

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 Bierv's Port Historic District

and/or common Catasauqua

2. Location

street & number Front, Second, Race & Union Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Catasauqua

N/Avicinity of

state Pennsylvania

code 042

county Lehigh

code 077

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town

_____ vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lehigh County Courthouse

street & number Fifth and Hamilton Streets

city, town Allentown

state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Lehigh County Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979-80

federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg

state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Biery's Port Historic District is located in the southern quarter of Catasauqua in Lehigh County. The district is roughly V shaped and is set on a hill that slopes gently downward from the north to the Catasauqua Creek in the south. Catasauqua Creek forms the southern boundary of the district. Streets in the district are in a grid pattern with Howertown Road, which is the eastern boundary, running diagonally from the northeast to the southwest. There are two primary north-south streets, Front and Second, in the district. Both streets parallel the Lehigh River but are separated from the river by an area once used for local industrial purposes and by remains of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Canal. Most of the buildings in the district front either Front or Second Street. There are also two primary east-west streets, Union and Race. Only a few buildings front either street.

The Biery's Port Historic District reflects a multiple useage nineteenth century area. The district is characterized by a high density of buildings with little space separating one structure from another. The predominant useage within the district is residential. Most residences date from the mid to late nineteenth century and are wood frame or brick. The typical residential structure is two to two-and one-half stories high, three bays by two piles, has a gable roof with an occasional dormer and is a vernacular example of the Federal, or Italinatate style. Many of the residences are double houses with small front porches. The oldest, most outstanding residences in the district were built by Frederick Biery in the early nineteenth century. Located along Race Street these dwellings are Federal style stone buildings, 2½ stories in height and three or four bays wide.

Like the residential structures in the district, Biery's Port industrial and commercial buildings reflect a mid and late nineteenth century character. Most of these buildings are located along Race Street. They are generally brick buildings, three stories in height and front either Race Street or Front Street. The most outstanding commercial building is the Americana Hotel which was built in 1852 and rebuilt during the late 1880's in the Second Empire vernacular. A good example of the typical industrial building in Biery's Port is the Dery Silk Mill. Though a bit larger than most local industrial structure, the mill is a 2½ story brick building with a gable roof. Industrial commercial structures comprise about 15% of the total buildings in Biery's Port. Many of the buildings once used as both small, first floor shops and residences are now residential.

Alterations within the proposed district have been limited to some aluminum siding and brick coating. However, the Biery's Port section of Catasauqua has seen far less aluminum or brick coating than most of the town. Other alterations include new roofs and normal maintenance. As a result of these limited alterations Biery's Port retains much of its nineteenth century character.

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 N/A

Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Biery's Port section of Catasauqua is the oldest part of a town that became an early home for the anthracite iron industry in America. One of two villages that merged during the 1840's to form Catasauqua, Biery's Port contains some of the first residential and commercial buildings in the town. With the development of the iron industry in the 1850's Biery's Port became the commercial heart of a thriving town. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the port area remained Catasauqua's commercial core as well as the site of some light industry.

The first structure built in the Biery's Port section of Catasauqua was a grist mill erected by David Desher in about 1752. Locating his mill at the confluence of the Catasauqua Creek and the Lehigh River, Desher took full advantage of the abundant supply of water power available at the site. The mill remained relatively isolated until 1768 when George Taylor, a prominent iron master in Easton and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, built a substantial summer home across the creek from Desher's mill (Taylor House was listed in the National Register 7/17/71.)

In 1801 Frederick Biery gained possession of Desher's mill as well as a sizeable portion of acreage bordering the Lehigh River and Catasauqua Creek (which in 1801 was known as Mill Creek). During the next quarter of a century Biery made numerous improvements to his farmstead and mill. A fulling mill and saw mill and two stone homes for Biery's sons were built between 1801 and 1825. The dwellings, as well as Biery's residence are stone structures built in the vernacular Federal style and remain local landmarks. In addition to operating this mill, Biery ran a ferry across the Lehigh which helped make the settlement a local commercial center even before the Lehigh Canal was built or the iron industry came to the area.

Biery's settlement became Biery's Port in about 1830 after the Lehigh Canal was constructed through the settlement. The Canal Company built a lock about one mile south of Biery's settlement thus making Biery's a likely stop for canal users. The construction of a chain bridge across the Lehigh linking what is today Race Street with the western banks of the Lehigh further enhanced Biery's commercial potential. Taking full advantage of the new construction, Biery built a tavern and a home on Race Street near both the bridge and the canal. This structure provided easy access for canal travelers and made Biery's a popular stop along the waterways. The growing commerce brought new property and prominence as well as a new name-Biery's Port - to the settlement.

The middle decades of the nineteenth century was an explosive period for Biery's Port. Spurred by a diminishing supply of timber and a substantial reward offered by the Lehigh Coal and Mining Company, numerous efforts were made within Pennsylvania to develop a furnace that burned anthracite coal. The most successful attempt was made by the Lehigh Crane Iron Company at a site one mile north of Biery's Port. After consulting with George Crane, an ironmaster who developed an anthracite furnace in Wales, the company brought to America David Thomas, an apprentice operator at Crane's furnaces in Wales. Under Thomas' guidance the Lehigh Crane Iron Company opened an anthracite furnace in July 1840. The furnace proved so successful that within a decade Lehigh Crane operated five furnaces at the site.

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The growth of the local iron industry was a boom to Biery's Port. In 1839 Biery and his sons sold a portion of their land to Lehigh Crane for a handsome profit. A year later, after the furnaces were put in blast, the three Biery's began laying out lots on their acreage and encouraging development. Residential building soon followed. Despite the construction of almost one hundred dwellings by Lehigh Crane across from their furnaces, Biery's Port became a popular location for new residents. Simple wood frame and brick structures, rarely more than three bays wide and 2½ stories in height, the new dwellings reflected the Greek Revival and Federal vernacular styles. The homes of furnace workers and management, the new structures, along with the half dozen Federal style structures by Biery, gave Biery's Port the look of a rapidly growing town.

The growth of the Lehigh Crane Company during the early 1850's meant continued expansion for Biery's Port. Millworkers and mill operators looked to Biery's Port as a trading place and a business center as well as a comfortable place to live. Access to ever increasing Lehigh Canal traffic further enhanced commercial opportunities in the village. By 1850 the traffic between Cranesville, a village which emerged from the workers housing built by Lehigh Crane across from their furnaces, and Biery's Port led to the laying out of Front Street which formally linked the two villages. Three years later, in 1853, amid the rapid growth of both villages, Biery's Port and Cranesville were incorporated as the borough of Catasauqua.

Incorporation did little to change Biery's Port. Throughout the 1850's, 60's and 70's the area remained the primary commercial neighborhood in the borough. New housing in a dense concentration similar to earlier construction was added along Front and Second Streets. Small shops, a church and a hotel also became part of the Biery's Port section of Catasauqua. Vernacular examples of Italianate from this period are among the most recent in Biery's Port.

Competition from the burgeoning steel industry in western Pennsylvania brought change to Catasauqua during the last years of the nineteenth century. However, changes were not as severe in Biery's Port as in other portions of the borough. While the iron industry slowly evaporated, new industry came to town. During the last decades of the century Biery's Port became the site of some of the new enterprises. Perhaps the most notable was the C.D. Dery Company. Dery came to Catasauqua in the late 1890's and built a silk mill along Race Street. Within twenty years the Dery Company grew to international proportions. Other businesses, including a foundry and another silk mill also located in Biery's Port between 1880 and 1910. Meanwhile the retail businesses in the district remained healthy throughout the early twentieth century.

In the past fifty years much of the commercial activity that characterized Biery's Port in the nineteenth century has moved elsewhere or closed. The shops along Front and Second Streets have been converted to residences and the mills have been adapted as warehouses or for other uses. Fortunately, little demolition and few alterations have been involved in these changes. As a result, Biery's Port still reflects its nineteenth century character and is easily identifiable as the oldest portion of Catasauqua.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name Catasauqua

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References (see continuation sheet)

A

Zone	Easting			Northing					

B

Zone	Easting			Northing					

C

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

D

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

E

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

F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Doutrich/Janice Lathrope

organization Bureau for Historic Preservation/none date

street & number Box 1026/Pine Street telephone

city or town state

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 Dr. Larry Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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MAPS

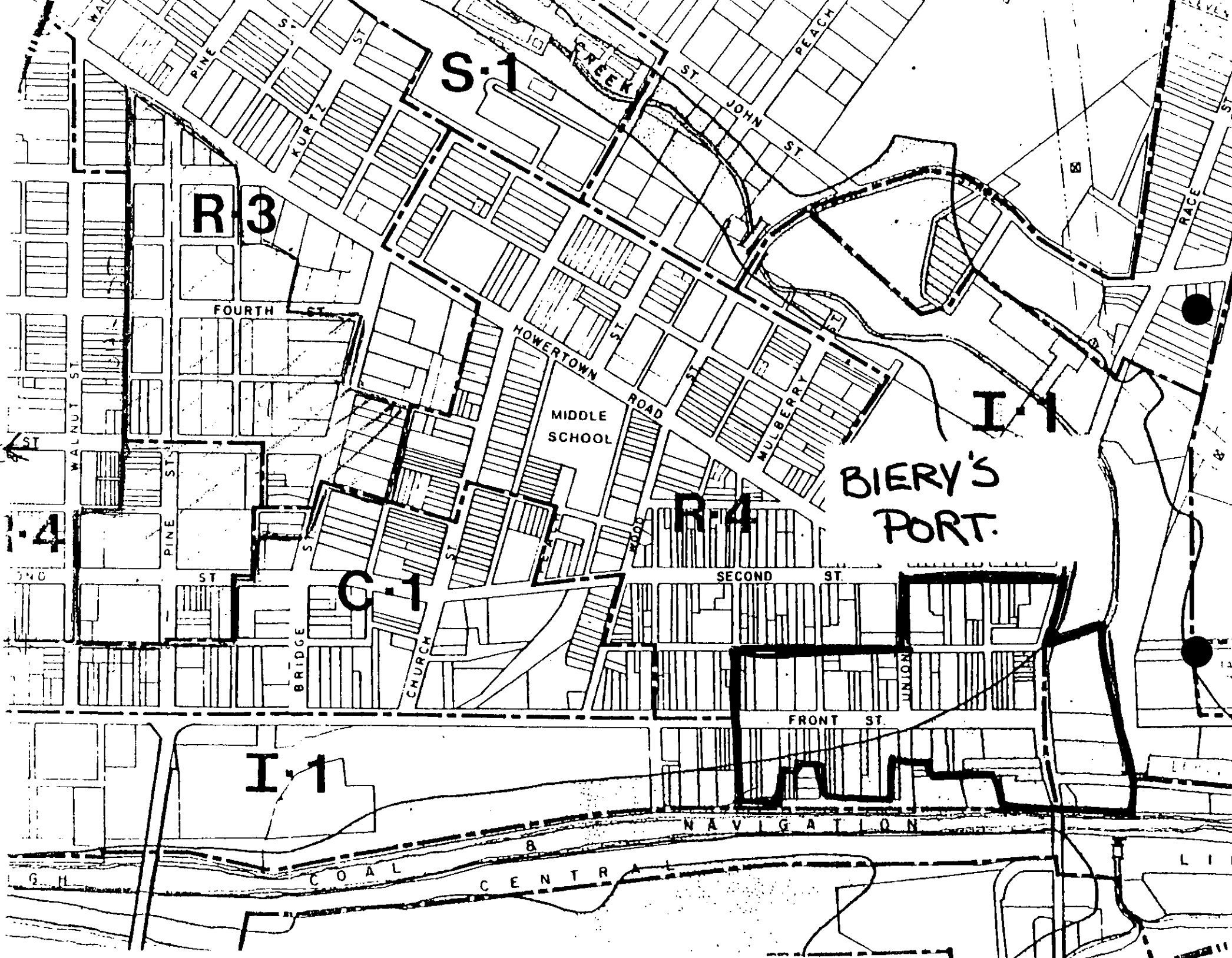
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S-1

R-3

FOURTH ST

HOWERTOWN ST
ROAD

MIDDLE SCHOOL

R-4

BIERY'S PORT.

I-1

C-1

SECOND ST

FRONT ST

I-1

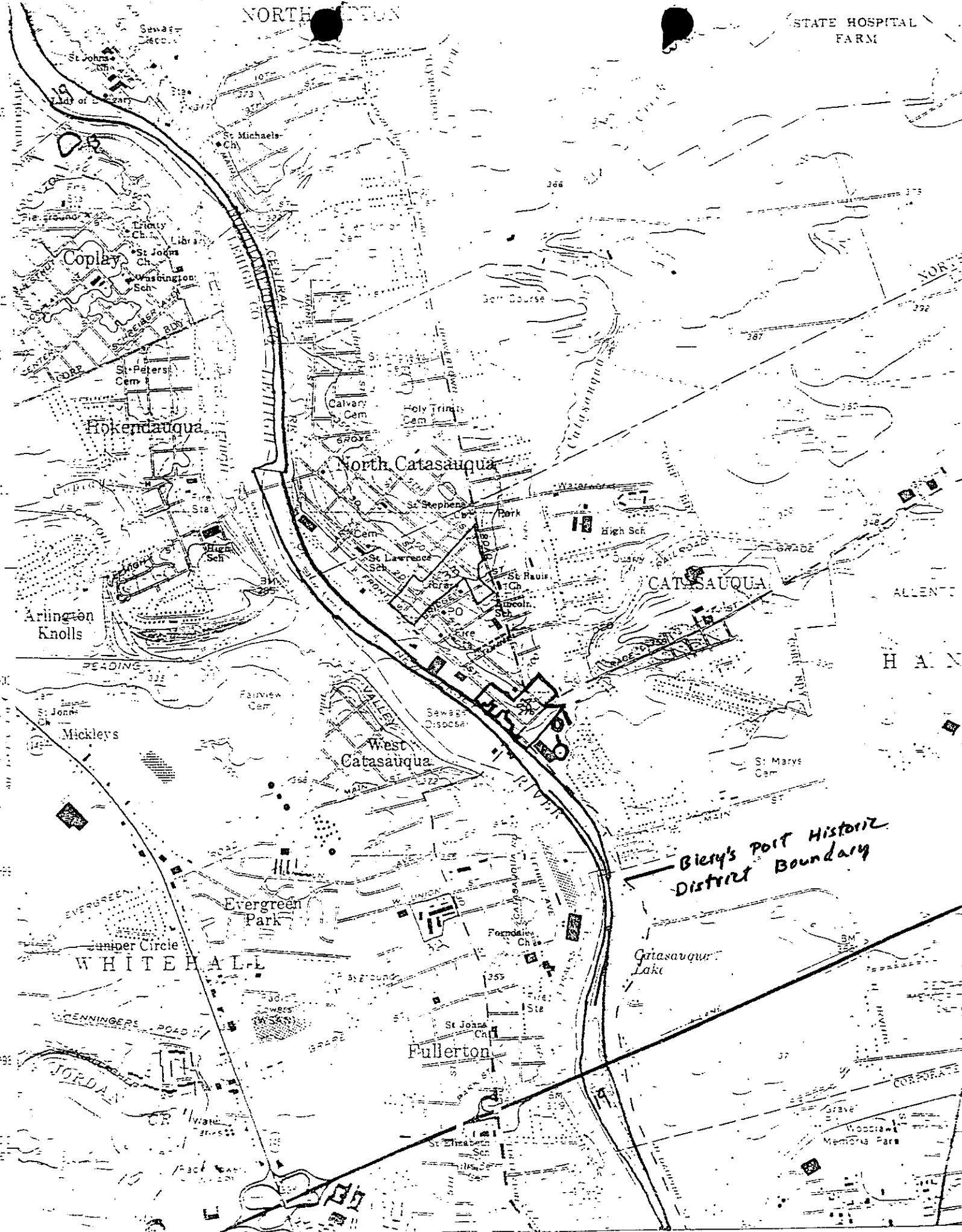
NAVIGATION

COAL CENTRAL

LI

NORTH CATASAUQUA

STATE HOSPITAL FARM



Biery's Port Historic District Boundary

WHITE HALL

Fullerton

Catasaugus Lake

Evergreen Park

West Catasaugus

North Catasaugus

CATASAUQUA

Coplay

Arlington Knolls

Mickley's

Juniper Circle

St. John's Ch.

St. John's Ch.

St. Elizabeth Sch.

Formedies Ch.

St. Marys Cem.

St. Stephen's Ch.

St. Lawrence Sch.

St. Paul's Ch.

St. Michael's Ch.

St. Peter's Ch.

St. John's Ch.

St. Marys Ch.

St. Elizabeth Sch.

St. John's Ch.

St. Michael's Ch.

St. Peter's Ch.

St. John's Ch.

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St. Michael's Ch.

St. Peter's Ch.

