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**South Carolina State Museum Opens a One-of-a-Kind Facility with a Planetarium, Observatory and 4D Theater in Columbia, S.C.**

*Grand opening of new attraction to be held on Saturday, Aug. 16*

**COLUMBIA, S.C., Monday, July 21, 2014** – The South Carolina State Museum is about to be **brighter than ever** as it opens a one-of-a-kind facility on **Saturday, Aug. 16** in the state’s capital offering the only observatory of its kind in the nation, one of the largest planetariums in the Southeast and the only permanent 4D theater in the state. For the first time in the nation, all three of these innovative elements, plus a multidisciplinary museum focusing on art, history, natural history and science/technology, will be housed under one roof.

The long awaited 75,000 square foot renovation and expansion project, known as [Windows to New Worlds](#), will position the State Museum on the cutting edge of education, particularly in the critical areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and will create a large boost in the local and statewide economy. Visitors traveling from more than 50-miles to the museum after the opening are expected to contribute more than \$19 million to the state’s economy with spending on hotels, food and beverage and other travel-related activities.

“What we have built represents a quantum leap forward for South Carolina in the areas of cultural tourism, recreation and, especially, education,” said Willie Calloway, executive director, South Carolina State Museum. “Our new facility is building opportunity – opportunity for students to thrive, opportunity for our economy to grow and opportunity for our guests to be entertained in new ways.”

**The new additions include:**

- [Boeing Observatory](#) The new 2,500 square foot observatory will play a central role in the museum’s new distance learning initiatives. For the first time in the nation, remote access of a vintage telescope will be provided free-of-charge to every classroom across an entire state. The observatory houses a fully digitized 1926 Alvan Clark 12 3/8-inch refracting telescope and fully equipped classroom.
- [The Robert B. Ariail Collection of Historical Astronomy](#) Adjacent to the observatory is a new 6,000 square foot telescope gallery that features an expansive collection of antique astronomical instruments dating back to 1730. This incredibly rare collection has been praised by the Antique Telescope Society as the best public collection of early American Telescopes in world. The collection includes the oldest surviving American-made observatory instrument, which is a 5.6-inch Henry Fitz made in 1849 for Erskine College in Due West, S.C.
- [BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Planetarium](#) One of the largest planetariums in the Southeast, this massive 55-foot dome planetarium and theater will take guests on journeys to the deepest reaches of space through educational and entertaining astronomy shows, non-space films dealing with art, history or natural history and laser light shows set to music of the Beatles, Pink Floyd, U2 and more. A permanent NASA gallery will be located in the planetarium lobby with interactive capabilities and artifacts from South Carolina astronauts.

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- [Rev. Dr. Solomon Jackson, Jr. 4D Theater](#) The only permanent theater of its kind in South Carolina, the 4D theater couples high definition 3D digital projection films with physical features to provide multisensory, interactive experiences for guests. Physical features, including water sprayers, ankle ticklers, air blasters, scents, snow, bubble and smoke effects, strobe lights and vibrating seats, are synchronized to the images displayed on the screen.
- [New Lobby](#) After decades of being covered up and underutilized, the museum is bringing back to life the 1894 mill building and showing its original architectural features and character in the new public lobby. A glass entrance that extends outside of the front mill building will welcome guests as they walk under 36,000 pounds of steel telescope legs that support the telescope in the fourth floor observatory. Three of the museum's partners, Columbia Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau, South Carolina Educational Television and the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department have unique exhibit spaces in the new lobby, allowing guests to explore and learn about the great things happening across South Carolina.
- [New Store and Café](#) The Cotton Mill Exchange museum store is in a larger 4,000 square foot space in the front lobby, enhancing the shopping experience and featuring additional retail merchandise that represent every corner of South Carolina. A new admissions desk designed to resemble vintage textile machines is located next to the store and the new grand staircase leading to the Mezzanine. The newly renovated Crescent Café will be located on the second floor Mezzanine, offering guests the opportunity to take a break for something delicious to eat and drink.

A special grand opening celebration will take place from **9 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 16**. To kick off the day, there will be a ribbon cutting and model rockets launched by students attending the Challenger Learning Center in Columbia, S.C. The day will be packed full of activities, including the opening of a new art exhibition, *Building a Universe*, which features original works focusing on space and the universe, live music representing popular South Carolina genres (bluegrass, blues, beach and gospel) and other family-friendly programming. The first 100 people will receive free general admission and other free tickets and great discounts to the museum for an entire year. The celebration will take place at the museum, located at 301 Gervais St., Columbia, S.C. 29201.

[Click here](#) to access the grand opening press room. To learn more, follow the museum on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook or visit [scmuseum.org](http://scmuseum.org). The official hash tag for the grand opening is #BrighterThanEver.

**About the South Carolina State Museum:** *On Oct. 29, 1988, the South Carolina State Museum opened its doors, bringing to the citizens of the Palmetto State the newest, and one of the finest, state museums in America. The Museum has four large floors devoted to the disciplines of art, history, natural history and science/technology. It houses both long-term exhibits and five changing exhibit galleries. For more information about the museum, visit [scsmuseum.org](http://scsmuseum.org) or follow @SCStateMuseum on Twitter.*

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### **SCSM\_Building**

Opening on Saturday, Aug. 16, the South Carolina State Museum's newly renovated facility features a planetarium, observatory and 4D Theater. For the first time in the nation, all three of these innovative elements, plus a multidisciplinary museum focusing on art, history, natural history and science/technology, will be housed under one roof. The museum is housed in an 1894 textile mill building, which was the first electrical powered mill in the nation. Visit [scmuseum.org](http://scmuseum.org) to learn more. *Photo credit: S.C. State Museum.*