

Carolina Built by Kianna Alexander

Carolina Built is historical fiction based on the life of Josephine Leary in North Carolina. Young Josephine's world expands as the Civil War ends, freeing her mother and family from slavery. Josephine is young enough to appreciate the freedom. She has time to play and has been taught to read. While still expected to work for the "family", rules are changing and Josephine is allowed to leave the plantation and attend barbering classes nearby. There she meets a young man whose lighter skin offers him different options. Josephine soon marries this young man, Sweetie Leary, and they run a barber shop together. Sweetie is more accepted by the community, but Josephine is driven to use her freedom to gain economic independence for herself, her husband, and her daughters. She becomes a landlord as a way to provide for her family, being personally driven to save and invest. Josephine Leary leaves a legacy for her family, and Alexander's telling of the story brings a richness to the story of a woman who quietly fought for and accomplished much in her life.