City Trees Given New Life
City Bench Exhibit Opens at Connecticut Historical Society

Hartford, Conn (October 11, 2011) – Each year hundreds of trees are removed from city streets, parks and private homes due to age, sickness, damage, or construction projects. Living trees remove air pollution, store atmospheric carbon, and reduce air temperature and energy costs. They add beauty and history to cities and towns, and in the process of removal their environmental contributions, and often their stories, are lost. New Life for Connecticut Trees: Furniture by City Bench, a new exhibit opening on November 1, 2011 at the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, explores the environmental benefits, beauty, and history of urban trees in Connecticut, through a unique and artistic storytelling display of hand-crafted furniture, photographs of urban tree projects, and thought-provoking facts about Connecticut’s urban tree canopy.

Ted and Zeb Esselstyn, brothers, from Higganum, CT, share a passion for building beautiful objects with meaning, soul, and a compelling story. When they realized how much trees represent society’s shared space and common stories, lining streets and filling public spaces, the idea for City Bench took root in 2009. Preserving a tree’s history is part of City Bench’s mission for each table, chair, and bench it creates. Storytelling is an important element of City Bench and part of the crafting is to “keep the tree in the wood”, revealing the unique aspects of the wood itself. With each furniture piece created, there is a counterpart, the story of the tree. “In Connecticut cities – between Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven – there are so many trees and so much opportunity, these are cities with such rich history and so many stories to tell,” says Ted Esselstyn.

Beginning Tuesday, November 1, three galleries at the Connecticut Historical Society will be planted with 23 City Bench pieces complete with accompanying photographs and stories of the trees from which they came, often including the tree’s birthplace and significance. Included in the environmental-based exhibit will be benches, tables, chairs and other furniture pieces, as well as photographs, graphs, and other information about the value of trees and what people are doing today to take care of and increase Connecticut’s urban tree canopies.

The CHS will also display photographs of some of Greater Hartford’s noble trees of the past in a complementary exhibit “Lost Landscapes”. This iconic exhibit will feature albumen prints taken by Frederick S. Brown in the 1880s. Most of these massive elms, oaks, maples, and hickories are no longer standing, but their images are reminders of the beauty and value of Connecticut’s city trees.

The two exhibits will be bringing new life to Connecticut trees through March 17, 2012. The Connecticut Historical Society is located at 1 Elizabeth Street in Hartford. To learn more, visit www.chs.org.

By the numbers:
70 billion trees in U.S. metropolitan areas.
600 trees New Haven removes each year
769 million, estimated number of trees in Connecticut; mostly red maple, sugar maple, oak, hemlock, beech, and white pine, which cover 64.5% of the state.
17,380 metric tons of total pollution removed by trees in urban Connecticut (includes Carbon Monoxide, Nitrogen Dioxide, Ozone, Sulfur Dioxide, particulate matter)

568,000 estimated number of trees located in Hartford, Connecticut

143,000 tons of Carbon stored annually by Hartford trees, rather than being released into the air as carbon dioxide.

3 barns used to design and build City Bench furniture, located in Higganum, CT.

148 rings (years) counted in the trunk of the former largest American elm tree in Connecticut, which fell in 2009.

23 unique pieces to be displayed in the New Life for Connecticut Trees: Furniture by City Bench exhibit at CHS

About The Connecticut Historical Society:

Founded in 1825, the Connecticut Historical Society is a non-profit museum, library, research and education center. We strive to inspire and foster a life-long interest in history and facilitate a passion for learning about history through research assistance, exhibitions, tours and programs for all ages. Visit www.chs.org or call 860.236.5621.

About City Bench:

City Bench grew out of a passion for building beautiful objects with meaning, soul, and a story. It also grew out of a reverence for the trees that line our streets, fill our public spaces, and enliven our campuses. Those trees represent our shared space and common stories – they are also a vital and overlooked resource. City Bench extends the life left in those trees by building uniquely hand-crafted furniture that tells their stories. Community and connection to place are built into everything created with each piece bearing a “birth certificate” describing the tree’s origin, significance, and story. To learn more, visit www.city-bench.com/our-story.

Listing:

New Life for Connecticut Trees: Furniture by City Bench
November 1, 2011 - March 17, 2012
FREE with general admission, T-F noon-5pm, Sat 9a-5p

The environmental benefits, beauty and history of urban trees in Connecticut are explored through a unique and artistic storytelling display of hand-crafted furniture, photographs of urban tree projects, and thought-provoking facts about Connecticut’s urban tree canopy. www.chs.org