

Wilson, John Makemie ^[1]

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by Thomas H. Spence, Jr., 1996

1769–30 July 1831

See also: [Wilson, Alexander Erwin](#) ^[2]

John Makemie Wilson, [Presbyterian](#) ^[3] minister and schoolman, was the son of James and Margaret Makemie Wilson. Born in [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[4], about six miles east of [Charlotte](#) ^[5], he was a relative of [Andrew Jackson](#) ^[6], who, with his mother, spent several months (September 1780–February 1781) in the Wilson home as a refugee from the British army during its invasion of South Carolina. For his early education he was a student of Dr. Thomas Henderson of Charlotte, then attended Hampden-Sydney College from which he was graduated with high honors. Wilson studied theology under the Reverend [James Hall](#) ^[7] of [Iredell County](#) ^[8]. After his licensure by Orange Presbytery in the summer of 1793, he spent two months (December 1793–January 1794) on a missionary tour of eastern North Carolina, during which he "rode nearly a thousand miles." Orange Presbytery ordained him to the gospel ministry between May and 1 Oct. 1795, after which he served as pastor of the Quaker Meadows Church of [Burke County](#) ^[9] until 1801.

In that year he accepted a call to the Rocky River and Philadelphia churches, situated in [Cabarrus](#) ^[10] and Mecklenburg counties, respectively, where he served until the time of his death. During his early ministry at Rocky River, the church erected a new sanctuary that was completed in 1807. In addition to his ministerial duties, he established and operated Rocky River Academy (incorporated 1812) until about 1824. Twenty-five of his students entered the ministry, about fifteen of whom were from the Rocky River congregation.

While at Quaker Meadows, Wilson married Mary (Pretty Polly) Erwin of Burke County. They had five sons and four daughters. Two sons, John Makemie, Jr., and Alexander E., entered the Presbyterian ministry, the latter serving as missionary in Africa. In 1829 [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[11] conferred on the Rocky River pastor the D.D. degree. He was the author of sermons on the deaths of the Reverend [Samuel E. McCorkle](#) ^[12] and the Reverend [Lewis F. Wilson](#) ^[13]. John Makemie Wilson died suddenly at his home, which was located between his two churches, and was buried at Rocky River. No portrait of him has been located, nor have his papers been preserved.

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