

BENJAMIN F. FULTON, formerly and for years one of the most active factors in the general commercial and industrial life of Portland and who died at his home in that city in the spring of 1911, had done much to promote the general interests of his home town and county and it is but fitting that there should here be carried something in the way of a memorial to his activities. Mr. Fulton was a native of the old Buckeye state, but for forty years his activities had been centered in and about Portland and during that period he had done much to impress his individuality upon the community. He was born at Sidney, Ohio, March 25, 1848, the first born of the four children born to Isaac and Jane (Taylor) Fulton, both of whom were born in that same city, where they spent all their lives.

Reared at Sidney, Benjamin F. Fulton received but meager schooling, the circumstances surrounding his youth being such as early to force him to rely upon his own efforts for a livelihood. When eighteen years of age he entered the employ of Rhodehamel Bros., of Piqua, Ohio, and after an apprenticeship in their store there was put in charge of one of their novelty wagons, the territory he covered on his sales trips extending as far west as Portland. He presently acquired also an interest in a general store at Covington, Ohio, and in 1870 gave up his road trips and devoted his attention to the store, continuing thus engaged until after his marriage in August of 1871, when he sold his interests at Covington and established his home at Portland, where he spent practically the remainder of his life. Upon locating at Portland Mr. Fulton became engaged in the grocery business. Four years later he sold that store and moved to Indianapolis where he bought another grocery store and was there engaged in business for about three years, at the end of which time he sold out there and returned to Portland, resuming there his vocation as a grocer. Two years later he sold his store to his brother, William Fulton, and he and his brother, James L. Fulton, became engaged in the hardware business, their store being on the site now occupied by the Spades grocery on Meridian street, and this business was maintained by the brothers for about ten years. Meanwhile, about two years after they had become engaged in the hardware business the Fulton brothers took up the work of drilling gas wells and organized what then was known as the Fulton Gas Company, their operations becoming quite extensive hereabout. They presently bought out the plant of the Portland Gas Company and thus acquired control of all the gas business in Portland. When oil was being sought in this county Mr. Fulton drilled in the first producing well brought in in Wayne township, and he continued his operations in this and adjacent territory until his death, one of the most active promoters of gas and oil interests in this section, his death occurring on April 2, 1911.

Mr. Fulton was a Republican and was a member of the Friends church, as is his widow. It was on August 8, 1871, that Benjamin F. Fulton was united in marriage to Sarah G. Hawkins, who was born in Portland, and to this union were born two children, Ethan Allen and Jane Louise, the former of whom (now engaged in the promotion of the oil business in this county) served as an officer in the United States army during the time of American participation in the World war and is now captain of Howitzer Company of the 151st Infantry, United States National Guard of Indiana, at Portland. Capt. Ethan A. Fulton married Gertrude Rogers and has had two children, Betty Fulton, and Pauline M. Jane Louise Fulton is a teacher of art in the Portland public schools. As noted above, Mrs. Fulton was born in Portland, where she is still living and where she is very pleasantly situated. She was born on November 27, 1850, a daughter of Nathan B. and Rebecca (Shanks) Hawkins, the former of whom, born on October 24, 1812, died on October 20, 1853, and the latter, born on February 22, 1816, died on April 1, 1882. Mrs. Fulton is a member of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution by right of descent from her great-grandfather, Samuel Hawkins, who was a soldier of the Revolution. The family in this country was established by Joseph Hawkins, who came to the American colonies from Wales in 1685, and has been prominent in Jay county since pioneer days.

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