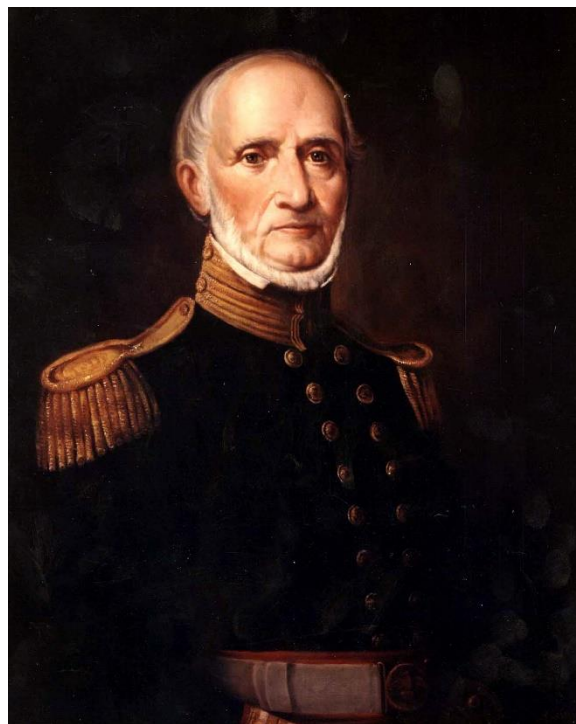




MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson

Archibald Henderson was born in Dumfries, Virginia, in 1783. Commissioned in 1806, Henderson was part of the second generation of Marine officers. As a young officer, he served aboard ship and commanded the Marine barracks at Charleston, South Carolina. Ambitious, he attempted to transfer his commission to the U.S. Army to see combat in the War of 1812. Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton rebuked him for the attempt. He was given command again of the Charleston Marines until reassigned in mid-1813 to USS *Constitution*. He commanded the Marines in the celebrated final action of the war on 15 February 1815 against HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant*.



*Portrait of Archibald Henderson, 5th CMC by Reuben LeGrand Johnston.
National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

When Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gale succeeded Franklin Wharton as Commandant in 1819, Henderson took command of the Marines in New Orleans. After Gale's discharge from the Corps, Henderson was promoted to Commandant of the Marine Corps on 17 October 1820. Henderson shepherded the Service through a tumultuous four decades. He protected the Corps from President Andrew Jackson's intentions to merge it with the Army in the 1830s. He successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps in 1834, clarifying its unique role as a naval Service sometimes serving ashore under Army command. He was promoted to colonel in 1834 and led the bulk of the Corps in the Creek and Seminole Wars in 1836 and 1837. For his service in the Seminole Wars, he was brevetted brigadier general in 1843, the first U.S. Marine promoted to general. During the Mexican War, he organized the Marine battalion that served with the Army

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in Mexico, including the Battle of Chapultepec. In 1857, Henderson faced down rioters attempting to interfere with elections in Washington, DC, by placing his chest against a cannon muzzle.

Henderson's death on 6 January 1859 ended the longest tenure of any Commandant of the Marine Corps at 38 years and 81 days, earning him the designation of "The Grand Old Man of the Corps."