

Molinaro, Kendall Select New County Historian



Poughkeepsie, NY... Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro and Dutchess County Clerk Bradford Kendall have announced the selection of William P. Tatum III, M.A. to serve as Dutchess County Historian. Mr. Tatum, who has most recently served at the Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Hudson Highlands, is an accomplished historian and heritage tourism expert and is experienced in development, fundraising and advocacy for public and private historic sites. Dutchess County's Historian position has been vacant since 2008.

County Executive Molinaro said, "Mr. Tatum's love for history and his combination of experience and education make him the ideal candidate for the County Historian position. His experience in working collaboratively with volunteers to promote access to historical archives and his work designing and promoting Heritage Tourism programs will help bring the preservation and promotion of Dutchess County's rich and vibrant history to a level of excellence that is long overdue. Heritage tourism is an important tool for economic development and we want Dutchess County's valuable historic assets to be showcased to continue to drive tourism dollars into our local economy."

Mr. Tatum is completing his Ph.D. studies in History at Brown University this fall. Prior to his doctoral studies, he earned his Master's Degree in History, also at Brown University, and earned his Bachelor's Degree in History with an Anthropology minor at the College of William and Mary. He has extensive experience in heritage tourism and educational program

design, public speaking and grant writing. At the Newburgh Bay and Hudson Highland Historical Society, he worked closely with the executive director on programming and development projects. Prior to working in Newburgh, he was the Sol Fenstone Scholar and Historian for the David Library of the American Revolution in Washington Crossing, PA, where he managed the programs department, coordinated speaker series, teacher workshops, historic site bus tours and curated exhibits. He also recruited and trained volunteers and college and high school interns while developing and implementing collections development plans to make records more accessible to the public. He has written grant proposals and won several competitive research grants, and recently closed out a \$25,000 grant-funded project in New Jersey.

“I am honored to be appointed by County Executive Molinaro and look forward to working with him, County Clerk Brad Kendall and the many other professionals and volunteers devoted to preserving and celebrating Dutchess County’s rich history” said William Tatum. “Dutchess County is a true historical delight and I have greatly enjoyed exploring all it has to offer. I am eager to get to work promoting the historic treasures throughout Dutchess.”

Mr. Tatum’s priorities as he begins his service as Historian will include familiarizing himself with the county archives. He will work closely with Dutchess County Clerk Brad Kendall to catalog and promote these records and to continue on-going efforts to make these items more accessible to the public. As Dutchess County Historian, he serves as a resource for the general public on ethnic, religious, genealogical, or other related historical information and is responsible for collecting and preserving documents, maps, photographs and other materials relating to the history of Dutchess County.

Mr. Tatum will work under the leadership of the County Clerk. County Executive Molinaro’s proposal to transfer the functions of record management from the Division of Central Services to the Office of the County Clerk was approved early this year by the Dutchess County Legislature. County Clerk Kendall has been very active in the preservation of records, painting and prints and other historic artifacts, therefore the transfer was a logical realignment as the Dutchess County Clerk provides the archivist function for county government and the functions of record management are closely related. The collaboration between the County Clerk and the County Historian will enable the work of both to be maximized.

Dutchess County Clerk Brad Kendall said, “Will Tatum brings impeccable academic credentials as well as a passion for history to the position of Dutchess County Historian. I look forward to working with him to preserve and make accessible the historic resources that are in the County Clerk’s office.”

Mr. Tatum will also be focused on networking with key stakeholders throughout Dutchess County, including all city, town, and village historians and historical societies, sites, and museums. He will also reach out to regional and national organizations, including Hudson Valley Greenway, Scenic Hudson, and the National Park Service, to explore opportunities for collaborative work. Mr. Tatum looks forward to supporting historic projects that are already underway, such as Dutchess County’s commemoration of its 300th anniversary of democracy in 2013. He will also be pursuing grant opportunities and will offer assistance to historical societies and other organizations interested in pursuing grant-funded projects. Mr. Tatum will additionally explore the potential for new heritage tourism programs in conjunction with Dutchess County Tourism.

Melodye Moore, former Executive Director of the Dutchess County Historical Society and former Manager for the Mills Mansion/Staatsburgh State Historical Site, served on the County Historian search committee. Ms. Moore said, “Thank you to County Executive Molinaro for recognizing how important this position is to all those who are involved with and passionate about Dutchess County’s history. I was honored to be involved in the Historian selection process. Mr. Tatum was chosen from a very distinguished group of applicants and we are pleased to welcome him to Dutchess County.”

Dutchess County Tourism Executive Director Mary Kay Vrba, who also served on the search committee said, “A 2009 national travel study noted 78% of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. These travelers spend an average of \$994 per trip, so heritage tourism is an important economic development tool. We are thrilled that County Executive Molinaro has appointed Will Tatum to serve as Historian and look forward to working with him to enhance the heritage tourism offerings throughout Dutchess County.”

A resolution to confirm Mr. Tatum as County Historian has been forwarded to the Dutchess County Legislature for approval at its October meeting.

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