

## **Benton, Lemuel** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by Lucius Mcgehee Cheshire, Jr., 1979; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, April 2023

**1754–18 May 1818**

Lemuel Benton, planter and congressman, was born on his father's plantation, Oxford, in Granville County <sup>[2]</sup>, the son of Samuel Benton <sup>[3]</sup> and his wife, Frances Kimbrough Benton. His father was prominent in the area and served as justice of the peace, sheriff of Granville County, registrar, clerk of court, chief military officer, and from 1760 to 1768 a member of the assembly in New Bern. Lemuel's nephew was Thomas Hart Benton <sup>[4]</sup>.

Although most of his adult life was spent in South Carolina, before Benton emigrated he and his brother Jesse signed the "Redressor Papers" in protest of the Regulator <sup>[5]</sup> movement in North Carolina and "in support of the Laws and Constitution of our country." Soon thereafter, however, he left North Carolina and settled in the section of Cheraw District that is now Darlington County, S.C. There he became a planter and acquired extensive landholdings. During the Revolution <sup>[6]</sup>, he attained the rank of colonel and successfully served under General Francis Marion <sup>[7]</sup> as commander of the Pedee forces, retaining his commission for several years after the war, until he resigned in 1794.

Benton also proved to be a dedicated civil servant. He was a member of the South Carolina legislature in 1781–84 and 1787; Darlington County court justice from 1785 to 1791; escheator of Cheraw District, 1789–91; and delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1790 and to the 1788 convention in Charleston that ratified the federal Constitution. His most hard-earned victory probably came when he was elected the first congressional representative from the Pedee District. His unequalled speaking ability gained him the position, and he served as a Democrat in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Congresses, 1793–99. He was then defeated for reelection because of his opposition to the administration of John Adams. He returned home and resumed his agricultural pursuits until his death. He was buried on his estate, Stony Hill.

Benton married his first cousin, Elizabeth Kimbrough; they had four daughters and four sons, but of the sons, only one reached manhood.

### **Additional information from NCpedia editors at the State Library of North Carolina:**

This person enslaved and owned other people. Many Black and African people, their descendants, and some others were enslaved in the United States until the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865. It was common for wealthy landowners, entrepreneurs, politicians, institutions, and others to enslave people and use enslaved labor during this period. To read more about the enslavement and transportation of African people to North Carolina, visit <https://aahc.nc.gov/programs/africa-carolina-0> <sup>[8]</sup>. To read more about slavery and its history in North Carolina, visit <https://www.ncpedia.org/slavery> <sup>[9]</sup>. - Government and Heritage Library, 2023

### **References:**

*Biog. Dir. Am. Cong.* (1961).

*Darlingtonia* (1964).

Alexander Gregg, *History of the Old Cheraws* (1867).

Alma Cheek Redden, *A Chronicle of Two Pioneer Families: The Bentons and the Taylors of the North Carolina Back Country* (1969).

William L. Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (1886–90).

*Who Was Who in America, 1607–1896*

### **Additional Resources:**

Alma Cheek Redden, *A Chronicle of Two Pioneer Families: The Bentons and the Taylors of the North Carolina Back Country* (1969): <https://www.worldcat.org/title/chronicle-of-two-pioneer-families-the-bentons-and-the-taylors-of-the-north-carolina-back-country/oclc/244203366> <sup>[10]</sup>

"Benton, Lemuel, (1754 - 1818)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000396> <sup>[11]</sup> (accessed April 9, 2013).

"Lemuel Benton." *Third Census of the United States 1810*. Darlington, South Carolina. Roll 62. Page 636. Image 00011. FHL Roll 0181421. Accessed April 21, 2023 from Ancestry.com.

William L. Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (1886–90): <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/historical-publications/colonial-records> [12]

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#). [18]

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