

# A HIDDEN GEM



BY ERIC SPROTT  
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Still settling into his new digs and learning his way around the area, Adam Smith, the new curator of the Bob Campbell Geology Museum, realizes the enviable situation he's in with what he called "amazing" collections at his disposal and a strong group of supporters.

But when it comes to the quantity of those supporters, he's a bit surprised at the number of people who aren't actually familiar with the museum, which sits on the grounds of the South Carolina Botanical Garden on the Clemson University campus.

Attending an evening event last month at Westminster Elementary School, Smith set up a table to display a collection of rocks and fossils, and he was surprised by the feedback he was getting.

"I can't tell you how many people said, 'Wow, there's actually a geology museum in Clemson?'" he said with a laugh.

Though the museum has hosted tens of thousands of visitors in its 12-year history, the hope for Smith — who came to Clemson from the prestigious Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in September — is to increase the profile and visibility of the museum,

while also expanding and improving the museum and its collections.

Smith knows he has a solid head start with the resources already in place, and he's aiming high as he looks to live up to the expectations placed upon him by Patrick McMillan, the director of the SCBG.

"We like to refer to this place as Clemson's 'hidden gem,' with the pun intended there," Smith said. "This place is a real resource, and an underused resource, because there aren't any other museums that are focused on geology, paleontology and earth-history within 100 miles of our location here in Clemson. We provide a resource for researchers, students at Clemson and the general public, and we want people to know that we're here."

"We want these resources to be utilized, and we have planned lots of fundraising and outreach efforts to achieve that goal."

Those efforts will be ramped up soon, as Smith has been busy working his way through the museum's archives, as he's been digging through numerous private donations and transferring specimen data over from outdated floppy disks and zip drives.

In addition to revamping the museum's current dis-

plays — with the planned addition of an exhib-

olinas before expanding to other parts of the country. In the meantime,

it on pterosaurs, like the ones seen on the children's show "Dinosaur Train," and an update to the museum's fluorescent minerals room among numerous projects in the works — Smith has long-range plans of leading field trips to collect new specimens.

Smith, a native of Winston-Salem, N.C., who grew up in Myrtle Beach, said the initial field trips — which he plans on making available to the public — will take place in the Car-

the museum takes plenty of pride in its current displays.

Arguably the most popular display is the skeleton of a Smilodon — a long-extinct saber-toothed cat — that's billed as "Clemson's Oldest 'Tiger'". While Smith also likes to point out a display that highlights the fascination and training that Clemson's namesake, Thomas Green Clemson, had in geology.

While Clemson is well known for agricultural

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Adam Smith  
Museum Curator

pursuits in the latter part of his life, he studied at the Royal School of Mines in Paris, and later worked at mines in the United States as a geologist, naming a variety of mineral that appears in a scientific journal on display in the museum.

"I think that's something a lot of people don't realize, and I always like to point out the longstanding connection between Clemson and the geological sciences," Smith said.

While changes are coming for the museum, it's doubtful those Clemson-centric displays will be going away any time soon. As for the rest of the public display collection, Smith is eager for the work ahead as he looks to cater toward not only the general public, but Clemson students, professors and researchers as well.

"I definitely have my hands full at the moment," said Smith, whose specializes in the evolution of birds. "We have big plans to grow the facility, our staff and the amount of educational programs

we offer, plus the amount of primary research that goes on here. We're a small museum with a small staff right now, but we have big plans to grow."

All totaled, the non-profit museum boasts more than 10,000 rocks, minerals, fossils and gemstones with interactive exhibits and displays. Admission to the museum is free, and guide tours — including school field trips — are available at a minimal expense.

"But we certainly appreciate donations so we can expand and improve the exhibits we do have," Smith added with a smile.

The museum, which is closed on Clemson University holidays, is open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. on Sundays. The museum also provides free mineral, rock and fossils identification.

For more information, visit [clemson.edu/public/geomuseum](http://clemson.edu/public/geomuseum) or contact the museum at (864) 656-4600 or [bcgm@clemson.edu](mailto:bcgm@clemson.edu).

BACKYARD

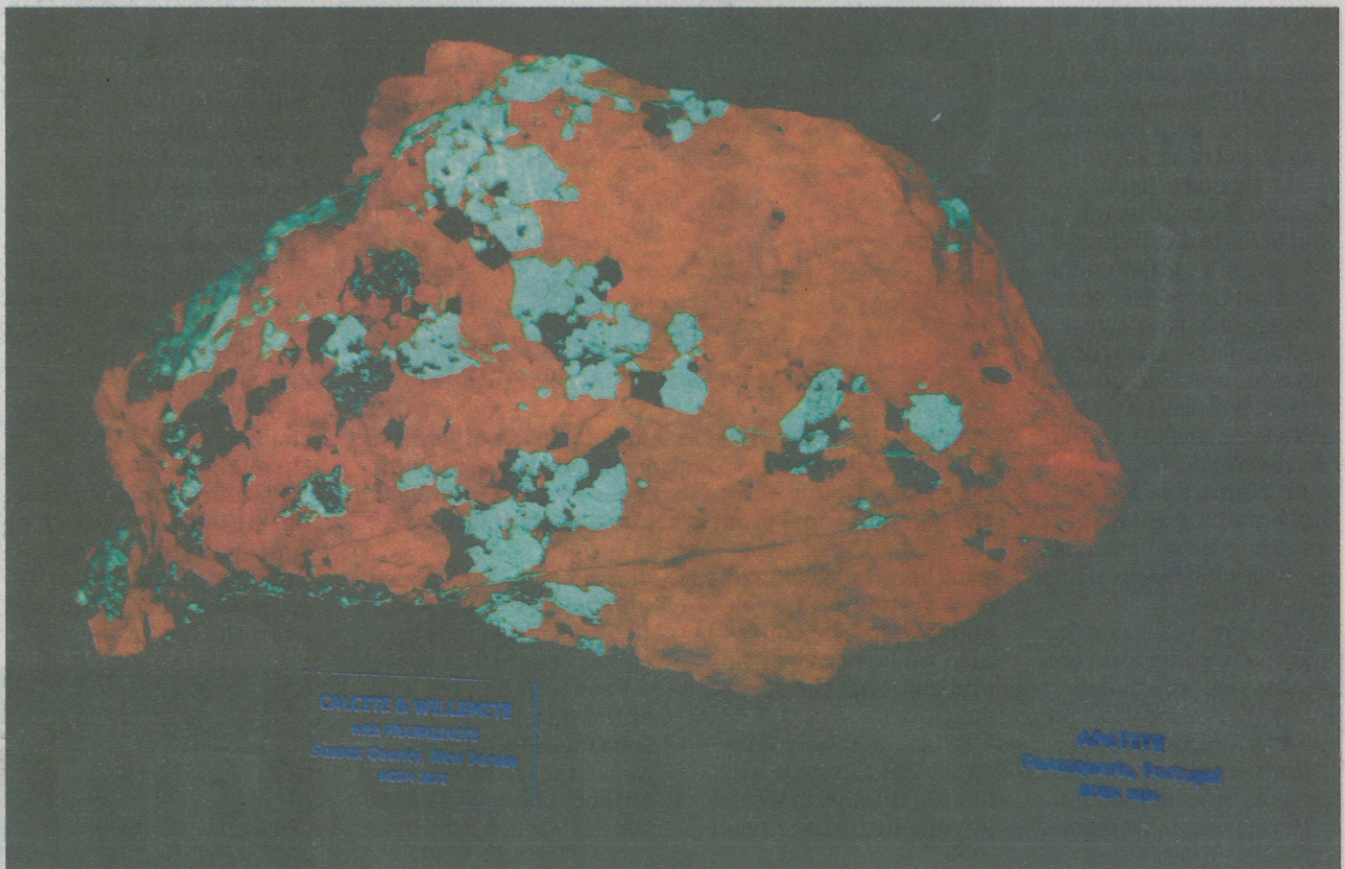
A Smilodon skeleton, billed as "Clemson's Oldest 'Tiger,'" is among the most popular displays at the Bob Campbell Geology Museum located at the South Carolina Botanical Garden on the Clemson University.



AT

# CLEMSON

U N I V E R S I T Y



CALCITE & WILLEMITE  
with FRANKLINITE  
Sussex County, New Jersey  
BGCM 1872

APATITE  
Penedafels, Portugal  
BGCM 1873

PHOTOS BY REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

A rock containing calcite, willemite and franklinite doesn't come truly alive until the standard lights are shut off and the fluorescent lights are turned on in a special display room at the Bob Campbell Geology Museum.