

Samuel B. Thomas

*Oh do you know the Muffin Man,
the Muffin Man, the Muffin
Man, Oh do you know the Muf-
fin Man who lives on Drury Lane?*

The popular children's song has been around for decades and refers to the men who delivered fresh-baked foods throughout London. But the song could

just as easily be a reference to Samuel Bath Thomas, a man recognized for his role in popularizing the English muffin.

Born in Plymouth, England, in 1855, Mr. Thomas left England for the United States in 1874 with a recipe for a muffin baked on hot griddles. After arriving in New York, Mr. Thomas began working in a local bakery until 1880, at which point he had saved enough money to open his own bakery in Manhattan, N.Y.

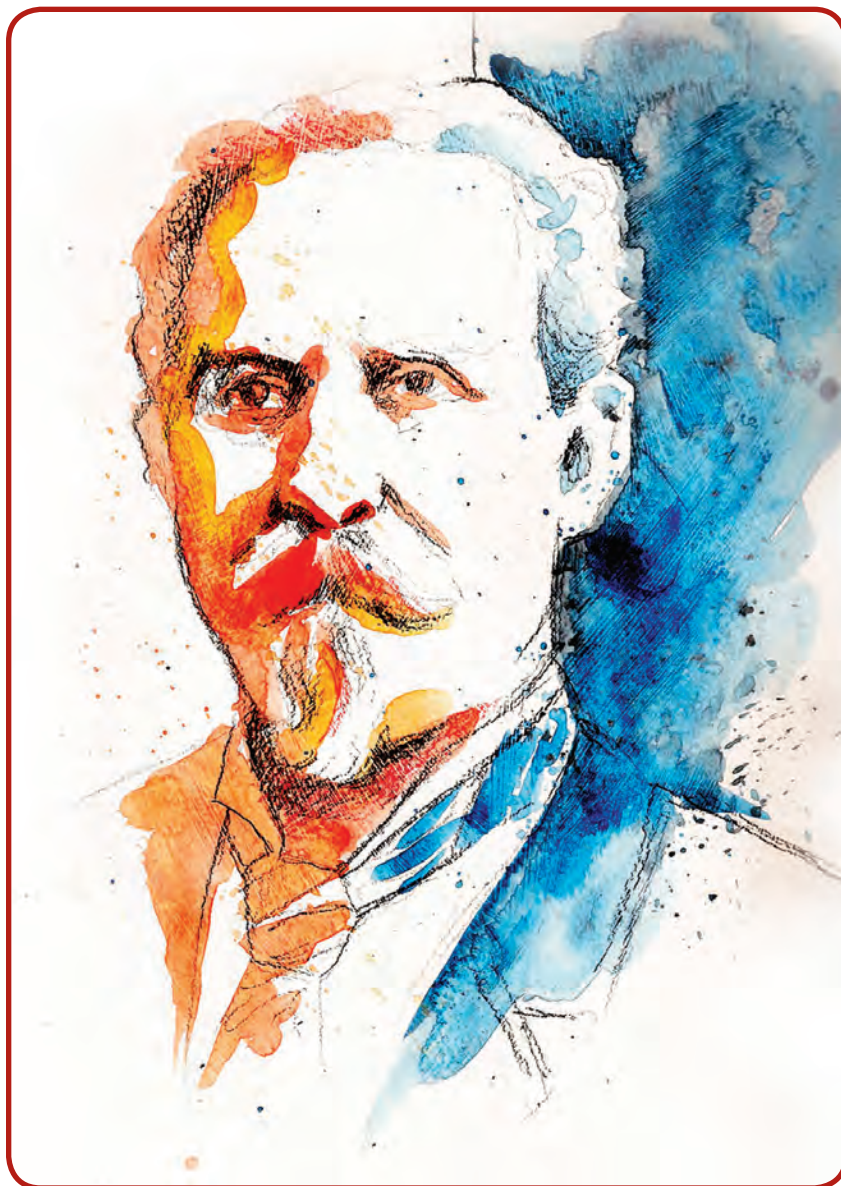
Mr. Thomas' bakery was different from most. In addition to common white and rye bread offered by other bakeries, Mr. Thomas offered English Muffins, a round, single-serve portion of distinctively coarse-grained, yeast-raised dough baked on a griddle or hot-plate. The muffins were to be split, not sliced, and toasted prior to serving.

The flavor and texture of Thomas' English Muffins were unlike any muffin on the market, and soon had a large and loyal following. As word of the muffins spread, other stores began buying and selling them to their own customers. Within just a few years time, Mr. Thomas had expanded his deliveries beyond Manhattan into Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens. And soon, demand led Mr. Thomas to open other bakeries, and make deliveries by horse and wagon.

"When you talk about being an entrepreneurial spirit, that is what Samuel Thomas was," said John Speaker, Midwest vice-president of bread manufacturing for George Weston Bakeries, in accepting the Baking Hall of Fame award on Mr. Thomas' behalf. "When you talk about innovation and a dream, that is what he was.

"His dream was about quality, being different, and he stood for freshness."

Mr. Thomas died in 1919, and his daughters and nephew inherited the business, incorporating S.B. Thomas, Inc. in 1922. The business continued to prosper. The company moved the muffin-making operations out of the city in





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1965, and in February 1970 S.B. Thomas was sold to CPC International, Inc. At the time of its sale, S.B. Thomas had annual sales of approximately \$26 million and served the principal markets of metropolitan New York City, New England, the middle Atlantic states and Florida.

At the time of the acquisition, Robert S. Swanson, president of S.B. Thomas, said, "Our new association will provide welcome managerial resources of a national, indeed worldwide, operation to enhance the growth and development of our business."

Over the years, Thomas' English Muffins introduced flavors, including Cinnamon Raisin, Honey Wheat and Oat Bran, and in 1994, the company introduced a sandwich-sized English Muffin, called Thomas' Super Size English Muffins.

In 1996 Thomas' introduced fresh Bagels, which have grown to be a national leader. A year later, the brand's packaging was updated to identify the brand, and the brand has come to mean more than just English Muffins.

In 2001, Thomas' was acquired by George Weston Ltd. as part of the latter's acquisition of Bestfoods Baking Co. from Unilever. At the time, Thomas' had annual sales of approximately \$300 million. Today, the



John Speaker of George Weston Bakeries with the Thomas' Hall of Fame plaque.

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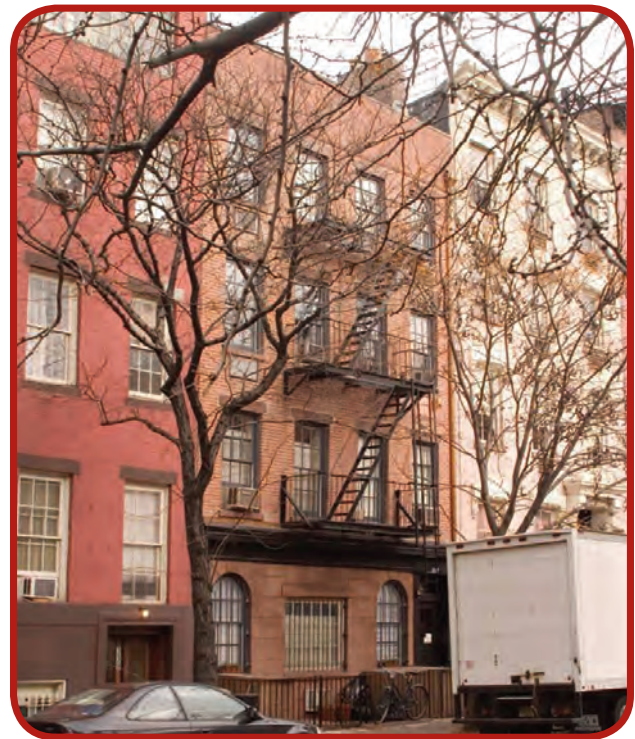
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brand encompasses a full line of products, including English Muffins, bagels, toasting and swirl bread, and pitas and wraps.

"At Weston we have many brands, but Thomas is our flagship because of its uniqueness and how we take it to market," Mr. Speaker said. ■



New York City site of S.B. Thomas' original bakery.



Samuel B. Thomas opened up his first English Muffin shop in Manhattan in 1880. Adapting his mother's recipe with little more than pure ingredients, a griddle, a horse-drawn carriage and tender loving care, he baked and delivered his English Muffins all over the city.