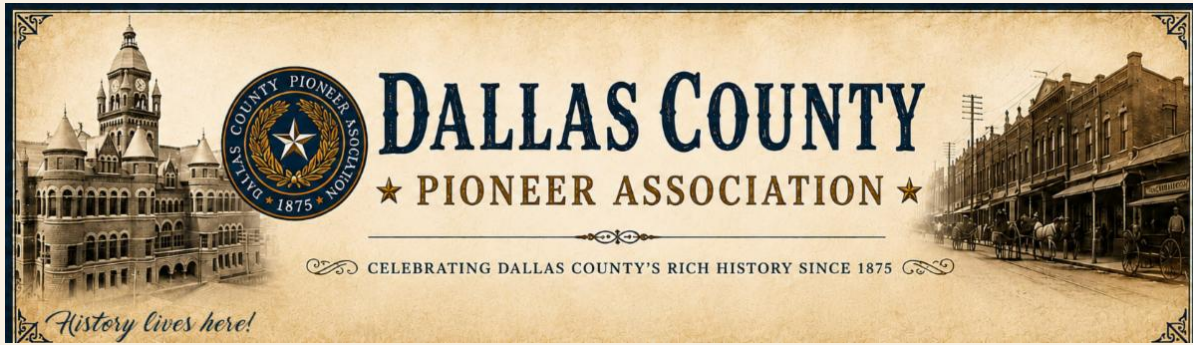




RALPH FULTS - CRIMINAL GOES STRAIGHT

From Prisons to Pulpits

by Dustin Durrett

Ralph Fults was born in Anna, Texas on January 23, 1911 to Audie B. Fults and Sophie Ruth Fults. Fults got into trouble early in life. At just 14 years old, he was arrested in Aspermont after being caught with stolen items. A week later, he escaped from jail by making a key out of an old tobacco can.

Before leaving, he unlocked the cells and let the other prisoners out too. He was caught again not long after. Over the next several years, Fults kept getting arrested and escaping from prisons and reform schools across Texas. While locked up, he met future outlaw Clyde Barrow. The two became friends while serving time at Eastham Prison Farm.

In 1932, Fults joined Clyde Barrow, Bonnie Parker, and Ray Hamilton during an attempted robbery in Mabank. The robbery went bad after a night watchman raised the alarm. Bonnie and Fults were arrested while the others escaped.

Fults was sentenced to 10 years in prison but was pardoned in 1935 by Texas Governor Miriam "Ma" Ferguson. After getting out, he went right back to crime with Ray Hamilton. The pair robbed stores, stole cars and guns, and traveled across several southern states before Fults was captured again in 1935.

This time, he was sentenced to 50 years at Mississippi's tough Parchman prison farm.

But years later, Fults finally changed his life. After being pardoned in 1944, he became a Christian and started working at Buckner Baptist Children's Home in Dallas. He spent years talking to kids about staying out of trouble and avoiding the mistakes he made.

In 1960, Fults also helped create a television program called "Confession," which focused on helping former prisoners find jobs and rebuild their lives.

Ralph Fults died in Dallas on March 16, 1993, at the age of 82. He is buried at Grove Hill Memorial Park.

RALPH FULTS
former member
of the Barrow
Gang



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