

## **Pettigrew, William** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Pettigrew, William Shepard**

by Brenda Marks Eagles, 1994; Revised by Jared Dease, Government and Heritage Library, December 2022

**3 Oct. 1818–27 July 1900**



Portrait of William Shepard Pettigrew. Image from [Archive.org/N.C.](https://archive.org/N.C.) Department of Archives and History.

<sup>[2]</sup>William Shepard Pettigrew, planter and clergyman, was born at Bonarva plantation on Lake Scuppernong (now Lake Phelps) in [Tyrrell County](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, the son of Ebenezer and Ann Blount Shepard Pettigrew. He was the older brother of [James Johnston Pettigrew](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and the grandson of the Reverend [Charles Pettigrew](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, first bishop-elect of the Protestant [Episcopal church](#) <sup>[6]</sup> in North Carolina.

Pettigrew received his preparatory schooling at [Hillsborough Academy](#) <sup>[7]</sup>. He attended [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[8]</sup> from 1834 to 1837, studied law, and was awarded the A.M. degree in 1838. In 1837 he settled in [Washington County](#) <sup>[9]</sup> at Belgrade, one of the Pettigrew plantations that was given to him on his twenty-first birthday by his father. Magnolia plantation, in nearby Tyrrell County, was a bequest to Pettigrew on his father's death in 1848. Pettigrew remained a planter on Belgrade and Magnolia plantations until Federal occupation of his home counties in 1863. Due to his poor health, summers during the planter years were often spent at the Virginia hot springs. During these and other absences, he left the management of the plantations to two Black foreman whom he enslaved, Moses and Henry. [Correspondence between Pettigrew and the foremen](#) <sup>[10]</sup> through a white intermediary is included in the [Pettigrew Family Papers](#) <sup>[11]</sup> in the Southern Historical Collection at Chapel Hill.

A member of the North Carolina [Secession Convention](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, Pettigrew was a former [Whig](#) <sup>[13]</sup> who had opposed secession but became a secessionist when Abraham Lincoln issued his call for troops. Pettigrew joined the Senior Reserves of [Edgecombe County](#) <sup>[14]</sup> in 1864. After the war he returned to the plantations and engaged for several years in various tenant arrangements that proved unsuccessful due largely to the depressed economy. He was ultimately sold both plantations to pay his mounting debts and taxes.

On 31 Jan. 1869 Pettigrew was ordained a deacon in the Protestant Episcopal church at St. James's Church in [Wilmington](#) <sup>[15]</sup>, and for a short time he officiated at St. David's Church in Scuppernong, where he had been a lay reader for two years. On 12 June 1870 Pettigrew was ordained a priest at St. James's Church, and in the same year he became rector of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Henderson and of [St. John's Church](#) <sup>[16]</sup> in Williamsboro. In 1878 he resigned from the Henderson church and accepted the parish of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd in Ridgeway. He took over a mission at Middleburg in 1884 and served it, as well as the Williamsboro and Ridgeway parishes, until his death.

Pettigrew never married; a courtship disappointment at age twenty-seven permanently confirmed him in bachelorhood. He died at age eighty-one at the rectory in Ridgeway and was buried the following day in the near-by churchyard.

#### **References:**

Daniel L. Grant, *Alumni History of the University of North Carolina* (1924).

Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, ed., *The Pettigrew Papers* <sup>[17]</sup>, vols. 1–2 (1971, 1988 [portrait](#) <sup>[2]</sup>).

John G. McCormick, *Personnel of the Convention of 1861* (1900).

*Pettigrew Family Papers* <sup>[11]</sup> (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill).

Protestant Episcopal Church *Journal* (1901).

### Additional Resources:

Correspondence Of William Pettigrew Plantation & Slave Owner North Carolina and Moses & Henry Black Drivers on the Pettigrew Plantations 1856-1857\* Selections." *The Making of African American Identity: Vol. I, 1500-1865*. National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox.

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text4/mosesandhenry.pdf> <sup>[10]</sup> (accessed June 3, 2013).

Cheshire, Joseph Blount. *Address of the Bishop of North Carolina to the Convention of the Diocese of North Carolina, 1901*. [North Carolina : s.n.]. 1901. 2-3. <https://archive.org/stream/addressofbishops1901ches#page/2/mode/2up> <sup>[18]</sup> (accessed June 3, 2013).

### Image Credits:

"William Shepard Pettigrew, the second surviving son of Ebenezer and Nancy Pettigrew, was born in 1818. Photograph of a portrait courtesy of Mrs. John H. Daniels." *The Pettigrew papers volume 2*. Raleigh [N.C.] : State Dept. of Archives and History. 1988. <https://archive.org/stream/pettigrewpapers1988lemm#page/n229/mode/2up> <sup>[2]</sup> (accessed June 3, 2013).

### Subjects:

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### Origin - location:

[Edgecombe County](#) <sup>[25]</sup>

[Wilmington](#) <sup>[26]</sup>

[Tyrrell County](#) <sup>[27]</sup>

[Washington County](#) <sup>[28]</sup>

[Henderson](#) <sup>[29]</sup>

### From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).<sup>[30]</sup>

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