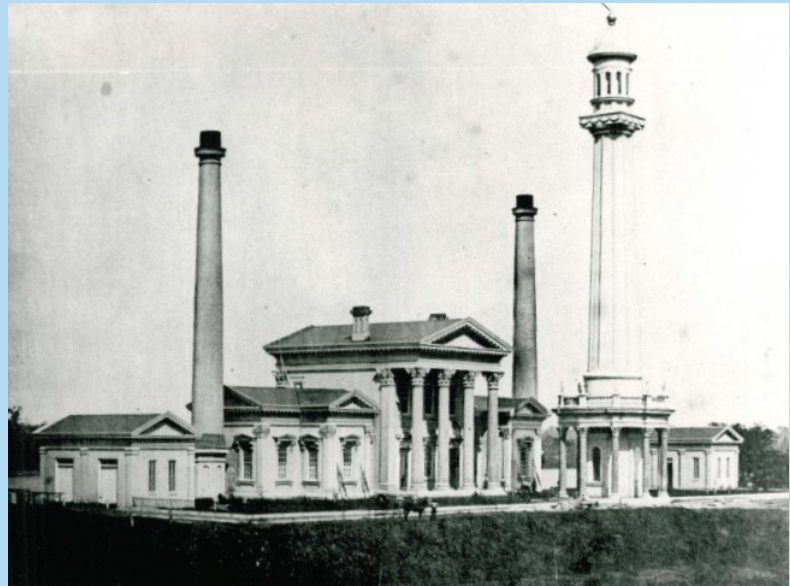


The Louisville Water Tower

One of the most recognizable landmarks in the city, the tower began operating during Louisville Water Company's first year (1860), which makes it the oldest ornamental water tower in the world.



Height: 185'
Basement: stone,
22 ½' deep
Base: brick
Main Shaft:
wood, 1860 - 1890;
steel, since 1899
Lantern:
wood, 1860 - 1890;
steel, since 1899
Standpipe:
48" diameter, 169' tall

For Louisville Water's first pumping station, engineer Theodore Scowden and his assistant Charles Hermany wanted a park-like landscape of "unrivalled beauty and effect that would be used and valued by the community."

Inspiration for the Roman temple design came from French architect Claude Nicolas Ledoux, who merged architectural beauty with industrial efficiency to make the pumping station and water service more appealing to Louisvillians.

The tower evened the flow of water through the pipes that went up to the reservoir. A standpipe inside the structure equalized pressure from two massive steam pumps in the station. Without the tower, pressure surges would have cracked the pipes.

In 1890, a tornado knocked over the tower shaft, which then crushed much of the brick base above the balustrade.

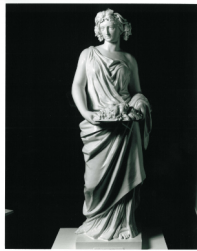




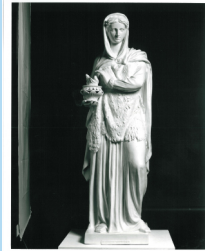
Spring



Summer



Autumn



Winter



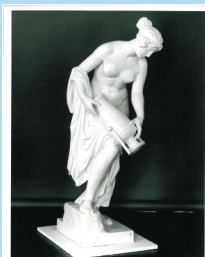
Mercury



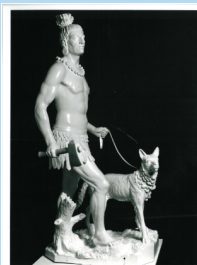
Neptune



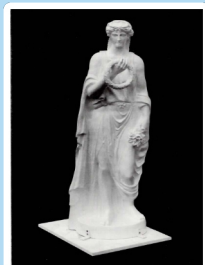
Hebe



Danaide



**Indian Hunter
and Dog**



Flora



When the tower fell, it also crushed or knocked over eight of the ten original statues around the balustrade. The two that survived depicted a girl in a dress holding flowers and what might have been a statue of Mercury.

The iron standpipe was replaced with a cast-iron one. In 1899, the exterior of the tower, which had been wood, was recreated with riveted steel plates and sheet metal. The statues were replaced with the ten shown at left. Louisville Water continued to use the tower until 1910.

The Flora statue fell over in a thunderstorm in 1980. The statue shattered, which also shattered the belief that the replacement statues were made of stone. In fact, they are zinc. Flora could not be repaired and remained missing for more than ten years.



From 1990 to 1993, the tower underwent its first major restoration. The work included rebuilding the shaft, and a new dome was placed on top. The statues were taken down and stripped of 27 layers of paint. Bullet holes were found. The statues were repaired, and a new Flora was cast (probably in aluminum).

In 2019, a piece of the wood molding inside the tower fell. It showed extensive insect damage and rot. Further study revealed moisture damage to the entire structure. In early 2020, K. Norman Berry Associates Architects was brought in to coordinate the current restoration.

Pumping Station No. 1 and the tower are a National Historic Landmark as well as an American Water Works Association Landmark and a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

