



# Michael F. Crowley Lectures

*Our 4th Program of the 2014-2015 Series*

## Dr. Kurt Schlichting

**Monday, November 17, 2014 ~ 6:00 p.m.**

International Tennis Hall of Fame ~ Special Event Room  
194 Bellevue Avenue, Newport \*

### *The Irish Immigrants in Newport: A Question of Upward Mobility*

Oscar Handlin, the eminent Harvard historian, argued that immigration was and is the key to understanding American history. For Newport, the arrival of large numbers of Irish immigrants in the late 1840s and 1850s shaped the history of the city to present times. One question that arises is the degree of upward mobility: To what extent did the Newport Irish realize the American Dream? While these immigrants faced hardship and discrimination, did their children and the children's children enter the mainstream of American life and have opportunity for social and economic success?

Measuring economic mobility is a particular challenge for the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1880 Census asked questions about home ownership and occupation, but none regarding household income. To study income and wealth distribution during this period of Irish immigration is daunting. Historical records such as property tax lists are not computerized and require hundreds of hours of research. However, the establishment of income tax during the Civil War and resulting records in the National Archives provide data on income distribution and can be used to ascertain the ethnic composition of the wealthiest segment of Newport's population in 1865, as the wealthy are identified by name, occupation and address, providing an indication of the socio-economic status of the Irish during this time frame.

**KURT C. SCHLICHTING** is the E. Gerald Corrigan '63 Chair in Humanities & Social Sciences Department and a Professor of Sociology at Fairfield University (CT). He is the author of *Grand Central Terminal: Railroads, Architecture and Engineering in New York* (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 2001), for which he received the 2002 Best Professional/Scholarly Book: Architecture & Urbanism Award from the Association of American Publishers. This book was the basis of "Grand Central," an *American Experience* documentary on PBS, for which Dr. Schlichting served as an academic advisor and was an on-screen interviewee. His recent book, *Grand Central's Engineer: William J. Wilgus and the Planning of Modern Manhattan*, was published by Johns Hopkins in the spring of 2012.

In collaboration with the Redwood Library he and his students are creating a website, "Digital Historic Newport Rhode Island," to explore Newport's rich history. The project is funded by the Humanities Institute of Fairfield University. Dr. Schlichting received his bachelor's degree from Fairfield University in 1970 and his master's degree and a doctorate from New York University. We welcome Dr. Schlichting for this, his third talk, for the Museum of Newport Irish History.

*Following the lecture, a reception with light hors d'oeuvres will be held.*

**Reservations are required. Please call or e-mail Maeve Sheehan at (508) 826-0134 or MaeveS@hotmail.com**

Members – \$3 donation ~ Non-members - \$15 donation, which can be applied to 1-year Membership.

\* *Wheelchair Accessible via elevator to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. All enter via Hall of Fame archway*