

“Carolina”

*We was in the West Indies when they cut off his head,
Cromwell was ruler and Charles was dead.*

*We were still in the Indies when Cromwell died,
The Restoration of Charles's life.*

*In the sugar cane fields of Barbados we stayed.
We was two hundred Englishman and ten thousand slaves.*

Oh, Carolina! Land we crave: C-A-R-O-L-I-N-A

*We left Barbados for Charlestown. With slaves we made a West Indian town.
Oak and pine and hickory: the coast was swamps, the rest was trees.*

*Thousands of gallons of pine, tar, and pitch
We sold to New England, where they built the ships.
West African Slaves taught us to grow rice and endless fields of indigo.*

Oh, Carolina! Land we crave: C-A-R-O-L-I-N-A

*On the Stono River one-hundred slaves burned down plantations and marched away.
We cut off their heads and put them on posts. They say that the river is still haunted with ghosts.*

Oh, Carolina! Land we made: C-A-R-O-L-I-N-A

*Plantation gentry men, with the finest cloth from England: C-A-R-O-L-I-N-A
Wine, silk, and silverware; the finest furniture anywhere: C-A-R-O-L-I-N-A*

Historical Background

In 1649, the Parliamentarians defeated the Royalists in the English Civil War and chopped off the head of King Charles I. The Parliamentarian Puritan General, Oliver Cromwell, ruled England for almost a decade. When Cromwell died, the beheaded Charles's son, Charles II, took the throne. This period is known as “The Restoration,” which brought a renewed interest in establishing more English colonies in North America. Carolina, named for the restored king, was the first of these colonies.

Carolina was primarily founded by sugar planters from the English colony of Barbados in the Caribbean. These planters established a large-scale, slave-based plantation economy in Carolina, which they modeled after Barbados. Carolina's major commodities were cattle, pine, tar, rice, and indigo.

Carolina's slave population was many times larger than that of any English colony in North America, a factor which helped it to become the wealthiest of all the colonies on the continent. In some counties within the colony, slaves outnumbered whites ten to one. Among the planters, the fear of slave uprisings was a constant concern. In 1739, on the Stono River near Charlestown, 150 slaves seized weapons and murdered several white planters on their march toward freedom in Spanish Florida. The local militia put down the rebellion and cut off the heads of the convicted rebels, placing them on posts throughout the area as a graphic warning to any other dissenters considering an uprising.

North Carolina was separated from the rest of the Carolina colony in 1712. It was settled mainly by tobacco farmers who drifted south from Virginia in search of new land. It developed as an independent refuge for settlers who fled from the aristocratic wealthy rulers of Jamestown, to the north, and Charlestown, to the south.

