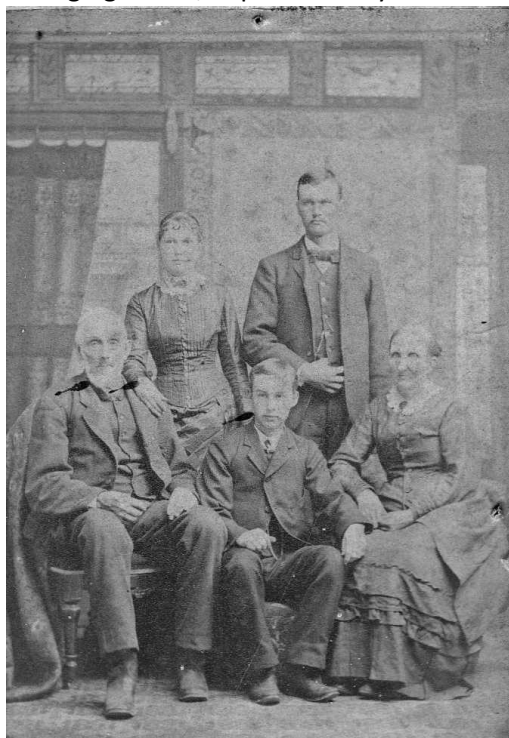


## Sharp's family history & "Dad Sharp's Corner" of Higgins Lake

To begin this tale, we're going back to some pre-history of the Sharp legacy. First, I'll introduce my second great-grandparents, Horace M. Sharp & Frances Tyler (Sharp). The Sharp family traces its military history of this country with several notable Army soldiers & officers going back to the historical founding of the colonies and operating "Sharp's Forge" for Gen. George Washington's Continental Army that supplied weapons and ammunition at Valley Forge.

The Tyler family heritage comes from a line of early Naval sailors, notably Frances Tyler's father- a certain Capt. Daniel L Tyler. Capt. Daniel Tyler's early sailing career began as a crewman for whaling boats of the coast of New Jersey & Connecticut, then crewed vessels plying the English 'tea' trade route of London, New York and China. Later, he also was aboard the USS Spitfire gunboat during the Mexican-American war during the siege of Veracruz (of which our family possessed the ship's battle ensign 28-star flag as a historical heirloom- recently turned over to the Naval History Museum) and crewed the USS Nightingale Navy hospital ship during the Civil War. Following the Civil War, Capt. Daniel Tyler sailed the Hudson river for the Vanderbilt fleet including stints sailing the Vanderbilt families personal yachts until his retirement in 1870 & subsequent move from his home in New Jersey to a lavish manor home in early developing Flint, Michigan presumably gifted to him by the Vanderbilts upon his retirement.

Horace's second wife, Frances Tyler gave birth to his son Daniel Tyler Sharp (my great-grandfather) who followed in the family trade as a carpenter. (Interestingly, Walter P. Sharp, son of prominent builder/carpenter Horace M. Sharp and first wife Keziah A. Warrington was the noted confectionary president of Whitman's Sampler chocolates.) Horace died in an accident while working on the roof of a construction project in 1881, after which his widowed wife Frances Tyler Sharp (and her young sons Edward, Daniel T., William & daughter Frances) moved to the manor house in Flint, Michigan to be with her aging father, Capt. Daniel Tyler.



*\*Circa 1890 photo of the Tyler manor house at 916 N. Lyon Street, Flint, Michigan. Standing: Frances Elizabeth Sharp -age 17 (Frankie Kingsley), Edward Sharp - age 15 Sitting: (Capt.) Daniel L Tyler -age 72, Daniel Tyler Sharp - age 13, Hannah Higgins (Tyler) -age 73*

## Early history of “Sharp’s Corners”

In 1898 young Daniel Tyler Sharpe (my great-grandfather) moved from his lavish boyhood manor home in Flint to a barren and logging era-stripped 80-acre parcel of land granted to him by lumber-baron Henry Stephans & Co. to homestead in Higgins Lake. At the time while stripped to a mere field of pine stumps, native Indians of the area still used the field of this barren property (the original “Mackinaw” native Indian trail bisects the land) as a summer encampment for fishing and hunting near the lake-sharing the land with them as he attempted to farm it with moderate success. Thanks to the support of earlier neighboring homesteading families nearby like the Burleson’s (Burleson Orchard & Farm) & Sergeant’s (Sergeant’s Dairy Farm – now Sergeant’s Septic & Excavating), the “Dan Sharp Farm” became a landmark staple of the area community... though less of an actual farm as Daniel T. Sharp found more success as an area carpenter than farming the sandy soil. The “Dan Sharp Farm” also hosted the area post office for many years for the early Higgins Lake / Markey area as well as a trading post of sorts for the area’s goods.



*\*Dan Sharp Farm circa 1910. Mostly post logging-era barren land littered with pine stumps. This view is looking west across the sandy wagon road that is Markey Rd. For reference, the barn in this photo is roughly where the new Dollar General is located today.*

The Sharp family lakeshore parcel property (the north 40 acres of the 80-acre homestead) was developed by Dan T. Sharp as “Sylvan Beach” where a summer lake house (which still exists but moved from its original location along the beach to the west) was constructed along with several smaller vacation rental cabins. Due in part to the scarcity of the local economy at the time, this portion of the original homestead parcel was exchanged for taxes to the State of Michigan in 1926 to become the seed property of the (South) Higgins Lake State Park, which was opened in 1927.



*\*Sharp's "Sylvan Beach" lake house cottage circa 1920. Its original location is roughly where campsite #143 in the S. Higgins Lake State Park is today. It was moved outside of the park to the west- just on the other side of the park's fence of campsite #470 location today. It has been recently renovated & continues to serve as a historical vacation rental retaining much of its original appearance as it did in 1920.*

### **"Dad Sharp's Place"**

After Dan Sharp's Farm became more of an area landmark trading post of sorts than an actual farm, "Dad Sharp's Place" began in 1923 as a small local produce stand, roadside cookshack, tiny grocery store & early gas station for White Star gasoline (later, Gulf gasoline) for the area's residents and early vacationers. Continuing in the construction trades, Dan Sharp also was heavily involved in building many of Higgins Lake's early cottages, road construction, as well as helping build the (South) Higgins Lake Park Store with the CCC in 1935 & later the "Ralph A. McMullen" center lodge (North State Park) projects.



*\*Dad Sharp's Place circa 1925.*



### *Glimpses of history*

A young Danny Sharp is pictured here in front of "Dad" Sharp's Gas Station, the forerunner to Sharp's Corner IGA, on Markey Road at the south end of Higgins Lake. The picture was taken between 1928 and 1930, before the county road passed by the station making it a corner. Danny Sharp, who is still alive and well, living in Florida we hear, operated the station until he sold it to John Bennick, the current owner, in July 1978. Much of the land previously owned by the Sharps is now part of South Higgins Lake State Park.

\*News clipping from ~1995.  
Dad Sharp's Place circa 1928.  
"Danny" Daniel R. Sharp passed in 2009, 2 months shy of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. John Bennick purchased "Sharp's" in 1978 from my uncle Richard Sharp & operated it until 2003.

The original "Sharp's store shack", now 100 years old (and still stands today- soon to be restored), was replaced by a 'new' store built in 1939-40 by my great-grandfather Daniel T. Sharp & grandfather Daniel R. Sharp as a father/son project. My grandparents combined use of the back of the 'new' store building as their residence, a small restaurant, with the front used as an early grocery store. The attic of the store was used by my uncle Richard Sharp and my father Frank Sharpe (yes, confusingly the "E" in the Sharp/Sharpe surname comes and goes) as their 'upstairs bedroom' growing up as kids.



\*Dad Sharp's Grocery circa 1950. My dad's '47 Chevy Fleetline car parked out front. The original shack store (on the left behind the Gulf sign) still in use. Interestingly at the time, also the location of the Higgins Lake Chamber of Commerce (sign above the attic window).



\*Dad Sharp's – Sharp's  
Corner circa 1951



Dad Sharp's Grocery continued to serve as the family store & gas station with my uncle Richard Sharp operating it until 1969 when a deal was made with then-current fuel supplier Leonard Oil proposed a new steel building to replace it. The new steel building was completed in November 1969 while the 'old' Sharp's buildings were both moved to their present location at 153 W. Higgins Lake Drive & began to serve many subsequent businesses through the years. Richard Sharp & family continued operating "Sharp's Corner" using the 'new' building until selling to John Bennick in 1978.



*\*The 'new' Sharp's Corner store & gas station completed in Nov. 1969 by Leonard Oil, IGA was soon brought onboard for grocery products. My uncle Richard sold our family store to John Bennick in 1978 & retired soon after. John Bennick operated the store using the original "Sharp's Corner" name with many years of success & expansions.*



*\*Reinhart's Restaurant circa 1972 making use of the then recently moved former "Sharp's Corner Store" now located at 153 W. Higgins Lake Drive. Reinhart's also used the old 'shack' building adjacent to it and operated a bait & tackle shop.*

*This building has housed numerous businesses since!*

Through the years since, the 'original' Sharp's Corner store building has hosted numerous businesses including "Reinhart's Restaurant", Nancy Robinson's (Sergeant) "Sub Shack", "Minto's Delicatessen", "Sandcastle Gifts", and most recently "Treasures By The Lake".

### **More about us...**

Our (wife Heather Sharpe's & I's) background is also unique. I am a military veteran having served several overseas tours & actions including Desert Shield/Storm, retired from the military in '99. Also, while serving in my military occupation as an Avionics Tech, I also enjoyed being a military athlete having ski-raced throughout Europe & also trained in mountaineering at Garmish/Partenkirchen in Germany. I have also been an instructor and coach in the winter-sports ski industry since 1993 with many N. Michigan and western resorts with long-standing PSIA credentials across several disciplines including Alpine, Telemark, Adaptive, and experience in backcountry touring. I have also been a long-time board member and past-president of non-profit N. Michigan adaptive & disabled programs organization, Challenge Mountain. These days, I'm a highly regarded and credentialed staff trainer & instructor at Boyne Mountain and at Big Sky, Montana's Madison Base Mountain Sports School. Assistant Midwest product rep/pro for Elan, Leki, Roxa, & Karbon for over 10 years.

Heather's background includes for many years as an employee under John Bennick at "Sharp's Corner" where she was also it's General Manager for several years. Hence, Heather became "momma Heather" to the employees under her at Sharp's! She has also continued to serve as a bookkeeper/accountant assistant under her families long-standing accounting business.

Jointly, we started our own company in 2015 (THS Ventures, Inc.) after having been managers of the South Higgins Lake Park Store for 6 years to contract holding concessionaires of the South Higgins Lake Park Store for the last 8 years (our connection to the park also part of the Sharp family history). Well over a year ago we made the decision to **not** renew our concessionaire contract with the State Park & begin our business plan moving forward in a new direction.

### **Boomerang?**

Heather and I are now the proud "new" owners of the old Sharp's family legacy store having recently purchased the property from John & Jeannie Bennick back to the "Sharp family". Renovations to the store building have been ongoing since last fall in '22 to sympathetically 'restore' the building to its general appearance in 1951 including the return of its original "Dad Sharp's" now 100-year heritage name-with-a-twist... "Dad Sharp's Outfitters". Though the new store won't be anything resembling a grocery store, gas station, or restaurant- it will reflect what our passions are as N. Michiganders... outdoor adventures!

The new store, with a planned opening of May 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, will feature several outdoors product lines and be a dealer for Jamis Bicycles, Leki trekking, Oboz footwear, Perception SUP's & kayaks, Scott, Atlas snowshoes, Smith Optics & helmets, Karbon outerwear, Life is Good clothing, Madschus XC skis, and more!