

Sharp, Jacob Hunter ^[1]

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by Gary Terpening, 1994

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Jacob Hunter Sharp, lawyer, Confederate officer, legislator, and newspaper editor, was born in Hertford County ^[2] and at an early age moved with his family to Pickens County, Ala. Not long after arriving in that state, however, the family moved again and settled in Columbus, Miss. Both his father, Mississippi state senator Elisha Hunter Sharp, and his mother, Sallie Carter Sharp, were North Carolinians.

Sharp attended the University of Alabama ^[3] from 1850 to 1851, studied law, and was admitted to the bar in Lowndes County, Miss., sometime before the Civil War ^[4] began. He and his older brother, Thomas L. Sharp, became partners in a law practice in Columbus.

When the Confederate States government was established, Sharp and his brother enlisted as privates in the Tombigbee Rangers. Jacob soon was chosen to be captain of his company, which was part of the battalion commanded by Colonel A. K. Blythe. After Blythe's death at the Battle of Shiloh, Sharp was elevated to colonel of the reorganized unit, which became the Forty-fourth Mississippi Infantry.

Sharp was commended frequently by superior officers for bravery and gallantry in action. Among the battles in which he was engaged in Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina were Shiloh, Murfreesboro ^[5], Chickamauga, Jonesboro, Franklin ^[6], Nashville, Atlanta, and Bentonville. When the commander of the Forty-fourth Division was killed, Sharp was promoted temporarily to the rank of brigadier general and received his commission on 28 July 1864. He surrendered his command at Greensboro ^[7] in April 1865.

After the war Sharp returned to Columbus and entered into a law practice with J. E. Leigh and later with W. W. Humphries. He was elected to the state legislature in 1886, 1888, 1890, 1892, 1900, and 1902 and served as speaker of the house during the session of 1886–88. In 1903 he made an unsuccessful bid for the office of state treasurer.

Sharp was active in Reconstruction politics, and in 1879 he became owner and editor of the *Columbus Independent*. He participated in white supremacy movements and was made head of the Ku Klux Klan ^[8] in Lowndes County. After several years of failing health, Sharp died in Columbus and was buried in Friendship Cemetery. His portrait, showing him in military uniform, hangs in the Mississippi Hall of Fame. He was married to Sallie Harris, the daughter of a Mississippi judge with whom he read law. They had one son, T. H.

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