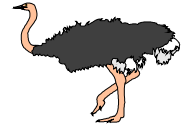


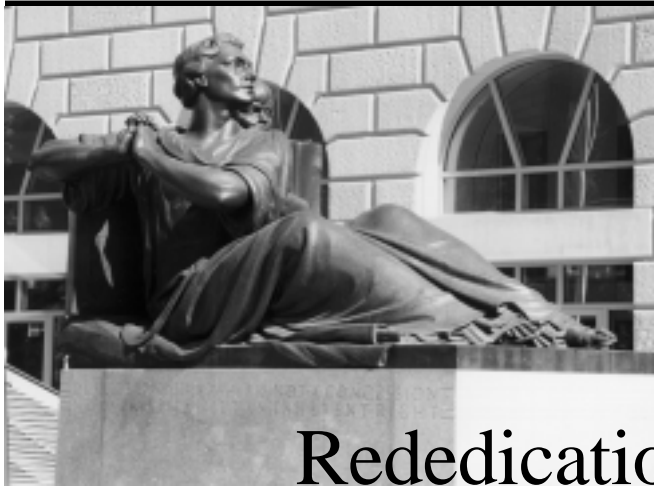
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Rededication Ceremony Oscar S. Straus Memorial October 26, 1998

After construction of the Ronald Reagan Federal Building and International Trade Center was completed, and after many months of planning, the rededication of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial took place in Washington DC on October 26, 1998. This date marks the 51st anniversary of the monument's dedication by President Harry S. Truman.

Oscar S. Straus is noted for his brilliant professional life. He was one of America's first career diplomats; serving his country under four administrations, Democrat and Republican. He was Minister to Constantinople and then Ambassador to Turkey between 1887 and 1910. He served as Secretary of Commerce and Labor from 1906 through 1909 under President Theodore Roosevelt. Oscar Straus was Minister to the International Court of Arbitration at the Hague and was instrumental in having the Covenant of the League of Nations written into the Treaty of Versailles. He was president of the American Jewish Historical Society from its inception in 1892 to 1898 and was the author of several books including his autobiography, *Under Four Administrations*.

Following Oscar Straus' death on May 3, 1926, a Joint Resolution of Congress authorized the erection of a memorial to honor him. President Coolidge signed this resolution on his last day in office. The government donated the site in the Federal Triangle and agreed to provide for its maintenance. A memorial association was formed by his friends and admirers to raise the additional funds necessary for the memorial's construction and "to advance the ideals of public service held and practiced by

the late Oscar S. Straus." Funding would come from the association with additional donations from the public. The Fine Arts Commission, the Board of Public Consultant Architects and the Department of Public Buildings and Grounds all gave their support to this project.

The Federal Triangle was originally envisioned with a Great Plaza at its Western End at 14th Street. In 1929, the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association was offered a distinguished and dominant position in the Plaza flanked by the new buildings of the Department of Commerce (which President Hoover called the noblest government building in the world), the Labor Department and the Post Office. Controversies over the site delayed progress of the memorial and by 1938, construction was halted in the Federal Triangle because of the depression. In 1939, Congress finally appropriated funds for clearing the site for the Oscar S. Straus Memorial.

- Introducing -
**Straus Historical
 Society, Inc.**

Turn to back page for details



Paul A. Kurzman, Oscar S. Schafer,
Oscar S. Straus II and Rabbi Ronald Sobel

By the time the plan was approved, costs had risen so substantially that the original design required paring down. A much more simple design was proposed and approved in January 1941. But by then, World War II was raging and the use of bronze for casting the sculptures was restricted. It was not until 1947 that the work was completed and, almost twenty years after President Coolidge authorized its construction, President Harry S. Truman dedicated the Oscar S. Straus Memorial on October 26, 1947. His extemporaneous remarks focused on the fact that Straus was a displaced person, coming to America with his family to find freedom and sanctuary.

The Oscar S. Straus Memorial was the only element of the Great Plaza ever completed. It stood in a place of honor before the Department of Commerce Building until that structure was demolished. The surface of the 11 acres was paved over and served as a parking lot. (See photograph in the August 1998 issue of "wholedamfam.") No statue in Washington DC may be placed in storage once it has been dedicated and so the memorial graced the parking lot for many years. Fortunately, the Ronald Reagan Federal Building and International Trade Center has been constructed on that site and the Oscar S. Straus Memorial has been resituated in a position of honor on the plaza.

The formal rededication ceremony was held in the Atrium Ballroom of the Ronald Reagan Building. Family and friends in attendance included: Oscar S. Straus II and his wife Joan Straus, Mildred Morse, Oscar S. Straus III and sons, David, Daniel and Adam, David's wife Elli and daughters Meghan and Laura, Alan F. and Birgitta Hockstader, Didi Hockstader and daughters Kalen and Avery, Kalen's mother-in-law Josephine Holliday, Oscar Straus Schafer with Didi Fenton, Paul A. Kurzman, Harold P.

Kurzman Jr., Nancy White Kurzman, Kate F. F. Cote, Ginnie Bersohn, Joan de Graaff, Jonathan and Fran Straus and their son James. In addition, friends of the Straus family who were present include: Senator MacMathias, Craig E. Carlson and Chuck Whitehead.

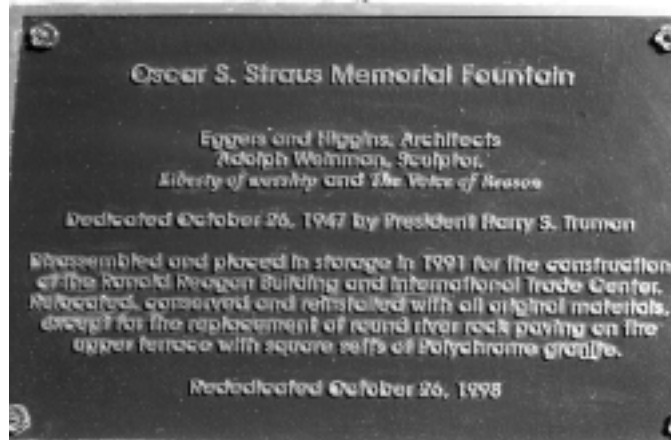
The President's Own United States Marine Corps Brass Quintet played as guests arrived. The Armed Forces Color Guard presented the colors and Senior Rabbi Ronald Sobel of Temple Emanu-El gave the Invocation. Family representatives who spoke were grandson Oscar S. Straus II and Straus Historical Society Chair Paul A. Kurzman. In addition, Ann W. Everett, Deputy Regional Administrator, General Services Administration; David J. Barram, Administrator, General Services Administration and Robert A. Peck, Commissioner, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration also spoke.

The unveiling of the plaque commemorating this rededication was held outdoors on the plaza at the fountain. Accompanied by brilliant sun and warm temperatures, members of the Straus family unveiled the plaque which flanks the original plaque set

in the cobblestone around the perimeter of the fountain. After a photographic session and time for all to admire the memorial, a reception was held in the Atrium Ballroom.

The rededication event was spectacular. It could not have been accomplished without the extraordinary efforts of Toni Johnson, Events Manager for GSA. She put together an elegant event in a very short time, sparing nothing and seeing to every detail with efficiency and professional-

ism. Toni has mailed us a complete set of negatives of the photographs taken by the government photographer. I will be putting together a photo album commemorating the day. Please contact me if you would like one.



The Straus Family at the unveiling of the plaque rededicating the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Fountain

The Maas and Altschuler Family

On November 5, 1998, I received a note from Mark Altschuler, a descendant of Barbara (Babette) Straus, sister of Sara Straus. He and his family wanted to learn more about their ancestors and also to establish contact with the Straus family. The Altschulers and Edith Mendel had letters, photographs, stories and family trees they were interested in sharing with us.



Edith Maas Mendel

Abraham Maas. Edith Maas is a descendant of Barbara and Abraham Maas. Barbara and Abraham Maas' daughter, Henrietta, married Ferdinand Altschuler. Herbert and Otto's grandparents were Henrietta and Ferdinand Altschuler. The Altschulers lived in Speyer and in Carlsbad. Max, Herbert and Otto's father, worked for the Strauses, importing china and porcelain to Macy's and to L. Straus & Sons in New York. On July 29, 1909, Jesse Straus and his fam-

I met Herbert, Otto, Helene and Mark Altschuler (Otto's son), Edith Maas Mendel and Marcella Sabo (Edith's daughter) at Edith Mendel's home in Livingston New Jersey on November 22nd. We spent an interesting day together exchanging information.

Barbara Straus, sister of Lazarus' wife Sara, married



Marcella Sabo

ily were touring Europe. His daughter Beatrice wrote from Carlsbad; "The other day Mother, Father, Sister, Mr. Altschuler, and I, went for a long automobile ride. Mr. Altschuler showed us L. Straus & Sons."

Max spent time with the Strauses



Herbert Altschuler

sonally thank them. She saved their lives.

Herbert, Otto and Edith Maas Mendel have graciously shared their family papers with the society and have given us several family trees which go back to the early 1700's. Of particular interest are a series of letters written by Clare E. Kohns in New York and by the Altschulers from Germany in

in New York in the late 19th and early 20th century but returned to Germany long before World War II.

Clare E. Kohns sponsored Max and Susanne Altschuler and their sons Otto and Herbert when they wanted to come to the US during the war. The family emigrated to Philadelphia in August 1939. The Altschulers are anxious to meet the descendants of Clare Kohns so that they may per-



Otto Altschuler

1939. From these we now have a better view of who these people are and how they lived. It was particularly interesting to learn that the Strauses in the United States maintained very close ties to their family abroad, even as late as 1939. Many of their German relatives worked in some aspect of the family business. They maintained foreign offices, or managed or worked in the porcelain, glass and decorating factories in Limoges, London, Paris, Carlsbad, Rudolstadt and Steinschonau. The



Mark Altschuler

American branch of the Strauses regularly sent money to Europe to help support the older members of the family.

Herbert, Otto and Edith Mendel have given me the names and addresses of several of their relatives. I will be contacting them soon and hope to write more about the Maas and Altschuler families in future issues of the newsletter.



The dry goods shop of Ferdinand Altschuler, Otto and Herbert's grandfather

Hermine Straus Kohns 1846 - 1923

Information about Hermine Straus Kohns and her family is sparse. We have only one letter written in Hermine's hand and two photographs, both taken when she was a mature woman. We do know that she was very much a part of the family and remained close to her parents and brothers. Their feelings for her and for her family were warm and remained so throughout her life.

Hermine married Lazarus Kohns, a match that was prized by her family. Her husband worked in the family business and became a partner in L. Straus & Sons. It is mystifying, to say the least, why so few documents remain to illuminate the life of this loving mother and devoted wife and daughter.

The information gathered for this article comes from many sources. I have found references to Hermine and her family in the letters of other family members. I have also been blessed with a wealth of information from Craig E. Carlson who is researching the cut glass business of L. Straus & Sons. Special thanks go to Gail Kohns Nutku for allowing me to copy the two beautiful photographs of Hermine Straus Kohns and to Gus B. Kaufman for sending Hermine's calling card.

Notice must be made of the various spellings and pronunciations of Hermine's name. Virtually all of the early letters refer to her as Hermine. By the 1880's, she was referred to as Hermina. The name is spelled Hermine on her crypt. One piece of cut glass, pictured later in this article, was named "Hermione." In his article, you will find the name spelled as it appeared at the time of its reference. Pronunciation seemed to have followed spelling. Family members today use Hermina.

Hermine Straus was the second child, the first daughter, of Lazarus and Sara Straus. She was born in Otterberg, Rhenish Bavaria, on June 16, 1846. Her father arrived in the US in 1852 and settled in Talbotton GA. After opening a dry goods store, and making certain he was sufficiently established and successful, he sent for his wife and children.

Sara Straus left Otterberg on August 24, 1854. She, her four children and a nursemaid, traveled to Kaiserslautern by carriage; her father Solomon accompanying them on horseback. From there she and the children took a train to Forbach, a French frontier town where they remained overnight. The next morning they proceeded to Paris. On August 29th they left for LeHavre

where they sailed on the maiden voyage of the Steamship "St. Louis." The family arrived in New York September 13, 1854. The passenger manifest lists the family: Marie Straus age 40, Isidor Straus age 12 years 10 months female child, Herman Straus age 10 years 4 months male child, Nathalie Straus age 8 years 6 months female child and Oscar Straus age 6 years 7 months male child. Their country of origin is listed as France. We know that Sara was 31, Isidor was a 9 year old male, Hermine an 8 year old female, Nathan a 6 year old male, and Oscar was 4. We don't now if the nursemaid accompanied them to America.

Lazarus met his family at the dock in New York. After a few days they traveled to Philadelphia where they remained for several weeks due to a yellow fever epidemic in Savannah. They sailed to Savannah where they remained all day in its primitive suburban railway station until their train left in the evening for Geneva GA. A stagecoach took them the final few miles to their home in

Talbotton. The trip was even more remarkable because Sara had suffered a stroke in 1851 which left her disabled; her arm partially paralyzed. She was unable to write, except for brief periods when her health improved.

The Strauses were educated people. They saw to it that their children received all the benefits of an education in their adopted country. Hermine studied at LeVert College, a girls' school. Unfortunately, we have no record of her academic achievements. Sara received a household allowance of \$20 from which she saved enough to buy a piano so that Hermine could continue her piano lessons.

Lazarus and Sara were traditional Jews. There was no synagogue in Talbotton. Lazarus arranged for his children to attend the Baptist Sunday school where the minister, a close family friend, taught Bible studies and read to them from the Old Testament. The minister visited their home frequently. Philo-

sophical, religious and secular dialogues were carried on between Lazarus and his friend. Hermine may have absorbed her religious training at home as girls were not usually included in formal religious training at that time.

During the Civil War, Isidor was sent to England as the secretary to Lloyd G. Bowers. He and his colleagues hoped to buy a fleet of ships with which to get Georgia cotton through the Union blockades and to sell bonds for the Confederacy. Their advertisement, taken out in a Georgia paper dated June 17, 1893, announced the formation of "The Georgia Importing and Exporting Company." L. Straus & Co. and L. Kohns & Bro. were subscribers to this newly formed company. Isidor was on their Steamship "Alice" which successfully ran the blockade out of Charleston Harbor on June 18th. Along with gold pieces with



Hermina Straus Kohns - about 1914

which to make investments, he carried letters to family and friends in Europe including to the Kohns family.

Isidor spent the duration of the war in Europe. He wrote frequent letters to his family in Georgia. They often included notes to Hermine and to Lazarus Kohns whose family was from Giebelstadt Germany. The two families knew each other in Germany and Isidor visited the elder Kohns during his years abroad.

Lazarus Kohns had come to New York in 1849. Some time during the fifties he went to Pennsylvania, near Wilkes-Barre, and established a general store with his older brother. After a year or two, they moved to Columbus Georgia, perhaps because they knew other Germans who had settled there.

In his first letter home after running the blockade, Isidor wrote at length about the business opportunities in Nassau New Providence, which is where his ship docked. He wrote, "Ask my friend Lazarus Kohns ...I ask it particularly to be layed before Mr. Kohns because I know him to be the very best man for this occasion, perservering and energetic." On October 15, 1863, Isidor's letter contained congratulations on the engagement of Hermine to Lazarus Kohns. On November 6th Isidor wrote to Hermine, "When will your wedding come off? I wish you a happy time of it & hope your new step in life will be one that will add to your pleasure comfort and happiness." Hermine and Lazarus Kohns married in late November or early December 1863. On December 12th Isidor wrote, "congratulations you all, my dear ones, upon the change in the family."

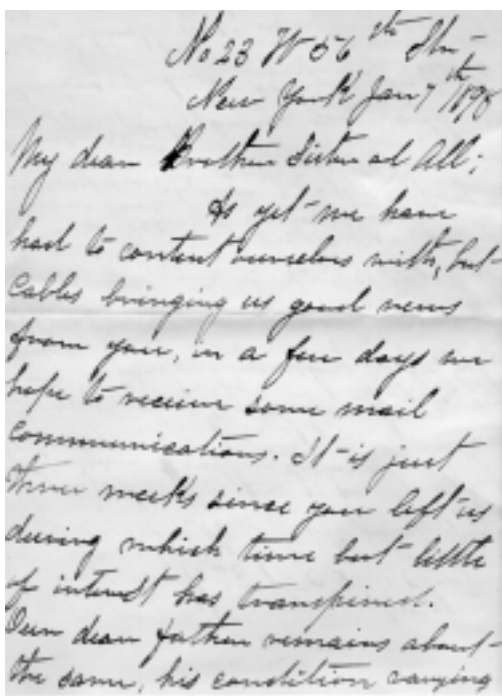
Lee Kohns was born to Hermine and Lazarus on September 1, 1864. He was named after the Confederate General Lee. Isidor wrote a congratulatory letter to his parents from Cologne on October 20th. "It affords me more than pleasure to congratulate you upon the ascendancy to the title of Grandparents and pray that kind heaven may yet permit you to see great grand children. How do you my dear mother feel in the shoes of a grandmother, perhaps as awkward as I in those of an uncle. Instead as before having to take care of 3, you now have to look after 4 children. Often when I am a little dreamy headed I see before me a vision of my dear Sister and her son fighting as to who is to have the largest part of a piece of candy, which unfortunately, the good grandmother broke into unequal parts."

When the Strauses left Georgia in 1865 after the burning of Columbus, Lazarus, Hermine and Lee went with them. Lazarus Straus wrote to his mother-in-law from Philadelphia July 17, 1865, "... for your first great-grandchild, the child of my dear Hermine, and you would be so happy with the 10 months old

boy." He wrote to his uncle in Otterberg from New York shortly after their arrival in that city in late July 1865, "Sara was visiting Hermine so she could not enclose her greetings."

Lazarus and Hermine Kohns had two daughters who died young and are buried at the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum at Salem Field Cemetery in Brooklyn. Clara Louisa was born May 25, 1866. She died December 28, 1869 at age 3 years, 7 months, 3 days. Her stone reads: "Too meek for this world, Too gentle was she, More like an angel, Than mortal could be." Flora Caroline, was born March 23, 1868. She died July 30, 1868, age 4 months, 7 days.

On April 5, 1871 Lazarus sent Passover greetings to his in-laws; "Hermine is close to delivery. My wife is busy with the preparations ..." A daughter, Irene, was born May 11, 1871. She joined her parents and brother Lee in the family home at 23 West 56th Street, New York City. On March 27, 1872 Lazarus Straus wrote to his in-laws; "My daughter's husband L. Kohns is since the new-year with us in the store." Lazarus Kohns' name appears on the L. Straus & Son letterhead on which this letter is written.



Hermine's letter - January 7, 1898

On August 16, 1882, Lazarus Straus wrote to Ida from the West End Hotel in Long Branch NJ. "Since Mr. Kohns is at home now, hopefully dear Isidor shall visit you this week and stay at least one week with you. The dear Hermine and Irene left on Monday to receive her Lee is still with me here and will stay until the 24th. Ida wrote to Percy from Long Branch on August 25, 1887; "I could not leave Grandpa alone, as aunt Hermine had not come when dear papa left..." The custom of the day was for a widowed father to live with his daughter and that appears to have been the case

with the Strauses, Sara Straus having died July 21, 1876 at the age of 53.

In 1886, Lee Kohns toured Europe. Ida wrote to him July 30th. "Of us on this side of the big water I can give you only the very best accounts. Your dear parents (Lazarus and Hermine) have been with us these last weeks more than ever before, as you have already probably heard grandpa (Lazarus Straus) went to Long Branch with aunt Sara and Irene (Lee's sister), mama (Hermine) wishing to remain home to superintend alterations in the house. Taking advantage of the small family, mama gave Babette a two week's vacation with her brother Sigmund on the Catskills and so I insisted on papas' (Lazarus Kohns) and her coming every evening to dine with us, and I assure you we enjoyed their company very much. Mama left for the Branch last Monday as aunt Sara went home, and since them papa is stopping with us. He is looking and feeling tip-top, eats with uncle Isidor

most every afternoon, going to look after the house before he goes down town, in short, I do not notice any of the nervousness about him which used to characterize him. Now a word about your house, ... It is an elegant, comfortable home, and papa is sparing no expense in making it as perfect as one could wish to have it. ... When uncle Isidor returns papa intends either to go to Saratoga with mama or to the Adirondacks."

In the early 1890's, the Isidor and Nathan Straus families summered at Lower Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks. On July 26th, Ida wrote home to Isidor; "I am so pleased that everyone reports you look so well. I had a letter from Hermina yesterday, in which she speaks about it." September 16th, Jesse wrote; "Isidor is staying with Hermine in town." On September 18th, Ida wrote; "I will stay for the whole of October if you are satisfied. Percy can go down to stop with Hermine and attend school from there." During the Summer of 1891, Ida wrote to Isidor; "If you wish to go to the Branch (Long Branch NJ) for a week I have no objection and I am sure aunt Hermina and grandpa will be glad to have you." In February 1893, Nathan and Lina's son Jerome died. Hermina did her part to help Nathan and Lina, who decided not to return to Saranac Lake. Ida went there in October and wrote; "Hermina disposed of all poor Jerry's other clothes."

On Wednesday, November 16, 1896, Lee Kohns married Clare Elfelt in New York City. Percy Straus, who had been at Harvard wrote to his parents about his intention to come in for the wedding. "I think Lee has displayed good sense in the time selected for the wedding ceremony & reception, as evening weddings always seem more like jollification meetings arranged by a father to celebrate his having married off a daughter."

An undated calling card reads: Mrs. Lazarus Kohns, 23 West 56th Street, Saturdays. "Thanks for your thoughtful attention in sending the papers." The postmark is from New York City. This card was found in a desk once owned by Edward Kimborough of GA.

The one letter we have in our collection written by Hermine is dated January 7, 1898 and was written from her home at No. 23 W 56th Street. Her father was quite ill at the time. "Our dear father remains about the same, his condition varying from better to not so good. His principle trouble now is his disinclination to taking food. He is taking no whiskey at all subsisting mainly on champagne. I just told him that I was writing to you and asked him if he had any message for you. He said, tell Isidor "I am knaichzing." I went with Brother Nathan on Jan 1st to city hall to see him sworn in as Health Commissioner. This

gave me a good insight into the Tammany politics. I see some of your children every day none seem to miss you. Yesterday I met your granddaughter she is indeed a very fine child. I have just had a visit from Robert Lee, whose visit grandpa enjoyed immensely in spite of his having had but little to say for himself. ... We are all very anxious to hear that you dear Isidor are feeling better and also that dear Sara's knee is improving. With much love to you all. Believe me, your devoted Hermine."

The same evening Jesse wrote; "Grandpa is much better than he was when you left. He eats more, drinks more, and is in better spirits. Mr. Nathan was there the other say and spent an hour chatting with Grandpa, and Aunt Hermina said it reminded her of Grandpa 5 years ago, he was so hearty, in such good spirits, so talkative and laughed so heartily at Mr. Nathan's jokes."



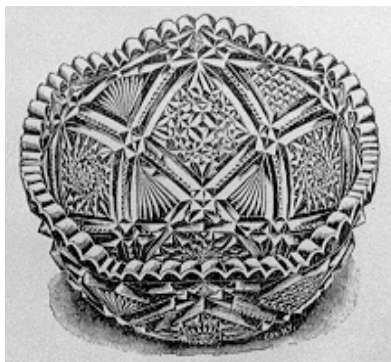
Hermina Straus Kohns

On January 14, 1898, Lazarus Straus died. Isidor and Ida were in Cairo. Family members wrote at length to tell them about the last days of Lazarus' life and about how the various members of the family were faring. From Percy; "I know how useless it is to try to offer any consolation for I know that you like Aunt Hermina feel most consoled when talking and hearing about Grandpa. ... During the afternoon Dr. Friedenberg asked permission to call in Dr. Adler to which both Grandpa and Aunt Hermina agreed. ... At twelve o'clock the doctor told Aunt Hermina that he thought he had better not bother Grandpa any more ... in his end, holding Aunt Hermina's hand, and surrounded by the various members of the family, none of whom, not even Aunt Hermina realizing that life was extinct, - so peaceful was his death. When we dressed him for the last time we allowed no hand to which he could have objected to touch him.

... I assure you the fact the no strangers were allowed to lend a hand was a great source of comfort to Aunt Hermina." On January 19th, Lina wrote; "Even Hermine and Irene who certainly had the worst of the trial, are quite cheerful and begin to realize how much we all have to be thankful for, and what little cause for murmuring against fate. ... Hermine feels at present, as if she did not want to break up the family more by leaving. But she may change her mind and yet join you. - We all think your proposition such a good one as a change of surroundings is so beneficial for mind and body." January 20th, Oscar wrote; "We are all well and Hermina keeps up well. I think she will not think of leaving the house for 30 days - after that she Laz and Irene may join you abroad. ... Hermine was most devoted, a tender mother, she was mother, wife & daughter all embraced in her affection care and loving watchfulness." January 21st, Herbert wrote; "Aunt Hermina takes Grandpa's death very quietly and kept up simply wonder-

fully. We all attended minion and several times took supper with her." Sarah also wrote on January 21st; "Hermina bears up bravely but is weak physically ... Irene is rather feeling the after effects more as Nathan said she was like three Irene's in the house she was everywhere when she was needed. ... The other day Clara brought her (Lina) over to cheer Hermina up..."

Irene Kohns, Hermina's daughter, wrote to Isidor on January 21, 1898. "I was sitting at the foot of his bed feeling his feet so that they should not grow cold and Mamma held his hand on one side and one of the children on the other and we did not realize that he had breathed his last until the doctor told us. ... Mamma is wonderfully strong and brave and I hope that as reaction will set in so that her nerves will keep her up. ... Mamma requests me to say that she cannot as yet collect her thoughts to write nor can she cable her decision. What her plans for the near future will be - She is trying to make up her mind to go abroad but nothing definite can be settled yet."



"Hermione" - cut by L. Straus & Sons - *The House Furnisher* - August 1899

For many years, Lazarus Kohns had the responsibility of supervising the L. Straus & Sons foreign buying office. He retired from active participation in the business in 1887 but came down to the store every day, giving a helping hand or a word of advice, greeting the customers, keeping old friends and making new ones. On December 21, 1899, the *Crockery and Glass Journal* printed, "A Tribute of Respect," honoring the seventy-fifth birthday of Lazarus Kohns. The article gives a brief biography and includes the text of an engraved tribute by the employees of L. Straus & Sons: "... By your straightforwardness, your unceasing activity and conscientious execution of self-imposed duties you set a brilliant and admirable example to each and every one of us, and by your kind-heartedness (sic) and unaltered modesty you have won our sincere love. May you be blessed with many, many returns of this day and continue to enjoy good health and unclouded happiness. This is the fervent wish of THE EMPLOYEES OF L. STRAUS & SONS, New York, the 22nd day of December 1899." At the annual meeting of the Crockery Board a resolution was passed, "...To us he was best known in his daily business life and we found him ever affable and helpful, the gentleness and sweetness of his disposition unruffled. His many lovable traits endeared him to all who had the privilege of association with him. In his conduct of affairs he was eminently fair and just. He was loyal to the highest standard of principle, and of scrupulous honor."

From an article in the *Crockery and Glass Journal*, June 14, 1900, "At noon June 6th Miss Irene Kohns, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lazarus Kohns, was married to Edmund E. Wise, at the home of her parents, No. 23 West Fifth sixth street.

The drawing room, where the ceremony was performed by the Rev. Dr. Gustav Gottheil, of the Temple Emanu-El, assisted by the Rev. Dr. Kauffman Kohler, was elaborately decorated with spring flowers and apple blossoms. The bride, wearing a gown of white satin and lace, was attended by Miss Sarah Straus as maid of honor. There was no best man. The ushers were Dr. Alfred N. Straus, Frederick Lavanburg, Percy S. Straus and J. P. Seaman. A luncheon and reception followed the ceremony." Sarah Straus was Oscar's wife and Frederick Lavanburg was Sarah's brother.



Lazarus Kohns

On January 15, 1910, Percy wrote to Isidor and Ida who were in Cannes. "Last evening, before going to the Educational Alliance meeting I dined at Aunt Hermina's. Their whole household is well." Jan. 31, 1910: "Last evening we had our first family reunion since your departure. Everyone was there ... We met at Minnie's house. Next Sunday we are going to celebrate your birthday at Luchow's, where we are all going to meet for dinner." April 18, 1910, "We were all together at my house last night ..." May 2, 1910, "Last evening most of us were at Vivie's for supper..."

Lazarus Kohns had a stroke in late May of 1910. June 3rd, Isidor wrote to Oscar; "Lazarus was removed Thursday to his Elberon home. He was absolutely oblivious to his surroundings." Isidor also wrote to Nathan on that day; "Lazarus' condition, as I cabled you in answer to your inquiry, shows no change.... recovery is not desirable, as it is feared it would only mean leaving him in a senile condition, and rather than see him linger in that sort of a way a peaceful end is preferable." Hermine's birthday was June 16th. June 17th, Oscar wrote to Isidor from the American Embassy in Constantinople; "I telegraphed yesterday my congratulations to Hermine, and inquired how Lazarus was, to which I to-day received a reply that he continues unconscious. Under the circumstances, that is a fortunate condition for him. I trust that Hermine will not break down under the strain" On August 12th, Isidor wrote to Nathan; "Hermina keeps up very well under the circumstances. It is fortunate that human nature in course of time seems to adjust itself to every condition." Lazarus Kohns died December 3, 1910, three weeks shy of his 86th birthday.

Although we have little direct evidence of Hermine's life, the letters of family members make it clear that they all remained close. She was an integral part of their lives. Hermine Straus Kohns died October 17, 1923 at the age of 77. She is buried, along with her husband Lazarus, son Lee, daughter-in-law Clare Elfelt Kohns, baby daughters Flora Caroline and Clara Louisa, and daughter Irene Kohns Wise in the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum at Salem Fields Cemetery in Brooklyn.

Meet Billy Straus

William Sachs Straus, Billy, was born in New York City on July 8, 1960. He lived with his parents, Irving and Barbara Fensterwald Straus on Sutton Place. After attending Collegiate, first through eighth grade and then Choate in Connecticut from ninth through twelfth grades, Billy went to Brown University in Providence, RI. Before graduation, he decided to take a break from school to pursue a music career.

Beginning in his freshman year at Brown, Billy, a self taught musician, organized a rock and roll band which achieved moderate success in and around the Providence area. He was the guitar player and songwriter. He also became involved with music production, working for a remote recording truck; a recording studio in a truck. They went to where the Tony Awards, The Grateful Dead, The Beach Boys were, and recorded what was happening. They did live albums, concerts, television and radio. Billy feels his work on the recording studio truck gave him the tools he later needed when he went into his own music production business.

Billy met his wife, Lynne Jaeger Weinstein, their first day at Brown. She completed her studies there, moved back to New York and became a photo researcher at a photo agency. Within a short time, she was hired by *Life Magazine* as a photo journalist.

Billy returned to New York in 1983. He got a job as an assistant recording engineer at the Hit Factory, one of the most prominent recording studios for rock and pop music in New York. He spent a year working with Bruce Springsteen on what became "Born in the USA," "one of the most seminal records of the 1980's." This was studio work, every day, every night for over a year. He worked with a number of other famous rock and roll folks including Julian Lennon and Stevie Nix. Billy received a Platinum Record for "Live In The USA," which sold more than 1,000,000 records and a Gold Record for "Valotte" by Julian Lennon, for selling more than 500,000 records.

In 1985, Billy and a partner started their own recording studio on 14th Street called the Manhattan Recording Company. They were together for five years. It gave him the opportunity to do all kinds of projects, not just high profile music. They did lots of jazz and some rock, pop and classical music. Billy enjoyed working in so many different genres. They became involved with writing and producing TV commercials. It was a good way to balance the need for income with the desire to do the projects they wanted to do. 1986, 1987 and 1988 were big jingle years and the commercial work snowballed. They did commercials for Miller Beer and M & M Mars. After several years, Billy decided he no longer wanted to be in the ad business.

He started producing music, particularly acappella music for the group, "Rockapella," who were most well known for their work on the PBS children's TV show "Where In The World Is Carmen San Diego?" He did seven records for Rockapella and produced several records that were spun off from the TV show. Billy won an Emmy for his music production on "Where In The World Is Carmen San Diego?"

After some time, Billy and his partner decided to close their studio. Their interests were now going in different directions. It had become apparent that they would either have to move up to the next level; rent a larger space, come up with money to finance a big improvement and become a larger company, or dissolve it. Billy didn't want to be in the studio business. He wanted to work on his own projects.



Billy Straus

By 1990, the changes in computers and music production equipment were beginning to make it possible for him to work at home. He was finally completely free to pursue the kind of projects that interested him. He began to write songs for children's music and many songs for Rockapella, which they are still singing today. Billy wrote a song, "Change In My Life", which was used in a Steve Martin movie, *Leap of Faith*. "Change In My Life" is constantly being used by organizations such as the Boy Scouts or United Way in their campaigns. That led to a number of other movie related projects where he was asked to either compose or write music for films.

Ian Jaeger Straus was born June 24, 1991. Lynne had been working at *Life Magazine* throughout the early years of their

marriage and continued to do so after Ian's birth. Billy was able to stay home, work on his music and be the primary care giver for Ian. Their's is an unusually close bond, perhaps forged during those early months. On July 16, 1994, Emma Patricia joined the family.

Around 1994, Billy got the idea to do children's music CDs. They would be a collection of music in different styles which would appeal to adults and parents as much as to children. This grew directly out of his Carmen San Diego work. The two CDs he produced for them were eclectic, with artists like Tito Puente, The Persuasions, as well as Rockapella and some Irish and Ska music. He wanted to take that idea further. Now that he had children, he had become aware that the music available for them was pretty bad. He presented his ideas to the president of Gap, thinking his concept would be suitable for Gap Kids. Although that project never took off, Gap decided to do a Valentine's Day CD which Billy produced. Billy began taking high-end music compilations and putting them into stores that were traditionally not music retailers, like Gap and Pottery Barn. His first CD for Pottery Barn was a Christmas CD. He's about to do his 14th CD for them and his company, Rock River Communi-

cations, does about fifteen new releases a year. Amazingly, just about all of the work gets done in one room in his apartment thanks to today's new computer technologies.



Emma Patricia and Ian Jaeger Straus

songs. He wrote a majority of the songs and produced all of them. That show did well and won several awards including The Viewers Choice. He did network ID's and a spin-off of Gullah Gullah Island called Binyah Binyah for Nickelodeon. Billy explained that his work involves a very specific skill set; being able to write music and lyrics, interface with producers and writers on the show and create and produce the recording and finally produce the vocal sessions with the kids. There aren't many people who do that. As a result, Disney asked Billy to music direct a new TV show called "Out Of The Box" which has been very successful. His work is now on the cusp, with opportunities in several different areas. Billy wants to get back into the studio, producing artists. He's working with a few artists who he might sign to his label.

Billy, Lynne, Ian and Emma are a close family. Both Billy and Lynne work at home; Lynne doing portrait photography. Some of her photographs are beautifully displayed in their apartment along with lots of Ian and Emma's artwork. Lynne is currently being represented by a worldwide agency.

The family has been spending Summers and vacations at their South Newfane Vermont home. They are an active family who love being outside, taking hikes in the woods and skiing. Ian is studying piano this year and Billy feels he has the gift of a really good ear. Emma is a prolific artist.

As a member of the board of directors, Billy has made significant contributions to the Straus Historical Society, Inc. He seems to look at issues with a perspective others have not considered. This has proven to be quite an asset. Billy's intelligence, sense of humor and his empathy round out a personality that is both unique and delightful. I, for one, feel lucky to have gotten to know Billy Straus.

Friends of Straus Park

by Leon Auerbach, Edited by Joan Adler

It has been a busy time for Friends of Straus Park (FSP). Our 2nd Annual Art in the Park, a day-long celebration of music, art, dance and food, took place on Saturday, September 19th in the Park and on West End Avenue between 106th and 107th Streets. The weather was cool and crisp and about 200 to 300 neighbors and friends came out to enjoy the day. We developed the Art In The Park theme around an Art Exhibition and Sale organized by Marjorie Auerbach with the help of local members. Paintings and photography by 25 to 30 artists pleased passersby and collectors alike. The day started with three tours lead by Park Designer Eric Mattes who discussed the horticultural and historical background of the Park. Our musical presentation were supplied by Bota-Fogo lead by Susan Schwartz; Acoustic North, led by Maxine Mann with her Canadian Friends; Bill Saferstein performing soft Sinatra sounds and by Hanna Dolgin and her Quartet. Patrick Poladian, Hanna's keyboardist was also responsible for the sound system for the day. Commissioner Henry Stern brought greetings and best wishes from Mayor Giuliani. We also had some very flashy dancing including line and square dancing under the tutelage of folk teacher Karl Finger and a demonstration and instruction by Fred Astaire Dance Studio led by Theo and Ganine Derleth. Local restaurants donated their special dishes which were augmented by a table of delicacies and desserts donated by members and neighbors.

Other events this Fall included a third storytelling at the monument by Jo Abrams and a Flower Planting in the Park which was held on Saturday October 17th, under the direction of John Olund, our Horticulturist/Gardener.

On Friday, January 22nd, NYC Parks & Recreation Commissioner Henry Stern held the Annual State of Parks where the "Emerald Awards" were presented. Friends of Straus Parks received the Partnership for Parks Award for Manhattan. Partnership for Parks, under the direction of Tim Tompkins, is the umbrella organization under which volunteers and parks supporters do their work in neighborhood parks. Although the presentation was made to Leon Auerbach, Jo Abrams and Mary Walsh, it was in recognition of the major efforts of FSP. Our award was a wooden leaf painted forest green mounted on a base with a brass plaque. We showed off the award at the Midwinter Song Fest that evening. FSP members and neighbors met at the monument to sing, under the holiday lights twinkling in the trees of the Park. After the Song Fest, the group moved to Jo Abrams apartment for an informal party and continuance of the good times at the Park.

Plans for the coming year include the Second Annual Straus Park Commemorative Celebration April 17th, Planting Flowers in the Park May 1st and October 16th, a Spring Concert May 14th, a concert in the Park July 14th and Art In The Park October 2nd. Storytelling will be ongoing. In the works is an interactive school and park plan using Straus Park as an historical and natural resource. The Straus Historical Society, Inc. will work with Friends of Straus Park on their educational and historical programs as well as their Park events.

Fourth Grade Curriculum City of New York

LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, The City University of New York, has put together its annual curriculum for fourth grade students. Richard K. Lieberman, Director of the Archives, wrote, "The curriculum encourages students to uncover the causes and solutions to the high infant mortality rate in New York City during the years 1880-1920. Using this material, teachers will introduce their students to the study of New York City history, as well as topics in health and science." Unit Seven is about Nathan Straus and his milk stations.

In December, I received a copy of the student workbook and was impressed with the curriculum's quality. The children are challenged to be "History Detectives." This approach makes history fun and interesting and teaches students to be creative thinkers.

The Straus Historical Society contributed information and photographs to LaGuardia and Wagner Archives for use in the curriculum. A copy of the workbook has been added to the Straus Family Collection. It is available for your inspection.



"Straus Milk Pavilion, where ice cold sterilized milk was sold to the public at one cent per glass. Circa 1900" Photo courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, The Byron Collection

Kenneth H. Straus Fire Fighting Collection New York City Fire Department November 20, 1998

Kenneth Hollister Straus was fascinated with everything having to do with the fire department. One of his earliest memories was of watching a unit of the fire department during their practice exercises at their training school on 68th Street and Lexington Avenue. In his autobiography, Ken wrote, "Most of all I remember those engines. Oh, how colorful, powerful, shiny and noisy they were." Ken never got over that thrill.



Commissioner Tom Von Essen, Timothy Straus,
Kenneth Straus, Brenda Straus

Ken became involved with the fire department as a volunteer during his adult years. He was made honorary fire chief and was president of The Fire Foundation, a philanthropic arm of the department. Ken carried three beepers, two for receiving fire calls and one for police activity. His car was set up with the appropriate lights and sirens so that he could respond to emergencies along with members of the department.

Ken's professional life with Macy's took him all over the world. He visited fire departments in many large cities in these foreign lands and studied their methods. He collected fire memorabilia which included a set of miniature antique brass pieces having something to do with the fire department. He also built models of antique fire engines. His son Tim remembers watching his father's meticulous workmanship and creativity. Tim recently spoke of the shoelaces Ken used to simulate hoses on the tiny engines. Ken found a wonderful model maker in Paris who designed and built some of his more intricate models. All these were beautifully displayed in Ken's study at home. They were among his most treasured possessions.

Ken's collection was presented to the New York City Fire Department by Ken's widow, Brenda, and his son and grandson, Tim and Kenny, at a cocktail party on November 20, 1998 at Fire Department Headquarters. The Fire Belles, a volunteer group of fire enthusiasts, members of the Fire Foundation, Commissioner Tom Von Essen and members of his fire department and Ken's family and friends gathered for the dedication. It seemed to me to be the perfect place for the collection and I believe Ken would have been pleased. I am grateful to the Photography Unit of the New York City Fire Department who were kind enough to send us a set of photographs taken at the dedication.

Announcements

Expecting: Stephen and Melissa Straus of Austin TX are expecting their second child in April. Stephen is the son of Thomas and Carol Straus.

Expecting: Kerim and Elisa Nutku of Victoria AUSTRALIA are expecting their third child in May. Kerim is the son of Gail Kohns Nutku.

Born: Nicholas Abraham Moskow to Christina and Clifford Moskow of Concord MA on August 26, 1997. Christina is the daughter of Randy and Stephanie Selden.

Born: Isabella Nolin Bush to Sarah and Jonathan Bush Jr. of Belmont MA on September 20, 1997. Sarah is the daughter of Randy and Stephanie Selden.

Engaged: Julie Ellen Schafer, daughter of Jack and Betty Ann Schafer of San Francisco CA, is engaged to Mark Schneider. The wedding will take place March 20, 1999 in San Francisco where the couple make their home.

Engaged: Kate Fariss Fraser Cote, daughter of Kate Fariss McNally Cote, to Peter James Gillen. Peter proposed New Year's Eve while the couple were vacationing on Antigua. An October 16th wedding is planned in New York City.

Congratulations: To Daniel Kohns who turned 30 on December 4th. His wife Jennifer threw a birthday bash at their apartment on January 9th to celebrate the event.

Congratulations: To Alan and Birgitta Hockstader who are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary with a trip to Mexico.

Congratulations: To Clifford Moskow, husband of Christina Selden Moskow, of Concord MA. Clifford is a documentary film maker. His film is currently being aired on PBS.

Get Well Wishes: To Udine Kurzman, wife of Harold P. Kurzman Jr. of Potomac, MD.

Get Well Wishes: To Robert Haber, husband of Pam Haber of San Francisco, CA.

Died: Peggy Hess de Graaff, former president of the Portland Junior Symphony, now the Portland Youth Philharmonic, died peacefully in her sleep at her home in New York City on December 24, 1998. In 1931, Peggy married and moved to Portland with her husband, Jan de Graaff, proprietor of the Oregon Bulb Farms and creator of world-famous hybrid lilies. She helped to publicize the developing strains of flowers, as well as naming each one, including the immensely popular Enchantment series. They lived in Portland from 1931 to 1970.

Peggy de Graaff was born in New York on March 30, 1907. She was the daughter of the noted pediatrician Alfred Hess and Sara Straus Hess and the granddaughter of Isidor and Ida Straus who perished in the "Titanic" disaster. Mrs. de Graaff attended

Horace Mann School in New York and graduated from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania in 1928. After college Peggy was a reporter for the *New York Evening World* and the *Paris Herald* and also wrote for the *New York Times Book Review* and *Magazine*. During World War II she was a Red Cross Nurses Aide. She served on the board of the Portland Youth



Philharmonic for a number of years, and was its president in the 1960's. Peggy de Graaff and her husband were devoted to music education for young people and the orchestra. In 1970, when her husband retired, they moved to New York City, where she did volunteer work for Young Audiences and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Peggy de Graaff is survived by a daughter Joan, of Bethesda Maryland, and a son, Alfred, of Paris France. A memorial service will be planned for sometime in March.

New Acquisitions for the Straus Historical Society

Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 2. This interesting book contains a chapter about the "Pink Palace," Oscar and Sarah Straus' home in Washington DC when he was Secretary of Commerce and Labor. The book was donated to the society by Sue Kohler, Historian for The Commission of Fine Arts, National Building Museum of Washington DC.

A photocopy of the page from the original passenger manifest of "Titanic" on which Isidor and Ida Straus are listed with their maid and valet. The page was donated by John Celardo of the National Archives and Records Administration - Northeast Region, New York City.

Many letters written by members of the family including Hermine and Lazarus Kohns, Isidor and Ida Straus, Percy, Herbert, Jesse, Sara, Vivian and Minnie Straus. These original, handwritten letters were in the possession of Peter Kurzman. His widow, Nancy White Kurzman and Paul A. Kurzman have donated them to the society to be organized and preserved in the Straus Family Collection.

A continuing deluge of information about L. Straus & Sons, Hermine and Lazarus Kohns, and Lee and Clare E. Kohns, from Craig E. Carlson. Our knowledge about the family business and about the Kohns has been greatly increased because of Craig's excellent research and his generosity.

Straus Historical Society, Inc.

The Straus Historical Society is pleased to announce our incorporation as a charitable organization in the State of New York effective October 26, 1998.

Preparation and submission of our application for 501(c)(3) status is in the process of being completed. It is expected that the filing will occur no later than the end of February.

IRS regulations state that we have 27 months to obtain our not-for-profit status from the date of incorporation, October 26, 1998, and that contributions to the society may be considered tax deductible retroactive to that date.

Fred Rothman of the firm of Loeb & Troper has been retained to prepare our papers. He is a highly qualified accountant with many years experience in this field. It is his feeling that we should not have much difficulty obtaining the not-for-profit designation. In the meantime, your contributions to the society are tax deductible pending approval of our application, retroactive to October 26, 1998.

Your continued support of the Straus Historical Society has made this important step possible. Your tax deductible contribution for 1999 will help preserve the past through educational programs. It will ensure that the history of the Straus family will be documented and that this information will be made available for researchers and family alike.

"CALDAMFAM" - April 16-18, 1999

In 1993, the first "caldamfam" was held in Palo Alto CA. Sara Byruck and Liza Loop were the hosts. Activities included a picnic in Foothill Park and a pot luck dinner at Liza and Jim's home. Liza and Sara's report of this wonderful weekend may be found in "wholedamfam," volume 1, number 2, July 1993.

A second "caldamfam" will be held in San Francisco and in the Napa Valley area the weekend of April 16-18, 1999. Plans for the weekend include tours of the Wine Country, a day at a park in Napa Valley with a luncheon served at a local winery hosted by Denise and Philip Toohey and Sunday lunch at the Marin County home of Jack and Betty Schafer. A Friday evening cocktail party is being planned.

We hope that many of you, not only those from California, will come to this beautiful area of the country for the weekend. Philip Toohey has volunteered to send out a list of small inns, hotels and B & B's where you can stay for a night or two in the Napa Valley. Arrangements will have to be made for local transportation and lodgings. It will be helpful to the hosts to know how many to prepare for. Please let me know if you plan to attend.

Available from Straus Historical Society

Back issues of the newsletter - \$6.00 each

Newsletter Binder - \$35.00

Artistic family tree - \$55.00

Family tree update - \$20.00

Video tape of "Titanic on Broadway" with Joan Adler interview and CNN segment of interview of Paul Kurzman regarding "Titanic" - \$20.00

"The Autobiography of Isidor Straus" a privately published book by Sara Straus Hess, in softcover - \$25.00

"Genealogical Miscellaney" a family genealogy compiled by Robert K. Straus with addenda - \$30.00

Color photograph album of the Straus family's trip to Talbotton and Columbus GA, October 24-26, 1997 - \$35.00

New: Color photograph album of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial rededication ceremony and reception, October 26, 1998 - \$35.00

New: Video Tape of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Rededication Ceremony - October 26, 1998 filmed by Alan F. Hockstader - \$20.00

Send your check to Joan Adler, payable to the **Straus Historical Society, Inc.**, P. O. Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416 if you would like to purchase any of these items. Be assured that all money received is deposited into the Society's account. I do not profit personally from the sale. A receipt will be issued for your contribution to the Society and for the purchase of any item.

You can contact Joan Adler by phone: 516-265-3340, fax: 516-724-4487 or e.mail: famjad@aol.com

Board Meeting, September 28, 1999

A Straus Historical Society, Inc. board meeting was held September 28, 1998 at the University Club in Manhattan. It was hosted by board member Barnard Sachs Straus Sr.

This was a meeting convened so that Paul Kurzman, Rob Straus and I could present a report based on our meeting with Fred Rothman of Loeb & Toper. The board voted to proceed with our application for not-for-profit status. Mr. Rothman was hired to file our application. Other agenda items were also discussed.

The next meeting of the board will be held February 16, 1999 at the home of Paul and Margaret Kurzman.