



*Merrell Quentin ("M. Q.") Sharpe*

## *Dakota Images*

Merrell Quentin ("M. Q.") Sharpe, governor of South Dakota from 1943 to 1947, was born at Marysville, Kansas, on 11 January 1888. He was educated in the Axtell, Kansas, public schools and was a teacher in rural schools between 1905 and 1907, when he enlisted in the United States Navy. During his four-year stint as a yeoman on the presidential yacht, his widowed mother moved the family home to a homestead claim in Lyman County, South Dakota.

After his discharge from the navy, Sharpe attended the Kansas City, Missouri, Night School of Law and in 1914 received his LL.B. degree from the University of South Dakota. During World War I, he left his private law practice in Oacoma to serve in the army. Upon returning, he married Emily L. Auld, and the couple had one child, Lorna. In the early 1920s, Sharpe moved his law office from Oacoma to the new seat of Lyman County at Kennebec, where he would spend the rest of his career except for periods of public service.

Between 1916 and 1920, Sharpe served as state's attorney for Lyman County and in 1929 was elected attorney general for South Dakota. During his two terms of service lasting until 1933, he conducted investigations of the Banking and Rural Credits, Highway, and Finance departments. The state Supreme Court later appointed him chairman of the South Dakota Code Commission, which produced the modernized 1939 South Dakota Code. In 1942, and again in 1944, Sharpe was elected governor of South Dakota. As governor, he promoted education, the war effort, the tourist industry, and in particular, the development of the Missouri River.

In 1941, Sharpe had proposed the formation of the Missouri River States Committee to formulate plans to develop the Missouri River for flood control, navigation, irrigation, and electrical power. The committee, made up of representatives of several Missouri River Basin states with Sharpe as its first chairman, worked to reconcile the interests of upstream and downstream states and with the federal government's departments of reclamation and army engineers to implement the Pick-Sloan plan.

After his loss to George Mickelson in the 1946 Republican gubernatorial primary, Sharpe returned to his law practice in Kennebec and the management of his ranching and manganese-mining interests near Oacoma. M. Q. Sharpe died on 22 January 1962.

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