

## The Homestead Art Gallery

at The Cheney Homestead Museum, 106 Hartford Rd, Manchester, CT

Notes by Peter Millett, Cheney Homestead chairperson, October 2018 and Trudy Mitchell, September 2019

**Mission:** To present the life and works of John, Seth, and Margaret Swan Cheney, and the legacy of art in Manchester, CT; fulfilling the artistic focus of the Cheney Homestead mission to portray “Art, Ingenuity and Early American Life” from our 1785, five-acre homestead and gardens.

**Works to be seen:** Paintings, drawings and engravings by John and Seth. Books by Ednah, and paintings by early 20<sup>th</sup>-century artist Russell Cheney. Digital slideshow of 100+ engravings.

**Introduction:** Ednah Dow Cheney’s 1904 will provided funds to establish a room in Manchester to remember the lives and works of John and his brother Seth (her husband), and their daughter, Margaret. In June 2018, a room in the Homestead was restored and then dedicated by members of the extended Cheney family for this purpose.

**John Cheney** (1801-1885) Prominent American engraver and portrait artist. Studied in London and worked out of Boston and Philadelphia. Born and died at the Cheney Homestead. We believe John purchased the Homestead’s five plaster busts in Paris in 1854 from the Louvre plaster works. Restored in 2019 by sculptor Robert Shure, the Venus of Cnidus is on display in the Homestead’s third floor art studio.

**Seth Cheney** (1810-1856) Prominent American portrait artist, known for his sensitivity and delicate early use of conté crayon. Studied in London and Paris, and worked out of a studio in Boston; mentored the American sculptor, T.R. Gould. Married Ednah Dow in 1853, and died at the Cheney Homestead in 1856 of tuberculosis at age 46. Their daughter, Margaret, was one year old.

**Margaret Swan Cheney** (1855-1882) Daughter of Seth and Ednah Cheney, born at the Cheney Homestead. Raised by her mother and graduated from MIT. She died at the age of 27, also of tuberculosis. Soon after, MIT established the Margaret Swan Cheney Room, that serves to this day as a women-only sanctuary on the campus, and was quite an active place during the ‘60s and ‘70s Women's Movement.

**Ednah Dow Cheney** (1824-1904) Wife of Seth Cheney and mother of Margaret. Writer, reformer, and philanthropist. Friend of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Bronson Alcott. Involved in progressive causes such as the American Anti-Slavery Society, Freedman's Aid Society, MA Woman Suffrage Association (vice president), NE Women's Club (vice president) and the NE Hospital for Women and Children. Considered a part of the second wave of the Transcendental movement and lectured for 10 years at the Concord School of Philosophy.

Biographies of John, Seth, Margaret and Ednah are available in the Vintage Reprints section of [www.manchesterhistory.org](http://www.manchesterhistory.org). The Society’s offices: 175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT, 06040, 860-647-9983.



Engraving by John Cheney



Sculptor Robert Shure with  
Venus of Cnidus



Drawing by Seth Cheney