

## Peyton, John Lewis <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Peyton, John Lewis

by William S. Powell, 1994

**15 Sept. 1824–21 May 1896**

John Lewis Peyton, european agent for the state of North Carolina (1861–65), lawyer, and author, was born near Staunton, Va., the son of John Howe and Anne Lewis Peyton. One of his great-grandfathers, Colonel William Preston, died of wounds received some years before at the Battle of Guilford Court House. Peyton attended the Virginia Military Institute and was graduated from the [University of Virginia](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in 1844 with a law degree. He was practicing at Staunton when Secretary of State Daniel Webster sent him to Europe on a secret mission to England, France, and Austria.



Image of John Lewis Peyton, from *National Cyclopaedia American Biography*, vol. 4, [p.89], published 1895 by New York, J. T. White company. Presented on Internet Archive.

<sup>[3]</sup>

During the period 1853–56 Peyton lived in Chicago, where he contributed to a number of periodicals and was assistant editor of W. W. Dannerhower's *Literary Budget*. He also was active in the [National Guard](#) <sup>[4]</sup> with the rank of lieutenant colonel. At the recommendation of Stephen A. Douglas, President Franklin Pierce appointed him federal district attorney of Utah but because of ill health he declined the post and in 1856 settled again in Staunton. As a Whig he supported the Bell-Everett presidential ticket in 1860. An opponent of secession, he considered the election of Abraham Lincoln to be no cause for alarm. Following the secession of Virginia, however, he helped organize and largely equip a regiment of which he was made colonel, but because of physical infirmities he was unable to serve.

In the late summer of 1861, while drilling troops, he was appointed North Carolina's agent abroad by Governor [Henry T. Clark](#) <sup>[5]</sup> and on 26 October sailed by way of Bermuda from Charleston aboard the Confederate man-of-war *Nashville*. He landed at Southampton on 21 November and joined other Confederate agents and English sympathizers of rank and influence in London. They promptly set about to secure support and recognition of the Confederacy from Great Britain and felt that they might have succeeded if the home government had been more supportive at a critical time. Peyton remained in England at the end of the war and retired to the Island of Guernsey. He declined to renounce his claim to American citizenship in order to accept appointment to office in Guernsey and in 1876 returned to Staunton. Peyton was widely published, writing on such a variety of subjects as the trade of China, recollections of the Far West, and a history of Augusta County, Va.

He was married in 1855 to Henrietta, daughter of Colonel John Washington of [Lenoir County](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, N.C. She was a niece of Governor William A. Graham and an aunt of Congressman William A. B. Branch. The Peytons were the parents of an only

son, Lawrence Washington Howe. John Lewis Peyton died at his home, Steephill, near Staunton.

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#### Subjects:

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[Public service](#) <sup>[25]</sup>

[UNC Press](#) <sup>[26]</sup>

[Writers, journalists, and editors](#) <sup>[27]</sup>

#### Authors:

[Powell, William S.](#) <sup>[28]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

Lenoir County <sup>[29]</sup>

Kinston <sup>[30]</sup>

**From:**

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press <sup>[31]</sup>

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