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Historical Society Hosts National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist

Newport, RI – (May 2010) – The Newport Historical Society presents Princeton University history professor Martha Sandweiss discussing her book *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception Across the Color Line* on June 24, 6pm at the Colony House on Washington Square.

Ms. Sandweiss tells the remarkable story of Clarence King, Newport son and noted explorer, geologist and writer. King hid a secret double life from his Gilded Age friends, Washington cohorts and prominent Newport family: for 13 years until his death in 1901 the celebrated and influential King was married to Ada Copeland, a woman born into slavery who believed her husband was a black Pullman porter named James Todd. *Passing Strange*, a finalist for the 2009 National Book Critics Circle award, tells the dramatic tale of a family built along the fault lines of celebrity, class and race.

The New York Times declared *Passing Strange*, “an astounding true story that would beggar most novelists' imaginations. [Sandweiss’s] great accomplishment is to have explored not only how the 19th-century explorer and scientist Clarence King reinvented himself but also why that reinvention was so singularly American. Best of all are Ms. Sandweiss’s insights into what King’s deception and its consequences really mean. . . . Ms. Sandweiss offers a fine, mesmerizing account of how one extremely secretive man, 'acting from a complicated mix of loyalty and self-interest, reckless desire and social conservatism,' could encapsulate his country’s shifting ideas about race in the course of one family’s anything but black-and-white history.”

A book signing will follow this hour long program. *Passing Strange*, now in paperback, will be available for purchase at the event and at the Newport Historical Society’s Museum & Shop at Brick Market, 127 Thames Street, Newport, RI.

This program will take place at the Colony House on Washington Square. General admission is \$5 per person, \$1 for Newport Historical Society members. Reservations requested; persons with mobility issues should call in advance. 401-841-8770

For additional information and/or to obtain media photos please contact: Elizabeth Sulock, Public Affairs Associate, 401-846-0813 x104, esulock@newporthistorical.org.

About the Newport Historical Society

Since 1854, the Newport Historical Society has collected and preserved the artifacts, photographs, documents, publications, and genealogical records that relate to the history of Newport County, to make these materials readily available for both research and enjoyment, and to act as a resource center for the education of the public about the history of Newport County, so that knowledge of the past may contribute to a fuller understanding of the present. For more information please visit www.newporthistory.org.

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