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Old Salem and Key Supporter Announce State-of-the-Art Library & Research Center

Winston-Salem, NC (April 16, 2010): Old Salem Museum & Gardens has announced plans to modernize its library and research center with a state-of-the-art facility made possible through a lead gift from Thomas A. Gray, a long-time supporter of Old Salem and co-founder of the Old Salem Toy Museum. The new facility fulfills Old Salem's needs for upgrading its existing library and research center and addresses questions that have arisen during an ongoing strategic planning process. The new library and research center facility, envisioned by Mr. Gray, re-invests Old Salem Toy Museum facilities and assets in ways that enable Old Salem to best fulfill its mission. The plan also creates a meaningful and lasting legacy for Mr. Gray and his mother, Anne P. Gray, who co-founded the Toy Museum.

The library and research center will be housed in space currently occupied by the Toy Museum in the Frank L. Horton Museum Center. Old Salem's Toy Museum collection will be sold and the proceeds of the sale used to create two funds that will be available exclusively for the purchase and conservation of Moravian objects and southern decorative arts. The funds will be named for Mr. Gray and his mother. Objects that are of specific interest to Old Salem's mission will be kept by the museum. "The purchase funds are a perpetual legacy that ensure a dynamic future for Old Salem and MESDA," said Mr. Gray. "A 21st-century research library is the missing link for my cousin Frank Horton's lifetime gift of MESDA and complements his renowned collection. I am thrilled, as I know my mother would be, that our gift will have a lasting and relevant purpose."

To begin preparing for the new facility and processing the collection, the Old Salem Toy Museum will close May 17. For those wishing to enjoy the exhibit before then, a special Toy Museum ticket is being offered (\$7 adult / \$5 child) or visitors can purchase an All-in-One ticket to experience all of Old Salem.

"Tom's concept is essentially comprised of three major gifts—two significant purchase funds that allow the institution to continue building and conserving our world class collections plus a major step forward with the modernization of our library and research center," said Lee French, President and CEO of Old Salem Museums & Gardens. "These are all strategic priorities to build upon the core excellence at MESDA and Old Salem as we look to the future."

Old Salem's library and research center contains a rich and important collection of books and documents about the history, culture, and arts of the early American South, including those of the Moravians. The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) at Old Salem is the world's only museum dedicated to exhibiting and researching the decorative arts of the early American South.

The MESDA Research Center houses information about southern craftsman and their products and is an invaluable resource for anyone investigating the South. In conjunction with the new research facility, MESDA is currently working with the University of North Carolina to digitize the Research Center's collections to make them available to 21st-century audiences in rich and powerful ways. Ragan Folan, vice chairman of Old Salem's Board of Trustees and chair of the museum's strategic planning committee, said that the vision for a new library and research facility is "an excellent example of how a museum works together with its major donors to respond to the ever-changing landscape of museum relevancy. We appreciate and thank Tom for his support. How appropriate that during Old Salem's 60th anniversary year he is helping us to prepare for the next sixty years."

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