

Fulton Walking Tours Introduction

History of the City of Fulton

Excerpts taken from "A History of Callaway County, Missouri 1984"

Fulton, the largest city in Callaway County and the seat of its county government, was founded and became the county seat in 1825 but was not incorporated until March 14, 1859.

The early residents of Fulton were from a predominantly Southern culture. The coastal and upland Southerners that settled on the land brought with them slaves and established an agricultural economy.

When the first history of Callaway County was compiled in 1884 the die had already been cast as far as the type of community Fulton was to be. The Missouri General Assembly had voted to establish an asylum for the insane in Fulton (February 26, 1847), the first mental health facility ; west of the Mississippi; the General Assembly agreed (February 28, 1851) to establish a school for the education of the deaf in Fulton; the Presbyterian Church had opened (in 1842) a female seminary later known as Synodical College; in the fall of 1851 the Presbyterian Church established the all male Fulton College, now known as Westminster College; and Fulton was the seat of county government.

Being the county seat does not, alone, guarantee that a town will be the largest or most important in the county. But a look at a map of Missouri will show that to be the general case. There are several reasons for this. When folk in the outlying parts of the county travel to the county seat to take care of business, they very often also do their banking, their shopping and buying of groceries.

The Christian Church moved their Orphan School to Fulton in 1890. Whether or not they were influenced by the already existing colleges is not known, but Fulton's bid of \$40,000 and the offer of ten acres of land was surely a factor. This school, which had previously been located at Camden Point, Missouri, later became William Woods College for girls, now William Woods University.

Fulton had about 4,000 residents in 1880 with eleven churches, 3 public schools, a railroad depot, 10 lawyers, 1 policeman, 2 banks, 4 hotels, 6 restaurants, 9 doctors, a fair ground, an opera house, 3 saloons and a brewery, not including the other usual mills and shops. Starting in 1872, farm auctions began being held 'on the square' around the Court House.

Eventually, they were held on the first Monday of every month. Reportedly there were as many as six auctioneers simultaneously crying stock sales around the square. One day in 1910, total sales receipts for the day were more than one and one half million dollars. Fulton's livestock sales made a great and strong market for mules, cattle, sheep, hogs, horses and other farm products.

M. Fred Bell

Morris Frederick Bell was born August 18, 1849 in Hagerstown, Maryland. An architect known primarily for his institutional buildings but also his domestic and commercial structures. His most notable work is the Francis Quadrangle on the University of Missouri campus which includes Jesse Hall.

General Bell lived and worked in Fulton, his own home on East 5th street still exists today and is on the 5th street walking tour. He designed the old buildings on the Missouri School for the Deaf and Fulton State Hospital campuses, all of which are now gone.

Mr. Bell was active in politics and prominent in the community, bringing the first telephone exchange to the community. Dying at age 80, he left a huge legacy in Fulton and the State of Missouri. Each of the four walking tours have Bell buildings.

Kingdom of Callaway Historical Society

Four walking tours begin at 513 Court Street, the Historical Society Museum. Tours are:
West 7th Street/Westminster
Court Street Residential
Downtown Fulton
East 5th Street