

**DUNKARD'S BOTTOM:
MEMORIES ON THE VIRGINIA LANDSCAPE, 1745 TO 1940**

**HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS FOR SITE 44PU164
AT THE CLAYTOR HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT
PULASKI COUNTY, VIRGINIA
FERC PROJECT NO. 739**



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INTRODUCTION

As part of Appalachian Power Company's application for a new license to operate the Claytor Hydroelectric Project near Pulaski, Virginia (FERC No. 739), cultural resource studies of the dam and surrounding area were completed. During the cultural resources investigations, archaeological site 44PU164 was identified on the southwest corner of a small island near the north shore of the lake. The remains of a brick foundation were visible and a number of historic artifacts were recovered from the site dating from the mid-eighteenth through early twentieth centuries. The site was identified as being part of Dunkard's Bottom, a flat stretch of land along the banks of the New River that had been the location of an early religious settlement in the area. Dunkard's Bottom had also been the home of Statesmen, Revolutionary War hero, and noted Indian fighter, William Christian, and had been part of the large Cloyd family plantation for over a century before the creation of Claytor Lake. Site 44PU164 was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Because the site is being adversely affected by the operations of the Claytor Hydroelectric Project, this booklet is being produced to mitigate those adverse effects. The booklet is a compilation of historical research on the inhabitants of the area, from the 1740s through the 1930s, and is intended to make this information readily available to the public.

DUNKARD'S BOTTOM

When the Claytor Dam was completed on the New River in 1939, it replaced a slow, meandering river with a vast lake and dramatically changed the landscape of this part of the New River Valley. Landscapes, though, include memories as well as materials, and thus are more than just dirt, rocks, grass, and water. The memories embedded in the landscape are attested to by the traces left by generations of people who lived on the land, building roads, houses, churches, and schools. Each generation added layers of use and meaning to the land surrounding the New River, some of which remain intact while others lie hidden, waiting to be discovered by subsequent generations. Such is the case with the small community created on the banks of the New River in the 1740s by the Eckerlin brothers and a few of their co-religionists, originally known as the Dunkers, from the flourishing German Pietist community in Ephrata, Pennsylvania.

The Eckerlins arrived in the American colonies with their mother in 1725 as children from Alsace, a province along the border of France and Germany. By 1745, they had become well-established figures in the Ephrata community before a break with the founder of the community led them to seek out land for a new settlement in southwestern Virginia. The Eckerlins' settlement fell into disuse when they moved on to yet more distant frontiers by the early 1750s. William Christian, a notable politician and soldier in the Indian wars on the Virginia frontier in the mid-eighteenth century, bought the land and added his memories to it before also moving on. The Cloyd family added the lands to their vast New River holdings at the turn of the nineteenth century and they established a long-standing relationship with the land. Only portions of the Cloyd family's landscape survived inundation in the 1930s, while most of the remains of the Christian farm and the Eckerlins' community lie within Claytor Lake. Their memory resonates, however, in the name that the area retains to today: Dunkard's Bottom.

The Dunkards¹

As remarkable—romantic, even—as their lives on the frontier were, the significance of the Eckerlin brothers is not merely that of settlers and adventurers. Instead, they were frontiersmen driven by a particular vision of the Christian faith. They, to a greater degree than most people, sought to live out the tenets of their faith; these tenets, moreover, led them to the solitary, hermit-like conditions in which the American frontier of the eighteenth century abounded. It is impossible, therefore, to understand the Eckerlins, and the community that they founded on the New River in 1745, without recognizing their particular Christian beliefs and the intensity with which they held and lived these beliefs.

The Eckerlins drank deeply of that combination of separatism, pietism, and mysticism that flourished in the underground church communities in central Europe in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. A loosely-organized group of Christians, known collectively as the Anabaptists, emerged in the early sixteenth century in response to what many considered a less-than-total break with the Catholic Church on the part of Reformation leaders Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. Christian separatism had its own internal and centripetal logic in the relentless pursuit of purity, as subgroups separate themselves from a larger separatist group in order to follow a particular idea that they found central to achieving Christian purity. The historian Claus-Peter Clasen has explored the difficulties inherent in writing a history of such a decentralized movement as the Anabaptists created; as he noted, the Anabaptist movement was formed from thousands of highly devout ordinary men and women who frequently had little formal training or a relation to any definable hierarchy (Clasen 1972:ix-x).

The Anabaptist movement emerged in Zurich in the 1520s. In the early 1520s, these Zurich radicals discussed a number of points of Christian doctrine that put them at odds with both the Catholic hierarchy and the leading Protestant reformers who controlled the city. While different groups placed emphasis on different doctrinal points, the one constant among them was the restriction of baptism to professing adult believers only. This preoccupation led their contemporaries to call them Anabaptists, or ones who baptize again (Clasen 1972:5-13). In addition to the rejection of infant baptism, a few other key points united the Anabaptists:

- first-century Christianity was their ideal, and they believed that the institutional church had fallen from that ideal while the early Reformers had not successfully returned to the ideal;
- the true church was a visible community of disciplined saints maintained by the believers' baptism and the strict practice of excommunication;
- the regulation of the church by civil authorities was illegitimate and thus Christians should withdraw as far as possible from the world (Ahlstrom 1975:291; Clasen 1972:32).

¹ In the 1700s, spelling and language were more informal than they are today. The terms Dunker, Dunkard, and Tunker are all used to refer to the settlers who moved to the New River from Ephrata and they are used interchangeably within the booklet. The name Eckerlin also appears as Eckerling in some documents and both spellings are used in the booklet.

Among the more recognizable Anabaptist groups in the American colonies were the Mennonites and Amish, though there were other groups including the Hutterites and the various Pietist groups who settled in Pennsylvania.

By the mid- to late seventeenth century, the Anabaptists, with their emphasis on the believers' baptism and withdrawal from civil society to form communities of believers, became associated with the broader Pietist movement. Pietism was a revolt against the growing formalism and intellectualism of mainstream Reformed Christianity. It was a movement of revival, again in the hope of calling Christians back to their roots, "aimed at making God experientially and morally meaningful as well as socially relevant" (Ahlstrom 1975:297). The emphasis of Pietism lay more with Christian experience than with doctrinal precision; it also created "a zeal for missionary activity" (Ahlstrom 1975:300).

The focus of our story, the Dunkers, came into being in this era of Pietist ascendancy. The city of Schwarzenau, in the far eastern part of what is now Germany, had become a safe refuge for persecuted dissenting Christians throughout central Europe. The first Dunkers came together from among those who had settled in Schwarzenau in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The group was organized in 1708 when eight people, under the leadership of Alexander Mack, came together to form a church. Mack was a miller from a small community near Heidelberg, who had fled to Schwarzenau in 1706 to avoid persecution. The first step for this new group was adult baptism. According to tradition, these original eight members met at Mack's mill pond, and then went from there to the Eder River for the solemn ceremony. No records were kept, as they felt the need to work in secrecy for fear of retribution. According to a later historian of the Dunker church, "they purposely carefully concealed the exact day of its occurrence, and the name of the first baptizer. The latter was done with the view of avoiding all occasion of the new denomination being named after any man" (Holsinger 1901:36).

The Dunkers accepted many of the tenets of the broader Protestant Reformation, though more than most they placed baptism at the center of their faith. Indeed, the name Dunker was later given to them because of their method of baptism. Baptism was to be done by full immersion, face-forward, and repeated three times; the triple sprinkling of water on the head, they claimed, was a Papist invention and contrary to Scripture. Also unlike the Catholic Church and some of the early Protestant denominations, they saw baptism primarily as a point of obedience and less as a matter of salvation. For the Dunkers, obedience to the moral laws of Christianity was crucial; obedience was to be enforced by threat of excommunication, or removal from the fellowship of the church until repentance was sought and granted.

The enthusiasm of the new group drew a large congregation from Schwarzenau. In their attempts to convert even more, they reached out to people throughout the Palatinate in Germany. They established a church at Marionborn, which thrived for a while before facing persecution from the established churches in the area; they then went to Krefeld where they had the protection of the King of Prussia. Once at Krefeld, their attempt to establish a community of common goods among the Brethren, in line with the early community of Christians as described in the New Testament, folded in the face of the large numbers of refugees who fled there. Instead, the Dunkers developed a thriving textile industry, particularly silk and velvet, to keep the incoming refugees employed (Holsinger 1901:121).

The centripetal nature of Christian reform movements continued to plague the Krefeld community. Given their dedication to religious liberty, the Dunkers allowed into their community adherents of different theological systems. The heated discussions among the various religious factions, combined with renewed persecution, drove many of the Dunkers outward from Krefeld (Holsinger 1901:121-122).

In central Europe, where both the Catholic Church and the early reform groups held considerable sway over both religious and civic life, the presence of disparate groups of religious iconoclasts who recognized neither the civil nor the religious authority of the locally dominant groups constituted a genuine threat to the social order. This challenge to the established authorities, whether Catholic or Reformed, led to persecution, and dissenting Christian groups were hounded from one European city or principality to another for generations. In the American frontier of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the threat posed by these groups was dramatically reduced given their ability to find their own remote lands. As Klaus Wust, the principal historian of the Dunkers and other Christian Pietists in the southern frontier, has noted, ~~the~~ "the multifariousness of German sectarian movements which surfaced in Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century and, to a lesser degree, in several other colonies, is a tribute to the relative freedom America offered these believers" (Wust 1977:9).

The early eighteenth century was a time of vast enthusiasm among Europeans for the new American colonies. Two features in particular drew the Dunkers and other, like-minded religious reformers. First, the New World offered freedom from the traditional constraints that they had experienced in Europe; with such abundant land, there would be plenty of room to allow various groups to establish their own communities without fear of persecution. For those groups, such as the Dunkers, who had been hounded out of one community after another when regional princes and rulers changed, such an opportunity was enticing. Second, the New World, with reports of unchurched Natives, was a potentially fertile field for conversion. While interested primarily in forming their own communities dedicated to the restoration of an idealized, primitive Christianity where they could live out their lives of Christian obedience, these groups also had a great deal of missionary zeal and sought to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

The first set of 20 Dunker families ~~from~~ "from the mother church in Germany" sailed to the American colonies from Friesland, and landed in Philadelphia in 1719. The leader of this first wave, the weaver Peter Becker, established a settlement in nearby Germantown. Once in Germantown, Becker took on Conrad Beissel as an apprentice; Beissel, born in 1691 in Germany, was a religious enthusiast, but not yet a Dunker (Holsinger 1901:123-124).

Other families spread throughout the Philadelphia and Germantown areas on individual farms. Over the course of the next several years, this distance between families led to discord, and the scattered community began to unravel. The first attempts at reunification came in 1722 when Conrad Beissel began encouraging many of the families to come back together. Beissel and Becker then began a more formal house-to-house canvass, which led to their first public worship meeting in 1723 (Zigler 1914:24-25; Holsinger 1901:125-128).

In 1724, during a second evangelizing tour to the west of the Philadelphia, Becker baptized seven people at Conestoga, including Conrad Beissel. Beissel remained there, organizing a church at Mill Creek with himself as the minister. Beissel, through his preaching and charisma, drew many new members to his congregation. He also began to develop his “Economy”—something akin to a monastic rule in which celibacy played an important part. At this point, coming under the influence of the Seventh-Day Baptists, he also began to develop his ideas regarding Sabbatarianism, that the Christian Sabbath should be celebrated on Saturdays rather than Sundays. These two issues in particular led to a break between Beissel and some of his congregation. In 1728, Beissel withdrew his membership in the church and attracted followers to his own set of beliefs. By 1732, the break with his co-religionists was complete and he left Conestoga to form a separate community on the banks of the Cocalico Creek in northern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Other Brethren who followed his beliefs came to him, where they began building the village of Ephrata in 1734 (Holsinger 1901:137-138; Ahlstrom 1975:302-303).

Among those who drew close to Beissel at Ephrata were four brothers who had recently emigrated from Schwarzenau: Samuel, Emanuel, Israel, and Gabriel Eckerlin. The brothers' father, Michael Eckerlin, was a tailor from the city of Strasbourg in Alsace, on the border between what is now France and Germany. While still in Strasbourg, the senior Eckerlin came under the influence of the Pietists in the late 1690s. In 1705, when his oldest son Samuel was two years old, he was expelled from the city because of his leadership role in a sect of religious mystics. He then traveled with his wife, Anna, and their son to Schwarzenau to join Alexander Mack's new congregation. The three younger sons were then born in Schwarzenau, where they grew up surrounded by the new Dunker fellowship under Mack's leadership. Michael Eckerlin died in the early 1720s, and in 1725 his widow and the four boys immigrated to Pennsylvania, settling near Germantown (Sachse 1900:211; Wust 1977:11).

Having breathed in the religious fervor of the Schwarzenau community as children, the Eckerlins sought out similar experiences in the New World. Israel, the third son, made the first steps. Apprenticed to a religious adherent near Germantown, he and his employer went to Conestoga in 1727 for the new community being formed there. While in Conestoga, Israel Eckerlin began attending Conrad Beissel's meetings; convinced that Beissel spoke the truth, he soon joined Beissel's congregation at Ephrata, and submitted himself to baptism in June of 1728. His mother died in 1728, but his three brothers joined him in 1729; the four brothers soon became active revivalists (Sachse 1900:212-214).

As they began to build the Ephrata community, Beissel and his followers held to the ideal of celibate living. Men and women initially lived in entirely separate quarters and lived largely separate lives except for some occasions of public worship. Eventually Beissel allowed for the establishment of membership for families, or householders, who could live together. Beissel, under the continuing influence of the Seventh-Day Baptists, continued to lead his community in the practice of the Saturday Sabbath celebration. By the late 1730s, the community had nearly 40 buildings, including three places of worship (Holsinger 1901:137-139).

The Ephrata community was still in its formative years as the Eckerlin brothers came into their maturity and married. They took naturally to positions of leadership with the community, and

Israel was appointed the prior of the men's convent in the early 1740s. He and his older brother Samuel then began to turn the community away from a reliance on alms and offerings, and instead prompted the construction of workshops, mills, and orchards: in the process, they "made the Ephrata society financially sound and economically independent" (Wust 1977:13). Beissel, the founder of the community, became increasingly uneasy about this commercial development and saw the potential that his leadership of the community would wither away. Beissel was not alone in his concerns, and unease throughout the community grew by the mid 1740s as the Eckerlins came to exercise more authority. An open rebellion in 1745, that included Emanuel Eckerlin, the youngest brother, led Beissel to denounce Israel and Samuel Eckerlin and all who followed them. In September, 1745, Israel and Samuel Eckerlin, together with Alexander Mack, Jr., left the community. In a fit of vengeance, Beissel then burned their papers and uprooted the orchard that they had planted (Wust 1977:13; Sachse 1900:214-216).

In heading southwest toward the Virginia frontier, the Eckerlins were hardly blazing new ground. Instead, they followed a path that was laid down by a generation of German immigrants. Indeed, the valleys west of the Blue Ridge were known to the Germans who traveled down the Shenandoah Valley well before the English began moving across the mountains from the coast. The first reference to Germans in western Virginia was in 1704 when Johannes Kelpius, a leader of the Pietists on the Wissahicken River, wrote to one of his followers (Sachse 1900: 332). From their base in southeastern Pennsylvania, other Germans, including Lutherans, Mennonites, and German Calvinists moved into the Virginia frontier during the first decades of the eighteenth century (Figure 1).

The German sectarians who migrated to the Virginia frontier tended to settle in two different areas: the northern settlements in what are now the counties of Shenandoah, Rockingham, and Augusta; and the southern settlements in what are now Franklin, Botetourt, Floyd, and Roanoke Counties (Zigler 1914:29). The Eckerlins followed in the paths of the Brethren who had settled in the southern portions of the Virginia frontier. In particular, they headed for the settlement of the German immigrant, William Mack who, with his neighbors Samuel Stalnaker and Adam and Jacob Harman, had been in the area for four years. Within six weeks of leaving Ephrata, Samuel and Israel had had land appraised in the New River Valley: clearly, they knew where they were going. They lived for a time in William Mack's cabin, Mack having only recently died, and took over his crops.

Samuel and Israel Eckerlin purchased several hundred acres on the west bank of the New River shortly after they arrived in the area (Figure 2). They quickly built cabins and created a settlement which they called Mahanaim, after the passage from Genesis, 32:1-2: "Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; and when Jacob saw them he said, 'This is God's army!' So he called the name of that place Mahana'im." Samuel Eckerlin took charge of the development of the community, attempting to recreate what he had started at Ephrata: "a viable colony of hermits and pious householders which would attract all those for whom Ephrata had not fulfilled their expectations of a sanctified life of toil and prayer" (Wust 1977:17). Samuel's interest in making Ephrata a viable economic community came to the fore in Mahanaim as well; they built the first mill on the New River, the westernmost grist mill in Virginia at the time. In addition, their choice of location also allowed them access to markets. As Julius Friederich

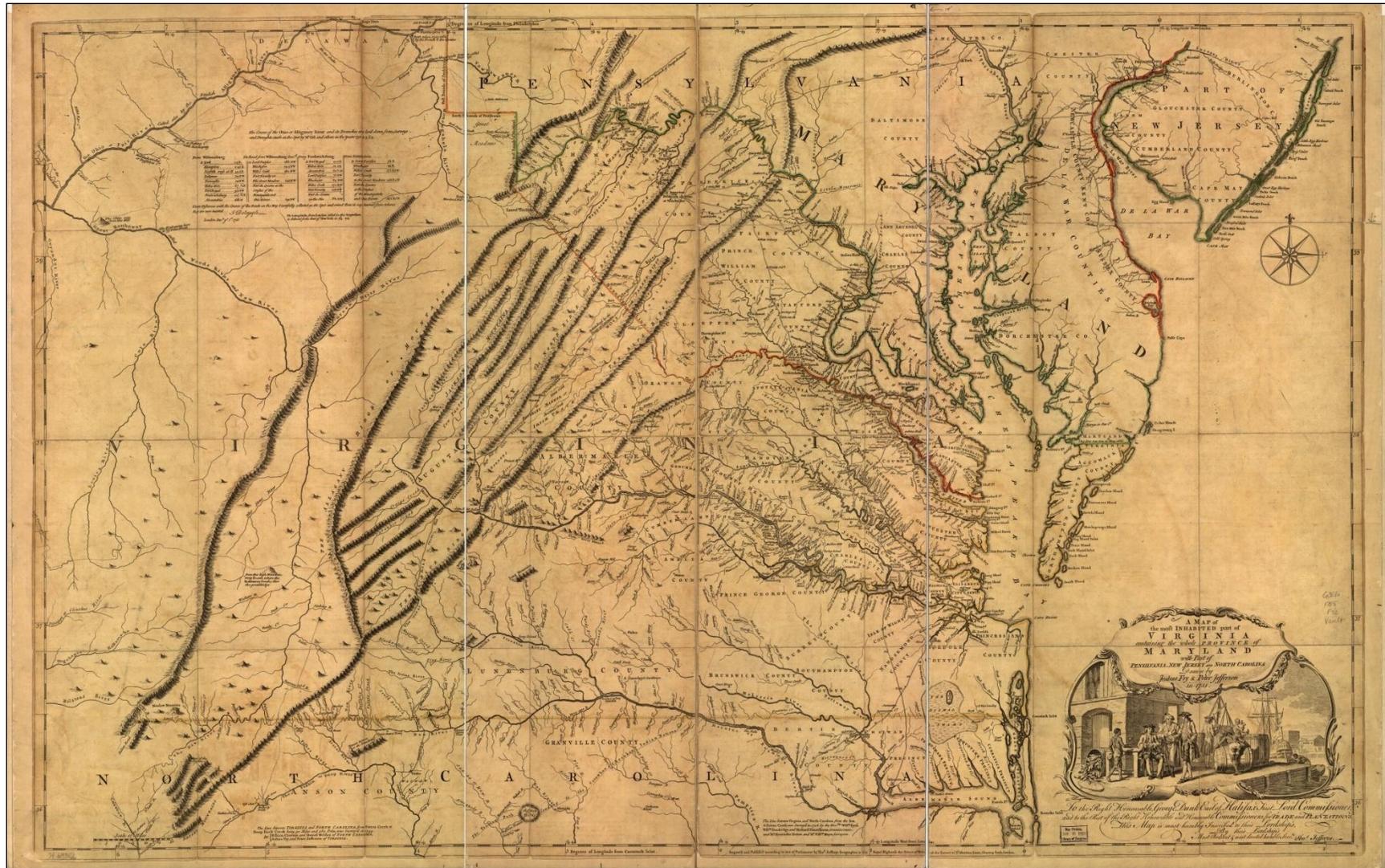


Figure 1. Fry-Jefferson Map (1755) of the Virginia territory during the mid-eighteenth century.

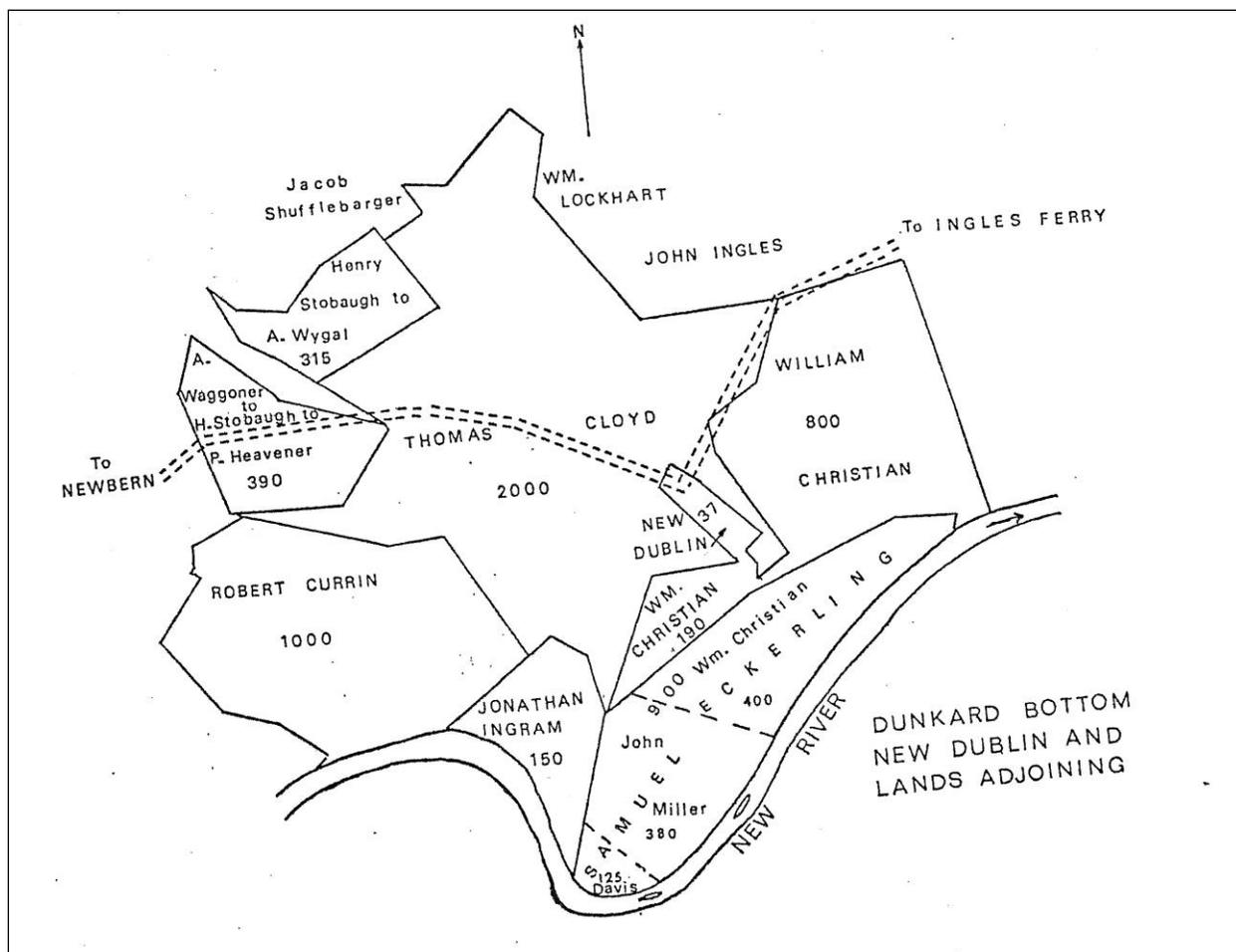


Figure 2. Map showing location of Eckerlin property and later property owners.

Sachse (1900:336) noted, “It was the only spot east of the Alleghany mountains which at that time would give them a natural outlet to the Mississippi and the French trading posts.”

The land where the Eckerlins set up their community was a part of the Wood’s River Company grant, a 100,000 acre tract that was administered by Colonel James Patton. Patton’s agent, John Buchanan, visited the area in October of 1745 and found the Eckerlins’ settlement already established; Buchanan was able to work out a deal with the Eckerlins to allow them to keep their land (Green et al. 2009:14). Samuel Eckerlin and Alexander Mack returned to Pennsylvania the following winter to purchase supplies and spread the news of their new community. They attracted a number of new followers, including Samuel’s brother Gabriel, who returned with them to Virginia in February 1746. Soon thereafter, a substantial number of followers arrived from Ephrata, boosting the size of the small community on the New River. The Eckerlins’ community on the New River was one of several such settlements established by German migrants from Pennsylvania and likely resembled the others. The settlers built a series of cabins which, according to tradition, had limestone chimneys built by an itinerant Irish stonemason (Green et al. 2009:14). Most of these new communities did not have meetinghouses at first;

instead, worship services, when they were held, took place in houses that were designed to hold meetings. These generally were one and one-half story log houses having open interiors that could then be divided to provide either living or meeting spaces (Zigler 1914:43).

Despite the difficulties inherent in establishing a new community on the frontier, the community flourished for a time. In their expansive vision, the Eckerlins purchased additional land and built another mill on nearby Dublin Branch (Green et al. 2009:14). The men of the Mahanaim community also joined with the other neighboring communities in the newly-formed Augusta County in civic works, particularly building roads (Wust 1977:20; Pawlett et al. 2003:5, 53). They retained generally peaceable relations with the surrounding Indians, but a sense of unease pervaded the community. This unease, combined with the solitary existence on the frontier, made it difficult to sustain a religious community. Klaus Wust, the leading historian of the German settlers on the Virginia frontier, could find no evidence of any baptisms, love-feasts, or common worship services (Wust 1977:23).

Samuel Eckerlin, the oldest of the brothers, maintained the most single-minded focus among the settlers at the Mahanaim community. As a result of the difficult conditions on the New River, other settlers began to return to Ephrata during the late 1740s and the community dwindled. Part of what made the attrition more feasible was the regular contact between Mahanaim and the older Pennsylvania communities. The path between the Virginia frontier and Germantown, Ephrata, and the other communities in Pennsylvania was a well-trodden one, with groups moving back and forth regularly for trade and migration. The Eckerlins were no exception, as they traveled between Virginia and Pennsylvania nearly every year. They seemed unable to stay in one place for very long. Israel and Gabriel decided to stay in Ephrata after receiving a warm welcome in the winter of 1750, but couldn’t stay away from Virginia for long, and soon renounced their decision. Samuel and Gabriel then returned to Ephrata in the fall of 1750, only to return to Virginia.

Though they found themselves unable to stay still in Ephrata, they also were unable to maintain their community on the New River. Most of their settlers had left by late 1750, and in the winter of 1751 the three brothers, Samuel, Israel, and Gabriel, decided to move even further west. However, even though the community had largely disbanded, the Eckerlins maintained their connection to the land. They initially sold the Dunkard’s Bottom land to Gerhard (Garrett) Zinn, another German immigrant, in 1753. Emmanuel Eckerlin bought the 125 acres back from Zinn in 1754 and his brother Samuel inherited the tract upon Emmanuel’s death. In turn, Samuel Eckerlin sold the property to William Davis, who operated trading outposts along the James, Roanoke, and New Rivers and speculated in frontier lands, in 1767.

Eventually the Eckerlin brothers settled on the Cheat River in what is now Preston County, West Virginia; like their land on the New River, this location remains known as Dunkard’s Bottom. They still could not remain settled, however, and kept up their communications with the merchants in eastern Pennsylvania, and purchased additional land in Virginia in the hopes of encouraging more Dunker settlement on the frontier.

Unfortunately, the western frontier in the mid-1750s was a challenging place to live, given the increasing hostilities among the English, the French, and the various Native American tribes who

allied themselves with one or the other nation. The Eckerlins, as loners of combined French and German descent, were natural targets for everyone on the frontier. The British first took Samuel Eckerlin captive in the spring of 1756 and accused him of being a French spy; he was brought to Williamsburg, where he successfully argued for his freedom. His lands in Virginia, however, were regularly subject to confiscation by the English authorities, and he made several trips to Williamsburg in the late 1750s to maintain possession of his property. Later in the 1750s, both Gabriel and Israel Eckerlin were captured by the Ottawas in western Pennsylvania, and were brought to the French garrisons at Duquesne and Niagara. The French took possession of them, and brought the brothers to Quebec for interrogation as spies. They were then taken to Rochelle, France where they died.

Their legacy of settlement on the New River survived, however, as did many of their cabins. It was, after all, a highly desirable piece of property, among the best agricultural and grazing lands. Farming and cattle raising would be central parts of the economy in this region well into the twentieth century. It is important to bear in mind that the Dunkard settlement that the Eckerlins created in the late 1740s was not an island in time and place. This fertile stretch of land, along the west side of the New River where the Dublin Branch joins it, had been occupied for centuries by Native Americans, while other white settlers quickly moved into the houses, fields, and riverbanks that they left behind in their continual quest for new frontiers. While there are few records that attest to how Gerhard Zinn or William Davis used the land, we know a great deal about the two families who owned and lived on the land from the 1770s to the 1930s: the Christians and the Cloyds.

William Christian

By the time William Christian purchased his first tract of land along the New River, in 1770, he had already established himself as an able military commander and allied himself with a prominent Virginia family through marriage. During the 15 years that he intermittently lived along the New River, Christian created a moderately successful plantation where the Dunkers had struggled only a generation before. Christian involved himself in commercial ventures, dabbled in politics, and furthered his military reputation, before setting out for greener pastures in Kentucky.

William Christian, the only son of Israel and Elizabeth Christian, was born in 1743 near Staunton, Virginia. His father operated a successful mercantile establishment in Staunton, trading with both white settlers and Indians. Israel Christian also served as a Captain in the militia and a member of the colony’s House of Burgesses, in addition to owning multiple tracts of land throughout the western portion of the colony (Waddell 1866:142). In 1764, Israel Christian moved to the Roanoke River and operated a store on his Stone House homestead, as well as having traveling traders working for him in more remote areas; this commercial enterprise served as the commissary for the First Virginia Regiment during the 1760s and 1770s (Kegley 1938:325; Lee 1998:197). William Christian’s early exposure to his father’s military, political, and business ventures helped shape his future lifestyle and involvements.

William Christian was raised in Augusta County, which encompassed the entire western portion of the Virginia colony from the time of its establishment in 1738 until Botetourt County was

created from the southern portion of its lands in 1769 (Waddell 1866:19–20, 131). Augusta County represented the fringes of Virginia colonial society, where new immigrants and pioneers sought large tracts of land on which to carve out productive plantations, a luxury which was no longer available in the eastern counties during the mid-eighteenth century. Although it held the promise of land and economic advancement, the Virginia frontier also contained the challenge of grueling work to create farmland from wilderness, the difficulty of procuring necessary supplies that were often scarce, the isolation of living far from family, and the danger of Indian attacks. Ultimately, this environment was one that William Christian, like the Eckerlins before him, would relish.

During the closing years of the French and Indian War, William Christian served as the commander of a ranger company, which provided important reconnaissance information and worked as scouts and guides for formal army companies. He was also made a captain in the militia in 1763. The following year, Colonel Andrew Lewis, Lieutenant of the Augusta County militia, raised a company of men to protect the Virginia colony’s frontiers; William Christian was put in command of a portion of this company and he oversaw expeditions on the James and New Rivers during 1764 (Kegley and Kegley 1980:289).

As frontier hostilities decreased and defensive forces were no longer necessary, Christian studied law under Patrick Henry, the future Patriot leader. In 1768, he married Anne Henry, sister of his mentor. As a wedding gift, the couple received seven slaves from Israel Christian. At the time, slaves were an essential part of a successful gentleman’s property and this was a valuable gift from a father to his son and daughter-in-law; it was Israel Christian’s investment in his son’s future. The following year, Christian was granted a license to practice law, although there is no evidence that he actually did so. He was also recommended as a justice for Augusta County and acquired several parcels of land on Buffalo Creek, a tributary of the Roanoke River in Botetourt County, collectively known as the Stone House tracts, from his father (Augusta County Deed Book 15:355; Kegley and Kegley 1980:335). Within a five year period, William Christian had grown from a young military commander into a husband, landowner, and slave holder. The following year, Christian continued his political, military, and business ventures. He served as a justice in the newly formed Botetourt County and took the list of tithables for the James River, Craig’s Creek, and the Greenbrier settlement. Christian was also promoted to major in the Botetourt County militia, obtained a license for an ordinary (or tavern) at his home in Botetourt County, and sold over 2,500 pounds of hemp that he had raised (Kegley and Kegley 1980:335; Summers 1929:65–66, 71, 84).

Additionally in 1770, William Christian purchased 125 acres of land along the New River, at Dunkard’s Bottom, from William Davis of Philadelphia. The land was part of the original 900-acre Mahanaim settlement which Samuel Eckerlin had sold to Garrett Zinn in 1753. Stephen Trigg, who resided in the area, was also a member of the militia and married William Christian’s sister, Mary, possibly in 1768 or 1769 (Whitsitt 1888:87; Kegley and Kegley 1980:369). The influence of his brother-in-law may have played a part in luring Christian to the New River area. In 1771, Christian purchased the remainder of the original 900 acres from William Ingles and Stephen Trigg (Kegley and Kegley 1980:307). By the spring of 1773, Israel and Elizabeth Christian, William Christian’s parents, had joined them at the Dunkard’s Bottom home place, and since Israel Christian never purchased land along the New River, it is likely that they lived

on their son’s large estate (Letter from William Christian to Anne Fleming, February 15, 1773, in Hammon 2003; Kegley and Kegley 1980:337). By the mid-1770s, William Christian had his parents, his yet unmarried sister Rosanna, and his sister and brother-in-law, Stephen and Mary Trigg, living along the west bank of the New River, establishing a large family network in the area. He also entered into a two year partnership with merchant James McCorkle to operate a store at New Dublin. As his family and connections in the area grew, Christian continued to increase his landholdings in the area, adding two tracts, 190 acres and 800 acres, in 1782 (Kegley and Kegley 1980:310, 337).

Both William and Anne were impressed by their new location. Mrs. Christian wrote to her sister-in-law, Anne Fleming, describing the Mahanaim property as ~~full~~ as agreeable as I expected,” and happily related that ~~Mr.~~ Christian is highly delighted” (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, December 3, 1770, in Hammon 2003). The only drawback of the new property seemed to be its distance from her family and friends, which she mentioned made her ~~a~~ little melancholy” (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, December 3, 1770, in Hammon 2003). Mrs. Christian was grateful to have familiar correspondence kept up by way of letter, and indicated that she had more leisure time at their new home place than she had had while living at the Stone House property at Roanoke (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, January 21, 1771, in Hammon 2003).

Many of the cabins that the Eckerlins had built remained on the land when the Christians bought it. These cabins provided the first houses for Christian and his growing family, and even an itinerant Baptist preacher for the community (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, January 21, 1771, in Hammon 2003). A man of William Christian’s stature, though, needed a more substantial dwelling. Christian hired workmen to begin work on his new house at least by January 1772, and likely earlier, possibly using some of the sturdy limestone chimneys built for the Dunkers (Figure 3). On June 12, Anne Christian lamented that ~~our~~ new house goes on but slowly (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, June 12, 1772). Account information from the McCorkle store in New Dublin indicates Christian carried out more construction, possibly an addition to the home, during February and March 1775. During those months, William Christian purchased building supplies, including a large quantity of eight-penny nails, window hinges, both H and HL hinges (used to hang heavy doors), a lathing hammer, and a claw hammer (McCorkle 1797). The lathing hammer was a specialty tool used for cutting and nailing wooden lath, which was the underlayment for plaster walls in the eighteenth century. This, combined with the window hinges, indicate construction on a dwelling rather than a shed or farm building. Upon completion, the Christian house was a frame dwelling with a large living and dining space and a utility room with a meat trough (Figure 4). Facing the New River, the house was entered by a set of steps with a decorative railing (Kegley and Kegley 1980:338).

William Christian was already a slave holder by the time he settled at Dunkard’s Bottom, owning at least the seven slaves given to him as wedding present by his father. While living along the New River, the cabins remaining from the Eckerlins’ settlement could have been used as housing for at least some of his slaves; these cabins would have provided ready shelter and saved William Christian the labor and materials of building new ones. By the end of the 1770s, slaves were a valuable commodity, with Christian writing to Stephen Trigg that ~~they~~ are risen here greatly since you went away and all buyers, no sellers” (Letter from William Christian to Stephen Trigg,



Figure 3. Chimney reconstructed in Claytor Lake State Park, reputedly from the home of William Christian.



Figure 4. Sketch showing the Christian home and the Dunkard’s chimneys.

December 5, 1778, in Kellogg 1916). Christian even advised his mother that slaves were the primary currency along the frontier, asking her to “sell at Botetourt to get some good working Negroes and money to bring with you” (Letter from William Christian to Elizabeth Christian, August 17, 1785). And at times, even William Christian needed a larger labor force than he owned and had to resort to using a female slave with a sore shoulder, telling William Fleming that “I am so driven for want of hands that I must make her work this winter as she is and endeavor to get her cured next summer” (Letter from William Christian to William Fleming, January 29, 1779, in Hammon 2003). By 1782, William Christian owned 33 slaves and his father owned four. Upon Israel Christian’s death and inventory of his estate two years later, his wife inherited his slaves, now numbering five, all valued between £30 and £90 each. When William Christian died in 1786, he also left particular Negroes to his children, wife, and mother, affirming the personal property value of slaves (Kegley and Kegley 1980:339–341).

The Mahanaim land was a farm venture for the Christians, with most of the family’s food probably grown on the land or obtained through hunting. Letters between the Christians and their friends and relatives reveal that they grew various vegetables, including turnips, cabbage, colewort, cucumbers, and rhubarb; harvested and dried apples; and cultivated hemp (Hammon 2003). In addition, the Christians churned butter, made cheese, hunted deer, and raised beef cattle. They consumed some of the foodstuffs they produced within the household, but sold excess amounts to supplement their income and pay off store accounts. During 1774, William Christian and his father sold five casks of butter to James McCorkle. The following year, William sold McCorkle at least one deerskin, eight and three-quarters bushels of corn, four bushels of oats, and 1,031 pounds of hemp (McCorkle 1797). The Christians supplemented those products produced at home and on the farm with foods that were purchased at McCorkle’s store, including coffee, rum, brown sugar, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. They also purchased chocolate on at least two occasions in 1775, indicating their high social status since chocolate was an expensive item during the eighteenth century, especially on the frontier.

Farming in the 1770s, as today, is a difficult and often risky business. In 1771, Anne Christian wrote to her sister-in-law and stated, “I am much obliged to you for the cheese and hope if I live till next summer to be able to send you some.” Two months later, William Christian could not travel because of the slow rate of work on his lands, lamenting that “we have not even cleared two acres yet” (Hammon 2003). Hard work and hope did not always guarantee good harvests, and in 1772, Anne Christian reported that “our crops are all very bad up here and people are replanting even now” (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, June 12, 1772, in Hammon 2003). Three years later, she still needed to ask Anne Fleming to send her seed for multiple vegetables, as her own crop seeds were not successful. In 1779, both Anne and William Christian expressed major concerns about the weather. She remarked that “the weather [is] so excessive that we can but just live and save ourselves from being starved,” while he mentioned that “we had about ten days of the most dreadful weather...I expect the River will freeze over tonight. If this weather holds two months...the inhabitants will have no stock or corn” (Hammon 2003). Despite having been established in the area for nearly a decade, the Christians were still susceptible to the whims of nature and worried that even their vast lands could not produce enough to supply their needs.

Much as the Dunkers a generation before, the Christians were hardly an economic island unto themselves. The Eckerlins and their fellow Dunkers made regular trips to Pennsylvania to both buy and sell goods. The records that are available for the Christians showed that they too took part in a regional economy; though the New River remained a frontier, the growing trade networks allowed for a modicum of civilized living. For example, although deerskin coats and raccoon hats were used on the New River frontier, the majority of the clothing worn by the colonists was similar to that of people living in the eastern portion of the colony. From June 1774 through September 1776, the Christian family purchased a multitude of fabrics, thread, buttons, and sewing notions, as well as many finished goods (McCorkle 1797). Orders of fabric and notions were split between a portion that went to the tailor, who would create the necessary garments, and the remainder that went to Anne Christian, Mary Trigg, and Rosanna Christian, who probably sewed some of their own clothing.

Most of the fabrics that they purchased included basic linens and wools, including Oznabrig (a coarse linen cloth), shalloon (lightweight worsted woolen fabric often used in coat linings), and frieze (a coarse woolen cloth with a raised nap), but velvet, silk, lawn (a silky untextured linen), cambric (finely woven linen or cotton), and calico (a brightly painted or printed cotton fabric) also appeared in orders placed by the Christian family. These more expensive fabrics, along with decorative items, including indigo dye, plated buckles, ribbon, and twist buttons, which were buttons covered with fabric or cotton thread to match a garment, were probably turned into more fashionable garments for both men and women. Nuns thread, which was a linen thread used primarily for lace making, was also a popular item, indicating that the Christian women made their own decorative lace. Combined with finished goods, such as felt hats, shoes for both men and women, painted and silk handkerchiefs, women’s gloves, yarn stockings, a silk bonnet, and aprons, the Christians made a concentrated attempt to remain fashionable, even on the frontier (McCorkle 1797).

In addition to fabrics, the Christians purchased a range of other supplies for the house and farm, including a curry comb, horse brushes, men’s and women’s saddles, bridles, and surcingles (straps that fasten around a horse’s girth) for their horse care and riding needs. They also bought silverware and table utensils, such as ladles, pen knives, cuttoes (large knives), scissors, tin pans, and kettles. Additionally, there were two orders for bottles of Turlington’s drops and Stoughton’s bitters, which were both marketed as cure-all medicines during the eighteenth century. These medicines were probably for Anne Christian and son John Henry Christian, both of whom suffered from consumption (Henry 1891:477; Kegley and Kegley 1980:342).

Although the western bank of the New River near Dunkard’s Bottom and New Dublin was the edge of the Virginia frontier during the 1750s and 1760s, settlements further west—along the Clinch and Holston Rivers—had pushed the boundaries of the colony beyond the New River valley by the 1770s. By the early 1770s there had been no major Indian attacks in nearly a decade, and by 1768, colonial migration into the backcountry had expanded the territory claimed by white settlers and pushed the native tribes to the Ohio River. As William Christian and his family were establishing themselves at Dunkard’s Bottom, the dangers of the frontier and Indian attacks along the New River had diminished. The fear of Indians, while not completely abated, was significantly muted and the western region of Virginia was again becoming densely settled.

As peace in the area and increased settlement to the west continued, William Christian’s satisfaction with his New River home began to wane. When an attack by the Shawnee in the Kentucky lands killed the sons of Daniel Boone and William Russell, in October 1773, terror again spread along the frontier. By the following March, people living in southwest Virginia (now part of Tennessee and Kentucky) had begun abandoning their homes and farms to move eastward into more densely settled areas. Fortified stockades, where settlers could go for safety, were set up along the Clinch and Holston Rivers. Lord Dunmore, then Governor of the Virginia Colony, sent Dr. John Connelly to head the militia near the forks of the Ohio River and called out the militia of the western counties in June 1774. William Christian was eager to provide his services to the colony ~~to~~ serve the inhabitants and perhaps cover the retreat of the Surveyors. “Could I save one life I should think myself recompensed” (Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:46–47). By the end of the month, Lord Dunmore’s orders calling out the militia had reached Fincastle County and Colonel William Preston, the officer responsible for organizing the approximately 400 troops in Fincastle County’s militia, appointed William Christian, now a colonel as well, as commander and placed him in charge of companies under six Captains (Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:ix–xii, 1–3, 52; Kegley and Kegley 1980:337).

Alarm spread throughout the territory during the summer, as additional reports of attacks in the western territory trickled into the New River area. Rumors also indicated that the Cherokee would join with the Shawnee in the upcoming battles, presenting further danger to the frontier settlements. Anne Christian and her children left their New River home during the fall of 1774, staying with her mother at Hanover and her brother at Scots Town. William Christian’s parents, and sister Rosanna moved to stay with their daughter/sister, Anne Fleming (Henry 1891:248; Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, October 15, 1774, in Hammon 2003; Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:206). Colonel Christian and his men first marched to settlements on the Clinch and Holston Rivers ~~for~~ “the Defense of that part of the Country” (Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:62). Once those settlements were secure, with four forts being built on the Clinch River by the end of July 1774, Christian thought to march to the Ohio River and possibly venture into Indian Territory, attacking some of the Shawnee towns that were nearby. Although he believed that this offensive tactic would stop the Indians from raiding the colony, he knew that it was a questionable gamble in the public’s opinion and suggested ~~that~~ “it is not best to say any thing publicly [sic] of attacking the Towns, but only to propose going to Ohio and returning up New-River,” which would be a long but feasible way home for his troops (Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:82–83).

Following extensive military actions against the Shawnee in the western portions of Virginia in September and October of 1774, the Treaty of Camp Charlotte was negotiated on October 25, 1774. The treaty pushed the boundaries of colonial territory to the Ohio River and guaranteed safe passage for boats along the river, as well as requiring the Shawnee to return all white prisoners and pay for the provisions they had raided during the past year (Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:301–307). The end of Dunmore’s War sent William Christian back to his family at Dunkard’s Bottom, though he found that he preferred the western frontier (Kegley and Kegley 1980:337).

As the colonial relationship with England disintegrated, in 1775 and 1776, William Christian supported the revolutionary policies that his brother-in-law, Patrick Henry, advocated. In January

1775, Christian was one of 15 men selected by the freeholders of Fincastle County, which had been created in 1772 from Botetourt County, to represent the county’s interests. This committee, of which Christian was elected chairman, drafted a written address to Virginia’s delegates to the Continental Congress which was adopted on January 20, 1775, and came to be known as the Fincastle Resolutions. Many of the signers of these resolutions, including Christian, had at least distant family ties to Patrick Henry and his influence on the document is evident. Although not calling specifically for war, the Fincastle Resolutions clearly stated that the men “by no means desire[d] to shake off our duty or allegiance to our lawful sovereign...but if no pacifick [sic] measures shall be proposed or adopted by Britain, and our enemies will attempt to dragoon us out of these inestimable privileges which we are entitled to...we are deliberately and resolutely determined never to surrender them to any power upon this earth, but at the expense of our lives” (The Fincastle Resolutions, in Glanville 2010:102–103). Christian’s political activities continued in 1776, when he was part of the Convention that adopted the Constitution of Virginia and elected Patrick Henry as the first governor of the new Commonwealth.

Christian’s experience in leading troops against Indians came to the fore later in 1776, when Indian attacks were again threatening settlements along Virginia’s western frontiers on the Holston and Watauga Rivers. Fearful that these attacks were spurred on by the British and would undermine their ability to fight the British in the imminent war, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia mounted a combined offensive against the Cherokee. As the armies of South Carolina marched on the Cherokee lower towns, William Christian led Virginia’s forces, joined by 400 men from North Carolina, in a swift attack on Over Hill, the upper Cherokee towns along the Little Tennessee and Tellico Rivers, destroying their grain, cattle, and provisions (*Virginia Gazette* August 9, 1776; October 18, 1776; November 1, 1776; November 11, 1776). The defeated Cherokee sought a peace treaty, which was negotiated at Long Island on the Holston, and signed in July 1777, with the Cherokee relinquishing the lands of eastern Tennessee (Letter from William Christian to General Rutherford, August 18, 1776, in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 1908, Volume 16:170–175; Kegley and Kegley 1980:338).

During the late 1770s, following his military campaigns, William Christian was indecisive about his choice of home place and permanent settlement. Although he sold lands he owned on the Holston River in 1777 and was recommended as a justice of Botetourt County in 1778, William Christian had returned to his Dunkard’s Bottom property by the fall of that year. The following year he was elected as a justice for Montgomery County, which had been created in 1776 from Fincastle County. On November 3, 1779, Christian’s petition to operate a ferry across the New River at Dunkard’s Bottom was approved, allowing him to charge one dollar passage for a man and a horse (Kegley and Kegley 1980:338). By 1780, William Christian had been living at Dunkard’s Bottom for a decade and he was already actively seeking a new frontier challenge. Both he and his father obtained grants for their military service, totaling more than 4,000 acres in Kentucky. During 1783, William Christian travelled into Kentucky to inspect the lands that he and his father were looking to settle on, while his family remained at Mahanaim. Stephen and Mary Trigg, his sister and brother-in-law, had moved to Kentucky in 1789; upon returning from a visit to his sister William Christian related that “Kentucky is a rich body of land and one acre of corn there is worth two here, and everything else is grown in proportion” (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, September 9, 1783, in Hammon 2003).

The Christians’ planned move to Kentucky was delayed by several years due to the death of William’s father, Israel, and other family illnesses. Christian sold his property in phases: in 1783, he sold 1,400 acres of land, 400 acres of which was from the original Dunkard’s Bottom grant, to James McCorkle, with the intention of moving his family to Bear Grass, Kentucky (Kegley and Kegley 1980:314; Summers 1929). By January 1785, Anne Christian reported that the tutor, –Mr. Gillon, has broke up school here in order for our Children to prepare for their journey to Kentucky, as we propose to go in April” (Letter from Anne Christian to Anne Fleming, January 17, 1785, in Hammon 2003). In February, William Christian sold his remaining New River property to James McCorkle, Bird Smith, and Daniel Trigg for £1200, which was to be paid –in Kentucky land (£300), Luke and children (£400), £100 in horses, and £400 in money,” stating that he planned to move on April 1 (Kegley and Kegley 1980:314; Letter from William Christian to Elizabeth Christian, February 19, 1785, in Hammon 2003).

In May 1785, Mrs. Christian, along with her children and her mother-in-law, travelled to the Holston River, in present day Tennessee, and by June 15 the majority of the Christians’ slaves and personal property had arrived in Kentucky (Kegley and Kegley 1980:340). The excitement about the new Kentucky home place was short-lived, however, as William Christian was killed in a battle with Indians who were raiding the Bear Grass settlements in April 1786, cutting short his new frontier enterprise. Although he owned much personal and real property, William Christian left his family a legacy of debt from his pioneering desires (Kegley and Kegley 1980:341). He also left his structural legacy upon the land where he lived along the New River.

The Cloyd Family

While the Eckerlins were wanderers, leading a temporary existence along the New River, and the Christians had only a semi-permanent life on this land, the Cloyd family and their descendents established themselves upon the Dunkard’s Bottom property and its landscape on a more permanent basis. Despite generations of ownership by the Cloyd family, however, the memory of the Eckerlins’ settlement resonated on the landscape. The first member of the Cloyd family to own the land, Thomas Cloyd, referred to the land as –the Dunkard Bottom” in his will which was probated in 1849; despite now being under the waters of Claytor Lake, the place still bears that name.

Thomas Cloyd was born in 1774. He was the son of Joseph Cloyd, who had served as a Captain under William Christian during the frontier defense and Point Pleasant battle, and later became a distinguished militia Colonel during the American Revolution. The Cloyd family had been among the earliest settlers in the area and Joseph Cloyd’s estate was along Back Creek, now in the northern part of Pulaski County. Thomas Cloyd was one of three brothers who began acquiring New River lands around 1800, including a purchase of 2,000 acres, along both sides of the Ingles Ferry Road, north of the New River. This property was northwest of the Dunkard’s Bottom/William Christian property (Montgomery County Survey Book E:431; Kegley and Kegley 1980:342).

By the early 1800s, the lands that William Christian had sold to James McCorkle and Daniel Trigg had passed to heirs of both men. The three Cloyd brothers purchased 1,490 acres of land from McCorkle’s niece, including a portion of the original Dunkard’s Bottom tract, between

1806 and 1808. This land adjoined Thomas’s 2,000 acre tract and he eventually acquired sole title to the land from his brothers in 1822. Additionally, he purchased the lands owned by Daniel Trigg’s heirs, including a 37 acre tract containing the original town of New Dublin, between 1820 and 1833, expanding his contiguous holdings to nearly 4,500 acres (Montgomery County Deed Book D:359, 539; G:211, 466, 577, 631; H:21–23, 32–33, 137, 158, 349; K:269, 455, 479, 620–621; L:8, 123, 171; Kegley and Kegley 1980:342). By 1840, Cloyd had also acquired 46 slaves to work on his estates, with 14 of them employed in agricultural tasks (United States Census Bureau 1840). With the value of property and slaves high during the antebellum years, Thomas Cloyd had become a wealthy man.

In 1809, Thomas Cloyd married Mary McGavock, daughter of another pioneer family in western Virginia, and the couple took up residence on the large plantation that Cloyd was assembling around Dunkard’s Bottom (Kegley and Kegley 1980:342; Gray 1903:4, 12). It is likely that they resided in one of the multiple structures already standing on the property. Of these, the larger Christian house seems the most likely candidate, with the smaller Dunkard cottages possibly serving as slave quarters. However, family tradition indicates that the family, which consisted of Thomas and Mary Cloyd along with their four children, lived in “one of the earlier German settlement houses” until his brick home was completed in 1847 (Wagner and McRae 2005:Section 8, page 9). The Christian house could have easily been mislabeled though, especially if it was built to reuse some of the Dunkard’s limestone chimneys.

The Greek Revival style home constructed by Thomas Cloyd was large, measuring approximately 60 feet square and rising two stories on top of a raised basement, and was suitable for a successful planter in the 1840s. During the 1830s through the 1850s, the Greek Revival style dominated American architecture, with multiple variations on classical themes spreading from established cities into the newly settled areas of the western frontier. Public buildings, such as courthouses, banks, and libraries, were built using classic forms and detailing during the late 1810s and early 1820s, and provided substantial examples that were scaled down for application to domestic constructions. The choice of a home in a popular contemporary architectural style, constructed with over 215,000 handmade bricks (Figure 5), would have demonstrated Thomas Cloyd’s successes as a landowner and farmer (Jeffries 1981). An early twentieth century description of the house indicates that it had a massed plan, with two rooms on either side of a central hall and stairwell. The basement, with the kitchen, was actually level with the ground; the main level was accessed by a stairway leading to an entry portico, supported by Ionic columns (Figure 6). The house, which was three bays wide by two bays deep, also featured a low hipped roof, double chimneys on either end, and molding along the eave line (Hurt 1937).

Observations of the surrounding lands during the 1930s described “an old stone foundation and three large chimneys (stone) with fireplaces,” as well as another “stone foundation and two tall stone chimneys with fireplaces” (Hurt 1937). Although they had fallen into disuse and disrepair by the time the Claytor Dam was constructed, the Dunkard and Christian homes had remained standing through the nineteenth century. Thomas Cloyd had built a fashionable new home, yet he had also retained the structures that his predecessors had erected during their tenures on the land. Existing structures could be recycled, saving time, labor and materials. The smaller wooden buildings could feasibly have been used for slave quarters or storage during the first half of the nineteenth century.



Figure 5. Bricks remaining from the Cloyd House, photo taken during a drawdown of Claytor Lake.

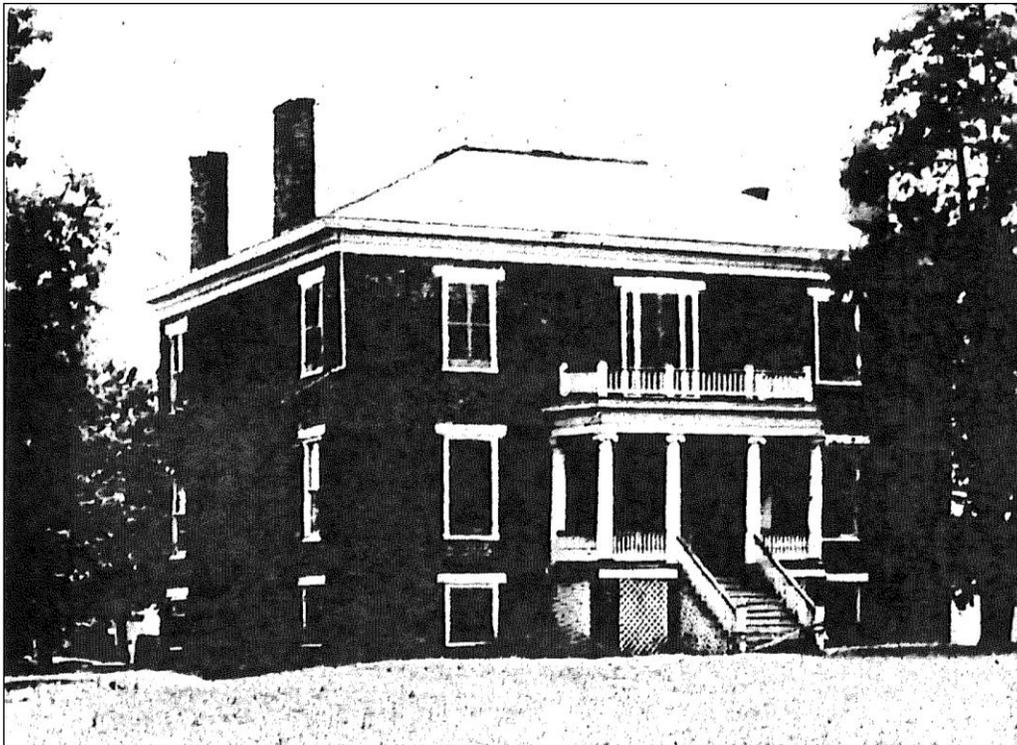


Figure 6. Early twentieth century photograph of the Cloyd House (Cannaday 1946:6)

Thomas Cloyd died in 1849. His will, combined with the inventory from his brother David’s estate, which was probated the previous year, reveal some aspects of life as a farmer and successful land owner during the antebellum period. The most important portions of the personal property, which were counted and enumerated separately, were the farm animals and slaves. David Cloyd’s estate had 250 hogs, 320 sheep, 27 milking cows, 12 work horses, and ten riding horses. He also had 267 head of cattle, ranging from calves to six year old animals. Additionally, David Cloyd’s estate contained 94 slaves, worth over \$30,000, on all his plantation holdings, with individual slave values ranging from \$100 to \$650 per person. He also owned five wagons, a carriage, a buggy, a variety of kitchen and household furniture, farm utensils, smith tools, and iron (Pulaski County Will Book 1:128–131). Like his brother, Thomas Cloyd owned vast landholdings and multiple slaves. With comparable land and assets, Thomas Cloyd probably owned similar numbers of animal stock and household goods when he died.

Thomas Cloyd’s success as a planter and landowner was evidenced by the lack of debt he owed upon writing his will. As part of the disposition of his estate, Thomas Cloyd willed 50 slaves, each referred to by name, to his heirs — 35 to his son David and 15 to his son-in-law Gordon Kent. In addition to the Dunkard’s Bottom plantation lands where he lived, and some property across the New River, Cloyd had also acquired over 3,000 acres of other land on the New and Roanoke rivers, which he divested to Gordon Kent in his will (Pulaski County Will Book 1:179–182). His possessions also included cattle, horses, hogs, sheep, guns, and farming utensils. With ownership of nearly 10,000 acres of land upon his death, along with slaves to work the land and both stock and tools to maximize its potential, Thomas Cloyd would have been considered a wealthy and successful man.

David M. Cloyd was the only one of the children of Thomas and Mary Cloyd to survive his father, and he inherited the tracts of land on which his father resided. This consisted of 4,429 acres that were generally referred to as Dunkard’s Bottom, as well as 2,015 acres of land on the opposite side of the river, called Egypt (Pulaski County Will Book 1:179–182). In addition to the land, slaves, stock, and farming utensils, David M. Cloyd also inherited his father’s large brick house and the wooden structures that bespoke of the earlier history of the land.

David M. Cloyd was born in 1824 and had already been predeceased by his sisters Lucinda and Nancy, and infant brother Thomas when he inherited the majority of his father’s estate. He married Elizabeth McDowell McGavock in 1848 and they had five children, only two of whom would survive into adulthood. David Cloyd owned his father’s house and plantation for only 14 years before he died in 1863. By 1850, the value of his real estate was estimated at \$75,000 and by 1860 his real estate was valued at approximately \$152,000 and his personal property at \$47,000 (United States Census Bureau 1850, 1860). His will split the property, totaling about 7,000 acres on both sides of the New River, equally among his three living daughters at the time, although only Lucy and Catherine (Kate) survived to inherit and divide the property (Gray 1903:20, 46, 67; Pulaski County Will Book 2:91). As her widow’s rights, however, Elizabeth Cloyd, who remarried in 1866, retained rights to 755 acres south of the road and north of the New River, including the Dunkard’s Bottom plantation house where she continued to live until her death in 1908 (Pulaski County Deed Book 6:134–136). The Egypt lands, located south of the New River, were sold to pay a portion of the debts due from David M. Cloyd’s estate following the conclusion of the Civil War, when large property holdings were difficult to keep profitable.

The sale of the Egypt property infused nearly \$3,000 into the estate (Pulaski County Will Book 2:338; 3:291).

David M. Cloyd’s estate was extensively inventoried after his death, with each piece of household furniture being counted and valued, as well as a number of his herd animals. Since raising beef cattle was an important agricultural pursuit in Pulaski County during the antebellum period, these were likely the most valuable assets in his herds. Among furniture inventoried in the estate there were five bureaus, eight carpets and rugs, 30 chairs, nine beds and bedding sets, and a cradle; a mahogany bedroom set including a bedstead, bureau, wardrobe, and other furniture was valued at \$175. Along with two walnut dining tables, the estate also contained a set of silver plated ware, a dozen each of large and small silver forks and spoons, two silver ladles, sugar tongs, and a set of table ware (Figure 7). Farm and production machinery included a wheat fan, a cider press, a grind stone, a corn mill, a threshing machine, and multiple plows and wagons. David M. Cloyd owned at least two yokes of oxen and cows with multiple colors and markings. He also had a valuable steam saw mill on his property, worth \$1,000. His total personal estate was appraised at over \$4,200 (Pulaski County Will Book 2:246–248). Interestingly, although he inherited a large number of slaves from his father and was the owner of 58 slaves, ranging in age from six months to 77 years old, in 1860, David M. Cloyd's slave property was not included in his estate, which was inventoried and appraised while the Civil War was occurring (United States Census Bureau 1860, Slave Schedules). In addition, David Cloyd specified in his will that he was to be buried ~~at~~ Dunkard Bottom on the hill north east of my late widow, and near the graves of my two still born infants.” Funds from his estate, moreover, were to be used to build ~~a~~ good stone wall around my grave & that of my still born infants.”

In 1873, when Kate Cloyd married Haven B. Howe, she and her sister Lucy split their father’s property, with Lucy Cloyd inheriting the eastern portion of the lands, including the antebellum mansion, the Christian home, and the Dunkard cottages. Kate Howe inherited the western portion of the lands, and she and her husband built an Italianate home, known as Crescent Falls, which now serves as the headquarters building for Claytor Lake State Park (Pulaski County Deed Book 6:134–136; Wagner and McRae 2005). The importance of lineage remained central, however; Kate’s husband formally renounced his dower rights in the land in favor of his wife. In addition to the house, the farm included a barn, a smokehouse, a carriage house, a woodshed, a springhouse, and a storage shed. Haven Howe was one of the leaders in the development of a strong agricultural economy in Pulaski County, and Crescent Falls Stock Farm became one of the county’s leading enterprises (Wagner and McRae 2005). Kate died as a result of a ruptured appendix in 1895, but Haven Howe continued to live in the house afterward; two of their children continued to live on the property into the early twentieth century.

Lucy Cloyd married Robert Barton in 1875 and they lived on a portion of her father’s property, although not in the antebellum mansion, which was still occupied by her mother and step-father. Although Lucy Cloyd Barton died in 1895, and never became the owner of her father’s large brick home, her husband and children resided there during the early twentieth century (Gray 1903:98). By the 1930s, when their daughter, Elizabeth Barton Mebane, sold the property to the Appalachian Electric Power Company (AEPC), the farm included ~~a~~ large colonial brick mansion, complete farm buildings, outhouses, etc.” More importantly, their property had the family graveyard which Elizabeth’s grandfather, David Cloyd, had established in his will; the



Figure 7. Sample of artifacts recovered from site 44PU164, including a metal door hinge and various types of stoneware and earthenware pottery.

Mebanes were granted the right to remove “all graves, monuments, and dead bodies” within two years.

During the early twentieth century, a photograph was taken showing the rear of the brick Cloyd mansion in the background. The foreground of the photo shows the gabled, wooden Christian house to the right and the foundation and chimneys from the Dunkard homes to the left, closest to the camera (Figure 8). The survey of the property by the Works Progress Association in 1937 indicates that the Christian house, “at the left in the back yard...has been torn down but some of the lumber is there still,” and that it had been “used before the brick house was built” (Hurt 1937). Also, the stone fireplaces and foundation of at least one Dunkard cottage remained and had been used as a tenant house in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hurt 1937).

Having passed through David Cloyd’s two daughters, Lucy and Kate, and then to their children, the area remained a valuable stretch of farmland. By the early twentieth century, a series of cousins owned a string of farms along the west bank of the New River to the south of Dublin Branch. Two of Haven and Kate Howe’s children, Daniel S. Howe and Thomas M. Howe, had houses along a small road that paralleled the New River. Two of Lucy and Robert Barton’s children, William S. Barton and Elizabeth Barton Mebane, owned property on either side of Dublin Branch to the west of the New River.

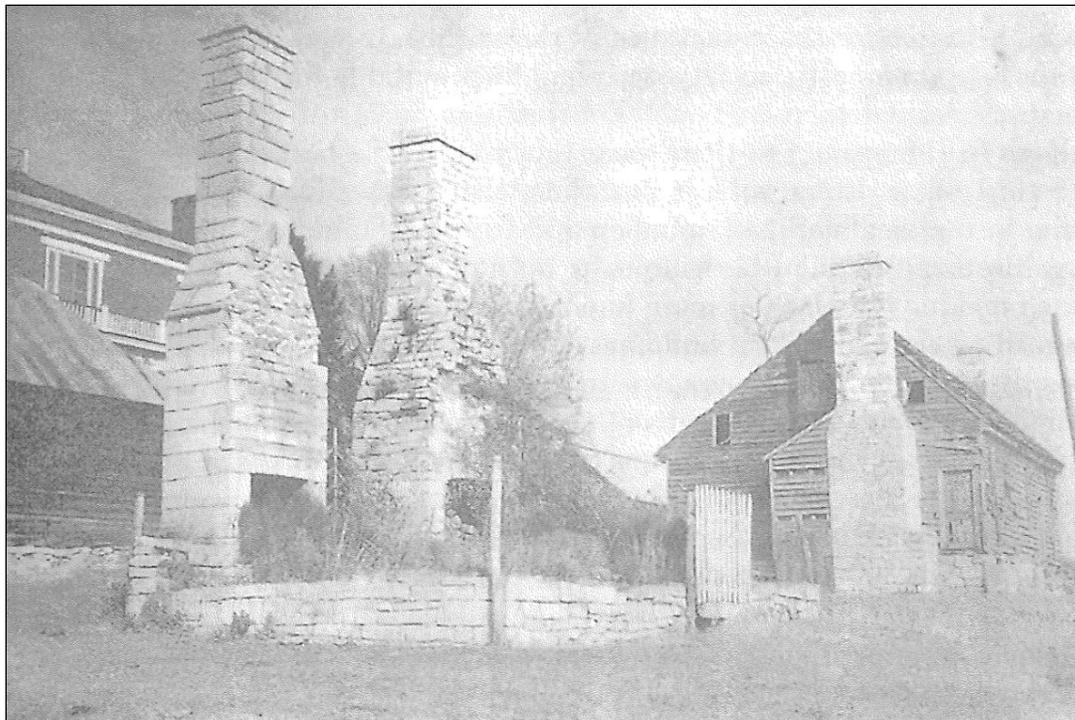


Figure 8. Early twentieth century photograph showing Cloyd House, Christian House, chimneys, and foundation (Sappington 1973:11).

This long-standing connection to the land, on this relatively flat portion of land along the New River known as Dunkards Bottom, stretches from the mid-eighteenth century when the Eckerlin brothers and their co-religionists were the first European-Americans to settle on the property, through the tenure of William Christian in the late eighteenth century, and then Thomas Cloyd and his descendants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Eckerlins, Christians, and Cloyds all found the land valuable for much the same reason: it was among the best farm land in the region, with gently sloping land and good drainage to both the New River and the Dublin Branch. Those who came after the descendants of the Cloyd family, however, found the land valuable for markedly different reasons.

Hydroelectric Development: Claytor Dam

While the Howes and the Bartons maintained the agricultural uses of the land well into the twentieth century, nearby Pulaski had begun to show the importance of industrial development. Manufacturing, however, requires power, and a lot of it. To some far-seeing entrepreneurs in the early twentieth century, the New River, though meandering and prone to wide fluctuations in flow, portended great things in terms of power production. The early twentieth century was a period of great fascination with hydroelectric power throughout the nation and, consequently, of rapid development in the technology that would allow for harnessing the power of the nation’s rivers to produce electricity.

In approximately 1900, O.L. Stearnes, a local “agent and promoter” began to secure control of the rights to develop the New River’s potential. Stearnes, with assistance from other local engineers and developers, made desultory attempts to survey and acquire title to the lands along the New River in Grayson, Carroll, Wythe, and Pulaski counties through 1909 (History of Development 1939:1-2). These explorations of potential water power sites on the New River lasted for some two decades, as Stearnes and the various investors and developers whom he brought on board examined a variety of sites.

Having identified the most likely water power sites along the New River in southwest Virginia, Stearnes reached an agreement with Viele, Blackwell and Buck, a New York City-based electrical and hydraulic engineering firm. Stearnes and his collaborators formed a syndicate to purchase these sites. This syndicate then created the New River Power Company, a corporation that could hold title to the lands and rights that the syndicate acquired. Of the six sites that the New River Power Company identified, two were built in short order in 1912, the Byllesby (New River Development No. 2) and Buck (New River Development No. 4) Projects, both located upriver in Carroll County (Louis Berger Associates 1995:3).

The development of the Claytor Project, however, was considerably more circuitous. It began in 1910 as New River Development No. 5, a proposed 30-foot-high dam located approximately nine river miles upstream of the present Claytor Dam at the Linkous Ferry, near the mouth of Clapboard Creek (Trout 2003:48). In 1911, the proposed height was changed, first to 40 feet then to 52 feet (History of Development 1939:3). Stearnes purchased what was then the Linkous Ferry property in 1911, including a two-acre mill site with mill equipment, before conveying it to the New River Power Company (Narrative to Parcels 44-44A-45-45A: 275-279). At the same time, the New River Power Company proposed to build another dam, Development No. 6, several miles downstream from the No. 5 site at the Howe-Smith site just below the mouth of Falls Branch and approximately three river miles above the present Claytor Dam (Trout 2003:48). This too was planned initially as a 30-foot high dam (History of Development 1939:3).

More actions took place through the rest of the decade, primarily focused on purchasing lands and rights for the No. 5 and No. 6 dams. In 1925, after purchasing land at a variety of sites along the New River, the location of the No. 6 dam was moved further downstream to the present location of the Claytor Dam. At the same time, negotiations were under way to merge New River Power Company with Appalachian Power and Light Company to form the Appalachian Electric Power Company, under the management and control of the American Gas and Electric Company (AEPC) (History of Development 1939:6-7).

The new location of the proposed dam and hydroelectric station, several miles downstream of the original locations, offered several advantages. First, for the same elevation level of the impoundment the head would be considerably greater, thus affording increased generating capacity. Second, the dam would be located adjacent to, and immediately upstream of a large limestone quarry, different parts of which were owned and operated by the Radford Limestone Corporation and the Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke Company. A lease with the Radford Limestone Corporation and the Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke Company allowed the AEPC to

construct a narrow-gauge railroad out to the dam site, and it agreed to purchase all of the stone necessary for the construction of the dam from this quarry (Narrative to Parcel 1: 11-14).

The new location of the dam, however, and the increased height, meant that vast amounts of land would be submerged. Much of the land that lay upstream of the new No. 6 dam site was steep, and not of much use for farming; this land was relatively easy to acquire. The Cloyd’s property, including the Dunkard’s Bottom site, was a different matter (Figure 9). In a discussion regarding the purchase of Elizabeth Barton Mebane’s property in 1935, the attorneys for AEPC noted that the 211 acres that would be submerged –embraced what was generally conceded to be the finest farming land in Pulaski County... The farm had been in Mrs. Mebane’s family for generations and was of great historical interest throughout southwest Virginia...” This property was considered to be the most valuable of all the properties involved in the No. 6 development and the Power Company representatives anticipated a long, drawn out fight in connection with the acquisition of it.

Indeed, the Power Company was correct: the land was very valuable, both economically and historically, and negotiations to purchase the land stretched out over several years. Mrs. Mebane’s oldest brother, David, sold his 542-acre parcel to the New River Development Company in 1925. The purchase of Thomas Howe’s lands, approximately 175 acres, was complicated given the nature of a deed by which Thomas Howe had conveyed to his wife, and future children, a life estate in the property. This legal entanglement took years to clarify, and the sale was completed in 1932.

The other two properties associated with the Dunkard’s Bottom site were more contentious. Both Elizabeth Barton Mebane and her younger brother, William Barton, understood the value of their properties and pressed AEPC for more substantial payments. The 175 acre tract owned by William Barton, the attorneys for AEPC noted, –embraced some very fine bottom land which had been in the Barton family for generations, but few buildings of any consequence were situate below Contour 1850 [the maximum elevation needed for Claytor Lake] and therefore the value of the land itself was the principal consideration in this case.” Eventually, AEPC began the process of condemnation proceedings against both Mrs. Mebane and her brother; they both settled with AEPC in 1935, before the condemnation proceedings were completed.

Various court cases delayed the construction of the No. 6 dam, later called the Claytor Dam, until the late 1930s. Even after construction began in 1938, however, progress was slow at first because of the nature of the bedrock at the dam site. Appalachian Power Company’s engineers developed innovative techniques to shore up the bedrock, whose joints ran vertically toward the surface rather than parallel to the surface, so that the dam would be stable and no water would seep through the bedrock beneath the dam. Once the legal challenges had been cleared and the bedrock prepared, construction on the dam progressed quickly. The dam was completed by the late summer of 1939; by the spring of 1940, the New River was fully impounded. The Eckerlins’ small settlement, Mahanaim, now resides gently together with the remains of William Christian’s home and the Cloyds’ farms beneath the waters of Claytor Lake (Figures 10 through 13). The memory of the Eckerlins, however, as perpetuated by the Cloyds throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, continues to identify the place as Dunkard’s Bottom.

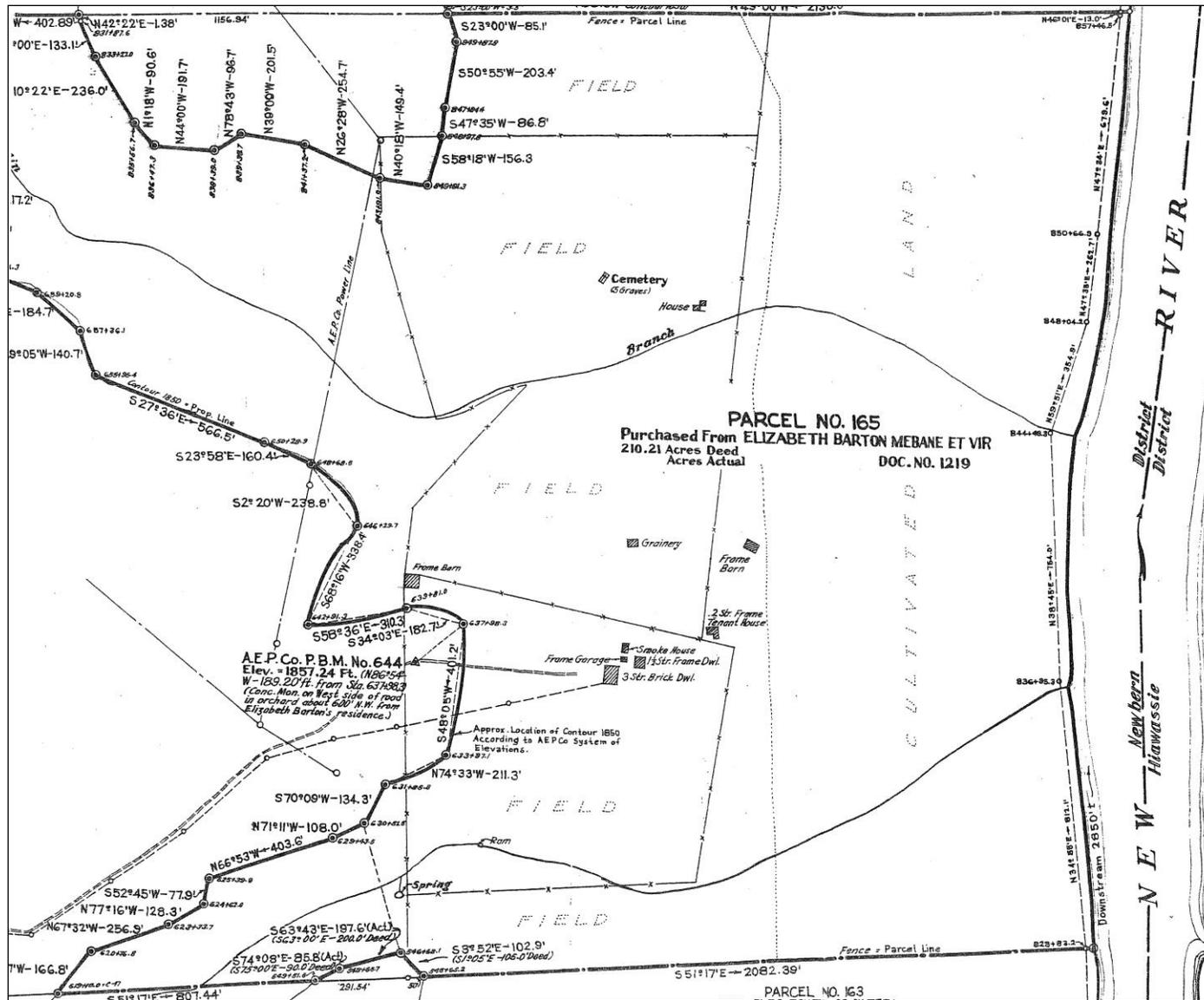


Figure 9. Survey map of the property of Elizabeth Barton Mebane (Parcel 165) at Dunkard’s Bottom.



Figure 10. Cut and uncut stones, piled below Claytor Lake at Dunkard’s Bottom.



Figure 11. Foundation remains below Claytor Lake, at Dunkard’s Bottom.



Figure 12. Cloyd Cemetery remains, visible during Claytor Lake drawdown, at Dunkard’s Bottom.



Figure 13. Brick foundation remains from the Cloyd House, during drawdown of Claytor Lake.

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