

## **Henderson, Thomas** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Henderson, Thomas**

by Charles D. Rodenbough, 1988

**19 Mar. 1752–15 Nov. 1821**

Thomas Henderson, merchant and legislator, was born in Granville County <sup>[2]</sup>, the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Williams Henderson. In the early 1770s he operated a store at Guilford Court House with Thomas Searcy under the name Henderson and Searcy. Searcy's brothers, Reuben, Bartlet, and Richard, participated with Henderson's brother, Richard <sup>[3]</sup>, in the formation of the Transylvania Company <sup>[4]</sup>.

Thomas Henderson was elected a delegate from Guilford County <sup>[5]</sup> to the Third Provincial Congress <sup>[6]</sup>, which convened at Hillsborough during 20 Aug.–10 Sept. 1775. Another delegate from Guilford was Alexander Martin whose sister, Anne Jane Martin, became Henderson's wife in March 1778. For the rest of their lives the brothers-in-law remained close associates. As the Revolutionary War <sup>[7]</sup> was ending, the fighting drew near Guilford Court House <sup>[8]</sup>. Henderson was called into the militia <sup>[9]</sup> as a private and acted as a guide to General Nathanael Greene <sup>[10]</sup> in the maneuvering of the armies on either side of the Dan River.

Soon afterwards Alexander Martin <sup>[11]</sup> became governor for the first of seven terms. He and Henderson acquired 350 acres of land at Guilford Courthouse confiscated from the Tory, Edmund Fanning <sup>[12]</sup>. On this land, adjacent to the courthouse, they laid out a town called Martinsville (Martinville, according to the original deed) where the governor built his home. Martin, who never married, provided a home for his mother, and apparently the Hendersons also came to live with him.

Henderson became clerk of court <sup>[13]</sup> for Guilford County <sup>[5]</sup>, which was now politically controlled by Martin. In 1786, when Rockingham County <sup>[14]</sup> was formed from Guilford, Henderson resigned as clerk of Guilford to take the same office in the new county. He then moved his family to Governor Martin's home, Danbury, on Jacobs Creek of the Dan River. Although Henderson acquired several tracts in Rockingham, he seems to have made his residence at Danbury for the remainder of his life. For this reason, according to local tradition, prior to the establishment of a central courthouse, much of the public business of Rockingham County was conducted by Clerk Henderson at Danbury (the governor's home—not to be confused with the county seat of Stokes County <sup>[15]</sup>, established much later).

In 1789 Henderson served a single term as clerk of the Council of State <sup>[16]</sup>, succeeded the next year by his wife's nephew, Thomas Rogers. In 1795 he was for one term a member of the Council of State. Between 1792 and 1795 Henderson served two terms as a representative of Rockingham County in the House of Commons, and in 1796 he served one term in the state Senate.

On 2 Nov. 1807 Alexander Martin died at Danbury and by his will left that home to Henderson and his wife on the condition that they continue to provide a home for Martin's mother. But Jane Martin died just four days after her son, relieving the Hendersons of this responsibility.

Henderson remained politically active in league with such local leaders as Colonel James Hunter <sup>[17]</sup>, Theophilus Lacy, and Alexander Sneed. He died in Rockingham County.

Thomas and Jane Henderson had seven children: Samuel; Alexander, who became the owner of the Danbury estate during his father's lifetime; Mary (Polly), who married John Lacy; Thomas <sup>[18]</sup>, editor of the *Raleigh Star*; Jane; Nathaniel, who married Susan Searcy; and Frances (Fanny).

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*Charlotte Observer*, 31 Oct. 1926.

John L. Cheney, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Government, 1585–1974* (1975).

*Early Families of the North Carolina County of Rockingham and Stokes with Revolutionary Service* (1977).

Worth S. Ray, *Colonial Granville County and Its People* (1973 reprint).

Rockingham County Deeds (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

#### **Additional Resources:**

"CSR Documents by Henderson, Thomas, 1752-1821"

"Archibald Henderson Papers Relating to Family History, 1891-1964, collection no. 03650." Louis Wilson Round Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/h/Henderson,Archibald.html> [19] (accessed January 4, 2013).

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