

Seth Wells Cheney

Notes by the Manchester Historical Society webmaster, Susan Barlow.

Seth Wells Cheney (1810-1856), of South Manchester, followed in the footsteps of his brother John Cheney, who was an artist and engraver. Seth's biography is reproduced in the Vintage Reprints section of the Manchester Historical Society's website www.manchesterhistory.org. This obituary (below) appeared in *The New York Times*, September 12, 1856.

Obituary.

DEATH OF SETH CHENEY, THE ARTIST

SETH CHENEY, the artist, died yesterday at Manchester, in Connecticut, about ten miles from Hartford. His age, we suppose, might be about fifty-five [webmaster's note: he was 46]. In him a fine genius has been withdrawn from the age and the country.

Mr. CHENEY'S drawings in crayon are among the most remarkable things of their kind. The greater number of them are portraits of the size of life, but though portraits, they are informed with a noble ideality. It is almost impossible to look upon any work that came from his hand without acknowledging the presence of a certain purity and spirituality, which the friends of the artist maintained was the proper expression of his own character. His strictly ideal pieces are of so high a degree of beauty and dignity that his friends scarcely scruple to speak of them as worthy of a place beside the drawings of RAPHAEL. It was remarkable that he would never draw the likeness of any one for whom he had not a personal respect. His circumstances did not compel him to depend solely on his art for a livelihood, and when importuned to allow any distinguished man of defective morals, whom other artists might be proud to paint, to sit to him for a likeness, he steadily refused. He would not consent to copy traits of sensuality and dissimulation in the countenance of any man, whatever his station or influence.

Mr. CHENEY had retired to Manchester, where, with his brother, Mr. JOHN CHENEY, the eminent engineer, he had built a studio, and where he purposed to devote himself to painting -- adding color, for which he is said to be possessed of a fine eye and delicate feeling, to outline and shadow, by the management and disposition of which he has gained his reputation. Here he became a prey to the wasting disease by which he died, spoken of by some as the consumption, but said by his physician to have been an exhaustion of the nervous organization, which, in him, was peculiarly sensitive. His personal character was of remarkable and blameless excellence, and he was greatly beloved by his friends. [Webmaster's note: additional word not legible.]

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Portrait of Seth Wells Cheney

