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Spain was the first European country to send explorers to South Carolina. The Conquistadors came to the Americas primarily looking for gold and the hidden riches of the Native Americans. When gold was not readily found, the Spanish soon took over large tracts of land that became known as *encomiendas* or large plantations.

Between Columbus, conquistadors and the explorers, Spain began claiming a vast amount of land in South and Central America. The local populations, in all parts of the Americas, were enslaved by the Spanish.

Soon the local population began dying of overwork or diseases which their immune systems had no ability to fight. This resulted in large numbers of African slaves being brought to the Americas to work the *encomiendas*. The Spanish also brought to (or developed in) the new world: Universities, complex social class system, the Catholic religion, missions, a new style of government and cities. The Spanish also began

establishing missions along the Pacific coastline.

Spain had already claimed many Caribbean islands. When the Native population was decimated by the Spanish on the island of Espanola, they went in search of new people to enslave. These Spanish also landed in South Carolina where they were met by the Native Americans living near the coast. The Spanish invited the natives they met to come on board their ships for food or goods and, while the natives were on board, the ships sailed away to the Caribbean. The captured hostages were then sold into slavery and never returned to their homeland.

The Spanish explorer Herman de Soto began exploring South Carolina looking for gold and riches. He, and his men, found the town of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi, Cacica, and were warmly welcomed by her. She greeted Herman de Soto with a strand of pearls, and the Spanish were treated as guests for around two weeks. De Soto returned this kindness by taking Cacica captive.

The first-known colony in South Carolina was San Miguel de Gualdape, along the Waccamaw River. Six hundred Europeans, mainly from Spain, attempted to settle in San Miguel de Gualdape but due to harsh living conditions only one hundred and fifty made it safely back to their Caribbean plantations. The treatment of the enslaved people by the Spanish was so bad that the first-known slave rebellion occurred around 1526 in that colony.

France also began exploring the New World and claiming land for France. Explorers began by searching for the Northwest Passage. They claimed land in Montreal and Quebec but the cold climate limited the number of people who wanted to settle there. Whenever they landed, however, they brought their culture with them. France would not allow Protestants to immigrate to the New World so it was primarily Catholics who settled in the places claimed for France. French traders established good relationships among the Native Americans with whom they traded furs. Frenchmen began traveling south and claimed land along the Mississippi River for France, including Louisiana, which they named after their King.

England did not wish to be left behind and also sent explorers and settlers to the New World to claim land for England. They established permanent settlements in Virginia and New England. Settlers came to find gold and, when that was not found, stayed to grow tobacco. Some settlers came fleeing religious persecution and founded societies based on their shared religious beliefs. People from England also brought their culture with them as well as their Protestant religion and their beliefs about self-government.

People from England and Ireland were the first to have a successful colony in South Carolina, named Charles Town, in 1670. King Charles II in England owed eight noblemen a vast sum of money. Instead of paying them in cash, he gave land in America. The land included what is now known as Georgia, North and South Carolina.

Individuals who settled in Charles Town got sick, so the town was moved to Oyster Point. Within ten years, settlers had also come from France, Scotland, Germany and Switzerland to settle in the Carolinas. The "Lord Proprietors" wanted to make money from the land they had been given. They established large land grants which became plantations to grow money crops such as rice, cotton and indigo.

A man, by the name of Dr. Henry Woodward, traded with the Indians and learned how the Natives grew food. He shared this information with the settlers in Charles Town and helped the colony to become successful.

Many say Dr. Woodward brought rice seed to the colony. Rice became such a huge cash crop that it was eventually known as "Carolina Gold."

Footnotes:

1) Winberry, John J., South Carolina, Encyclopedia Britannica , Dec/31/1969, May/19/2015,

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2) WordPress, San Miguel de Gualdape Slave Rebellion of 1526 (1st slave revolt in American history),

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3) Horne, Paul, South Carolina, no, May/19/2015, May/19/2015, no

4) unknown, Henry Woodward, Weebly, Dec/31/1969, May/19/2015,

<http://sc3rdexplorer.weebly.com/dr-henry-woodward.html>

5) SC Dept of Education, Support Doc,

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/European-Settlers-South-Carolina-History>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



South Carolina - New World

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