

## Egmondville and Van Egmond House

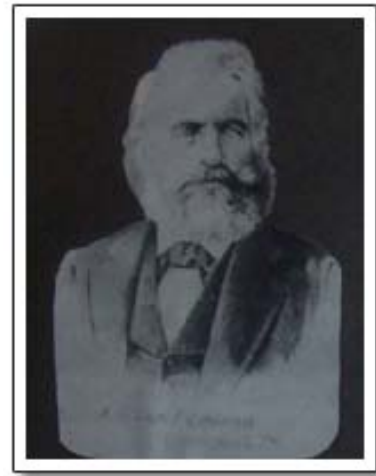
The three daughters all married. Susan and Louise married local farmers Thomas Govenlock and Richard Thwaites. Mary was wed to Andrew Helmer who operated one of the hotels on the Huron Road.



The boys, under the reportedly forceful direction of their mother, became leaders in the industrial revolution sweeping the area as well as leaders in the community. After her husband's death Susanna, or Madam as she came to be known, moved to the small brick residence owned by Constant. A few years after his marriage to Anne Johnston, he built another home now known as the Van Egmond House across the road. Here the three lived until their deaths. The house is now operated as a heritage museum and is open to the public in the summer months.

Constant established the village of Egmondville and became a Justice of the Peace. He established a grist mill and a flour mill on the shores of the Bayfield River which flowed beside his home. He was also to establish a distillery in the area.

Edouard, the second oldest of the boys, moved away from Egmondville after his marriage to Elizabeth Runciman of McKillop Township in 1839. He farmed and operated a sawmill on property near Clinton. Leopold was a gunsmith and two examples of his work can be seen above the fireplace in the Van Egmond house. He also owned a sawmill. As late as 1880, Leopold owned a large block of land in Egmondville. William owned and operated the American Hotel in Seaforth for many years.



The youngest son August started a woolen and carding mill in 1854. The business was so successful that he erected a steam-powered three-storey mill in 1866 at the north end of the village. This was destroyed by fire in 1883 but immediately reconstructed. He left the business to his sons when he retired in 1886.

The family's success attracted other businesses and for many years, Egmondville Pottery operated across the river from Constant's home. Remnants of the operation have been uncovered and identified archeologically. The village thrived with an active commercial life and manufacturers of everything from farm

implements to soap and candles thrived. The location of the railway station in Seaforth north of Egmondville in 1858 began a slow decline in the commercial importance of Egmondville. Although the Van Egmonds' mills operated as significant industrial establishments for many years, the heyday of the village as a commercial center wound down.

Madam Van Egmond lived on until 1874 and was buried beside her husband in the Egmondville Cemetery located immediately behind Constant's home. During the last 14 years of her life she had retired to her bed although no physical or mental impairment was ever suggested. From this location she continued to direct and advise her sons.



The centre of the settlers' home was the kitchen and Madam could, and apparently did, look out through the doorway of her ground-floor bedroom into the kitchen to ensure that all was to her satisfaction.

Despite the odd circumstances, there is no record of discord between Madam and her daughter-in-law, Anne Johnstone, or for that matter in any of her dealings with her sons - a rather remarkable tribute to a remarkable woman. Although reportedly strict with her immediate family, there are delightful tales of her grand-children hiding under her bed when they had committed some transgression, secure in the knowledge that Madam would become grandma and take their side.

It doesn't really matter whether the stories are true. The very fact that they exist provides an insight into why so forceful a person could have been as loved and respected, by both her family and Egmondville residents, as reports indicate she was. The Van Egmonds were, and continue to be, a truly remarkable family with a fascinating history intimately intertwined with the development and formation of the area and of Huron County.

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