

FULTON, Robert, *fool'-ton*, an American mechanic and engineer, whose name is intimately associated with the improvement of steam navigation. In his eighteenth year he entered, in Philadelphia, upon the duties of life as a painter of landscapes and portraits for subsistence; but in 1786 he visited England, where West, the historical painter, took him by the hand, and for some years kept him in his house. His genius, however, seems to have been less directed to the beautiful in art than the mechanical in science. Accordingly, on quitting the house of Mr. West, he sought the acquaintance of the duke of Devonshire, then engaged with his canals, and in 1794 took out a patent for an inclined plane, designed to set aside the use of locks. He also invented an excavating-machine, a mill for sawing marble, and took out patents for making ropes and spinning flax. With all these projects, however, he seems to have met with little success, when he went to Paris, where he resided seven years under the roof of Mr. Barlow, the representative of the United States government. Here he directed his attention to other pursuits, but still of a mechanical kind.

FULTON, Robert, American engineer; *b.* 1765; *d.* 24 Feb. 1815.

Came to London as a painter, and worked under West . . . . . 1787, *et seq.*  
 Devoted himself to mechanics under Ramsay about 1793  
 Invented various machines, and studied steam navigation . . . . . "  
 Exhibited his torpedo (sub-marine explosive) in the Seine, and offered his "Nautilus" to the Directory without success . . . . . 1797  
 Tried his steamboat on the Seine . . . . . 9 Aug. 1803  
 Not encouraged; went to London . . . . . 1804  
 Returned to New York; his steamboat successful on the Hudson . . . . . 1806  
 Patented the invention . . . . . 12 Feb. 1809  
 Employed by the U.S. government to construct steamers . . . . . 1814