



# STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 1 Number 1

Newsletter

August 1999

## The Straus Historical Society, Inc. A 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

Welcome to the first issue of the newsletter of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. This biannual publication is intended for your enjoyment and education. It will be printed in February and August. The SHS is dedicated to researching Straus family history and to disseminating this information. Each issue will contain articles about family history, about current family members and about projects with which the SHS has been involved.

The Society's activities focus on the family's involvement in government, commerce, and philanthropy. Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the 20<sup>th</sup>, members of the family have served in governmental positions at both local and federal levels. More particularly, Strauses have served as Ambassadors, in the House of Representatives, and in the Presidential Cabinet. By virtue of their positions, as well as a consequence of their acting as advisors and confidants to a number of American Presidents, family members have been actively involved in the formulation of American public policy for well over 100 years. Furthermore, in the context of American finance and commerce, they have been owners of Macy's and Abraham & Straus for nearly 100 years. In addition, they have been in a position to assist others less fortunate throughout this period of time, serving on the boards of innumerable philanthropic organizations. As a consequence of the family's involvement in this broad spectrum of American life, the family exemplifies, and brings to life, the true American story and spirit. For this reason, this is more than the story of one family, but rather the American experience as seen through, and lived by a family during this period of growth in America.

The newsletter is only a small part of what we hope to accomplish. We are making our archives available to students, researchers and interested others. We share material with newspapers, magazines and authors, as well as with television, video and movie producers in an effort to actively participate in the education process. We continue to make presentations before school groups, genealogists, historians, businessmen, philanthropists and scholars.

The Straus Historical Society has compiled and catalogued an extensive collection of letters, documents, photographs, news-

paper and magazine clippings, books, awards and certificates, photographs, memorabilia and ephemera relating to the Straus family. If you have anything which might complement this collection, please contact me. If you have photographs, information and/or historical background about the Strauses, or the places and times in which they lived, please consider donating this material to the SHS's Straus Family Collection. If you don't want to donate your articles, in most cases they can be photocopied or the information about their location can be added to our database for future reference. If you know of a monument dedicated to a Straus, please let us know about it. If you have an anecdote, wish to be interviewed or to participate in an oral history video, we would like hear from you

The Straus Historical Society, Inc., its board and director hope you will support our work with your active participation as well as your funds. Tell us about what you would like to see in this newsletter. Write an article. Share Straus-related stories. Donate materials to the Straus Family Collection. Suggest activities or fund-raisers.

### Become Involved

### Let Us Hear From You

#### 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 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 Chairman of the Board: Paul A. Kurzman**



In this first issue of the newsletter of the Straus Historical Society, Inc., I want to welcome all readers - family and friends - to our new organization. The SHS has been founded to assemble and preserve documents, publish newsletters and reports, conduct research and exchange information on the Straus family and their descendants in the United States and elsewhere in the world. We are pleased that the Society has been formally recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

The officers and the board of directors hope you will find this biannual newsletter informative and insightful, and that you will feel free to offer us your comments, and forward us appropriate material for inclusion in future issues. In addition, we would very much appreciate your tangible support through your contributions to the Society and participation in our events.

We are excited by the work that we have begun and look forward to your input and support. Welcome to the Straus Historical Society.

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



I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the first issue of the new Straus Historical Society Newsletter.

As director of the Society, it is my job to implement the programs described by the board of directors, to interface with members of the research and educational community, the media, other societies and government officials and to make certain we are being responsive to the interests of our contributors. We hope to build bridges of communication and understanding between the Society and interested parties and to provide a permanent and ever growing environment of knowledge and respect for the history of the Straus family.

Please let me know what you would like to see published in this newsletter. I would also like to learn what kinds activities you feel we should be pursuing.

*My job would be impossible without your active support and participation. Let me hear from you!*

## The Origins of the Family

In this issue of the newsletter, I will begin at the beginning; the early history of the Straus family within the historical context that enabled the family to achieve their outstanding success both in Europe and in America. Although parts of this story have been told before, there is quite a lot of new information about the origins of the family, the factors which led to Lazarus' immigration to America and about the family members who chose to stay behind in Germany. Particular mention and thanks must be extended to Dr. Hans Steinebrei and to Randy Selden for their expert research and documentation.

Most people find the history and genealogy of the Straus family confusing and it is for a good reason. Several factors must be considered. The Palatinate of Bavaria, where the family originated, was passed between France and Germany with alarming frequency. People spelled their names according to the common usage of the country where they resided and Jews were not required to take last names until 1808. In addition, family members frequently married cousins. For example, the family of Lina Gutherz, wife of Nathan Straus, were related through marriage five times. Lazarus Straus (1809-1898) married his first cousin Sara Straus (1823-1876), daughter of his uncle Salomon. Another factor which causes confusion is that the same first names were used over and over by large families; the boys might be named after a deceased grandfather and the girls after a deceased grandmother. This being the case, it's difficult to tell who is who and how they are related. In an effort to alleviate some of this confusion, I'll put the birth and death date in parenthesis following a person's name when it might not be clear who that person was. I urge you to contact me if it becomes too confusing and you want to sort it out.

In the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many occupations were forbidden to the Jews in Central Europe. They became money lenders, pawn brokers and dealers in used goods. They began leaving the cities, taking up residence in the villages of the imperial knights and counts where guilds weren't as influential.

Here they were able to purchase land and open markets for agricultural products such as wine, grain and hides. Their relationship with the peasant population was mutually beneficial. Peasants, who had been leasing land from nobles, now were able to purchase lands with financing provided by the Jews. They helped the farmer with his traditional cash flow problem, providing him funds on the security of the coming harvests.



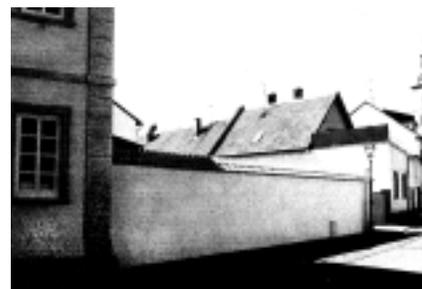
Dirmstein, Niederkirchen and Otterberg are in the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz

Locally-based Jews were much more willing to extend credit to peasants than were city-based bankers not intimately involved with village life, and who wouldn't accept crops as payment. In addition, the mobility of the itinerant Jewish merchant meant local people didn't have to travel far to do their merchandising and they benefitted from a variety of goods not otherwise available.

Village Jews were not peasants of a different ethnicity than that of their fellow villagers. They were urbanities transmuted into rural folk. But if the displaced Jews were miserable as the country Jews in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century they became leaders in the places where they lived. They were educated people who often took the initiative in suggesting better means of communicating and advancing education. They supported social institutions such as orphan asylums and hospitals. Their houses were large and solidly built and their furniture representative of the newest taste. They were scholars, reading Hebrew, German and French. This was certainly the case with the Straus family.

The earliest Straus we know about is Lazarus (Loeser/Loosser), born about 1715. At the time, Jews were not required to have last names and, following the Jewish custom of the day, this man might have been identified as Lazarus ben ....., meaning Lazarus son of ....., Unfortunately, we do not know the father of this Lazarus, the progenitor of the Straus family.

The family lived in Dirmstein. Old documents report that Judt Loosser came to Dirmstein in 1733 (Judt may have meant Jew.) He appeared on the tax list of 1734, taking over the house of Simbles for which he paid eight Kreuzer, one Pfenning. His



The home of Judt Loosser was located behind this wall

two story house was on the Hildebrandgass at the corner of the little stream. At this time there were four Jews in Dirmstein.

Jakob (Jacques Loeser) (abt 1754-1834), son of Judt Loosser, was born in Dirmstein. He married Kendel (Sara or Karoline)



Otterberg

Mayer between 1776 and 1779, moved to Niederkirchen, and obtained a piece of property there in 1784. He was a "Schutzjud," a protected Jew, having paid a tax for his sovereign's protection. By 1791 he is listed as a "burger;" a citizen. All six of Jakob's children were born in Niederkirchen. There were 48

Jews in Niederkirchen when Jakob moved his family to Otterberg in early 1802. On May 19, 1802 Jakob directed two acres of his land in Niederkirchen to be put up for public auction. The land was bought by Johannes Braun and Christoffel Edinger. All together Jakob received 105 Gulden, 4 Kreuzer.

In 1806 Napoleon convened the Assembly of Notables in Paris with the aim of developing laws that would determine the status of Jews. On July 22, 1806 he wrote to his Minister of the Interior stating, "Our purpose is to reconcile the beliefs of the Jews with the duties of a Frenchman and to make them useful citizens." The Department of Mont Tonnerre (Donnersberg) encompassed a large area whose capital was Mayence, later called Mainz. The department was entitled to nine deputies and the prefects of each department chose from the best known and best qualified Jews living in their respective departments. Jakob ben Lazar (Jacques Lazare/Jacques Loeser) was selected to be one of the representatives which indicates that the family must have been prominent and generally honored as much as two hundred years ago. Jacques Lazare spent many months in Paris during 1806 and 1807 while representing his fellow Jews from the Department of Mont Tonnerre at the Assembly of Notables. One result of the Assembly was that, in 1808, Napoleon decreed all Jews must take a surname. People often took the surname of prominent villagers and many people in Otterberg became Strausses. You can imagine the difficulty when trying to trace their relationships. Jacques Loeser became Jacob Straus on October 24, 1808. It is interesting to note that the name Straus was spelled with the "s zed" character which stands for "double s." It was not until the late 1800's that the single "s" in Straus came into common usage for this family, and then, mostly for the American branch. Upon reading the old business documents and letters, it is very clear that spelling was a very casual affair, even among the educated people of the day.

Otterberg and the surrounding towns of Rhenish Bavaria, where the Strauses lived, changed hands between France and Germany for centuries. Names were spelled according to the French or German conventions depending on the year. Many letters became interchangeable, even among individuals writing their own name. For instance, Jacob Straus' name appears on documents as Jacques, Jakob, Jacob Lazare, Lazarus, Loeser, Loesser,



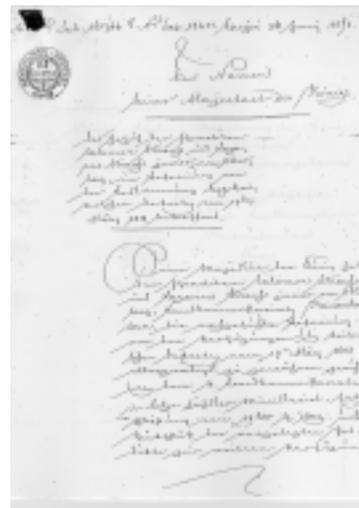
Salomon Straus, one of the most wealthy and influential people in Otterberg

Looser, Loosser and after 1808, his name became Strauss or Straus.

One theory about the origin of the name Straus is that there were no street addresses in 1808 and, when asked where a person lived, the usual response was that he lived on a particular street in the house with a particular plaque on its outer wall. The house the Strauses lived in reportedly had a plaque with an ostrich on it and, when the family was required to take a surname, they simply

adopted Straus which means ostrich in German.

Getting back to Napoleon: another decree, signed by Napoleon and H.B. Maret, Secretary Minister of the State in March 17, 1808, enumerated the rules regulating the financial lives of Jews including the regulation of commerce. On June 26, 1810, a decree in the name of His Majesty the King "graciously grants" release of the Israelis Salomon Straus and Lazarus Straus Jr. of Otterberg from the determination of the ordinance of March 17, 1808. (This Lazarus Straus Jr. was the oldest son of Jacob Straus and the brother of Isaak and Salomon. He was the uncle of the Lazarus Straus who came to the United States in 1852.)



Napoleon's decree of June 26, 1810

On January 22, 1810, Jacques and Isaac Strauss were granted passports to travel from Otterberg to Neustadt. Both listed their profession as cattle merchants. In 1815, Jacob Straus undertook the supply of magazine provisions and in 1817, together with other relatives (Maas and Weil), gave a great deal of financial aid to the poor. He bought a large house on Hauptstrasse (Main Street) in Otterberg.

Jacob had six children. His oldest son Lazarus (1778-1862) had five children; son Isaak (1788-1838) had fourteen and third son Salomon (abt 1792-1872) had eleven children from three marriages. Salomon must have been one of the wealthiest men of Otterberg judging from the size of his house. In a marriage settlement dated April 3, 1818 wherein Salomon Straus, son of



The home of Salomon Straus in Otterberg



The home of Lazarus Straus Jr., brother of Isaak and Salomon



The Otterberg home of Isaak Straus

surrounded by a wall together with accessories and everything that was moveable, located in Otterberg, inspected (inhabited?) on one side by George Bader, on the other side by Isaac Straus estimated at a yearly profit of 172 Franken. Jacob Straus and his wife would receive unimpaired residence in this house as long as they lived with sole title reverting to Salomon upon their death. Should any argument arise between parent and child, the parents had the right to sole use upon payment to the son of 1650 Gulden or 3440 Franken and the son with his family was required to vacate the premises.

In his autobiography, Isidor Straus wrote of Lazarus and Salomon, "They were both cultured and educated gentlemen. They spoke French as fluently as German. Neither one was engaged in any regular business. They were land owners, and, I believe, when the crops were harvested, they bought the wheat, oats, clover and clover seed, which were the principal crops of that section, from their neighbors and then sent them to the market of Kaiserslautern and Mannheim, the chief commercial towns of the section."

Because of the Napoleonic decrees, the position of the Jews in the Palantines was better than in other parts of Bavaria. But, in 1809, the people of Baden had been given free access to trade while the Jews of Bavaria were still prohibited from any kind of trade, wholesale or retail, without a license. This license would not be issued without a most rigorous inquiry and the Municipal Council had to stipulate that said Jew was neither a usurer nor an immoral trader.

By 1817 the Jews of Otterberg had built a synagogue and they were relatively free to practice their religion. Their congregation was so successful that they constructed a new synagogue in 1835. But increased governmental regulation and taxation caused unrest and agitation in the villages. Lazarus (1809-1898), acting on behalf of the Jews of Otterberg, addressed the Mayor's office in January 1846 requesting the district government change the licensing requirements stating that they unjustly injured the honor and morality of every Jew, and that they should be removed.

In 1847 the Mayor's office issued new regulations including a compulsory prayer for the king which was to be delivered in the synagogue before a listening, standing congregation. Other mandates tried to control the behavior of the Jews by prohibiting all announcements not directly related to the religious service and threatening police action for noncompliance. It is likely that these were regulations designed to control a population

Jacob Straus and Johanna Weil, daughter of Salomon Weil, entered into their intention of marriage and recorded their agreement and arrangement, Jacob agreed to give Salomon half a barn on the side

whose religious gatherings were eyed with suspicion. Although many aspects of daily life had improved for the Jewish community, there were still many restrictions.

The Revolution of 1848 sought to ameliorate conditions the populous considered intolerable. Lazarus was involved in the recruitment of volunteers and spent a considerable amount of money for the cause. Rebels hoped to establish a constitutional government. Dr. Steinebrei's research has revealed that, in the Spring of 1849, Lazarus and others formed a defense committee. He was regarded as an anxious Jew, not a radical, but one who wanted a correction in the position of religious groups. He was one of twenty members of the town council and was designated to collect money for the Revolution. To protect himself and his family, Lazarus only collected money from the nearby town of Niederkirchen. After the failure of the Revolution, Lazarus and others was interrogated about their "tax" collecting since this was supposed to be a purely governmental function. He claimed he was collecting donations and he was not punished.

The political and economic conditions at this time were unsettled and the people suffered greatly. Landowners were unable to collect rent or interest on their property. Isaak had passed away in 1838 and Lazarus, as the oldest son, was executor of his estate. Lazarus' sister Barbara (Babette) asked that their father's estate be divided and that the land be put up for auction. Isaak's widow Johanette kept the lot with her house on it. Although one parcel of land was auctioned, Lazarus was unable to collect the money due the estate and, therefore, was unable to compensate his siblings. Court papers in 1851 refer to bankruptcy. Lazarus was certainly not involved in criminal action but he was unable to provide the funds his sister and her family required. This factor, combined with the political suspicion thrust on him as a result of his participation in the Revolution of 1848, were integral in Lazarus' decision to emigrate to the United States.

Lazarus Straus' passport was issued from Sarraguemines France on May 26, 1852. It was better to say one was from France than from Bavaria. He probably traveled through France to Le Havre where he booked passage to New York. Although we have not found the name of his ship or its passenger manifest, family lore has it that Lazarus arrived in New York in 1852. This is certainly an area for future research.

*In the next issue:* Those Who Stayed Behind and Others Who Emigrated.

The home of Lazarus Straus (1809-1898) in Otterberg was sold in 1870.



## The Macy-Straus Cut Glass Connection

Craig E. Carlson, researcher, historian and collector, is an expert on L. Straus & Sons cut glass. On July 23, 1999 Craig spoke in Philadelphia at the 21<sup>st</sup> annual convention of the American Cut Glass Association. His presentation, complete with slides, clearly illustrates his expertise. He is an excellent speaker, well prepared, and thoroughly knowledgeable about his topic, L. Straus & Sons cut glass. Craig's speech, "The Macy-Straus Cut Glass Connection," received a standing ovation from the more than 350 cut glass enthusiasts in the room. Several members of the audience, upon congratulating Craig, commented that his talk had moved them to tears. Craig admitted that he had never spoken in front of such a large audience.



Craig E. Carlson

Craig was kind enough to invite me to the convention and asked that I join him during his session to represent the Straus family. There was a question and answer period after his presentation and we were busy for well over an hour.

His talk began with a brief history of R.H. Macy's, the Straus family and their business, and then established the connection between the two. Craig's scholarship and research have greatly enhanced SHS's knowledge of this era. He has graciously granted me permission to quote from, and to paraphrase, his presentation in this article.

Rowland Hussey Macy, who was originally from New England, had tried and failed at several attempts at merchandising before coming to New York. In 1858 he opened a dry goods store at 204 and 206 Sixth Avenue, between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Street. The store was 17 feet wide and 40 feet long, a total of 680 square feet. Macy employed one clerk and his first day's sales totaled \$11.06. Through a combination of hard work, innovative ideas and extensive advertising, the store succeeded. Macy bought the buildings surrounding his original store and added new departments, all dry goods and notions. In 1877, while on a trip to Europe with Nathan Straus, Rowland Macy died, leaving his successful establishment to partners.

Meanwhile, the Strauses, having emigrated from Germany and having lived through the Civil War in Georgia, now owned a crockery, china, and glassware importing, and lamp manufacturing firm at 44 Warren Street in New York City. Their first recorded sale was to A. Becker & Co. on June 1, 1866 in the amount of \$130.35. By 1885, their showroom needs had expanded and now included 42 to 48 Warren Street. They had branch offices in London, Paris, Berlin and Yokohama Japan. In addition to importing from others, they also manufactured their own products in a number of large factories in Europe which they exclusively controlled. They opened a glassware factory in Steinschoenau Bohemia in 1879, a French china factory in

Limoges in 1880, an art porcelain factory in Rudolstadt Germany in 1882 and a Bohemian china factory in Carlsbad in 1884. Family members who had remained in Europe managed and worked in these factories. L. Straus & Sons became one of the largest importing firms in the country. In 1887 an article in a trade paper declared, "The Strauses possess in a remarkable degree the rare facility of placing at the service of the public the precise wares which popular sentiment demands."

Nathan was the family's outside salesman and Macy's was the largest New York customer of L. Straus & Sons. Nathan opened markets all over the country and went abroad on buying trips. In 1874 he convinced R. H. to open a china, cut glass and silver consignment shop in a 25 x 100 foot area in the basement of his store. It was four times the size of Macy's original 14<sup>th</sup> 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 Macy's 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.

Glass cutting began at Macy's in 1880 but did not begin at L. Straus & Sons until 1888. Craig believes that they used the Macy's facility as a sort of trial run before establishing their own glass cutting shops. An October 1882 ad in *Century* magazine read: "Our richly cut Table Glass which is cut on the premises by skilled artists from pure crystal metal specially imported by us from the celebrated Cristalleries de Baccarat Paris merits special attention and as we are the only house in the city employing glass cutters and engravers we are able to offer superior advantages both in quality and price." An 1888 article about L. Straus & Sons in the *Crockery and Glass Journal* reported: "We desire to announce to the trade that we have recently opened our own Glass Cutting establishment and that we have now on exhibition the largest line of Heavy Cut Glassware to be found in this City." The Strauses had at least six other glass cutting factories in both New York and New Jersey during the years of their glass cutting operation.

L. Straus & Sons displayed several cut glass pieces at the 1893 World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago. Their space was always surrounded by a crowd of admiring visitors. The centerpiece of the exhibit was a twelve foot high piece of crystal cut into a candelabrum. To give you an idea of its size, the base is three feet in diameter. It took twelve expert cutters more than forty five days to complete the cutting and polishing. There are 1329



A twelve foot candelabrum cut by L. Straus & Sons.

separate pieces of solid crystal, which were handled, cut and fitted together to form what was conceded to be the largest single specimen of cut glass ever produced at the time. The pattern is "Americus," a brilliant and tasteful design which admirably lends its beauty to such a work as the candelabrum. After the World's Fair, the candelabrum was displayed in the Warren Street showroom of L. Straus & Sons. A May 1901 Jeweler's circular said that the candelabrum, valued at \$5,000, had recently been sold to a Philadelphia concern. It is currently on display in Hershey PA at the chocolate firm's museum.

An International Bazaar was held in St Petersburg Russia in 1896. Once again the firm of L. Straus & Sons was represented. One trade paper wrote: "The America stall contained many different kinds of goods of American manufacture but more attention and admiration was bestowed upon the "Straus" cut glass than anything else in the whole bazaar. A large punch set consisting of a 16-inch punch bowl and stand with ladle and tray and twenty-four punch cups in the "Americus" cutting was bought for the Emperor of Russia for 1,000 roubles." Shortly after the International Bazaar, L. Straus & Sons began advertising that "Straus cut glass is the first and only American cut glass used by His Imperial Majesty and greatly admired by his court." In addition, at the same bazaar, "A 48 inch vase was at once spoken for by the Governor of the Imperial glass factory as a sample for shape and cutting. This gentleman, who is a practical glassmaker, expressed himself to the effect that he had never seen anything in cut glass which in beauty of design, depth of cutting and polish could be called the equal of this piece..." Amazingly, these pieces were not made specially for the bazaar but were taken from stock. There had not been time to make new cuttings.



It is difficult to identify L. Straus & Sons cut glass because a paper label was affixed

to each piece. Craig has been unable to find any reference to an etched symbol, one which would have made identification certain. Cut glass experts thought a circle with a five pointed star in its center might have been used as an L. Straus & Sons trademark label but Craig has shown that this label was used by the Libbey Company. It is only through a careful search of trade journals and catalogues that Craig has been able to positively identify more than 70 L. Straus & Sons patterns. Each pattern was given a name. Some were named after a family member, such as "Hermine." The pattern would be repeated on glassware of many shapes and uses.

Craig plans to produce a Macy-Straus catalogue in the year 2000 for the American Cut Glass Association. If you have a Macy's catalogue or a Straus Cut Glass catalogue in your library, attic or basement, it would be of great assistance to him. He will make a substantial donation to SHS for each catalogue donated to the Society. Craig will also publish a series of articles about the history of L. Straus & Sons and, he has agreed to give his speech for the Straus Historical Society. His knowledge of L. Straus & Sons and the Macy-Straus Cut Glass Connection will fascinate you.

## Friends of Straus Park: Celebrating Our Second Year

by Leon Auerbach, Edited by Joan Adler

In this, our second year, Friends of Straus Park (FSP) wishes to thank all our friends and neighbors who have made our first two years so exciting and successful. We are planning to be more selective in our activities during the coming year while at the same time retaining our highest standard and continuing with a slightly abbreviated schedule of presentations.

FSP always starts the year with a trial of the elements. Our Mid-Winter Song Fest started with a fine drizzle so that the four flutists from the Bloomingdale School of Music were unsure they could perform outdoors: but they didn't stop. About 20 people sang for about 1/2 hour and then we retired to Jo Abrams' apartment for food, drink and additional vocalizations. We've issued a general request in making a list of cold weather songs and ditties: no more White Christmas. No easy task!

FSP received special recognition from Partnership for Parks and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Our award is a forest green wooden leaf mounted on a base with a brass plaque which read, "Friends of Straus Park, Volunteers of the Year, State of the Parks 1999."

We had an exciting 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Anniversary Celebration in the Park with Manhattan Borough Commissioner Adrian Benepe representing the Parks Department. An irregular power surge added some drama to the festivities and made the Bota Fogo Bossa Nova group very uneasy. However, the music must go on and the soft Brazilian melodies were a perfect complement to the splendid delicacies our neighbors provided. Mimi Cherney acted as Jo Abrams' back-up reader of children's stories and we were able to present four gift certificates, contributed by Barnes & Noble, to winning children.



Ganine Dowess and  
the Straus Quartet

Onus & Jesse Hirshbein hosted an elegant Benefit Concert in their home on Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. About 50 friends enjoyed a lovely variety of musical styles performed by neighbors. John Olund, our "green thumb gardener"

and tenor of the a cappella group Lion Heart, was joined by five colleagues from Lion Heart. They gave an outstanding performance of Renaissance, Medieval and contemporary works. Chris Cherney and a trio of talented jazz artists played the music of Duke Ellington and original compositions to



John Olund and Lion Heart

everyone's enjoyment. Ganine Dowess, an accomplished pianist and teacher, performed a Schubert Concert with the accompaniment of the Straus Quartet. The concert was followed by local delicacies and fine wines presented by members of Friends. It was obvious that the evening provided the answer to everyone's "tastes."



Chris Cherney and  
The Ellington Project

In our attempt to maintain our standard of excellence, we had a single concert in the middle of July, The Ellington Project Swings in Straus Park. We had the largest audience ever. 200 to 250 fans enjoyed the music and the beautiful Summer evening. Chris Cherney, who has played with Merce Ellington, led the eight piece band in the works of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. The concert, which ran for 2 1/2 hours, grew larger and larger as more people heard the music and brought their friends. It was a very special evening.

Our Fall schedule calls for another successful celebration of art, music, dance and food, our third annual "Art in the Park," on Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> (raindate October 3<sup>rd</sup>). One of our highlights will be the display and sale of art, (paintings, sculpture and photographs).

Eric Mattes, Parks Department Landscape architect, will lead walking tours. We will have our usual finger snapping, toe tapping entertainment with demonstrations and instruction by the Fred Astaire Dance



Boto Fogo Bossa Nova

Studio, and by folk dance specialist Karl Finger. As always, there will be a variety of ethnic and local foods provided both by neighbors and by the area's fine restaurants. There will be a special, first time presentation by SOH-DAIKO, a group of drummers who perform a "ballet" as they beat their giant drums. The SOH-DAIKO come from the New York Buddhist Church which is right around the corner on Riverside Drive. You can count on our regular Jazz and Bossa Nova as well as the "Sinatra Sounds" of Bill Saferstein. It should be another exceptional party!

We will be ending the year with our annual Board Meeting where we will review our activities of the past year and plan for the year 2000.

Contact Leon Auerbach at 340 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025, 212-865-4948 to become a member of Friends of Straus Park.

## Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

"The Autobiography of Isidor Straus" privately published by Sara Straus Hess, in softcover - \$30.00

"Genealogical Miscellany" a family genealogy compiled by Robert K. Straus with addenda - \$35.00

Large black & white photograph of the Lazarus and Sara 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 - \$40.00

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

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

Videotape: "Titanic on Broadway," a television special about the making of the Broadway play which includes Joan Adler speaking about the Straus family and a CNN segment in which Paul A. Kurzman is interviewed regarding the play "Titanic" - \$20.00

Send your check to Joan Adler, payable to the **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: 516-265-3340, fax: 516-724-4487 or e.mail: famjad@aol.com

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### Board Meeting - May 22, 1999

A Straus Historical Society, Inc. meeting of the board of directors was held Wednesday, May 22, 1999 at the home of Kalen H. Holliday in Sleepy Hollow NY. Kalen served a delicious dinner after which the board held their business meeting.

The first order of business was the announcement that the Society's 501(c)(3) had been granted by the IRS. The board then elected members of the executive committee and terms of office were established. Agenda items included the reading of the treasury report, announcing the winners of the "Draw A Bookmark" contest and of Craig Carlson's July 23<sup>rd</sup> presentation at the American Cut Glass Association convention in Philadelphia. Joan told the board about recent contributions to researchers made by the Society including information in the newly published Bohemian Decorated Porcelain by Dr. James D. Henderson, a newspaper article by Brian Moss and ongoing cooperation with Professor June Hall McCash who plans to write a book about Isidor and Ida Straus.

The next meeting of the board will be Wednesday, September 22, 1999 at the home of Oscar S. Schafer.