

Benton, Lemuel ^[1]

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Benton, Lemuel

by Lucius McGehee Cheshire, Jr., 1979

1754–18 May 1818

Lemuel Benton, planter and congressman, was born on his father's plantation, Oxford, in [Granville County](#) ^[2], the son of [Samuel Benton](#) ^[3] 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](#) ^[4].

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](#) ^[5] 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](#) ^[6], he attained the rank of colonel and successfully served under [General Francis Marion](#) ^[7] 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.

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Additional Resources:

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Authors:

Cheshire, Lucius Mcgehee, Jr. ^[15]

Origin - location:

Granville County ^[16]

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.^[17]

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