Alexandria was named not for the great city of Egypt, but for Alexander Fulton, the brother of Robert Fulton of steamboat fame. Or possibly, says G. P. Whittington in his history of Rapides Parish, Alexandria was named for Fulton's infant daughter who died about the time the town was being platted.

It was sometime between 1805 and 1810 that Alexander Fulton, who was the owner of the land on which Alexandria now stands, had it platted. Fulton had come to the area from Pennsylvania either in 1790 or 1793 with Henry Miller. They received an exclusive grant from the Spanish government to trade with the Indians of this section, on the condition they were to sell goods to these Indians at a fair price and upon long terms of credit. This last condition was the downfall of the Indians and resulted in the enrichment of the merchants.

By 1802 the Indians had become indebted to the firm of Miller and Fulton, far beyond their means of paying, and they agreed to sell their lands to this firm for the cancellation of their debt and a further sum of credit. The price on the 46,800 arpents (39,780 acres) was less than three cents per acre. After a bit of lobbying this sale was confirmed by Spanish officials and in time by the United States government.

Daniel Clarke, for successfully prevailing upon the governor to approve the sale, received a third of the land acquired from the Indians. Levi Wells, whose sister Henrietta married Alexander Fulton, was employed to survey the land and for his service received two-ninths of the land.

Having charged off five percent of the property as overhead, Miller and Fulton had two-ninths each. After the Louisiana Purchase, Miller disposed of his interest in the mercantile business to Fulton and moved to Leesville.

Fulton remained. He was one of the most popular men in the parish. Fulton was a close personal friend of Governor Claiborne, who made Fulton's home his headquarters whenever he was in Rapides.