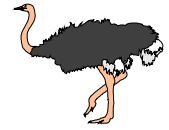


STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Newsletter

August 2002

Hon. Isidor Straus House of Representatives 1894-1895

Many people are not aware that Isidor Straus served in the House of Representatives during the second Cleveland administration. Although he never aspired to public office, Isidor felt it was his civic duty to serve when called.

Isidor, Nathan and Oscar Straus were close friends of Grover Cleveland, Governor of New York (1883-1885) and two time President of the United States (1885-1889, 1893-1897). Cleveland became notable for his single-minded concentration on a task. He was said to "mull over" a question until he got to the heart of it. Oscar Straus wrote of Cleveland, "His rugged honesty of purpose and determined stand for the best principles in our public life were more and more appreciated and valued." This was a man the brothers admired.

In his 1947 Master's thesis, [The Political Career of Isidor Straus](#), Saul Viener wrote, Isidor was "never conspicuous in dress or conduct. Serious and diligent, Isidor was methodical in his work, ... Isidor was reserved, full of dignity, and even-tempered. ... Scholarly, analytical, of a conservative disposition, and circumspect in his judgement, Isidor never made a decision without giving careful attention to every detail."

Isidor devoted full attention to his mercantile career. When away from the store, he considered it recreation to read about currency, banking and tariff matters from his extensive home library. And so, Isidor was fully prepared for the matters under consideration in the House; tariff reform, the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchasing Act and regulation of the railroads through the Interstate Commerce Commission when he was prevailed upon to run for the unexpired seat of Democrat Ashbel P. Fitch, representative of the Fifteenth Congressional District.

The McKinley Tariff Act of 1890 was a compromise protective tariff promised by the Republicans in 1888, and introduced by William McKinley. It was passed and then extended to include industrial and agricultural goods. The Act also included recip-

rocal trade provisions that allowed the president to retaliate against nations that discriminated against U.S. products, and reward those that opened their markets to American goods. Subsequent price increases led to a popular backlash, and a Democratic House victory in the 1890 congressional elections.

The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, initiated by pro-silver interests, passed legislation authorizing Congress to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver each month at market prices, and issue

Treasury notes redeemable in gold and silver. The Act created inflation and lowered gold reserves.

The Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 sought to curb railroad abuses such as price fixing, kickbacks, and discriminatory freight rates. When the Supreme Court ruled individual state laws unconstitutional because only Congress had the right to control interstate commerce, the Interstate Commerce Act was passed providing that a commission be established to oversee fair and just railway rates, prohibit rebates, end discriminatory practices, and require annual reports and financial statements. Unfortunately, the newly formed commission was ineffective in enforcing its regulations.



Isidor Straus

By the time Isidor was elected to the Congress in 1894, the country was in an economic depression and there was a lack of confidence in the government's ability to bring about the legislation necessary to turn the economy around. This article will illuminate Isidor's brief political career and his stance with re-

Inside this issue:

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The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is dedicated to advancing the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Lazarus Straus family and the historical context in which they lived through research and education. The Straus Historical Society Newsletter is a semi-annual publication of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. You are invited to submit articles or ideas for articles, calendar events, and material relating to the Straus family and to their history.

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is a tax exempt organization as described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Contributions to the Society are deductible to the extent provided by law.



**A Message from the
Vice-Chairman of the Board:
William Sachs (Billy) Straus**

As the magical dog days of the New England summer inevitably yield to the crisp autumn wind, the time has come for us to say thank you to our esteemed Chairperson and good friend Paul A. Kurzman as he prepares to step down after five highly productive years as our leader.

Under Paul's focused leadership, SHS has evolved into a fully functional organization with a clearly articulated mission. The accomplishments are numerous, but Paul's contribution goes far beyond the milestones; Paul has inspired and defined the spirit of the organization by openly soliciting, encouraging, and accepting ideas and input from all possible sources. Paul's in depth knowledge of the family and the family history is second to none, and thus he has bestowed on the SHS board a perspective that is extremely valuable to our mission.

Working alongside Paul has been very inspiring for me personally, and I am tremendously grateful that my participation on the SHS board has provided me this unforeseen opportunity. Paul is one of those amazing and rare individuals who brings reason, warmth, and a wonderfully collaborative spirit into the room wherever he may be.

From each and every one of the SHS board members, each Straus family member, and anyone who may ever pick up an issue of the newsletter to unearth some nugget of Straus family history previously unknown, we extend a resounding "Thank You" to our friend and colleague Paul A. Kurzman.



**A Message from the
Executive Director: Joan Adler**

On Wednesday, September 18th, the Straus Historical Society board of directors will elect a new chair of the executive committee. Paul A. Kurzman has been its chair since the Society's inception. He lead us through the application process for our 501(c)(3) certification. His guidance has provided direction. He's kept a watchful eye over our budget, encouraged board members to stay involved, contacted family and friends to join the Society, and has actively worked to

make this Society the best it could possibly be. Without Paul's leadership and guidance, the Society would not be recognized for its excellent research, education and collection as it is today.

On a personal note, Paul's insightful and tactful suggestions and his timely reminders have contributed greatly to making my work so pleasurable and productive. It is with deep gratitude that I thank Paul for his role in ensuring that the Society is a valuable instrument for historical preservation, research and dissemination of information about the Straus family.

Although he will step down as chair, Paul will continue to play an active role on the board of directors. We encourage all family members and friends to join us as we work toward fulfillment of our mission.

Let us hear from you!

gard to these important issues. Although the quotes are lengthy, I have included them not only to show Isidor's position but because I feel that the issues he dealt with, and the solutions he proposed, are as relevant today as they were more than one hundred years ago.

Saul Viener wrote, "From time to time Isidor Straus was called to Washington to appear before Congressional committees when tariff and financial legislation were under consideration. His first appearance in Washington before a committee was in June, 1890, when he was chosen as one of the Committee of Fifty who appeared before the Committee of Finance of the Senate to offer arguments against the passage of the McKinley Tariff Bill. Straus managed to interest everyone with an original method of illustrating his views on tariff. He enforced his points by actual proofs, demonstrating by means of an exhibit the difference between the domestic and foreign glassware. "The opinion of the merchants of this city (New York), after the report of the committee, was that six earnest men like Straus would have had greater effect by their arguments than the forty-nine who bore him company." (*The Tammany Times*, January 6, 1894) Isidor's interest in politics continued as he was again called to Washington to "present an argument before the Coinage Committee of the House of Representatives in favor of sound currency at the beginning of the silver agitation."

In a speech delivered in New York on June 14, 1890, Isidor said, "One of the first prerogatives of government is the raising of revenue to defray its expenses, From the foundation of our government it has been the practice to rely chiefly on the duties of Imports for this, and so long as human nature is constituted so that it prefers to be taxed, even if it be for a greater sum, indirectly, I presume this mode of procuring it is about as desirable as any other. Duties that are exacted purely for protection will not, in my opinion, be tolerated by the people ..."

In September, 1890, Grover Cleveland stayed at Prospect House on Upper Saranac Lake, a short distance from Isidor and Nathan's summer homes on Lower Saranac Lake. Jesse and Percy, Isidor's sons, went with their uncle Oscar to visit the president and his wife. Jesse wrote to his father on September 16th describing their lengthy visit. "In the course of conversation your speech was mentioned & Mr. C said it was the only clear & concise statement of facts given. That you had "put the thing so that they could not possibly misunderstand."

With regard to the Sherman Silver Purchasing Act, on July 20, 1893 Isidor said, "Money has been difficult to obtain even at the exorbitant rates which have prevailed during the past six weeks. ... There is approximately as much money in the country to-day as there was a year ago, then why has its value become so much enhanced? Confidence is shaken, people have become alarmed, and the vehicle which carries nine tenths of the commerce - credit - has in consequence become weakened -

curtailed. What is the cause of the commotion? Many believe that the purchasing clause of the so called Sherman act is the chief, if not the only disturbing element. I do not think I overstate it, when I say that this belief is shared by three fourths of the merchants in the country. Why should we therefore hesitate to try the remedy which is so generally supposed to be the restorer of confidence? ... If the fear of the Silver advocates, that there is not gold enough to go around, be well founded, nothing will effect the remonetization of silver so quickly, as bringing the commerce of the world face to face with such a condition. By theories we have twice failed to convert Europe to bi-metallism, ... If we now take the step, which will proclaim that we are ready to enter the fight for the possession of our share of the stock of gold, and there be any ground for the fear that there is not enough of the precious metal, it will not be long before the cry will go forth "enough of this," and that cry will not emanate from our side of the water either. We are healthy and vigorous enough to enter the lists, if we are no longer handicapped by ill advised legislation. ... I am a believer in bi-

metallism, but do not consider it feasible, excepting through an international agreement, which can never be brought about while a compulsory Silver purchase law is on the statute books. Therefore, as a friend of Silver, I favor the immediate and unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the act of July 14th, 1890."



New York Telegram
January 5, 1894

The *New York Independent* reported on February 16, 1893, "It is currently reported that Mr. Isidor Straus, well and favorably known as the head of the great dry goods firm of R.H. Macy & Co., of New York has been spoken of for the office of Postmaster General. We are glad to hear this news, and to say that we do not believe there is a man in New York or elsewhere

better fitted for this important position than Mr. Straus. ... If he will consent to that position, we predict such an administration of the office as will make him one of the most popular members of Mr. Cleveland's Cabinet. ...

"The prospect of this appointment met with wide commendation but Mr. Straus manifested no desire to lay aside his business pursuits, even for exalted station. ... The thoroughness with which Mr. Straus informed himself upon the currency question, and the ability that he had displayed in presenting arguments in favor of sound money, added to the confidence and respect which merchants in this city felt for him, and last July, when the condition of business was desperate, and grave doubt was entertained as to the position of the President with reference to the expediency of convening Congress in extra session before September, Mr. Straus went to Washington. He has never disclosed exactly what his service consisted of at this visit, but the fact is historical that he called upon the President and that the proclamation convening Congress in extra session was issued on the very day that Mr. Straus visited the White House. President Cleveland spoke to Congress, reflecting the message that Isidor Straus had given him; repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was paramount to the recovery of the economy."

Isidor wrote to Nathan on July 5, 1893, "Matters have been pretty severe here - we have never had a money panic that lasted so long ... The President has been urged on all sides to call an extra session of Congress at once, and not wait until September as he caused it to be given out some time ago but he apparently did not heed this demand for the reason that he could not see his way clear for accomplishing the desired results - While the house, on examination showed a majority for repeal, the senate did not. ... I was talking the situation with Charlie (Webster, an early Macy's partner) at lunch last Thursday and he urged me to go to Washington to try my hand at prevailing on the President to call an extra session at once. I never saw Charley so energetically persistent about any measure and he finally prevailed on me to start immediately without any baggage ... To make a long story short I saw the President next morning at 10:30 it was Cabinet day where he does not receive visitors, I chatted with him about 15 minutes, he gave me no indication that I had made any impression - he went to the Cabinet meeting at 11 o'clock and that afternoon he issued a proclamation calling Congress in extra session on August 7th. The Times gives me the credit for bringing it about - I dont deserve it but I presume that it was the last straw."

Ida Straus wrote to Isidor from Long Branch NJ on July 1, 1893, "If I ever felt proud of you it is today, that you should be singled out among so many bright authoritative men as the one who is to help tide the nation over the crisis. I think you will find me ten inches taller on your return."

When President Cleveland was elected to his second term, he reserved the ministership to Holland for Isidor. But Isidor was nominated and elected to the House of Representatives in January 1894. Cleveland later commented to William L. Wilson that he would much rather have Isidor in Congress where he could benefit from his wisdom in tariff and financial matters.

Isidor to Nathan on August 4, 1893, "Congress is to meet next Monday, and if the discussion of the silver question is prolonged, as some seem to think it will be, the public at large will yet be subjected to severe tests. Banks are failing all over the country."

Isidor to Hon. W. L. Wilson, House of Representatives, Washington D.C. on October 13, 1893, "It is dreadful to think that a popular government, the Centennial Anniversary of which was celebrated four years ago, should in the one hundred four years of experience never dreamed of being possible. Compromise on this score is a far greater humiliation than defeat of the question which gave rise to it. It is true that we have to learn by experience, but it scarcely seems credible that a popular government after undergoing the crucial tests of its earlier trials, should at so late a day find itself impotent to enact legislation which ninety per cent of the country demands."

Isidor to Col. D. G. Lamont, Washington D.C. on October 21, 1893, "... so long as the Democrats were bringing such disgrace on their party by their present action in the Senate the business world did not care whether they stayed in power or not - the fact of the matter was that they deserved defeat ... if the silver purchasing clause was not unconditionally repealed by Nov. 5th when the Virginia elections take place, I would prefer to see the Democrats defeated as a lesson."

Isidor to Hon. W. L. Wilson, Washington D.C. on December 19, 1893, "I have just finished reading your report accompanying the tariff bill ... most concisely comprehensive tariff document that has ever come under my motion. I congratulate you and only hope that the democratic house will not waste any time in debating the bill. The Republicans will want to talk for time, The Democrats ought to let them do all the talking - speeches will not convince anybody nor change a vote. However, they can do no better work than to expedite the passage by submitting it without further argument. ... The way things look I will probably be a collaborator with you sometime next month. The pressure on different sides has about overcome my objections. As yet it is a secret. The President sent me a very pressing message through Mr. Fitch and the powers." The secret Isidor was referring to was that Ashbel P. Fitch was resigning from the House to become Comptroller of New York City and Isidor was asked to be the Democratic candidate to fill his position.



New York World
January 9, 1894

Isidor was quoted in *The New York Times* on December 2, 1893, "An income tax is nothing more or less than a tax upon conscience. ... I am opposed to such a method of taxation because I think it is simply uncollectible. If it is ever adopted the honest man will have to pay the tax, while the unscrupulous man who will swear that he has no income and will pay nothing. Such a tax puts a premium upon dishonesty and encourages men to commit perjury."

On January 8, 1894, Isidor was nominated to represent the Democratic Party in the Fifteenth Congressional District. On January 9th, *The New York Tribune* reported, "There are Tammany men who do not hesitate to declare their disgust with the nomination of this opulent merchant, which they say was forced upon Mr. Croker by Mr. Cleveland." As reported in the *New York Herald* on January 11th, Isidor spoke after his nomination. "My training, unfortunately, has not been in the line of speechmaking, and for this reason when I was approached to permit my name to be used in connection with Congressional honors I at first declined even to consider it. I felt and stated that a man who had some political training - I have none - and one who possessed an aptness for public speaking would be better suited. This argument was met with the reply that there was no dearth of speechmakers what was needed were men of action and not of words, and when I reflected on last summer's experience while the Silver bill was being legislated upon I was forced to the conclusion that perhaps Congress, certainly the country,

would have benefitted if there had been less members with fondness for airing their vocabulary."

To Mr. Wheeler on January 10, 1894, "In answer to your question "What can we do for you?" I am a perfect green-horn with regard to politics and what is necessary in a political campaign, and will therefore have to put myself in the hands of my friends who have the principles for which I stand as much at heart as I can possibly have. If the Republicans are going to make the fight, which some of the papers intimate, and bring on their big guns to make a square fight on the Wilson Bill, why, we will have to march out some of our artillery."

On January 17, 1894, at the start of the official campaign, the *New York World* excerpted a speech by Isidor. "I believe in tariff reform because I believe it is right. It is in the interest of the many rather than the few. Any reduction of the tariff must mean a considerable temporary loss to me, but I should blush to think in considering such subjects I was influenced only by personal and selfish motives." Part of Isidor's speech was published in *The Tammany Times* on January 27th. "The Democratic party is on trial before the country. For the first time in more than thirty years it is in possession of all branches of the Government necessary to enact legislation. It bound itself to certain reforms when it asked the suffrages of the people, and it must and will redeem its pledges. We must now free our commerce from the shackles with which McKinleyism had inflicted it, and if this be done promptly we will enter on such a period of prosperity as this country has not experienced in many years. And so long as the Democratic party will remain true to its principles -- honest money, the raising of sufficient revenues for the economical administration of the affairs of the Government, no class legislation, no taxation of the many for the benefit of the favored few -- so long will it continue to command the confidence of The People, their support and their gratitude." During his campaign Isidor said, "I shall certainly vote for the Wilson bill in the absence of a bill that would be more radical. Honestly, I would prefer a more radical bill. I realize that Mr. Wilson himself would gladly have reported a more radical bill if the finances of the country and the conflicting views of the other members of the committee - which, I fancy, had to be harmonized - would have permitted it." The *New York Sun* quoted Isidor on January 18th, "Give our laborers free raw materials and you can rely upon the skillful ingenuity of the American people to take care of the rest" He was quoted in the *New York Mail & Express* on January 24th, "I favor the Wilson bill as strongly as I oppose the income tax. ... and if I am elected shall do all I can to pass the one and defeat the other."

Isidor Straus was elected in a special election held on Jan. 30, 1894 to fill the unexpired term of Ashbel P. Fitch to the Fifty-third Congress, Fifteenth District. He received 15,396 votes against 10,528 for the Republican Frederick Sigrist. He was sworn in on February 14, 1894. A *Washington Post* article reported, "He is of good height, but slender build, ... has a short beard of

reddish hue tinged with gray, and dark eyes. Mr. Straus (sic) had the alert air and presence of a successful businessman and speaks in a positive manner, unlike the professional politician." Isidor was appointed to the Committee on Reform in the Civil Service and to the Committee on Pensions within the first two weeks of his term.

The *Washington Post* declared, "Mr. Strauss goes around with the weight of the tariff legislation upon his shoulders. He talks, eats, and sleeps with the tariff bill. He is constantly at the White House and is the oracle and mouthpiece of the President among the members on the floor; he never leaves the side of Chairman Wilson, and even drives that gentleman home in a carriage from the Capitol; engages in long and earnest conversations with Senator Mills, and in the evening holds forth on his favorite topic in the lobby of the Arlington Hotel. It was to him and Don

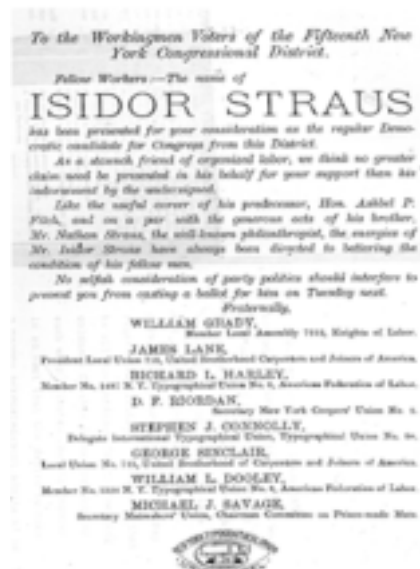
Dickinson that the President first showed his letter to Chairman Wilson, and it is from him that the pronouncements come which stir the pulsating hearts of the tariff reformers in the House. As against his aggressive leadership even the robust personality of John DeWitt Warner stands astonished and mute."

To Mr. Parker, on February 9, 1894, "The democrats have undoubtedly a hard road to go. The trouble is, they do not pull together; have so many little factional difference and so few of them are willing to sink what they think to be their little personal grievances to the general welfare of the community at large. ... I believe that my nomination and election furnished about all the pleasure I will get out of the position, through the many kind words it

elicited. I go to Washington on the 11th, and will probably qualify on the 12th. I have grave doubts whether I will like it. ...For the present I shall live at the Arlington; whether I shall take my family over remains to be seen."

Isidor wrote to Ida and his children at every opportunity. On May 1, 1894 he wrote on House of Representatives letterhead, "Mr. Wilson & I called on the President last evening at 9:20. The President at once congratulated me on the interview ... He said; 'It is refreshing to see that some one speaks boldly and to the point - it is a splendid and timely statement of the situation.' ...The President is absolutely confident of the outcome on the tariff and Mr. Wilson feels much more encouraged."

On June 8th he wrote to his business partner Charles Webster regarding the tariff bill, "What the result of the conference between the Senate and the House will be no one can tell. Mr. Wilson's committee is going to make a very obstinate fight to endeavor to get some of the inequities which the Senate forced into the bill corrected. If the House fails in accomplishing what it thinks should be done, I have every reason to believe, after the bill is enacted, the House will bring in separate bills to correct schedules, and if the Senate fails to act on those separate bills, the country will understand the reason in such an



Campaign Flyer

unmistakable way, as to put the blame where it belongs. The Income Tax feature will certainly be in the bill, but I think it will be shorn of many of its inquiries and objectionable inquisitorial features. If I have any power in the matter it will be amended in the House so as to make all incomes bear the burden."

Isidor wrote to Nathan's brothers-in-law, Oscar and Edgar Guthertz, who were managing the family's china and porcelain factories in Carlsbad. "With the change in the tariff the prospects are that our importation of dry goods will increase to a marked extent and, hence, will become a much more important branch, at least, so far as the service of one of you are concerned, than the china. The china business is in such a shape, that no house which entirely depends upon it can make much headway, even when conducted on the most economical plan, and with the shrewdest sagacity."

A letter to Oscar June 28, 1894 reads, "I saw President Cleveland on the evening before I left Washington. He told me that he had read your book and was very much pleased with you, and that it shows a great deal of careful research. As soon as I go back to Washington I shall see Secretary Gresham (Secretary of State) with regard to the resolution I introduced respecting the abrogation of the Russian treaty. ... Respecting the tariff, ... business cannot revive until this question is finally settled."

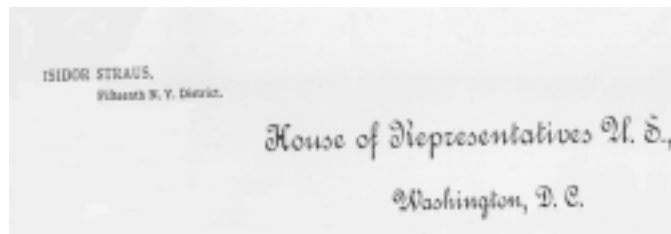
Isidor wrote to Ida from the House of Representative on July 18th, "Mr. Wilson - Mr. Breckinridge & I took a two hour ride yesterday (4 to 6 P.M.) and then dined together. Mr. B. has written to the President accepting the Russian Ambassadorship. Mr. Wilson read to us during the ride a letter addressed to him personally by the President on the tariff bill in which he upholds Wilsons position and indirectly condemns the Smotes bill. We discussed together as to the best use to be made of the letter and practically reached the conclusion that when Wilson makes his report, probably within a day or two, of the Congress being unable to agree, he will have the letter read by the clerk of the House as part of his remarks."

On July 30th he wrote, "The Conference Committee accomplished nothing - neither parties being willing to recede. Of course this makes the immediate outlook dark and unpromising, but the end is not yet. We will have rather intense suspense for some days - maneuvering, intraarguing, private persuasion &c &c - and it is necessary for all friends of the good cause to remain on the spot." He continued with is report to Ida on August 7th, "Tariff motions per se dont look encouraging but indications point to a favorable turn. I am writing this at 2 P.M. - in an hour we will have a caucus of the Democrats at which Wilson will make a report. If the caucus fails in the purpose ... and I think it will, I think we will have turned our last corner. I have felt all along and feel now that we are bound to win the principle fought for." And on August 8th he wrote, "It is coming around as I felt it would all along - The newspaper men think I am an oracle. We

will, as I have felt, since yesterday's caucus turned out as I anticipated, have a tariff bill practically by the end of the week and adjourn by the 20th." On August 13th he wrote, "Yesterday was a busy day of conferences and conferences - Mr. Wilson & I did not get to bed until 1:30 and were up at 7 - breakfast at 8. ... The caucus will meet in half an hour. The tendency is to surrender - Mr. Wilson is now in the speakers room for a last consultation to ascertain whether the caucus can not be held and prevented from doing anything today and adjourn until tomorrow as there is a gleam of hope in developments that may materialize in the Senate today if the House holds off any action. 3:45 P.M. The deed is done we are beaten but not conquered. The caucus simply stampeded and the House will of course follow the action of the caucus and the Senate carried the day, but the country will I hope hold them responsible for being traitors to the cause. The adjournment will likely not take place until about the 25th inst. The President will probably not sign the bill but let it become law by allowing it to remain in his hand beyond the Constitutional ten days, when it becomes a law without signature, hence this necessitates Congress not adjourning until 10 days at least after the bill reaches the executive. It is true that the House will manifest its disapproval of the bill by passing immediately after accepting the Senate amend-

ments 4 separate bills one putting all Sugar on the free list - one putting Iron on free list - one putting Coal on free list - one putting Barbed Wire on free list. It has been an exciting day - it is 6 P.M. and the vote is being taken - I hesitated a long time about voting against the bill but finally

concluded to stay with Wilson." And on August 15th he wrote to Ida regarding Mr. Wilson, "The load is off his shoulders, and although the first effect, when he saw that the Senate amendments would be accepted in toto, affected him very deeply, a letter which he received from the president, expressing his great satisfaction and obligation for his manly fight, helped to a very great extent in enabling him to pull himself together. Immediately after the caucus I drove to the White House, had a long talk with the President and suggested that he write this letter to Mr. Wilson and he did it at once. I am glad to say that it had the anticipated effect. The last three, four or five days have been as interesting and exciting as any I have ever experienced. Of course the tension at times was very great, but there was no grief or worrying connected with it. It was simply an excitement born of a desire to leave no stone unturned to thwart stamped-ing, which seemed inevitable to every observer. The working and excitement was not of that nervously wearing kind that is born of watching the sick-bed of a dearly beloved one, to which I can best liken it. From what I can gather from general reports, there is very little chance of our passing the four separate bills for free iron, free coal, free sugar, and free barbed wire, which the House rushed through in a manner to express the contempt and indignity of that body which, at the risk of defeating all tariff legislation, insisted upon our swallowing their free lunch concoction on which every protected interest that commanded the vote of a Senator had a call."



Isidor Straus' letterhead - 1894-1895

In 1894 Nathan ran for Mayor of New York City and Isidor was one of his most steadfast supporters. On October 11, 1894, he wrote to John A. Stewart, "My brother is a man of some courage and likes a fight for right win with odds against him. His career is made up of overcoming obstacles and there is nothing he is so fond of as succeeding where success looks to others as a difficult task. ... He and we all love the esteem of our fellow citizens above all other honors and this he will maintain under any and all circumstances with all fair minded people who judge by acts and who will weigh deeds rather than professions." Isidor wrote to the president on October 12, 1894, "Nathan is in the fight to win and he will, I believe, carry the day even if the rest of the ticket fails. The assurances he is receiving from Republicans and from men in all ranks, will when the election day comes know that a man's career of a life time can not be shadowed by deeds of men which he condemns as much as any one and that have no bearing on his fitness for the office. We recognize that it is no walk over with all the forces that are pitted against him, but the glory of winning will be all the greater and if elected he will make some democrats feel ashamed of their conduct. If you could see your way clear to write to him a line as to his candidature which could be given to the press or by any other way that may deem preferable to you to let the citizens of New York honor your views it would be an immense help and he needs all the moral influence that can be gathered." Nathan withdrew his candidacy by October 20th.

In a letter to Nathan dated November 7, 1894 Isidor wrote, "In my Congressional district the Republican is elected. I am awfully glad I am out of it. The next House will be a very cool place. The latest returns induce that there will be only about 110 Democrats and 244 Republicans." Isidor wrote to President Cleveland on November 9, 1894, "I am glad that I refused to stand for re-election - my district has gone Republican; but if I would have accepted, the State Democracy would not have placed a candidate against me and I would have been elected and I imagine the next House will be a cold and dreary place for a tariff reformer and without Mr. Wilson there I would feel very lonesome indeed. I guess the great "I am a Democrat" will henceforth pitch his voice a little lower."

Isidor wrote to Nathan on December 7, 1894, "It does not look favorable that Congress will do anything but routine business during this present session, although the papers last evening and this morning say, 'that unless Congress takes up currency and banking questions as strongly as recommended by the Secretary of the Treasury, and endorsed by President Cleveland in his message, that the President will call an extra session directly after the 4th of March,' ... It is a very healthy sign that it has come to the point to be so generally accepted that the only true remedy for our currency difficulties lies in divorcing the government and the business of a bank of issue, and throwing

that important function on banks to be organized under proper achievements and with carefully guarded laws, where it properly belongs, and where it lies in every other country but ours."

On Dec 27th he wrote, "I go to Washington with Ida next Monday as she has received an invitation from the president to help him receive on New Years Day and of course she wants to take it in. The present outlook is rather unfavorable to anything being done by this Congress - consequently I will not miss much by being there only part of the time."

In an address before the London Chamber of Commerce on September 27, 1894, Isidor said, "When the Republican Party had accomplished the purpose of its mission, and had no longer any ground for its existence their party managers were too self-seeking to lose the control of such an organization, and therefore had to conjure up a new issue of some sort. What a pity, that the political organization which was called into power for the noble purpose of abolishing slavery, finding themselves possessed of the shackles torn from the human form knew not how to make any better use of them than to fasten them on Commerce. Tariff agitation so far as any further general legislation is concerned, has, I believe, been set at rest for some years. ...

"We have, however, another burning question pressing to the fore to engage our attention. It is of no less, if not of more far reaching importance, and that is the Silver Problem. A large number of our well meaning citizens are imbued with the idea that the agricultural classes, and the debtor classes in general have been unjustly oppressed by the steady appreciation of gold and the enormous depreciation of silver. ... We firmly believed that the repeal of the compulsory silver purchasing clause of the

so-called Sherman Act would clear the way, in a measure for its realization. My friend, Mr. Wilson, led the successful fight for the repeal of this vicious law and were his name connected with no other reform, that alone would entitle him to the lasting gratitude of our countrymen.

"... Another question is forcing itself on our attention, the management of railroads and the status of their obligations. Eleven thousand millions of dollars invested in a hundred and seventy-eight thousand miles of road is a financial matter of no mean importance. About one fourth of the mileage is, at present, in the hands of receivers. I need not tell this Company what havoc has been played with many of these investments. I may well state here that we have many companies whose frugal conscientious and able management render their obligations as good as any in the world, but the chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and it has long been suggesting itself to thoughtful men who have the good name and honour of our country at heart, that some remedy should be found to check



New York Herald
January 25, 1894

the kite-flying vicious financiering that has characterized the operations of some railroad companies. By the nature of our forms of Government, it has been difficult to provide national legislation to reach the evil. Individual State legislation is impotent, as it loses its effectiveness on crossing the State's borders. A few years ago, on account of the abuses that had grown up through Railroads granting special freight rates to favoured individuals, an interstate Commerce Commission was created to check this unjust practice. Its functions were chiefly to regulate rates so as to prevent higher charges to intermediate non-competitive points, than to more distant competitive cities. They also established a single car load as the largest unit on which to base rates, thus giving to all shippers an equal opportunity by preventing discrimination in favour of the few largest shippers. Since the existence of this commission there has steadily and progressively developed a latitude in its function so that it has been found a convenient tribunal for the exercise of powers on the part of the general Government for which few before supposed any authority existed. The clause in our Constitution that has proved so conveniently elastic and prolific is the one which authorizes Congress to regulate Commerce between the States. ...

"We are a comparatively young and precocious nation, and naturally suffer for shortcomings to which youth, vigor, and persevering energy are addicted, but our people as a whole have a high moral standard, while they may at times be misled by scheming politicians and self-seeking demagogues, no question is ever finally settled until its settled right."

Isidor addressed the House of Representatives on Saturday, February 2, 1895. regarding H.R 7740, A Bill to Regulate Railroad Companies Engaged in Interstate Commerce. "I discover that the opposition to the passage of the bills seems to emanate chiefly from two motives - one represented by the residents of the Pacific Coast and along the line of these railroads, who are deeply incensed at the oppression which they have suffered at the hands of these corporations, particularly at the hands of the corporation having its terminus on the Pacific Coast; the other comes from those who imagine that they have an opportunity for avenging the feelings of indignation against the scandalous and colossal frauds which have been committed by the men who originated and controlled these corporations for many years. I sympathize with both, but I can not see the wisdom of their actions. ... We are assured by lawyers of the floor of this House, ... that by the passage of this bill the government forfeits none of its rights against the perpetrators of these wrongs. Such being the case, it seems to me to be the part of wisdom and prudence, and along the line of good business methodism that we should secure to the government and the people the largest possible sum in the liquidation of this enormous debt and wreak our vengeance upon the betrayers of their trust afterwards.

"The wrongs the Government has suffered, which seems to stir the blood of the opponents of this bill to fever heat, is not one whit worse than dozens of like occurrences where poor and innocent holders of securities, who could ill afford to bear the loss, have been victimized to even a greater extent. In the management of public affairs we do not go amiss if we follow

the path individuals do under similar circumstance. This discussion has emphasized to my mind the idea I have long entertained, that remedial legislation should be had which will make such practices illegal and will enable the public prosecutor to reach them beyond a possibility of escape by legal quibblings and technicalities.

"Greater than all the crimes I have heard enumerated against the directors of these railroads, to my mind, is the overtowering one that their dishonest practices by which the roads were robbed of earnings and the proceeds of obligations sold converted into private gains instead of going into the treasurers of the companies - if these abuses of corporate trusts gave birth to the system of railroad management that has brought discredit upon all forms of American securities abroad. That none of the transgressors have been brought to justice had encouraged practices so that to-day the management of railway properties is a disgrace to American citizenship,...."

In an undated speech, Isidor said, "A billion dollar Congress that squandered a surplus of 100 million and created a deficit, the real amount of which is to this day not made apparent - turned the pension roll of honor into a pension agent debauch and did anything and everything regardless of every other consideration, except to create a bankrupt treasury for the sole purpose of blocking the way to tariff reform."

Isidor declined renomination to Congress. *The Commercial Advertiser* reported on February 27, 1895, he is "literally counting the days when he will retire from public life. No consideration within reason, he says, would induce him to accept another nomination. He feels, however, that his experience as a Representative has been a useful one. It broadens one, he says, and makes one more charitable and more tolerant of the opinions of his opponents. He says that he leaves Congress with a greater respect for the House of Representatives than he ever before entertained."

A *Washington Post* article reports on March 4, 1895, "Another New Yorker who closes his career with this session is Mr. Straus, who gained the attention of the country as a statesman in a shorter period of time than any other member of the Fifty-third Congress. Mr. Straus is one of the more unique members - one of that class of men who come to the national legislature with well-defined ideas of reforming the transaction of public business on lines in vogue in successful private establishments." Isidor's term ended March 3, 1895.

Although Isidor Straus never held public office again, he remained active in civic affairs. He served on a general committee of the New York Chamber of Commerce to enter the crusade against free silver coinage. He continued to be an advisor to President Cleveland. He chaired the Citizens Committee on Conventions of the New York Board of Trade and Transportation that inaugurated a drive to bring the Democratic Convention to New York. Isidor's name was suggested in 1901 and in 1909 as a possible candidate for Mayor of New York. And in March of 1911, he was considered for nomination for the New York State Senate. His overriding desire was to attend to his family and his business, both jobs he handled with perfection.

Macy's Celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the Laying of the Cornerstone for the 34th Street Herald Square Store

On April 23, 2002, the 34th Street Partnership held a ceremony to honor the 100th Anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone for Macy's grand store at Herald Square. Speaking at the event were New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Paul A. Kurzman, great grandson of Isidor and Ida Straus. Paul and his son David, a great, great grandson, represented the Straus family at this event. Paul is the chair of the Straus Historical Society and a member of the board of Friends of Straus Park.

Lazarus Straus emigrated from Otterberg Germany in 1852. By 1854, he was sufficiently established to send for his wife Sarah and their four children, Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar. The family settled in Georgia, living in Talbotton and the larger city of Columbus. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, the Strauses moved to New York City and opened L. Straus & Sons, a glass, china and pottery business. In 1874, Nathan convinced Rowland H. Macy to open a 25 X 100 concession in the basement of his store, Macy's, where the Strauses sold china, cut glass and silver. It was four times the size of Macy's original 14th Street store. For the first time, dry goods and home furnishings were sold under one roof; and on this distinction, Macy's claimed to be "the original department store." When the Strauses became partners in 1888, their department accounted for nearly 18 percent of Macy's sales and returned the highest profit in the store. By 1894, the Strauses were sole owners of R. H. Macy's.



Daniel A. Biederman, President of 34th Street Partnership, Jim Gray, President of Macy's East, NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Paul A. Kurzman, Chairman of Straus Historical Society and Straus family member, Hal Kahn, Chairman of Macy's East, David Kurzman, Straus family member

The success of Macy's Department Store led the Straus brothers, Isidor, Nathan and Oscar, to seek larger quarters. They had already acquired the properties surrounding the original 14th Street store and began looking to the future. The "uptown" areas in New York City had not yet been developed for commerce. The "El" and crosstown bus service were just being established. The Strauses saw this as the perfect time and place to make their move. By 1902, they acquired most of the land between 34th and 35th Streets and between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. They proceeded to build what has become known as "the world's largest store." The cornerstone was laid in April and the store opened for business later that year.

In his talk, Mr. Kurzman noted that Macy's at Herald Square was the first department store "to move uptown." It was an immense structure for its time, encompassing more than one million square feet. He noted that Isidor Straus insisted that space be devoted exclusively for the comfort of his employees, who were provided with a library, reading room and gymnasium with baths - MOST unusual for that era, and even today.

Mayor Bloomberg congratulated the 34th Street Partnership, Macy's East Chairman Hal Kahn and the Straus family for their many contributions, and noted how proud he and the City are of the leadership which they each have so consistently provided. A plaque commemorating this event was unveiled at the ceremony. It is permanently inlaid in the sidewalk at the main entrance of Macy's on Broadway just north of 34th Street. An additional event is scheduled for September to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the opening of the new building, "The World's Largest Department Store."

100 YEARS ON HERALD SQUARE

23, 2002 -7:30

*Before there was the Subway...
Before the Yankees played...
Before Penn Station poured its old foundation
Or The Plaza bill was paid...*

It only happens once, and on Monday, September 23, 2002 at 7:30pm, Macy's celebrates 100 years on Herald Square with the Best of New York at *Remember Me To Herald Square*, a large-scale, outdoor extravaganza on Broadway between 34th and 35th Streets. The show will include fashion, musical performances and tributes to Macy's place in New York - and American - culture. Above all, this historic event has been conceived as a

valentine to the enduring spirit of New York City.

The show will open with the debut of a song, "This Store Was There", written exclusively for the festivities by Broadway composer Andrew Lippa and Macy's Annual Events Creative Director Bill Schermerhorn and performed by two-time MAC Award winner Alix Korey. The casts of several top Broadway musicals have been invited to participate, as have other favorite New York personalities and dignitaries.

Immediately following the show, Macy's will host invited guests at a fun-filled buffet party on the Main Floor of The World's Largest Store.

*I'm thinking back before the Daily News...
Before Fred wore his dancing shoes...
Before there was Times Square (!)
This store was there.*

Profiles: Barnard Sachs Straus, Sr.

If you want to have a delightful day, visit with Barnard Sachs Straus Sr. It was necessary to interview Barney in preparation for this article. There could not have been a more pleasant way to spend time. Barney makes one feel at ease. And, although he is not one to toot his own horn, it is clear he has had an interesting and very full life.

Barney was born in New York City April 1, 1919 to Nathan Straus Jr. and Helen Sachs Straus. He was the second of four sons; Nathan III, Barney, Irving and R. Peter. The family lived at 13 West 76th Street and then at One West 81st Street, The Beresford, from 1929 through 1939. Barney remembers being taken to play in Central Park by his nanny, a German fraulein employed by the Strauses to look after the rambunctious boys. Before 1939, the Strauses spent their summers with Nathan Jr.'s sister Sissie and her husband Irving Lehman at their Port Chester home. Barney also remembers the weekly religious lessons arranged by his father. Rabbi Jim Wise, son of Rabbi Stephen Wise, founder of the Reformed Jewish Movement, taught the class. Participants included Robert Morgenthau Jr. who is currently New York City's District Attorney; George Goldberg, son of Rube Goldberg, (George changed his name and is known as George George); Robert Arnstein, a relative who became a doctor and the head of the Mental Health Department at Yale University; and Johnny Liebmann of the Rheingold Beer family, Barney remembers the group as "active." More than once, Nathan Jr. had to intercede in order to calm the boys down enough so that they could concentrate on their religious lessons.

Nathan Jr. and Helen Sachs were both born in New York City. They spoke English, German and French at home. After their marriage in April, 1915, Nathan worked at Macy's, the family business. He soon found his interests lay elsewhere and he turned to politics. He served in the New York State Senate three terms. It was during his tenure in the Senate that he became interested in housing legislation. He became an expert in low cost housing and served in FDR's administration as Administrator of the Housing Authority.

Although he describes Nathan Jr. as a difficult, high strung man, Barney remembers his parents with great fondness. He was especially devoted to his mother, Helen, who he describes as strict but loving. The boys were expected to participate in discussions at the dinner table and after dinner. These conversations would be about history, current events or politics. It was a stimulating atmosphere in which to grow.

When he was looking to buy a family home outside of New York City, Nathan Jr. walked around with a thermometer in his pocket. He found that Quarry Lake was cold enough to support trout and so Nathan bought the property. This is where Barney learned

to play tennis. The family hired Abe Bassford to build tennis courts at Quarry Lake. Abe hit balls with the boys and Barney discovered that this was one sport where he had an aptitude. He was third ranked in the US in the 16 and under class and captain of the tennis team at Loomis and at Harvard. Barney continued to play tennis around the world throughout his adult life. Although he says he was never a "world" player, he admits to being "pretty good."

Barney also admits to being a "pretty good" violin player. He attended a performance of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at Carnegie Hall with his mother and grandmother in which Yehudi Menuhin played Beethoven's Violin Concerto. Barney was enthralled. From that time on, he studied his instrument seriously and was good enough to become the concertmaster of the Loomis School and the Harvard College orchestra.

While he was concertmaster of the Harvard Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein, who was assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony and a friend of Barney's, came to a rehearsal of the Harvard Orchestra at the Sanders Theatre. They were practicing for their annual concert. The main presentation was the Mozart Haffner Symphony. They had gotten about eight bars into the first movement when Lenny dropped his baton, clasped his hands over both ears and declared, "You are terrible!" There was a deadly silence from all 125 members of the orchestra. "Oh, let's try again," he said. This time things went better and the concert the next day was very well received. When Barney saw Lenny at a dinner party in New York about four weeks later, Lenny asked, "Hey, Barney, are you still playing the fiddle?" Barney replied, "Yes, maestro, how kind of you to remember." At which

Lenny came back with, "How could I possibly ever forget!" Barney still laughs about this experience.

Barney credits his tennis and violin skills with gaining him admission to Harvard. Although he doesn't remember pressure from his family to attend, an uncle, Paul Sachs, was head of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard and encouraged Helen to send one of her sons to the college. Barney thought it would be nice to attend the school where his uncle taught. Prior to that he attended the Lincoln School, and Loomis, now Loomis Chaffee Preparatory School. Barney graduated from Harvard in 1941. He began Harvard Business School but World War II interceded and he was drafted after half a year.

Barney was excited and scared when he was inducted into the Army Air Corps. He was stationed at Maxwell Field Air Corps Training Center in Alabama for basic training. He completed the basic flying course and was sent to Tuscaloosa Alabama and then to Blytheville Arkansas where he didn't do as well.



Barney - June 1931

His commanding officer suggested that, because he could speak French and German, he would be a better candidate for Officer's Candidate School. Disappointed but able to see the logic in this argument, Barney moved to Miami for training. Then he



2nd Lieutenant
Barnard Sachs Straus, Sr.
Army Air Corps

returned to Harvard to Statistical School and became a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps.

Barney was shipped overseas in early February 1943. The bombs were still dropping on Britain. He had one very close call. Upon arrival, several of his friends wanted to go to the movies. Barney was tired and would have preferred to stay in and get some rest, but the group prevailed upon him to

join them. When they returned from the movies, they found that their hotel had been the target of a V1 Bomb. Had Barney stayed in bed, we wouldn't have him here with us today.

Barney spent the remainder of the war in the European theater, surveying bomb damage, assessing how many planes we had lost, how the battles had gone and making reports. John Kenneth Galbraith headed the unit. After VE Day, Barney's unit also took on the responsibility of interrogating prisoners. He learned that, in war, it is necessary to take each day as it comes and to do the best you can.

While stationed in Badnaufheim, Barney participated in a tennis tournament. More than 10,000 troops came to witness the event. He played Colonel Ramsey Potts of North Carolina. Potts won. Even though war truly is hell, it's still possible to have an occasional diversion.

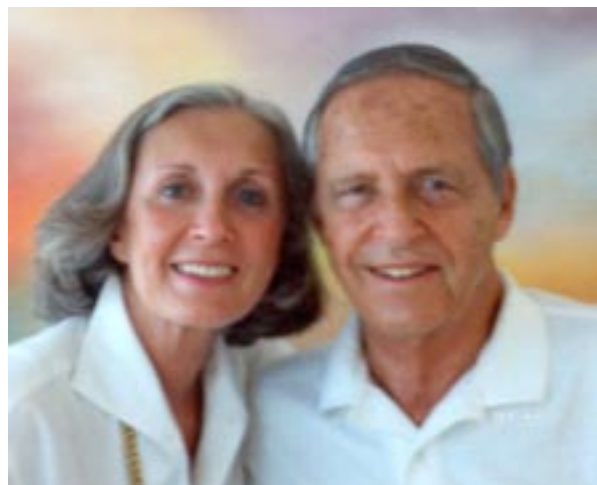
All four Straus boys were drafted. Nathan III was in the Navy. Irving became a highly decorated Naval pilot who flew in the Pacific and Peter was a highly decorated bombardier in the Air Force. Their mother regularly wrote to all the boys and kept the family together through her news. Barney still has what he thinks must be a thousand pages he wrote home during his time abroad.

After his military service, Barney formed a theatrical production company with Roland Haas, a friend he had made during the war. They produced a play about World War II called, "Temper the Wind" that did well. Then, by himself, Barney produced "For Love or Money." This play was even more well received. He later produced the movie version of this play starring Elizabeth Taylor. It became a smash hit. Barney enjoyed being in England and with Elizabeth Taylor during its filming.

After producing several more plays, Barney left Broadway and joined the Wall Street firm of Hamerslag Borg & Co. as the partner in charge of institutional sales. His clients included Mrs. Ruth Axe of the Axe-Houghton Funds and Ned Johnson of the Fidelity Funds. Huge blocks of stock were bought and sold through the Hamerslag trading desk yielding great commissions for all partners.

On a lighter note, having fun seems to be something Barney is very good at. He has been linked romantically with Patrice Munsell, Grace Kelly and many other beautiful women. His friends included Jack Kennedy and Peter Lawford. His scrapbooks contain photographs of Barney with his friends traveling around the world. There are famous people in the scrapbooks from every walk of life; show business, politics, finance and business.

When Barney finally decided to settle down, he married the beautiful Joan Paley in 1960. They have children Barnard Sachs Straus, Jr. (Chip) and Tracy. Chip is a social worker and has one son, Graham Paley Straus. Tracy is a dancer and choreographer. Although Barney and Joan have divorced, they remain friends and see each other socially. Barney is keeping company with Marjorie Hyman whom he describes as "the love of my life." The two maintain an active social life, splitting their time between New York City and Southampton.



Marjorie A. Hyman and Barnard Sachs Straus, Sr.

Although retired from stockbroking and from producing plays, Barney has not been idle. He is still active in the tennis community. He is a director of the International Tennis Hall of Fame housed in the historic Newport Casino in Newport, Rhode Island. The Tennis Hall of Fame is a non-profit institution dedicated to preserving the history of tennis. Barney also serves on the board of the Straus Historical Society and has been one of our most enthusiastic supporters.

Did You Know?

Barney's grandfather, Barnard Sachs (1858-1944), received his BS at Harvard and his MD from the University of Strassburg in Vienna. Dr. Sachs was a New York neurologist who is credited with first describing the cellular changes in the disease that bears his name, Tay-Sachs. This fatal genetic disorder occurs in people of eastern European Jewish origin.

Isidor and Ida Straus School Lower Lab School 77

The New York City Board of Education dedicated the Isidor and Ida Straus School in July 1958. For many years this building has been the home of Public School 198. In 1988, under-utilization prompted the school board to bring Lab School 77 to the building. Today, both schools function separately within these walls, cooperatively sharing facilities but maintaining individual programs and faculty. Parent Pam Dadlani, wrote, "The building now holds two schools and we are interested in activities we could do together to celebrate our common bond. After reading about the family morals Isidor Straus espoused for his children, I find that our community can't help but want the same for our families."

During the past few months, I have been working with parents from the school's active parents' organization and with Principal Elizabeth M. Kasowitz to bring information about the Straus family to the students of Lab School 77. Theirs is an innovative program that stimulates creativity, fosters the freedom to explore interests and broaden horizons within a safe and nurturing environment. On my first visit to the school, I was given a tour that included stops in many of the classrooms. As a former teacher, I appreciated the manner in which curriculum development involved all aspects of the students' needs. I was amazed at the childrens' independence, sophistication and respect for one another.



Joan Adler, Paul A. Kurzman and Elizabeth Kasowitz
at Lab School 77's Annual Science Fair breakfast

On Wednesday, May 29th, Straus Historical Society Chair Paul A. Kurzman and I attended the faculty and parent breakfast that precedes the Lab School's Annual Science Fair. Excitement was definitely in the air. We met with Principal Elizabeth Kasowitz and parents Pam Dadlani and Diane DiMauro and then we were delighted to visit the classrooms. As we made our way from classroom to classroom, we were amazed at the level of the sophistication of the projects and the true understanding each student had of the concepts. Every display included an hypothesis, materials, method, and conclusion. The kindergarten class had been studying the human body. Each student made a life sized cutout of his/her form with their internal organs displayed. Pink balloons were used to indicate lungs and wadded up yarn denoted the small intestines. Several children delighted in explaining the function of each organ, including the esophagus, white and red blood cells and the brain. We were amazed at the depth of their understanding and the maturity of their presentation. We were told about the weight carrying properties of a truss bridge in a third grade classroom and about how tornadoes form in a fifth grade class.

We then visited with Principal Beverly Wilkins from P.S. 198. We all agreed that there were many ways in which we could work cooperatively to develop curricula and weave it into their existing programs. Paul and I made a commitment to continue working with both schools during the coming academic year.

John Badenoch was aboard the rescue ship "Carpathia." He wrote a letter to Percy, son of Isidor and Ida, in which he described the rescue of "Titanic's" survivors and his attempt to locate or learn the whereabouts of the Strauses. His detailed descriptions left little doubt that Isidor and Ida were not among the survivors. Tina also read a letter from Isidor to his children intended to be read after his death in which he admonishes them to stay close to each other and to keep the family's moral and ethical values.

Tina's mother, Pat Harrah and I were invited to attend. Throughout the day, we all answered questions about the family. One man told me he knew a relative of the Strauses, someone I haven't heard of. This, of course, sent me on a quest to learn all I could about this new and mysterious relative.

Tina Toohey's Talk before the Kiwanis Club of Wilton CT Wednesday, April 3, 2002

Margaret (Peg) A. Reed, VP and Program Chair of the Wilton CT Kiwanis Club invited Tina Toohey, great great granddaughter of Isidor and Ida Straus, to speak at their luncheon on Wednesday, April 3, 2002. Tina pulled together an enormous amount of information in a short period of time. She did a wonderful job. Her talk was warmly received by a group of more than one hundred people, largely professional and retired business executives.

She fascinated her audience with stories about her ancestor's history. She wove many interesting facts and little known information into her talk. She highlighted her comments with overhead projections. Macy's Grocery Buyer



Peg Reed, Tina Toohey, Ivor Chapman,
(President) & Joan Adler

It is wonderful day, made all the more pleasurable because Tina had given such an excellent presentation.

Friends of Straus Park

By Leon Auerbach

Edited by Joan Adler

All Photo Credits: Margaret Kavanau

The enthusiasm and growth continued with an easy change of administration at Friends of Straus Park (FSP). At a time when Mary G. Walsh and Leon Auerbach stepped aside as cochairs, Jo Abrams was elected President and Kate Ford as Vice President of FSP. Deirdre Wulf continued as Treasurer and Margaret Kavanau as Secretary and Editor of the newly revitalized newsletter. The new officers are supported by a strong and vital Board of Directors.

There are also several active committees. There is a Planning and Events Committee setting and presenting new events for the Park. The Membership Committee encourages growth and involvement by new members of FSP. The Finance Committee assists the Treasurer and develops prospective means for soliciting grants and sources of contributions. The Garden Committee assists Horticulturist John Olund keep in touch with the Parks Department for planting and upkeep and for maintenance and clean-up. (A special note: John



Joe Arbo, Leon Auerbach, Jo Abrams, Adrian Benepe, Bill Castro at the April 15th Park Anniversary



Suzy Schwartz and Boto-Fogo

Olund has done an outstanding job with Straus Park. You should all visit and experience this beautiful environment he has lovingly tended.) An Art Committee that involves itself with the selection, display and selling of art in our major annual "Art in the Park" Celebration in the fall each year. Please contact Leon Auerbach at 212-865-4948 if you have any interest in participation.

FSP celebrated the 87th anniversary of the dedication of Straus Park on April 15, 1915. The "Titanic" disaster and sad passing of Isidor and Ida Straus occurred on April 15, 1912. New York City Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe and Manhattan Boro Commissioner Bill Castro spoke at the celebration. Children from the Ascension School

helped provide finger food and soft drinks to the accompaniment of Suzy Schwartz and the Boto-Fogo Bossa Nova Quartet.



Leif Antzen Band
June 13, 2002

In June, we followed the weather reports and used our rain date of Thursday, June 13th for a Jazz Concert by the Leif Antzen Band. Following a wet day, a goodly number of neighbors turned out for a finger snapping

musical evening. A good time was had by all!

On Saturday, October 5th, "Friends" will be presenting our 6th annual "Art in the Park" celebration, a full day of music, art, dance and food. The program for the day includes: the Boto-Fogo Bossa Nova Quartet; Karl Finger, folk dance leader; Nubian Gentlemen, sprightly high school musicians; Soh-Daiko, Japanese drummers and ballet; instructors from the Fred Astaire Dance Studio performing Ballroom and Latin Dances right on the street and finishing with the Salsa Beat of our Latin Group. The center focus is our exhibition and sale of Art, Prints, Paintings and Photography by talented invited artists. If years past are an indication, it will be an exciting day! You are all welcome to enjoy Straus Park.



John Olund and Martha Dembrowski

In the year 2000, we received an important grant from Manhattan Boro President C. Virginia Fields for eight metal tree surround fences for trees along Broadway and on West 106th Street next to the Park. These fences were put in place in July 2002 to try to protect the trees against visiting dogs and to keep the soil clear for additional planting.

"Friends" looks forward to further organizational growth and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Park. Please visit. Please become involved.

From Joan: My apology to Gary Masters for neglecting to include a credit for his moving photograph in the February 2002 issue of the newsletter.



Items of Interest

"We Shall Die Together"

Daniel M. Roper, an attorney from Rome GA has written an interesting article about two families who were on "Titanic" and had significant ties with Georgia. His article, "We Shall Die Together," will appear in the September 1st issue of *Georgia Backroads* magazine.

The Straus Historical Society contributed information and photographs as well as editorial comments to Dan in the preparation of his article. The author has agreed to send the Society copies of the magazine. The issue will also be available on-line.

A sample of *Georgia Backroads* may be viewed at: <http://georgiahistory.ws/default.asp>. You can see an earlier article by Dan Roper, also published by *Georgia Backroads*, at: <http://georgiahistory.ws/articles/trees.asp>

Historical Markers in Southwest Georgia

Ken Boyd contacted the Straus Historical Society with regard to a book he is writing, Historical Markers in Southwest Georgia. This book, the third in a five book set, will cover the area of Georgia south of Atlanta to the Florida border.

Ken was in the area his book will detail and met with Straus Historical Society board member and Historic Talbotton Foundation co-president Michael H. Buckner. Mike is very knowledgeable about the family's history and, I am certain, gave Ken a wealth of information. I was able to supply Ken with photographs of the markers as well as of the family and their homes in Georgia.

Oscar S. Straus Memorial - Information on the Web

A website has been created about the Oscar S. Straus Memorial in Washington DC by William Gilcher, Media Projects North America of the Goethe-Institut Inter Nationes. Mr. Gilcher asks for comments and suggestions regarding this site.

http://www.goethe.de/uk/vtour/dc1/A3/35/en_index.htm

Mr. Gilcher can be reached at: 202-289-3777 or 202-289-1200 ex 111, by fax at 202-289-3535 or by e.mail: wgilcher@washington.goethe.org

A brief film showing Oscar S. Straus working at his desk may be viewed from the Library of Congress website. First go to the Library of Congress: www.loc.gov and then select the option for **American Memory**. From there select **Search** and then type **Oscar S. Straus** in the Search box. You will find two notations. The first is for the film.

It will be necessary to download a viewer to see this film. You will be "walked" through the process. Although this may seem like a cumbersome prospect, it is worth the trouble. I was fascinated to see a man I had only read about, in his office, moving about. It brought him to life.

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

"The Autobiography of Isidor Straus" privately published by Sara Straus Hess, in softcover - \$40.00

"Genealogical Miscellany" a family genealogy compiled by Robert K. Straus with addenda - \$40.00

Large black & white photograph of the Isidor and Ida Straus family taken at Elberon NJ in 1905 - \$40.00

Color photograph album of the Straus family's trip to Talbotton and Columbus GA, October 24-26, 1997 - \$50.00

Color photograph album of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial rededication ceremony and reception, October 26, 1998 - \$50.00

Videotape of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Rededication Ceremony - October 26, 1998 filmed by Alan F. Hockstader - \$25.00

Videotape: "Titanic on Broadway," a television special about the making of the Broadway play that includes Joan Adler speaking about the Straus family and a CNN segment in which Paul A. Kurzman is interviewed regarding the play "Titanic" - \$25.00

Color photograph album of the Straus family's trip to Talbotton and Columbus GA, June 22-24, 2001 - \$50.00

Masters Thesis of Saul Viener, "The Political Career of Isidor Straus." Shepherd College, Morgantown, West Virginia, 1947 - \$25.00

Send your tax deductible check to Joan Adler, payable to: **Straus Historical Society, Inc.**, P. O. Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416. A receipt will be issued for your purchase and for your contribution to the Society. You can contact Joan Adler by phone: 631-265-0383, fax: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: famjad@aol.com

You Are Invited

The board of directors of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. would like to invite you to attend a meeting of the board of directors.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 18th, 2002 at the office of board chair Paul A. Kurzman, 129 West 79th Street, New York. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society.

This invitation is extended so that anyone interested in the Straus Historical Society may have an opportunity to share their views and voice their opinions. Please contact Joan Adler or Paul Kurzman 212-452-7035 for further information.