

# Firemen Dance Invitation

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE FULTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

By Barbara Mask

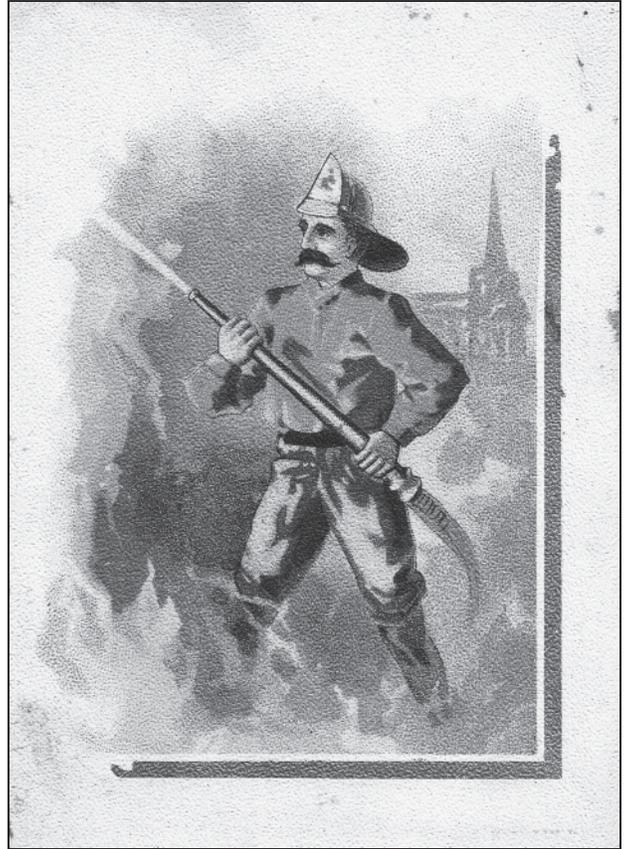
Recently, civic organizations have been hosting 'galas' as a means to raise funds for special projects. In researching the history of the Fulton Fire Department in preparation for its 125th anniversary, a dance card donated to the Fulton Museum by Vickie and Jon Lockhart, is proof that similar fundraisers were occurring here in Fulton that many years ago.

The Grand Thanksgiving Ball was held in the Fulton Opera House (current location of City Hall) on November 28th, 1889. Tickets were seventy-five cents. The sponsor and recipient of the proceeds was the T. A. Hardin Hose Company No. 2; formerly named the Fulton City Hose Co. The first hose company was the Lockheart Hose Co. No. 1 which was established two years earlier. The card listed the current members of the hose company, the introduction committee and floor managers of the gala.

These two hose-cart companies had an active group of volunteers, much like the devoted members of the Fulton firemen today. They not only responded to fire calls at all hours, but raised the necessary funds to procure the needed equipment. One outstanding event stands out in its early history. The origins of the Modern Woodmen of America were here in Fulton. The home office was located in four separate locations and it was of paramount importance to the citizens of Fulton that it remain here. Local people had nurtured and supported the early organization by becoming members, giving free rent, donating their money and promoting the benefits of fraternal organizational membership.

In 1895, the Head Clerk, Mr. Charles Hawes, a Rock Island native, initiated the relocation of the head office to Rock Island. When an attempt to remove the records and business papers from the Fulton office (then located in the Finch Building; now Johnny's Tap), the Fulton firemen congregated at the site and used their hoses to thwart the effort. A riot ensued. Personal accounts by several Fulton authors have acknowledged the passion and determination of the Fulton firemen defending their community.

An exhibit featuring the history of the Fulton Fire Protection District (organized in 1958) will be on display this Saturday, November 3 at the Open House celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Department. Many interesting and historic events will be featured.



**Front cover of the Fireman Dance invitation from a Grand Thanksgiving Ball held at the Fulton Opera House in 1889.**