

Fuller, Bartholomew ^[1]

Fuller, Bartholomew

by Carolyn F. Raney and [Mena F. Webb](#) ^[2], 1986

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Bartholomew Fuller, lawyer, magazine editor, government employee, and civic leader, was the second of three children born to Thomas and Catherine Eleanor Raboteau Fuller in Fayetteville, where Thomas Fuller, a native of [Franklin County](#) ^[3], operated an extensive mercantile business until his premature death at the age of thirty-two. Widowed at twenty-five, Catherine Fuller went to her husband's former home in Louisburg to raise her children. She saw her daughter married and her two sons practicing law together in Fayetteville before she was remarried on 21 Dec. 1851 to the Reverend [Simeon Colton](#) ^[4], a Connecticut-born Presbyterian minister and educator of note who moved to North Carolina in 1832.

Of English and French descent, Fuller's paternal ancestors were living in Virginia before 1667; but by 1730 many had migrated to North Carolina. His great-grandfather, Captain Jones Fuller, served with the Granville County militia during the Revolutionary War before becoming a wealthy landowner in Franklin County, near Louisburg. A first cousin, [Edwin Wiley Fuller](#) ^[5], was a writer of distinction whose first novel, *The Sea Gift* ^[6], written when the author was only eighteen, received wide acclaim after the Civil War. Bartholomew's maternal forebears were [Huguenots](#) ^[7] who in 1658, after the Edict of Nantes, moved to England from Rochelle, France, to escape religious persecution. His great-grandfather, Charles Cornelius Raboteau, emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1754 and became schoolmaster at the Trappe Schoolhouse in New Providence. His grandparents, John Samuel and Susannah Raboteau, were residents of Philadelphia before moving to North Carolina and settling in Raleigh, where his mother was born.

Fuller received his early education in Fayetteville and then entered [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[8], where he became a member of the Dialectic Society and a serious student. After graduating with first honors in 1851, he studied medicine for a time before turning to the law as a profession. His training in the latter field was under the tutelage of [Warren Winslow](#) ^[9] of Fayetteville, representative from that district in the United States Congress and later governor of North Carolina for a short period. Fuller established his first practice with his brother, [Thomas Charles](#) ^[10], who became a colonel in the Confederate Army, a member of the Confederate Congress in 1864, and, after the Civil War, a judge of the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Raised in the [Presbyterian](#) ^[11] faith, Fuller was an active layman, a ruling elder, and clerk of the session in the First Presbyterian Church of Fayetteville. He was also coeditor of the *Fayetteville Presbyterian*, a weekly publication he established in 1858 with the Reverend George McNeill. Described as a man of great power and fluency of speech, Fuller frequently held services at the church in the absence of the pastor "to the great edification of the congregation." After some years as a practicing attorney in Fayetteville, Fuller was appointed fifth auditor of the U.S. Treasury in Washington, D.C.; but he resigned at the outbreak of the Civil War, obtained a position with the Confederate post office in Richmond, and worked there until the war ended. In 1865, he resumed his law practice in Fayetteville until 1881 when he moved with his family to Durham, where he became legal adviser and personal secretary to [Julian S. Carr](#) ^[12], president of Blackwell's Durham Tobacco Company, manufacturers of the world-famous [Bull Durham](#) ^[13] brand of smoking tobacco. Fuller immediately entered into the life of the fast-growing town of Durham as a tireless champion of the proposed public school system and became one of the three members of the first board of education when, after considerable controversy, the system was finally established. One of the first schools to be built in Durham was named for him; Fuller School later was used as administrative offices for the Durham County school system.

Another of Fuller's efforts toward public improvement was as one of the organizers of the Lyceum, a group dedicated to the promotion of culture, a quality many felt was sadly lacking and desperately needed to balance the almost single-minded pursuit of money that occupied most of Durham's citizens. In addition to considering matters related to social and public improvement, members wrote essays, read them at meetings, and engaged in debating. Many of the state's best public speakers polished their skills in the Lyceum, where Fuller served as presiding officer from its inception until his death. He was also a charter member of the Commonwealth Club, designed to promote industrial development and a forerunner of the chamber of commerce.

On 23 Dec. 1853, Fuller married Wilhelmina Haldane Bell, Scottish-born daughter of [William Bell](#) ^[14], architect and builder of the U.S. arsenal in Fayetteville, and Margaret Robinson Bell, of Edinburgh. Their seven children were Agnes (1854), Thomas Blount (1857), [Kate Shepherd](#) ^[15] (1860), Margaret Hall (1863), Marion Sanford (1869), Eleanor Robinson (1871), and Ralph Bell (1873). Fuller and his wife were buried in Maplewood Cemetery, Durham.

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