



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Cheyney University

(Est. February 25, 1837)

"First Established HBCU—Historically Black College and University"

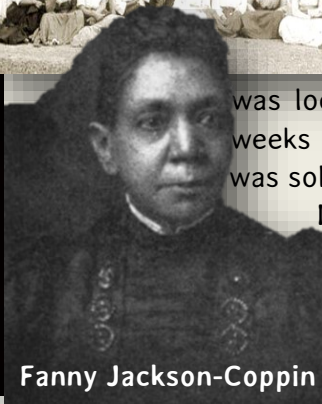


Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, was established February 25, 1837. After news of race riots in 1829, where Irish immigrants clashed with free and freedom seeking African-Americans, Quaker philanthropist Richard Humphreys, was compelled to help establish a system of education and trade skills for the African-American Community. In his will, Humphreys, a successful silversmith, bequeathed \$10,000 to the cause and charged thirteen fellow Quakers to establish a school to educate descendants of the African race. The school at its inception was called the **African Institute** and

was located on a 136 acre farm, seven miles from Philadelphia. The name was changed several weeks later to the **Institute for Colored Youth (ICY)**. In early 1846, the school closed and the farm was sold. In 1849, it reopened in Philadelphia, as a night school.

In 1869, Fanny Jackson-Coppin, a then ICY teacher, was appointed the principal of the

Institute, becoming the first African-American woman to become a school principal. She served as principal for 33 years and is responsible for transforming the institution, expanding and modernizing the curriculum and hiring many of the distinguished faculty members that gave the institute its character.

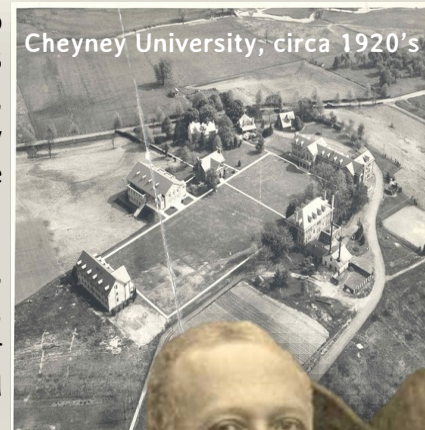


Fanny Jackson-Coppin



In 1902, with interest in the Institute continuing to grow, the board purchased a farm owned by another Quaker, George Cheyney, 25 miles west of Philadelphia. Booker T. Washington served as keynote speaker at the formal opening on May 5, 1905.

In 1913, a young Harvard graduate, Leslie Pinckney Hill, became the 5th principal of the school. One of Hill's first official actions came in January of 1914 when he proposed changing the name of the **Institute to Cheyney Training School for Teachers** to reflect the new purpose of the school. In 1921, Cheyney graduated its first class of state certified teachers. Under Hill's 38-year administration, the school grew from 14 students to nearly 500 students and became an accredited state college. Later, notable Commencement and "Cheyney Day" speakers



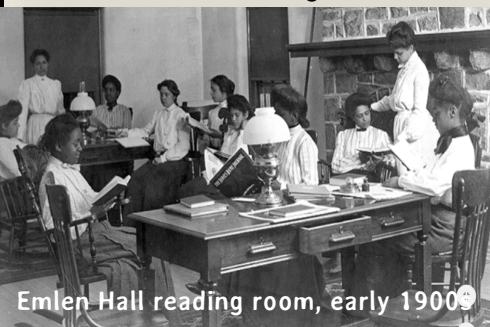
Cheyney University, circa 1920's



Leslie Pinckney Hill

included, Carter G. Woodson, Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune, and W.E.B. Du Bois.

By legislative act in 1959, the name of the school was changed to **Cheyney State College**. In 1983, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education was established by statute. As a charter member of the system, Cheyney State College became **Cheyney University of Pennsylvania**, the oldest of the fourteen member institutions and the oldest Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the nation.



Emlen Hall reading room, early 1900's