

《Oldest building in S. Africa set for facelift》

The Castle of Good Hope is in Cape Town. It is hundreds of years old, but it is getting a new lease on life, as a place of healing and reconciliation, and possibly a World Heritage Site.

The Castle of Good Hope is the oldest building in South Africa. Its first corner stone was laid at the beginning of January 1666. And the city of Cape Town started developing and growing around it 350 years ago. It was built as a fort by the Dutch East India company as a halfway point on their sea route between East and West.

"In '66 they started to build this as a halfway station, where the ships would come from the West to the East on the Spice Route and the trading missions, would come round here to get fresh water, fresh meat. And in that way, the castle represents a goal point of trade. Eventually it developed into a colonial post when British colonialism became a seat of Imperialism in Africa. And under Apartheid of course the Army was housed here for 60 years almost," said Calvin Gilfellan, CEO of Castle of Good Hope.

The castle was built mostly by slaves from Angola, Mozambique, the Far East and indigenous Cape people. It was a place of banishment and brutality. Prisoners were incarcerated and tortured here in a room known as the Torture Chamber.

Despite its dark Apartheid-Colonial past, the government has vowed to encourage South Africans to reclaim the Castle of Good Hope as part of their history and heritage. And turn it into a center of memory, hope and inclusivity.

The 350th commemoration of the castle was kicked off by South Africa's Deputy Defence Minister, saying it should be a celebration of 'Oppression to Freedom.'

"To really move from a place of pain and suffering and exclusion, into one that's inclusive, into and healing and builds our nation," Gilfellan said.

"He greet in our language, the world and citizens of South Africa a very, very Happy New Year and may everyone go well for 2016," said Griqua Royal House Commissioner Kenneth Visser.