

Dyckesville's name, early growth was prompted by Belgian settler

The following is from an article in the *Green Bay Advocate*, March 6, 1858:

"Dyckesville-where is Dyckesville? We will tell you. About 18 miles down the bay, on the east shore, just north of Whitney's Bluff, is the commencement of a small town named after Louis Van Dycke, an enterprising and intelligent Belgian, who has a store there and we believe is the principal of the place. Besides the store and a considerable number of dwelling houses, there are two taverns in the vicinity. Eastward from the village about three miles, is a settlement of some 250 Belgian families where they have a church, shops, etc. preparations are making to put up a school house in Dyckesville in the spring."

Louis Constant Van Dycke was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on April 12, 1829, to a prominent seafaring family.

Like his father, he entered maritime service and became master of his own ship, a big four-masted bark that sailed between Le Harve, New York and the coast of Africa. It was during one of these voyages that he participated in a sea rescue in the mid-Atlantic.

This feat won him a citation and a beautifully engraved gold watch, a gift from Elizabeth, Queen of the Belgians.

In 1855, he left his native land with \$1,500 in his pocket and came to America with his friend Edward Van den Braek. he spent nine months in New York and then came to Green Bay in the winter of 1856. Here he entered a partnership with Van den Braek in the shingle business and other businesses.

He came to the town of Red River in Kewaunee County and was amazed by the giant pine trees towering skyward upwards of 150 feet. Maples, bass and cedar trees also covered the region. He purchased 400 acres of forest land at \$1 an acre and started a general store where Dyckesville is now located. There were no roads, only trails leading out of Dyckesville, the site of an Indian village. The nearest road connected Green Bay to Bay Settlement, some miles distant. Some of the goods for his store were transported along the beach for want of a better route.

One of the first projects of the settlement was the construction of a roadway from Dyckesville to Bay Settlement. Trees were felled, the



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swamp passages were corduroyed by means of logs laid side-by-side and covered with ground.

In about 1860 he established a shingle mill along the bay just west of Wisconsin 57 and County A. This operation brought him wealth with up to 4 million shingles being produced per year. Along with the sawmill operation was a dock about 100 feet south of the mill.

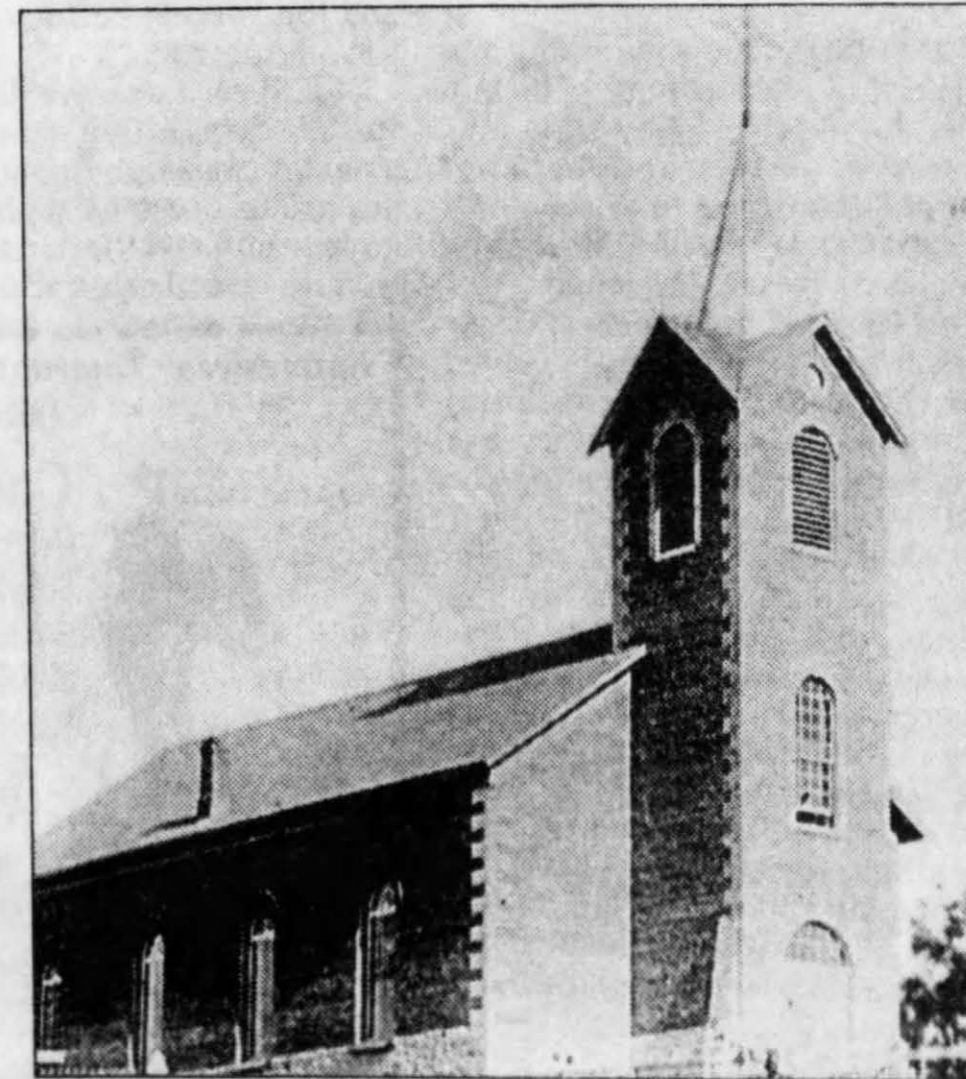
(The remains of this dock still can be seen from Barrett Dock Road.) He was appointed postmaster of the community, named in his honor, and served as town treasurer of 10 years.

On May 11, 1857, Van Dycke married Octavia Cesar. This marriage resulted in six children: Erma, who married Dr. H.M. Beck; Emile C.; Constance F.; Alice C., who married Charles A. Straubel, and Louis Paul.

In 1863 St. Louis Church was erected on land donated by the Van Dyckes. The name of the church was chosen in recognition of Van Dycke's generosity. In 1868 he sold half the interest in the Red River Lumber Co. the sawmill and 38 acres for \$6,000 to Charles Scofield. Later John Leathem bought the other half interest.

In 1868, the Van Dycke family moved to Green Bay where they built a large stone house at the corner of Doty and Adams streets. They later built a 3½-story house at 600 S. Adams St. complete with servants quarters. The house eventually fell victim to the building of the Don A. Tilleman Bridge.

In Green Bay, Van Dycke was engaged in a number of



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St. Louis Church was built in Dyckesville in 1863 on land donated by the Van Dycke family. The church was named St. Louis in recognition of Louis Van Dycke's generosity to the community.

enterprises. One was the Van Dycke Brewery at Chicago and Jackson Streets. Another was the Green Bay Dredge and Pile Co. He established a dry goods house on Washington Street. He acquired considerable property in Green Bay; Norway, Mich.; and also in Belgium.

Louis Van Dycke died of cancer on Jan. 9, 1881. The funeral was held at St. Willebrord Catholic Church. He was buried in the Allouez

Cemetery. Octavia, his wife, died in 1926 at age 86.

Louis Van Dycke was a prominent and colorful character in the early history of Dyckesville and later in Green Bay. The Kewaunee County Historical Society recently installed a plaque honoring him at the Bank of Luxemburg's Dyckesville Branch.

Submitted by Joyce Allard Lampereur of the Kewaunee County Historical Society.