



News Release

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Objects to Shine in
Museum's Silver Exhibit

Columbia, S.C. --- A collection of silver used in South Carolina over two centuries can be seen at the South Carolina State Museum beginning May 15, in the elegant exhibit *South Carolina Silver: Varieties in Society 1750-1935*.

“We have quite a few pieces of fine silver in the collection, a lot of which has never been exhibited before, so it’s a good time to bring it to the public,” said Chief Curator of History Fritz Hamer.

“Silver has always interested people – it’s shiny and beautiful and is associated with weddings, presentations, formal occasions. It’s a symbol of appreciation for a well-done job. Many athletic trophies are of silver, also.”

A wide variety of silver pieces can be seen in the exhibit, such as a silver service presented to John G. Richard when he left the governor’s office in 1931, and various Charleston silver and place settings of different eras: an 18th – century breakfast setting, for example, and a men’s silver set featuring humidors and tankards from the antebellum period.

Museum guests also will see a section of unusual flatware – mustard spoons, a fish slice and a tomato lifter, a very popular item in the 1850s and ‘60s. English and French silver used in South Carolina also are included.

“An exquisite set of two pitchers with ropes of silver as handles must be seen to be believed,” said the curator. “Plus, there’s a sweet meat stand of cut glass with a silver-engraved lid, among other intriguing items.”

Two very interesting artifacts with an equally interesting story are pieces from a silver service given to former Civil War general John B. Gordon when he was a U.S. senator from Georgia.

“It was presented by the ladies of Columbia for Gordon’s assistance in helping end Reconstruction in South Carolina, and for aiding his former Confederate comrade Wade Hampton in being declared governor of South Carolina after a contested election in 1876,” Hamer said. Custom made to represent South Carolina, the pieces have palmetto trees on the lids, along with an inscription of thanks to Gordon.

In today’s world, silver is not as commonly used in households. If it is, it’s largely flatware, said Hamer. “However, one hundred years ago and more, it played a much bigger role. It showed people’s status and taste. Also there were many more craftsmen who could produce more silver. The exhibit will show not only the taste of the time, but also the skills of the craftsmen.”

Those skills, and that taste, will fascinate everyone who sees this appealing exhibit, the curator said.

“We were fortunate to have a number of items loaned to us that really add to this stunning exhibit,” Hamer said. “In particular, many items from Dawn Corley, who is known as the ‘Charleston Silver Lady,’ add a great deal of substance.”

In conjunction with the exhibit, the museum will present a series of luncheon lectures on South Carolina silver featuring Ms. Corley, beginning in June. For a complete schedule of events, contact the museum’s public programs department at (803) 898-4952 or visit www.southcarolinastatemuseum.org.

South Carolina Silver: Varieties in Society 1750-1935 can be seen through Jan. 31, 2011.

For more information, contact Fritz Hamer at (803) 898-4921.

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CUTLINE #1 FOR SILVER EXHIBIT

This silver samovar (left), similar to those used to dispense tea and other hot liquids in 19th century Russia and Europe, is believed to have been made by Charleston silversmith James Allen in 1877. The sugar bowl is from the same silver service. They were made for former Civil War general John B. Gordon when he was a U.S. senator from Georgia, and are but two of many fascinating items to be found in the South Carolina State Museum's new exhibit *South Carolina Silver: Varieties in Society 1750-1935*, which opens May 15.

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Photo by Susan Dugan/courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #2 FOR SILVER EXHIBIT

The South Carolina State Museum's new exhibit *South Carolina Silver: Varieties in Society 1750-1935* does indeed contain a variety of intriguing artifacts, such as this 1928 baseball trophy won in the Columbia summer baseball league tournament by employees of the South Carolina State Hospital. It's unusual because it is sterling silver, when most items of this sort were silver plate at best. The exhibit can be seen beginning May 15 at the State Museum in Columbia.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

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