

GARDEN CITY, FINNEY COUNTY, KANSAS

Finney County, Kansas

Written by Bernice Crooms

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References: Conquest of Southwestern Kansas, copyright 1931, by Leola Howard Blanchard

* *Additional information added about certain people mentioned in this story*

Finney County is the second largest County in Kansas, with 832,096 acres. (Larger than the state of Rhode Island.) Its leading industry is agriculture, with the most significant diversification of crops grown anywhere. There are 100,000 acres of land in this area under irrigation. Finney County can boast of the largest gas fields in the nation. Garden City's trade territory covers 10,000 square miles in twelve counties.

Garden City's population is 6,500 and is the largest city in the western part of the state. It is known for its beautiful trees, large municipal swimming pool, and hospitable people.

The reason trees grow so well here is due to the water level in Garden City being so close to the surface. The climate is ideal, and on average, the sun shines about 300 days of the year.

The irrigated farms in and around Garden City grow alfalfa, sweet clover, kaffir corn, milo maize, corn, forage crops, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, celery, melons, and other vegetables are grown abundantly. The non-irrigated land grows wheat, barley, oats, Indian corn, milo maize, kaffir corn, sudangrass, and sorghum successfully, and there are ranches with the most luxurious grasses.

Dairy farming, beef cattle production, hog and sheep farms, and chicken and turkey farms are all highly profitable enterprises. The largest cattle ranches are in the Garden City area, and 97% of all broomcorn grown in Kansas is produced in that territory. The Hineman mule farm (*See story, "Tour of the Herbert T. Hineman Jack Farm in Dighton, Lane County, Kansas"*) has the largest herd of mules and jacks in the world. It is northeast of Garden City in Lane County. Finney County and its neighboring counties are the ideal places for the raising of horses and mules.

Three miles northeast of Garden City is a 320-acre State Federal Experiment Station. Finney County also has an active county farm bureau, which helps the farmers and stockmen. The experiment station is also beneficial to the people in and around Garden City.

Garden City has a million-dollar beet sugar factory that pays farmers and laborers

about one million dollars a year. This factory, built in 1906, is the only one of its kind in Kansas, and with it came the thriving little town of Garden City. It built irrigation ditch lighting systems for the farmers and other conveniences.

Garden City has excellent transportation and is located on the Santa Fe Railroad and a branch line connection with the Missouri Pacific line at Scott City. The Sugar Company operates a railway in the rich agriculture area of the northwestern part of the county. Two bus transportation companies operate through Garden City. They are the Greyhound Bus Company and Kansas Southern Stage Lines. A stage connects Garden City with the town of Liberal, 73 miles south of Garden City.

Garden City is where four of the most outstanding highways are. U.S. 50-N and U.S. 50-S join at Garden City to make 50-West from Garden City, known as the Santa Fe Trail or Old Trails Highway. The city is also on the Great Plains route from Canada to Mexico, U.S. 83. Garden City is the headquarters for the sixth Highway Division of Kansas, comprised of 19 counties. Division Highway offices and shops are on the east side of Garden City.

Garden City and Dodge City have the only airports in Western Kansas. Garden City has a lighted municipal airport with hard-surface runways and three hangers.

The rural schools in Finney County rank among the highest in the state. There are consolidated schools and rural schools in the county at Holcomb, Friend, and Pierceville. In Garden City, there is a junior and senior High School, and there is also an accredited Junior College. There are three grade schools; East Ward, West Ward, and Garfield.

Garden City has a beautiful 110-acre park called Frederick Finnup Park, named after the father of one of Garden City's most outstanding citizens. The park has the largest fresh-water cement swimming pool in the United States and is 73,466 square feet, with the capacity to hold 2,500,000 gallons of water. It is an attraction to tourists and Western Kansas residents living many miles from Garden City. This park has a zoo, the largest in Western Kansas, and a lighted softball field.

In the heart of the city is Stevens Park, which has a bandshell. In the cool summer evenings, there are free band concerts held weekly. Northeast of Garden City, the Finney County State Park of 850 acres is being developed. It has a lake of 340 acres. Twenty miles west of town is the largest body of water in Kansas. It offers excellent facilities for boating, duck hunting, and fishing.

One mile south of Garden City is a 3,200-acre State Game Preserve where there are more than a dozen buffalo. Garden City is the headquarters for "Eastern Sportsmen" who hunt prairie chickens.

Garden City has two great theaters, the State (*Opened in May of 1929*) and the Ritz

(also built in 1929). In the winter, they are warm and comfortable, and in the summer, they are nicely cooled.

Tourists and travelers find it very comfortable in Garden City. With well-equipped hotels, cabin camps, and excellent cafes. There is also a Chamber of Commerce in Garden City that is willing to complete detailed information about any subject.

When one drives into the modern little town of Garden City and sees the charming business section and lovely residential districts, one would not think there was an interesting history laid at the foundation of this pleasant little town. The population is about 6,500 and is growing larger every year, and it is an outstanding prospect for gas and oil.

Kansas was open for settlement in 1863, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company started its railroad through Kansas. The Finney County land location where they received a patent was in section 18, south of township 24; range 32; and a mile south of Kansas Avenue and Highway U. S. 50 North. The land was granted to the railroad on May 19, 1872. Thomas Osborn was the Governor of Kansas at that time.

In 1879, eighteen years after Kansas became a state, Garden City was platted. Section 18 grew slowly until the boom in 1884, 1885, 1886, and 1887. During this period, the Santa Fe Company began selling the north half of section 19 that lay north of the Arkansas River. In the early days, when the river flooded, the people who lived nearby would move closer to town.

Finney County was first called Sequoyah County, named in honor of a Cherokee Indian who was the first to write the alphabet for his race. It was changed to Finney by voters, and some didn't want it changed. However, 'Finney' was much easier to spell and pronounce, so it became the county name on 1 Feb 1885.

The U. S. Land Office was in Larned when the settlers first came to Finney County. Through C. J. "Buffalo" Jones's efforts, the land office was moved to Garden City, because it had become the center of the government land. When the land office was in Garden City, its population had grown to 6,000, and there were scores of people who came and went every day.

Mrs. William D. Fulton*, an old settler here, was the one who named Garden City. She was to name the new little town that the railroad men then called Fulton. She was at a loss as to what to name it, but the words of a tramp helped her. One day the Fulton family, who ran the Occidental Hotel in Garden City, were visited by a tramp. The tramp asked Mrs. Fulton, "*What do you call this place?*" She replied, "*It has been called Fulton by the railroad men, but we are still debating on a permanent name. I've been the one selected to decide on a different name.*" "*Why don't you call it Garden*

City?” said the tramp as he glanced at her lovely garden. The name instantly became the favorite.

Garden City streets are not straight, which happened because of the Windsor and Buffalo Block dispute. Irrigation opened in Finney County in 1880, and Charles Jesse “Buffalo” Jones had cottonwood trees planted, some of which still stand. Later, he had fruit trees planted.

C. J. “Buffalo” Jones built the old Court House, where the new one stands today. He deeded it to the city, but the town was still hostile about the Windsor Hotel and Buffalo Block disputes and wouldn’t accept the Court House.

There are some fascinating historical facts about Finney County. One is about the Kentucky Home built by DR. LABAN H. JOHNSON*, a blind doctor who came here in 1898 from New York for his health. Even though he was blind, he was very wealthy and was able to have it built. The home is still standing, about sixteen and one-half miles north of five points on the east side of Highway 83.

The home of Dr. Johnson was so unusual because he, a blind man, planned it. It has about twenty rooms, some without windows or outside doors. The light for each room is furnished only by each of the other rooms. He would build a room with a porch each time, and then he closed in the porch, making another room. Then he would add ‘another room with a porch,’ and so on. In this way, the Kentucky Home grew into a twenty-room house.

There is a watchtower on the housetop, and Dr. Johnson also had a water sprinkling system. There is a sign in Latin at the house next to the sprinklers that reads, “Pro Bono Publico,” which means “For the Public’s good”. He was very fond of dogs, and he fixed it so a dog could get a drink at his home.

Dr. Johnson was married to Miss Lydia Alice Stringfield.

Most people think the Kentucky Home has tunnels under it, but this is not true. Just before he died in 1913, he started to dig a basement for a furnace. The basement never was completed, but this is what led the people to believe there were tunnels.

Dr. Johnson died on July 25, 1913, and his burial was at the beautiful Arlington Cemetery, Washington District of Columbia, at his request. His wife, Alice, now lives in Washington D.C.

The Point of Rocks is another old historical spot in Kansas. It lies nine miles east of Garden City, and in the early days, it was a layout for the Indians. The Point of Rocks has a fascinating background. In 1876, about twelve thousand Indians camped there, and some of them were in the battle known for General Custer’s death. North of White Mound on Hick-Berry Creek, a sword was found with the name of one of Coronado’s officers’ on it. It is now in the State Historical Society in Topeka.

Garden City once had a streetcar line driven by mules. It extended south to the fairgrounds and north to where the cemetery is now located. There was also a toll bridge, but the people disapproved of it, so they excluded it from public use.

Garden City is now a very different little town than the one in 1879.

Additional Information

LUTICIA "LETTIE" (SKINNER) FULTON (Mrs. William D. Fulton)

LUTICIA "LETTIE" SKINNER was born on 6 May 1830 in Perry County, Ohio. Ohio marriage records reveal she married WILLIAM D. FULTON on 15 Jun 1847 in Perry County.

In 1850, Luticia, William, and their daughter, Frances, lived in Pike, Perry County, Ohio. Frances was born in 1848 and died before the year 1860. Nine children were born in their marriage, and three of them died at an early age.

In 1860, they were living in the town of New Lexington in Perry County, Ohio, and in 1866, they moved to the state of Missouri. By 1870, they had moved on to Warren, Henderson County, Illinois.

In 1878, they moved to Southwest Kansas and founded the town of Garden City, which was in Sequoyah County, later changed to Finney County.

Luticia passed away on a Sunday morning (16 Oct 1904) after a lingering illness of many months. William Fulton died on 19 Nov 1908. Both were buried at the Valley View Cemetery in Garden City, Kansas.

Their children were:

ELLEN JANE FULTON was born on 5 Oct 1849 in Ohio. She married Robert P. Ross in about 1870. Robert was born in about 1846 in Pennsylvania. Known children of this marriage were Jessie Ross, Ora Ross Klopp, Pearl Luticia Ross Mudd, Frederick E. Ross, Charles Ross, and William John Ross. After Robert passed away, Ellen lived in La Junta, Colorado. She also made her home in the States of Washington and California. Ellen passed away on 30 Sep 1929 in San Francisco County, California, and her burial was at the Cypress Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in San Mateo County, California.

CAROLINE ESTHER FULTON (1853-1928) On 10 Aug 1871, she married Roland Andrews Hopper (1849-1926). Their children were Bert W. Hopper, Vernon N. Hopper, V. Orrell Hopper, and Luta Hazel Hopper Bingham. Burial for Roland and Caroline was at the Valley View

Cemetery in Garden City, Kansas.

CLARIBEL FULTON was born on 3 Sep 1861 in Perry County, Ohio. She married Edward L. Wirt (son of George Wirt and Caroline L. Inskeep), a cattleman and real estate operator. They had three daughters: Edna Wirt, Sydia Jane Antoinette Wirt, and Christelle Wirt. Edward died on 14 September 1913 in the state of Washington. Claribel lived in Seattle, Washington, until about 1920, when she moved to San Francisco, California. She died there on 21 Nov 1937.

LINCOLN "LINK" W. FULTON was born on 10 Feb 1863. He married Grace E. Ross on 29 Oct 1890 in Polk County, Iowa. They had one son, William Drury Fulton, who married Elizabeth Tomback. Lincoln Fulton died on 2 Mar 1928. Burial at the Valley View Cemetery in Garden City.

SADIE ANNETTE "CIDDIE" FULTON was born on 20 Apr 1864 in Circleville, Pickaway County, Ohio. On 10 Feb 1879, she married John A. Stevens (1852-1902). It was the first marriage performed in Garden City, Kansas. Two sons were born to this marriage, Orville Folsom Stevens and Glenn Stevens. Ciddie (Fulton) Stevens died on 17 May 1949 in Seattle, King County, Washington, where her youngest son, Glenn, lived.

Newspaper Obituaries

LUTICIA (SKINNER) FULTON

The Garden City (Kansas) Telegram – Saturday, 22 Oct 1904

"WE MOURN OUR LOSS"

Mrs. Luticia (*Skinner*) Fulton, wife of W. D. Fulton, the mother of Garden City, being the first woman to settle here and to who is due the honor of naming Garden City, passed this life, Sunday, 16 Oct 1904. Services were held at the Methodist Church Tuesday afternoon, but due to the inclement weather, the internment was postponed to Wednesday afternoon.

Luticia Skinner was born on 6 May 1830 in Perry County, Ohio. She was united in marriage to W. D. Fulton, on 15 Jun 1847 in Perry County. Nineteen years later, in 1866, she with her husband and family moved to Missouri, and twelve years later, they came to Rice County, Kansas; two years later, in 1878, they settled where Garden City now stands.

To Mrs. Fulton belongs the honor of having named this beautiful little city. From its beginning until the day of her death, she always manifested a deep interest in its religious, social, and business welfare. She endured the hardships incident to frontier life with grace and patience, becoming her noble character.

To Mr. and Mrs. Fulton were born nine children, six daughters, and three sons. The husband, four daughters, one son, two sisters, a brother, sixteen devoted grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren survive her and mourn her loss.

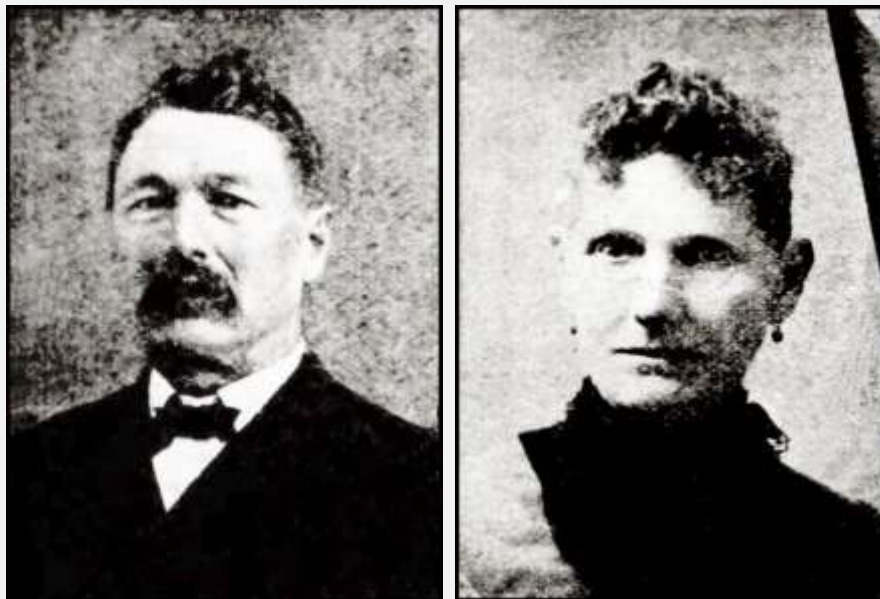
She became a Christian at the age of twenty and was a member of the Methodist Church. Not many days before her death, she assured her pastor that she had no fear and was ready to go.

The funeral was preached by Rev. Riley from the Methodist Church on Tuesday afternoon and was largely attended. The Odd Fellows and the Rebecca's both attended, and the town business houses closed during the funeral services. The casket was covered with white satin, and the floral offerings were profuse and very beautiful.

Mrs. Fulton was a devoted wife, a kind loving, and patient mother, and during her eighteen months of suffering, she tried not to be a burden to her loved ones who so tenderly ministered to her wants.

Her sufferings and hardships are over. She has gone to be forever at rest with her Lord. A large circle of relatives and appreciative friends will miss her greatly.

WILLIAM D. FULTON & LUTICIA "LETTIE" (SKINNER) FULTON



Newspaper Photographs
The Garden City (Kansas) Telegram

WILLIAM D. FULTON

The Garden City (Kansas) Telegram – Friday, 20 Nov 1908

GARDEN'S FOUNDER

ONLY GOOD CAN BE RECALLED IN THE NOBLE LIFE OF W. D. FULTON

HIS WORK FOR TOWN WAS STRICTLY HONEST IN ALL HIS DEALINGS - HAD AN ACTIVE CAREER EVEN BEFORE STARTING A NEW TOWN ON THE PLAINS

The death of W. D. Fulton yesterday has called to mind many interesting incidents of the life of the founder of Garden City, nearly everyone who knew him, having in mind some event that showed the gentle, kindly spirit of the man. Few men have lived in a place and taken as active an interest in affairs as he has in Garden City and has the community's friendship so universally as he had. The secret to this was his strict honesty, integrity, and generous heart.

D. R. Menke, who was intimately acquainted with him for thirty years and at various times in that period associated with him in business, said this morning, "In the early days of Garden City, there were no lawyers and contracts were only verbal. Yet I have never known Uncle Billy to deviate in the least from what he said he would do. He always remembered right, and he was so liberal that he would give the other man the best of it. William Fulton was very generous, and no one in need ever went to him in vain. He was always ready to help. It was the same with him about the town, and he always gave his share for anything that looked like pushing Garden City ahead." Everyone who spoke of Mr. Fulton mentioned his strict honesty. It was a part of his nature, and it marked his dealings so much that everyone remembered it.

During his life in Garden City, Mr. Fulton always enjoyed the confidence and esteem of his fellow men. He was for several years a councilman from the second ward, and for many years, he occupied a position as a member of the board of education from the same ward. In 1885, at the death of his brother, J. R. Fulton, who was then sheriff, he was appointed to fill the unexpired term. He was then re-elected sheriff for two terms succeeding. He also held the position of County Clerk for two terms.

One of his chief pleasures was his attendance at the different Odd Fellow Lodges and the Rebekah Lodge. He was a prominent member of these organizations and one of the most faithful. Last year, the lodge showed its appreciation for him by presenting him with a fine library chair at a banquet given in his honor.

Mr. Fulton enjoyed his social life and was never more at home than when in a gathering with his many friends. He was also an active worker in the Methodist Church, connected with the organization for many years.

Before coming to Garden City, Mr. Fulton had an active business career and he had accomplished much. He was born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 3 Aug 1824. When twelve years of age, he moved with his family to Perry County, Ohio, where he lived until 1864, when he came west, settling in Knox County, Missouri.

In 1848, he married Miss Luticia Skinner. About this time, he engaged in commercial business

and was active in mercantile pursuits for several years. Later he gave this up and took a keen interest in developing the oil country near his home. He was highly successful at this, but in 1864 sold out and moved to Knox County, Missouri, where he purchased a flouring mill and a sawmill that he operated for some years. In 1877, he went to Sterling, Kansas, and lived there for a year. The following March, he came to Garden City, settled on one-quarter of which Garden City now stands, and founded the town. He saw his vision of a great city on the prairies and realized in the early eighties that his vision was fading, but it was his privilege to see a new town rise, more significant and more substantial than the first. He took a keen interest in the town and its people. Everyone who has known him can feel sorrow at his passing.

Five children survive him, Mrs. Ellen Ross of La Junta, Colorado, Mrs. Hopper of Rocky Ford, Colorado, Mrs. E. L. Wirt, Mrs. S. A. Stevens, and L. W. Fulton, all of Garden City. Mrs. Fulton's death occurred some four years ago.

Acting Mayor and President of City Council, Zeph Roberts issued the following request: "Today Garden City mourns for the loss sustained in the death of William D. Fulton, its founder, from its birth, thirty years ago. He has been an honored resident and citizen of the town he so loved and took a deep and abiding interest. Out of respect and love for him, it is requested that all business houses be closed from 1:30 to 4:40 p.m. on 19 Nov 1908, during the funeral services."

Cemetery Headstone

WILLIAM D. & LUTICIA "LETTIE" (SKINNER) FULTON



VALLEY VIEW CEMETERY
Garden City, Finney County, Kansas

Additional Information

DR. LABAN H. JOHNSON

DR. LABAN HARTWELL JOHNSON, son of Cyrus Johnson (1818 - 1885) and Phebe Hartwell (1820 - 1848) was born about 1846 in Connecticut. He fought in the Civil War, and his occupation began as a gun maker. Later in 1876, he graduated from Yale College, becoming a Doctor of Medicine.

On 29 Nov 1880, he married **ELEANOR NAOMI RITTER** in Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania, where he had worked for the railroad yards as Foreman. Four children were born in their marriage, and three died in infancy. Their daughter, **MARGUERITE HARTWELL JOHNSON**, graduated from Prospect Hill School in 1904. It was a private school in Greenfield, Franklin County, Massachusetts. She lived in Garden City, Finney County, Kansas, until about 1923. It's believed she moved to Denver, Colorado. Not found, were the records to establish if Dr. Johnson and Eleanor Ritter were divorced or if she passed away.

A newspaper article reveals that he practiced Medicine in New York City for 23 years before going blind in 1896. He was advised to move out west for health reasons, where he started to build the "Old Kentucky Home" ranch.

He married Miss **LYDIA ALICE STRINGFIELD**, daughter of Christopher Stringfield and Catherine Johnson, on 22 Dec 1900 in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. Lydia worked for Dr. Johnson as his office secretary before they were married. She soon served as his eyes while he continued to work and treat patients. Lydia was born on 17 Mar 1862 in the state of Iowa.

Records indicate that Dr. Johnson died on 26 Jul 1913 in Terryton, Finney County, Kansas. Burial was at the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia. His wife, Lydia, continued to live in Finney County, Kansas, but soon after 1920, she moved to Washington, District of Columbia. She died there on 5 Jan 1951 and like her husband, buried at the Arlington National Cemetery.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

The Garden City (Kansas) Telegram – Saturday, 7 May 1904

THE "OLD KENTUCKY HOME" RANCH

This well-known ranch is located about fifteen miles north of Garden City. They have regular mail service and the ranch has had extensive improvements in progress for the past three years. It is one of the best-known places in Finney County and is likely to become the most prominent because of the tourists who will spend vacations here and enjoy our delicate summer breezes and the prairie landscapes.

Dr. Laban H. Johnson of New York City planned and built this ideal place. He spends about half of the year here. He has been adding adjoining farms until he has several thousand acres of prime land, much of it seeded to alfalfa. He has it all fenced, with several families in charge of his farming operations and the stock.

The "Home" place, where the Doctor and his estimable wife enjoy life with their friends, is situated on an excellent elevation, and the house of some twenty-two rooms is arranged with a view for comfort and health and has water and other up-to-date improvements. The Doctor should be proud of the lovely place, and Finney County is proud of such a useful citizen as Dr. Johnson.

In later years, when the alfalfa and the sugar beets will supersede the virgin sod, it will be among the possibilities for the "Old Kentucky Home" to be a favorite "halfway" place between Garden City and Scott City. It will haul the soil's products to market and furnish delightful pleasure rides for old and young in the summer evening. It will provide rides for those going to Sunday worship and for those enjoying nature. "That day is not far distant."