

Charles Cheney (June 7, 1866 - April 11, 1942)

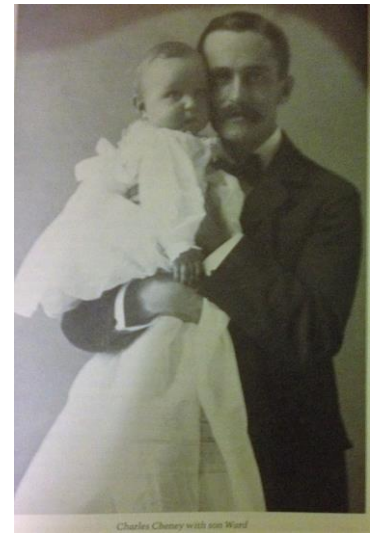
Notes by Susan Barlow, webmaster, www.manchesterhistory.org, who notes that there was more than one Charles Cheney, including Charles (1803-1874), of the founding generation of silk mill owners, who had lived in Ohio and was part of the Underground Railway. Notes as of December 2, 2016.

Charles Cheney served as president and chairman of the board of Cheney Brothers, silk manufacturers, for many years. He was the eldest son of Frank Woodbridge Cheney (1832-1909) and Mary Bushnell Cheney (1840-1917).

His niece, Antoinette Cheney Crocker, in her memoir "Great Oaks" says "Uncle Charles was a very handsome man, tall, almost 6 feet. He had dark hair, almost black, and a moustache and deep penetrating eyes. He was aloof, not easy to know, and had a mysterious gravity about him...He was sensitive, imaginative and remote....In later years, I came to know him better and was frequently astounded by his perception and sensitivity of people, places and minds. Once he said that a scent could transport one to another time and place."

In 1894, Charles married Mary Brainard (1867-1900) of Hartford, and together they had two children, Marian and Ward. Mary died from typhoid shortly after little Ward's birth. Antoinette relates her memoir, "After the funeral the whole family came to his house to give him support – a regular Cheney custom. I think it was too much for him. He took my mother into a back room, flung his arms around her and wept. Aunt Dolly [his sister] moved into his house to help take care of the children and keep house. About two years later, his younger brother, Leslie, became engaged to Katherine Bell in Santa Barbara. Uncle Charles went to California to meet the family. He fell in love with Mary Bell, Katherine's younger sister, then age eighteen. And so two Bell sisters became Cheney brides. My Aunt Mary had four children to care for before she was twenty-two." The children were: • Mary's stepson, Ward (1899-1963), who went on to be president and chairman of the board of Cheney silk; • Barbara (1904-1985), • Maribel (1905-1997), and • Sylvia (1912-1916).

Charles Cheney with his son, Ward, about 1901. Photo by his brother, Horace Bushnell Cheney, reprinted in "Great Oaks, Memoirs of the Cheney Family," by Antoinette Cheney Crocker (1901-1987), niece of Charles, and daughter of Horace B. Cheney and Mary Pierson Cheney.



Charles Cheney mansion, formerly owned by Ward Cheney, and formerly located closer to Hartford Road. It was moved about 1869 when the So. Manchester Railroad was being built.



Charles Cheney Mansion, 131 Hartford Road

Charles took over the house which had belonged to his great-uncle, Ward (1813-1876), who had also been Cheney Brothers' president and chairman of the board; Hammat Billings had designed the renovation for Ward in 1879 in the Gothic style. In 1913, the house was extensively remodeled to its stucco and half-timbered appearance for Charles and his family. This "Tudor" style remodeling was designed by Hartford architect A. Raymond Ellis, the influential architectural editor of "Woman's Home Companion" magazine in the 1920s and 1930s. Legend has it that Samuel Clemens, aka Mark Twain, liked the chimney with its window in the middle of the structure on the southeast side of the house and had it duplicated when he built his home in Hartford. Charles and Samuel Clemens were both members of the Monday Evening Club that would meet in the homes of various dignitaries in the Hartford area to read literary papers they had written. To the

east of the house are a fish pond, fountain, and garden; and to the west, large garages – once stables. Formerly, there were tennis courts, which the current owners, the Reichelts, plan to renovate. The Reichelts bought the house in March 2016; previous owners: Paula and Anthony Viscogliosi; Alex Urbanetti, during a controversial attempt to build condos on the Great Lawn; Robert and Janet Smith (Smith Insurance) for about 35 years.

Charles Cheney's obituary on page one of *The Hartford Courant*, April 12, 1942

Manchester Industrialist Dead At 75

Charles Cheney, Former President and Chairman of Silk Company, Had Short Illness

Manchester, April 11. — (Special.) — Charles Cheney, 75, president of Cheney Brothers, silk manufacturers, for many years and chairman of its board of directors prior to retirement in 1932, died Saturday at his home, 131 Hartford Road, after a short illness.

He was known throughout the country in industrial circles, having been president of the Silk Association of America for eight years and chairman of the National Industrial Conference Board for three years. He had also been a director of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company, National Fire Insurance Company and of the Chemical National Bank of New York.

Born in Hartford.

Born in Hartford, Mr. Cheney received his early education there, then attended St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H., for his preparatory study before going to Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He also broadened his education by travel. He was a son of Frank Woodbridge Cheney and Mary (Bushnell) Cheney.

He entered the silk business as an apprentice and steadily rose in position until he became president and finally chairman of the board.

He was made chairman in 1923 of a conference under auspices of the National Association of Manufacturers at a time when that association had decided to take a more active part in governmental affairs and give its assistance to the solving of economic problems.

Fostered Sub Detector.

He was interested at one time in promoting a magnetic device for detection of submarines and raised \$10,000 to assist its inventor with whom he became acquainted on a trip to the West Coast.

He served on various committees and commissions here and in Hartford in addition to those which were national in scope. He was a member of the Republican Party.

He married Mary Brainard in 1893 [sic] and two children were born to them. In 1901 his second marriage took place, to Mary Bell. Besides his wife, he leaves three daughters, Mrs. Rodney G. Dennis and Mrs. Harry Watkins of New York City and Mrs. John H. Humpstone of Baltimore, Md.; a son, Ward Cheney of New York City; eleven grandchildren; four sisters, Mrs. Charles A. Goodwin of Hartford, Mrs. H. B. Learned, Miss Dorothy Cheney and Miss Marjory Cheney, all of Manchester; and three brothers, Howell, Austin and Frank D. Cheney, all of Manchester.

Funeral services will be held at the home Monday at 2 p.m. with Rev. Warren S. Archibald, pastor of South Congregational Church, Hartford, officiating. Burial will be in Manchester.



Charles Cheney as a young boy.



Charles, Mary, Marian in 1898.



Charles Cheney house in 1900, designed by Hammat Billings.



Obituary on page 1, Hartford Courant.