



FREDERICK T. JAMES

1869 – 1949

Frederick T. James came from humble beginnings but died a wealthy man from the profits of his successful fish business. In 1908, he made a significant land purchase from his wife's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rumney, and the Home Smith Company. This tract comprised twenty-one acres of lush land on the east side of Edgehill Road running down into the Humber Valley. For the next forty years he carefully transformed his property into a picturesque garden where public visitors were welcomed.

The principal James home was built in 1927. It was a beautiful red-gabled, spacious, solid home built of stone quarried from the nearby Humber River. The house still stands and is now occupied by the Etobicoke Historical Society and other organizations. Before this home was completed, the James family lived in the coach-house next door.

Although there were times when Etobicoke had little water to spare for flowering plants and thirsty grasses, there were never such problems on the James Estate. James developed a special water supply system to overcome the chronic summer water shortages that were experienced before Metropolitan Toronto formed. Hydraulic pumps drew unlimited water from springs on the lower level of the property and there were often sprinklers playing on the verdant gardens and lawns.

Garden lovers were always welcome to view his lawns, terraces, gardens, and artistic stonework. James adopted an open door policy encouraging visitors to enjoy the surroundings every day of the week except for Sundays. James Gardens, established as a public park in 1955, continues to be an Etobicoke treasure that is enjoyed by many.

Inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in 1988