

Volume 15

Number 041

The Last Full Measure (69):
Archibald Henderson, Marine
Commandant

Lead: For 400 years service men and women have fought to carve out and defend freedom and the civilization we know as America. This series on A Moment in Time is devoted to the memory of those warriors, whose devotion gave, in the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg, the last full measure.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: For over thirty-nine years prior to his death in 1859,

Archibald Henderson served as Commandant of the Marine Corps. Perhaps more than any of the early leaders of the Corps, Henderson set the standards by which the Corps has been judged over the years. He was born into a prominent family in Prince William County Virginia in 1783. After a private education, at the age of 23, he accepted commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps.

As the clouds of war with Great Britain began to gather, his skills and organizational ability had secured him a promotion to the rank of captain. By the end of the War of 1812, he was leading a detachment of Marines aboard USS *Constitution*. In

one of the most important engagements of that conflict, *Constitution*, under Capt. Charles Stuart, took on and defeated two British ships, HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant* off the coast of Portugal near Madeira. Stewart later reported that the tenacious Henderson and his Marines had played a significant role in the victory and even allowed the Marine captain to present the two ships' battle flags to the Secretary of the Navy.

Henderson was promoted to Major and served briefly as Commandant. His replacement clearly was ill-equipped for the job and then October 1820 Henderson returned to the position and served in that

capacity until his death.

As Commandant he restored integrity to the office and established a foundation of service and tradition that remain a part of Corps life today. He led the Marines in Florida during the Seminole War and just as tenaciously for four decades battled bureaucrats and Congressmen who attempted to downsize the Marine Corps and minimize its role in military life. He died in January 1859.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Bell, SGT A Lyn. Official U.S. Marine Corps Website. "Grand Old Man of the Marine

Corps turns 220." January 17, 2003.

Henderson, David C. Clan Henderson Society of the United States of America.

"History's Hendersons: American Edition." September 18, 2004.

http://clanhendersonusa.org/historyshendersons_us.htm.

KWD Services, Inc. Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. "The Henderson House."

<http://historicdumfries.com/hendersonhouse.html>.

Leatherneck .com3.7.0. Leatherneck Guide Inc. "Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gale, USMC." 2000-2009.

<http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-22726.html>.

Maffeo, CAPT Steven. Department of the Navy of the United States of America.

"History: USS Constitution Timeline."

<http://www.usconstitution.navy.mil/history.htm>.

National Museum of the Marine Corps and Heritage Center. The Marine Corps

Heritage Foundation. "Lore of the Corps: The Blood Stripe."

http://www.usmcmuseum.com/Museum_LoreCorps.asp.

Millet, Allen Reed and Jack Shulimson. *Commandants of the Marine Corps*. Annapolis,

Maryland: US Naval Institute Press, 2004.

The Evening Star, January 7, 1859. Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery. "Death of General Archibald Henderson."

(http://www.congressionalcemetery.org/Research/History_Cemetery/Funerals/Henderson1859.html>.

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.