District of Maine: Henry Dearborn

Among the appointees was a 38-year-old veteran, who played a central role in both the American Revolution and the early years of the nation. Born on February 23, 1751, in North Hampton, NH, Henry Dearborn began his career as a doctor. However, when the news of the battles of Lexington and Concord reached him, Dearborn quickly raised a militia unit and proceeded to the outskirts of Boston, MA. Beginning with the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775, Dearborn participated in some of the most critical battles of the American Revolution and ended the war with the rank of colonel. At the conclusion of the war, Dearborn moved to Maine, where he continued to build upon his military achievements and ingratiate himself with the local community. By the fall of 1789, he was a major general in the local militia and President Washington’s appointee as Maine’s first U.S. marshal.

With his appointment as a U.S. marshal, President Washington charged Dearborn with leading the enumeration of the District of Maine for the 1790 Census. Unlike some of the other 1790 census returns, Dearborn’s 1790 returns do not provide a clear date for when he and his deputies completed their enumeration of Maine’s population. Dearborn personally counted the population of 23 towns in three different countries. Based on the extant 1790 Census schedules, it appears as though Dearborn was the only U.S. marshal to emphasize his personal role as both the primary overseer and an enumerator of the 1790 Census as he was the only one who noted in the final report which counties he personally enumerated.

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9 History - The First Generation of United States Marshals/The First Marshal of Maine: Henry Dearborn,”
Although they did not share any borders, Maine was still considered a part of Massachusetts and did not attain statehood until the Missouri Compromise in 1820. Therefore, the 96,540 people counted in the 1790 Census went towards Massachusetts’ total for apportionment. Today, Maine is still the fourth largest state in New England with a total population of 1,338,404 people.  

After the census, Dearborn continued serving as a U.S. marshal for three more years, and as a public servant for another three decades. During that time, Dearborn served as a U.S. Representative for Massachusetts (1793-1797), President Thomas Jefferson’s Secretary of War (1801-1809), the commanding American general in the northeastern theater of the War of 1812 (January 27, 1812 - July 6, 1813), and the United States’ Minister to Portugal (1822-1824). Ultimately, Dearborn permanently retired from a life of public service in 1824 and spent the rest of his life at his home in Roxbury, MA, where he died on June 6, 1829. Today, Dearborn, MI, named in Henry Dearborn’s honor, is the ninth largest city in Michigan with a population of 94,333 people.

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12 “Maine”. *Return of the whole number of persons within the several districts of the United States: according to "An act providing for the enumeration of the inhabitants of the United States," passed March the first, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-one.*, pg. 19-21.


15 History - The First Generation of United States marshals/The First marshal of Maine: Henry Dearborn.”
