



J.H. SHARP.

TEEPEE SMOKE

A NEW LOOK INTO THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOSEPH HENRY SHARP BY FORREST FENN

Preface

IN 1979 I PURCHASED A NUMBER of books from the estate of Lorraine Carr, who had been a friend and Taos neighbor of Joseph Henry Sharp. Included in the purchase was a scrapbook of photographs, letters, and newspaper clippings about the artist's life between 1886 and 1923. The scrapbook had been compiled mostly by Addie Byram who had become Mrs. Sharp in 1892. My casual interest turned to excitement as I discovered more and more pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of Sharp's life, and the lives of those who surrounded him.

Good fortune was my companion as I traveled in search of more information; the Cincinnati Art Museum had sixty original letters from Sharp covering a span of twenty-nine years. Another scrapbook was discovered as were two delicious little salesbooks, which contained an amazing record of the artist's sales from 1890 to 1950, including painting titles, sizes, dates, names and addresses of purchasers, and prices paid. Each new drink of knowledge brought on added thirst and I became consumed as an obligation to write this book emerged. Sweet little bits of information brought big rewards; I found a letter in which Andrew Carnegie purchased Spotted Bird That Sings for \$150. Letters from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., George Bird Grinnell, Ernest Thompson Seaton, Fernand Lungren, Lorenzo Hubbell, Phoebe Hearst, and many others, brought my total to more than 500.

I journeyed four times to Crow Agency, Montana, where the artist spent the happiest part of his life. I swam the Little Big Horn River, and walked the Custer Battlefield as Sharp had done. I saw many of the things that he had seen, and thought many of the thoughts he must have thought. Present reality faded as I saw hundreds of teepees that punctuated the valley while painted ponies grazed along the river. Later the council fires came alive, and I heard the beat of the drum and the whoop of the dance. Sharp had been deaf but I was not.

As my knowledge of Sharp expanded I found a growing parallel in our personal philosophies and interests. We both revered the life the old-time Indian lived, and bemoaned the bureaucratic overcast that suffocates the very spirit of his dead.

Carolyn Riebeth extended to me her vast reservoir of firsthand knowledge of Sharp's life on the Northern Plains, and her undimmed love for him served to further challenge my endeavor. But my richest provision, for which I am most indebted, came from Joe and Martha

Liebert. The great majority of their information was heretofore unknown, and they gave it with interest and warmth. By 1981 my rewards seemed to come from everywhere. Interviews at Taos Pueblo with Joseph Sunhawk, Elkfoot, Hunting Son, Bawling Deer, all of whom had posed for Sharp before 1910, gave me a cherished glance backward to a time that came alive in their stories – though their sad smiles reflected the reality that passing years are a great equalizer that condemns all stories to the cold storage of time.

So now, as Sharp had been compelled to document in oil the passing of the Indian way of life, I feel compelled to document in words Sharp's passage through life. This book was not written for art scholars; there are no fancy French words between its cover. It was not written for those who would seek fault in its style or content. Rather, this book was written for those who own or appreciate any of the 10,500 paintings that were left by this simple man, and for those who love the West through which he trod.

The first edition of this book went on the shelves in 1984 at a time when I was working nine hours a day in my art gallery in Santa Fe. It had been researched and written mostly on weekends and at night after work, with the help of some able assistants. To coincide with the publication date, we scheduled a show of Sharp's work. Seven large gallery spaces were filled with his paintings, 219 in all. Eight years later all 3,500 copies of the book had been sold, and during that time the value of Sharp's average painting escalated from about \$3,500 to \$35,000.

Now, fourteen years after the book went out of print, I have seen copies sell on the secondary market for very high prices, obviously it was time for a second edition.

During the same period many of Sharp's greatest works, which had been hidden in old private collections and museum basements, had surfaced in the light of much-increased national interest. I decided that if I were to reprint the book, it must necessarily include many of the newly discovered paintings and photographs. To make such drastic revisions would also require a name change, and since Sharp had started an unfinished autobiography, which he called Teepee Smoke, that name seemed to be a natural.

So here is the revised edition of the Sharp biography, which contains about 200 new images and some text revisions. There is also an addendum to the inventory of known Sharp paintings that I hope will be useful to my readers.





Foreward

Most art books consist of a large group of painting reproductions, each accompanied by a few words describing circumstances pertaining to it. Although this book contains many fine images of Joseph Henry Sharp's work, it is primarily a riveting, page turning biography of this remarkable man.

The author, Forrest Fenn, is the son of a school teacher who encouraged him to read and write a lot. This developed curiosity, interest in history, and writing skills. As a teenager he worked as a fishing guide in the wilds of Montana where he began finding arrowheads and other small Indian artifacts. Thus began a hobby. Later, his years in the Air Force took him to varied places where the practice continued. This hobby developed into a career of collecting, buying, selling and trading not only artifacts but also weapons, weavings and pots.

The collection grew, the reputation grew, and the hobby grew into a business. Forrest finally opened a trading post. The collection expanded to include sculpture and paintings. The collector became a dealer and he built a large, beautiful gallery. Joseph Henry Sharp's

OPPOSITE: Sharp invested his subjects with the dignity he felt their lives and history merited. Chief Old Dog—Crow. 1907. Oil, 18" x 12". (Collection of The Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Photo courtesy Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Fenn; PN. 22.845)

paintings of Indians were among those displayed. It was Forrest's custom, being a good dealer, to inform himself thoroughly about the things he offered for sale and he began to read about Sharp.

It soon became apparent to Forrest that Henry Sharp was an extraordinary person. Having decided at a young age that he wanted to be an artist, he prepared himself with a fine education in painting. He was fortunate to be from Cincinnati at the close of the 19th century where there lived and worked a number of accomplished painters. Many of them traveled to Antwerp, Munich and Paris to study and Sharp joined them. He became, as did most at that time, a portrait painter.

But what really interested Forrest came later. Bored with portrait painting, Sharp, on a trip to the West, discovered and became fascinated with Indians. He studied them, made friends with them and chronicled their way of life for decades. He settled among them and communicated with them, even though he was completely deaf!

Forrest, in turn, became fascinated with Sharp—enough to form a large collection of his paintings. His curiosity turned into serious research and a gradual determination to document his life in words as Sharp had done for Indians in paint.

My own introduction to Sharp's paintings occurred when, in 1962, I began showing my own work at Grand Central Art Gallery

in New York. Sharp had been for a long time an established artist-member. I had lived in Santa Fe for a year in the 1940s with occasional day visits to Taos. I enjoyed seeing his paintings in New York as much for the nostalgia that they invoked as for their excellence. Over the past thirty-five years in the West I have seen many of Sharp's works and know them. As an artist who has also experienced the hardships of finding interesting subject matter in far flung places, lugging paint box and easel, I identify with his struggles. Identify but not match. I have few problems with transportation or accommodation. And I have my hearing.

Besides being entertained by a well-told story about an unusual and interesting man, the reader of his book will learn a great deal about the Indians themselves and their almost long gone lifestyle.

Forrest and I have known each other since 1972 when we both settled in Santa Fe. Although we have never been involved together in business, we share many common interests and a fine friendship. I am honored to have been asked to write this forward.

To know and be impressed by the exhaustive research done by him, glance at the pages of "Acknowledgements" (p-304-7). To know how well it is written, read any page.



CLARK HULINGS