



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 224

Name: Fry, Cremona "Mooney" (Satterthwaite) Morrey

Dates: (c. 1715 - 1770)

Colonial Society: PA

Date added to ROA: 4-14-2025

Service: Woman of Distinction:

Manumitted and became a landowner of 198 acres, (1745/1746)

Authority: Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections, MC 1182 Dorothy Merriman Schall Collection, Box 4, "Lease from Richard Morrey to Negro Mooney alias Cremona"; Pitts, Reginald H. "Richard Morrey, Gent." of Cheltenham Township and His "Negro Woman Mooney." The Bulletin of the Historical Society of Montgomery County, Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 269-272.

Biography:

Humphrey Morrey (1650-1716) was appointed Philadelphia's first mayor by William Penn in 1691. Like his friend Penn, he was a Quaker from England, and a wealthy merchant who ultimately served a 10-year term in office. He founded Cheltenham Township in present day Montgomery County. Humphrey Morrey was also an enslaver.

Among the slaves held by Morrey was a woman known as Mooney (more formally called Cremona). She was likely born on Morrey's Cheltenham property, the child of enslaved parents. When Humphrey died, Cremona was just a baby, but she would have been enumerated as "property" in the Morrey estate, which was divided equally between his son Richard, and a grandson Humphrey (Richard's nephew). By the time Cremona reached the age of 20, the Morrey family was hit by great upheaval. Grandson Humphrey died followed soon after by Richard's son Thomas. Neither of them left children. Sometime soon after, Richard's wife Ann also died. Richard was suddenly very alone having lost his nephew, son, and wife in such quick succession. It is at this time that Richard sought solace in the young Cremona, thought to be a housemaid.

Family lore is that Richard fell in love with Cremona, and that they cohabitated in a time they could not legally marry. They were accepted as a couple within their community and had five children together between 1735 and 1745. Their children were Robert Lewis, Caesar, Elizabeth, Rachel, and Cremona, Jr.

In January of 1746, just after the birth of their youngest child, Richard Morrey went to the Philadelphia



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County Recorder of Deeds to declare the following:

"... know yea, that the said Richard Morrey, as well for and in consideration of the good faithful Service unto him done and performed by his now freed Negro Woman Mooney otherwise Cremona Morrey... do bargain and sale for consideration of one peppercorn... a total of 198 acres... on his land in Cheltenham....together with all and singular the buildings, improvements, ways, woods, waters, watercourses, rights, liberties, privileges, or hereditaments and appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging."

The lease was noted for a period of 500 years, and structured in such a way to avoid the restrictions on ownership of property by African Americans. It was also noted in this deed that Cremona had previously purchased her freedom for £20. She now controlled the property on which she had been born enslaved. Having taken care of his mistress, Richard, now in his seventies, left the property, and moved to Philadelphia, where six months later he married the twice-widowed Sarah Beasley Williams Allen. Richard died sometime in 1753.

For her part, Cremona did not remarry until after Richard's death. In 1754 she married a former slave, John Fry, by which she had another son named Joseph. Cremona was thought to have been "not yet sixty" when she died sometime around 1770.

Cremona's children flourished and built what became Guinea Town on the Cheltenham property, named because most of the 22 families living there were originally from Guinea, West Africa. Some of the original land is now part of Arcadia University. There are many well-known descendants of Cremona. Daughter Elizabeth married Cyrus Bustill, a noted African American brewer and baker and founder of the Free African Society. Through them, we find Paul Robeson, the well-known singer/actor and activist. Daughter Cremona Jr. married John Montier, through which descended Dr. William Pickens, Sr., the first field secretary of the NAACP. Today, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, you can visit two very rare portraits, by the artist Franklin R. Street, which depict Cremona's descendants Hiram and Elizabeth Brown Montier, a free, middle-class African-American couple in 1840.