

THE FUNERAL OF CHARLES CHENEY (1803-1874)
June 24, 1874, *The Hartford Courant*

The funeral services of Charles Cheney were held at his late residence in South Manchester yesterday afternoon at half-past three. A special train left the station here at a quarter after two, carrying many friends of the deceased and prominent men of the city.

At the house assembled at the appointed time the relatives, whose number is very large, the neighbors and friends. The services were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Morrison of Milton, Mass., a venerable pastor and a dear friend of Mr. Cheney. The services were simple and unostentatious, in keeping with the modest and unassuming character of the departed, and pervaded by his sweet spirit, by his cheerful hope, by his loving charity. The clergyman in his reading and in his prayer was impressive, speaking out of a deep and christian affection; and in the simple music and the calm atmosphere of the place, there was nothing but peace. The last rites of burial were left to be performed by the family alone.

Mr. Charles Cheney was the son of George Cheney who was a farmer upon the land where the village now stands, and who used the water power of the little valley stream for a saw-mill, a grist mill and a carding factory. He had eight sons and one daughter. Charles was the third son, born in 1801; five of his brothers and his sister survive him.

Charles Cheney went to Tolland as clerk in a store when he was about fourteen, leaving the home farm as most of his brothers did for a time, but subsequently returning to it, as they all did eventually. Before he was of age he went to Providence and engaged in the mercantile business for himself, with Solomon Pitkin. There he married Miss Waitstell Dexter Shaw, a niece of Knight Dexter of that city. The children of this marriage are Colonel Frank W. and Mr. Knight D. Cheney. About 1837 Mr. Cheney removed to the west and established himself as a farmer at Mt. Healthy, near Cincinnati, Ohio, where he carried on a farm for some eleven years. And at this early day his philanthropic nature became strongly interested in the anti-slavery movement, and he was one of the abolitionists whom the colored people could trust.

About 1836 Mr. Ward Cheney and some of his brothers had started in a small way a silk factory at their old home. The experiment went rather slowly, and at length came to a halt. But it was revived again in 1841, and in 1847 Charles joined his brothers in the undertaking, which has engaged their energies ever since. While he lived in Ohio his wife died, and some time after his return to the east, he married Miss Harriet Bowen of Providence, whose death, four years ago, the people of Hartford have not yet ceased to mourn. Mr. Cheney's life work as a business man, in connection with his brothers, has been the slow building up and development of the great establishment for the manufacture of silk goods which is now one of the most conspicuous of American industries. And more noteworthy than the success of the business itself is the model village at South Manchester, which is to America what Saltaire is to England, except that the

Excerpt from
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village of the Cheney Brothers is a kind of rural paradise for workmen, while the establishment of Sir Titus Salt, with its schools, libraries, and facilities for the education and amusement of the operatives, is a miniature city.

When the time comes for tracing the growth, through many discouragements, of the Silk Mills at South Manchester, and the harmonious labors of the united brothers, whose concord has been as remarkable as their industry and success, it will be seen that their work has had in it a higher quality than mere business prosperity. For side by side with this prosperity has been developed a rare culture, a sweet charity and philanthropy, a practical solution of the harmony that may exist between employers and workmen. That village would not be what it is if it were not for the love of beauty and the artistic sense which is hereditary in the family. One of the brothers was Mr. Seth Cheney, the most promising of our crayon artists; another is Mr. John Cheney, who has produced one of the finest engravings of the Sistine Madonna. In the building of the mills and the village, with its cottages hid in trees, its roads and streets with no disfigurement of fences, its schools, public hall and library, we see the love of beauty that combined with humanity to make this factory town a most agreeable residence for the owners and for the workmen.

If the history of this establishment is ever written, as we said, a portion of Mr. Charles Cheney's work in the world will be properly made known; for there are as benefactors better than they who are the founders of great and well paid industries. But today we recall Charles Cheney as a citizen of Hartford. He was in the best sense a public man, without being an office holder, (except for a term or two in the legislature) and in fact always shrinking from any public display. He took the warmest interest in political affairs, especially in the moral questions, and his name and purse were always at the service of the cause of humanity. He was an abolitionist when it was singular to be one, and in all the drama of the war and the preparation for it, he was one of the wise whose counsel was sought, one of the liberal to whom appeal was never made in vain. Whenever aid was sought for anything worthy, the name of Charles Cheney was sure to be one of the first thought of. He was full of charity and toleration for all men. No one could be more fortunate in his home life, in his love of reading, in the opportunities of travel, in the enjoyment of the rational delights of a cultivated society. He set an example to business men of an unfeverish pursuit of his calling, and of a happy spirit which made the most of this beautiful world. As to his integrity and high character, his devoted friendships, his quick sympathy with all who suffered, his modesty, his love of all virtues, these are proverbial. His living in the world made it better and happier. His character was a positive strength in all the neighborhood and as far as his influence reached. Such men are the best pillars of society; their memory is one of its best treasures.

Webmaster's notes: transcribed by volunteer Maureen Hevey.

See also a reprint in the People Then & Now section of the Reprints page: [Charles Cheney](#), (1803-1874), lived for a time in Ohio, where he was a part of the Underground Railroad. This 1999 reprint describes the naming of a street after him. Charles did return to Manchester and was involved in the family silk business.]