



The historic waterworks at Shakertown, the first west of the Allegheny mountains, were restored this year. At left is the house containing the barrels and force pump which formed the nucleus of the

gravity-feed system. Photo at right shows faucet and iron work around the barrels, done during the 1830s.

## First Waterworks In The West...

# Shakertown Restoration Proceeds With Rebuilding Of Water Tower

By JIM MILLER

For years the old water house stood silently at the center of Shakertown at Pleasant Hill near Harrodsburg, continuing its gradual decline. Windows were broken, boards were rotted and brick nogging crumbled between the framing of the fading yellow clapboard walls.

The roof sagged in the middle like an old gray mare and the entire building leaned nearly a foot off center.

The structure hardly resembled a building having the distinction of being the first central public water works west of the Alleghenies, one that once furnished fresh limestone spring water for almost 500 Shakers living at the Village.

Then in 1969 came restoration of the tank standing atop three 12-foot high masonry columns. A new roof replaced the old bowed and rotted one. The weatherboard was repaired. New window sash was required and the foundation was re-pointed.

The exterior has been painted in the original yellow and only minor repairs to the brick nog-

ging (rough brick that lines the interior walls) remains to be done.

Through the renovation process, the water house has been restored to its pre-eminence of the past when it supplied water to every kitchen in the Shaker village and some of the large nearby livestock barns.

Old Shaker journals list the beginning of the water works construction as Sept., 1831. The spring was dug and was prepared to furnish water for the force pumps. "In November following we raised a shed over it."

The water house followed. "April 20th, 1833, the frame house containing the reservoir was raised; also we commenced laying down the lead pipes to convey the water from the reservoir to the Families; and the works went into full operation on the 30th of the same."

Shaker journals recorded the trip of Micajah Burnett, the principal architect of the Village, to Cincinnati to have the pumps made and to buy the pipes. He took a flatboat from the Shaker landing on the Ken-

tucky River to the Ohio River at Carrollton, then up the river by steamer. Machinists at Cincinnati made the pumps to force the water uphill for a quarter mile to the tank at the top of the Village Water House.

Fame of the water works spread far and wide. "The Manual of American Water Works" drew reference to the Shaker water system in an 1897 edition while "Engineering News" described the water works in its Oct. 1, 1881 edition: "Water is pumped by an old-fashioned force pump, with 5-in. discharge, worked by two horses, pumping with 120-ft. lift to a wooden tank reservoir with capacity of 4,482 gallons."

An earlier account described the power source. Daniel Boler's journal, dated July 8, 1852, stated: "(I) saw their famous spring and apparatus (sic) for forcing the water up to their buildings, which consists of a force pump attached to a strong cast iron pipe, carried by horse power and occupies the time and labor of a horse about six hours each day."

According to James C. Thom-

as, curator of Pleasant Hill, the water works was in constant operation for about a century, ceasing its function in the 1930's.

Most of Pleasant Hill, once the home of several hundred Shakers, is now restored to its appearance of the period just prior to the War between the States. The Shakers believed in celibacy, confession of sins, separation from the world, and common ownership of property.

By adopting orphans and receiving converts, the Society survived from 1805 to 1910 when only twelve aged remaining members gave the Village property and their holdings of 1,800 acres of fertile Bluegrass land to a friend who promised to care for them the rest of their lives. The last Shaker died thirteen years later.

Shakertown at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, Inc., was organized in 1961 as a private nonprofit educational institution to acquire this original Village and lands which in 51 years had succeeded to 11 different owners. Beginning in 1966, the restoration program has included most of the principal buildings, the last being the water house.