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Biographical History

State University of New York at Cortland

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DR. FRANCIS JOHN CHENEY, 1848-1912

SECOND PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL (1891-1912)

Dr. Cheney entered Genesee College (now Syracuse University) in 1868, and received his A.B. with Summa Cum Laude in the first class graduated from that institution in 1872. For advanced work in history, he received his A.M. and Ph.D. degrees also from Syracuse University.

Dr. Cheney was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon and Phi Delta Kappa.

He was professor of Mathematics in the Northern New York Conference Seminary, Antwerp, N.Y., 1872-1873; principal of Dryden, N.Y. Union School, 1873-1880; student of law, 1878-1880; admitted to the bar, 1880; principal of Kingston, N.Y. Free Academy 1880-1890; inspector of academies under the Regents of the State of New York, 1890-1891; and principal of Cortland, N.Y. State Normal School beginning September, 1891.

During Dr. Cheney's administration, important changes in the clubs of the school are of unusual interest: The Young Men's Debating Club--The Delphic Fraternity; the Normal Debating Club--Gamma Sigma (organized 1870); The Athenae Society--The Clionian Fraternity (1891); Alpha Delta (1892); Philomatheon Society--The Theta Phi Sorority (1902). While the sororities and fraternities offered opportunities for literary, debating and social activities there appeared during this administration other groups interested in the general welfare of the student body: The Students' Christian Union (1891); The Neal Dow Prohibition Club (1894); Normal Lecture (1894); The School Color Committee (1893). Early in Dr. Cheney's administration the custom of holding school sociables was inaugurated.

On February 20, 1901, Dr. Cheney laid before the students "a new system of government of students, for students and by students" a forerunner of our present-day Student Government.

Dr. Cheney died on March 19, 1912, after serving faithfully for a period of twenty-one years the Normal School and the community. "His fatherly interest, his lofty purpose, and his sterling character are the contributions he made to all with whom he came in touche."