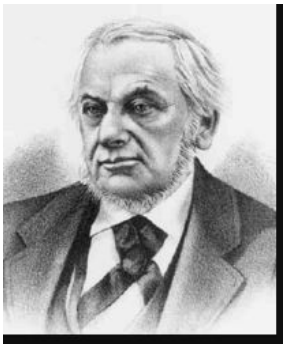
The Thomas C Sharp Document

Thomas Coke Sharp 1818 to 1894
Editor Lawyer Political Organizer and Hancock County Civic Leader



Thomas C. Sharp in later life. Reproduced in the Famous Trials Carthage collection; the original portrait source should be recorded if located.

Highlights of His Life

1840 — Arrives in Warsaw and becomes editor of the Western World.

1841 — Renames his paper the Warsaw Signal and publicly breaks with Joseph Smith.

February 1844 — Regains the Signal and renews his campaign against Nauvoo.

June 1844 — Calls for “POWDER and BALL” against the Saints.

July 1844 — Publishes a defense of the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

October 1844 — Indicted for the Smith brothers’ murders.

May 1845 — Acquitted in the Carthage murder trial.

1845–1846 — Advocates the Saints’ removal from Illinois.

1847–1848 — Serves in the Illinois constitutional convention.

1853–1854; 1859–1861 — Serves as mayor of Warsaw.

1865–1869 — Moves to Carthage and serves as Hancock County judge.

Later years — Continues practicing law, publishing newspapers, and conducting business.

April 9, 1894 — Dies in Carthage at seventy-five.

A reusable biographical and contextual report prepared to accompany Sharp documents in the Nauvoo and Hancock County collection.

Research edition

Expanded newspaper and source review • 30 September 2026

Purpose and central conclusion

Thomas Coke Sharp cannot be understood simply as the editor who hated the Mormons, nor can his 1845 acquittal be made to settle every historical question about his conduct. He was a highly educated young lawyer who became a frontier editor, partisan organizer, officeholder, judge, businessman, and one of the most durable public figures in nineteenth-century Hancock County. His influence arose from the convergence of a printing press, political skill, legal training, commercial relationships, marriage and stepfamily ties, and more than fifty years of residence in Warsaw and Carthage.

The evidence establishes that Sharp helped turn local apprehension about Nauvoo into a disciplined political movement and that, in June 1844, he printed language that openly invited armed violence. A grand jury indicted him for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. In May 1845 a jury returned a verdict of not guilty. A responsible biography must preserve all three facts: Sharp was a major architect of the anti-Mormon movement; inflammatory advocacy is not identical to proof that he personally entered the jail or fired a weapon; and the acquittal was a binding legal verdict rendered after a deeply contested trial, not a historical finding that the surrounding political movement bore no responsibility for the killings.

His later life also resists a simple morality tale. Sharp did not disappear after the trial. He remained in Hancock County, became Warsaw's first mayor, represented the county in the Illinois constitutional convention, served as county judge, practiced law, edited the Carthage Gazette, engaged in real-estate and loan business, and lived until 1894. His long civic acceptance helps explain both his local stature and the strength of the community network that had sustained the anti-Mormon cause.

A life at a glance

Date	Event
25 September 1818	Born at Mount Holly, Burlington County, New Jersey, to Methodist minister Solomon Sharp and Jemima Budd.
1830s	Lived in Smyrna, Delaware, then moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania; studied at Dickinson College and in Judge John Reed's law school.
14 April 1840	Admitted to the Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, bar.
July to September 1840	Moved west through Quincy to Warsaw, Illinois, and opened a law office.
11 November 1840	With James Gamble, took control of the Western World and became its editor.
12 May 1841	Renamed the paper the Warsaw Signal.
May to June 1841	Public break with Joseph Smith and Nauvoo; Sharp's criticism hardened into sustained opposition.
Summer 1842	Lost or surrendered the paper after financial default; the successor appeared as the Warsaw Message.
6 September 1842	Married Hannah Gregory Hardy Wilcox, a widow with established Warsaw connections.
February 1844	Recovered the newspaper and restored the name Warsaw Signal.

Date	Event
June 1844	Helped organize Warsaw resistance and published calls for war, extermination, and action by powder and ball.
26 October 1844	Indicted with eight others for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.
30 May 1845	Acquitted with Levi Williams, Mark Aldrich, Jacob C. Davis, and William N. Grover.
1846	Ended his principal period as editor of the Signal; Thomas Gregg later carried the paper forward.
1847 to 1848	Delegate to the Illinois constitutional convention that framed the constitution of 1848.
1853 to 1854 and 1859 to 1861	Served terms as mayor of Warsaw; local histories identify him as the city’s first mayor.
1864 to 1865	Served as Warsaw city clerk; the attached subpoena falls within this later Warsaw phase.
December 1865	Moved to Carthage and began a four-year term as Hancock County judge.
1872 to 1873	Served as president of the town of Carthage.
3 October 1879	First wife Hannah died.
24 or 25 November 1881	Married Ann Elizabeth Wells Lawton Worrell Hewitt at Hannibal, Missouri.
1880s	Practiced with Orville F. and Melvin P. Berry and participated in the real-estate and loan business later associated with Sharp and Berry Brothers.
About 1890	Suffered a disabling stroke and spent his final years with impaired mobility.
9 April 1894	Died at Carthage, aged seventy-five; buried at Moss Ridge Cemetery.

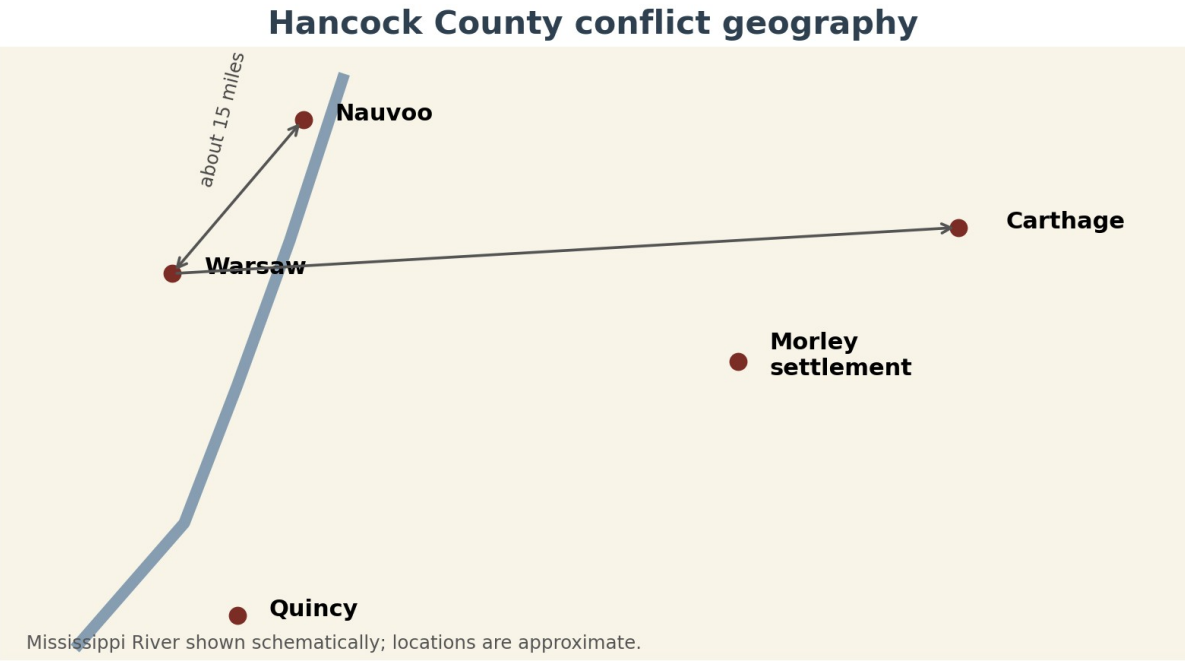
Early life education and the move west

Sharp was born into a Methodist minister’s household at Mount Holly, New Jersey. His middle name, Coke, likely honored Thomas Coke, the influential Methodist bishop, and signaled the religious culture in which he was raised. The family’s movements through Delaware and Pennsylvania placed him within the expanding network of educated Methodism rather than the isolated frontier society sometimes imagined in later accounts.

In 1835 he went to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where Dickinson College had recently come under Methodist influence. He also studied law in the school conducted by Judge John Reed. He graduated in 1840 and was admitted to the Cumberland County bar on April 14. These facts matter because Sharp arrived in Hancock County with unusual advantages for a twenty-one-year-old: a college education, legal training, command of polemical prose, and familiarity with organized denominational and partisan life.

He went first to Quincy in July 1840 and reached Warsaw in September. Warsaw was a small but ambitious river town positioned at the foot of the Des Moines Rapids. Northbound boats often had to unload freight there in low water, creating hopes that Warsaw might become an important transshipment and commercial center. In 1840 it had mills, stores, hotels, workshops, and a newspaper, but it was also beginning to live in the shadow of rapidly growing Nauvoo, only about fifteen miles upriver. Competition

for trade, population, courts, political offices, and public improvements formed the material setting in which religious difference became political hostility.



Warsaw, Nauvoo, Carthage, Morley, and Quincy formed the principal geography of Sharp's public career and the Hancock County conflict.

From law office to printing office

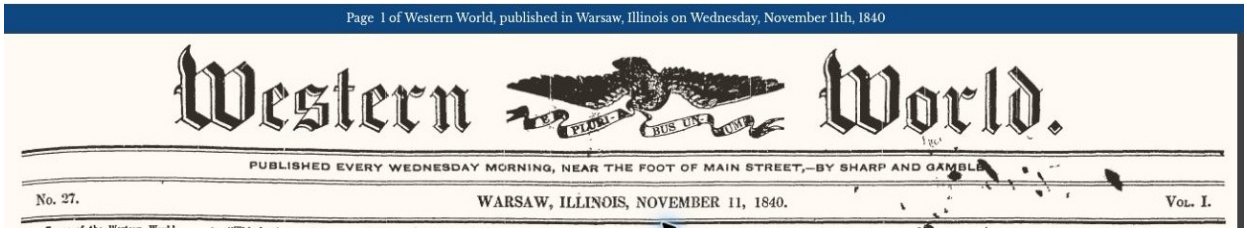
Sharp opened a Warsaw law office, but partial deafness reportedly made courtroom practice difficult. Newspaper work offered another arena in which legal reasoning, partisan argument, and personal wit could be used without the same physical disadvantage. In November 1840 David N. White sold the Western World to Sharp and James Gamble. Sharp assumed editorial direction on November 11.

The Western World was a four-page weekly typical of its period: national and state politics, reprinted literary matter, agricultural information, market reports, local notices, and advertisements. It leaned Whig and served both as newspaper and commercial printing establishment. In May 1841 Sharp renamed it the Warsaw Signal, explaining that Western World promised a reach greater than the paper actually possessed. Gamble withdrew late in 1841, leaving Sharp in control.

The business was never financially secure. Its paying audience lay chiefly among non-Mormon residents, while Nauvoo was developing its own press and commercial institutions. Sharp defaulted in the summer of 1842. The paper passed through another incarnation as the Warsaw Message in 1843 and early 1844. Sharp regained it in February 1844, restored the Signal name, and made it the principal organ of militant anti-Mormon resistance. The publishing succession is therefore important: Sharp's voice was powerful, but ownership, credit, printers, partners, subscribers, and advertisers made that voice possible.

An illustrated chronology of the Warsaw press

The mastheads show that "Sharp's newspaper" was not a single uninterrupted business. Ownership, title, and editorial responsibility changed. Those changes affected both the reach of Sharp's voice and the degree to which a surviving item can be attributed to him personally.

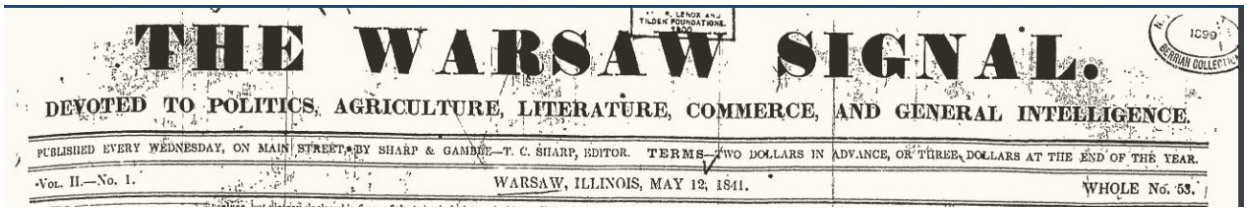

Page 1 of Western World, published in Warsaw, Illinois on Wednesday, November 11th, 1840

Western World.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING, NEAR THE FOOT OF MAIN STREET,—BY SHARP AND GAMBLE

No. 27. WARSAW, ILLINOIS, NOVEMBER 11, 1840. Vol. I.

The Western World, November 11, 1840. The masthead names Sharp and Gamble as publishers—the issue in which Sharp assumed editorial direction.

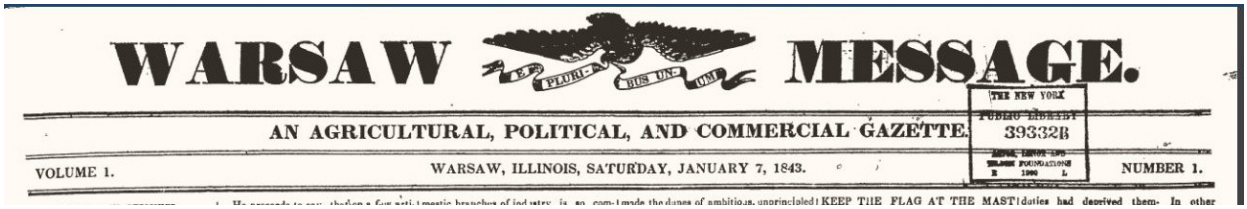

THE WARSAW SIGNAL.

DEVOTED TO POLITICS, AGRICULTURE, LITERATURE, COMMERCE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY, ON MAIN STREET, BY SHARP & GAMBLE.—T. C. SHARP, EDITOR. TERMS—TWO DOLLARS IN ADVANCE, OR THREE DOLLARS AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

Vol. II.—No. 1. WARSAW, ILLINOIS, MAY 12, 1841. WHOLE No. 53.

The Warsaw Signal, May 12, 1841. Sharp and Gamble remained publishers, and T. C. Sharp was explicitly identified as editor.


WARSAW MESSAGE.

AN AGRICULTURAL, POLITICAL, AND COMMERCIAL GAZETTE.

VOLUME 1. WARSAW, ILLINOIS, SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 1843. NUMBER 1.

The Warsaw Message, January 7, 1843. Its masthead names Gregg and Skinner as publishers and Thomas Gregg as editor. It was part of the printing-office succession, not an issue edited by Sharp.

Dates	Title and masthead evidence	Sharp's documented role
May–Nov. 1840	Western World under D. N. White	No role established before the November transfer.
11 Nov. 1840–11 May 1841	Western World, published by Sharp and Gamble	Co-publisher and editor; the November 11 masthead is the clearest contemporary business evidence.
12 May 1841–summer 1842	Warsaw Signal, published by Sharp and Gamble; T. C. Sharp, editor	Editor and initially co-publisher; Gamble withdrew late in 1841.
1843–early 1844	Warsaw Message, printed and published by Gregg and Skinner; Thomas Gregg, editor	Successor to the establishment after Sharp's financial loss. It belongs in the business succession, but its contents should not automatically be called Sharp's.
Feb. 1844–1846	Warsaw Signal restored	Owner-editor during the Expositor crisis, murders, trial, and final expulsion campaign.
Later Carthage years	Carthage Gazette	Editor and proprietor or part-owner during portions of his later career; exact years and W. O. Sharp's relationship require masthead-by-masthead confirmation.

The development of an anti Mormon editor

An initially measured observer

Sharp did not arrive in Warsaw as a fully formed anti-Mormon crusader. His earliest treatment of the Saints could be neutral or even sympathetic. He acknowledged their civil rights, described them as a persecuted people, and expressed admiration for the scale of their gathering. On April 6, 1841, he attended the Nauvoo Temple cornerstone ceremony as an honored guest, sat on the reviewing platform, received personal attention, and dined at Joseph Smith's home. His next issue praised the order of the gathering and the respectable appearance of the Nauvoo Legion.

Later tradition sometimes claimed that the display of military power at the cornerstone ceremony instantly converted Sharp into an enemy. The publication sequence does not sustain so simple an explanation. He printed no immediate denunciation. His decisive public turn came several weeks later.

The break in May and June 1841

On May 19, Sharp criticized Judge Stephen A. Douglas's appointment of John C. Bennett as master in chancery and questioned Bennett's character and sincerity. In an accompanying article, Sharp said the Saints deserved protection in the exercise of religion but warned that his press would oppose the concentration of political power in a religious body. The distinction was intelligible within antebellum republican thought, but it touched the most sensitive nerve in Nauvoo: the Saints' belief that political unity and expansive charter protections were necessary defenses against another Missouri expulsion.

Joseph Smith responded on May 26 by cancelling his subscription and branding Sharp's paper a source of lies and moral pollution. Sharp printed the letter on June 2 under a mocking headline, styled it a new revelation, and publicly demanded the three dollars owed for Smith's subscription. The exchange converted disagreement into personal combat. From that point Sharp repeatedly used sarcasm, ridicule, and alarm to define Nauvoo not simply as a rival town or unpopular religion but as an organized political danger.

Politics commerce and fear

Sharp's hostility cannot be reduced to theology. Nauvoo's charter, municipal court, militia, bloc voting, immigration, land development, and commercial ambitions appeared to many older settlers as a state within the state. The Saints, in turn, remembered dispossession in Missouri and interpreted hostile organization as preparation for renewed persecution. Each side could cite genuine provocations; each also magnified the other's intentions. Sharp proved exceptionally skilled at turning local incidents into a coherent narrative of threatened republican liberty.

His paper helped create the vocabulary of opposition. Supporters of the Saints became "Jack Mormons." Political competition was framed as submission to priestly rule. Reports of theft, habeas corpus disputes, militia displays, and electoral bargaining were arranged as evidence of a single system. Sharp did not invent every grievance, and many non-Mormons had serious constitutional concerns. His particular importance lay in repetition, selection, timing, and tone: week after week the Signal converted scattered anxieties into group identity.

From cancellation to powder and ball 1841 to 1844

The three years between Joseph Smith's subscription cancellation and Sharp's June 1844 call for "powder and ball" were not an empty interval. They were the period in which a personal newspaper quarrel became an organized county movement. On June 9, 1841, only a week after printing Smith's letter, Sharp published "Read and Ponder," warning readers about Mormon numerical and political ascendancy. During June and July the Signal promoted a county convention and an Anti-Mormon ticket. Its July 21 and July 28 issues defended organized opposition, reported hostile encounters with visitors from Nauvoo, and announced Anti-Mormon nominations. The movement therefore acquired candidates, conventions, and a durable public vocabulary within weeks of the cancellation dispute.

The Signal then developed recurring subjects that remained effective through 1844. Sharp attacked bloc voting and Joseph Smith's influence over civil choices; criticized the charter, municipal court, and Nauvoo Legion as concentrations of power; circulated allegations that Mormon offenders used Nauvoo institutions to escape outside process; and printed reports of theft and economic injury. The October 27, 1841 publication of a Kilbourne letter helped make alleged Mormon stealing a continuing political argument. Each subject allowed Sharp to present opposition as defense of law and property rather than persecution of belief.

The political contest sharpened in 1842. Sharp sought a seat in the Illinois House as a Whig and faced William Smith, Joseph Smith's brother and an apostle running with Democratic and Mormon support. William Smith's victory demonstrated that Nauvoo's vote could decide a county election and gave substance, in the minds of Sharp's followers, to his warnings about political control. At the same time, John C. Bennett's break with Joseph Smith supplied sensational allegations about Nauvoo's leadership,

while the dispute over Missouri's attempt to extradite Joseph and the use of habeas corpus reinforced complaints that Nauvoo stood beyond ordinary process. The pro-Mormon Wasp, and later the Nauvoo Neighbor, answered Sharp with ridicule and counterattack, making the newspaper conflict increasingly personal and communal.

Illustrative episode one the Boggs shooting and extradition crisis

On May 6, 1842, an unknown assailant shot and gravely wounded former Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs at his home in Independence. Boggs had signed Missouri's 1838 extermination order against the Latter-day Saints, giving the crime an immediate Mormon dimension in the public imagination. John C. Bennett, newly estranged from Joseph Smith, publicly alleged that Smith had directed Orrin Porter Rockwell to kill Boggs. On July 20 Boggs swore that he believed Joseph was an accessory before the fact; Missouri governor Thomas Reynolds then demanded his extradition from Illinois.

Sharp and the Signal did not originate the Missouri requisition, and no court found Joseph guilty of the charge. Sharp's role was to amplify the allegations and interpret the attempts to arrest and extradite Joseph as a test of whether Nauvoo would submit to outside law. The Signal's July 9, 1842 treatment of the Boggs affair, its publication of hostile accusations, and its broader commentary helped carry Bennett's claims from personal denunciation into Hancock County politics. To Sharp's readers, Joseph's periods in hiding and the protective action of Nauvoo officers looked like obstruction; to the Saints, surrender to Missouri threatened a repetition of imprisonment and mob violence.

Joseph was arrested in August 1842 and petitioned the Nauvoo Municipal Court for habeas corpus under a recently adopted ordinance. He continued to avoid officers while his lawyers sought relief. After another arrest in December, the matter reached the federal circuit court at Springfield. On January 5, 1843, Judge Nathaniel Pope discharged him because the extradition papers did not lawfully show that Joseph had fled from Missouri after committing the alleged offense; Joseph was in Illinois when Boggs was shot. The ruling resolved that requisition but did not decide who shot Boggs or whether anyone had solicited the crime.

The episode became a durable part of Sharp's case against Nauvoo. A legal victory for Joseph appeared to his supporters as protection against a defective and dangerous Missouri proceeding. Sharp presented the same result as evidence that charter powers, friendly officers, habeas corpus, and political influence repeatedly insulated the Mormon leader from accountability. That interpretive divide led directly into later controversies over arrests, extradition, and the reach of the Nauvoo Municipal Court.

Illustrative episode two elections and organized opposition

The 1842 legislative election gave the argument a measurable political form. Sharp's defeat by William Smith was not simply a personal reverse: it demonstrated that the concentrated Nauvoo vote could overwhelm the preferences of many scattered rural and river-town voters. Sharp thereafter treated bloc voting as proof that ordinary party competition could not restrain the Saints, while Nauvoo leaders viewed political unity as necessary protection in a hostile county.

Illustrative episode three the 1843 arrest and rescue controversy

In June 1843 Missouri again sought Joseph Smith, this time on an old treason indictment arising from the 1838 conflict. Missouri agent Joseph H. Reynolds and Hancock County constable Harmon T. Wilson arrested him near Dixon, Illinois. A Nauvoo party intervened, and the prisoners and officers were brought to Nauvoo, where the municipal court released Joseph on habeas corpus. Sharp and other opponents regarded the episode as another demonstration that no outside warrant could reach Joseph once he returned within Nauvoo's jurisdiction. The Saints emphasized alleged mistreatment by the arresting officers and the legal right to test the process. The same facts thus strengthened contrary stories of rescue from kidnapping and escape from law.

Illustrative episode four dissent and the Expositor

By early 1844 opposition was no longer confined to outsiders. William Law, Robert D. Foster, Charles A. Foster, Chauncey L. Higbee, and other dissenters accused Joseph of religious, marital, financial, and

political abuses. Sharp's restored Signal gave their movement a sympathetic audience beyond Nauvoo. When their Nauvoo Expositor appeared on June 7 and the city destroyed its press three days later, Sharp could present the act not as an isolated municipal error but as the culmination of the earlier Boggs, extradition, habeas corpus, election, and dissent controversies.

Sharp's loss of the press in the summer of 1842 interrupted his direct editorial control, but not the controversy. The successor Warsaw Message continued to print criticism of Nauvoo. When Sharp recovered the establishment in February 1844 and restored the Warsaw Signal name, he returned to a county already divided by elections, legal contests, rumors of crime, militia anxiety, and reciprocal newspaper abuse. Joseph Smith's presidential candidacy, the growth of the Council of Fifty, and the organization of dissenters around William Law and his associates supplied new evidence for Sharp's longstanding argument that religious and political power had become inseparable.

The Nauvoo Expositor did not create Sharp's militancy; it brought together themes he had cultivated since 1841. Its destruction on June 10, 1844, appeared to confirm his warnings about political domination, suppression of opponents, disregard of outside law, and danger to property. The leap from criticism to armed mobilization was morally consequential, but it was rhetorically prepared by three years of conventions, election defeats, legal disputes, crime allegations, and escalating exchanges between rival presses.

Sharp in his own words: a changing editorial voice

The following dated selections trace Sharp's movement from political criticism to personal ridicule, armed mobilization, and justification after the murders. Quotations retain the wording of the cited transcription; ellipses indicate omissions. Most are editorial statements from his press. The final selection is a signed public address preserved in another newspaper. Source notes identify the original issue and the accessible reproduction used.

19 May 1841 | Religious rights and political power

> *"it is bound to oppose the concentration of political power in a religious body, or in the hands of a few individuals."*

In "The Mormons," Sharp distinguished protection of religious belief from resistance to political concentration. This is an important starting point: his stated objection was to the combination of church leadership and public power. The later demand for armed action did not follow automatically from that distinction; it represented a further and consequential escalation. [S1]

2 June 1841 | A subscription dispute becomes personal

> *"Come, Josey, fork over, and for mercy's sake don't get a revelation that it is not to be paid."*

Sharp printed Joseph Smith's May 26 cancellation letter and demanded the unpaid subscription money. His mockery turned a disagreement about the paper's treatment of Nauvoo into a personal contest with the Prophet. The joke depended on portraying revelation as an instrument of convenience, a theme that made religious authority itself a target of his editorial ridicule. [S2]

31 January 1844 | A common cause needs a newspaper

> *"We have a common cause, and we want a common advocate."*

In proposals printed in the Warsaw Message for reviving the Signal, Sharp invited opponents of Nauvoo to rally around a common press. This was his proposal, not evidence that he edited that issue of the Message. The restored Signal began publication in February. The statement helps explain the paper's organizing purpose as well as its editorial tone. [S3]

29 May 1844 | Anticipating a violent death

> *"we would not be surprised to hear of his death by violent means in a short time."*

This statement appeared before the Nauvoo Expositor was published on June 7 and before its destruction on June 10. That sequence matters. The prospect of Joseph Smith's violent death already appeared in Sharp's newspaper; the destruction of the dissenters' press intensified an existing

campaign. The passage is evidence of the threatening climate and of Sharp's willingness to publicize it, not by itself proof of a completed murder plan. [S4]

5 June 1844 | Personal denunciation in the presidential contest

> *"Look in a mirror Joe and you will see the reflection of the most detestable wretch that the earth contains."*

"Joe Smith and Henry Clay" answered Smith's criticism of the Whig presidential candidate. The passage is worth retaining because its personal vilification connects the newspaper feud with national politics. It also shows how far Sharp's tone had traveled from a declared distinction between religious liberty and concentrated political power. The article preceded the destruction of the Expositor. [S5]

12 June 1844 | The call for powder and ball

> *"War and extermination is inevitable! … Let it be made with POWDER and BALL!!!"*

In the editorial on the destruction of the Expositor, Sharp urged readers to turn indignation into armed action. The Joseph Smith Papers dates the issue June 12, correcting the June 11 date in the previous version of this biography. This was an appeal published while the crisis was unfolding, fifteen days before Joseph and Hyrum were killed. Its significance lies in what it encouraged readers to do, not merely in its violent vocabulary. [S6]

12 June 1844 | Weapons as an alternative to law

> *"we have the consolation to know that steel and gun powder can."*

"Can Joe Smith Have a Fair Trial in This County?" argued that justice must be obtained even if legal process failed. The quoted ending supplied the alternative: weapons. Read beside the powder-and-ball editorial, it reveals the transition from demanding enforcement of law to endorsing force outside ordinary judicial proceedings. The Joseph Smith Papers reproduces the passage in its annotation to Smith's June 22–23 letter to Governor Ford. [S7]

29 June 1844 | Reporting the killings

> *"He fell heavily on the ground, and was soon dispatched. Hiram was shot in the jail."*

"Events of the Week," in a Signal extra two days after the murders, described Joseph's fall from the window and the deaths of both brothers. This is a contemporary newspaper account, not a statement that Sharp personally witnessed each event. Its importance is the early public account issued from his press before the later defenses of the killings. "Hiram" is retained as printed in the cited reproduction. [S8]

29 June 1844 | The deaths do not end the conflict

> *"Our opinion is, that either the old citizens or the Mormons must leave."*

The same day's extra made removal the proposed solution to the county's divisions. The deaths of Joseph and Hyrum had not satisfied the movement's broader objective. This brief declaration connects the crisis of June 1844 with the pressure for expulsion, the burning of settlements in 1845, and the forced departure of the remaining Saints in 1846, discussed later in this biography. [S9]

10 July 1844 | "The Act and the Apology"

> *"the course of law in the case of these wretches would have been a mere mockery"*

Sharp acknowledged that the brothers had been in legal custody, then argued that normal legal proceedings would not have delivered justice. Here "apology" means a defense or justification, not an expression of remorse. This is the clearest editorial counterpart to his earlier threat: before the murders, force could achieve what law could not; afterward, the supposed inadequacy of law could excuse the killings. His assertion records his rationale, not an established legal necessity. [S10]

September 1844 | A denial and a justification together

> *“I did not help to kill Joe Smith … guilty -- not of murder, but of an extra judicial execution.”*

In a signed address reprinted in the Sangamo Journal on October 3, Sharp denied going to the jail with the killers. Between the two quoted portions, he conditionally addressed whether his influence had helped produce the feeling that led to Smith’s death. He then substituted “execution” for “murder.” The distinction was his own defense. The reprinting described a manuscript address intended for his paper; it should not be mislabeled as a verified issue of the Signal. [S11]

What Junius and Joseph adds

Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister’s Junius and Joseph supplies useful context for Sharp’s January 1844 proposal to revive the Signal and preserves his June 29 report of the killings. Those passages strengthen the biography by showing a newspaper deliberately serving an opposition coalition, followed by the press’s immediate account of the deaths. The authors place Sharp within wider Illinois and national political networks and argue for a conspiracy extending beyond the local attackers. Their reconstruction is valuable as an interpretation to examine, but its broader claims should not be presented as settled findings. [S3, S8, S12]

Reviewers Susan Sessions Rugh and Michael W. Homer questioned the strength of the proposed national conspiracy. Their objections matter particularly where political association, legal representation, and later recollection are made to carry the weight of proof of an agreement to murder. This biography therefore adds the dated newspaper evidence while distinguishing it from the book’s more disputed reconstruction. Sharp’s inflammatory advocacy, his possible operational role, and the involvement of other political figures remain separate historical questions. [S12]

The Saints’ response in History of the Church

The newspaper campaign should also be read alongside the records of those threatened by it. History of the Church preserves a June 17, 1844 statement signed by John Taylor and fifteen other men, denying an allegation circulated against Hyrum Smith:

> *“Hyrum Smith did not make any threats, nor offer any reward against the Signal or its editor in the City Council.”*

The statement directly contests a justification for hostility toward the Smiths. It is evidence of a contemporary denial by named participants, rather than a reason to repeat Sharp’s allegation as an uncontested fact. The history also records W. W. Phelps reading a Signal extra to the Nauvoo Legion on June 18. This helps show how the Warsaw press’s threats reached the Saints and became part of their understanding of the immediate danger. The history’s extended version of Joseph’s speech on that occasion was compiled later from listeners’ reports and should not be treated as a contemporaneous verbatim transcript. [S13]

Contemporary correspondence confirms that pressure reached beyond Nauvoo. Isaac Morley’s June 16 letter reported demands that the Saints near Lima assist against Smith, relinquish their property and move, or surrender their arms and remain neutral. Smith’s reply urged vigilance and readiness while counseling calm. These documents connect the printed campaign to threats experienced in outlying settlements, without assuming that every hostile act was personally directed by Sharp. [S6]

Additional books identified for continued comparison

Two requested works remain important for a further comparison: An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, edited by Scott H. Faulring, and Glen M. Leonard’s Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise. The relevant book pages were not available for direct examination in this revision. No new quotation or page-specific claim is attributed to either book here. The documentary additions above instead cite the accessible History of the Church, contemporary newspapers, and Joseph Smith Papers. [S14]

The crisis of June 1844

The destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor press on June 10, 1844, supplied Sharp with the event that made his argument appear conclusive. The Expositor's publishers were dissenters and former insiders who accused Joseph Smith of abusing civic and religious authority. Acting under a Nauvoo City Council nuisance declaration, the city marshal destroyed the press. However the municipal lawyers defended the action, neighboring editors and citizens saw the destruction of a newspaper as an attack on property, due process, and freedom of the press.

Sharp's June 12 editorial declared that war and extermination were inevitable and called on citizens to answer with powder and ball. A June 14 extra printed resolutions from a Warsaw meeting demanding the surrender of Joseph Smith and his adherents and threatening a war of extermination if they were not delivered. These were not merely retrospective criticisms. They were mobilizing words published while armed companies were organizing and the county was moving toward violence.

Sharp operated within a network rather than alone. Colonel Levi Williams commanded the Fifty-ninth Regiment; Mark Aldrich commanded the Warsaw Independent Battalion; Jacob C. Davis was a lawyer and state senator; William N. Grover was a lawyer; Warsaw merchants, craftsmen, militia officers, and political activists supplied men, money, intelligence, and legitimacy. Sharp's distinctive function was public persuasion. His press gave the movement a continuing voice, linked Warsaw to sympathetic communities, and translated private anger into calls for collective action.

The killings of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

Joseph and Hyrum Smith surrendered and were confined in the Carthage jail under state authority. On June 27, 1844, an armed body attacked the jail and killed both brothers. The men who entered the jail and fired the fatal shots were not conclusively identified in court. Sharp's precise movements and degree of operational knowledge remain disputed. The evidentiary record supports strong conclusions about his political leadership and incendiary publications, but it does not establish that he personally entered the jail or fired a weapon.

Sharp's own post-killing editorial stance is nevertheless revealing. In the July 10 Signal he acknowledged that the brothers had been in legal custody but argued that ordinary legal process would have been a mockery. That language did not amount to a courtroom confession. It did show that he defended or rationalized extrajudicial killing after the fact and that his commitment to law was subordinated, in this instance, to his conviction that the law could not control Nauvoo.

Indictment flight surrender and trial

A Hancock County grand jury returned indictments on October 26, 1844, against nine men for the murders: Levi Williams, Mark Aldrich, Jacob C. Davis, Thomas C. Sharp, William N. Grover, William Voras or Vorhees, John Wills, Gallaher, and Allen. Four were not brought to trial. Sharp initially resisted arrest and left Illinois, but he negotiated a surrender under arrangements intended to protect the defendants and permit bail.

The trial began in May 1845 before Judge Richard M. Young. The five defendants who appeared were Sharp, Williams, Aldrich, Davis, and Grover. The defense included prominent lawyers Orville H. Browning, Archibald Williams, Calvin A. Warren, Onias C. Skinner, William A. Richardson, and Thomas Morrison. Josiah Lamborn led the prosecution, with James H. Ralston serving as state's attorney pro tempore. Jury selection became a struggle over who constituted an impartial Hancock County public. The defense successfully challenged the original jury machinery, and the resulting panel contained no Latter-day Saints.

The prosecution faced weak, compromised, or disputed witnesses, a county divided by fear, and the practical difficulty of proving a conspiracy whose participants had dispersed or maintained silence. On May 30 the jury acquitted all five defendants. The verdict must be stated plainly: Sharp was tried and found not guilty. "Acquitted" is more accurate than saying he was proved innocent, because criminal trials determine whether the state has carried its burden on the charge presented. The verdict also does

not erase the documentary evidence of his rhetoric and organization. Conversely, the rhetoric cannot be substituted for proof of his physical participation in the assault.

Why the prosecution failed

Trial problem	Effect on the case
Jury selection	The defense challenged the original method of selecting jurors. The final panel contained no Latter-day Saints, raising enduring questions about whether the jury represented the whole county while not, by itself, proving misconduct by any juror.
Witness credibility	William Daniels supplied dramatic testimony but was vulnerable to contradiction and impeachment. Other witnesses were reluctant, compromised, absent, or unable to place a defendant within the operational conspiracy.
Conspiracy proof	The state could show meetings, militia organization, hostile publications, and common purpose in opposing Nauvoo. It struggled to prove the additional step: an agreement by these five defendants to murder the prisoners.
County conditions	Fear, divided loyalties, community pressure, and the dispersal or silence of participants narrowed the evidence available in court.
Defense resources	Sharp and his co-defendants were represented by an unusually strong bar, including Orville H. Browning. The defense separated reprehensible rhetoric from legally sufficient proof of murder.
Meaning of the verdict	The not-guilty verdict ended the criminal prosecution of the five men tried. It did not adjudicate every participant's identity, pronounce the wider movement blameless, or convert political advocacy into proof of innocence in a broader historical sense.

The state did not need to prove that Sharp personally fired a weapon if it could establish a criminal agreement and acts in furtherance of it. In practice, however, the prosecution had to connect public agitation and political association to a particular conspiracy to murder. That was a much more difficult proposition than demonstrating hostility or showing that Sharp's writing contributed to the climate of violence.

Orville H Browning and the Lincoln connection

One of the most formidable members of the defense was Orville Hickman Browning of Quincy. Browning was already a leading Illinois Whig lawyer and former state legislator. He and Abraham Lincoln had served during overlapping years in the Illinois General Assembly, moved in the same Whig political world, shared Kentucky backgrounds, and developed a lifelong friendship. Browning's presence therefore connected the Carthage defense to the highest level of the Illinois bar and to the political circle from which Lincoln would later emerge.

Browning's later career makes the association especially striking. He became a Republican, was appointed to the United States Senate in 1861 to fill the seat left vacant by Stephen A. Douglas's death, and served in Washington during Lincoln's presidency. He was a trusted friend of the Lincoln family, kept a detailed diary valuable to historians of the administration, and was among those summoned after the president was shot. After the Civil War he served as secretary of the interior and briefly as acting attorney general under Andrew Johnson.

Browning's defense of Sharp and the other accused men in 1845 should not be read as evidence that Abraham Lincoln approved the anti-Mormon movement or participated in the case. Lincoln was not counsel in the trial. The proper significance is professional and political: Sharp's defense secured a lawyer of statewide reputation whose Whig associations included Lincoln and whose later national career demonstrates the caliber of counsel assembled for the defendants.

From acquittal to expulsion 1845 to 1846

Sharp's acquittal on May 30, 1845, did not end either his anti-Mormon activity or the county conflict. The intervening sixteen months carried Hancock County from a contested criminal trial to the forced removal

of the last poor Latter-day Saints after the Battle of Nauvoo. Sharp's principal role remained editorial and political rather than military: the Warsaw Signal supplied explanations, accusations, and renewed calls to action that helped keep expulsion before the non-Mormon public as the only durable solution.

The expulsion program actually predated the acquittal. Two days after the Smith murders, Sharp's June 29, 1844 extra declared that either the old citizens or the Mormons must leave. As spokesman for the Warsaw Committee of Safety, he was assigned to draft a letter urging Governor Ford to expel the Saints. Through late 1844 and early 1845 the Signal repeatedly printed headings such as "Mormon Thieves" and "Mormon Stealings," using alleged theft, resistance to outside legal process, militia power, and bloc voting to argue that ordinary coexistence had failed. This campaign helped prepare public support for repeal of the Nauvoo Charter in January 1845.

After the trial, violence accelerated. In September 1845 anti-Mormon bands burned homes at Morley's Settlement and elsewhere. Sheriff Jacob B. Backenstos organized a posse to resist them; during that crisis Frank Worrell, the former Carthage Jail guard officer, was shot and killed. On September 17 the Signal called men to arms and praised Worrell as "one of our best men." The language recalled Sharp's June 1844 mobilization. State troops and a Quincy citizens' committee finally helped broker the October 1845 understanding under which Brigham Young and the Twelve promised that the Saints would begin leaving in the spring.

The migration started in February 1846, and the Signal reported its progress. Yet the departure of thousands did not satisfy those who demanded that every Latter-day Saint leave or surrender political influence. Anti-Mormon meetings in June called upon the remaining Saints to depart. Armed camps formed, threats and hostage-taking resumed, and men accused of misconduct were whipped. Sharp described one such whipping as "tickling with the hickory," language that normalized vigilantism rather than condemning it.

In September 1846 roughly seven hundred anti-Mormon combatants confronted a smaller force of remaining Saints, new non-Mormon citizens, and state volunteers. After artillery and rifle fire in the Battle of Nauvoo, a negotiated treaty required the remaining Mormon population to leave or disperse as soon as it could cross the Mississippi. The available evidence does not establish that Sharp commanded troops in this final engagement. His responsibility was nonetheless substantial: he had helped define expulsion as the movement's objective, kept the movement's accusations before the public, and periodically converted crisis into a call for collective action. The soldiers completed in 1846 what the editor had publicly demanded since 1844.

Sharp's role between acquittal and expulsion

Sharp's participation should be described with precision. The record presently supports a sustained editorial and political role; it does not establish that he commanded the September 1846 attacking force.

Period	What happened	Sharp's evidenced role
May–Aug. 1845	The defendants were acquitted, but political reconciliation did not follow.	The Signal continued to portray coexistence as impossible and law enforcement as inadequate.
Sept.–Oct. 1845	Burnings at Morley and Green Plains, Backenstos's posse, the killing of Frank Worrell, and state intervention produced a removal agreement.	Sharp called men to arms and memorialized Worrell; his paper sustained the anti-Mormon interpretation of the crisis.
Feb.–June 1846	Large companies of Saints crossed the Mississippi, while poor families and later purchasers remained.	The Signal monitored the exodus but supported demands that the remaining Mormon population and political influence disappear.
Summer–Sept. 1846	Whippings, seizures, rival armed camps, and artillery culminated in the Battle of Nauvoo and a removal treaty.	No reliable evidence presently makes Sharp a battlefield commander. His documented contribution was advocacy, movement-building, and normalization of coercion.

After Nauvoo

Sharp's biography did not end with the acquittal or the Latter-day Saint exodus. He remained an influential citizen in the same county where the crisis had unfolded. In 1847 he was elected as one of Hancock County's delegates to the Illinois constitutional convention and helped frame the constitution adopted in 1848. Warsaw's incorporation brought him additional standing: local records list him as mayor in 1853 and 1854 and again from 1859 through 1861, and as city clerk in 1864 and 1865. His repeated election is evidence of sustained acceptance among Warsaw voters.

Sharp's party identity also evolved. The Signal began as a Whig paper. Later accounts describe him as a Democrat for a period, then as breaking with the Democrats over the Kansas-Nebraska Act and joining the emerging Republican Party. In 1856 he unsuccessfully sought a congressional seat. The political transition placed him within the anti-slavery Republican coalition without dissolving the older Hancock relationships through which he had first become prominent.

In December 1865 Sharp moved from Warsaw to Carthage. He served as Hancock County judge from 1865 to 1869, which permanently attached the honorific "Judge" to his name. He was president of the town of Carthage in 1872–1873. He continued legal practice and, for years, edited or owned an interest in the Carthage Gazette. By 1885 he practiced in the firm of Sharp and Berry Brothers with Orville F. Berry and Melvin P. Berry. The associated real-estate and loan business survived him and became part of the institutional ancestry of the Dime Savings Bank of Carthage.

Newspapers and publishing career

Publication	Sharp's connection	Context and significance
Western World, Warsaw	Editor and co-owner with James Gamble, November 1840 to May 1841.	Whig weekly inherited from David N. White; Sharp's earliest treatment of Nauvoo was often measured.
Warsaw Signal	Owner, editor, and publisher, May 1841 to summer 1842; resumed February 1844 through 1846. Partnerships included Gamble and later arrangements involving David E. Head and Galloway.	The principal vehicle for Sharp's anti-Mormon campaign and his most consequential public work.
Warsaw Message	Not Sharp's principal paper; successor title during the period after his 1842 default.	Explains the interruption in Sharp's ownership and the commercial fragility of local publishing.
Carthage Gazette	Editor and proprietor or co-proprietor for many years after moving to Carthage; later associated with W. O. Sharp.	Extended his influence from Warsaw into the county seat and aligned his later journalism with Republican politics.
Commercial and legal printing	The newspaper office printed notices, handbills, and job work in addition to news.	The press was a business and communications hub, not merely a platform for editorials.

Marriages household and kinship networks

Hannah Gregory Hardy Wilcox Sharp

Sharp married Hannah Gregory Hardy Wilcox on September 6, 1842, in Hancock County. Hannah was a widow and had a household history in Warsaw before her marriage to Sharp. The union rooted the

young eastern newcomer more firmly in the town's existing social world. She lived through the Signal years, the Smith murder trial, Sharp's municipal career, and the family's removal to Carthage. She died on October 3, 1879.

Published summaries identify W. O. or Will O. Sharp with the later Carthage Gazette and with Carthage civic and business life. The exact biological and step-relationship structure requires confirmation in marriage, probate, census, and family records before every connection can be stated definitively. This report therefore treats the Sharp household as a documented social unit while marking unresolved lines for the project's genealogical register.

Ann Elizabeth Wells Lawton Worrell Hewitt Sharp

Sharp married Ann Elizabeth Wells Lawton Worrell Hewitt in Hannibal, Missouri, on November 24 or 25, 1881; sources differ by one day. Her sequence of surnames reflects earlier marriages and placed Sharp within a broad stepfamily network. In particular, the Worrell name linked the household to descendants and relatives with a visible place in later Carthage society. Ann survived Sharp.

This second marriage is historically important not because it explains Sharp's actions in 1844—it occurred almost four decades later—but because it illuminates the respectable county-seat network in which he spent his final years. Marriage joined households, property, adult children, social obligations, and business acquaintances. The full project should trace Ann's Lawton, Worrell, and Hewitt connections through deeds, probate files, censuses, obituaries, and cemetery records rather than relying on name similarity alone.

Family and kinship: what can safely be said

Kinship can explain access to property, credit, newspaper work, and civic reputation, but it is also where repetition of an unsourced family tree can do the most damage. The biography therefore separates established relationships from research leads.

Relationship or question	Present assessment
Solomon Sharp and Jemimah Budd	Identified as Sharp's parents in biographical sources; Solomon's Methodist ministry provides a documented denominational setting for Sharp's youth.
Hannah Gregory Hardy Wilcox	Sharp's first wife, married in Hancock County on September 6, 1842; a widow whose earlier household and property connections should be reconstructed from original records.
W. O. or Will O. Sharp	Associated in later accounts with the Carthage Gazette and Carthage business life. The exact biological, step-, or other family relationship should remain unresolved until census, obituary, probate, or marriage evidence is found.
Ann Elizabeth Wells Lawton Worrell Hewitt	Sharp's second wife, married at Hannibal in November 1881. Her prior surnames indicate earlier marriages and a substantial stepfamily network.
Possible relationship to Frank Worrell	A shared surname is not evidence of kinship. No connection should be stated unless a documented line is established.

Community relationship map

Person or group	Relationship to Sharp	Why the connection matters
James Gamble	Early newspaper partner.	Helped acquire and operate the Western World and early Signal; shows that Sharp's press began as a partnership.
David N. White	Predecessor as Warsaw editor and seller of the Western World.	White's relatively sympathetic coverage provides a baseline for measuring Sharp's change.

Person or group	Relationship to Sharp	Why the connection matters
Thomas Gregg	Printer and later editor associated with the Signal.	Connected Sharp's publishing shop to the wider history-writing and newspaper world of Hancock County.
Joseph Smith	Subscriber, host, political adversary, and target of Sharp's editorials.	Their 1841 exchange personalized a broader contest over charter power, bloc voting, and public legitimacy.
John C. Bennett	Object of Sharp's May 1841 attack.	Bennett's public offices and rapid rise crystallized fears of Nauvoo political power.
Levi Williams and Mark Aldrich	Militia leaders and fellow murder defendants.	Represent the military arm of the Warsaw movement with which Sharp's press and political work interacted.
Jacob C. Davis and William N. Grover	Lawyers and fellow defendants.	Demonstrate the professional and political respectability within the anti-Mormon coalition.
David E. Head	Clerk, lawyer, and publishing associate in the mid-1840s.	Linked the Signal to county legal administration and the practical operation of the press.
Orville F. and Melvin P. Berry	Later law and business partners in Carthage.	Show Sharp's integration into postwar county legal, political, real-estate, and banking networks.
Warsaw merchants and militia households	Readers, advertisers, voters, and political allies.	The audience and commercial base that made Sharp's influence possible.
Hannah and Ann's family networks	Marriage and stepfamily relationships.	Anchored Sharp in Warsaw and Carthage society across two distinct phases of his life.

Character influence and historical responsibility

Sharp was intelligent, ambitious, witty, partisan, and persistent. His legal education made his editorials sound constitutional even when his conclusions moved beyond constitutional restraint. His hearing impairment may have redirected him from courtroom advocacy toward print, where he became more influential than he likely would have been as an ordinary young lawyer.

He was also a builder of institutions. Newspaper shops, party organizations, municipal government, courts, law firms, loan businesses, and family alliances formed the infrastructure of his authority. That later record helps explain why he was neither permanently ostracized nor reduced to the status of a fugitive after 1845. Among many non-Mormon neighbors, he had acted as a defender of their community. Among Latter-day Saints, his name became inseparable from a campaign that ended in murder and expulsion. Both memories arose from real features of his public life.

The fairest judgment is therefore neither exoneration nor caricature. Sharp articulated genuine concerns about concentrated municipal, military, judicial, and religious power in Nauvoo. He sometimes distinguished civil rights from political opposition. But he also helped strip opponents of ordinary civic legitimacy, printed language of extermination, and defended the rejection of legal process after the

Smiths were killed in state custody. His later civic service demonstrates social rehabilitation and local esteem; it does not cancel the consequences of his earlier words.

Sharp as his own historian

Late in life Sharp began an unfinished “Manuscript History of the Mormon War,” now associated with the Thomas C. Sharp and Allied Anti-Mormon Papers in Yale’s Coe Collection of Western Americana. It is indispensable but not neutral. A retrospective manuscript can preserve details omitted from newspapers, yet it can also soften, reorder, or justify decisions after the author knows how events ended. The most revealing method is to place the manuscript beside the dated Signal editorials, trial evidence, Governor Ford’s account, Latter-day Saint records, and recollections from Warsaw and Carthage.

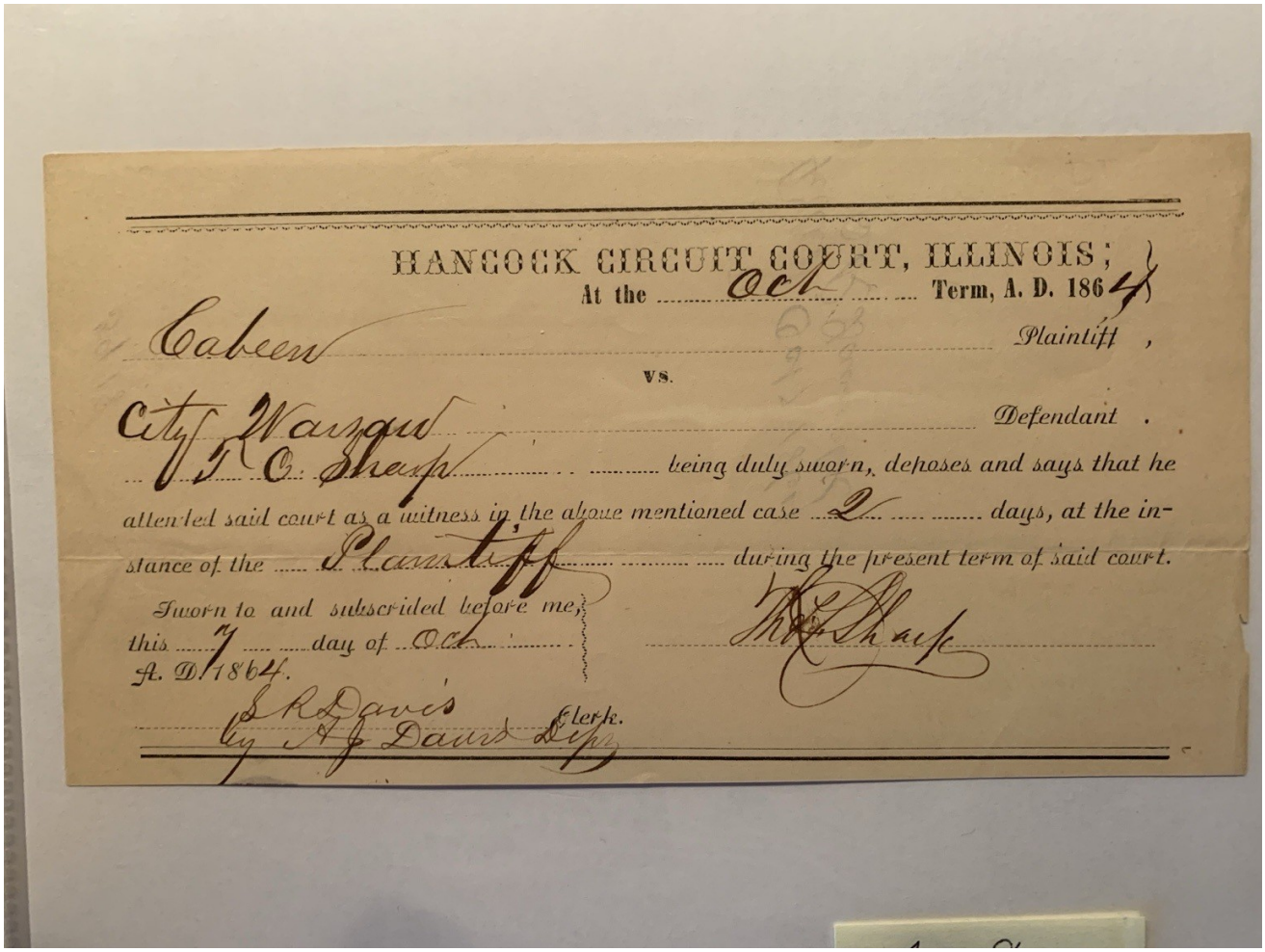
Reputation after 1846

Sharp’s neighbors repeatedly entrusted him with office after the Latter-day Saint departure. That fact is evidence of local standing, not a verdict on 1844. Hancock County commemorative histories tended to emphasize the educated lawyer, judge, mayor, editor, and businessman. Latter-day Saint memory emphasized the editor whose appeals preceded murder and expulsion. A balanced biography should not choose one memory and suppress the other; it should explain why the same career produced both.

The attached 1864 Hancock County document

The document that begins this project is a printed subpoena form from the Hancock Circuit Court for the October term of 1864. The handwriting appears to identify the action as Cahen or a similar surname v. Morgan and commands “T. C. Sharp” to appear as a witness. The clerk’s signature appears to be George W. Davis, but both the case caption and signature should remain provisional until compared with the circuit docket and known exemplars. The reverse carries a filing notation dated October 7, 1864.

Even without a final case identification, the subpoena is biographically useful. It places Sharp in the ordinary legal and commercial life of Hancock County twenty years after the Carthage killings and shortly before his removal from Warsaw to Carthage. He appears not as editor or murder defendant but as a witness whose knowledge mattered in a routine civil action. It is precisely the kind of document for which a reusable biography is valuable.



HANCOCK CIRCUIT COURT, ILLINOIS;

At the Oct Term, A. D. 1864

Caheen Plaintiff,

vs.

City Wagon Defendant.

T C Sharp being duly sworn, deposes and says that he attended said court as a witness in the above mentioned case 2 days, at the instance of the Plaintiff during the present term of said court.

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 7 day of Oct A. D. 1864.

T C Sharp

S R Davis Clerk.

by A J Davis Dep.

Figure 1 Front of the October 1864 Hancock Circuit Court subpoena naming T C Sharp as a witness

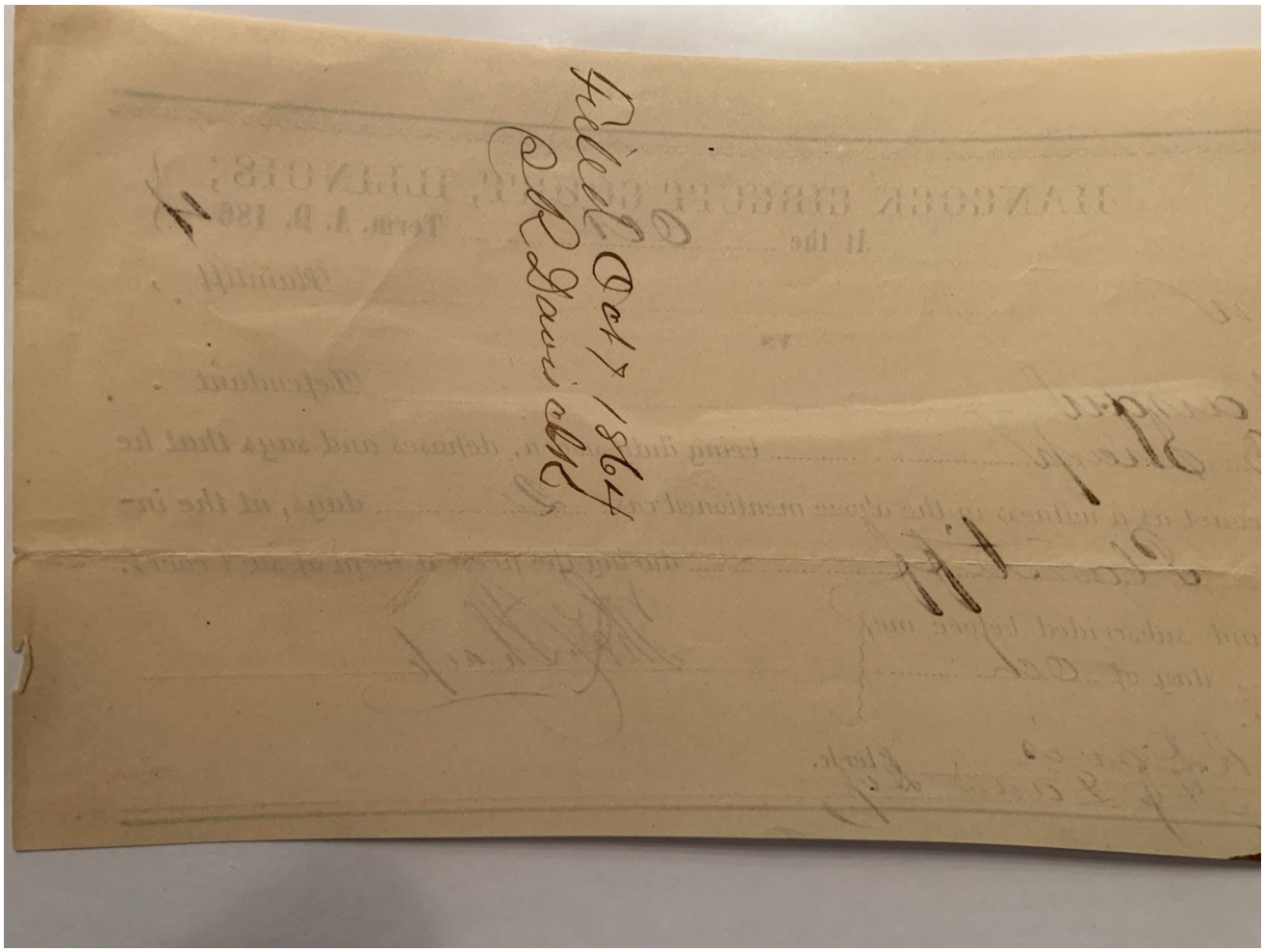


Figure 2 Reverse docket and filing notation

Evidence guide and remaining archival questions

- Confirm the 1864 case caption, parties, clerk, filing date, witness appearance, and disposition in the circuit docket and minute book.
- Reconstruct both households through federal and state censuses, marriage returns, deeds, probate files, obituaries, and cemetery records.
- Determine precisely whether W. O. Sharp was a son, stepson, or other relation and document his role in the Carthage Gazette.
- Create a verified ownership and partnership chronology for the Western World, Warsaw Signal, Warsaw Message, and Carthage Gazette from contemporary mastheads and notices.
- Search Sharp’s surviving correspondence, including political letters and any Thomas Coke Sharp papers, for his private explanation of the 1841 break and the 1844 crisis.
- Compare Sharp’s anti-Mormon rhetoric with other Warsaw and Carthage editors so that his individual influence is not confused with the movement as a whole.
- Trace land, tax, loan, and business records connecting Sharp with the Berry brothers and other Carthage partners.
- Identify documented Masonic, church, militia, and fraternal ties; none should be inferred merely from social proximity.

Sources for the expanded newspaper selections

Original publication dates govern the chronology. Online reproductions and scholarly transcriptions are identified below so that quotations can be checked; they are not represented as personal inspection of every original newspaper sheet. Accessed September 30, 2026.

[S1] “The Mormons,” Warsaw Signal, May 19, 1841; quoted in Joseph Smith Papers, Introduction to Documents, Volume 8, February–November 1841. Open source

[S2] Warsaw Signal, June 2, 1841, “Highly Important!!” and the response to Smith’s cancellation; transcription reproduced on Truth and Grace. The site’s modern heading is not the original newspaper title. Open source

[S3] Sharp, “Proposals for resuscitating the Warsaw Signal,” Warsaw Message, January 31, 1844; reproduced in Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister, Junius and Joseph (Utah State University Press, 2005), 86–87, including note 24. Open source

[S4] Warsaw Signal, May 29, 1844, p. 2; quoted in “A Question on My Mind: Robert McCorkle’s 1844 Letter to Joseph Smith,” BYU Studies, note 23. Open source

[S5] “Joe Smith and Henry Clay,” Warsaw Signal, June 5, 1844; transcription and source image reference in the B. H. Roberts Foundation archive. Open source

[S6] Warsaw Signal, June 12, 1844, p. 2, editorial on the Expositor; see Brett D. Dowdle, “Stirring up Strife,” Joseph Smith Papers, notes 1–6. The same article links the June 14 extra and the June 16 Morley correspondence. Open source

[S7] “Can Joe Smith Have a Fair Trial in This County?,” Warsaw Signal, June 12, 1844, p. 2; reproduced in the annotations to Joseph Smith’s letter to Thomas Ford, June 22–23, 1844, page 3, Joseph Smith Papers. Open source

[S8] “Events of the Week,” Warsaw Signal, Extra, June 29, 1844; reproduced in Wicks and Foister, Junius and Joseph, 201–202. The quotation follows their transcription. Open source

[S9] Warsaw Signal, Extra, June 29, 1844; quoted in Marshall Hamilton, “From Assassination to Expulsion: Two Years of Distrust, Hostility, and Violence,” BYU Studies 32, nos. 1–2 (1992). Open source

[S10] “The Act and the Apology,” Warsaw Signal, July 10, 1844. For discussion and identification, see Joseph Smith Papers, The Road to Carthage, episode 4 transcript. The quoted clause is also reproduced in the biographical entry “Thomas C. Sharp.” Open source

[S10a] Additional accessible reproduction of the July 10 clause: “Thomas C. Sharp,” section on the Warsaw Signal. Open source

[S11] Sharp’s signed address, September 1844, in “The Mormon Troubles,” Sangamo Journal, October 3, 1844, reprinting the St. Louis Republican; transcription on Truth and Grace. The introductory account distinguishes the supplied manuscript from an observed Signal printing. Open source

[S12] Wicks and Foister, Junius and Joseph, especially 261–269 for the wider conspiracy interpretation. Publisher’s record supplies full bibliographic information. Open source

[S12a] Susan Sessions Rugh, review of Junius and Joseph, BYU Studies 45, no. 4 (2006). Open source

[S12b] Michael W. Homer, “A National Conspiracy?,” Dialogue 39, no. 2 (2006), review of Junius and Joseph. Open source

[S13] History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 6:495, 497–500. The June 17 certificate is at p. 495; the June 18 account identifies the later compilation of the speech. Project Gutenberg transcription. Open source

[S14] For subsequent direct review: Scott H. Faulring, ed., An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith (Signature Books, 1987); Glen M. Leonard, Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise (Deseret Book / Brigham Young University Press, 2002). These are research leads, not sources for new quotations in this revision.

Selected source foundation

Editorial and image source notes

Newspaper mastheads and issue dates are taken from the Digital Archives of the Warsaw Public Library. The May 12, 1841 Signal identifies Sharp and Gamble as publishers and Sharp as editor. The January 7, 1843 Message identifies Gregg and Skinner as publishers and Thomas Gregg as editor. The portrait reproduced here appears in the Famous Trials Carthage collection; its earlier provenance

remains to be identified. The 1864 subpoena photographs are from the document owner’s collection. The geographic figure is an explanatory locator diagram, not a cadastral map.

- Joseph Smith Papers, “Sharp, Thomas Coke,” biographical directory, and the legal record of State of Illinois v. Williams et al.
- Joseph Smith Papers, “Letter to Thomas Sharp, 26 May 1841,” including the Warsaw Signal publication context.
- Warsaw Signal, especially issues of 1841 and June–July 1844; digital runs at the Church History Library and Warsaw newspaper archive.
- Marshall Hamilton, “Thomas Sharp’s Turning Point: Birth of an Anti-Mormon,” Sunstone 13, no. 5 (October 1989), 16–23.
- Marshall Hamilton, “From Assassination to Expulsion: Two Years of Distrust, Hostility, and Violence,” BYU Studies 32, nos. 1–2 (1992).
- Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith (1975).
- Joseph Smith Papers, trial accounts, indictment, jury records, arguments, instructions, and verdict in State of Illinois v. Williams et al.
- Joseph Smith Papers, “Appendix 1: Missouri Extradition Attempt, 1842–1843,” and related Boggs affidavit, requisition, habeas corpus, and federal court records.
- Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, eds., The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library.
- Thomas Gregg, History of Hancock County, Illinois (1880).
- Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Hancock County, vol. 2 (1921), sections on courts, municipalities, newspapers, law firms, and banking.
- Papers of Abraham Lincoln, entries for Thomas C. Sharp and the Warsaw Signal.
- Hancock County and Carthage newspaper obituaries published after Sharp’s death in April 1894.
- Illinois constitutional convention proceedings and Hancock County municipal and county office lists.
- Attached original subpoena, Hancock Circuit Court, October term 1864, private collection.

Assessment for future Thomas Sharp documents

This biography should accompany future Sharp documents as a living reference rather than force every artifact into the 1844 narrative. A legal paper from the 1860s, a Gazette item from the 1870s, or a business instrument from the 1880s belongs to a different phase of the same life. Each new document should be entered into the chronology, tied to the relevant household and professional network, transcribed separately, and used to correct—not merely illustrate—the developing biography.