



## THOMAS FISHER

1792 – 1874

Thomas Fisher, a merchant miller, was born in England and lived for some time in the United States before settling in Canada. Fisher significantly impacted the social and physical development of the Township of Etobicoke as a prominent businessman, pioneer, land developer, and community figure.

In 1822, he became the tenant of King's Mill on the west bank of the Humber River in Etobicoke Township. The King's Mill was a saw mill, with a timber reserve of eleven-hundred acres, built in 1793 about twenty-one miles above the mouth of the river. The property was dilapidated when Fisher took it over. However, by 1829, Fisher's diligent work on the property paid off and the mill had become a profitable business. He manufactured nails and was known as a merchant miller, a designation given to millers who also acted as traders, shippers, and storekeepers.

The timber reserve was surrendered in 1834; most of it was assigned for Mimico's Christ Church and Thomas Fisher was a major contributor to the building of the church. Although Fisher retained the property, he sold King's Mill to William Gamble in 1835. On the property, Fisher built Millwood House, a grist mill, a store, and cottages for his labourers. He then built roads north to Dundas Street and south to the former King's Mill for the easier transport of his flour.

In 1844, Fisher was actively involved in the organization of the parish of St. George's-on-the-Hill (Islington), as a contributor to its building in 1847 and as a parish officer until 1864.

Despite all of his previous successes, the 1840s presented financial challenges. Fisher began to engage in speculative business ventures including mortgaging his property. Additionally, a fire and the failure of export firms in 1849, and the Humber River flood in 1850 pushed Fisher to

the edge of financial ruin. The mill was sold for a fraction of its worth to Edward William Thomson, the father of his son's wife. His son, Edwin Colley Fisher, took over management of the mill and Thomas Fisher moved on to other undertakings. He purchased land at a crossroad near what is now Thistleton. He built a store there, which he sold in 1857 at a profit. He then retired from business.

Throughout his life, Fisher performed a number of public duties. He was an officer of the West York militia and was appointed to the Court of Requests in 1836. In 1837, he became a Justice of the Peace, and a coroner in 1838. The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, donated by his great grandson Sidney T. Fisher, was named in his honour. He was inducted in the Etobicoke Hall of Fame one century after his death.

*Inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in 1974*