

212 HENDERSON, DAVID

Bookseller

Fredericksburg

Fredericksburg merchant who sold bound books in his dry-goods store from 1792 to 1826.

Henderson was one of the numerous Scottish merchants who came to Virginia before the Revolution to conduct import/export businesses there. He arrived in Williamsburg about 1765 and was likely apprenticed to one of the two Scottish Henderson merchants then there; he was also instated in the Masonic lodge there just before the Revolutionary War began. In a demonstration of his fealty to his new home, Henderson joined the Virginia Navy in early 1777, serving on the Fredericksburg-built galley *Dragon* under the command of exchange-merchant Eleazer Callender. It was a fortunate association, as it introduced Henderson to that Rappahannock River port and allied him with an important figure there who would become his partner in a mercantile firm in Fredericksburg after the war.

Henderson's bookselling activities were augmented by Callender's death in 1792; after administering and dissolving his late partner's estate, he expanded and diversified his store, moving it into the prominent building at the corner of Main (today Caroline) and Amelia streets that had been the apothecary store of Hugh Mercer, George Washington's close friend and local surgeon. His long tenancy there gave the locale the name "Henderson's Corner," supplanting its designation as the "Tory Corner" before the war, the place where the town's Loyalist merchants often met. From 1796 onward, Henderson advertised the arrival of shipments of books in his store from European suppliers in the annual spring and fall convoys. Eventually these imports were supplemented with stocks provided by Mathew Carey of Philadelphia, thanks to the recommendation of his itinerant bookselling parson, Mason Locke Weems (435), who lived in Dumfries, nearby to Fredericksburg.

Those advertisements came to an end in 1826, as did all of his merchant advertising, indicating his retirement from commerce at about that time, then age seventy-two. Still, Henderson remained an important figure in the town, having long served on the city council and as a vestryman in a local Episcopal church. After his retirement, his religious inclinations reverted to his Scottish roots, taking on a leadership role in Fredericksburg's Presbyterian church, as well as in its Masonic lodge. Moreover, his large family (eleven children in all, six surviving to adulthood) created marriage relations with some of the town's leading lights. On his death in 1838, the only legacy that Henderson did not leave Fredericksburg was his mercantile one; that went to his son David, who had become a merchant in New York City, creating a firm that would live there, in various incarnations, until after World War II.

Personal Data

Born:	July 1	1754	Kirkcaldy, County Fife, Scotland.
Married:	June 7	1782	Mildred Allen @ Williamsburg, Virginia
Died:	Jan. 28	1838	Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Children: William, Margaret, John, James, and Charles, died in infancy; twins Thomas (1783-99) & David (1783-1863) eldest; Elizabeth; Janet (b. 1793); Mary (m. 1817); and Alexander (b. 1791)

Sources: Notices in *Fredericksburg Virginia Herald* (1787-1826); Rawson, "Guardians," chap. 7; Quinn, *Fredericksburg*; Jett, *Minor Sketches of Major Folk*; Swaine, *Cravath Firm*; WPA Survey Report, Masonic Burying Ground, Fredericksburg (1937); Quenzel, *St. George's Church*; Alvey, *Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg*.