Connecticut Historical Society announces new Executive Director
Jody Blankenship takes the helm at statewide history institution

Hartford, CT (August 15, 2013) – The Connecticut Historical Society (CHS) announces Jody Blankenship as its new executive director effective September 23, 2013. Mr. Blankenship becomes only the fifth director since CHS was founded in 1825, replacing Kate Steinway, who announced her retirement plans in November 2012 (see release).

“It’s exciting to join an organization with creative staff and volunteers, rich collections and a great reputation,” Blankenship commented. “I believe CHS has an opportunity to build upon its legacy of achievement and develop a model for historical organizations that can be adopted and applied by other institutions that may be struggling to understand how they can be relevant to contemporary society.”

Regarding the ten-month-long, successful nationwide search to replace Steinway, Paul Beach, President of the CHS Board, says, “Jody clearly distinguished himself among a number of outstanding candidates from across the nation. His vision, passionate commitment to the life-enriching power of historical understanding, and already-demonstrated record of leadership, collaboration and management savvy give the Board great confidence that he will lead CHS to engage new communities and new audiences through 21st-Century tools.”

Blankenship believes in the richness of the Nutmeg state’s history, declaring, “Connecticut’s unique narrative encompasses a broad swath of the American experience. Its stories provide us with a vast collection of historical information with which we can gain perspective about who we are and where we are going. The content and skills inherent in history provide a framework and context for understanding and thriving in our ever changing world.”

Blankenship comes to Connecticut from the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) where he was education director since 2009. Under his leadership, KHS advanced its educational model to a skills-based, learner-centered program, increased participation in key programs and secured $1.2 million in grants to pilot model curricula, design instructional aids, conduct professional development, and revamp Kentucky’s cemetery preservation program. In addition, Blankenship led a charge towards technological advancements including the launch of “Explore Kentucky History,” the institution’s first mobile application which provides location and contextual data to the historical marker program, and in less than a year KHS will unveil “iKentucky,” a digital content development and aggregation system for educators, tourists, and citizen historians. Prior to his appointment at KHS, Blankenship managed the Ohio Historical Society’s Outreach and Field Services Department. His outreach involvement included educational programs such as National History Day in Ohio, the Ohio Social Studies Resource Center, the Buckeye Council for History Education, the Ohio Historical Markers program and the Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums.

With sights already set on the challenges he sees ahead, Blankenship responds, “CHS will endeavor to find creative, mutually beneficial ways to collaborate with and promote the numerous historical organizations across the state that are collecting, interpreting and sharing Connecticut’s story. And, CHS will continue to create opportunities where history can be applied for the advancement of the public good, turning the creativity, passion and courage of Connecticut residents toward developing strategies for acting on the critical challenges of our time.”

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Blankenship is a 2007 graduate of the American Association of State and Local History’s Seminar for Historical Administration. He received an MA in History Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, State University of New York at Oneonta, and a BA in History and Education from Ohio Northern University.

The Connecticut Historical Society is located at 1 Elizabeth Street in Hartford. For more, visit chs.org or call (860) 236-5621.

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About the Connecticut Historical Society (@ConnHistSoc):

Founded in 1825, the Connecticut Historical Society is a non-profit museum, library, research and education center. CHS strives to inspire and foster a life-long interest in history and ignite a passion for learning about history through research assistance, exhibitions, tours and programs for all ages. Visit chs.org or call 860-236-5621.