

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Memorial Gymnasium

other names/site number VDHR#104-0095

2. Location

street & number 210 S. Emmett Street not for publication _____

city or town Charlottesville vicinity _____

state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 540 Zip 22903

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally __ statewide __ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: _____ other (explain): _____

___ 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

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts Classicism _____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick _____
roof slate _____
walls brick _____

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
 Politics/Government _____

Period of Significance 1924-1954 _____

Significant Dates 1924, June 10, 1940 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Kimball, Fiske, et. al. _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 5.05 acres _____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	718756	4212681	2		
3	_____	_____		4	_____	_____

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gwendolyn K. White, intern, University of Virginia School of Architecture

Organization: _____ date November, 2003

street & number: 437 Monticello Blvd. telephone 703 535 8662

city or town Alexandria state VA zip code 22305

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name University of Virginia

street & number P. O. Box 400726 telephone

city or town Charlottesville state VA zip code 22904-4726

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section 7 Page 1

Summary Description:

Memorial Gymnasium is situated at the bottom of a steep hill to the west of the original “academical village” of the University of Virginia. The building was constructed in 1924. The use of red brick and classical ornament provides a link to Thomas Jefferson’s original University complex, but the gymnasium’s style is Beaux Arts Classicism rather than a direct response to Jefferson’s Roman Revival architecture. In fact it is almost Roman in scale and employs the familiar three-section semi-circular window from the Baths of Diocletian and giant engaged Corinthian columns dividing the main block into five bays. The main part of the building is comprised of a single mass with two lower flanking blocks. Memorial Gymnasium has retained its historic integrity and is in good condition. It continues to be used for its original purpose, serving as the site of intramural sports for University of Virginia students.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section 7 Page 2

Detailed Description

Memorial Gymnasium is a large rectangular building situated on Emmet Street in Charlottesville to the west of the central grounds of the University of Virginia. It was completed in 1924 and was built to serve as the main site of all indoor athletic classes and games and other gatherings.

The design was influenced by the American Renaissance and University Beautiful movements, which employed classical references. The gymnasium is based roughly on the Roman Baths of Caracalla and Baths of Diocletian with similar massing and rooflines and the use of thermal windows. The building's style is predominantly Beaux Arts Classicism. The central block has a low-pitched roof, but the two flanking blocks have flat roofs surrounded by a balustrade that alternates brick piers and white-painted classical wooden balusters. The entire building is built of brick in five course common bond with a belt course of contrasting light colored stone between the first and second floors. The gymnasium has three levels, but is built into a slope so that on the north and west sides only the top two stories are visible.

The main entrance to the gymnasium is located on the north façade and features a two-story portico that protrudes from the main building. The portico shelters three double doorways capped with cornices. Six Ionic columns support the portico. A plaque to the right of the entrances states "This building erected in 1924 is a memorial to the alumni of the University of Virginia who lost their lives in the World War 1914 – 1918."

The east elevation has engaged Corinthian columns framing its five bays in contrast to the pilasters on the west elevation. These rest on a first-floor podium. On the first level, each bay has brick pilasters dividing the space into three sections, each containing a tall narrow window with Roman lattice glazing. Above the pilasters in each bay is an entablature that serves as the base for a giant thermal window ornamented with a large central keystone. The thermal windows each project into a triangular gable. On the west façade, the end bays each have sets of three doors (instead of narrow windows) that allow access to the gymnasium from the street.

The south end of the building, which holds the swimming pool, has no exterior entrances. All three levels of this section have eight windows across the end façade. The two lower levels have frosted glass panes. Only the middle level windows have cornice caps.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section 7 **Page** 3

The main entrance to the interior is reached through the three double doors sheltered by the north portico. A one-story entrance hall opens into a two-story hall with double stairs leading to the top floor that contains offices. Directly straight ahead from the entrance is the basketball court. The gabled wooden ceiling has metal truss supports. An open gallery area above the basketball court holds a wooden indoor lap-track. To the left of the entrance is a row of offices reached through a doorway. To the right is a small exercise room.

The ground level of the gymnasium now holds the weight room and swimming pool. Squash courts originally were in the space now occupied by the weight room and the dividers for each court are still visible on the wall.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA

Section 8 Page 4

Summary Statement of Significance

The Memorial Gymnasium at the University of Virginia, affectionately called “Mem Gym,” reflects the trends in architecture prevalent at the time of its construction in 1924. Unlike designs for the earliest buildings at the University, the design for the gymnasium proposed a classically detailed building that was not an attempt to be an academic version of ancient classical structures. While Fiske Kimball is generally credited with the design of Memorial Gymnasium, the work was actually the collaboration of a group of architects including Walter Dabney Blair, John Kevan Peebles, and R.E. Lee Taylor working under Kimball as supervising architect. This building is the most ambitious result of that very fruitful coalition. Memorial Gymnasium continues to be used for intramural athletics and retains much of its architectural integrity. It possesses historical significance as the site of a commencement speech on June 10, 1940 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt that made clear the president’s thinking about the country’s responsibility to protect freedom and democracy in those European countries then under the control of Hitler and Mussolini. The speech, coming at a time when the neutrality of the United States was still being maintained, foreshadowed deeper U.S. involvement in the global conflict.

Criteria Statement

Memorial Gymnasium is eligible for the National Register under **Criterion A** with national significance in the area of Politics/Government because it provided the setting on June 10, 1940 for a commencement address by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in which he moved away from an isolationist position. Until this time, Roosevelt had not yet laid out a clear course of action with regard to the war and American neutrality was still being maintained. As the location of an important speech associated with a major political leader and identifying a change from U.S. isolationism from the war to support for countries involved in the conflict, Memorial Gymnasium is identified as a property associated with nationally significant topics within the World War II Home Front context, currently being studied under a National Park Service Based theme study.

As an elegant expression of the Beaux Arts Classicism, Memorial Gymnasium is eligible under **Criterion C** for Architecture. Although in contrast to Thomas Jefferson’s academic versions of ancient classical building types, Memorial Gymnasium relates well to those earlier buildings with its use of red brick and classical ornament.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section 8 Page 5

Historical Background

Memorial Gymnasium was constructed to replace Fayerweather Hall, which had been completed in 1893. The rapidly growing student body had already outgrown that facility and the university's expansion over the preceding decades necessitated larger accommodations for athletic events. The architectural firm of McKim, Meade and White had constructed buildings at the south end of the Lawn at the University in the late nineteenth century, which completed that area of the grounds. The design for Memorial Gymnasium closely followed their example of classically detailed buildings that were not an attempt to be academic versions of ancient classical structures.

Memorial Gymnasium was erected between 1921 and 1924 in memory of the 2,700 students and alumni of the university who lost their lives in World War I. The cost of construction was \$300,000. One third of the funds came from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The president of the university, Edwin A. Alderman, raised an additional \$100,000, and students contributed the remaining balance. During Alderman's tenure, an Architectural Commission was assembled to design all new structures for the campus to provide architectural continuity. On the construction of the gymnasium, Fiske Kimball, professor of art and architecture at the university from 1919-1923, served as supervising architect for the group that also included Walter Dabney Blair, John Kevan Peebles, and R.E. Lee Taylor.

At the time of its construction, Memorial Gymnasium was the third largest on the East coast. There was no formal dedication ceremony for the gymnasium but it was officially opened in 1924 with a basketball game between the University of Virginia and Randolph Macon College. It continued as the site of basketball games until University Hall was constructed in 1965. In addition to its intended purpose, it has been used for countless other functions including concerts, dances, mass meetings, and University registration. It is now used for intramural sports and as a recreational facility for the University of Virginia community. Few changes have been made to the gymnasium since its construction and it retains much of its architectural integrity. A large reflecting pool that ran the entire length of the east side of the building was used as an ice skating rink in the winter. The pool was drained in 1952 and filled in. A weight room has replaced courts on the first level.

On June 10, 1940, Memorial Gymnasium was the site of University graduation ceremonies after a sudden rainstorm drove participants from McIntyre Amphitheater. The commencement speaker that day was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose son, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., was a

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section 8 Page 6

member of the class of 1940. The President took the opportunity that day to comment on Italy's recent invasion of France that pointed to worsening relations around the globe. His comments foreshadowed America's participation in the growing conflict, at a time when the country's neutrality was still being maintained.

Law school class of 1940 member Mortimer M. Caplin, an attorney and former IRS Commissioner under President John Kennedy, recalled President Roosevelt's speech when he delivered his own commencement address on May 18, 2003. He recalled that the President on that June 10 delivered "an historic speech, the most sensitive part inserted by him ...contrary to the State Department's specific pleas that America's neutrality would be compromised." Caplin's speech went on:

On that very morning, Mussolini's Fascist forces-- joining Hitler-- had invaded their neighbor France. Soon, every member of our class would be required to register under the vigorously debated Selective Service Act, the first peacetime military draft in our nation's history. FDR dramatically declared: "On this tenth day of June 1940, the hand that held the dagger has struck it into the back of its neighbor. On this tenth day of June 1940, in this University founded by the first great American teacher of democracy, we send forth our prayers and our hopes to those beyond the seas who are maintaining with magnificent valor their battle for freedom." Remember, in 1940 there was no television; no cell phones, no internet. Until then, we heard President Roosevelt only on the radio. To have the President of the United States before us in person, delivering to the world his famous "dagger-in-the-back" speech, is a moment I will never forget. That day, he also gave us a glimpse into what lay before us when he solemnly committed, for the first time and without congressional approval, to "extend the material resources of this nation" to the embattled democracies. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt later said: "Franklin's address was not just a commencement address, it was a speech to the nation that brought us one step nearer to total war." For us, World War II had begun. And it was not long before many of us were on our way.

Roosevelt's speech that June 10 also pledged, in addition to sharing the country's material resources, that:

...at the same time, we will harness and speed up the use of those resources in order that we ourselves in the Americas may have equipment and training equal to the task of any emergency and every defense. All roads leading to the accomplishment of these objectives must be kept clear of obstructions. We will not slow down or detour. Signs and signals call for speed—full speed ahead.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section 8 Page 7

The reference in this presidential address at Memorial Gymnasium on June 10, 1940 to sharing the nation's materials with those countries fighting to maintain their freedom was borne out in the passage, in March 1941, of the Lend-Lease Act. Under the terms of that program war supplies, food, machinery and services were provided from this country to those nations whose defense was considered crucial to the defense of the United States. The speech clearly identified Roosevelt's determination to protect throughout the world the ideals of freedom and democracy that were so clearly espoused by Thomas Jefferson and those of citizen responsibility so clearly represented in his founding of the University of Virginia. Roosevelt concluded:

We need not and we will not, in any way, abandon our continuing effort to make democracy work within our borders. We still insist on the need for vast improvements in our own social and economic life. But that is a component part of national defense itself.

The program unfolds swiftly and into that program will fit the responsibility and the opportunity of every man and woman in the land to preserve his and her heritage in days of peril.

I call for effort, courage, sacrifice, devotion. Granting the love of freedom, all of these are possible.

And the love of freedom is still fierce and steady in the nation today.

As the site of Roosevelt's "dagger in the back" speech, Memorial Gymnasium possesses national significance. Mortimer Caplin noted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's suggestion that the president's speech at Memorial Gymnasium that day moved the country closer to total war. If it did not do that in actuality, it certainly provided the country with a clearer understanding of Roosevelt's sense of the war in Europe and of his belief, despite political efforts to remain neutral, that this country's involvement in the war would be important – and even necessary – to effect an outcome supportive of freedom and democracy.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA

Section 9, 10 Page 8

Major Bibliographical Resources

Caplin, Mortimer M. Commencement Speech, University of Virginia, May 18, 2003 at <http://www.virginia.edu/uvanewsmakers/newsmakers/Caplin.html>

Dabney, Virginius. *Mr. Jefferson's University: A History*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981.

O'Neal, William B. *Pictorial History of the University of Virginia*, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1976.

Roosevelt, Franklin, Delano, Commencement Speech, University of Virginia, June 10, 1940 at http://millercenter.virginia.edu/scripps/diglibrary/prezspeeches/roosevelt/fdr_1940_0610.html

Wilson, Richard Guy and Sara A. Butler. *The Campus Guide: University of Virginia*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property being nominated (a 5.05-acre parcel) is designated as parcel number 076A0-000 D0 on the tax maps for Albemarle County, Virginia.

Boundary Justification

The property being nominated includes only the historic building known as Memorial Gymnasium.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Memorial Gymnasium
City of Charlottesville, VA**

Section Photo List **Page** 9

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Name of Property: Memorial Gymnasium
Location of Property: Albemarle County, VA
Date of Photographs: September 2003
Negative Number: 21005 (photos 1-5) No.: 21004 (photos 6-7)
Photographer: Gwendolyn White
Photographs Filed: Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Photograph 1 of 7
View: North façade

Photograph 2 of 7
View: East façade

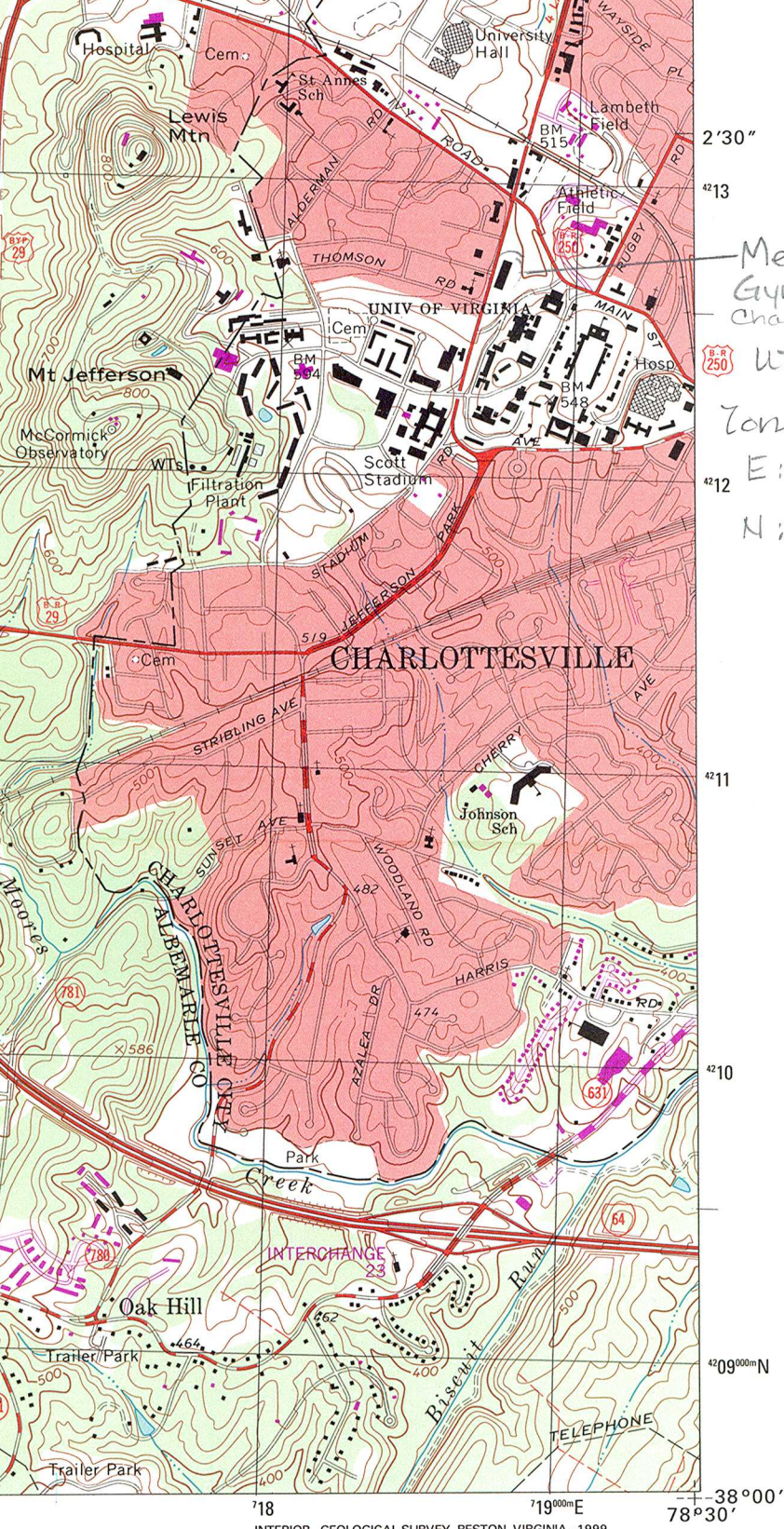
Photograph 3 of 7
View: East façade

Photograph 4 of 7
View: West façade

Photograph 5 of 7
View: Typical column east façade

Photograph 6 of 7
View: Gymnasium

Photograph 7 of 7
View: Swimming Pool



2'30"
 4213
 Memorial Gymnasium
 Charlottesville, VA
 UTM Reference:
 Zone 17
 E: 718756
 4212
 N: 4212681

718 719⁰⁰⁰E 78°30'
 INTERIOR - GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA - 1999

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface Unimproved road
- Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route

CHARLOTTESVILLE WEST, VA

1997

NIMA 5260 II SE-SERIES V834

ISBN 0-607-91099-2

 9 780607 1910995