



## Bunce Island

Bunce Island is a slave castle, one of the “warehouses of humanity” European slave traders built along the coast of West Africa to facilitate their trade in human beings. Between 1670 and 1808, British traders based there sent about 50,000 men, women, and children into exile on plantations in North America and the West Indies.

Bunce Island has a closer link to the United States than any other slave castle in West Africa. During the mid-1700s, it sent thousands of African rice farmers into bondage in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and in recent years the Gullah people in those states have made several historic pilgrimages to the castle.

Slave ships based in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut also purchased African captives at Bunce Island.

Today, Bunce Island is an officially-protected site in the West African nation of Sierra Leone. The government of that country is now making strenuous efforts to preserve the castle and develop it as an educational resource for future generations.

In 1989, the US National Park Service conducted a survey of the castle at the invitation of Sierra Leone’s president. NPS officials said they had “never seen a site so important for *American* history in such urgent need of preservation.”

In 1992, Colin Powell visited Bunce Island. He described his reaction to the castle in emotional terms in his autobiography *My American Journey*:

“I am an American...but today, I am something more. I am an African too. I feel my roots here in this continent” (p. 534).