



Transcript for Penn Center History:

Joseph McDomick: The Penn Center started in 1862. You probably heard about the Port Royal experiment. Basically what they were doing was trying to determine whether not the slaves could actually be educated. That's what the whole just of the Port Royal experiment was about. So Penn Center had a building shipped down from Philadelphia. Old barracks that was sent down here by boat and they started the experiment. They had two ladies Ellen Murray and Laura Towne, who come down, and **Charlotte Forten**, a black lady, who came down a few months later. To teach these slaves to read and write. They continued the school until 1948. After, the school closed in 1948. Penn center started a community development center. Where they brought in people. That's when I was hired under that transition period. I was hired in sixty-four and we organized these communities for a number of years. We brought in people from throughout the south. People, what we called community leaders. They came here and we taught organizing skills. We had about seven or eight different states where we went out and recruited people from those different states and brought them here for programs. After that program we looked at some of the other problems we were having in the local areas. Like land retention. some of those things. So we started a land program. We felt like the blacks were giving up or losing too much of their land that their ancestors had worked so hard for. To get after coming out of slavery. So we wanted to find out what were some of the reasons why we were losing some of this land. We wanted to address those issues.

End of Video