

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic H.K. Deisher Knitting Mill

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 56 Noble Street

not for publication

city, town Kutztown

vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

code 042

county Berks

code 011

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Trangush & Yoder

street & number 151 Main Street

city, town Emmaus

vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of deeds, Berks County Court House

street & number Sixth & Penn Streets

city, town Reading

state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

# 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved

date 1881, 1903, 1907

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

This three story "L" shaped mill building is a free standing structure which abuts Noble Street. The walls are common red brick, laid in common bond, resting on curved limestone foundations. On the Noble Street elevation there is an elaborate corbelled brick cornice. The only other brick ornamentation is to be found in the segmental soldier course brick arches, which surmount most door and window openings.

The roofs are low pitched gables, with built up surfaces and simple cornices, except on the west elevation where there is a more elaborate brick cornice. The northwestern roof is surmounted with a small cupola with a weathervane dated 1881.

All of the windows are four over four, double hung sash with medium frames. Traces of shutter hardware and outlines in the dirty brick indicate that the first floor windows originally had shutters or blinds.

A loading dock and elevator shaft were attached to the rear of the building in the 1950's. The only other modification to the building in recent times was the ca 1920 coating of a small portion of the rear or west wall with smooth, sand finished stucco.

On the interior the spaces are simple loft areas which have been largely unaltered. The ceilings and walls are plastered while the floors are rough sub flooring. A simple baseboard is the only piece of trim which seems to be original to the building.

The building was constructed in three or perhaps four phases. The 1915 Centennial History of Kutztown indicates, as does the weathervane, that the northernmost section along Noble Street was constructed in 1881. The history indicates the building was raised three feet in 1900, however, it is more probable that a third floor was added. In 1903 the southern three story section along Noble Street was constructed. Four years later the eastern three story rear wing was built. All phases are in exactly the same style.

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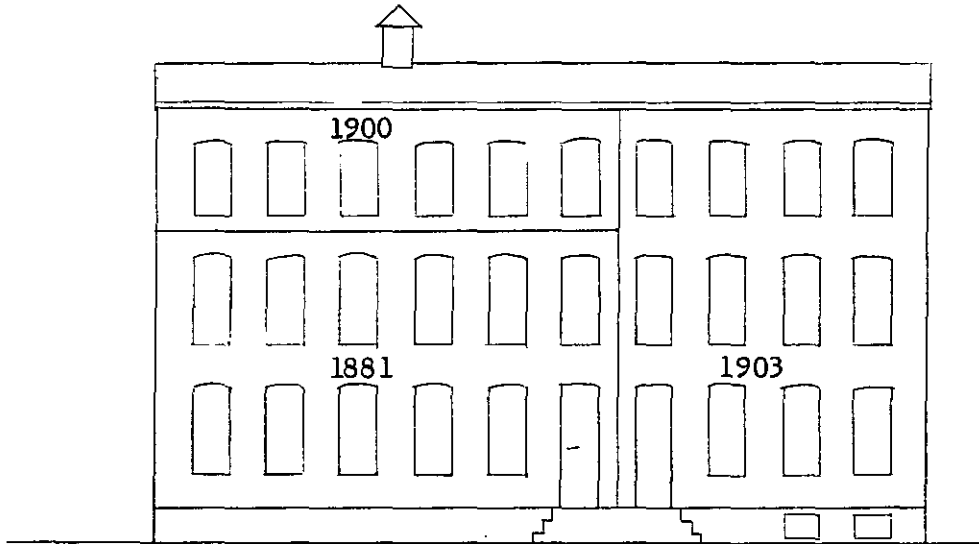
H.K. Deisher Mill, Berks Co. PA.

Continuation sheet Description

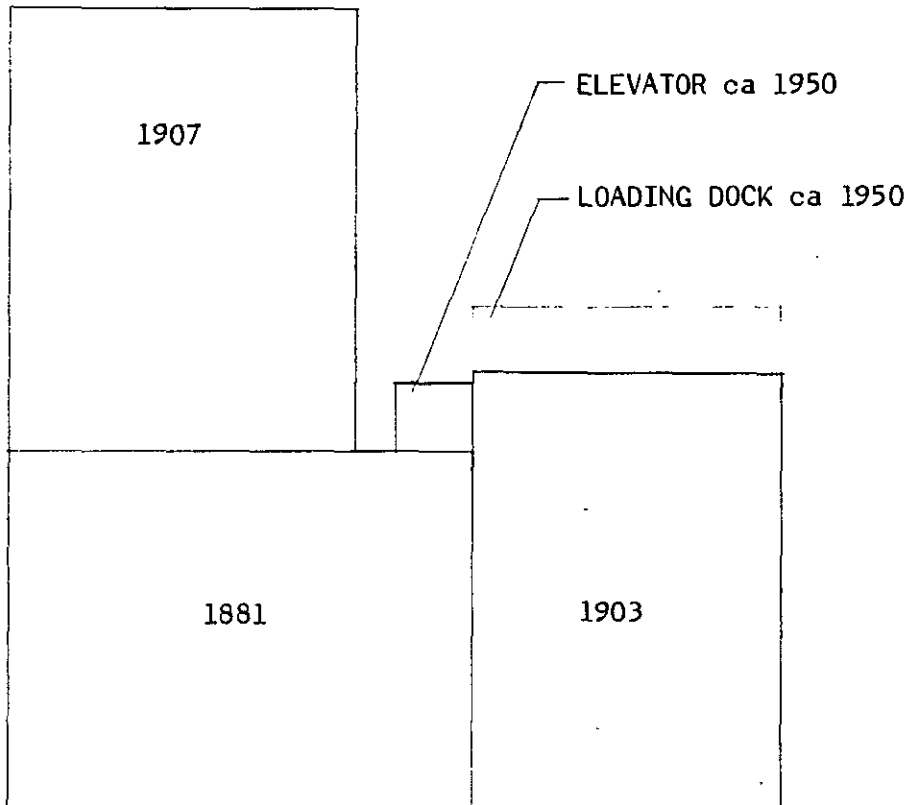
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NOBLE STREET ELEVATION



SCHEMATIC PLAN

NOBLE STREET

# 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1881 Builder/Architect not known

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Deisher Knitting Mill is significant not only for its intact nineteenth century industrial architecture, but also for the large role that it played in the economic development of Kutztown, Pennsylvania during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period Kutztown assumed a position of economic dominance over eastern Berks County, which this community maintains until the present day.

The Deisher Knitting Mill is one of the most important remaining nineteenth century industrial buildings in Kutztown. It is also unique due to the fact that it has retained almost all of its original architectural elements and embellishments. The structure is constructed of three story common brick walls laid on coursed limestone foundations with semi-flat and low pitched roofs. Although the building was enlarged early in the twentieth century, it has been little changed since that time. The interior consists of unaltered brick arches. The buildings only significant alteration has been the insertion in a rear wall of a loading dock and the covering of the adjacent area with a coating of smooth sand finish stucco.

The Deisher Knitting Mill owes its origin to the development of Kutztown as a commercial and manufacturing center. Founded at the junction of several major trade routes between Easton and Lancaster, Kutztown had become an incorporated borough by 1815. The community soon became the commercial center for the prosperous agricultural region that developed in Eastern Berks County during the early nineteenth century. Between 1824 and 1838 Kutztown's prosperity resulted in it becoming the focal point for the efforts of local farmers and merchants to create Penn County from the eastern townships of Berks. However, Penn County was never created as the necessary enabling legislation was several times defeated in the Pennsylvania's legislature.

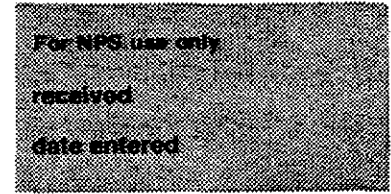
During the middle decades of the Nineteenth Century, Kutztown became a center for manufacturing, transportation and education. The East Pennsylvania Railroad reached the area in 1854, triggering a period of unprecedented growth. Kutztown also became a focal point for the anthracite iron manufacturing and foundry industries. The still operating Kutztown Foundry was started in 1866 and a large iron furnace was erected by the Kutztown Iron Company in 1872. It operated successfully for almost two decades. The prosperity brought about by these industries was further augmented by the creation of the Kutztown Normal School in 1863-1864. Today this institution still functions as the modern Kutztown State University.

The prosperity of Kutztown's industries made possible the creation of the Deisher Knitting Mill. Since the knitting industry traditionally employed the wives and daughters of workers in heavy industry, Kutztown's foundries and furnaces had made it the likely location for such an endeavor by the 1880's. At the same time the simultaneous development of modern knitting machines and America's rail network made it possible to produce and market knitted underwear both cheaply and over a wide area. As a result of these factors local resident J.L. Eck established a hoisery knitting mill in Kutztown during 1882.

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Continuation sheet    Significance

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Initially located in the second floor of the Red Front Millinery Store on Main Street, Eck's knitting enterprise moved within a year to a nearby barn. It is known that three knitting machines were initially in operation. Eck's business prospered and he soon added a line of women's and children's knitted ribbed underwear. In 1890 he formed a partnership with a former clerk, H.K. Deisher. Deisher gained sole control of the enterprise in 1892. During that same year Deisher moved the enterprise to 56 Noble Street.

The building at 56 Noble Street had already played a prominent role in Kutztown's economy. By the 1870's the focus of agricultural activities in eastern Berks County had switched to dairying. In order to tap the growing market for milk products in such cities as Philadelphia, Reading and Allentown, a group of forty-one farmers formed an association to construct a combined dairy and cheese manufacturing plant at Kutztown. This facility would be the earliest of its kind in the region and it was designed as a showpiece for the community complete with a cupola. Completed in 1881, the building served its purpose until 1892 when the association moved their operations to a larger plant outside of Kutztown. It was then purchased by H.K. Deisher to house his knitting mill.

Deisher's purchase of the knitting mill was further evidence of the expansion of textile related industries in the Borough. Although the foundry's operations continued to be the areas largest source of employment, the textile related industries were also becoming a major economic factor. Besides the Deisher Knitting Mill, Kutztown also possessed in 1892 a large shirt factory which employed forty-one women, and which would be sold in 1909 to the S. Leibowitz and Sons Company of New York. Kutztown also possessed a silk mill employing 92 women during this period. In 1912 it would be sold to the noted Allentown Silk Magnate, D.G. Dery, who would eventually own 16 plants and employ over 4,000 workers. However, this empire would crash disasterously during the 1930's. Finally it should be noted that Kutztown was also the site of two large shoe manufacturers during this period. The Sauconny Shoe Manufacturing Company which employed 90 workers and produced over 250,000 pairs of shoes annually. Their competitors, the Keystone Shoe Manufacturing Company, was founded in 1884 and by 1900 it employed 150 women workers producing 200,000 pairs of women's and children's shoes annually.

Deisher installed over thirty knitting machines in his newly acquired factory and within two years fifty employees were producing three hundred dozen pairs of hose and ribbed underwear each week. In order to install larger and more efficient machines, the building was raised three feet on its foundations and another story was added in 1900. Increased business soon made further expansion necessary and annexes were added to the rear of the main structure in 1903 and 1907 respectively. Knitting operations finally stopped in 1956 and the building has been used as a warehouse until the present time.

Although the Deisher Knitting Mill is now vacant, almost all of its original architectural elements hav survived and it continues to visually dominate its surrounding area. No other manufacturing structure in the Kutztown area exists in such an unaltered condition.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

W.W. Deatrick, (Ed.), The Centennial History of Kutztown. Kutztown, PA:  
The Kutztown Publishing Co., 1915.  
Morton L. Montgomery, Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania.  
Chicago Illinois: J.H. Beers and Co., 1904.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .25 acres

Quadrangle name Kutztown

Quadrangle scale 1" = 20,000.'

### UTM References

A 

1	8	4	3	4	2	1	0	4	4	8	5	1	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

### Verbal boundary description and justification

see attached

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
	N/A			

state	N/A	code	county	code
	N/A			

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lance Metz, Historian/  
Benjamin L. Walbert, A.I.A.

organization Canal Museum - Hugh Moore Park/  
Benjamin L. Walbert, Architect & Planner date May 26, 1985

street & number 200 S. Delaware Drive, P.O. Box 877/  
122 North Fifth Street telephone (215) 250-6700/  
(215) 821-0202

city or town Easton/  
Allentown state Pennsylvania

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/11/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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H.K. Deisher Mill, Berks Co., Pa.

Continuation sheet Geographical Data

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ALL THAT CERTAIN message, tenement and tract of land situate on the easterly side of Noble Street, between Sander Alley and Hoch Alley, known as No. 56 Noble Street, in the Borough of Kutztown, County of Berks, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in accordance with a survey performed by Keystone Consulting Engineers of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania on March 13, 1985, bounded and described as follows to wit:

BEGINNING at a found Iron pipe on the eastern topographical building line of Noble Street (a 54 foot wide street), as laid out on the topographical survey of Kutztown, said Iron pipe being located 392.60 feet northwardly from the northerly side of Hoch Alley;

thence along the eastern topographical building line parallel to and 12.00 feet distant from the easterly curblineline of Noble Street South  $18^{\circ} 52' 00''$  East 76.00 feet to a drill hole in the concrete sidewalk;

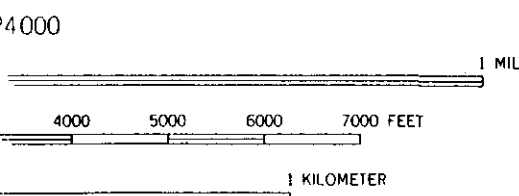
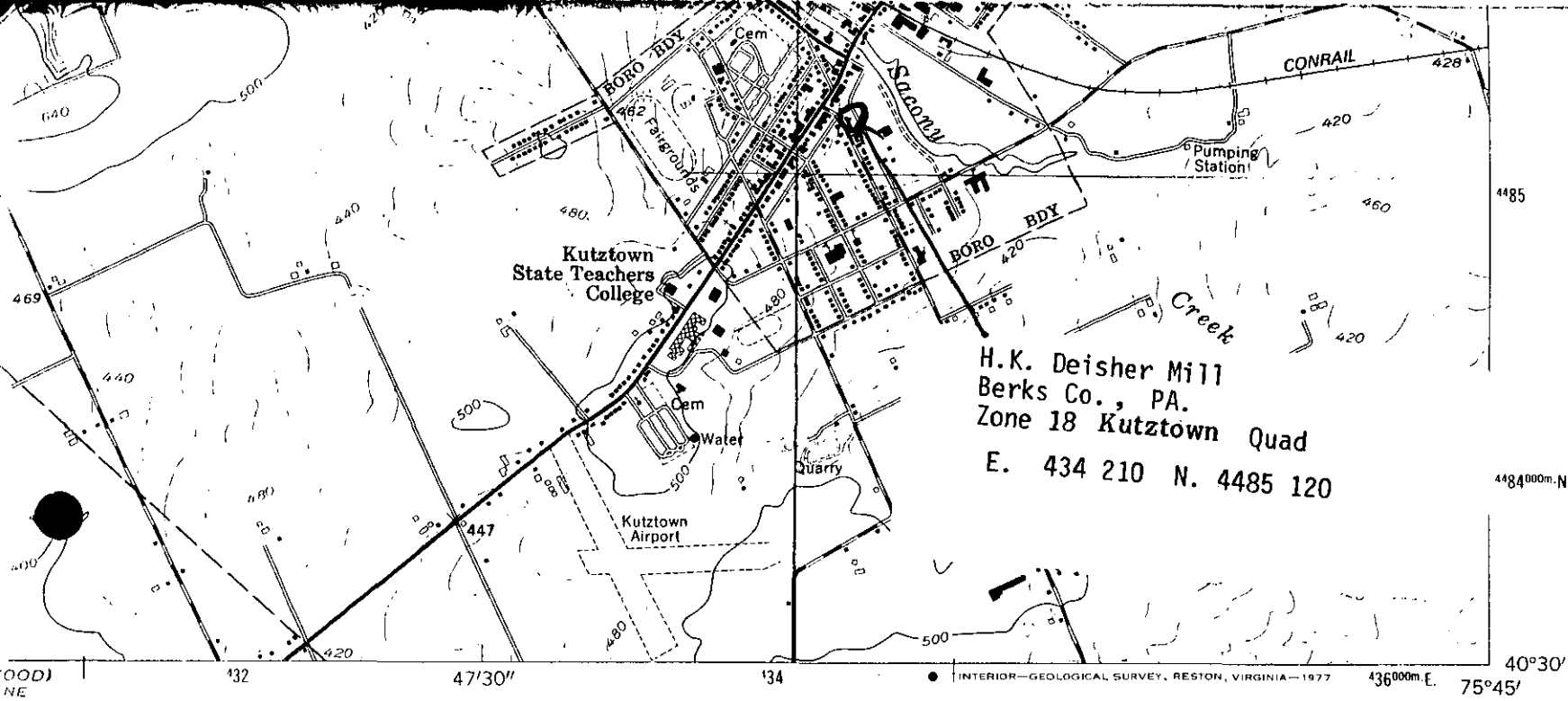
thence along lands now or formerly of John C. and Shirley J. Printz, known as No. 58 Noble Street North  $71^{\circ} 05' 00''$  East 150.55 feet to an Iron pin on the westerly side of Bieber Alley (a 20 foot wide alley), passing through enroute the northerly 0.3 foot of a brick chimney at 71.5 feet and a brick smoke house at 84.2 feet;

thence along the westerly side of said alley North  $18^{\circ} 48' 00''$  West 76.00 feet to an Iron pin;

thence along lands now or formerly of Clarence F. and Carrie A. Hein, known as No. 48 Noble Street South  $71^{\circ} 05' 00''$  West 150.64 feet to the point and place of BEGINNING.

CONTAINING 11,445 square feet of land, more or less.

SUBJECT to the unrecorded drainage rights in the underground stone culvert running along the southerly property line of the above described tract, said stone culvert being approximately 3 feet in width and running between Noble Street and Bieber Alley.



VAL 20 FEET  
 CAL DATUM OF 1929  
 AL M ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 RVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 ND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

Heavy-duty	—————	Light-duty	—————
Medium-duty	—————	Unimproved dirt	-----

U.S. Route State Route

**KUTZTOWN, PA.**  
 SE/4 HAMBURG 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N 4030—W 7545/7.5

1956  
 PHOTOGRAPHED 1969 JULY 19  
 AMS 5865 III SE—SERIES V831

(MANATAWNY)  
5864 (NW)