



**Thomas James Sharp Letter
June 28, 1921**

**Tulsa Historical Society & Museum
Catalog Number: 2021.170.001**

Reproduction Restrictions:

The Tulsa Historical Society & Museum makes this PDF copy available for research purposes only. Copies may not be distributed, published, released on website or social media, or placed at other repositories or libraries without the written permission of the museum. For questions or applications for reproduction, email Curator of Collections at lwilliams@tulsahtistory.org.

Notice of Copyright:

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Tulsa Historical Society & Museum are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only. Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Tulsa Historical Society & Museum also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

Citing this Resource:

The preferred citation for this manuscript resource is the following:
Thomas James Sharp to Joseph Anthony Sharp, June 28, 1921 [2021.170.001], Tulsa Historical Society & Museum, Tulsa, OK.

Item Provenance & Biographical History:

Four-page, typewritten letter addressed to Joseph Anthony Sharp and Marguerite Jane McFadden Sharp from their son, Thomas James Sharp, dated June 28, 1921, in which he describes the event now known as the Tulsa Race Massacre. Sharp composed the letter on stationery from the Garfield Petroleum Company of Enid, OK, where he served as the company's corporate secretary. The letter contains introductory remarks concerning Sharp's activities with the petroleum company and the recent birth of his son. The second half of the letter contains Sharp's comments upon the recent "race riot" in Tulsa, OK. Sharp states that upon a trip to Tulsa, he surveyed the burned area of North Tulsa. He stated, "There wasn't as much as a stick of wood standing in a piece of land a mile

square. . ." Sharp gives his parents an account of the riot events and states that a grand jury found that blame rested upon "black agitators." He states that no blacks are "allowed on the streets in Tulsa without a green pass which is issued to all having employment." Sharp also gives an estimate of the number of individuals killed during the violence by stating that the blacks "killed in the riot were over 200, although the papers had it down to thirty odd. The Salvation Army alone buried 68." Sharp regrets the shame the violence brought to Tulsa, but states, "There is no way of preventing it that I know of." Sharp's explicit use of racist terms and his vitriolic hatred for the Black race permeate the letter. He classifies all blacks as a "treacherous, thieving, lying dirty lot."

Thomas James Sharp was born July 2, 1894 in Scranton, Lackawanna County, PA, to parents Joseph Anthony Sharp and Marguerite Jane McFadden Sharp. By 1900, the family lived in Olean, Cattaraugus County, NY.

On July 23, 1917, Thomas James Sharp married Ethel Margaret Murphy. She was born November 7, 1897 in New York to parents James Thomas Murphy and Margaret J. Lawson Murphy. By 1920, the couple lived on East 9th Street in Tulsa, where Thomas worked as a clerk for a petroleum company. A daughter, Margaret Lucille Sharp, was born in Tulsa on October 30, 1918. By the next year, Thomas Sharp was the secretary of the Garfield Petroleum Company of Enid, Garfield County, OK. The family moved to Enid where a son, Joseph Arthur Sharp, was born June 4, 1921. By 1930, the family returned to Tulsa, where Thomas worked as an accountant for the Darby Petroleum Company. The family then lived at 227 South Knoxville Avenue. Another son, Thomas James Sharp, Jr., was born in Tulsa on August 17, 1924.

Thomas James Sharp, Sr. died April 19, 1975 in Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK. Ethel Margaret Murphy Sharp died March 2, 1979 in Tulsa. Both are buried in Calvary Cemetery in Tulsa.

GARFIELD PETROLEUM COMPANY

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

ENID, OKLAHOMA

6/28/21

J. H. CAMPBELL, PRES.
BURTON V. MOORE, VICE PRES.
J. J. KERINS, GEN. MGR.
THOS. J. SHARP, SEC'Y.
JOHN E. SHARP, TREAS.

Dear Dad & All:

Your letter arrived it seems a long time ago and I of course am ashamed of myself for not having answered sooner, but must put up the old alibi of being too busy. Along with Jos. A. junior the lad out at the Refinery who keeps books etc wanted to go on a vacation and as he had no one to take his place while he was gone, and also since I had never had any real refinery experience I volunteered to hit the ball for him while he was enjoying two weeks in the Ozark Mountains which is supposed to be the best old fashioned vacation spot in this section of the country. He had extreme bad luck in that it rained every day they were gone and as they were driving a Ford they didn't have much time to enjoy the beauties of the Ozarks. That, together with doing my own work at night, visiting Ethyl at the hospital, going to Tulsa for Margaret who spent a week in Tulsa while Ethyl was in the hospital, moving to a brand new bungelow which I rented while Ethyl was sick, and various other odds and ends kept me rather busy as you will doubtless agree. But now we are moved, Ethyl is home from the hospital, Roy is back from his vacation, I am all caught up with my work and nothing to do but sweat, swear and write letters, so here you are. Harvey Campbell is in town from Tulsa and I am waiting for him to come to the office. We are having a meeting tonight to decide whether or not we will purchase an oil business here in Enid, hence Harv's visit to Enid, and my absence from home. When he comes I will have to quit this letter, but knowing Harv pretty well I imagine I have time for about ten pages like this.

There is really not a whole lot of news to tell you, the new baby being practically the only subject to discuss. Must admit he is a wonderful kid, in fact a chip off the old block and from all appearances is going to develop into a fine young man. He has an extremely good pair of lungs which he uses whenever he thinks necessary to get a square deal, and he keeps Ethyl pretty much on the go. Margaret thinks her baby brother as she calls him is just the whole push and she would have him dead in no time from hugging and kissing him if Ethyl didn't keep a pretty close eye on her. She doesn't seem to be a bit jealous of Joe or for that matter she never has been selfishly or jealously inclined. She is always more than willing to give up half of anything she has to anyone who wants it and I'm sure glad of it for if there is anything I detest its a

Tulsa Historical Society & Museum

2021.170.001

6/28/21

selfish little kid. Its bad enough when they get bigger but I particularly hate it in a small one. The baby has eyes just like your own and to my way of thinking looks a whole lot like you. Both Ethyl and John seem to agree to this too so I don't think its just my own way of looking at it. He is normal in every way and has long baack hair which looks very much as though it were going to curl. I suppose it will be just our luck to have Margarets hair straight and Joe's curly but I should worry so long as his hair isn't white. I don't know why but I always hated a white headed kid and thank Heaven both of ours are dark haired.

Our business seems to be going along in very fine shape and we continue to make money which is more by a long shot than most companies in the oil business can say. The oil game is sure on the bum and seemingly getting worse every day. The refineries that are making money on the present markets are indeed lucky and the plant we are operating at Fairmont is one of the lucky ones. I don't know what there is to it but we seem to be getting across in fine shape and on top of that have the best crude oil to work on that is produced in the Mid-Continent oil field. It is fully as good or better than the highly touted Penna crude, containing 50% gasoline.

Had a wire from Jack Ryan congratulating us on the new arrival and Ethyl had a letter yesterday from Mrs. Ryan in which she said she was coming to Enid for a visit if she could get around to it. I would sure like to have her come over for Mrs. Ryan is a peach and thinks awfully well of both John and I. John always was her favorite and I don't wonder either for he seems to have a way of being everyone's favorite.

I noticed John has been writing back and forth with reference to supplying you with some gas oil for the Acme and it would seem to me that you never had a better opportunity to save money than by buying gas oil. In your next letter be sure to tell us what you are now paying for it, also what the freight rates from Bradford to Olean. What we want to know is how much is your stuff costing you per gallon F.O.B. your plant. At the present time gas oil is selling here for from a cent to a cent and an eighth and the freight rate to Olean is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per gallon (I have the exact figure but can't find it right now) so you can see you are being cheated if you are paying more than .05 per gallon F.O.B. Olean. Please also let us know what terms the Bradford people sell on, whether sight draft less 1% or 1-10-30. It is not particularly that we are trying to drum up some business for the Garfield but knowing conditions in the oil business can save you some money and at least give you a quotation to go back to the Bradford people with and make them come clean with their price. The way the oil business is now I am satisfied they would meet competition rather than lose your business especially when they realized it was legitimate competition. We are making a gas oil out at the plant at the present time that is running very close to 36 gravity and is a strictly high class product and we would just as soon

ship to Olean as to Tulsa for our cars are rented on a trip basis, that is so much per car per trip irrespective of where they go. We shipped some stuff to Spokane, Washington the other day and that is over twice as far from here as Olean, for that matter practically everything we ship North goes as far from here as Olean which is only 1200 miles. Shipments to northern Minnesota, North Dakota, etc which is our regular trade territory cover at least 1200 miles each way, and the way freight is moving I wouldn't be surprised if a car made the trip in ten days. At the present time a tank car leaving Fairmont, our shipping point is in Kansas City the following night and Chicago the night after that or three days from Fairmont and its close to a 1000 miles. This is of course due to slack business. I have seen the time when a car wouldn't make a round trip to Chicago in less than 60 days but those days are gone I hope, and the worst of it was we were renting cars in those days at about \$3.00 per day and not by the trip.

I suppose you read all about the race riot in Tulsa a few weeks ago. It sure was some riot. I saw the remains of nigger town when I went over after Margaret and there wasn't as much as a stick of wood standing in a piece of land a mile square, and believe me you can build a lot of nigger houses in that much territory. I presume you people back there thought mighty hard things about Tulsa when you read the papers, but the Grand Jury which has just finished its inquest into the riot layed the whole blame on the niggers where it rightfully belonged. As I understand it the whole fracas started over the fact that a shinola attempted to assault a white girl and they had him in the County jail. The skillets got the idea there was going to be a lynching (which of course should have happened) and about 100 real tough ones armed with rifled, shot-guns razors etc and paraded right up Main Street to the County Jail and told all hands enroute what was going to happen if they didn't watch out. Naturally the whites went home right away when they saw the armed coons, but they came right back with everything from a shotgun to a cannon and the battle was on. It raged for hours right up in the business section and it was about 3:00 AM before they had the coons chased back to nigger town. Then the fires started and they swept the black belt clean, not a house or a barn or even a church being left. When the riot assumed large proportions the white folks tried to round up the coons and put them in Convention Hall which holds 5000 for protection but every time they would approach a nigger house they would be fired on from within and the only way to get them out was to fire their houses, which of course was done and when the house would blaze up the coons would run into the next etc. They tell of about 100 niggers barricading themselves in the nigger church and shooting every white they saw. It was necessary to mount a machine gun to get them out of the church but they came quick when the machine gun started to spit. When the church burned there was explosion after explosion from the ammunition the coons had stored away proving they were looking for trouble. When Convention Hall was full of shines they took over the Base Ball

Tulsa Historical Society & Museum

2021.170.001

6/28/21

and when it was filled they used the Fair Grounds so you can imagine there are some niggers in that town. There are actually more niggers in Tulsa or rather there were than there are people in Olean so you can see how bad the fight must have been. Now that it is over and everything is quiet again I understand the whites are going to rebuild nigger town and if they do I'll always say the shines won out for nigger town as a whole was a pretty rotten place before the way. The Grand Jury decided that the riot was caused by black agitators who have been in nigger town for quite a while before the riot and the fact that all the coons were well armed and had plenty of ammunition bore out the verdict. The white had to break into all the sporting goods stores in town to get weapons to fight them. If I had been there I would have been well prepared for I have in my arsenal my double barræled shotgun, Joe's pump gun, a 45 Colt and about 100 shells. I have a couple Tulsa papers issued during the riot which I will send you first chance I get. It will give you a good idea of what really happened and it sure was a plenty. At the present time no niggers are allowed on the streets in Tulsa without a green pass which is issued to all having employment. The others are still at the Fairgrounds under care of the Red Cross. The total coons killed in the riot were over 200 although the papers had it down to thirty odd. The Salvation Army alone buried 68 niggers and the morgues were just crowded with them. Of course it is a shame such things have to happen but there is no way of preventing it that I know of. Abe Lincoln was a good old scout but he never lived among niggers. I don't say slavery wasn't wrong but no one can ever tell me a nigger is the equal of a ~~white~~ white for he is not. They are certainly the most treacherous, thieving, lying dirty lot that every drew breath and I would be in favor of moving them all to Russia with their first cousin Big Bill Haywood. The worst of it is the better a person tries to be to a nigger the worse he will be repaid while the guy that drives them gets as near a square deal as it is possible for a coon to give. Its really funny how the anti-negro attitude hits a person after he has been among a lot of them a while. When I went to school I didn't think a thing of several negroes being in the same class but I wouldn't any more think of allowing Margaret to go to the same school with one than I would allow her to drink poison. You will get it too if you ever move to Oklahoma. Well enough of niggers. You can read your fill in the papers I am sending you.

There isn't much more to write about so I'll be quitting.

Harv hasn't showed up yet but he should drift in pretty quick. Write when you get a chance and tell Mother I'll write her soon now. Also remind her she is coming to Oklahoma this Fall and that I'll be looking for her. If things get shaped around right I'll try to talk John into going home for a few weeks but yours truly will have to keep his nose to the grindstone. Next year maybe I'll take a trip but surely not this year. Well must close now with love to all and hoping to hear from you soon. As ever,

Your loving Son

Tulsa Historical Society & Museum

2021.170.001

P.S. Mother said she was sending a package. Tell her we never got it and I was wondering if it came to the house while Ethyl was at the hospital and someone else got it. Understand I'm not trying to remind her of it if she didn't send it for Joe has everything under the Sun but in case she had sent it I didn't want her to think we were so ungrateful that we didn't acknowledge it.