

Synopsis

Sometimes the history of a place begins elsewhere.

Through South Carolina and American history, we understand that the Carolinas were colonized by the English who had come to the Charleston area by way of Caribbean trade routes, primarily Barbados.

Today, most people around the world think of Barbados as a popular tourist destination because of its warm climate and picturesque tropical beaches. So it is difficult to imagine this tiny island, located almost 2,000 miles south of the United States (almost in South America), might have a combined heritage, a shared past with America and specifically the Carolinas.

The influence of the tiny island country of Barbados on the Carolinas is unmistakable but to what extent is largely unknown.

This one-hour documentary will explore the pre-colonial origins of our state deeply rooted in this 166 square-mile island. Beyond its cultural influence, the economic and governmental systems created, tested and proven in the West Indies all forged the success of South Carolina, its wealth and power, yet still vexes us as a society today. Through an ongoing dialogue with historians and scholars from both cultures, we will navigate these difficult waters of historical circumstance to connect us to our past.

Barbados fed the birth of the Carolinas with a rich amalgamation of cultures, well-established laws and religions, successful entrepreneurship, burgeoning agricultural technology and slavery. Without these, it is uncertain whether the colony would have ever been a success and eventually an important and influential state in the founding of the nation.

The institution of slavery is coterminous with the settlement of Barbados and South Carolina. The creation of Barbados' wealth was driven by the global demand for sugar, which could not be done without the labor, knowledge and skill of enslaved Africans. The country culturally influenced neighboring island countries with its rapid economic growth and power. As the settlement of Barbados colonized what is now Charleston, South Carolina, it subsequently transferred its social structures, its religions, its culture, its architecture, its language, its food and its way of life to present day; sometimes in almost undetectable fashion.