

Frederick A. Chew

Prominent Attorney in Rensselaer County



Early Life

Frederick A. Chew was born about 1868 in Troy, New York. He was the son of Daniel Boston Chew, a prominent African American restaurant proprietor and abolitionist, who was active in the "underground railroad" and aided many enslaved individuals in escaping to freedom. His son, Frederick A. Chew, was no doubt influenced by his father's commitment to social justice as he pursued legal studies which led to a career dedicated to pursuing racial equality under the law. Frederick A. Chew was educated in the Troy public schools. He did not attend law school, but instead, at the age of 14, he began to study law in the Law Office of John A. Cipperly, which was a common method at that time to become a lawyer. He passed the bar examination in 1884.

Career

Mr. Chew had a very wide and lengthy law practice that took him into many local, State and Federal Courts and that extended for nearly 50 years. According to a published memorial, he was active in public affairs and numerous organizations and enjoyed the "respect and confidence of judges and fellow attorneys." Some of his cases and civic activities provide a glimpse into his commitment to social justice. In 1929, Mr. Chew assisted District Attorney Abbott Jones in successfully prosecuting Proctor's Theater in Troy for violating the Civil Rights Law by depriving Mrs. S.

Clarissa Evans, an African American woman, equal privileges and accommodations on account of her race by forcing her to sit in the balcony section of the theater rather than a section of her own choosing. In 1910, Mr. Chew gave testimony before the New York State

Assembly in opposition to a bill prohibiting marriages between whites and African Americans. In 1905, Mr. Chew served as an "incorporator" in the establishment of a central trust company to engage in general banking business and establish a chain of banks in the southern states to be controlled and managed by African American men. Mr. Chew was also active in the local Republican Party, the Afro-American Equal Rights League, was a delegate from New York State to the National Negro Suffrage Convention, as well as having served on the executive committee Troy branch of the NAACP.

Later Life

Mr. Chew practiced law up to the time of his death in 1932. Upon his death, the Rensselaer County Bar Association fittingly described him as follows: he "gave freely of himself in the service of his church and in numerous organizations for the welfare of his own people, to the cause of whose continued advancement he was devotedly attached and to which his own life he made no small contribution."

Mr. Chew is buried in the Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, New York.



**New York State Unified Court System
Third Judicial District**