

## **The Philip B. Sharpe Papers Adams County Historical Society**

**Accession No(s): #4161**

**Home Location: Rm 203, Rack 6, Shelf G**

### **PREFACE**

The Adams County Historical Society was established to “foster interest in the history of Adams County and vicinity, conduct research, preserve records and objects, mark sites, and pursue such activities as may be related to the history of the community.” The Society’s collections are privately held, maintained, and made available to the public for research purposes at the discretion of the governing authority of the institution and its staff.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Philip B. Sharpe Papers were acquired by the Adams County Historical Society in July 1969 from George W. Olinger. The collection was processed by Derrick D. Little, January-May 2010. The collection is housed in three boxes, which total 1.4 cubic feet, though there are some additional materials in oversized storage.

The collection contains the papers of a prominent firearms technician and author of the early to mid-twentieth century. He spent the most productive period of his life from 1946-1961 in Fairfield, Pennsylvania, where he conducted extensive research on military and sporting firearms. The collection offers research possibilities to those interested in significant persons in the history of the Adams County, Pennsylvania area. As well, it offers research possibilities to those interested in the history of firearms technology.

### **ACCESS**

This collection is open for research, and viewing access to the materials is unrestricted. However, restrictions apply concerning the use, duplication, or publication of items. Please consult research room staff for specific information regarding the Society’s policies.

### **PREFERRED CITATION**

Philip B. Sharpe Papers, Adams County Historical Society, Gettysburg, PA.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Philip Burdette Sharpe was born May 16, 1903 in Portland, Maine. A gun enthusiast from early in life, Sharpe would ultimately become an internationally known ballistics expert. Sharpe authored two classic firearms reference books, *The Complete Guide to Handloading: A Treatise on Handloading for Pleasure, Economy, and Utility* (1937), and *The Rifle in America* (1938), which were among the most influential volumes in the field at the time. Sharpe is most noted for his role in developing the .357 Magnum cartridge in the 1930s along with Elmer Keith and Daniel Baird Wesson. Sharpe first came to Adams County in mid-1941, living in Gettysburg for about one year before moving to Red Lion, Pennsylvania. He lived there for about six months and then left to serve as Captain in the Ordnance Department of the United States Army from December 1942 to May 1946. After being discharged from the Army, he resided for ten months in Baltimore, Maryland, where he had been stationed during World War II when not serving

overseas. He then returned to Adams County for good in March 1947, purchasing a house in Fairfield, Pennsylvania along Lower Tract Road. There, he operated the Philip B. Sharpe Research Laboratories, where he tested virtually every new rifle and cartridge manufactured in America before they were sold to the public. Along with Richard Hart, Sharpe formed Sharpe & Hart Associates Inc. in 1954, with main offices in Emmitsburg, Maryland and branches in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and Oakland, California. The firm served as the United States distributor for the Schultz and Larsen Rifle Company of Otterup, Denmark, which manufactured guns designed for cartridges developed by Sharpe & Hart Associates. Sharpe was an active member of the Adams County area community, particularly in nearby Emmitsburg, where he was a member of that town's Francis X. Elder American Legion post, Lions Club, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Sharpe was also a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association (NRA). He served as a member of the NRA's Technical Division from 1950-1955 and wrote articles for the organization's monthly magazine *The American Rifleman*. Sharpe's activities declined after he suffered a heart attack in March 1957. He suffered another heart attack late in the morning on January 24, 1961, and died that afternoon at the Annie M. Warner Hospital in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He was survived by his wife Marguerite Burby Sharpe, his two children Phyllis Eileen Sharpe and Philip B. Sharpe Jr., and previous wife Ethel Marie Sharpe. Firearms aficionados and historians consider Philip B. Sharpe as one of America's foremost authorities on military and sporting firearms in the early to mid-twentieth century.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection is comprised of six series: Correspondence, Manuscripts, Military Service Papers, Photographs, Miscellaneous, and Oversized Documents. The materials in the collection date from 1918 to 1960, with the bulk of the materials from 1946 to 1956. These ten years comprise the most prolific period of Sharpe's life, from the time he established the Philip B. Sharpe Laboratories in 1946 to when he suffered the heart attack in early 1957 that significantly curtailed his activities. Because Sharpe was among the leading ballistic experts in the United States, researchers will find this collection rich with information regarding the evolution of firearms technology in the early to mid-twentieth century.

### **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

#### **Series I—Correspondence**

The Correspondence series covers the years 1921-1960. It is the largest series, comprising over two-thirds of the collection. In the letters, Sharpe and his correspondents mainly discuss a wide variety of topics regarding firearms technology. A smaller volume of the correspondence involves personal matters.

Folders in this series are arranged so that each one contains correspondence with one organization, such as the Denver Hydraulic Reloader Company, or one individual, such as John Scofield, with some exceptions. For example, the "D-Miscellaneous," "E-Miscellaneous," and "F-Miscellaneous" folders contain correspondence with various organizations and individuals with names beginning with letters "D," "E," and "F" respectively. Additionally, folders with subject titles such as "Collection (Reference Data)," "Foreign Arms and Ammunition," and "Personal" contain correspondence with various persons. The folders in this series generally

retain Sharpe's original titles. To facilitate locating materials, folders are alphabetized by title and the documents within each are sequenced in chronological order.

Much of the correspondence is business-oriented and formal in tone. Correspondence sometimes regards Sharpe's purchasing of ammunition or supplies, such as that with the Apex Rifle Company and Bjørn Baunan. More often, however, it pertains to Sharpe testing products for his research on firearms and ammunition. For example, the correspondence with Bausch & Lomb Optical and David P. Bushnell of D. P. Bushnell & Company involves various issues with Sharpe's use of those companies' rifle scopes and binoculars. As well, Sharpe corresponded with numerous organizations such as Canadian Industries Ltd., the Federal Cartridge Corporation, and the Frankford Arsenal regarding his testing of the ammunition they manufactured. Materials such as these would be of value to researchers who are interested in the history of firearms technology.

Correspondence of a more personal nature is less voluminous, though researchers should note that Sharpe was well acquainted with many of the individuals he communicated with, and thus business and personal often overlaps. One of the most notable correspondents is Thomas C. Florich. Sharpe and Florich often refer to one another as "Shadrach" and "Abednego" respectively, and they occasionally mention a person known as "Mesach." Those familiar with the Book of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible will recognize these as the names of the three young men that King Nebuchadnezzar II threw into the fiery furnace for refusing his order to bow down and worship a golden statue. Given the amount of correspondence between Sharpe and Florich and their frequent use of these nicknames, one can reasonably assume these men are close associates. The correspondence that reveals the most about Sharpe's personal life is found in the appropriately titled "Personal" folders, which chronicle Sharpe's divorce from his second wife Ethel Marie Sharpe in 1954. Researchers who are interested in Sharpe's private life will find these materials valuable.

Sharpe often attached photocopies of his outgoing letters to the responses he received, thus helping the correspondence remain complete and in proper context. Given the high informational value and sheer volume of documents in the Correspondence series, it is undoubtedly the strength of the collection.

### **Series II—Manuscripts**

The Manuscripts series covers the years 1950-1951. However, many documents are undated. With the exception of one fiction piece, the manuscripts all pertain to topics regarding firearms technology.

Folders in this series are arranged according to the nature of the documents. The "National Rifle Association" folder contains articles written by Sharpe for the magazine *The American Rifleman*. The "Fiction" folder contains a short story entitled "The Ghost of Hell Ship" about a haunted vessel that transported prisoners from Great Britain to Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The "Miscellaneous Manuscripts" folder contains various articles and gun data that are undated and unidentified. One can reasonably assume Sharpe wrote these documents. However, in most cases, there is no way to verify authorship. It is known that Sharpe compiled the document entitled "Active Gun Collectors and Dealers," as his book *The Rifle in America* includes names

and addresses of manufacturers of firearms, ammunition, and accessories in a section entitled "Reference Addresses." The nature of the remaining papers, however, is uncertain. Sharpe did not originally file these documents with his National Rifle Association manuscripts, so they were likely not written for *The American Rifleman*. They may be materials that Sharpe distributed to members of the various fraternal organizations he was involved in, especially given that there were originally ten photocopies of the document entitled "Shooting Bench Data" and twenty-five copies of the document entitled "Measuring Chambers." Moreover, many of the photocopies were folded in thirds, suggesting he mailed them to others. Additionally, researchers should note that Sharpe did not author the article entitled "The Birth of a New Cartridge." However, the article is included here because nearly half of it is comprised of a verbatim first-hand report of Sharpe's visits to the Schultz & Larsen Rifle Company of Otterup, Denmark in 1953 and 1954.

Researchers will find these documents a valuable supplement to the information on firearms technology found in the Correspondence series. However, the relative scarcity of manuscripts in this collection belies the fact that Sharpe was a prolific author. Therefore, the Manuscripts series contains a far from comprehensive selection of Sharpe's writings, and is one of the weaknesses of the collection.

### **Series III—Military Service Papers**

The Military Service Papers series covers the years 1942-1946. These documents pertain to Sharpe's tenure as Captain in the Ordnance Department of the United States Army from December 1942 to May 1946.

Folders in this series are arranged chronologically. The types of materials include Special Orders, Movement Orders, reports, memorandums, and meeting minutes, as well as various other documents. It is unknown if these files contain every document compiled by Sharpe during his service in the United States Army. However, the records included here are sufficient for researchers to gain valuable insights into Sharpe's activities in the military, and they adequately complement the abundance of materials that document his work in the private sector. Thus, the Military Service Papers series is one of the strengths of the collection.

### **Series IV—Photographs**

The Photographs series includes photographs of Sharpe, individuals Sharpe worked with in the Army, and various firearms related images.

Photos are not arranged in any particular order. With the exception of the "Office Staff" folder, the photographs were originally filed in various locations throughout the collection in no discernable order, and were compiled together in this series for easier access. Many photographs are unidentified and undated. In almost all cases, the photographer is unknown. Because of the lack of documentation, the Photographs series is one of the weaknesses of the collection.

### **Series V—Miscellaneous**

The Miscellaneous series covers the years 1918-1948. However, many documents are undated. The series compiles various materials that do not fit into any other series in the collection.

Folders in this series are arranged by similar types of records. The documents were originally filed in various locations throughout the collection in no discernable order, and were compiled together in this series for easier access. Materials includes awards certificates, firearms data, documents pertaining to German ammunition, a script for a radio program entitled “Iron City Lodge,” and photocopies of newspaper clippings that mention Sharpe. Some of the materials in this series may be of little interest to researchers. However, the radio program script features an interview with Sharpe and reveals numerous insights into his life and work, including his love for guns as a child, his involvement in the development of the .357 Magnum cartridge, and his advice on oiling guns after cleaning them.

### **Series VI—Oversized Documents**

The Oversized Documents series includes several documents that are too large to be housed in archival folders. Materials include photographs, technical drawings, and other firearms related data. Researchers interested in similar documents in other series will want to examine these materials to be comprehensive.

## **CONTAINER LISTING**

### **BOX 1**

#### **Series I—Correspondence**

- 1-1 AGFA ANSCO**—Correspondence with Lloyd E. Varden and Jack B. Titcomb of AGFA ANSCO, Binghamton, New York, 1939-1946
- 1-2 Ahlemann, Paul E.**—Correspondence with Paul E. Ahlemann, 1949-1950
- 1-3 Apex Rifle**—Correspondence with Sam May of Apex Rifle Company, San Fernando, California, 1953-1956
- 1-4 Art Steel**—Correspondence with Philip Schwartz of the Art Steel Sales Corporation, New York, New York, 1951-1952
- 1-5 Barr, Al H.**—Correspondence with Al H. Barr, Technical Service, National Rifle Association, 1950-1951
- 1-6 Baunan, Bjørn**—Correspondence with Bjørn Baunan, 1951-1953
- 1-7 Bausch and Lomb**—Correspondence with various individuals at the Bausch and Lomb Optical Company, Rochester, New York (mainly Jack F. Brandt, Allen E. Murray, and George G. Tschume), 1940-1951
- 1-8 Belding and Mull**—Correspondence with H. S. Harper of Belding and Mull, Manufacturers of Reloading Equipment, Shooters’ Supplies, Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, 1952-1953
- 1-9 Bell, Bob**—Correspondence with Bob Bell, 1951 and 1960
- 1-10 Berlin-Karlsruher Industrie-Werke**—Correspondence with Berlin-Karlsruher Industrie-Werke Aktien-Gesellschaft, Karlsruhe, Germany (formerly Deutsche Wafflen- und Munitionsfabriken), 1927-1937
- 1-11 Brooke, Roger #1**—Correspondence with Roger Brooke, 1946-1948.
- 1-12 Brooke, Roger #2**—Correspondence with Roger Brooke, 1949-1959 and undated.
- 1-13 Bushnell, David P.**—Correspondence with David P. Bushnell of D. P. Bushnell & Company, Pasadena, California, 1951-1956 and undated

- 1-14 Canadian Industries Ltd.**—Correspondence with Canadian Industries Limited, Montreal, Canada (mainly with K. N. Morris), 1951-1952
- 1-15 Christmas**—Christmas cards sent to Sharpe from various persons, 1942 and 1948, and a letter to Santa Claus written by Sharpe's daughter Eileen, undated but presumably late 1940s
- 1-16 Collection (Reference Data)**—Correspondence with various persons (mainly F. M. Hakenjos), 1952-1954 and undated
- 1-17 D-Miscellaneous**—Correspondence with organizations with names beginning with the letter "D," and individuals with last names beginning with the letter "D" (most notably Decker Brothers Incorporated, Mason City, Iowa), 1928-1955
- 1-18 Denver Hydraulic**—Correspondence with individuals connected with the Denver Hydraulic Reloader Company, Inc., Denver, Colorado (mainly Donald G. Rozzelle), 1952-1955. Also includes photographs sent to Sharpe by Denver Hydraulic, 1952.
- 1-19 Dodge, H. D.**—Correspondence with Harry D. Dodge of Graham-Paige International Corporation, Detroit, Michigan, 1939-1948
- 1-20 Donaldson, Harvey A.**—Correspondence with Harvey A. Donaldson, 1939-1946
- 1-21 E-Miscellaneous**—Correspondence with organizations with names beginning with the letter "E," and individuals with last names beginning with the letter "E" (most notably Easton Rifle & Tool Co., Salt Lake City, Utah), 1939-1957
- 1-22 Eastman Kodak**—Correspondence with various individuals at Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York (mainly Fenwick G. Small), 1939-1949

## **BOX 2**

- 2-1 F-Miscellaneous**—Correspondence with organizations with names beginning with the letter "F," and individuals with last names beginning with the letter "F" (most notably Firearms International Co., Washington, D.C.), 1938-1957
- 2-2 Federal Cartridge Corporation**—Correspondence with individuals at the Federal Cartridge Corporation, Minneapolis, Minnesota, (mainly H. C. Russell), 1933-1952
- 2-3 Florich, Thomas C. #1**—Correspondence with Thomas C. Florich, an associate member of the Philip B. Sharpe Research Laboratories, 1953
- 2-4 Florich, Thomas C. #2**—Correspondence with Thomas C. Florich, 1954-1956
- 2-5 Florich, Thomas C. #3**—Correspondence with Thomas C. Florich, 1957-1960
- 2-6 Foreign Arms and Ammunition**—Correspondence with various individuals and firearms and ammunition companies, mainly in Germany and England (most notably Hauptmann Walter Lampell and the Rhenish Westphalian Explosive Co. Ltd., Nuremburg, Germany), 1921-1945
- 2-7 Foreign Miscellaneous**—Correspondence with various individuals in Germany and Sweden (mainly R. Hast and W. R. Triebel), 1946-1950
- 2-8 Frankford Arsenal**—Correspondence with individuals at the Frankford Arsenal, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (mainly Lt. Col. R. H. Hannum and Col. George A. Miller, Jr.), 1937-1951
- 2-9 Geiger, Albert G. (Insurance)**—Correspondence with Albert G. Geiger of Gorsuch, Scott, & Geiger, Baltimore, Maryland, 1948-1953
- 2-10 Hatcher, Julian S. #1**—Correspondence with Julian S. Hatcher, Director, Technical Service of the National Rifle Association, 1951-1952
- 2-11 Hatcher, Julian S. #2**—Correspondence with Julian S. Hatcher, 1953-1958

**2-12 Keith, Elmer**—Correspondence with Elmer Keith, 1950-1955

**2-13 Mailbag Hold**—Correspondence answered by Sharpe for the *American Rifleman* “Mailbag” column, 1951

**2-14 Miscellaneous Correspondence**—Correspondence with various persons, 1931-1959, plus several blank pieces of Sharpe’s stationery

**2-15 Personal #1**—Correspondence with various persons (mainly Edward Storm, Esq.) and other documents pertaining to Sharpe’s 1954 divorce from his second wife Ethel Marie Sharpe, 1949-1953

### **BOX 3**

**3-1 Personal #2**—Correspondence with various persons (mainly Edward Storm, Esq.) and other documents pertaining to Sharpe’s 1954 divorce from his second wife Ethel Marie Sharpe, 1954-1958 and undated

**3-2 Scofield, John**—Correspondence with John Scofield, Managing Editor, *The American Rifleman*, 1947-1950

**3-3 Sherman, Lytle G.**—Correspondence with Lytle G. Sherman and his wife Kathleen, 1948-1951

**3-4 War Department Office of Director Civilian Marksmanship**—Correspondence with individuals in the War Department Office of Director of Civilian Marksmanship, Washington, D.C. (mainly Ted F. Wessels), 1921-1951

### **Series II—Manuscripts**

**3-5 National Rifle Association**—Articles written for the National Rifle Association magazine *The American Rifleman*, 1950-1951 and undated

**3-6 Fiction**—Short story entitled “The Ghost of Hell Ship,” undated

**3-7 Miscellaneous Manuscripts**—Various firearms related documents, undated

### **Series III-Military Service Papers**

**3-8 Military Service Papers #1**—Various papers pertaining to Sharpe’s service in the United States Army, 1942-1944

**3-9 Military Service Papers #2**—Various papers pertaining to Sharpe’s service in the United States Army, 1945

**3-10 Military Service Papers #3**—Various papers pertaining to Sharpe’s service in the United States Army, 1946 and undated

### **Series IV—Photographs**

**3-11 Philip B. Sharpe**—Portraits of Philip B. Sharpe, and group photographs including Sharpe, undated

**3-12 Office Staff**—Photographs originally filed by Sharpe as “Photos Office Staff,” mostly unidentified but including Lt. Col. Calvin Goddard and Major John R. Stockton, undated

**3-13 Miscellaneous Photographs**—Various photographs, including images taken at the Stora Skuggan firing range in Stockholm, Sweden, images of Easton Rifle & Tool Co. forming dies and presses sent to Philip by a man named Andy, and images from munitions factories, 1951 and undated

#### **Series V—Miscellaneous**

**3-14 Certificates**—Boys' Working Reserve certificate, May 20, 1918, Field Dog Stud Book Registration, January 2, 1936, and Eugene Field Society Honorary Membership, April 26, 1939 (includes letter from Society President John George Hartwig, April 18, 1939)

**3-15 Firearms Technical Data**—Various documents including blueprints, drawings, and handwritten and typed firearms data, 1937, 1945, and undated

**3-16 German Ammunition**—Data and literature pertaining to German ammunition, 1942-1948 and undated

**3-17 Iron City Lodge**—Script for a radio program entitled "Iron City Lodge" on KQV AM, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, featuring an interview with Sharpe, February 3, 1942

**3-18 Newspaper Clippings**—Photocopies of newspaper clippings, 1923-1941

#### **OVERSIZED STORAGE**

#### **Series VI—Oversized Documents**

**Note:** Due to the size of these materials, they are stored separately from the rest of the collection. Please see research room staff about viewing these documents.

Includes two photographs of Sharpe, technical drawings, a chart of caliber sizes for Smith & Wesson revolvers, and other documents, 1923, 1937, and undated