

WHEREAS, founded as Penn School in 1862, Penn Center was one of the first schools to offer an education to formerly enslaved African-Americans of the Sea Islands; and

WHEREAS, when the school closed in 1953, Penn Center became a community development center, focusing on issues ranging from daycare to health care to civil rights to community development and the preservation of Gullah culture; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, the 50-acre Penn School campus was designated a National Historic Landmark District by the United States Department of the Interior and is one of our nation's most historically significant African-American educational and cultural institutions; and

WHEREAS, seeking an opportunity for the public to become better acquainted with Penn School and the history and culture of the Sea Islands, the Penn Center Heritage Days Celebration was introduced in 1981 and has grown to a significant event of food, entertainment, exhibits, activities, and more; and

WHEREAS, Penn Center Heritage Days draws thousands of visitors from South Carolina, the nation, and abroad in celebration of the many contributions made by African-Americans of the Sea Islands to our rich cultural heritage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mark Sanford, Governor of the Great State of South Carolina, do hereby proclaim November 8 - 15, 2009, as

PENN CENTER HERITAGE DAYS CELEBRATION WEEK

throughout the state and encourage all South Carolinians to recognize the importance of this and other local festivals and celebrations to the preservation of our unique culture.