



“wholedamfam”



Straus Square Rededication Ceremony, June 18th, 1998

Straus Square, located at the corner of East Broadway, Essex and Rutgers Streets in New York City was dedicated to Nathan Straus within a month of his death in 1931. The last of Nathan's milk stations may have been on this site and later the Nathan Straus branch of the New York Public Library was located there. The New York City Board of Aldermen dedicated this triangular plot of land in the center of the Lower East Side. The report issued by the Commission on Public Thoroughfares proclaimed: "... the designation of Straus Square pays tribute to the memory of a beloved son of New York who distinguished himself as a citizen, philanthropist and patriot."



Barnard Sachs Straus, Sr., Nathan Straus III, Hugh Grant Straus III and Tom Straus

Society, by officials from the American Jewish Historical Society and the Educational Alliance, neighbors and members of Commissioner Stern's staff. Speeches were made by Commissioner Stern, Manhattan Borough Commissioner Adrien Benepe, Straus Historical Society Chair Paul A. Kurzman, and Nathan descendants Barnard Sachs Straus Sr., Ann Straus Gertler and Virginia Straus Bersohn.

On June 18, 1998 at 4:30 PM, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Henry J. Stern rededicated Straus Square and unveiled a plaque containing a brief biography of Nathan Straus and the history of the Square. This event was attended by several members of the Nathan Straus branch of the family as well as members of the board of directors of the Straus Historical

Ann Straus Gertler brought a panel from a restored flag given to Nathan Straus by the City of New York. The panel was originally the center of three, one outer panel being blue and the other orange. Although the flag is now a tan silk, it was originally white. Ginnie Straus Bersohn had the center panel of the flag restored. The women doing the work, seeing the aging and discoloration of the silk, reproduced it as they saw it, not realizing it had once been white and should have been restored to white. During the rededication ceremony, the flag was draped over the historical sign created by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. Commissioner Stern unveiled the sign to a rousing round of applause. It was a very dramatic moment.



Commissioner Henry J. Stern and Adrien Benepe

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Ann also brought a copy of Lina Gutherz Straus' book, *Disease In Milk, The Remedy Pasteurization, The Life Work of Nathan Straus*. It was written to promote her husband's work. One photograph in the book shows long lines of people waiting for their daily milk at a milk station. Barney Straus spoke of a friend of



Paul Kurzman speaking at Straus Square

his who remembered drinking fresh, clean milk from the milk stations and credited it with helping him to grow healthy when many children were dying. Barney also told a story about his father, Nathan Straus Jr., being stopped by a policeman for some traffic violation. When the policeman learned who he had stopped, he said, "I can't give a ticket to the milkman's son."

After Nathan Straus passed away, the Broadway Association of the City of New York proposed that a monument to Nathan Straus be erected in Central Park because this was the place where children of the whole city gathered to play. Nathan Straus Jr. opposed the idea. An article in the *Jewish Advocate* of Boston MA, February 6, 1931 states, "... he was certainly acting in accordance with the spirit of his father's beliefs and ideals. Nathan Straus, Sr. found his joy in helping others, and the idea of a monument to him would have scandalized his innate sense



Virginia Straus Bersohn, Tom Straus, Ann Straus Gertler and Hugh Grant Straus III

of modesty. He would have said: 'Give the money to some charity.' ... And yet, because the memory of good men should always be kept green, in order that others may be inspired to similar lives, some memorial will have to be erected."

In the Fall of 1997, six London Plane trees were planted along the perimeter of the park. The historical sign unveiled at the June 18th ceremony will be mounted on poles and securely positioned between two trees at the Park's West end. I will be working closely with Jonathan Kuhn, Art Historian of the Parks Department, to design a granite plaque dedicated to the memory of Nathan Straus. We hope to have it placed in the center of the triangle. Although just a small park in the middle of a very large city, Straus Square honors the memory of Nathan Straus in a manner that seems fitting. The rededication ceremony reflected the simplicity and honesty of his beliefs. The Parks Department is to be commended for its sensitivity and cooperation.

Events in Washington D.C. The Oscar S. Straus Memorial

A series of week-long events were planned in Washington D.C. to commemorate the dedication of the new Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center on 14th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues. The Oscar S. Straus Memorial has been restored and reconstructed on the plaza in front of this beautiful building. We had hoped that some recognition of Oscar S. Straus and the memorial would be made at the dedication ceremony. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Early in the week of events, on Thursday, April 30, I spoke about Oscar S. Straus and about the memorial at a seminar, "Art and Architecture in the Federal Triangle." I was asked to confine my remarks to the art of the memorial but was able to include some background about Oscar S. Straus so that the memorial could be viewed in its historical context.

George Gurney, Curator of Sculpture at the National Museum of American Art, acted as moderator and gave the keynote address. He described the architects whose buildings are within the Federal Triangle and the process by which they were designed and built. Three artists also made presentations. Martin Puryear, Stephen Robin and Keith Sonnier had artwork commissioned for the Ronald Reagan Building. Their works were selected by a panel from the Art-In-Architecture Program of the Government Services Administration. Each artist described the concept behind his work and the process by which it was constructed. The panel also responded to questions from the



audience. After this event, a luncheon was held for the artists and participants in the seminar. In this informal setting, I met the artists and answered questions about Oscar S. Straus, about the memorial and about the Straus Historical Society.

A glossy brochure was prepared as a companion piece to the seminar. In this brochure, a statement by the architect of the Ronald Reagan Building reads: "The Straus Fountain was on the site, of course, when we first came to the project, and we committed to saving it. The fountain has been refurbished and now stands as fine as ever it was. It exhibits the best qualities of public art and seems destined to stand for many years to come." The brochure has been added to our family collection and is available to anyone wishing to see it.

The culmination of the week-long series of events was the dedication of the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center on May 5, 1998. Four members of the Straus family attended President Clinton's dedication ceremony in Washington, DC. Accompanied by the Armed Forces Color Guard and the United States Marine Band, the President introduced Mrs. Nancy Reagan who said that the new 3.1 million square foot building represents a tribute to her husband of which they are both appreciative and proud.



Oscar S. Straus Memorial in the parking lot before reconstruction



Oscar S. Straus Memorial on the plaza in front of the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center

The Oscar S. Straus Memorial Fountain has been preserved and refurbished. Photographs of the reconstruction and an article about it were published in the August 1997 issue of "whol-damfam." Construction of this handsome memorial -- authorized by President Coolidge and a Joint Resolution of Congress three years after Secretary of Commerce and Labor Straus' death -- was delayed by the Great Depression and World War II, and finally dedicated by President Truman in 1947. In 1991, the stone and bronze elements of the memorial were cleaned and conserved and in 1997 (50 years after it was first dedicated) it was rebuilt at its original location, now adjacent to the new Ronald Reagan Building, in what is known as The Federal Triangle.

Attending the dedication ceremonies were Oscar S. Straus' grandson, Oscar S. Straus II, his wife Joan; great-grandson Oscar Straus Schafer; and Paul Kurzman, chair of the Straus Historical Society's Board of Directors.

Note: Thank you to Paul Kurzman for his contribution to this article including text and photographs. Thanks also to George Gurney, Curator of Sculpture at the National Museum of American Art, who sent slides of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial before and after the reconstruction.



President William Clinton addressing members of Congress, diplomats and Strauses at the May 5th dedication ceremony



Paul A. Kurzman, Oscar S. Straus II, Joan Straus and Oscar Straus Schafer at the May 5th dedication ceremony of the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center

Nathan Straus 1848 - 1931

Nathan Straus was involved in many humanitarian and philanthropic activities. His wife, Lina Gutherz Straus, fully supported all of his endeavors. She was his most staunch supporter. It has been suggested that the many tributes to Nathan Straus could just as correctly have been tributes to both Nathan and Lina Straus. As you continue to read about Nathan Straus, remember that diminutive Lina was right there with him, every step of the way.

During a coal strike in New York City in 1892-1893, Nathan used his business genius and knowledge to maintain coal distributing stations throughout the city where people could buy twenty five pounds of coal for five cents. It was free to the neediest. He had secured the cooperation of J. Pierpont Morgan and obtained ten thousand tons of coal at a reduced rate. He convinced the Dock Department to allow him free use of the piers for coal depots. He was able to distribute a million and a half buckets of coal. During the same crisis, in January 1894, he accepted \$50,000 from J. P. Morgan, notable because it was the only time Nathan accepted financial aid for his work. He opened a store on Grand Street where, for five cents or upon presentation of a Nathan Straus depot ticket issued free through charitable societies, he supplied twenty five pounds of coal or food stuff. At the same time, when the city was filled with unemployed homeless men, he opened lodging houses for 64,000 persons who were supplied bed and breakfast for five cents. He funded 50,000 separate meals for one cent. Those who didn't have the money were given work around the lodging house. In this way, they were able to maintain their self respect and be helped at the same time.

In an article in *The New Palestine*, February 3, 1928, dedicated to Nathan Straus on his eightieth birthday, Joseph Brainin wrote: "This chapter of Nathan Straus' work is characteristic. It brought to the fore all the human qualities which made him the outstanding philanthropist of his time. First, his vision: he was among the first to see the true dimensions of the acuteness of the panic which left 39,000 families without means of sustenance. Second, his amazing organizing abilities which immediately set into motion a tremendous relief machine. Third, his keenness, which had recognized that assistance must be of a fundamental character, and which would reach the largest possible number in the quickest possible time. And while his mind worked out the scheme to the smallest details, he visualized the individual tragedies and refused to pauperize the victims, cre-

ating the illusion that the needy ones were helping themselves and buying the relief, not receiving it. All by himself, he had successfully combated and coped with a mass emergency, and given to New York a unique example of true and wise philanthropy."

Nathan sent an ice plant and a water distilling plant to Santiago, Cuba for the use of U.S. troops during the war with Spain. In 1902 he was active in the settlement of the anthracite coal strike and offered to support the families of miners the companies declined to re-employ.

Having been denied access to the Lakewood Hotel in New Jersey because he was a Jew, Nathan built a hotel in Lakewood which was open to all. He induced socially prominent Americans to visit his hotel and actually showed a profit for several years. President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland stayed in one of

his cottages for a few weeks rest between his second election to the presidency and his inauguration in 1893. Nathan gave use of the land for the Red Cross buildings at the Army Hospital in Lakewood, New Jersey during World War I.

Nathan helped build a Roman Catholic Church in Lakewood, New Jersey and sent food, clothing and medical supplies to Italy after the earthquake of 1909. He sent a physician to Naples and Messina. He established a home in Farmingdale, New Jersey on a farm donated by Arthur Brisbane. Children from families whose members were suffering from tuberculosis could get fresh air, build up their resistance and be taught how to maintain good health. He coined the word Preventorium to describe this institution, the first of its kind. He also donated a cottage to the Trudea Sanitarium in Saranac Lake and in Duarte, California.



**Nathan and Lina Gutherz Straus
Their Wedding Year - 1875**

Nathan presented a paper at the Eighth International Tuberculosis Conference held in Stockholm in 1909. He was appointed the United States delegate to the World International Congress for the Protection of Infants in Berlin in 1911, was a delegate to the American Public Health Association in the International Congress of Hygiene in Washington D.C. in September 1912 and was a delegate to the International Tuberculosis Congress in Rome in 1912. During a depression in New York in 1914-1915, he provided more than a million meals at a penny a meal. He sold his private yacht "Sisilina" to the Coast Guard in 1916 and gave the proceeds for the feeding of war orphans. He distributed coffee, bread and milk to soldiers in Battery Park in 1918.

In 1915, when asked to speak about war preparedness, Nathan said, "Greed and pride are the causes of war. ... Peace does not mean that nations must weakly yield rather than fight. Peace



NATHAN STRAUS

means that the great nations must organize as a community and refuse to permit war. ... the power to prevent war, can be achieved only by the most thorough preparedness on the part of the nations that want peace and order in the world. This, I maintain, is the overwhelming reason why America should have a powerful navy and a strong army, and enough equipment essential to the efficient use of this power. We need preparedness - not to

fight battles, but to prevent battles being fought. ... It is therefore, to my mind, a duty that we owe not only to our own people, but to all the world, to be so thoroughly well prepared as to be not only invincible, but able to say to any nation that presumes to disturb the peace of the world, "Take your quarrel to the court of the nations, the Permanent Court of Arbitration."

In November 1902, Nathan dictated a letter from Frankfurt, Germany to J. P. Morgan. "I want to talk to you about something which has been on my mind all my life, and I know I have now found the man who is big enough to do it. I mean - to emancipate the Jew. - Whoever does that will be a bigger man than Lincoln... Why should the Jews of nowadays suffer for the imaginary wrongs which is claimed their forefathers did? ... You are the leader of the world in finances - if you make ten million more you can not in that line become any bigger, as there is only one Morgan and no second or third. But here is the chance of your life to give a word that would not be effective in any other mouth, and you would have done the greatest thing that was ever done by any one man. - You right the wrongs under which suffers an entire race. ... It has been the dream of my life. - I have put money making and all worldly aims secondary to this one great cause. - I have enough to live comfortably and have no desire for accumulating wealth. I have enough to follow the philanthropic work I am engaged in, and have never done anything in that line that was not entirely nonsectarian. ...nothing that the greatest heroes in the world ever did, will compare to the deed you can accomplish, as it requires more moral courage and you will set for yourself a monument as there was never one before."

Upon touring the Mediterranean with Lina in 1904, the couple stopped over in Palestine, expecting it to be but one stop of many. He wrote, "On reaching Jerusalem, we changed our plans. All that we saw in the Holy Land made such a deep impression on us that we gave up the idea of going to other places. Visiting the holy sights of which one hears and reads since childhood, watching the scenes in life as pictured in the Bible, was most soul-stirring. From that time on we felt a strange and intense desire to return to the land."

Nathan and Lina became staunch Zionists. He built soup kitchens for the aged and the blind and the physically defective in

1917. He supported work-rooms so that unskilled laborers could find employment. He built health stations which ministered to the victims of malaria and trachoma. He believed strongly in palliative care. He provided \$250,000 for the establishment of the Jerusalem Health Center and made possible the founding of a Pasteur Institute. He lent moral and material support to the farmers and colonists of Israel and labored in the interests of the Hebrew University. They began calling him "The Great Giver." The lovely seaside city of Natanya was named to honor Nathan Straus in the hope that they would benefit from his charity. Nathan stated that he had already given away 3/4's of his fortune and had no more to give. Nathan III told me that the Mayor of Natanya, a fellow by the name of Ben Ami, was invited to visit Nathan at Driftwood, his Mamaroneck home. The young Ben Ami was very poor and was looking forward to a great repast. He was sorely disappointed when he was served cereal, bananas and poached eggs.

So great was the depth of Lina's commitment, she donated her jewelry to Hadassah in Palestine in 1918. It was valued at more than \$18,000.

When Nathan learned of the Titanic disaster, the shock was so severe he became ill. Nathan later said, "The one gleam of consolation I find in the darkness is the thought that it was a Jew and Jewess who gave to the world this example of self-sacrifice, heroism and mutual love." After the loss of his beloved brother Isidor and sister-in-law Ida, Nathan retired from the family business. His son Nathan Jr. took over the running of L. Straus & Son's, and his younger son, Hugh Grant Straus, entered the firm of Abraham & Straus. Nathan dedicated his enormous energy in the pursuit of his philanthropies.



LENA G. STRAUS



Humanitarians Both - Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Nathan Straus at the Democratic National Convention of 1924 - *Jewish Daily Forward*, 1933

Nathan was Commissioner of Parks in New York City from 1889-1893. He was instrumental in forming the State Forest Commission in 1893 and served as its first chairman and was president of the city's Board of Health in 1898. The New York Democratic Party nominated him for Mayor in 1894. He accepted the nomination but had to withdraw, citing poor health. He was unanimously elected president of the American Jewish Congress in 1916 and was reelected in 1918, 1920 and 1922. In 1912 Nathan was nominated presidential elector-at-large on the Democratic ticket but resigned following the unexpected nomination of his brother Oscar for the New York governorship on the Progressive ticket. Nathan is the author of numerous articles. He addressed many congresses, medical groups, and other public gatherings regarding issues of public welfare.

Nathan never lost sight of his roots. Before World War I, he returned to Germany every year for visits of varying lengths; never less than several weeks and sometimes up to three months. He spent time in Heidelberg, Baden and other cities where the Strauses had porcelain or china factories. He visited spas, where he received the latest in medical treatment and enjoyed a much needed rest. His European sojourns always included visits with relatives. Lina and Nathan's families were connected five times by marriage. Lina, always a strong advocate for her husband, was delighted to accompany him. Herman Bernstein wrote of Lina that she was "one of the noblest of women, who always helps her husband with keen intelligence, while remaining modestly in the background, inspiring him, working with him constantly in the service of mankind."

On the anniversary of Nathan's seventy-fifth birthday, *The Jewish Tribune and The Hebrew Standard* published a special congratulatory issue. The dedication read, in part, "Truly a mountain among men, the world pays homage to him on the Diamond Jubilee of a life, embodying the highest conception of citizenship. Great merchant, great philanthropist, great American, great Jew, Nathan Straus represents all that is beautiful and holy in life. Giving to him has been a divine duty, the duty to serve those unable to serve themselves. He struck a new note in Philanthropy, "Give Until It Feels Good," is one of the world's immortal expressions, immortal because Nathan Straus has carried out what with others would have been an empty phrase." According to his grandson Nathan III, Nathan said, "What you give in health is gold. What you give in sickness is silver. What you give in death is lead."

Nathan gave away his splendid stable, his yacht "Sisilina," his Thousand Island home, his 72nd Street apartment and many other luxuries when he felt it his duty to give every dollar he could to the relief of stricken people. He was the first to send relief to Jewish refugees in Siberia during World War I.

Nathan was an avid horseman, personally driving his race horses on The Speedway in Upper Manhattan, in the area now known as Harlem River Drive. It is said he would rather have lost a race than apply the whip. When he drove his prized horse "Cobwebs," he often talked or hummed a popular air. He insisted "Cob" was pleased with this and it was apparent that the horse responded to Nathan's affection.

In an interview by Henry Morgenthau, Helen Sachs Straus said that she and Nathan Jr. lived at "Driftwood," Nathan and Lina's home for the Summer of 1915. They were newly married and had



"Driftwood," the Mamaroneck home of Nathan and Lina Straus

just returned from their wedding trip. Nathan and Lina built an extra bathroom onto their house to accommodate the couple. Unfortunately, the shower didn't work. Helen remembered Lina saying, "I feel so badly about it. I know he isn't really a very good plumber but he is such a good Zionist."

Nathan never sat down to a meal at "Driftwood" until the birds had been fed. Hundreds flocked around his dining room window in anticipation of a meal. Nathan would ask

his secretary, Mrs. B., if she had earned her dinner. She would throw handfuls of crumbs to the birds and respond, "Yes, I have."

I asked some of the grandchildren of Nathan and Lina to tell me stories about them; stories about their more human side. We know about Nathan's great humanitarianism. We know about the milk stations, Zionism, his relief of the poor and striking workers and their families. I wanted to know about the man. Nathan III remembered that there was a dock and a stone breakwater into Long Island Sound at the Strauses Mamaroneck home. Twice a week their two lobster pots would be pulled and lobster would be served for lunch. Ann remembered that a lobster once bit the cook. She also remembered that the driveway had dandelions along its border which she was allowed to pick. They remain her favorite flower.

Barnard Sachs Straus Sr. told me: "We used to go to their house for Sunday lunch. He had his secretary, Miss Burke, come down with this little safe deposit box. As you entered "Driftwood," on the right, in a little room, was a golf putting green. If you

sank a putt in one shot, Miss Burke would take out a crisp one dollar bill, which was like one hundred now, and give it to you. We were getting five or ten cents a week in allowance at that time so one dollar seemed like a lot of money." Ann Gertler said the putting green was 30 feet long and five feet wide.

Nathan III remembers his grandfather as a bearded man sitting in his grand chair. "He was always warm to me. I remember kissing him and feeling his beard on my face." Nathan sat at the head of the table at Sunday lunch with a menu placed on a stand before him. He didn't know why his grandfather wanted or needed that menu. Nothing was ordered. But it was always present. He supposed it was just that Nathan wanted to plan how much to eat based on what would be served next.

Ann Straus Gertler remembers Nathan as a model grandfather. One year, when there was a polio scare in the city and Ann was too young for school, about four years old, she stayed at "Driftwood" when the other children returned to the city. She got to know Nathan quite well during that time. They would sit, side by side, and would tell each other riddles such as, "Why did the chicken cross the road?" He smoked cigars which he would clip with a fancy clipper. He had four greenhouses. One held fig trees. He raised guinea pigs by the thousands and donated them for medical research. He had beer steins, Tobys, with gargoyle faces. Ann was terrified of them. He also had Boxers, one after the other named Karo. One of the dogs bit Ann.

When I asked Nathan and Barney about their grandparents' size, stating that they appeared small in the photographs I had seen, Nathan said, "I don't remember him standing. I only remember him sitting in that chair, a very imposing figure; about six foot six I would guess." Lina was a secondary figure who waited on him and acted at his pleasure. "He was a commanding presence. I didn't get any sense of women's lib in that house. His personality made him grow in my mind. Maybe she was a strong woman but that's not how we saw her. At "Driftwood" we never actually saw her doing anything." She was devoted to him. Lina was called Oma and Nathan was called Opa, terms of endearment which are German words for grandma and grandpa. Ann remembers Lina as a frail woman, very tiny. She wore purple. She wore half mittens which just left her fingers exposed because she was arthritic and wanted to keep her hands warm. Ann used to go to Lina's room every morning to visit. She was required to be quiet.

Lina visited every day at Four Wind Acres, where her son Hugh Grant Straus and daughter-in-law Flora Stieglitz Straus lived with their four children. At one time Nathan wanted to go to Atlantic City. He snapped at Lina, "I didn't marry you to stay in

Mamaroneck." Although Lina is described as diminutive, frail, quiet, she was also strong and tough where her husband was concerned. I get the feeling she would stop at nothing to protect him or to promote his ideas. Given the fact that Nathan was often ill and unable to continue, it must have been quite a job. When asked about the relationship between Nathan Jr. and Hugh Grant and their parents, both Barney and Nathan III felt that a great burden of family affairs had been placed on both sons so that Nathan Sr. could pursue his philanthropic work.

Given Nathan and Lina's position on Zionism, I wondered if they were observant Jews. I was told that this was not the case. Nathan was very close with Rabbi Wise. He didn't feel that being a Zionist meant double allegiance as many others did. Lina went to Temple Bethel where Rabbi Shulman officiated but Nathan didn't attend. She lit candles on Friday nights at the Sabbath dinner. Nathan felt that you should know your background, where you came from. He didn't seem to believe it was necessary to carry on the ritual of the religion. Both men do, however, remember a bowl of water being placed at the entrance to the dining room at Passover. One had to jump over it to enter the room, symbolic of crossing the Red Sea.

Nathan enjoyed seeing his name in print. He was great friends with Arthur Brisbane, of Hearst newspapers, who was happy to oblige. When I first met Flora, she had already donated more than fourteen carton boxes of news clippings, books, articles and photographs to The New York Public Library. They are organized, and a finding aid is available. Flora was kind enough to share her remaining collection of Nathan Straus memorabilia with me. Some of her stories and copies of her photographs appear in this article.



Nathan Straus

Nathan died January 11, 1931 at 83, eight months after the death of his beloved wife Lina. He had been in failing health since his return from Palestine the previous year and had never rebounded following Lina's death. A brief service was held at Temple Emanu-El. It was open to the public. Flowers sent to the family were distributed to local area hospitals in keeping with his spirit of philanthropy.

As per his wishes, Nathan was buried in a plain pine box in the Jewish tradition. Honorary pallbearers included former pugilist Benny Leonard, Mayor James J. Walker and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. A crowd of more than 5,000 people lined the hearse's route. Nathan's body is interred alongside Lina's in the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum at Salem Field Cemetery.

"It is my ambition to die a poor man, for then I shall enrich in happiness and in good works."

L. Straus & Sons Cut Glass

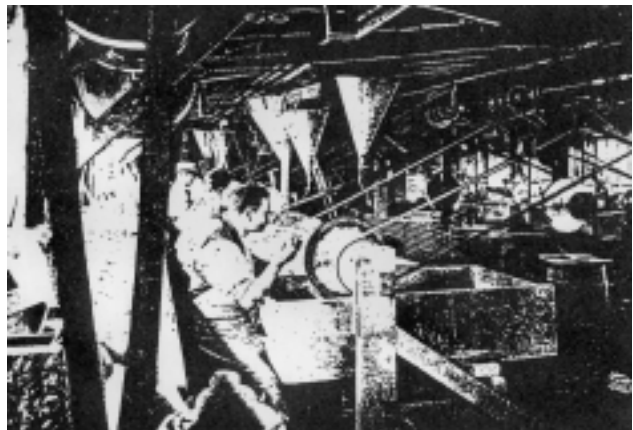
Craig E. Carlson, a new member of the Straus Historical Society, is an expert on American rich cut glass and particularly L. Straus & Sons cut glass. He has generously made his entire collection of material available to me and shares each new discovery as he finds it. My knowledge of the Hermine and Lazarus Kohns family has increased dramatically because of his work.

A very small sample of this new information includes: Lazarus Kohns was honored in an eightieth birthday celebration held at his home, with a banquet for L. Straus & Sons employees at the Arena, Thirty-first Street near Broadway in New York and with banquets in Rudolstadt Germany where the Strauses owned a pottery factory. "A very elegant loving cup of sterling silver standing three feet high was sent him bearing the following inscription: "To Lazarus Kohns on the eightieth anniversary of his birthday, Dec. 22, 1904, as a token of their appreciation and esteem." *Crockery and Glass Journal*, December 29, 1904. I wonder if anyone knows what has become of this loving cup.

We've learned that Lee Kohns had a complete collection of presidential autographs beginning with George Washington. It is now in the New York Public Library, Lee Kohns Memorial Collection, and that Irene Kohns married Edmund E. Wise on June 6, 1900 at the home of her parents, Lazarus and Hermine Straus Kohns, 23 West Fifty-sixth Street, New York. L. Straus & Son's first recorded bill was June 1, 1866 and is charged to A. Becker & Co., Plymouth Ind. in the amount of \$130.35.

Craig is interested in learning more about the glass cutting operation of L. Straus & Sons. In the fall of 1873 Nathan Straus convinced R.H. Macy to allow the family to rent space in the basement of his 14th Street store. There would be no risk to Macy as the Strauses would pay a fixed percentage of their sales as rent. Their department soon became known as the most extensive display of china, glass, pottery and majolica and the most popular department in Macy's. On October 9, 1887, a story in *The New York Times* read, in part, "There is probably no better place in the country to study the character, the gracefulness of outline, the delicacy of blending shades and quiet and brilliant colorings in pottery and glassware than at R.H. Macy & Co.'s ... The line of cut and engraved glass tableware is deserving of more than a passing reference, as the cutting and engraving is done on the premises by the most skilled and celebrated artisans." Craig believes this refers to the Straus' firm cutting the glass and would like to find evi-

dence to confirm this. Glass cutting at Macy's may have been a "trial run" before the Strauses committed themselves at L. Straus & Sons. The cut glass operation at Macy's, operated under L. Straus & Sons, was continued until at least 1911. It was located on the eighth floor of the 34th Street building.



In 1889, L. Straus & Sons opened a glass cutting shop at 14 Jay Street in New York City where three floors were devoted to cutting. The first L. Straus & Sons cut glass ad appeared in 1888. It was not long before the Strauses also owned 42, 44, 46 and 48 Warren Street and 116 Chambers Street which communicated with the Warren Street showrooms. By 1892, they employed over 100 expert glass cutters and, by 1895, they also owned a factory in Hoboken which burned down in May of 1897. Within three months, they opened a new glass cutting factory at 525-535 West Fifty-ninth Street between Ninth and Eleventh Avenues in New York City. The Fifty-ninth Street factory burned February 23, 1904. Shortly thereafter, a factory opened at 794-800 Tenth Avenue near 54th Street. It appears that the Tenth Avenue factory was in operation until 1911 or 1912 when they moved to Debosses, Vestry and Greenwich Streets. At one time, they also had a decorating factory in Jersey City. The Strauses seemed to have been running a parallel cutting shop within Macy's during the same period that they ran a cutting shop owned and operated by L. Straus & Sons. For a number of years, the Strauses cut their patterns on Baccarat glass.

In 1893, L. Straus & Sons won six prestigious awards at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The text of the certificate reads:

"The designs are original, very handsome, and most skillfully executed. The cutting is bold, the sharp angles are well kept, the workmanship is perfect, and the polish excellent.

"There are a number of very large pieces which are finely cut - in itself an evidence of skillful workmanship, as pieces of such size are very difficult to handle. Among others may be mentioned a twelve foot candelabrum with forty-two arms; a large druggist's bottle, diamond cut; a punch set with egg-shaped bowl; an epergne, having four horizontal dishes and a top vase; and also two large and heavy punch bowls.

"All this work calls forth the highest tributes to American skill and originality in conception.

"For original, artistic and tasteful designs, fine and regular workmanship in cutting, excellent polish, and general perfection."

John Boyd Thacher, Chairman Executive Committee on Awards.



Prize Winners at the 1893 World's Columbian



Egg-Shaped Punch Bowl



**Epergne No 52
"Isabella"**

The candelabrum is now displayed in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The work on this gigantic piece of crystal required the time of twelve expert cutters for over forty-five days, during which time 1329 separate pieces of solid crystal were cut and fitted together to form what was conceded to be the largest single specimen of cut glass ever produced.. The whereabouts of the egg-shaped punch bowl is unknown. The expert workmanship was such that the cover fit so neatly that the seam was invisible. The Epergne was recently sold at auction and can now be seen at the Nagasaki Historical Society in Japan. Craig would like to know if anyone has copies of the six 1893 World Fair Award certificates.

It is difficult to identify L. Straus & Sons cut glass because their name or symbol was not generally cut into the glass, a paper label was affixed. In most cases, the only way to identify a piece is through the catalogue. Many of these patterns were patented, and most were advertised for sale through the catalogues. The only catalogue that has surfaced was published in 1893. The complete line of L. Straus & Sons cut glass was illustrated in this catalogue and the Straus Historical Society has a copy. Craig has also found references to L. Straus & Sons catalogues produced in 1891, 1894, 1900, 1902 and 1905 but to date copies have not surfaced. Additional catalogues may have been produced and it would be wonderful if we could find other catalogues or patent papers which would help collectors identify Straus cut glass.

Craig will be making a presentation about L. Straus & Sons cut glass at the American Brilliant Cut Glass Convention next Summer. I will be there to answer questions about the family. We will be working during the coming year to prepare slides and material. More about this in the next issue of "wholedamfam."

Craig would like to know if anyone has L. Straus & Sons cut glass, has L. Straus & Sons cut glass catalogues, patents, knows anything about the early operation of the firm or has a copy of Straus' "China and Glass Courier" of 1908. You can contact Craig E. Carlson, 447 Chain O'Hills Road, Colonia, NJ 07067, Phone 732-396-8736. E.mail craig447@aol.com.



Friends of Straus Park

The Spring and Summer seasons for Friends of Straus Park are in full swing. With their usual expertise, Leon Auerbach, Jo Abrams, Mary Walsh and their board of directors have managed to arrange an exciting and interesting schedule of events. April 18th saw the First Annual Straus Park Commemorative Celebration. There was continuous music, dance, art exhibits and sales, refreshments, and a very festive atmosphere in which people enjoyed the Park. The weather could not have been more beautiful. It was exciting for me to see how important Straus Park has become to the community and to see how well it is utilized.

I attended the June 18th Jazz Concert in the Park. The Harlem Jazz Legends performed. These musicians have played with the likes of Lionel Hampton, Dizzie Gillespie and Duke Ellington. At 6:00 PM there was a brief but intense downpour, and the musicians headed for their cars. Tarps were thrown over the refreshment tables and it looked as though the event would have to be cancelled. Luckily, the weather cleared, and we had a beautiful evening for a wonderful concert.

On June 23rd Leon hosted a wine and cheese cocktail party at his apartment to celebrate the benefit concert held at the end of April. Leon and his wife Marjorie are the consummate hosts and the party was a huge success.

Wednesday, July 22nd, Hana Dolgin and Her Brothers played selections from the music of Duke Ellington and other jazz greats. The Park was full of happy people enjoying good food and good music. What a great way to spend a hot Summer evening.

Plans for the remainder of the year include: Wednesday, August 12th a concert in the Park will feature a Latin theme. Saturday, September 19th the 2nd Annual Art in the Park - A Day-Long Celebration of Music, Art, Dance & Food will be held. Saturday, October 17th neighbors and friends will be out in force for the annual Planting Flowers in the Park. Friday, November 20th there will be a Thanksgiving Concert. Saturday mornings there will be story telling hours. These dates will be announced as they are scheduled. If you are not already on Friends mailing list, please write or call Leon, 340 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025. Phone 212-865-4948.

Friends of Straus Park is working on an interactive school program using Straus Park as an historical and natural resource. The Straus Historical Society will be working closely with Friends to develop this program.

Titanic Fever

The Titanic craze, already at an almost feverish pitch, was greatly stimulated by the December 1997 release of the movie "Titanic." It is interesting that people of every age, sex, every walk of life and from all over the world share this obsession.

Sophie Finkelstein has become famous at Brearely School by virtue of being the great granddaughter of Isidor and Ida Straus. She invited Paul Kurzman and me to give a talk about the Strauses at her school on April 15th. I spoke about the Straus family, their background in Germany and Georgia, and why they moved to New York. I also spoke about the Titanic disaster, giving these pre-teenagers a slightly different view than the one they had gotten from the movie. Paul spoke about the social responsibility that comes with prominence and what it means to him to be a Straus. The girls had a brief opportunity to ask questions. It was obvious they had given this subject a lot of thought and their questions were excellent. We are grateful to Sophie for offering us this wonderful opportunity to meet and speak with so many young people. We hope to develop more programs of this kind for school groups.

An article about the Titanic disaster appeared in the March 16th issue of *People Magazine*. The Straus Historical Society contributed photographs and I was interviewed and quoted. This led many people to our historical society asking for information about Isidor and Ida Straus. Fran and Jonno Straus have been maintaining a Straus Historical Society website. They have been getting thousands of "hits" on their pages. This has also led people to us.

Magazines around the world wrote articles about Titanic and requested photographs of Isidor and Ida Straus. I was happy to send copies of their photograph and asked that a copy of the issue be sent to me once the article was published. Articles have appeared in Germany, Italy, Russia, Canada and Australia and in several small circulation Jewish newspapers around the country.

Many people have been led to believe they are related to the Strauses. Quite a lot of my mail has been from people trying to find the connection. Except in very rare cases, we have been unable to find a common link.

When speaking or e.mailing with people who request information, I usually ask them how they plan to use our material. One couple was going to dress up and attend a Titanic party. They were assigned the characters Isidor and Ida Straus and they wanted to make their characters as authentic as possible. They had been researching the Strauses without much luck. Many requests for information came from students working on term papers. In each case, I asked that the completed report be sent to me for our files. A new member of our society, Gayle Gruber, is writing her Master's Thesis on the artwork of the Titanic. Several people dress up in period clothing and give lectures at bookstores, libraries and schools. One author has requested permission to write a book about Isidor and Ida, a story of their relationship.

Love Can Never Be Broken

They both were together right from the start,
Not letting anything or anyone tear them apart.

Isidor 67, Ida 63,
Having 6 lovely children and living happily.

They celebrated their birthdays on the same day,
They wrote each other letters, whenever they went away.

Through the screaming and crying of the sinking Titanic,
They managed to stay together during all of that panic.

Ida had refused two times of being saved,
Choosing to sit down with her husband, and that's were they stayed.

Isidor and Ida were meant to be,
Loving one another till their death at the sea.

Written by seventh grade student Alika N.R. Young of Pearl City, Hawaii. Reprinted by permission of the author.

I have heard from many members of the family that they are tired of hearing about Titanic. It's understandable. The Straus family is so much more. A very important part of the historical society's mission is to educate, and one way we are fulfilling that mission is by disseminating information. Hopefully, as more people become aware of our society, our newsletter and our events, interest in other aspects of the family will develop.

Investment Management Institute - March 9, 1998

Linda Marcus, granddaughter of Melville Straus of Columbus Georgia, was invited to speak at a seminar, "Managing Philanthropy Assets of High Net Worth Individuals: Developing the Next Generation for Philanthropic Leadership: Investing and Financial Issues." Linda was to speak about the Straus Historical Society but was unable to attend. She asked me to fill in for her. It was an exciting opportunity to get our name and mission known. My panel consisted of the moderator, Deborah Ziskind Reich, President and CEO of Deborah Z. Reich Public Relations and Board Member of The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Pittsburgh Film Makers, Dr. Salvatore LaSpada, Philanthropic Advisor, Rockefeller Family Offices, and Shelby White, Author, Financial Journalist, Chair, Investment Committee of the New York Botanical Garden and Mount Holyoke College.

I made a presentation and participated in a question and answer period. As Linda had predicted, the participants of this seminar were fascinated by the work we have been doing and wanted to know more. I gave information to several people about how they could start a family organization and spoke at length with a lawyer interested in our 501(c)(3) status. She indicated that we should have little difficulty in obtaining this not-for-profit status once our mission statement is clear.

Announcements

Born: Laura Alexandra Straus to David Alexander and Elli K. Straus on July 14, 1997 in Baltimore, MD. Laura joins her parents and big sister Meghan in their Parkton, MD home.

Born: Katherine Elizabeth Douglas to Geoffrey and Colleen Douglas on April 20, 1998 in San Antonio, TX. She was born at 11:23 PM, was 7 lbs, 12 oz and 20 1/4 inches long. Geoffrey is the son of Barbara and George Douglas of Austin, TX.

Married: R. Peter Straus and Marcia Lewis in February 1998. A formal reception for family and friends will be held in the Fall.

Married: Leonard Albert Hockstader III (Lee) to Flore de Preneuf on July 4, 1998 in Pleneuf-Val-Andre, France. Lee is the Jerusalem Bureau Chief of *The Washington Post*. He is the son of Didi Hockstader and the late Leonard Albert Hockstader II. Flore is a freelance journalist.

Died: Leonard Albert Hockstader II on May 8, 1998. Len was the husband of Didi, father of Lee, Kalen and Avery, grandfather of Pierson and brother of Alan F. Hockstader. He was a partner in the former investment bank L.F. Rothschild, Unterberg, Towbin.

Died: Delivered prematurely on June 5, 1998, twins, a boy Jack and a girl Virginia. They were the children of Ann Toohey Musgrave and Roger Musgrave. The twins were named posthumously for both Ann and Roger's grandparents. Ann is the daughter of Pat Harrah.

Moved: Kate Fariss Fraser Cote, 301 Reynolds Street South, Apt 211, Alexandria, VA 22304. Phone 703-370-3655.

Moved: Ann and Roger Musgrave, 5 Cambridge Road, Wharton, NJ 07885-1636. Phone 973-537-8135.

Moved: Stephen, Melissa and Charlotte Straus to 3700 Bridle Path, Austin, TX 78703, Phone 512-236-9607.

New Members (whose names and addresses may be found in your address book): Fred de Graaff, Sophie Finkelstein, Stephen E. Straus, Phone 954-764-5393, Philip and Denise Toohey Jr., Susan Voorneveld.

New Members: Tabitha Boring, P. O. Box 1102, Freedom, CA 95019. Phone 408-728-9024. E.mail tabbymeow4@aol.com. Tabitha is the great granddaughter of Eugene Harold Eising, nephew of Isidor and Ida Straus.

Craig E. Carlson, 447 Chain O'Hills Road, Colonia, NJ 07067, Phone 732-396-8736. E.mail: craig447@aol.com. Craig is an expert on American cut glass and is particularly interested in glass cut by L. Straus & Sons.

Gayle N. Gruber, 4 East Brook Drive, Holmdel, NJ 07733. Phone 732-739-5461. E.mail ggruber669@aol.com. Gayle is pursuing a Master's Degree. Her thesis is about the art on the Titanic.

Warren H. Simmons Jr., 508 Terhune Road, Princeton, NJ 08540. Phone 609-921-1330. Warren was a friend of Ken Straus.

Helen Cohen Straus, 500 Washington Avenue, Kingston, NY 12401-2916, Phone: 914-339-8313. Helen is the widow of Hugh Grant Straus Jr.

Donald B. & Kristen C. Taylor, 302 Jackson Blvd., Nashville, TN 37205. Phone 615-371-2400. Donald and Kristen were friends of Ken Straus.

Angela P. Thrift, 110 Vernelle Drive, P. O. Box 274, Mayo, SC 29368. Phone 864-461-3353. Angela is interested in the Strauses and in Titanic.

Friends of Straus Park, c/o Leon Auerbach, 340 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025. Phone 212-865-4948.

Congratulations: To Leon Auerbach for being named a Volunteer of the Month by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. A luncheon was held in the Arsenal, the Parks Department headquarters, on February 20th, where Leon's work for the West 106th Street Block Association and for Friends of Straus Park was described and where he was given an award certificate. I attended this luncheon and can attest to the wonderful things being done around the city by Leon and the other volunteers honored at this luncheon.

Thank you: To Billy Straus and to Ginnie Bersohn for their assistance in finding lawyers and accountants willing to work on our 501 (c)(3) status at a fee we can afford.

Thank you: To Henry J. Stern, Adrien Benepe, Bob Redmond, Margaret Asaro, Sharon Williams, Jonathan Kuhn, Sarah Zurier and the staff of the NYC Parks Department for their cooperation and for making our rededication of Straus Square such a wonderful event.

Thank you: To Virginia Straus Bersohn, Ann Straus Gertler, Hugh Grant Straus III, Barnard Sachs Straus Sr. and Nathan Straus III who sent me photographs and articles and told me stories about their grandfather and great-grandfather, Nathan Straus. They each helped me to see him as a man who appeared larger than life but who had a very human side.



Katherine Elizabeth Douglas
Born April 20, 1998
Daughter of Geoffrey & Colleen Douglas

Upcoming Events

Oscar S. Straus Memorial Rededication

On October 26, 1998, the Oscar S. Straus Memorial will be rededicated in Washington D.C. This memorial was originally dedicated by President Harry S. Truman on October 26, 1947. It has been refurbished and reconstructed and now stands on the plaza in front of the newly dedicated Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, 14th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues. Letters from Oscar S. Straus II to Senator Alphonse D'Amato have been instrumental in setting the wheels in motion for this event.

The rededication ceremony is being planned by the General Services Administration. I will be working closely with them. If you have any thoughts about how you would like this ceremony to be structured or if you wish to participate, please let me know. Proposed speakers at this time are Oscar S. Straus II, Paul A. Kurzman, Senator Alphonse D'Amato of New York and a representative of the American Jewish Historical Society. GSA has asked if we would be willing to host a reception. Do you have any ideas about how we might obtain funding?

A California and a Texas Family Get-Together

We are looking for ways to encourage more participation by family and historical society member who do not live in New York. We can't expect that whole families will come East for every event. The board of directors has proposed that more events be held in locations where there are clusters of members. We hope to hold a Northern California get-together sometime in December and an Austin TX get-together in the Spring. If you live anywhere near these areas and would like to host a luncheon, picnic, dinner party or any other event, please contact me or a member of the board. If you live in any other location and would like to host an event, please let us know.

Our 501(c)(3) Not-For-Profit Status

On July 29th, Rob Straus, Paul Kurzman and I met with Fred Rothman from the accounting firm of Loeb & Troper to explore our options regarding not-for-profit status. I am pleased to report that he has given us every indication we should not have a problem. We have decided to contract with Mr. Rothman and his firm. He will begin the application process immediately.

Although it is never a sure thing, and the length of time it will take to achieve not-for-profit status varies with each application, we are pleased to report that we have made the first step. We must first incorporate in New York State before applying for the federal designation. Our name, Straus Historical Society, will be researched to ascertain that it is unique. Then officers will be officially named and a clear mission statement will be written. The paperwork will be submitted as soon as possible. Barring unforeseen difficulties, we expect to be able to offer tax exempt status for donations before the end of the year.

Available from the Straus Historical Society

Back issues of the newsletter - \$5.00 each

Newsletter Binder - \$30.00

Artistic family tree - \$55.00

Family tree update - \$15.00

Video Tape: WWOR TV's "Titanic on Broadway" with Joan Adler interview and CNN segment of interview of Paul Kurzman regarding "Titanic" - \$20.00

Video Tape: A & E "Biography: R. H. Macy" produced by Greystone Productions - \$20.00

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

Photograph Album of Talbotton and Columbus Georgia Trip - Oct 24-26, 1997 - \$30.00

Coming soon: T-shirts with an ostrich logo - in adult and children's sizes

And: lapel pins

Please send your check, payable to **The Straus Historical Fund**, to Joan Adler, Post Office Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416 if you would like to purchase any of these items. Please be assured that all money received by me is deposited into the fund's account. I do not profit personally from their sale.

Available from the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce: An audio tape, "Tour Talbotton's Treasures." This tape is intended to be used while driving through Talbotton. An historical text which includes the narrative on the tape is also supplied. Both are available from Gary Page, c/o Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, Route 1, Box 101, Talbotton, GA 31827. Phone 706-665-8740 or 706-665-8079. The cost is \$5.00.

Available: L. Straus & Sons 1893 Cut Glass catalog produced by the American Cut Glass Association. This catalog contains illustrations of L. Straus & Sons patterns. The catalog may be obtained by writing to Kathy Emmerson, American Cut Glass Association, P. O. Box 482, Ramona, CA 92065-0482. The cost is \$10.00 which includes postage. There are only about 100 copies of this catalog left so don't delay if you want a copy. Craig E. Carlson has donated one copy to the Straus Historical Society.

Available: Brochures from the American Cut Glass Association. Their brochure describes a brief history of American brilliant cut glass and contains a form for membership in their organization. Information about cut glass, L. Straus & Sons or about this organization can be obtained from Craig E. Carlson, 447 Chain O'Hills Road, Colonia, NJ 07067. Phone 732-396-8736. E.mail craig447@aol.com.

The Next Board Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Directors of the Straus Historical Society will be held Monday, September 28, 1998 at a place to be announced. If you would like to join the board or attend a meeting, please contact me.