

Roger W. Cheney, Manchester Connecticut and Santa Fe New Mexico



Roger Cheney with his mother and two brothers, 1919.

Roger Cheney (September 23, 1907 - 1990) was an employee with the Cheney Brothers Silk Company in Manchester, Connecticut, and an artist in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Cheney was born on September 23, 1907 in Manchester, Connecticut as the son of [Horace Bushnell Cheney](#) and Mary Pierson. In his generation, he was the second youngest of his 4 siblings (2 other brothers and 2 sisters) and had 43 first cousins linked to the Cheney Brothers Silk Company in the region. Most of them, including Roger, grew up on one tract of family land, on which about 25 houses belonging to the Cheney families were located. On Halloween 1913 - when Cheney was 6 years old - his costume caught on fire, resulting in a severe burn on his face. Instead of going to school with his peers at their own school on the property in Manchester, Cheney instead went to study at the Kingswood School in West Hartford and the Hartford Art School. In the latter, he was given instruction in drawing with charcoal and pastel crayon and began his life long love of art and weaving.

He later graduated from Yale University in 1931, and entered the family's silk weaving business. He learned to design fabric patterns for the Jacquard looms of his family's silk business in Manchester, working there for five years. After his marriage in 1933, he removed with his wife to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1936, the same year their son was born. They came to know other artists in the area, and they loved to ski. In Santa Fe, he designed and constructed machinery, such as looms, warp wheels, and supplemental equipment. He started his own weaving studio and taught at least 200 weavers their trade. Many of his students were Native Americans to whom he taught more modern techniques which they readily assimilated into their traditional weaving patterns. Among the singular additions to their art was their ability, for the first time, to incorporate curvilinear designs into traditional patterns.

After the death of his second wife in 1986, he went back to art school in 1987 to learn more about modern and abstract art. Beside weaving, as an artist, he loved painting, native and modern sculpture and design of all sorts, a love that went all the way down to the minimalist challenge and delight in designing and tying his own fanciful “flies” for fly fishing in the mountains of the West. Cheney died in 1990 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.