

## Ulster's Fulton Physicians

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### PREFACE

A series of books under the same title, "Always Turn the Page" was designed to bring family stories to life by including the history of the times that they lived through. The Fulton Story traces the family from their roots in Scotland, their arrival in 17th century Ulster and their journey through 18th & 19th century life in South Antrim. The books are not published but printed hard copies of the Fulton Story are available at the Linenhall Library, N.I., Family History Society, Presbyterian Historical Society and Fleming Fulton School. Individual chapters and other details in the book can be obtained directly from the author, Dr David Robinson who presents some extracts here:

### INTRODUCTION

Dennis Biggart, in his 2011 book about his father 'John Henry Biggart', wrote that: "Throughout N. Ireland, but perhaps more particularly in County Antrim, there were certain traditions in the farming community. One son inherited the farm, one entered the church, whilst another frequently studied medicine".

This was most certainly true of the 'Ballyhartfield Fultons', who had arrived in Carnmoney Parish from Ayrshire, Scotland, in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Samuel Fulton, (1813-1872), was the fourth generation of his family to tenant farm in south Antrim. With his wife, Elizabeth Speers (1821-1905), they raised eight children on their 52 acre Ballyhartfield farm, which bordered on the Six-Mile-Water River, between Ballyclare and Templepatrick.<sup>1</sup>

Of their six sons, the three eldest inherited the farm, the fourth, Thomas Cosby Fulton entered the church, while the two youngest, James and Joseph Fulton, studied medicine.

### JAMES FULTON

**James Fulton(1861-1935)** was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1861 in Ballyhartfield. He qualified from the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland in 1889 and practiced as a family physician on the Woodvale Road, Belfast.<sup>1</sup>

"A much loved physician, in a practice where his patients came from all walks of life and were treated with love and compassion. In the early days he made all his visits to patients by bicycle. At all hours he never refused a call to anyone in need. When he himself was ill, his patients spread straw on

the road outside his house so that the carriages and trolley buses would not disturb him".



Fig 1. Dr. James Fulton with wife Minnie (Campbell) and daughters Maisie & Dorothea, at the family home at Woodbank, Ballygomartin Road, Belfast.

James Fulton's life is commemorated by a plaque in the Woodvale Presbyterian Church, where the Fulton family worshipped. The other lasting memorial to James Fulton is at Fulton Park on the Woodvale Road, now the home of the Forth River Bowling and Tennis Club. It was opened in his honour in a lavish ceremony on the 4th October 1930. An article in the 'Ireland Saturday Night' newspaper described in detail Dr Fulton's 40 year association with cricket, football and bowls, both as member and patron. It was reported that the ceremony concluded with the unveiling of a portrait of Dr. Fulton "amid the cheers of the crowded audience".

Dr. James Fulton died on the 10th July 1935 at the age of 74. His passing was noted:

*"As a family physician he will be missed by a large community and especially by the sick and poor in this district, to whom he was always a friend. One had no difficulty in discerning that his genial presence and the consideration which he displayed,*

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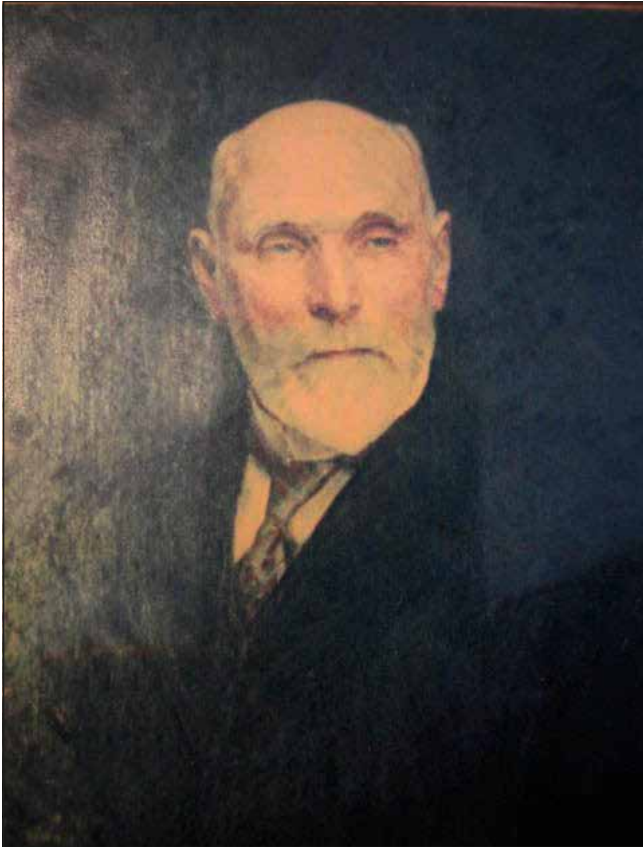


Fig 2. Portrait of Dr. James Fulton presented in 1930 at the opening of Fulton Park, Woodvale Road, which was named in his memory.

*came from a life characterised by nobility of conduct and a heart that was generous to all men”.*

James's daughter, Elizabeth Dorothea (1900-1956), followed her father into family practice in County Down.<sup>1</sup> James Fulton would be delighted in the knowledge that his great-great grandson, Kieran Taylor, is carrying on the family tradition in Melbourne Australia.<sup>1</sup>

### JOSEPH FULTON

**Joseph Fulton (1864-1940)** was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1864 in Ballyhartfield and studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. By 1901 he was working as a resident surgeon at the Belfast City Hospital.<sup>1</sup> Belfast City Hospital began life as the 'Workhouse' on the Lisburn Road in Belfast and from its beginnings in 1841 provided sick beds for the poor. It was so difficult to separate the sick from the destitute that the 'Workhouse' soon developed into a 'Workhouse Infirmary' with over 600 beds.

Belfast City Hospital recorded its first official surgery in 1850, created a dedicated operating room in 1877, and appointed its first trained surgeon, Dr. Lynass, in 1900. In that year Dr. Lynass performed '51 chloroform induced surgeries'.

As we can see from the below text, Dr. Joseph Fulton became head of surgery in 1905, at the age of 39, and continued in that post until he died in 1940.<sup>4</sup>



Fig 3. Belfast City Hospital began as the 'Belfast Workhouse' in 1841. It then became the 'Belfast Union Infirmary', which by 1869 had over 4,000 inmates. By WWI it was called the 'Belfast Union Hospital' and by WWII it had been renamed 'Belfast City Hospital'.

*“Dr. Lynass died very suddenly in 1905, at the age of 40, and was replaced by Dr. Joseph Fulton, who had worked for several years as his assistant. ‘Old Joe’, as we called him behind his back, worked on until 1940. He too I think was largely self taught, and though this may seem extraordinary to the young men of today’s jet set, this was a long time ago and was not surprising or uncommon about that time. He worked in isolation all his life and had few contacts with any of his surgical colleagues. This again was quite common in those days. Even the surgeons in the Royal corridor had relatively little contact with each other. Joseph Fulton’s results were as good as many better known surgeons. He was a remarkable personality”.*

Dr. Joseph Fulton passed away on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1940 at the age of 75. Joseph Fulton's son, Jay (1903-1985), carried on the medical tradition, practicing family medicine in England.<sup>1</sup> It was however James and Joseph Fulton's nephew, Thomas Stevenson Fleming Fulton, who next left an indelible mark on Ulster medicine.

### FLEMING FULTON

**Fleming Fulton (1887-1974)** was born in Newchwang, Manchuria, on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1887, the oldest child of Rev. Thomas Cosby and Barbara Fulton. He was given his middle names in memory of Rev. Dr. Fleming Stevenson (1832-1886), who had been Convener of the Irish Presbyterian Foreign Mission.<sup>1</sup> Fleming's father had come to Manchuria from Ballyhartfield in 1884 as a missionary and was to become the longest ever serving Presbyterian missionary, staying for 57 years.<sup>5,6</sup>

During their time in Manchuria Fleming's family lived through several major Chinese wars, numerous droughts, floods and a plague. In 1888, still in his first year of life, Fleming nearly died of small pox. He made his first visit to Ulster at the age of seven on one of his parents 'ten yearly furloughs home'. He returned to England to attend the 'School



of Sons of Missionaries' in London.

He remained there until entering Queens College Medical School, Belfast in 1906. Fleming was at Queens College Belfast, when it received its charter in 1908 as Queens University Belfast Medical School, and graduated with an MB in 1912 and a DPH (Diploma in Public Health) in 1913.



*Fig 4.* Dr. Fleming Fulton (centre) during his houseman year in Belfast, having graduated from Queens University Medical School in 1912.

Fleming initially practiced in Rochdale but on the 3rd August 1915 he joined the Royal Army Medical Corp (RAMC) as a Lieutenant and was stationed in France for the next four years. At the outbreak of WW1 in 1914 the RAMC had a total of only 200 medical officers but by July 1916 there were 10,000, by which time Fleming had been promoted to Captain.

After the war Fleming continued his medical work back in Rochdale but in 1920 returned to the land of his birth, working as a Medical Officer of Health in Shanghai, which by then had a population of nearly 2 million.

Health concerns caused Fleming to return to the UK in 1921, with posts in Whitehead, Nottingham and Pembroke, before finally settling in Belfast in 1923. For the next thirty years Fleming became a pioneer of the school medical services,



*Fig 5.* Dr. Fleming Fulton, about 1937, in the garden at Pasadena, Knock & Kensington Roads, Belfast. This was the Fulton family home from 1926 until 1962. Also in the photo from the left are his son, Thomas Terence Fulton (1921-2009), wife May Elizabeth Lyons (1888-1985) and daughter Elizabeth Sherrard Fulton (1923-2010), who married John Walker Sinclair Irwin.

ending up as Senior Officer of Health for Schools and developing a special interest in handicapped children.

In his position as chairman of the N.I. Orthopaedic Services he was closely involved with the development of a multidisciplinary school to teach children with cerebral palsy. The Belfast Education Authority opened Mount Collyer House in 1957 but soon renamed it 'Fleming Fulton School' in his honour.<sup>7</sup>



*Fig 6.* The original Fleming Fulton School Building on the Upper Malone Road was called 'Mount Collyer House & Demesne'. It was built in the 1840s by Andrew Mulholland Esq., a successful Belfast Flax Merchant. It was later lived in by the Donaldson (1875) and Thomson (1892) families, before being converted into the school by the Belfast Education Authority and renamed 'Fleming Fulton School' in 1957.

The official motto was 'Faith, Friendship, Service' (F.F.S.) and the prevailing philosophy 'One Step at a Time'.



*Fig 7.* Fleming Fulton School, crest & motto, 'Faith, Friendship, & Service'.

Thomas Fleming Stevenson Fulton passed away on the 9th January 1974, at the age of 87 and his obituary described his 'devotion to handicapped children.'

The next Fulton physician to make his mark on Belfast medicine was Fleming's son, Terence.<sup>1</sup>



Fig 8. Dr. Fleming Fulton, in retirement about 1970, in his garden at Lennoxvale, Belfast, with his wife May.

### TERENCE FULTON

**Thomas Terence Fulton (1921-2009)** was born in Belfast on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1921 and grew up in the Shandon Park area, attending Campbell College. He studied medicine at Queens but because of the war and through the Rockefeller Foundation program, he finished part of his studies in Cincinnati, Ohio. Returning from America, Terence served in the RAF in Palestine in the years following the war.

His first medical practice was in Banbridge, where he was a consultant physician with the Dromore and South Armagh Hospital Group from 1951 until 1954.



Fig 9. Dr. Terence Fulton, in the R.A.F. in Palestine in 1945.

Terence came to the Royal Victoria Hospital in 1954, where he served as a consultant physician until his retirement in 1986. He was a brilliant diagnostician and a walking encyclopedia of medical knowledge, combined with compassion and common sense.

He was widely respected and admired and would supplement his clinical obligations with service on committees and

administrative work. He maintained connections with medical fellowships in the North and the South of Ireland and offered medical care and assistance to all the missionaries of the Presbyterian Church, whenever they were home in Ulster. Terence served as the Head of Postgraduate Teaching at the Queens University Department of Medicine. His OBE for services to medicine in 1986 was richly deserved.

Dr. Terence Fulton passed away on the 4th November 2009 at the age of 88.

### CURRENT GENERATIONS

The Fulton medical tradition continued into the next generation, with two of Terence's daughters, Lorna and Jill practicing, along with his nephew Terry Irwin and niece Barbara (Irwin) Marshall.



Fig 10. Dr. Thomas Terence Fulton (1921-2009), with his wife Denise Ingham (Corkey) Fulton (1920-2003) receiving the O.B.E. at Buckingham Palace in 1986.

The present generation is continuing the Fulton tradition with three Fulton descendants in the profession: Jill's son, David Finlay, Barbara's daughter, Louise Marshall and Terry's daughter Charlotte Irwin.<sup>1</sup>

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