FULTON'S FIRST CITY HALL; TRULY ONE OF OUR VERY OWN

By Barbara Mask

Wayne Bastian, Fulton's well-known and highly respected historian, called the old City Hall, one of Fulton's "home-mades," a most accurate description. The lumber was from logs sawed in the local sawmill. The soft, red bricks were made of clay that was dug in the southeast corner of the current site of the Fulton Cemetery and burned in kilns there. An observant look at the 'big hill' in the Cemetery reveals that the far eastern slope has been removed; a view from Third Street one can notice that the camel back hill has been depleted during the active brick-making factory located on the premise. Owned by William Forrester, his factory provided the bricks for many homes and businesses that remain in Fulton today. William Bennett, a master stone-mason who emigrated from Ireland to Fulton, along with his brothers, arrived in Fulton because of the local quarries that allowed them to practice their craft. He was paid $404.60 for the skillful stone -work on the City Hall. Other Fulton tradesmen were: Phillip Sheets received $447.25 for carpenter work; E. D. Chapman $415.83 for masonry; John Downs $88.70 for tin-work; and Peter H. Cossman, who received $135.00 for ironwork, will be the subject of an upcoming "DID YOU KNOW?" as his blacksmith shop was located

One of Fulton's 'home-mades," replaced a stone building that was used as a school house for 11 years and then as the city's calaboose (jail) from 1858-1879. The Greek cross in the upper cornice and the large double-doors were noticeable featured. The doors served as a public bulletin board.

A CHANGING SCENE

Photo: 1935 - The City Hall was built in 1879 using local products and tradesmen. It was razed in 1966 and replaced with an addition to the Fire Station. The Standard Gas Station was purchased by the FFPD and converted into a parking lot. The Masonic Lodge and the Broadhead/Blecha building were destroyed by fire.

on the site of Manny's Too.

The foundation extended one-story high and the 'stoop' (a Dutch word) were made of native limestone shaped by Bennett and quarried from the Considine Quarry (now a shuffle-board court owned by the City of Fulton) in the 500 block of 4th Street. The steps were carved large limestone pieces and, later, became one of the reasons given for razing the building as the large stone steps were difficult to climb. Bastian, when writing a plea that the old building not be razed, stated that evidently, "Fulton has no high-steppers." There were three cells in the basement and heavy grilled doors of iron were set with heavy bolts onto the thick walls. Cossman, the local blacksmith, made them. At the back of the building a double-door was built to allow for the storage of fire-fighting equipment. The stone arches over the windows and front door were architecturally added attractions.

The original stone building (1847-1879) on this site was Fulton's first school house from 1847-1858 until the Union School (later referred to as the Park School) was opened. It was razed so the City Hall could be built on that site.

Many city ordinances that impacted daily living in our community were passed in this building. Records of those public activities are located in the Fulton Museum Resource Room. Interesting anecdotes can be read about the City Hall which also served as the local jail. An incident occurred in 1883 when Fulton had voted to be 'dry.' The City Marshall Carlyle saw a Fulton man weaving his way homeward with a jug under his arm. Alert to his duty, Fulton's Law-Man put the guilty jug in the cell and ordered the man to go home and recuperate." At one point, the newspaper referred to the local jail as 'Hotel Bum.' "The jail had 18 bunks. The colder the weather the better the business was at Hotel Bum.

The City Hall was first used by the City Council on February 4, 1880. Its last meeting there was in July, 1965 when the Council moved into the former CB&Q Depot at 1110 Third Street (current site of the River Bend School District Office). The first city hall building cost was $1500 and it was sold to the Fulton Fire Protection Department for expansion purposes for $500; the only bidder.

In spite of Bastian's efforts to save the building from being razed, it was demolished to make room for the fire department's addition (current site of the offices of the River Bend Senior Center).