

## Claytor Lake

Claytor Lake was created in 1939 when the Appalachian Power Company built the nearby dam in order to provide water for the Claytor hydroelectric plant. Now, all but Haven Howe's house lie within the waters of the lake, and portions of the foundations of Thomas Cloyd's Greek Revival house become visible only when the level of the lake is sharply drawn down.



Once incorporated into the landscape, however, the memories of generations past are not so easily submerged: this area remains known as Dunkard's Bottom, in recognition of the brave and unique people who created their community so long ago.



For Reservations call  
1-800-933-7275 or  
[www.virginiastateparks.gov](http://www.virginiastateparks.gov)

6620 Ben H. Bolen Drive  
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540-643-2500



LOCATION: From I-81, take Exit 101 (Claytor Lake) to State Park Road (State Route 660). State Park Road ends at the park's entrance



# the Dunkards, the Christians & Cloyds

memories along  
the banks of the new river



Claytor Lake State Park  
Virginia



## The Dunkards

Within the waters of Claytor Lake lie the remains of a fascinating, but short-lived, community. "Mahahaim" was created by two of the Eckerlin brothers, German immigrants who had helped to shape the famous Ephrata Community of German Pietists in Lancaster, PA. After being expelled



from Ephrata in 1745, Samuel and Israel Eckerlin settled on the New River, where other German settlers had been living, and created their new community as a way to live out their faith more completely. Known as Dunkers or Dunkards because of their belief in full-immersion, face-forward baptism, their community thrived for only a few years. Having attracted a number of followers from Ephrata, the settlement consisted of a series of small wooden houses with prominent limestone chimneys. The community of Dunkards splintered by 1750 when the Eckerlin brothers moved even further west, finally settling in West Virginia before being captured by the French as possible spies during the French and Indian War. Their memory, however, and that of the small community which they founded, continues to resonate on the landscape.

## The Christians

The next owner to leave his mark at this spot was William Christian. Christian, who bought the land in 1770, had already gained local fame as the commander of a ranger company in the French and Indian War in the 1760s. In 1768, after studying law under Patrick Henry, he married the famous patriot's sister, Anne. Christian moved his family to the New River site and built his plantation, which included a large wooden house facing the New River. He also incorporated the Dunkards' former cabins with their limestone chimneys. Christian was an

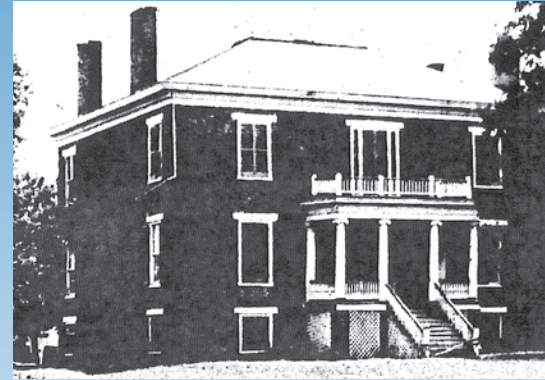


active political and military leader in the region through the 1770s. He served as a Colonel in the local militia during the Revolutionary War, fighting mostly against Indians who were allied with the British in the backcountry, and served also as a member of the Virginia Constitutional Convention in 1776. In the 1780s, though, like the Eckerlins a generation earlier, Christian was drawn further west. He moved to the new territory of Kentucky, where he died in 1786 in a battle with local Indians.



## The Cloyds

The Cloyd family had been among the earliest settlers near this portion of the New River Valley, with property on Back Creek from the



1760s. Around 1810, three Cloyd brothers bought some 1500 acres that included the Dunkard's Bottom land. In 1822, the estate settled on one of the brothers,

Thomas, who already owned the adjoining 2000 acres. This massive parcel of some of the best farm and pasturage land in the region remained in the hands of Thomas Cloyd's descendants for over a century. By the 1930s, the estate had been divided up among a series of cousins who owned individual parcels along the west bank of the New River. When the last descendants sold the land to the Appalachian Power Company in the 1930s,



the former Cloyd Plantation included Thomas Cloyd's brick Greek Revival home from the 1840s, the family's cemetery with its stone wall, another brick mansion built by Thomas Cloyd's granddaughter and her husband,

Haven Howe, the remains of William Christian's frame house from the 1770s, and even the few remains of the original cabins of the Dunkards.