

Sharp, Hunter ^[1]

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by James Elliott Moore, 1994

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Hunter Sharp, diplomat, was born at Harrellsville in [Hertford County](#) ^[2], the son of Colonel Starkey and Jane Lewis Sharp. The Sharps were large landowners and active in local affairs. After being prepared for college at Harrellsville, young Sharp entered [Trinity College](#) ^[3], Durham, in September 1876. Two years later he transferred to [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[4], where he remained from 1879 to 1881. He concluded his studies at the University of Maryland during 1881–82. Sharp had originally intended to become a surgeon but abandoned the idea and returned to Harrellsville.

Shortly afterwards he accompanied his sister Frances to Japan to join her husband, Thomas R. Jernigan, who was American consul at Kobe. In 1886 Sharp was appointed marshal and vice-consul for Osaka and Hioga and thus began a diplomatic career that lasted for thirty-seven years. From 1900 to 1902 he was vice-consul and later deputy consul and interpreter at the same post. In 1902 he was transferred to Kobe as vice-consul.

Sharp and his wife built a home in Kobe. He led an active social life and was fond of rowing and sulky racing. In addition, he became known in diplomatic circles as an inveterate collector of fine china. In fact, his dinner guests invariably lifted their plates to read the makers' names.

Sharp was legislated out of office by the election of President [William H. Taft](#) ^[5]. Furthermore, he learned that the U.S. government intended to close the American consulate at Kobe. After traveling to Washington, D.C., Sharp was granted an interview with the president. Taft was so impressed with Sharp's arguments that he not only decided to retain the consulate in Kobe but also instructed him to return to that city as the U.S. consul (1905).

In 1908 Sharp was sent to Russia as consul general in order to transfer the consulate from St. Petersburg to Moscow. Once this was accomplished, he began collecting rugs. However, because he suffered with pneumonia and hardening of the arteries—a consequence of the harsh climate—he was allowed to leave after only ten months in Moscow.

The following year he was transferred to France and became consul at Lyons (1909–11). Despite a pleasant eighteen months there, Sharp wished his children to be educated in an English-speaking country and applied for the position of American consul at Belfast, Ireland. His request was granted, and for the next nine and one-half years (1911–20) he was stationed in Belfast. During [World War I](#) ^[6] Sharp found his work especially demanding. Whenever an American ship was sunk by the Germans, it was his responsibility to do everything possible for the survivors. With a small staff to aid him, he often worked far into the night. Meanwhile, his wife headed the [American Red Cross](#) ^[7] for Northern Ireland.

In 1920 Sharp was appointed consul at Edinburgh and the family moved to Scotland. After he died three years later in the Scottish capital, his remains were returned to North Carolina and interred in the family cemetery at Harrellsville.

On 27 June 1900, in Swarthmore, Pa., Sharp married May Adelaide Suydam. They were the parents of three children: Myra Adelaide, Dorothy Katherine, and Hubbard.

References:

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