



225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1789-2014



## George Bethune Adams

**Born:**

April 3, 1845  
Philadelphia, PA

**Received Commission:**

December 17, 1901

**Died:**

October 9, 1911  
Hague, NY

George B. Adams, born in Philadelphia, was educated there in public and private schools. In 1861, although underage, he enlisted in a Pennsylvania regiment in the United States Army. He served its three-month commitment and then returned to school. In 1863, after Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania, Adams reenlisted, joining the Quartermaster's Department of the Army and serving until 1871.

After some work as a merchant, Adams began to study law in Philadelphia and was admitted to the Pennsylvania bar. In 1883, he moved to New York City, entering the office of Beebe & Wilcox. After Judge Beebe died in 1884, Adams became a member of the firm, renamed Wilcox, Adams & Green. He worked there until his judicial appointment, specializing in maritime law and arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court in *The Kate* (1896).

In summer 1901, as Judge Addison Brown was preparing to retire as the SDNY's sole judge, New York's maritime bar passed a resolution urging Adams's appointment to succeed Judge Brown. On August 30, President McKinley made a recess appointment of Adams. Following McKinley's assassination, President Roosevelt nominated Judge Adams to fill the seat and he was confirmed by the Senate in December 1901. Under heavy workload produced by new federal bankruptcy laws, Judge Adams's health broke down. Although he continued to serve on the Court and it was expanded to four Judges, he never recovered fully. He focused on maritime cases and served until his death.

**Sources:**

Judge George B. Adams Dead, N.Y. Times, Oct. 11, 1911, at 11.

Herbert Green, Memorials of George Bethune Adams, in Association of the Bar of the City of New York, Year Book 1912, at 203-05.