



GEORGE AND HARRIET FULTON BUILT A MANSION BY THE SEA UNLIKE ANYTHING EVER SEEN ON THE COASTAL PLAINS. THEY CALLED IT OAKHURST FOR THE MAJESTIC WINDSWEPT OAKS THAT SURROUNDED THE PROPERTY. TODAY IT IS KNOWN AS FULTON MANSION. IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY. SO TOO WERE GEORGE AND HARRIET. HE WAS AN ENTREPRENEUR. SHE WAS A WOMAN OF MEANS AND POSITION. TOGETHER, THEIR IMAGINATIONS, INNOVATIVE SPIRITS AND PROSPERITY CREATED A HOME FOR THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND A HERITAGE TO TREASURE.



Fulton Mansion passed through a succession of owners—a private residence, a restaurant, a backdrop for a trailer park and a recreation center—until its acquisition by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1976. Today, the mansion continues to serve the public by preserving and interpreting time, place and people, to better understand Texas' rich heritage.

Harriet and George would be happy to see their mansion by the sea still vibrant.

Help preserve the memories that linger in this special place. Consider volunteering as a docent or joining the Friends of Fulton Mansion.



Fulton Mansion State Historic Site
P.O. Box 1859, Fulton, TX 78358
(361) 729-0386
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/fulton/



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Interpretive Guide to:

FULTON MANSION

STATE HISTORIC SITE



A MODERN HOME



The Fulton Mansion was the only house in the region to have central lighting, heating and running water. A gas generator supplied fuel for the chandeliers. Stored water in the basement was hand-pumped to a tank in the attic and gravity-fed to bathrooms equipped with flush toilets and bathtubs. A central cast-iron furnace heated the rooms, and hot air piped into the laundry room dried clothes. A series of flues from the basement to false decorative fireplaces in the major rooms transported the heat. The home achieved the same prosperous appearance and function in this remote location as any house of its time, in any place.

While George Fulton's technological interests and talents were reflected in the construction methods and the mechanical systems in the house, it was Harriet who governed at home. She supervised the household, including a small farming operation and several servants. Gardening was a passion of hers, writing, "...housework is quite distasteful to me ... I feel sometimes as if I would like to live ... among the wildflowers, or in a green house, where I could watch, and promote the growth and improvement of every plant, the forming and expanding of every bud, from the most tiny forget me not to the grandest and most noble of flowers."



HARRIET FULTON

Harriet and her family came to present day Brazoria County in Texas in 1827. She was the eldest daughter of Henry Smith, governor of Texas' provisional government in 1835.

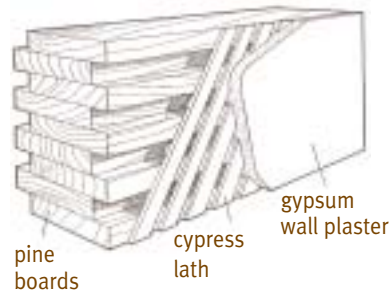
In 1840 Harriet met George Fulton, "that memorable morning many years ago when you and I were very young in the little schoolroom in our dear old home on the Brazos." He was the new school teacher; she was a student. They married that same year.

Six years after marrying, Harriet and George moved to Baltimore in pursuit of better opportunities. Increasingly homesick, Harriet wrote, "Oh ... how I should like to take a trip to Texas this fall (Texas, there is something fascinating about that name[.] Oh how I love it). ..."

In 1868 Harriet received a vast land inheritance. She and George finally returned to her beloved Texas to oversee the property. Buoyed by their bright business prospects and their vast land holdings, George and Harriet began building Oakhurst in 1874. They chose the fashionable French Second Empire style of architecture with its characteristic slate-shingled mansard roof. Poured concrete and pre-cast concrete blocks with native seashell as an aggregate



Fulton family, 1860s.



formed the basement walls. The upper walls and floors were constructed by stacking and spiking pine planks. The house was built to withstand hurricane-force winds.

GEORGE FULTON



George was born in Philadelphia. Orphaned at 16, he trained as a watch and instrument maker and throughout his life patented inventions. Like many young men of his day, he set out at 18 to seek his fortune. He was a sign painter, bookkeeper, watchmaker and teacher. In 1836 he became caught up in the romance of Texas' fight for independence and organized sixty volunteers to join the fight. Arriving too late to participate in the battles, Fulton still received a military commission.

He became a draftsman in the Republic's General Land Office and met Henry Smith, his future father-in-law. Fulton moved to Brazoria in 1840 where he and Harriet married.

Described as "a talented artist and an ingenious and very correct man," George worked as a machinist, structural engineer, bridge builder and railroad superintendent in different cities. Always ready for the next adventure, George saw the family's move back to Texas as an opportunity.

Fulton used his knowledge of land acquisition to add to his wife's inheritance. He accumulated over 25,000 acres and within a few years, Fulton joined the Coleman brothers in establishing the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company. The company became a leader in the cattle industry, making changes that are still evident in South Texas ranching. Even some of the neighboring towns owe their existence to the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company.

In 1893 at the age of 83, George Fulton died at Oakhurst. After his death, Harriet left Oakhurst. She reflected, "Although it is such a lovely house, I have not the slightest desire to ever live there again. The charm has fled for all time. ... It does seem too bad for the place to go to complete ruin for want of paint. ..." She never returned to Oakhurst and died in 1910.