

## JOEL CHENEY WELLS

J. Cheney Wells was born in Southbridge on November 11, 1874, a son of George W. and Mary E. (McGregory) Wells. Cheney had gone from the Southbridge public schools to Worcester Academy to prepare for college when his father, stricken by illness, asked him to come home to help in the local optical company of which he was one of the founders. This, the American Optical Company, was Cheney Wells' chief occupation from 1893 to 1936. With his brothers, Channing M. and Albert B. Wells, he built it up into a national institution. He was himself a skilled craftsman, and was largely responsible for the research on which some fifty of the company's patents are founded. His last office before retirement was that of executive vice-president.

Mr. Wells was also a director of the Old Colony Trust Company of Boston, of the Rolls Royce Company, Inc., of Springfield, and other businesses, but the great interest of his later years was Old Sturbridge Village, the museum which grew out of a collection of clocks which he and his brother Albert had gathered.

Cheney was a personal friend of Brig, but his election to the Society, in 1948, came after his affections had been firmly centered on Old Sturbridge, so he was never active in the affairs of the Society. Of late years he had lived at La Jolla, California, where he died on January 6, 1960, leaving a son, John M. Wells of Southbridge. His first wife, Florence W. Morse, died in 1940, and his second, Mrs. Marion (Hengerer) Hollister, in 1955.

C. K. S.

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