

VIRGINIANA FILE

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**HENDERSON HOUSE
THE HOME OF ALEXANDER HENDERSON**

CREDIT THE:

**MARINE CORPS MUSEUMS
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA**



FIGURE 3
HENDERSON HOUSE - 1969

More than 183 years have passed since the Henderson House was built in Dumfries, Virginia, in about 1785. Today it is still in use. Over the years that have passed, it has been the home of famous Virginians and some not so famous.

Of all the early houses of Dumfries, this one is certainly worthy of reverence. One of the early residents of the house became Commandant of the Marine Corps and directed the destinies of this elite unit from the drawing room of another famous old house.

This, then, is a brief history and description of Henderson House, the boyhood home of Archibald Henderson. Prior to being appointed a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on June 4, 1806, Henderson spent much of the 18 years of his youth in this fine old home. He acquired a strong and sturdy character that was undoubtedly influenced by the strong and sturdy character of this old house.

^{great}
A Brigadier General Archibald Henderson served as Commandant of the United States Marine Corps

for over 38 years and during this time ably administered the affairs of the Corps.

General Henderson died suddenly on January 6, 1859. Services were held at the Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., the internment being in the Congressional Cemetery. The funeral was attended by the President of the United States with his cabinet and all high officers of the Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps.¹

For purposes of this paper, however, we are interested in the earliest part of his life and the Henderson family, specifically their home.

Henderson has been an illustrious name in Fairfax and Prince William Counties throughout the years. Archibald's father, Alexander, was the son of a Scot's minister. He settled in Virginia in 1756, and established himself as a merchant at Colchester in Fairfax County. He married Sarah (Sally) Moore of Colchester, and one of his six sons, Archibald, was born on January 21, 1783. During the Revolution the Hendersons retired to their farm in the country for fear of being captured by the British, as

¹The Washington Evening Star, 10 January 1859

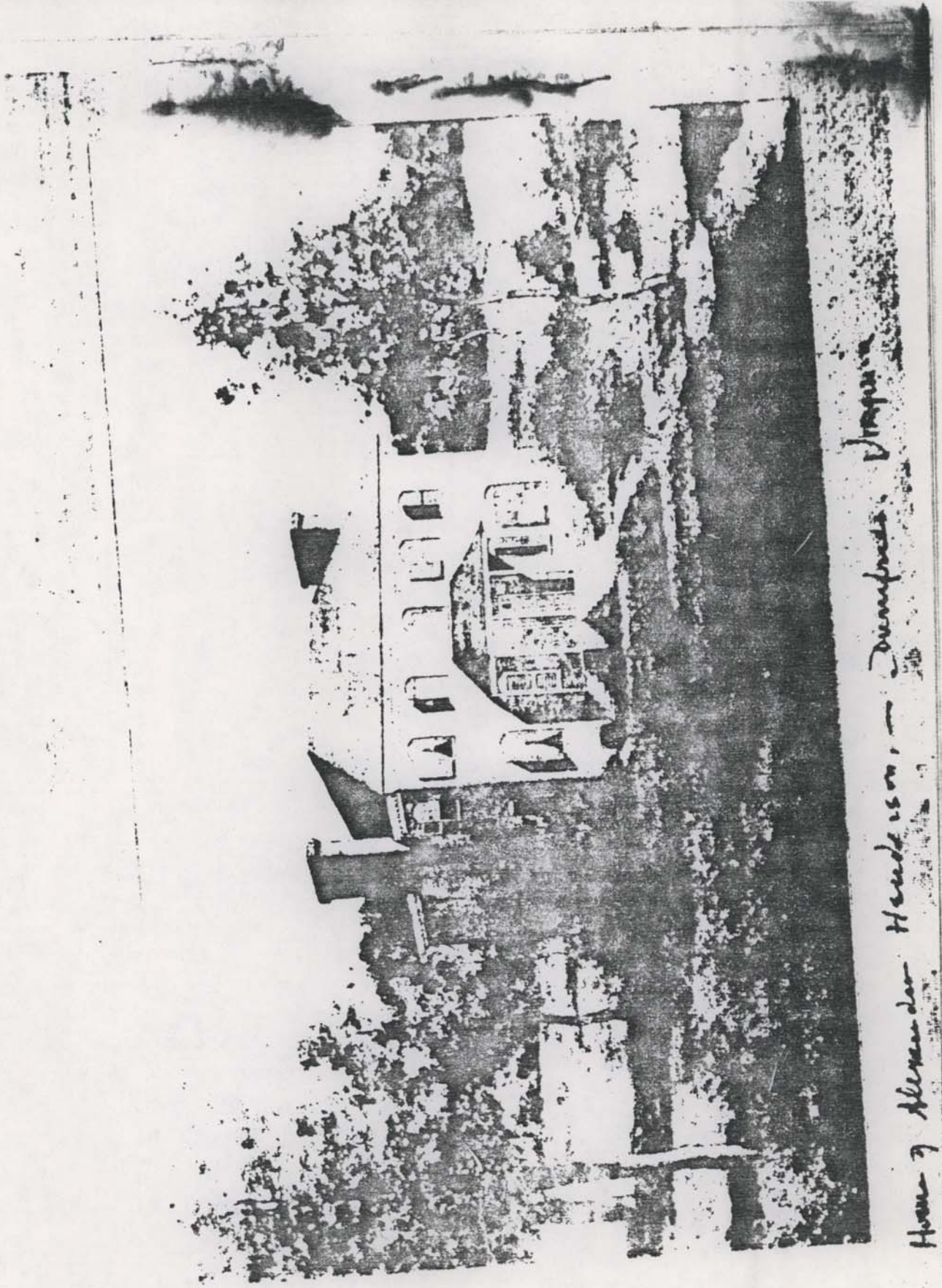
Alexander had rather pronounced views about the "Mother Country."²

Alexander served his community well and was a regular visitor at Mount Vernon.³ He was elected a Vestryman of nearby Pohick Church. Henderson along with Mason, Madison, and Edmund Randolph served as representatives of Virginia for a joint committee to settle the jurisdictional and navigation dispute with Maryland over the Potomac River.

The Hendersons, foreseeing the decline of Colchester, had a house built in Dumfries, 14 miles to the south. Then, in the late 1780's, he moved to this fine brick home (see Figure 1), which was situated within a few hundred feet of the Old Post Road or King's Highway, approximately the location of U. S. Route 1. In this new town he faced a similar problem of declining commerce. Quantico Creek began silting up and trade moved upriver to Alexandria.

² Melvin Lee Steadman, Jr., Falls Church by Fence and Fireside, Falls Church Public Library (Falls Church, Va., 1964), p. 552

³ Washington's Diaries, Vol 1, pages 301, 335, 353, and 355 as referred to in 16 Feb 1931 letter from Reginald S. Huidekoper, a descendant of Archibald Henderson, to Major E. N. McClellan, USMC, the then Marine Corps Historian



House of Alexander Henderson, Dundee, Virginia

FIGURE 1

He lived in Dumfries until his death on November 22, 1815. The Henderson House, according to his will, was to be sold with the town lots following the death of his wife, which occurred on December 14, 1816.⁴ The sale notice appeared as follows:

PUBLIC SALE

Will be sold, at public auction, on Tuesday the 7th day of January next, being the second day of Prince William Court, at the late residence of Alexander Henderson, of Dumfries; all the personal property at the mansion house. It is useless to enumerate it particularly, but amongst many other articles are such as follows:

A large quantity of bedding, of superior quality; a piano; an elegant violin; a new fashionable carriage with plated harness and a pair of horses; 3 milch cows; 40 or 50 hams of prime old bacon; valuable carpeting; tea ware and glass ware, etc. etc.

On this property a audit of 9 months will be given, the purchaser giving bond and security bearing interest from the date if not paid punctually.

Five slaves are for sale, viz. a first rate female cook, a likely well tutored girl of 14, a young man of good character, a rough blacksmith, and two valuable farming negro men, one about 25, to be sold as near Fauquier courthouse as may be, to be

⁴Published article by Edith Sprouse (7409 Rebecca Drive, Alexandria, Va.), "It is a maxim with me never to refuse money--Alexander Henderson of Colchester"

near his wife, and the other for a like reason near Leesburg. Inman Horner, Esq. will sell the youngest. These people may be seen at Dumfries till the day of sale, and on that day, but will not be publically exposed--the executor does not deal with foreign purchaser or their agents--they need not call, and are asked not to do so. Cash will be asked for the servants.

The dwelling house itself with its appurtenances will be sold on very moderate and accomodating terms. The house is spacious and convenient; the out houses are good, and the garden prepared with great labor and taste, so as to be at once remarkably productive and handsome. The society of the village is very agreeable and a bargain may be had in this property.

R. H. Henderson, acting
executor of Alex Henderson,
deceased.⁵

Now with the background established, the House itself can be discussed. It is now the only old house of that style left in Dumfries. The house originally contained ten rooms, and had a large hall that extended through the center and ended in an enclosed staircase. It contains some fine mantelpieces (see Figure 2) and other woodwork, and there are deep window sills in all the rooms. Going into the "basement" you can see the 18-inch walls

⁵Alexandria Gazette, (Alexandria, Va., December 19, 1816), p. 3

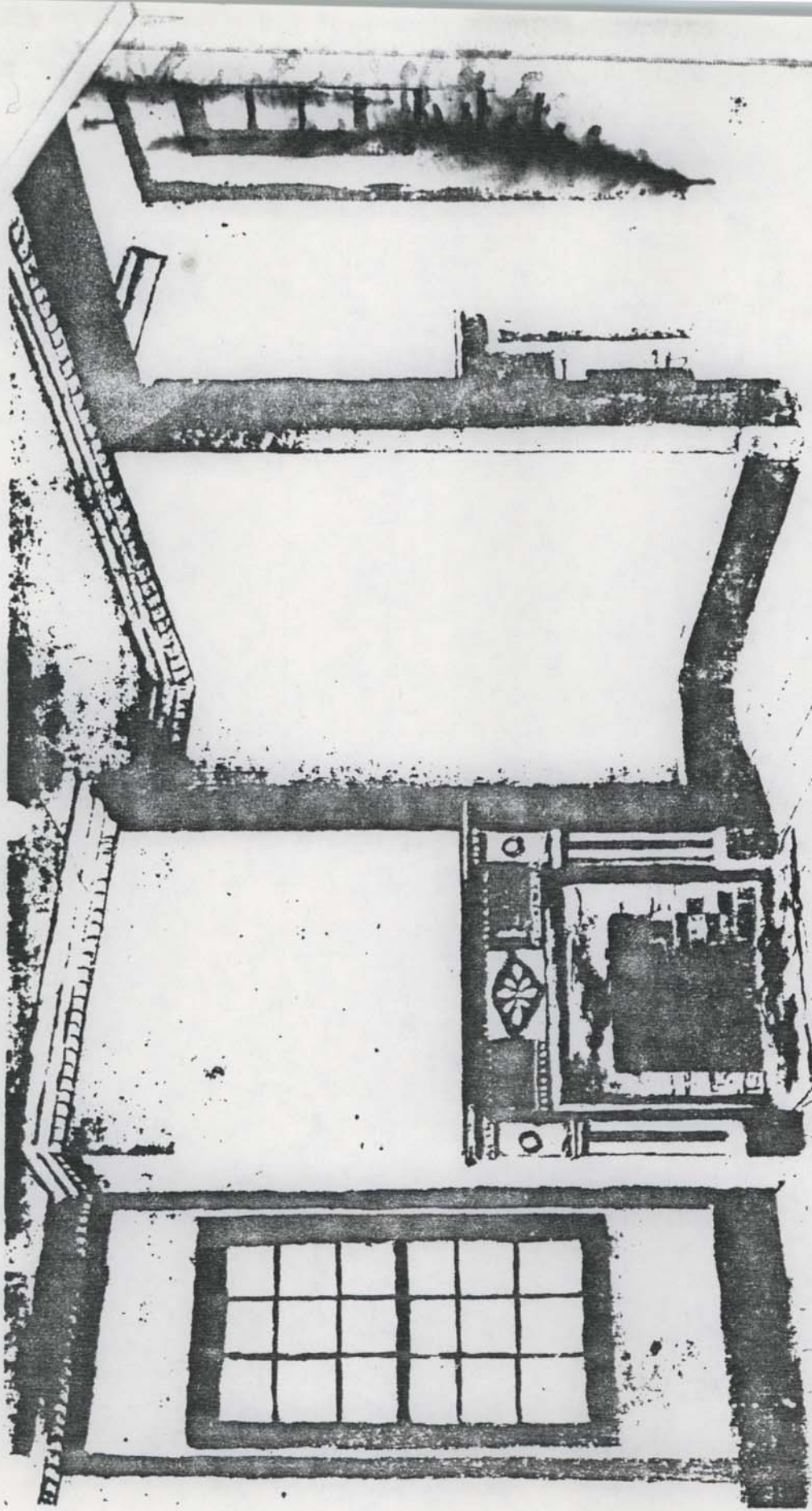


FIGURE 2

Hand-drawn architectural floor plan of a room with a window, doorway, and another window.

where there were once large fireplaces and brick ovens. There were formerly chimneys at both ends of the house, but a recent owner has added several rooms at one end, leaving one chimney in what is now the middle of the house.

Some would have you believe that the bricks for the house were brought from England, as bricks were often used as ballast. However, it is well known that this was not altogether probable. Only a few were ever imported by the Colonies. Locally, excellent deposits of brick clay can be found. This material was cheap and near at hand. In all probability the bricks were made near Dumfries.

During the Revolution this house witnessed many troop movements pass by, and many notable men and officers were entertained under its roof.

The years of the second war with Great Britain found British ships endangering the house again.

During the War Between the States, it was used as a hospital. When the present owner bought and remodeled the house, the upper rooms were very large wards numbered One through Four. On the stairway was painted, "Be quiet."

The coping at one corner of the house was torn away during the war, and a cannon ball was lodged in the west sidewall until a few years ago when it was taken by a souvenir hunter.⁶

The Henderson House, despite its storied ancestry, is "just home" for the Reverend A. H. Shumate, a retired minister and his wife.

Mrs. Shumate started her long residence in the home in 1913 when her first husband, a country doctor, Dr. D. C. Cline, bought the home. She has been living there ever since.

The home's original woodwork, sills, nine fireplaces, and much of the original plaster is still visible in the now 21-room house. Mrs. Shumate has made the home into three separate apartments.

When Mrs. Shumate had the whitewash and layers of paper removed from the living room and music room, she found original velvet-like paper which had been put on in 18-inch squares.

Fireplaces were the only means of heating the large rooms with 12-foot ceilings in the early days.

⁶William and Mary College Quarterly, (Vol 4), p. 120

The original winding stairway is still in good repair. Over the years, lights and a heating system have been added, and the house is presently in very good shape.⁷

When Mrs. Shumate moved in the house, although restored by her grandfather from Civil War damage, it was in deplorable shape. The previous tenants had worked in the nearby mines and had not kept it up. The tin-covered, hip-roofed house was rented at the turn of the century for \$1.50 a month, and has been rented to various tenants since the Civil War. In 1917, when there was very little housing around Quantico, as many as 42 civilians and Marines shared the house with the Clines. Through three wars, soldiers and Marines have come to live at the Henderson House.

It's a wonder that after so many tenants and three wars that any of this most picturesque house (see Figure 3) is left.⁸ Who knows? Perhaps it will stand another 200 years.

⁷Potomac News, (Dumfries, Va., 3 September 1969)

⁸The Manassas Journal, (Manassas, Va., 19 May 1911)

= Transcribing
Public Service
Claims - Rev. War

Alexander

Henderson ^{P.W.}
_{Grant}

= Zeeves ^{after}
_{war}

= Rent of his house
Commissary & Quartermaster

References

1781 =