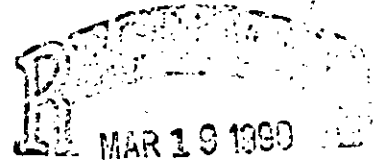


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Knabb-- Bieber Mill
other names/site number John Knabb Mill

2. Location

street & number Bieber Mill Road not for publication N/A
city, town Oley Township vicinity N/A
state PA code PA county Berks code 011 zip code 19547

3. Classification

<p>Ownership of Property</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> public-local</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> public-State</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal</p>	<p>Category of Property</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> district</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> site</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> structure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> object</p>	<p>Number of Resources within Property</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Contributing</td> <td>Noncontributing</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>3</u></td> <td><u> </u></td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>1</u></td> <td><u> </u></td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>4</u></td> <td><u>0</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Total</td> </tr> </table>	Contributing	Noncontributing	<u>3</u>	<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>		Total
Contributing	Noncontributing											
<u>3</u>	<u> </u>											
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>											
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>											
	Total											

Name of related multiple property listing:
Gristmills in Berks County, PA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 4

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Georgian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

Wood

roof Slate

other Metal

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Knabb-Bieber Mill is an operating gristmill located in a scenic rural setting along the Monocacy Creek in the Oley Township National Register Historic District. Adjacent to the mill is its wagon scale and weigh house and a stone and frame icehouse. A mill race approximately one-half mile long is located on the west side of the creek originating on an upstream property. The race was recently repaired with the construction of a new dam, repair of the overflow area, and rebuilding of the race where necessary to again bring water to the mill. The head race extends right to the mill where there is a pipe trash rack, the last 50' going underground into the mill on its west side. The tail race exits the mill below grade on the east side and it is about 100 feet long.

This mill is exceptional in its architectural design and integrity. A stone building, two and one-half stories plus basement, measuring 40'4" by 54'6", it exhibits the classical elegance and refinement of the Georgian style. Unlike most mill buildings, it features pedimented doorways, pent roofs at its gable ends, and chair-rails in the mill office. Because of its function as a gristmill, it displays interesting fenestration patterns, retaining balanced but irregular courses on the lower levels to admit light to the wheel pit, gearing, and mill stones at differing levels than the regular floors.

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Continuation Sheet

Knabb - Bieber Mill

Section number 7 Page 2

The south facade or front of the mill has Dutch doors on the first and second levels and a solid attic level door, all panelled. There is an elegant example of a hood type bag hoist roof, open on the bottom, with the painted inscription "John Knabb 1809". There are pent roofs, cut out in the center for the gable end doors. This is the only known mill in Berks County with existing gable end pents. There is a wrought iron lightning rod which is made in sections and bent to conform to the profile of the pent roof. A chimney for the office fireplace is located in the southwest corner.

In the northwest corner of the west wall is located the head water arch. The fenestration is interesting in that on the first floor level the three windows are at different elevations to provide light to the wheel-house floor, stone floor, and office. This clearly indicates the different floor levels required to accommodate the machinery. There is an elegant Georgian doorway with a hood roof covering it and a loading dock.

The north wall has the gable pent and remnants of a wrought iron lightning rod. There are no doors in this end. At grade level are two stone arches indicating the mill originally contained two vertical water wheels. The first floor windows are at the same level as those on the east and west walls at this end, that is, at the higher level of the wheel house floor.

The east wall fenestration indicates the multi-level design. The second floor windows are in a straight line as would be expected. Those of the first floor are on three different levels. Two to the south represent the architectural first floor, then the next to the north drops to what would be the lowered stone floor level, and the northernmost window is raised above all of them, indication the height of the water-wheel house floor. The basement north and south windows are at the same level, but the middle window is at a lower level allowing light and access to the gear pit area below the millstones. There is also a Georgian doorway with hand carved details on its pediment and pilasters at grade level. The exterior aspect of this mill is one of rare elegance, both in appearance and dimensions. The exterior is basically in very good condition.

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Knabb - Bieber Mill

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The two associated outbuildings are located near the east wall of the mill. A large wagon scale is located beside the lower door, between the mill and the small frame weigh house that provides shelter for the scale mechanism. This scale is in working condition and is still used by Mr. Bieber, the miller, and by local farmers who drive their wagons or trucks onto the scale to weigh loads of grain. The weigh house measures about 8' by 10' and has a low pitched gable roof. It has a door centrally located on the south side. It is painted white, and dates from the 1930s.

The ice house, between the mill and the creek, near Bieber Mill Road, is a banked building measuring approximately twelve feet on each side. It's lower level is stone, while the upper section is of frame construction with vertical wood siding, painted red with white trim. Its gable roof is covered with tin. The front west gable faces the mill. It has two openings, a door into the ground floor room and a small door for loading ice above in the frame upper level. The south elevation, facing the road, shows the location of a window in the stone foundation. The original lintel and frame are in place although the window has been walled up with stone. This window measured approximately three feet wide and two feet high. The east elevation, facing the creek, is the lower end of the building, having a door below grade and a small window 23" by 26" above it in the stone wall. The interior features of this building reveal that it has had a succession of uses and changes through the years. The lowest level has a spring trough along the west wall having about six inches of water flowing through. This seems to point out the original purpose of the stone structure. Architectural consultant, Barry Stover, believes this spring room dates from the eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and possibly was built at the same time as the mill, in 1809. The upper part of the stone building has plastered walls with a heavy accumulation of blackened material or soot, which indicates possible use as a smokehouse. A cement floor has been added to this room. The raising of the building with a frame upper story represents a conversion to an icehouse in the later 19th century. Ice houses were frequently found near gristmills and sawmills and were once common buildings in the Oley Valley.

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Knabb - Bieber Mill

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The interior of this mill reveals it to be an excellent example of an unusually well designed and well built grain mill structure. It is extremely heavily constructed in order to sustain the heavy loading of stored grain. The various floor levels mentioned above are obvious within the building. There is evidence on each floor of the original bag traps for the internal bag hoist. The office in the southwest corner of the first floor has vertical board partitions, on the outside of which are chair rails and baseboards. All floor joists throughout the mill are beaded and summer beams are chamfered. Miller's night quarters are located on the second floor above the office. The roof is heavily trussed in the German style.

There are massive summer beams throughout the building dividing each floor into three bays in a longitudinal direction. The stairway from the first to second floors shows a remarkable amount of wear on its treads. There is a board along one side for sliding bags down the steps. The second floor flooring appears to be quite old, of random width and beaded on the lower surface. On the first floor in the area of the millstones and water wheel house there has been considerable alteration in order to accommodate the turbine which replaced the vertical water wheels. The second and attic floor levels appear to have had little if any structural alteration. The water wheel housing area in the eastern half of the building was removed in order to install the presently existing cider mill. The "knob and tube" electric wiring remains on the first and second floors.

Currently there is an encased turbine in the wheel pit with a riveted steel flume pipe connecting it to the head race. The west wall arch through which passed the wooden flume for the vertical water wheels most recently served as the entrance for cider mill apples. The tail race arch is open. A stone arch tunnel, some thirty feet long, carries water away from the mill. The hurst frame presently in place in the west section of the mill, which supports the two existing pairs of stones, appears to be a replacement installed to accommodate the flat belt drives to the stones from the turbine. Tentering is done with a hand wheel at the meal bin level. There is crook string control to the meal bin level from the shoes of both pairs of stones. There are two meal bins in place. The turbine gate control is located on the stone floor.

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Continuation Sheet**

Knabb - Bieber Mill

Section number 7 Page 5

To the east of the present hurst frame are remnants of the original hurst: the front and rear mill beams, two bray posts, a bridge post and two stone bearers. There is nicely executed detail on the front mill beam at the meal spout and one wrought iron tenting beam fulcrum. No gearing elements remain.

The vertical drive shaft up through the top two floors of the mill has been converted to flat belt drive on the first floor. On the second floor remain the horizontal shafts and pin gear drives of wood, taking power from the vertical shaft to the west, east, and southeast corners, presumably to the flour dressers which would have been on this floor. There is clutching allowing each shaft to be disengaged. The vertical shaft is of steel on the attic floor level and powers the friction bag hoist of the grooved wooden pulley type.

The stone floor is located at a level between the first floor and the basement. Two pairs of millstones, probably fifty-four inches in diameter, are complete with horses, shoes, hoppers, damsels and enclosed by galvanized steel hoops with wood tops. Both runner stones and the west bed are French buhrs, the east bed may not be. There is a stone crane with wooden screw and handle. The mill originally had four pairs of millstones, in a row, at the level of the present stone floor. Near the internal bag trap on the second floor is evidence of a flour barrel packing machine. No flour milling machinery remains in the mill.

The first floor is used for feed processing and mixing. There is an attrition mill, no longer used, stored on the first floor. Other animal feed machinery includes a Sprout Waldron Monarch Rotary Cutter for animal feed, horizontal feed mixer, and two Clipper Seed Cleaners for cleaning grain. In the northeast corner of the first floor is a work area with work bench, grinders and tools.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Engineering
Industry

Period of Significance

1809 -1939

Significant Dates

1809

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

The John Knabb Mill is eligible for the National Register under criteria A, C and D. This mill was directly associated with the grain milling industry in Berks County between 1809 and 1939, and in fact, is still actively used by its 92 year miller, Effinger Bieber. Its water courses have recently been restored by Mr. Bieber "so the water rights will not be lost." This mill exemplifies an early 19th century merchant mill, a classic building type, growing out of the steady expansion of merchant milling during the late 18th century. The associated buildings, a weigh house and ice house, have been directly associated with the mill's business in the past and the weigh house and scale are still used. The mill is an eloquent statement in functional and artistic design. It is a classic merchant mill with classic Georgian features, making it significant simply for its aesthetic architectural qualities. Complimenting its beauty is its superb workmanship and engineering. Mill consultant Steve Kindig considers this mill "as properly built for the period as any in the United States." Because of its remarkable integrity and clear evidence of its early and changing technology, it provides insight into milling operations in Berks County during its period of significance, 1809 to 1939. Its long-time operator, Mr. Bieber, must also be considered a valuable source of milling lore and keeper of milling traditions.

The Knabb Mill has been owned and operated by two prominent Oley Valley milling families since it was built in 1809. The 1816, 1854, and 1862 maps show the owners as being Knabbs. The 1850 Census lists the John Knabb Mill as having a capital of \$5,500, processing 9,000 bushels of wheat and rye with a product value of \$5,940. At that time the mill was operated by one man who earned \$16 a month and made flour and chop.

See continuation sheet

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Knabb - Bieber Mill

Section number 8 Page 2

Montgomery in his 1886 history states the mill was operated by Daniel Bieber. Since then the mill has passed through two succeeding generations of Biebers to the present owner and operator, Effinger Bieber, age 92. Mr. Bieber uses the mill to grind and mix animal feed and he retails pet foods. He made cider until he was no longer able to comply with increasingly stringent Federal health regulations. He is the last of the one-man traditional mill operators in Berks County. The only other mills in operation are five modern commercial mills.

Structurally, the mill is extremely heavily built to bear all the loads that it would have to take. There are massive summer beams throughout, divided into three bays north and south. All of the floor joists are expertly set into the beams and are beaded on their edges. Flooring is random width and beaded on the second and third floors. Summer beams and posts are chamfered and finished with lambs tongue carving. The office and miller's quarters have hand-planed vertical board partitions with chair-rails and baseboards. The original hurst frame and mill beam in the east section of the basement is considered a good study artifact for early mill construction. The pin gears and wooden shaft drives on the second floor which originally powered sifting equipment are also examples of early technology.

The John Knabb Mill comes quite close to the well known designs of the eighteenth century millwright Thomas Ellicott presented as plates in Oliver Evans' millwright and miller's guide, published in Philadelphia in 1795. The building is in good condition both inside and out and, though internally altered during its long life, there is clear evidence of its original configuration. Never converted to a roller plant, two pairs of millstones remain complete with flat belt drives to the existing turbine. The current miller continues in the animal feed business and recently repaired the water courses with the intent of returning water to power the stones.

While the machinery within the mill is very interesting, of far greater importance is the structure - an exceedingly fine and rare study artifact. In evaluating its significance, nationally known milling consultant Steve Kindig has stated, "In its present condition, this mill ranks among the very best in Pennsylvania and in the United States."

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Berks County Conservancy Multiple Property Nomination: Gristmills of Berks Co.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # PA - 1031

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Approximately 9 acres

UTM References

A	1 8	4 3 1 2 0 0	4 4 6 7 5 0 0	B	1 8	4 3 1 2 3 0	4 4 6 7 4 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 8	4 3 1 1 7 0	4 4 6 7 8 8 0	D	1 8	4 3 1 1 0 0	4 4 6 7 8 7 0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Phoebe Hopkins, Project Director & Stephen Kindig, Project Consultant
 organization Berks County Conservancy date July, 1989
 street & number 960 Old Mill Road telephone (215) 372-4992
 city or town Wyomissing state PA zip code 19610

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Knabb - Bieber Mill

Section number 10 Page 2

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Starting at the west side of the bridge over the Monocacy Creek on Bieber Mill Road, proceed along the west side of the creek to Wiest School Road, approximately 1500 feet, thence westerly along the south side of the road across the mill's head race to its west bank, approximately 250 feet, thence continue southerly along the west bank of the head race to the end of the race near the Knabb Mill, approximately 1450 feet, thence continue southerly in a straight line to the north side of Bieber Mill Road, approximately 50 feet, thence continue easterly to the place of beginning, approximately 250 feet. The boundaries are marked by the creek, head race and roads.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries were drawn to include the grist mill, its water courses, and the associated buildings included in this nomination, and to exclude other farm buildings on the property such as the farm house, barn and outbuildings. The farm buildings were excluded because they date from a later period than the mill, they do not match its classic architectural style, and they were not directly connected with the function of the mill. The portion of the head race north of Wiest School Road was not included because it continues underground for several hundred feet after crossing the road, and this section of the race is on another farm property which includes several buildings located between the race and the creek.

Knabb-Bieber Mill Berkes County

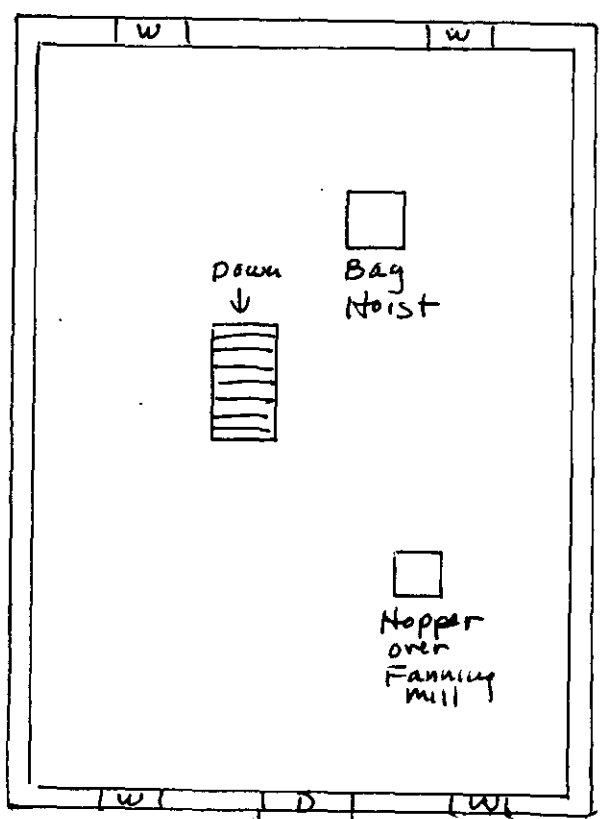
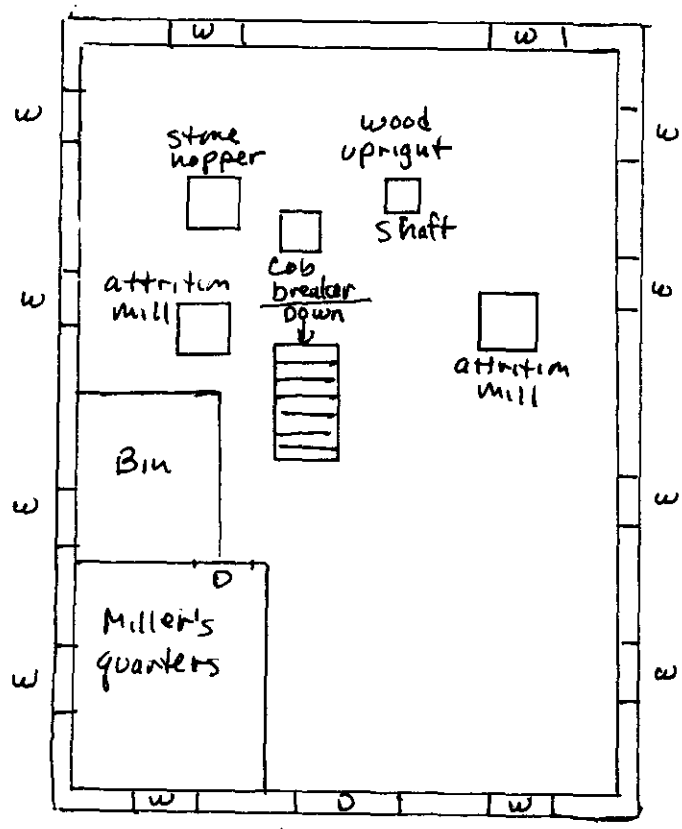
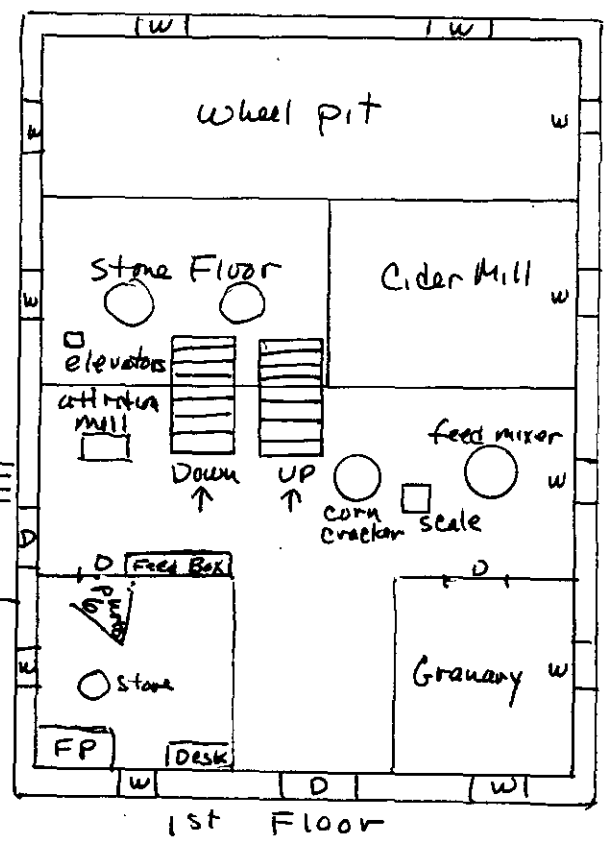
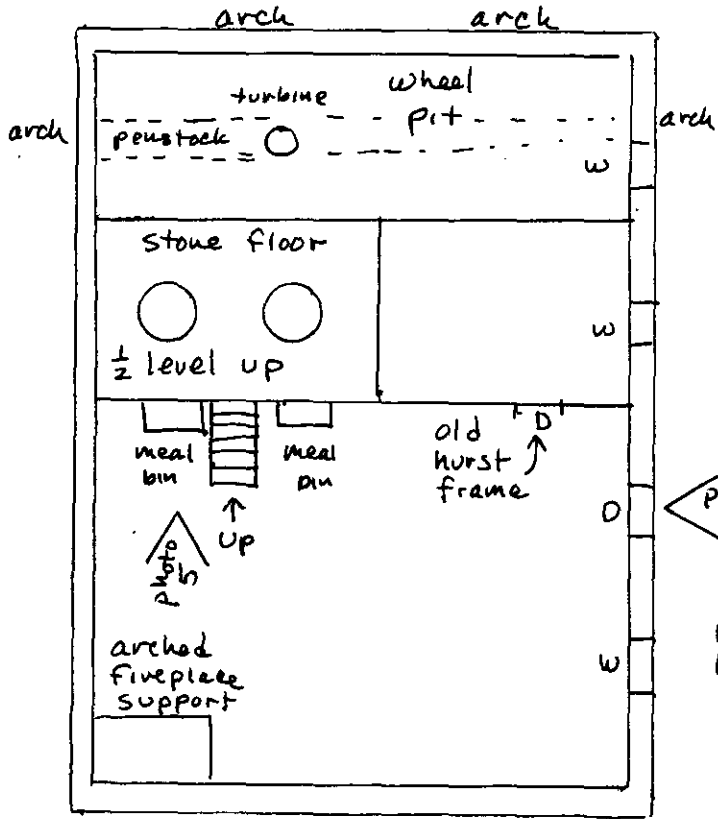
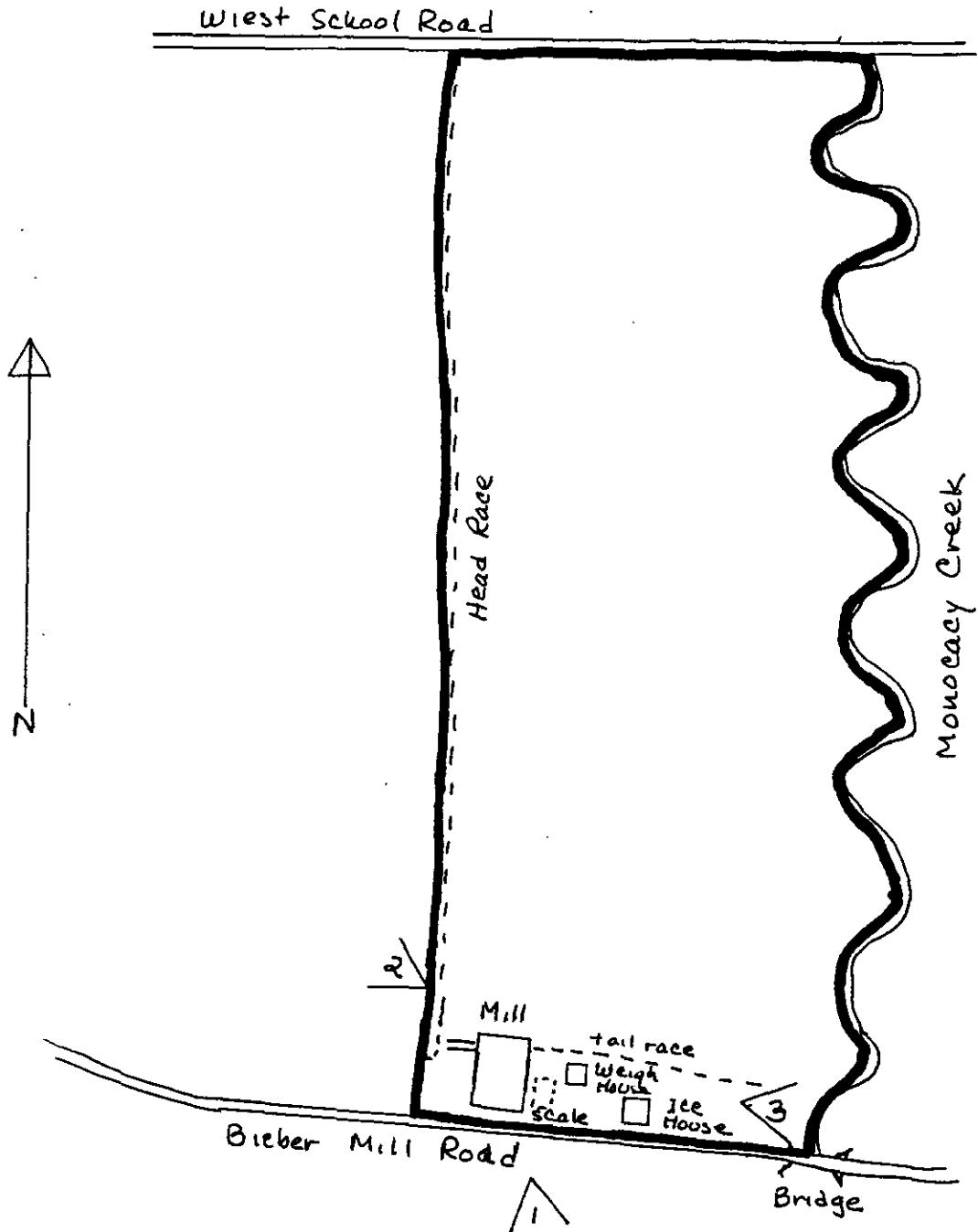


Photo views: 4, 5, & 6 Not to Scale

KNABB - BIEBER MILL
BERKS COUNTY



— Boundary

< Exterior Photo Views: 1, 2, & 3

Not to Scale

