

P115020111

# DATA SHEET

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kentucky
COUNTY: Logan
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE APR 3 1975

### 1. NAME

COMMON:  
Shakertown at South Union Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Same

### 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
U. S. Highway 68 & 73 & ~~1466~~ <sup>SR 1466</sup>

CITY OR TOWN:  
South Union

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
1

STATE:  
Kentucky

CODE:  
021

COUNTY:  
Logan

CODE:  
141

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
See Continuation Sheet.  
Commonwealth of Kentucky (leased to Shakertown Revisited, Inc.)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
South Union

STATE:  
Kentucky

CODE:  
021

### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Logan County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Russellville

STATE:  
Kentucky

CODE:  
021

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
401 Wapping Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Frankfort

STATE:  
Kentucky

CODE:  
021

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE

COUNTY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Pl. 1

The buildings at South Union have some unusual features compared to those at other Shaker colonies. The bilateral symmetry of facades is not so noticeable here, for instance: the Centre House has a single entrance to the central house, rather than the two usual for structures used by both sexes. One of the two less prominent doorways just behind the main block on either side of the ell, however, appears never to have been used. Although lacking some of the subtleties of form of, say, Micajah Burnett's designs at Pleasant Hill, there are some striking visual effects at South Union, particularly in the concentric round arches of the Centre House. There are also refinements like the superb curves of the limestone gutters of the Centre House. The overall level of craftsmanship, as in the masonry of these gutters, is unsurpassed.

Pl. 2

To the west of the Centre House (already described in an earlier National Register form) is the Centre House Well House, a double-bayed pavilion with two graceful segmental arches on both sides and a higher segmental arch within the gable at either end. The moderately sloping roof is supported on six chamfered octagonal wooden posts. This has been walled and moved to the back of the Centre House but will be restored.

Pl. 3

A smaller well house is found southeast of the laundry--the Laundry House Well House. It consists simply of a roof supported by four posts and cross beams. Both well houses were constructed c. 1850.

Pl. 4

The Laundry or Wash House also within the Centre Family Complex is a tall three-and-a-half story building of nine bays set parallel to the road slightly farther back than the rear of the Centre House which is just to the east of the laundry. This austere functional structure is almost without stylistic features, although the three narrow doorways on the facade facing the road with their inset transoms recall late 18th-century Kentucky doorways.

Originally there were nine large rooms, used by the Church Family sisters for washing, sewing, weaving, drying herbs, and so forth. Each room has three openings toward the road; the center opening on the first story of each vertical sequence of workrooms is the exterior entrance, reached by a railless flight of six monolithic limestone steps.

The finely-laid brick walls are interrupted only by the stone lintels of the openings, including a matching stone over the cellar windows, which neatly break the ashlar foundation. At first glance the openings seem regularly spaced; in fact, a closer examination reveals that those of the center room are closer together than those on the sides, and this subtle hint of centrality is abetted by the just slightly larger lintel of the central window on the second story, which contains the inscribed date of 1854.

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1822-1917**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Shaker ingenuity exerted an influence on western Kentucky far longer than the 115-year span of the communal colony at South Union. In turn, it was the raw, frontier spontaneity that first attracted the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing to the area, and something of the same spirit prevails in the colony's current restoration.

Led by Mother Ann Lee, nine Believers in the Second Appearing of Christ, more commonly known as the Shakers, immigrated to New York from England in 1774. Within a period of twenty years eleven societies had been organized in the United States.

The main tenets of this new religious group consisted of pacifism, charity to all in need, cleanliness, industry, honesty in all dealings, celibacy for all members, community of goods, and the belief that Christ had appeared the second time in the form of Mother Ann. Shaker women shared the leadership in both temporal and spiritual matters with the men.

During approximately the same time as the Shakers were establishing their communities in the East in the late 18th century, a great religious awakening which had its inception on the Gasper and Red Rivers in Logan County was taking place in the State of Kentucky. Shaker missionaries learned of this spiritual revival and two of its members migrated from New England to Logan County in hopes of making converts. It was with this background that Issachar Bates and two new western converts, Matthew Houston and Richard McNemar, founded the South Union Colony in Logan County on the Gasper River in 1807.

As with the Shaker settlement at Pleasant Hill in Mercer County in central Kentucky, care was taken to locate the community strategically. Both Shaker settlements were laid astride major highways. The location of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad

(Continued)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Manuscript Diaries & Records of the South Union Shaker Colony.  
 Richard McNemar, The Kentucky Revival (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1807).  
 Mary Julia Neal, ed., The Journal of Eldress Nancy Kept at the South Union, Kentucky, Shaker Colony, August 15, 1861-September 4, 1864 (Nashville, Tenn.: The Parthenon Press, 1963).  
 Charles A. Nordhoff, Communitistic Societies of the United States (New York, 1875).  
 Elizabeth Coombs, "Brief History of the Shaker Colony at South Union, Kentucky," The Filson Club History Quarterly (Louisville, Ky., July, 1940).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	(Centre Family Complex)		36° 53' 05"	86° 38' 40"	
NE	° ' "					
SE	° ' "					
SW	° ' "	(Railroad Complex)		36 52 35	86 39 24	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 9.5 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Julia Neal**

ORGANIZATION: **Shakertown Revisited, Incorporated** DATE: **June 19, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER: **WEL & GM**

CITY OR TOWN: **South Union** STATE: **Kentucky** CODE: **021**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Eldred W. Nielson

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 1-10-1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

AR Worsham  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 4/3/75

ATTEST:  
W. Shultz  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date **APR 2 1975**

NO  
 1-10-75  
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List of Owners (continued)      Item 4

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Centre House  
Well Houses

Shakertown Revisited

Laundry or Wash House  
Warming House

St. Mark's Monastery

Hotel (Tavern)

William Traugott

Store and post office building

Roger Hollins

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Shakertown at South Union Historic District

7. Description (Continued)

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The end walls have two windows for each story, including lookouts squeezed within the gables of the attic story flanking the unemphasized chimneys. (The interiors have been partitioned into smaller units for the use of the monks of St. Mark's.)

Pl. 5 The Warming House rests on a stone foundation laid noticeably more roughly than the ashlar masonry of the Centre House and other major buildings. A single window has almost square proportions, four panes wide and three high; the chimney is at one end. Built c. 1840.

Pl. 6 Features of the Hotel include a broad gable of the portico which contrasts to the narrower gables at the ends of what is essentially the normal T-shaped Shaker dwelling. The portico, with its colossal arcade, seems to overwhelm the building behind, apparently being directed primarily at the traveler, perhaps on a still-moving railroad car--the line is less than ten yards in front of the portico. The arcade has recessed panels on the surfaces of the piers, prominent keystones on the five arches of the front, and pilasters on the ends of the main block on which the arcade seems to rest (since these pilasters have never been painted it is possible that the stucco on the portico is a later addition).

The openings of the facade behind the portico have shallow arches framed with double courses of corbelled brick in typical post-Civil War fashion. The arched central entrance has both transom and sidelights. The three central bays of the second story give on to a balcony cantilevered on florid brackets with decorative balustrade.

The ends of the main block are plain except for unusual triple-flued chimneys that project from the surface in two stages, and eaves considerably deeper than is characteristic of earlier Shaker architecture. The construction of the tavern is dated 1869.

Pl. 7 The present Store and Post Office Building is a long narrow one-story brick structure set alongside the road with a false front facing the railroad above a simply bracketted hood over the entrance and show window. Built in 1859, it was originally two-story. The structure was altered to its present one story c. 1917. The post office has a separate door toward the rear facing the back of the tavern. (Opposite it is a warehouse of indeterminate

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7. Description (Continued)

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age; aside from two residences--one of which is the former L & N railroad depot moved a short distance and extensively altered--there are no other buildings at the junction.)



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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8. Significance (Continued) Page Two

line nearby in the 1850s also proved a fortuitous advantage, not neglected by the Shakers. A notice in a book published by the Shakers in 1856 describes their settlements as "easy of access, most of them being located near to railroad depots."

Pl. 7 & 8

Fortunately some of the commercial structures situated at the railroad junction and intended to serve the "world," survive. The buildings there and at the original settlement on the highway suggest the diversity of the Shaker activities--domestic, agricultural, and industrial.

This group of buildings also provides a glimpse of the later, perhaps more "worldly" aspects of Shaker development. There is a festive quality in the openly mid-Victorian arcade and balcony of the hotel that contrasts with the retardataire Georgian quality of much of the early Shaker architecture. Corresponding adaptations to late 19th-century tastes are observable, although often ignored, in the Believers' furniture and other products, whether for the "World" or their own use.

Pl. 1 & 4

Other South Union structures reveal the conformity to Shaker community organization. Shakers were grouped into "families" of approximately one hundred members. Each had its own living quarters, communal meeting places and working farm and industries. The members of all families met at the Centre Family headquarters for joint activities, but were otherwise quite independent. At South Union only portions of the Centre Family complex remain.

It is interesting to note that while most Shaker communities were white (the religion simply did not appeal to racial minority groups), South Union, after the Civil War, contained a black "family" of forty ex-slaves. There was no racial discrimination or segregation--both races lived comfortably together.

Although only partially restored and in some cases adapted for other uses, most of the structures at South Union are essentially intact. Restoration so far has been notably cautious and sensitive, accepting the evidence as found, rather than striving toward a preconceived notion of Shaker habits or any set period of occupation or construction. The South Union structures graphically illustrate the Shaker habits, as well perhaps as their decline. The district

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Shakertown at South Union Historic District

8. Significance (Continued)

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includes buildings ranging in scale from the large Centre House and Laundry to the minor, but revealing, outbuildings. Although there are minimal intrusions at either cluster of buildings, they remain aligned to the highroad and railroad yet surrounded by the open fields that for over a century provided the economic basis for the community's existence.

Several prominent representatives of the "world" visited South Union during its heyday in the mid-19th century: James Monroe in company with Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and others. But it is ultimately not for these figures' occasional association, but as one of the few remaining tangible survivals of a unique cultural phenomenon that Shakertown at South Union deserves recognition.

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Shakertown at South Union Historic District

9. Bibliographical References (Continued)

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Marguerite Fellows Melcher, The Shaker Adventure (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1941).

Julia Neal, By Their Fruits (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

\_\_\_\_\_, "Shaker Industries in Kentucky," Antiques, (March, 1974), 603-611.

Marywebb Gibson Robb, Shakerism in Kentucky (Lexington, 1942).

Elmer Ray Pearson, Julia Neal, and Walter Muir Whitehill, The Shaker Image (New York and Boston: The Graphic Society, 1974).

