

Empie, Adam ^[1]

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by Alice R. Cotten, 1986

5 Sept. 1785–6 Nov. 1860

Adam Empie, clergyman and educator, was born in Schenectady, N.Y., the son of John Empie, of Dutch descent. Empie was educated at [Union College, Schenectady](#) ^[2]. Ordained in the Protestant Episcopal church, he began his ministry in 1809 as assistant rector of St. George's Church in Hempstead, Long Island. In November 1811 the Reverend Mr. Empie went to St. James Parish in [Wilmington](#) ^[3], N.C., where his energy and enthusiasm greatly enlarged the church.

In the spring of 1814, Empie left Wilmington to become chaplain and professor of geography, history, and ethics at the [U.S. Military Academy](#) ^[4] at West Point. He returned to St. James Parish in 1816 or 1817. Under his direction the church again grew, services expanded, and the side galleries had to be opened to accommodate the parishioners. While serving in Wilmington, Empie was active in trying to organize the [Episcopal](#) ^[5] church in North Carolina.

Empie again left Wilmington in 1827 to assume the presidency of the [College of William and Mary](#) ^[6] in Williamsburg, Va. During his administration, which lasted until 1836, the college grew and prospered. Then, after a brief stint as principal of the Episcopal diocesan school in [Raleigh](#) ^[7], Empie moved to Richmond, Va., in 1837. In Richmond his congregation soon built a church and named it St. James in honor of Empie's former Wilmington parish. In 1853, he resigned because of poor health and returned to Wilmington to live with one of his sons. He died in Wilmington and was buried in Oakdale Cemetery.

On 24 Mar. 1814 Empie married Ann Eliza Wright, daughter of Judge Joshua Wright of Wilmington. She died in Richmond in 1842. They had five children: John Joshua, Anna Catharina, Adam, Charles Wright, and Ann Smith. Empie was the author of several books and pamphlets on religious subjects.

References:

Caroline D. Flanner and Leora Hiatt McEachern, *St. James Church, Wilmington, N.C., 1729–1974* (1974).

The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, vol. 3 (1893).

John H. Wheeler, *Reminiscences and Memoirs of North Carolina and Eminent North Carolinians* (1884).

Additional Resources:

"Adam Empie, D.d." N.C. Highway Historical Marker D-59, N.C. Office of Archives & History.

<https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=D-59> ^[8] (accessed July 29, 2013).

Students of the University of Virginia, 1825-1874. Brief biographies of early students of the University of Virginia:

<http://uvastudents.wordpress.com/2011/11/11/adam-empie-1-jul-1821-10-jul-1877/> ^[9]

Empie, Adam (1785-1860). William and Mary: <http://scdb.swem.wm.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=1082> ^[10]

Empie, Adam 1785-1860 in WorldCat: <https://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-nr97-25906> ^[11]

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Authors:

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Origin - location:

[Wilmington](#) ^[16]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[17]

1 January 1986 | Cotten, Alice R.

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/empie-adam> [2] <http://www.union.edu/> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/wilmington> [4] <http://www.usma.edu/SitePages/Home.aspx> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/religion/episcopal-church> [6] <http://www.wm.edu/> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/raleigh> [8] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=D-59> [9] <http://uvastudents.wordpress.com/2011/11/11/adam-empie-1-jul-1821-10-jul-1877/> [10] <http://scdb.swem.wm.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=1082> [11] <https://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-nr97-25906> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/clergy> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/educators> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/cotten-alice-r> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-39> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>