

Morris Sheppard

(1875-1941)

Born in Wheatville, Texas, Morris Sheppard was elected as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1902, succeeding his father. In 1913 he resigned his seat following his election by the Texas legislature to the U.S. Senate to fill a vacancy; he was subsequently reelected four times. At the time of his death in 1941, Sheppard was senior in overall service among all members of Congress.

During his years in the Senate, Sheppard was chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, and he acted as Democratic whip between 1929 and 1933. He led the fight for adoption of the prohibition amendment to the Constitution and strongly supported women's suffrage. As a progressive Democrat, Sheppard advocated reform legislation promoting rural credit programs, child labor laws, and antitrust laws. Also among his list of accomplishments was the Sheppard-Towner Act, which provided for maternity and infant welfare, the Federal Credit Union Act, the Selective Service Act, and the Lend-Lease Act. Standing only five feet, four inches tall, he was a quiet man who was most effective behind the scenes rather than in active debate. Sheppard was a dedicated student of English literature who compiled an unpublished 35-volume work entitled *Selected Comments of Shakespeare on Over 4,000 Subjects*.

Boris Gordon executed this portrait of Morris Sheppard in 1941, shortly after the senator's death. A gift to the Senate from Sheppard's family, it was accepted and unveiled later that year. The painting is based on Gordon's 1937 life study of the senator, now in the collection of the Texas State Capitol in Austin. Known in his day as the "painter of presidents," Boris Gordon was born in Switzerland and pursued his art studies in England, Germany, and Italy. He immigrated to the United States in 1907, fought as a U.S. Marine in World War I, and settled in Washington, D.C., where he painted portraits of numerous political figures. In addition to the portrait of Sheppard, 12 other works by Gordon hang in the U.S. Capitol; another 37 paintings are found in the collections of state capitols.



Boris Gordon replicated this 1937 painting of Morris Sheppard for the United States Senate.

(Courtesy of the State Preservation Board, Austin, Texas)

Morris Sheppard

Boris Bernhard Gordon (1890-1976)

Oil on canvas, 1941

41 ½ x 33 ½ inches (105.4 x 85.1 cm)

Signed and dated (lower right corner): Boris B. Gordon-1941.

Gift of the family of Morris Sheppard, 1941

Accepted by the U.S. Senate, 1941

Cat. no. 32.00021

