adopted all 25 of them into his 3rd, 4th and 5th edition rulebooks. However, many of these MCC rules would soon be altered or abolished by the All England Club 2 years later, in 1877. Then, from 1878 through 1887, the AEC and the MCC cooperated in overseeing the rules of lawn tennis, with the AEC in the leadership role. In 1888, the Lawn Tennis Association was created by the British which then took over the rule-making authority. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 173-179, pp. 506-509)

17. What was the role of the All England Club in the beginnings of lawn tennis?

The All England Club near Worple Road at Wimbledon, in southwest London, played a crucial role in supporting the early development of lawn tennis. Its most important contributions were modernizing the early rules of lawn tennis and holding the world's first lawn tennis tournament open to all amateurs. Some small, local and club member-only tournaments predated The Championships, but this first open tournament certainly gave the game of lawn tennis a boost. The All England Club was founded on 23 July 1868 as The All England Croquet Club. It attracted croquet players at that time, even though it did not have its own croquet ground until the following year. Later, as lawn tennis had gained popularity and the Club was facing financial difficulties, club member Henry Jones proposed that part of the Club grounds be set apart for lawn tennis and badminton. The motion passed on 25 February 1875, exactly one year after Wingfield had published his first rules. Lawn tennis was being played at the Club by the spring of 1875. After the game had gained a following there, the Club changed its name on 14 April 1877 to The All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club. On Saturday, 9 June 1877, *The Field* printed the first public notification that the Club proposed to hold a lawn tennis tournament starting on Monday, July 9th, open to all gentlemen amateur lawn tennis players. It offered only a men's singles division. The three-man AEC subcommittee of the first Championship at Wimbledon consisted of Henry Jones, Julian Marshall and Charles G. Heathcote. Largely because of the observation and experimentation of Henry Jones, with active involvement of Marshall and Heathcote, this committee made some rule changes that were REVOLUTIONARY and changed the rules of lawn tennis forever. Their 15 rules for the first Championship appeared in *The Field* on 16 June 1877. They differed greatly from the earlier rules of the Marylebone Cricket Club. Here are some of the significant changes found in the All England Club's 1877 rules. These rules were created for the first

Championships but remained as the Club rules when that event finished. These 15 original AEC lawn tennis rules are found in the Appendix of *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*. Here are some of their rules that changed the game.

1. The SCORING SYSTEM changed from the rackets scoring of games to 15 by ones used by the MCC, to real tennis scoring with games of 15, 30, 40, game, and sets played to 6 games. "Each match will be the best of five sets, without advantage sets except for the finals." Advantage sets meant sets that were won by at least 2 games such as 7-5 and 8-6. Until the finals, 6-5 sets were played, where at 5-5 in games, whosoever's turn it was to serve did serve the final game of the set. There was no tie-break.

2. The SHAPE of the court was changed, abandoning the MCC's and Wingfield's hourglass court for a rectangular court, as that used today. Of course, many of the early British clubs, such as the Prince's Club, had earlier adopted the rectangular shape for their courts.

3. The SIZE of the court was changed. Now it became 78 by 27 feet for singles, and on 30 June 1877, the doubles court became 78 by 36 feet, as today. The MCC court had been 78 by 30 feet.

4. The HEIGHT OF THE NET was changed. The MCC net had been 5 feet at the posts and 4 feet in the center. In 1877, the AEC lowered the center of the net to 3 feet 3 inches. In 1878, it lowered the net to 3 feet at the center and 4 feet 9 inches at the posts for singles and 4 feet for doubles. In 1880, the net was lowered to 4 feet at the posts for singles as well. In 1882, the net height at the posts was lowered to 3 feet 6 inches. So by 1882, the net's height became the same as it is today.

5. The net posts were moved from being placed on the boundary lines where they had been located before 1877, to 3 feet outside the boundary lines on either side of the court as today.

6. A slight change was made in the size and weight of the ball.

7. The terminology was changed. The MCC had called the server and receiver the "hand-in" and "hand-out." The AEC now called them the "server" and the "striker-out."

8. More changes followed later, made by the AEC and the MCC. The AEC kept the service line at 26 feet from the net in 1877, identical to the MCC rules. But, led by Henry Jones and his statistics each year on games won by the server and receiver, the committee changed the service line location in 1878 to 22 feet from the net, and in 1880 to 21 feet from the net, as it remains today. Also in 1880, the rules made it illegal for a player to volley a ball "before it had passed the net." That rule also remains today.

So, largely because of the hard work of the All England Club's lawn tennis tournament committee, by 1882, only 8 years after lawn tennis had been invented, the court's shape, size and net had already become identical to today's court. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 246-277, pp. 508-509)

18. Who played lawn tennis during its early days?

Within 2 or 3 years after Wingfield had introduced lawn tennis to the public, it had already surpassed the popularity of real tennis and rackets. During the 1860s, prior to lawn tennis, croquet had been extremely popular with the elite. It gave gentlemen and ladies a chance to mingle and flirt in an enjoyable environment outdoors. But many, especially men, found that



Above: A detail from an oil painting by Bob Everitt. It is based upon an original engraving by Victorian artist Horace William Petherick, when he visited the Championship event on the first day in 1877.

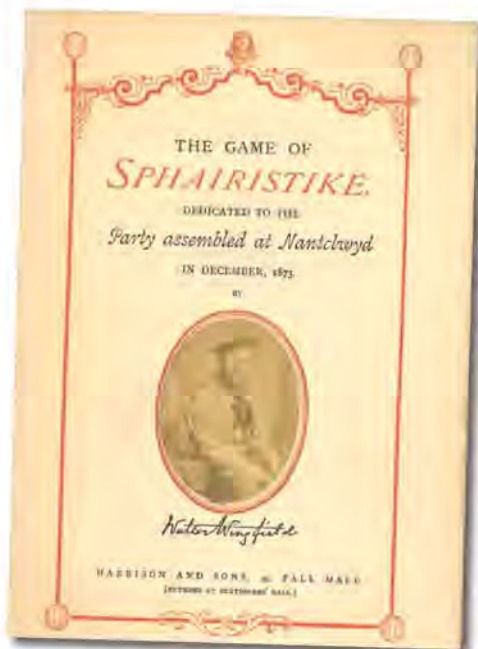
Below: Julian Marshall, the expert on the history of real tennis who served on the 3-man 1877 AEC tournament committee along with Henry Jones and Charles G. Heathcote. They revolutionized lawn tennis rules.





Above: Inside Wingfield's second edition rulebook he printed a list of "titled personages" who had already purchased his game. This was only the first page of names. His 3rd, 4th and 5th edition rulebooks also included the list of titled purchasers.

Below: The title page of Wingfield's second edition rulebook of November 1874, titled *The Game of Sphairistike*. This booklet shows how Wingfield had changed the name of his game from lawn tennis to sphairistike for a short time.



croquet lacked action and was unmanly. Then lawn tennis came along in 1874 and replaced croquet as the game of choice of the upper classes. Gentlemen and ladies could play the game together and get exercise and pleasure at the same time. Wingfield from the start had encouraged women to play his sport. Only one illustration appeared in his first lawn tennis booklet, and it pictured a mixed doubles match. Women had been discouraged from playing the sports of real tennis and rackets, let alone cricket, rugby and football (soccer). Many ladies had played battledore and shuttlecock, as well as badminton, but those games were mostly played indoors where there was no wind to ruin the game. Perhaps the most significant single reason that lawn tennis popularity had taken off so swiftly across England and the world was because both men and women could play that game, and could play it together. The very important role of ladies' involvement in lawn tennis, thus increasing its attraction, cannot be overestimated.

During Victorian times in England, those in the upper classes had leisure time and were looking for new amusements. Each novel game was usually reported in *The Field*, as well as in *The Court Journal*, a paper popular with the aristocracy. It was in the newspapers that so many British citizens first learned of lawn tennis. Those who played lawn tennis in its early stages tended to be well-to-do individuals and families; the upper classes; the titled; those who owned estates and property; those who belonged to exclusive cricket, archery and croquet clubs; men in the military; men who attended the best schools and universities; those who had earlier played real tennis and rackets; and ladies. Wingfield's second edition rulebook, *The Game of Sphairistike* (Nov. 1874), in order to advertise his new game, listed the names of about 250 titled personages who had already purchased his game during its first year. His impressive list included the Prince of Wales; the Crown Princess of Prussia; 5 other Princes; another Princess; 9 Dukes; 14 Marquises; 49 Earls; 10 Countesses; 8 Viscounts; 30 Lords; 37 Ladies; 55 Sirs; the British Embassies in Calcutta, Constantinople, St. Petersburg, and Rome; the MCC, Prince's Club, Hurlingham Club, and Lillie Bridge Club; and Eton, Oxford, Cambridge and other schools and universities. Major Wingfield himself was a retired military cavalryman, an estate owner (Rhysnant in Wales), and one of 40 members of Queen Victoria's Royal Body Guard. He traveled in upper class circles and knew their tastes. His will showed that he was worth about \$5 million in today's money when he died in 1912. Although Wingfield's lawn tennis sets, selling for 5 guineas each, were considered expensive at that time by some, nevertheless, middle class people did play lawn tennis at parks and other sites.

What characteristics did the 22 players who entered the initial Championships at Wimbledon in 1877 have in common? Bob Everitt studied the lives of 20 of those players and included their biographies in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*. Here is what he found from that research. Many attended the best British schools and universities. At least 4 attended Rugby School, 3 Harrow, 3 Eton, and 7 Cambridge (of whom 5 attended its Trinity College). Surprisingly, it seems none of those 20 players went to Oxford University. Most were sportsmen. Eleven played cricket. Most had played real tennis or rackets. Seven were employed in legal professions; 4 had military connections; 3 were stockbrokers; and 2 were land agents. The average age of the players was about 32 years. The youngest was 18. Thirteen lived within 15 miles of the All England Club. Only 4 players resided more than 100 miles from the AEC grounds. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, p. 132, p. 356)

19. Was Mary Outerbridge the first person to bring lawn tennis to America?

Although it is extremely unlikely that Mary Outerbridge was the first to introduce lawn tennis into America, the only person whom we know for certain did play the game in America during 1874 was also a woman. She will be discussed in the next section under question No.20. Since the early 1930s, many have credited Mary Outerbridge with bringing lawn tennis into the United States in 1874. As recently as 2021, a tennis book credited her. However, contemporary written evidence definitely works against her being the first. Mary Ewing Outerbridge (1852-1886) was the 7th of 10 children born to Alexander Ewing Outerbridge and his wife, the former Laura Catherine Harvey. The "*Outerbridge Story*," which the late American tennis historian Frank Phelps called the "*Outerbridge Myth*," has been reported in scores of tennis histories. The story goes like this. Mary, who lived in Staten Island, New York at the time, and one of her older brothers Emilius Outerbridge, made a round trip on the steamship *SS Canima* from New York to Hamilton, Bermuda in early 1874. They left New York on 16 January 1874, spent only 5 or 6 days in Bermuda, and returned to New York on 31 January 1874. The story claims that on that trip, Mary saw British military officers playing tennis in Bermuda and acquired from them some lawn tennis implements and a Wingfield rulebook. These she brought back to Staten Island where she was allowed to set up a lawn tennis court on a corner of the Staten Island Cricket and Base Ball Club grounds where her brothers were members. The Outerbridge Story claims that it was on this very trip that Mary brought back the first lawn tennis implements ever to enter the US. And she supposedly used that equipment to play the first game of lawn tennis in America with her younger sister Laura. The story is probably a true one, except that it did not happen in January of 1874, not that early. Based upon known contemporary documents, Mary could not have brought back lawn tennis on that particular trip.

Why not? Major Wingfield had not yet patented his portable court, nor published his first rulebook, nor started selling his lawn tennis implements until about a month later, no earlier than late February 1874. That was in London. It would have taken awhile for his game to travel to Bermuda. The respected tennis historian of Bermuda, Mary Gray (1860-1947) maintained that lawn tennis did not enter Bermuda until 1875. Gray won the first lawn tennis tournament played there in 1876, and her trophy racket resides today in the Museum at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, Rhode Island. No one would have found lawn tennis in Bermuda as early as January 1874. The reason so many books have published the wrong year for the Outerbridge Story is that for decades, none of the authors knew the date of Wingfield's first rulebook. One historian of the 1930s thought it had been published in December of 1873; another November. They were just guessing. It was not until a century later, in 1973, that American tennis historian George Alexander discovered in London the exact publication date of Wingfield's first rulebook. It was on 25 February 1874. But by the time of Alexander's discovery, the Outerbridge Story had already gained traction.

Where had the Outerbridge Story come from? Some, but very little about it had appeared in the newspapers during the 19th century. In 1917, Randolph St. George Walker's *History of the Staten Island Cricket and Tennis Club 1872-1917* claimed that Mary Outerbridge had been the first to bring a lawn tennis set to America, but not until 1876. Then in 1923, a letter was sent by Mary's youngest brother Eugenius to Dwight Davis, president of the USLTA. In it, Eugenius claimed that Mary had been the first to bring the game to America, and that she had done it the same year that she had spent the winter in Bermuda and returned in the spring. That was not in 1874 when



Above: Eugenius Harvey Outerbridge – the youngest sibling of Mary Outerbridge. There is no known photograph of Mary.

Below: The Staten Island Cricket and Base Ball Club at its new site at Livingston in 1886. Photo by Isaac Almstaedt featured later in Outing of November 1887.





Above: Mrs. Martha Summerhayes, author of *Vanished Arizona - Recollections of My Army Life* in 1908.

Below: Dr. James Dwight, called the Father of American Tennis, who played an early game of lawn tennis at Nahant, Massachusetts with Fred Sears Jr. For decades that was considered the first lawn tennis ever played in America.



Mary had been in Bermuda for only 5 or 6 days. Tennis historian Frank Phelps discovered that Mary's second trip to Bermuda was not until 1877. That year, Mary had left New York on 7 January and had returned more than 3 months later on April 18th. That was the year, 1877, that Mary "had been spending the winter in Bermuda" and returned as Eugenius stated, "in the spring of that year."

During the early 1930s, the Outerbridge Story took on a following in America. Three significant books advocated and popularized that tale. They acted as building blocks to solidify Eugenius Outerbridge's claim. All stated that Mary had brought tennis to America in early 1874, and that she had been the first. In 1931, the USLTA published *Fifty Years of Lawn Tennis in the United States* that included that story as quoted from Eugenius, a past member of the USNLTA executive committee. Then in 1932, *Tennis Origins and Mysteries*, written by 3-time US singles champion (1898-1900) Malcolm Whitman and Robert Henderson, librarian of the New York Public Library and the Racquet and Tennis Club (NYC) reported Mary's 1874 trip on the SS Canima. Frank Menke's *All-Sports Record Book* (1932 version) credited Mary with bringing the game from Bermuda "in February or March of 1874." If that weren't bad enough, S. Wallis Merrihew, in his influential *American Lawn Tennis* magazines, agreed with Whitman and Henderson. These 4 sources were mistaken on one major point. Mary probably had brought lawn tennis from Bermuda, but NOT in 1874.

The year Mary brought lawn tennis from Bermuda to Staten Island was surely 1877. That fits the contemporary documents. The first newspaper articles and pictures showing lawn tennis at the Staten Island Club did not appear until June of 1877. That is the month that the papers reported the Ladies' Club for Out-of-Door Sports, part of the SICBBC, was playing lawn tennis. No earlier such articles have been found. But prior to 1877, lawn tennis had already entered America and was being played in cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. Based on this research, Mary was not the first to bring lawn tennis to the United States. Sadly, no known photograph of Mary Outerbridge is known to exist. That would be a good project for a young researcher to take up. Mary was important, and as the late Outerbridge expert Mrs. Patricia M. Barry stated, "Mary got the ladies off of the benches and onto the courts." She likely helped to start one of the earliest, or perhaps the earliest, ladies' club for sports in America. (*The Birth of Lawn Tennis*, pp. 464-465, pp. 481-491)

20. Who first brought lawn tennis to America?

Lawn tennis entered the United States during 1874 and spread there during the mid-1870s. Documents show that it was being played during that time period in a number of American cities. Yet we will probably never know who first brought the game to the United States, or in which American location lawn tennis was first played. Some private individual or family may have brought in a tennis set, put up a court in their yard, and played it privately. Perhaps no stories were ever written about their court. Nevertheless, a few individuals are frontrunners in answer to the question of who came first. Here are 3 separate examples of individuals, or pairs of individuals, who some have claimed were the very first to play lawn tennis in America.

A. For five decades, until the 1930s, most American newspapers and magazines had credited Dr. James Dwight (often known as the Father of American Tennis) and Fred Sears, Jr. (half brother Richard Sears) with playing the first game of lawn tennis in America. Their initial game was played in Nahant, Massachusetts, a few miles north of Boston. It was played on a private lawn at the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. William and Emily Warren Appleton. They were the uncle and aunt of James Dwight. How did they



Above: Published in both England and the U.S.A., this decorative edition of *Lawn Tennis* from 1886 was dedicated by Dwight to English champion William Renshaw "by his friend and pupil." This was the first lawn tennis instructional book written by a top player.

acquire their first lawn tennis set? James Dwight, 7-time US singles champion (1881-87) Richard Sears, and 2-time US singles champion (1888-89) Henry Slocum Jr., all recorded the story in 1890 and the following years. This is the story. Upon returning from a visit to England, J. Arthur Beebe had brought back with him a lawn tennis set as a gift for his mother-in-law, Mrs. Emily Appleton. This is the set Dwight and Sears used in their initial game. But there still remains a question of whether they first played during the late summer of 1874 or 1875. In various newspapers, magazines and letters, Dwight sometimes claimed that 1874 was the year they first played. Other times he claimed 1875. Which year is correct? American tennis researcher Geoff Felder traced 2 trips that Beebe had made from England to the United States. On his first trip, Beebe returned to the US in January of 1874. On his second trip, he returned to the US on 30 June 1875. Which one was the trip where he brought back the lawn tennis set? The first trip of January, 1874 would have been too early, before Wingfield had introduced his game. As with Mary Outerbridge, it seems impossible that he could have found a lawn tennis set to bring back so early. The trip that ended on 30 June 1875 is likely when Beebe carried his lawn tennis set into the US. So Dwight would have first played in 1875. However, there is a complication. James Dwight owned a first edition Wingfield booklet, *The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis*, published on 25 February 1874. But by June of 1875, that rulebook would have been out of date, replaced first by the second edition of November 1874, and then the third edition of June 1875. Dwight wrote that the original Wingfield booklet, the one Beebe had brought over, had been lost. In its place, another rulebook had been given to Dwight by a friend, William Watts Sherman of New York and Newport. That rulebook is now in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. It is a first edition, only 8 pages long. Dwight wrote that it was the second Wingfield booklet to enter the US, indicating that the one Beebe brought back was likely a first one to enter the US, and probably a first edition as well (since the 2nd edition was 40 pages and the 3rd was 48 pages, much different from the first edition's 8 pages). This somewhat complicates the question. There is still more research to be done on when Dwight and Fred Sears Jr. first played lawn tennis at Nahant.

B. Robert B. Minturn and Francis George Curtis of Staten Island, New York, also appear to have played an early game of lawn tennis in America. We know from written records of Wingfield's French & Co. Day-Book (now in the Wimbledon Museum) that Robert Minturn purchased one of Wingfield's lawn tennis sets on 16 September 1874 while he was in London on business. Minturn's was the first American name in that book, although a Day-Book for the first few months of sales prior to 6 July 1874 has never been found. Canadian Major Rowan Hamilton's name appeared as a purchaser even earlier, on 15 July 1874. Twelve days after his purchase, Minturn left England through the port of Liverpool on the ship *RMS Russia*, and arrived back in New York City on 7 October 1874 (per Geoff Felder research). But when did Minturn first use the lawn tennis set to play a game in America? Decades later, on 15 February 1931, Francis George Curtis, who had been a neighbor, friend and nephew-in-law of Minturn and a resident of Staten Island, published a letter in the *Boston Herald*. This was in response to articles in the newspapers claiming that Mary Outerbridge first brought lawn tennis to the US in early 1874. The headline was "Lawn Tennis First." Curtis wrote, "In the autumn of 1873, Robert B. Minturn, a resident of Staten Island and a member of the firm of Grinnell, Minturn & Co., owner of the 'Flying Cloud' (a ship), brought from England a lawn tennis net, racquets and balls. This was set up on Mr. Minturn's lawn on Bard Avenue, Staten Island, where he then lived. I had the pleasure of playing the first game, which was naturally a very crude affair." Writing more than 50 years after the event, Curtis appears confused as to the exact year he and Minturn first played lawn tennis. He noted 1873 instead of 1874 (the year Minturn had brought back the set). No



Above: The prize racket with an inscribed silver plate and red handle covering which 15-year-old Mary Gray won in the 1876 women's singles tournament in Bermuda, probably the first lawn tennis tournament ever held in the western hemisphere. It is now housed in The Museum at the ITHOF in Newport. Gray later became known as the dean of Bermuda tennis.

Below: Richard D. Sears, America's first lawn tennis champion who won the first 7 US singles titles from 1881 through 1887.



contemporary reports of when Minturn and Curtis first played lawn tennis have been found, but they likely played in the fall of 1874, after Minturn and the set had arrived from England. Since Minturn returned from England on 7 October 1874, they could not have played lawn tennis in America before that date.

C. Robert W. Henderson, a long-time librarian at the New York Public Library and at the Racquet and Tennis Club (which offers real tennis) in New York City, discovered another contender for the honor of first lawn tennis player in America. This was Mrs. Ella Wilkins Bailey who played lawn tennis at Camp Apache (later Fort Apache) in the Arizona Territory on October 8th or 9th, 1874. Mrs. Martha Summerhayes and Mrs. Bailey were both army wives who had accompanied their husbands from San Francisco to Camp Apache,

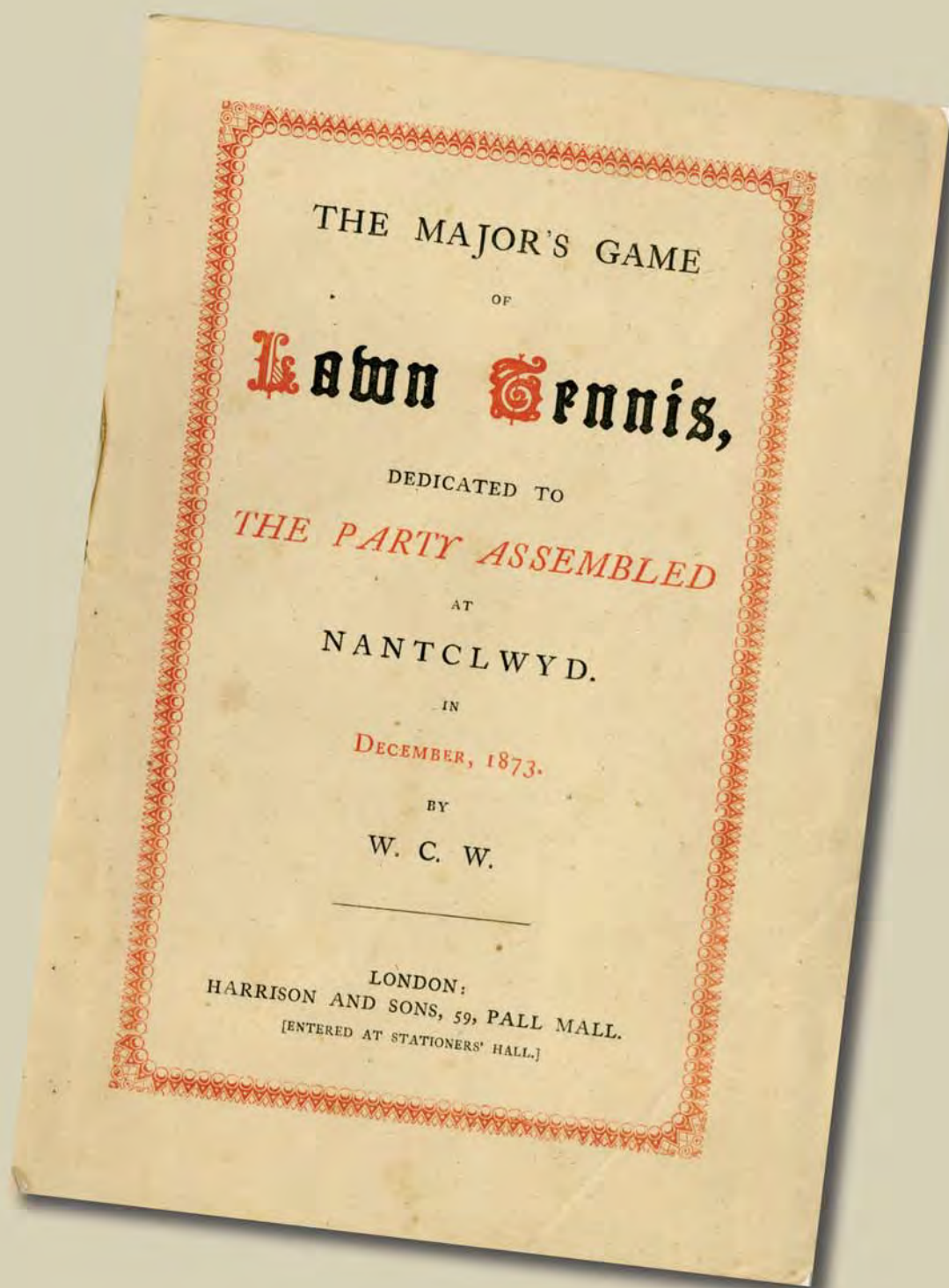
arriving on 7 October 1874. More than 30 years later, in 1908, Martha Summerhayes published a book, *Vanished Arizona - Recollections of My Army Life*, describing her activities as an army wife. It is today considered a classic of Western history. It was from this book that Henderson learned of Ella Bailey. The 7th October 1874 date is confirmed in Summerhayes' book, p. 96. Summerhayes described her arrival at Camp Apache on pages 90 and 91. "The question of getting settled comfortably still worried me, and after a day or two, I went over to see what Mrs. Bailey had done. To my surprise, I found her out playing tennis, her little boy asleep in the baby-carriage, which they had brought all the way from San Francisco, near the court." *Ella Bailey advised, "You can have shelves and such things - you'll soon learn," and still smiling, she gave her ball a neat left-hander.* Martha had married John Wyer Summerhayes a few months earlier in March of 1874. American historian George Alexander reported on page 56 of his book, *Lawn Tennis, Its Founders and Its Early Days* (1974), that "my investigation through army records reveals that Lieutenants Bailey and Summerhayes, husbands of the ladies, reported to Camp Apache on the date, October 7, as written by Martha Summerhayes."

From this information, based upon contemporary documentation, we might conclude the following. Mary Outerbridge did not bring her lawn tennis to Staten Island, New York until the spring of 1877, long after others had played the game in America. James Dwight and Fred Sears, Jr. played their first lawn tennis game at Nahant, Massachusetts in the late summer of 1874 or 1875, but probably 1875. Robert B. Minturn bought his lawn tennis set from French & Co. in London on 16

September 1874, brought it into the US on 7 October 1874, and probably played his first lawn tennis with Francis George Curtis in Staten Island that autumn, but it is not known for certain. Ella Bailey very likely did play lawn tennis at Camp Apache on October 8th or 9th of 1874. Of the early lawn tennis pioneers, her story is best backed up by the written evidence. However, there may have been other unknown lawn tennis pioneers who played the game in America prior to these individuals. A more complete story of these early players is found in Chapter 18, pp. 463-499, in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis*.

Below: "At The Lawn Tennis Game." An engraving from an 1895 watercolour by Viennese draftsman and illustrator August Mandlick (1860-1934). Note the quartered, two-colour lawn tennis ball to the right of the basket.





Title Page of the First Ever Booklet on Lawn Tennis Published on 25 February 1874
from *The Major's Game of Lawn Tennis* by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield

The Early Years of Lawn Tennis a GUIDE for HISTORIANS & RESEARCHERS

Richard A. Hillway

This booklet, which includes key points fully discussed in *The Birth of Lawn Tennis* (2018), is to assist tennis authors to recognize and reject historical myths passed along concerning the beginnings of lawn tennis, and to discover instead the real story of the game's early days based upon written documents of the 1870s.

Years of diligent historical research have shown that:

- **Lawn Tennis was invented and first introduced by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield in 1874.**
 - **He called the game "Lawn Tennis" and later changed it to "Sphairistike."**
 - **"Lawn Tennis" was the first racket game to require the use of a hollow rubber ball.**
- **International Patent Offices have stated that "Lawn Tennis" was indeed an invention.**
- **"Lawn Tennis" was not invented at Edgbaston, Birmingham, in 1859.**
 - **The Leamington Club began in 1874, not in 1872.**
 - **The All England Club chose a rectangular shaped court, not an hourglass shaped court, for its first Championship in 1877.**
- **Mary Outerbridge was not the first to bring the game to America.**

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