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Sommario/riassunto	"For more than 150 years, the Penn Center, located on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, has been an epicenter of African American education, historic preservation, and social justice for tens of thousands of descendants of formerly enslaved West Africans living in the Sea Islands. Founded in 1862 in the midst of the Civil War after the island was secured by Union troops, the Penn School was established by two Northern missionaries, Laura M. Towne and Ellen Murray, to

provide a formal education for former slaves who formed the nucleus of the coastal Gullah Geechee community. Burton and Cross examine the intricate history and evolution of the Penn Center over the past 150 years and place it in its modern context. In 1901, the Penn School expanded to become the Penn Normal, Agricultural and Industrial School after adopting the industrial arts curriculum taught at Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes. The educational training stood at the forefront of progressivism and reform as it helped to advance an entire generation and community into the Industrial Age after slavery. This project makes a tremendous contribution with its examination of Penn Center's role in the Civil Rights Movement: it was the only location in South Carolina where interracial groups, including Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Peace Corps, could have safe sanctuary in an era of mandated segregation. During the Sea Island resort boom of the mid- to late-20th century, the Penn Center was instrumental in preserving land on St. Helena. Since 1974, the campus of seventeen historic structures and eight other sites has been designated a National Historic Landmark District, one of only four in the state of South Carolina, and the only African American historic district so named"--

"The Gullah people of St. Helena Island still relate that their people wanted to 'catch the learning' after Northern abolitionists founded Penn School in 1862, less than six months after the Union army captured the South Carolina Sea Islands. In this broad history Orville Vernon Burton and Wilbur Cross range across the past 150 years to reacquaint us with the far-reaching impact of a place where many daring and innovative social justice endeavors had their beginnings. Penn Center's earliest incarnation was as a refuge where escaped and liberated enslaved people could obtain formal liberal arts schooling, even as the Civil War raged on sometimes just miles away. Penn Center then earned a place in the history of education by providing agricultural and industrial arts training for African Americans after Reconstruction and through the Jim Crow era, the Great Depression, and two world wars. Later, during the civil rights movement, Penn Center made history as a safe meeting place for organizations like Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Peace Corps. Today, Penn Center continues to build on its long tradition of leadership in progressive causes. As a social services hub for local residents and as a museum, conference, and education complex, Penn Center is a showcase for activism in such areas as cultural, material, and environmental preservation; economic sustainability; and access to health care and early learning. Here is all of Penn Center's rich past and present, as told through the experiences of its longtime Gullah inhabitants and countless visitors. Including forty-two extraordinary photographs that show Penn as it was and is now, this book recounts Penn Center's many achievements and its many challenges, reflected in the momentous events it both experienced and helped to shape"--
