

Henderson, Archibald ^[1]

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Henderson, Archibald

by Stanley J. Folmsbee, 1988

7 Aug. 1768–21 Oct. 1822

See also: [Leonard Henderson](#) ^[2], brother



Photograph of the Henderson Law Office, circa 1917. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Image from the North Carolina Digital Collections.

^[3]Archibald Henderson, congressman, legislator, and lawyer, was born near [Williamsboro](#) ^[4] in [Granville County](#) ^[5]. His father was [Richard Henderson](#) ^[6], promoter of the [Transylvania colony](#) ^[7] in Kentucky and a descendant of [Thomas Henderson](#) ^[8] who emigrated from England to Virginia early in the eighteenth century. His mother was Elizabeth Keeling. Young Henderson attended a local academy, studied law under Judge [John Williams](#) ^[9], and began to practice in Salisbury. Returning to Granville County, he was [clerk](#) ^[10] of the county court from 1795 to 1798. He was elected to Congress in 1798 and served two terms. As a [Federalist](#) ^[11], he voted for Aaron Burr instead of Thomas Jefferson in the House election of 1801. On 23 Feb. 1801 Henderson published a three-page letter—apparently sent to his constituents—in which he discussed the presidential election, the meaning of freedom of the press, and other timely topics. (A copy of this letter is in the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.) Because the [Republicans](#) ^[12] controlled the state, he declined to run for a third term; instead, he represented Salisbury in the North Carolina legislature for five terms between 1807 and 1820.

Henderson's chief distinction was his long and extensive practice of law. He was considered by John Marshall to be "unquestionably" one of the ablest lawyers of his time. Henderson also served as president of the Salisbury branch of the [State Bank of North Carolina](#) ^[13] and vice-president of the Raleigh chapter of the [American Colonization Society](#) ^[14]. Following his death the state bar association erected a monument over his grave in Salisbury.

Henderson married Sarah Alexander in 1801, and they were the parents of Roger (died young), Archibald, and Jane Caroline.

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