

Castramont

Location: 42460 Front Rd. R.R. #4, Seaforth, Ontario

Year built: c. 1845

“CASTRAMONT” WAS THE NAME given by James Dickson to his farm on Lot 15 Concession 2 Tuckersmith Township. His father purchased the land for him from The Canada Company, the price being 11s 3d per acre. James was a successful farmer and merchant. He was the first clerk of Tuckersmith, and later became the Reeve. He served five years in the United Counties of Huron and Bruce Council, and was elected to pre-Confederation parliament in 1861. In 1866, he was appointed Registrar of Deeds for Huron, an appointment that lasted 29 years.



Castramont, the farm of James Dickson, as seen in Belden's *1879 Historical Atlas*

James Dickson was born May 2, 1816 in Roxburgshire, Scotland. He arrived in the Huron Tract in 1833 with his father, Archibald; his mother and other family members arrived in 1834. The family settled in McKillop Township on a farm they called “Gladswood” (*see the related story on the stone houses of Roxboro*).

When he was 21, James joined the volunteer militia sent to Sarnia to guard the frontier against Fenian raiders. His commanding officer was Dr. “Tiger” Dunlop. James was many years with the militia and retired with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

Castramont produced prize-winning livestock and exceptional crops for many years. It was regarded as a model farm, winning a gold medal in a farm competition.

James opened a store in Egmondville in 1851, moving it in 1863, to the fast-growing community to the north, Seaforth. He is credited with determining the route of the Grey Turnpike (now County Rd 12) from Egmondville north to Wroxeter. The Turnpike gave farmers in that area a means of transporting their grain to markets.



The house had 14 rooms and three fireplaces when James built it. The story is told of Jane, James' wife, not being able to decide on the placement of the stairway in the front hallway — it was changed three times! The house has some of the characteristics of the Georgian-style: a symmetrical façade, hipped roof, and large end chimneys. As you can see in the Belden etching on the previous page, the house originally had a front verandah.

The farm remained in the Dickson family until 1913. It was then bought by W.L. Forrest of Goderich who was a dredging contractor. Castramont is now owned by Peter and Maureen Spittal.

Old houses were scaffolding once
and workmen whistling.

T.E. Hulme
