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Media Contact: Anna Kate Twitty, (803) 348-6010 (c), (803) 898-4948 (o), AnnaKate.Twitty@scmuseum.org

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South Carolina State Museum Receives Six Awards for Renovation and Expansion Project

Museum recognized with industry-leading awards for preservation, design and construction

COLUMBIA, S.C., Thursday, June 11, 2015 — The South Carolina State Museum receives six awards for its major \$23 million “Windows to New Worlds” renovation and expansion that opened in August 2014. The industry-leading awards recognize the State Museum’s project for its extensive historic preservation efforts, unique and innovative design, and outstanding construction leadership.

Through private and public funding, State Museum leadership and industry-leading firms, the State Museum successfully transformed its nationally registered historic facility into a world-class attraction with one of the largest planetariums in the Southeast, a state-of-the-art observatory and the only permanent 4D theater in the state. The strategic collaboration of many individuals and organizations helped solidify a high-quality project that has received the following 2015 awards.

- **The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation’s Historic Preservation Stewardship Award:** This award recognizes those who have ensured the ongoing preservation of historic buildings, structures or sites through long-term care, planning, management, protection or continuous ownership.
- **Historic Columbia’s New Construction in a Historic Context award:** This award recognizes new buildings in a historic district adjacent to or within existing historic structures that complement the historic context.
- **Gilbane Construction Project of the Year Southeast Division:** This award recognizes excellence on projects that embody core values, commitment to quality and the Gilbane family legacy of excellence in the construction industry.
- **Construction Management Association of America South Atlantic Chapter’s Project Achievement Award for Renovation/Modernization:** This award recognizes excellence in construction management specifically for projects involving renovation and modernization.
- **American Institute of Architects South Carolina Design Award:** This award recognizes excellence and innovation in architectural design.
- **American Institute of Architects Charlotte Design Award:** This award recognizes excellence and innovation in architectural design.

“These awards are a direct result of a quality project made possible by the hard work of many stakeholders and an outstanding design and implementation team,” said State Museum executive director Willie Calloway. “We are proud to have successfully transformed our 19th century mill building into a true cultural destination.”

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The State Museum worked with [Jack Rouse Associates](#), one of the world’s most prominent experiential design firms, to develop a thematic visitor experience that would embrace and highlight the history of the mill. Awarding-winning architects, [Clark Patterson Lee](#) and [Watson Tate Savory](#), took their cue from the thematic design with an approach that both reinforced the rich historic fabric of the original structure and introduced additions that were contemporary yet sensitive to the mill in scale and rhythm. The museum then brought on industry-leading experts to construct the project, including [Gilbane Construction](#) (general contractor), [Evans & Sutherland](#) (planetarium contractor) and [SimEx-Iwerks](#) (4D theater contractor). The project preservation, oversight and review were provided by South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Historic Columbia and the City of Columbia.

Although the project idea was formed in 1997, it was not until 2002 that serious deliberation, fundraising and planning began. The State Museum explored several design concepts and did extensive benchmarking, including a trip made by museum executive director Willie Calloway to the Hayden Planetarium in New York City, which was the inspiration for the planetarium’s glass cube design. The final design plan focused on a historically-sensitive renovation, including repurposing existing spaces, uncovering and rehabilitating original interior features and adding modern additions to the exterior of the museum.

“Our goal was to embrace the mill and bring its original character back to life,” said Calloway. “We paid close attention to every detail – from ripping carpeting out and refinishing 100 year-old wood floors, to bringing in reclaimed historic mill flooring, to removing sheet rock to expose the mill’s original brick interiors. We also made sure any added features into the mill space complimented our vision of restoring and celebrating the historic mill building.”

In 2012, the State Museum broke ground on the 75,000 square feet “Windows to News Worlds” project to renovate and expand the Columbia Mills Building, the home of the State Museum and a former textile mill listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the planetarium, observatory and 4D theater, the project consisted of adding a new telescope gallery, lobby, store, meeting and office spaces, and student entrance and lunch room.

The new expansion is having a positive cultural tourism and economic impact and is providing many new opportunities to educate and inspire South Carolina students through innovative programming that focuses on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

About the South Carolina State Museum: *As the state’s largest and most comprehensive museum, the South Carolina State Museum offers a unique, entertaining and educational experience to visitors throughout its 225,000 square foot facility located in the heart of downtown Columbia’s Congaree Vista. The State Museum is housed in one of its greatest artifacts, an 1894 old textile mill full of character and charm. In addition to beautiful meeting spaces throughout the facility, guests can explore outer space in one of the largest planetariums in the Southeast, watch an interactive 4D movie and look through a vintage telescope in a one-of-a-kind observatory. These exciting opportunities are all in addition to the four floors of South Carolina art, cultural history, natural history and science/technology. Visit scmuseum.org to learn more.*

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