

# ROBERT FULTON IS OUR CITY'S NAME- SAKE

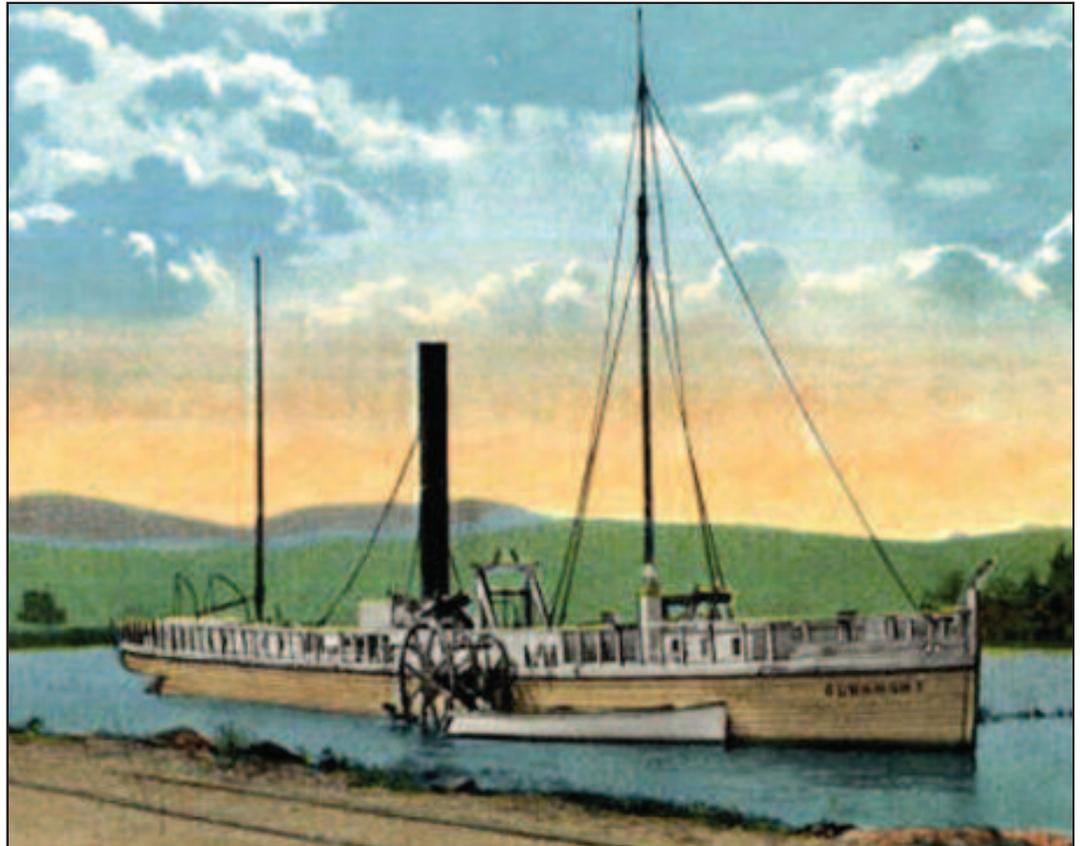
When Fulton was settled in the 1830s, one of the original proprietors, Ransellaer Jenks, persuaded the others to name the prospective town Fulton City. In 1859, when the city form of government was adopted, the name Fulton City was changed to the City of Fulton. Every Whiteside County history book credits Mr. Jenks with choosing the name of our town. His descendants were located a few years ago and presented a program at the Fulton (Martin House) Museum tracing their family history from the eastern states to Fulton. A diary, penned by Abby Jenks, Ransellaer's daughter, is a historical treasure as she writes beginning with her arrival here at the age of 21 in 1838 until just prior to her death in 1888. Copies are available for check out at the Museum.

When the 5th grade students visit the Museum each year, information about Robert Fulton is presented. Almost everyone credits him with the invention of the steamboat, but to be historically accurate, Fulton developed it for commercial use. He was born on November 14, 1765 and began to invent things as a young boy. In his teens, he worked at a forge, making a rifle with a sight and bore of original design. Art was his first love and he studied under several successful and famous artists. He was known for his portrait paintings. At the age of 21, he sailed for England and expanded his inventive genius. He was one of the first to design inclined planes as an alternative to locks in canals. How appropriate that a city on the Mississippi River with its sophisticated lock and dam system bears his name.

Young Robert moved to Paris and there experimented with diving boats (called submarines today) that drew the attention of Napoleon who was plotting an invasion of England at the time. In 1803, he built his first steamboat on the Seine River and returned to America in 1806. He formed a partnership with Robert Livingstone and they constructed the "Clermont," which made its first trip on the Hudson River in 1807. One of the viewers of that first one commented, "it looked exactly like a backwoods sawmill that was set on fire."

The birthplace of our city's name-sake is now a National Historic Site in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. A marker calls it the "Fulton House." The Fulton family only lived there a brief time, but a Swift family has resided there for over a hundred and fifty years before it became a historic site. There is a mural painted on one wall that depicts Robert Fulton's career. A replica of the "Clermont" is on display on the property.

Besides inventing many things and a successful artist, Robert Fulton was interested in education and was an avid supporter of the newly-formed United States of America. One of his quotes by the name-sake that is shared with the students in the City of Fulton today is, "The art of peace should be the study of every young American."



**The Clermont**



**Robert Fulton**

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