



STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 19 Number 1

Straus is the German word for ostrich

August 2017

The Lehman Connection Sissie Straus (1879-1950) - Irving Lehman (1876-1945)

After twenty four years of writing articles about the members of the Straus family, I find that there are still many interesting people who have not been featured.

It is difficult to write about the women in the early American generations of Strauses. Women of the day did not generally work outside the home nor did they receive the same kind of publicity as the men from the same generation. Therefore, as I began to think about writing an article about Sissie Straus Lehman, for the reasons stated above, but also because of their unusual bond, I quickly came to the realization that an article about Sissie would also have to be an article about her husband, Irving Lehman. This was a couple who were devoted to one another. And, perhaps because they had no children, Sissie's focus was always on Irving.

Sissie Straus was born June 10, 1879 in New York City. She was the third child of Nathan and Lina Gutherz Straus. Her oldest brother, Jerome Nathan, was born in February 1876 and her sister, Sara, was born July 26, 1877. Sara died June 25, 1878, a year before Sissie was born. Brothers Charles Webster Straus, later known as Nathan Straus, Jr., and Hugh Grant Straus were born in 1889 and 1890 respectively.

I have been asked if Sissie was her given name. There was no requirement in those days for a birth to be recorded by the city. And Sissie's birth was not. We have no birth certificate for her so we cannot be certain of her given name. In both the 1880 and 1900 New York census her name was recorded as Sara. Census recorders were notorious for getting information wrong so we have no way to learn the accuracy of their reporting. Perhaps the family wanted to use the initial letter "S" to honor the memory of Nathan's mother Sara as was the Jewish custom. Sara died in 1876. Sissie's sister Sara died in 1878, the year before Sissie was born. Perhaps the family wanted to use the letter "S" again, named their new daughter Sara, but called her Sissie which is a nickname meaning sister. All of this, of course, is conjecture.

At the time of Sissie's birth in 1879, the family was living at 220 West 49th Street in the same household with Nathan's father Lazarus, brother Oscar who was unmarried at age 31, and his sister Hermine with her family including husband Lazarus

Kohns and their two children, Lee, age 15 and Irene, age 9. Only Isidor and his family were missing from this household. Isidor and Ida married in 1871 and had four children by 1879.

Nathan and Lina had a summer home on Lower Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks. In 1893 their oldest child, Jerome, died of pneumonia. The family never returned to Saranac Lake where their happy memories were replaced by tragedy.

By 1900 the family had moved to 27 West 72nd Street in New York City and they were summering at Villa Olympia on Cherry Island in the Thousand Islands, NY where Lina's sister Eugenie had a twin house and Straus business partner Abraham Abraham also had a house.



Sissie attended Dr. J. Sachs Collegiate Institute, a preparatory school and Barnard College. In September 1898, during her college years, Sissie went to Constantinople with her uncle Oscar, his wife, three children; Mildred, Aline and Roger W. and Isidor and Ida's son Percy. Oscar was in his second term as Minister to Constantinople at the time. While in Constantinople Sissie took a course in Modern Greek at the Zapplan Greek School. Newspapers reported in April of 1898 that Sissie returned home to New York "bringing

with her the decoration of the "Second Order of the Cheft-Kaht," which had been conferred upon her by the Sultan of Turkey." The *Reading Eagle* newspaper reported on April 9th. "It is not often that the Sultan confers this order, and his bestowal of it in the present instance is regarded as not only a compliment to the popularity of an American girl in Turkey, but as an evidence of the Sultan's appreciation of the popularity of the American Minister here."

A *New York Times* article from November 26, 1899 contained an announcement of the engagement of "Mr. Lawrence Abraham of Brooklyn and Miss Cissy [sic] Straus, daughter of Mr. Nathan Straus." Lawrence Abraham was the youngest child of Abraham Abraham and Isabel Hyams. Abraham

*When we remember the past,
we shape the future.*

*Jerry Klinger: Jewish American Society
for Historic Preservation*

Straus Historical Society, Inc.
Newsletter (ISSN 1536-9188) is
published semi-annually

by the

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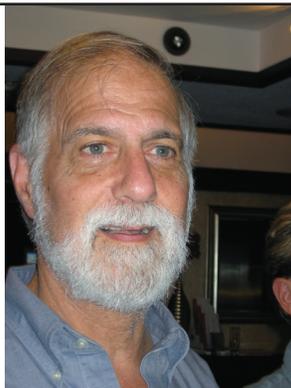
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The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is dedicated to advancing the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Lazarus Straus family and the historical context in which they lived through research and education. You are invited to submit articles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

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is a tax exempt organization as described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Contributions to the Society are deductible to the extent provided by law. A copy of the annual report of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. may be obtained from the Society or from the New York State Attorney General, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271

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**A Message from SHS Chair:
Oscar S. Straus III**

It gives me great pleasure to bring you all up to date on the activities of your Board of Directors of the Straus Historical Society (SHS). There are now 12 members of the board who are located around the country. The board meets in person and by conference call five to six times a year to discuss and direct the ongoing operations of SHS and to set future programs and goals. This is a time for recap and exploration as well as for discussion about fund raising. Your Board would like your input into the future areas of our work. Please contact me at ostraus3@aol.com or Joan Adler our Executive Director at info@straushistory.org with your thoughts and ideas.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the David A. and Mildred H. Morse Charitable Trust Matching Grant. Your support allows Catherine McIlvaine Smith to continue as our Assistant Director. Catherine has made our work much deeper and stronger as we enter the digital age. Among the many projects she has undertaken are the updating of our website, Facebook page and overseeing the digitizing of the archives. She also creates and sends you our informational flyers and much more. And this is only a small part of what she does. She has become an indispensable part of SHS

Our Fall fundraising continues to be most important. I urge all of you to respond. Without regular support we cannot continue to provide you with information and service. The requests for Straus information we receive on a regular basis from 'outside' researchers shows how important our materials are to scholars, authors, filmmakers, students and others.

Recently I wrote a letter to those of you who did not contribute to SHS in 2015 and 2016 asking for assistance. We received limited response. This was disturbing. We need your support. If you have chosen not to assist in the past, I urge you to reconsider.

Board membership brings with it a requirement to become involved, not only at the times of our meetings, but in working groups between meetings, in future planning and in fund raising. Your Board is active and involved. We encourage committed and interested individuals to write to us and to become involved too.

We continue to digitize our archives and upload collections to our website as they are completed so that you, and every other interested party and institution, will have direct access to our history and research. A year ago we announced the republication of the updated and expanded version of Lina Gutherz Straus' *Disease in Milk*. We also released the updated and annotated autobiography of Oscar S. Straus: *Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft*. Today, Joan is working on a book entitled *Strauses and The Arts* which will highlight those family members who are involved in the arts. We anticipate holding a silent auction of these artist's work at the time on the book's publication, which will be announced in 2018.

Your Board is working on a Straus Scholarship in Public Service to assist individuals in graduate programs to further their education. An outside group of professionals will be convened to make the decision as to who will receive the Straus Scholarship which will be awarded based on applications and essays. An article about this scholarship appears on page eight of this newsletter. You will be hearing more about this wonderful project in the near future.

While much of our history has been researched and written about in the Newsletter thanks to Joan's hard work, there is still a lot more work to be done. We honor the past as we prepare for the future. Please help us in this work with your ideas as well as your support.

Abraham was the business partner of the Strauses, owners of Abraham & Straus, the Brooklyn department store. He was also the father of Edith Abraham who married Isidor and Ida's son Percy in 1902.

Sissie never married Lawrence Abraham. In early June 1901 she graduated from Barnard College. Each of the fifty graduates was given a "statistic" or attribute, by class members. Sissie was called the "refrigerator." This appellation was not meant to be hurtful but to illustrate her "coolness" and reserve, qualities to be admired.

On June 26, 1901 Sissie Straus, daughter of Nathan Straus and Lina Gutherz Straus married Irving Lehman, son of Mayer Lehman and Babette Neugass Lehman. Sissie was 22. Irving was 25. Their marriage took place at the home of the bride's parents, 27 West 72nd Street, New York City at half past six o'clock. Rabbis Rev. Dr. Kauffman Kohler of Temple Beth El and Rev. Dr. Gottheil of Temple Emanu-el officiated. Newspaper accounts of the day reveal that neither Sissie nor Irving had attendants and that they walked together to the wedding alter. "The wedding ceremony was performed in a bower of foliage arranged in the bay window in the dining room at the rear of the house. White orchids and roses were scattered through the greens and a large ball of white orchids were suspended over the heads of the young couple." Dinner was served in a large tent erected on a vacant space east of the residence and was decorated in such a manner as to look like a garden. Immediately following the wedding the Lehmans traveled cross country to Vancouver where they boarded a ship for their honeymoon trip to Japan which lasted four months.

Irving's family background was similar to that of Sissie's. He was the seventh of eight children born to Mayer and Babette Neugass Lehman. The Lehmans originated in Rimpfing, Germany which is located in Bavaria, east of Otterberg, where the Strauses lived. They were prosperous cattle dealers. At that time the Catholic prince-bishops of the area permitted only one male child in a Jewish family to marry or work in their place of birth. The oldest son, Seligmann stayed, and the three youngest, Henry, Emanuel and Mayer were encouraged to move. Henry immigrated to Mobile, AL in 1844, answering "the call of cotton." Like Lazarus Straus when he arrived in GA, Henry began as a pushcart peddler which editor, the late Ken Libo called "the Harvard Business School of that day" in the Introduction to the book, *Lots of Lehmans, The Family of Mayer Lehman of Lehman Brothers: Remembered by His Descendants*. Within a year Henry accumulated enough capital to open a small store in Montgomery, AL.

By 1850 Henry's brothers Emanuel and Mayer had joined him

and the brothers were now owners and proprietors of Lehman Brothers, a general store on Commercial Street in Montgomery. The town was linked to the larger cities of Atlanta and New Orleans by rail. Mayer's son Herbert wrote, "It was largely a barter arrangement. The farmers would come in with their cotton and trade it for shirts and shoes and fertilizer, such little as was used in those days, and seed, and all the necessities. That's how we got started in the cotton business." By 1852 they were also buying and selling real estate and extending credit to the planters, "settling accounts in bales of cotton more often than in dollars." These early financial dealings became the basis of their banking operation. In 1858 Emanuel headed north to New York City to open Lehman Brothers, a cotton brokerage firm.



Irving Lehman

Like Lazarus Straus who also emigrated to the American south from southwestern Germany and was a pushcart peddler, the Lehman brothers were industrious people who found a niche and capitalized upon it. And, like the Strauses, they suffered huge losses during the Civil War. They shipped cotton to Liverpool or London from New Orleans where Mayer's wife Babette Neugass' brother-in-law became part of the group that bought the cotton that was shipped. Brother Emanuel moved to Europe with his family to oversee that sales abroad. Mayer took on a partner in Montgomery to store the cotton before it was moved to New Orleans. They burned the warehouse rather than let the cotton fall into Union hands, but not before converting much of it into gold.

Mayer owned seven slaves. One, a nursemaid, volunteered to move north when Mayer, Babette and their children left the south after the Civil War. Isidor Straus reported in his autobiography that Lazarus also brought slaves with him when his family moved from the south to New York.



Sissie Straus - 1900

In 1868 Mayer moved to New York City with his wife Babette their and children. Lehman Brothers continued to grow. It was considered the largest futures and spot cotton house while also dealing in petroleum and coffee. Mayer built a five story brownstone at 5 East 62nd Street where the family, now with seven children, lived until the turn of the century. They took advantage of every educational opportunity for their children. Their three daughters were educated by nursemaids and governesses who taught them folklore, French and German. The four boys, Sigmund, Arthur, Irving and Herbert, went to Dr. J. Sachs Collegiate Institute and then attended Cornell, Harvard, Columbia and Williams College respectively. And while the children received little formal Jewish education, the family did observe the Jewish holidays and keep a kosher home. The children received home-based Bible classes. The same was true of Nathan Straus' children's

religious upbringing. They seem to have had a very strong connection to their Jewish faith but did not regularly attend services at the synagogue and the children's religious education was conducted in at-home study. Lessons were given on Wednesday afternoons after school because the Lehmans and all their friends went to their country homes for the weekend.

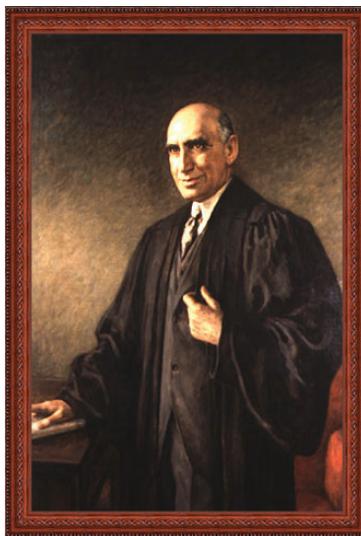
Mayer and Babette instilled a strong sense of family in their children. They followed a strict set of rules and a hierarchy of values that clearly defined who they were and how they were to behave. Once the children were grown, they and their spouses and children continued to live near one another and were close.

Like the Strauses, the Lehmans maintained summer homes; in Elberon, NJ and a camp in the Adirondacks. There were also frequent trips to Germany to visit the relatives who did not immigrate.

In an attempt to explain, at least in part, why so many Jewish people at the turn of the century became philanthropic, Ken Libo wrote in *Lots of Lehmans*, "perhaps to compensate for providing their children with so little in the way of Jewish learning, Babette and Mayer encouraged them to look upon Jewish philanthropy as their religion. ... Each Sunday without fail, Mayer would take their three youngest children – Arthur, Irving and Herbert – through the wards of Mount Sinai Hospital to see for themselves both the fruits and the challenges of Jewish philanthropy." Irving seemed to have gotten the message. He was a longtime president of the 92nd Street Y and Temple Emanu-El and an anonymous contributor to numerous charities. In 1945 he and Sissie donated their extensive collection of Judaica to Temple Emanu-el. Curators today still mention how wonderful and unusual it was that the collection arrived with complete annotations as to each item's purchase and a description.

Irving's brother Arthur became a senior partner of Lehman Brothers. Herbert was the governor of New York State and Irving became the chief judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, the highest court in New York. Years later Arthur's son-in-law John L. Loeb, Jr wrote, "They are three of the most different men I've ever known. Arthur was a hardheaded banker. Herbert was a great humanitarian. Irving was a leading jurist and a deeply religious man." Nearly seventy five years after the founding of Lehman Brothers, all the partners were still named Lehman. It was the second generation that moved the firm from merchant to investment bankers.

Irving attended Columbia College from which he earned a Bachelor's degree in 1896, a Master's degree in 1897 and a law degree in 1898. He won a prize in constitutional law during his final year of law school. He received the degree of LL.D. from Columbia (1927), St. Lawrence University (1936), Syracuse University (1943) and L.H.D. in 1936 from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Initially he was a member of the law firm of Marshall, Moran, Williams & McVicker and later Worcester, Williams & Lehman. Harry Schneiderman wrote in the *American Jewish Yearbook 1946-1947*, "He was never an ambitious man – politically or otherwise. Those who knew him well ascribed to him a certain meticulousness of speech and conduct as well as a naiveté and diffidence in his mental make-up which precluded him from participating in any political race." In 1908 Irving Lehman was elected to the New York State Supreme Court. He wrote, "I was a very young lawyer, in practice only a short time; I was deaf; and I was Jewish. None of these helped. But I was married to Nathan Straus' daughter, and Mr. Straus was a dear friend of Al Smith. And Smith knew the governor of New York. So I became a judge."



Judge Irving Lehman

In 1923 Irving Lehman became associate judge of the NYS Court of Appeals, the highest court in the state, and chief judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, in 1939, a position he held until a year before his death in 1945. He was widely supported by the Democrats, Republicans and members of the American Labor Party when he ran for re-election to the bench. Schneiderman wrote, "The qualities of mind and heart which he exhibited in his judicial opinions and in his intercourse with his colleagues and with members of the Bar, won for him the respect and admiration of all who knew him and the approbation of the legal profession of the State." Irving Lehman believed that our constitutional freedoms were inalienable and God-given and should not be meddled with by any branch of government. A *New York Times* obituary stated on September 23, 1945, "His reputation as a jurist rested upon a double foundation. He was known to the general public as a liberal, whose interpretation of the law made it a living force subject to change and development with the appearance of new problems and



Pre-teen Sissie Straus - about 1890

new outlooks: and he was known to lawyers for his ability to slash through legal verbiage and to get to the heart of complex commercial and financial problems." He was a self-described libertarian.

Irving suffered from severe hearing loss and wore a hearing aid that was only partially helpful. Three large amplifiers were placed strategically around the courtroom so that he could

hear what was being said. Granddaughter June Bingham Birge wrote in *Lots of Lehmans*, "One of the things he became famous for was his hearing aid. Experienced prosecutors and defenders got to know the signs of Judge Lehman's getting ready to turn it off, and they would speed up their arguments. A sign that it was actually turned off was Irving's wonderful beatific smile."

By now you might be thinking that this was supposed to be an article about Sissie, not Irving. I've found that I could not write about one without writing about the other. Family members report that Sissie and Irving were unusually bonded.

Sissie took an active interest in his work and fiercely protected the sanctity of his office when he was writing opinions. She attended many of his legal proceedings, sitting in the gallery taking notes. Henry M. Greenberg, an Irving Lehman biographer wrote of Sissie, "The marriage was an unusually happy one. They were wrapped up in one another with a love, a devotion, and a companionship that constantly grew over the years. Sissie Lehman was well educated, highly accomplished, and possessed a forceful and assertive personality. She took a keen interest in her husband's career and helped him realize his full potential as a lawyer and judge."



Sissie Straus Lehman - About 1903

Sissie joined her parents, Nathan and Lina, in their charitable activities and helped them continue their philanthropies. In 1911 Sissie joined other Jewish women under the auspices of the New York Jewish Protectory and Aid Society to provide for the care of delinquent Jewish girls. From 1912 to 1914 she attended the New School of Social Work, then known as the School of Philanthropy. She was an ardent supporter of the League of Nations in 1919 and was active in the Democratic Party, prominent in the Democratic Club of New York. Sissie was president of the National Council of Jewish Women's New York section in 1922 and 1923 and chairman of their legislative committee. She was an officer in the Young Women's Hebrew Association (YWHA) and a member of the women's division of the Jewish Education Association. Sissie was honorary president of Irvington House, a convalescent home for children with cardiac conditions.

Following the death of her mother in 1930 and then the death of her father a year later, Sissie continued to support the food banks and other projects in Palestine established by her parents in the early part of the century.

During World War II Sissie took an active role bringing hundreds of people to the United States from Europe. Many of them were relatives. In the early 1990s I was given a large book that was created by Sissie. It contained hand drawn family trees

showing who each person was and how they were related. One family story is that the US State Department told her she had to stop providing affidavits. That no one person could have so many relatives.

Irving and his brother Herbert, their wives and other relatives formed the Herbert Lehman Fund. Not only were family members saved during the war, their families were given apartments and milk was delivered daily. They were supplied with newspapers and assisted in finding employment.

In 1916 Irving and Sissie created Camp Lehman, a summer camp, on their Port Chester property. At first it was a Boy Scout camp under the auspices of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) from the 92nd Street Y but later the focus was changed to include impoverished and immigrant children. The boys attended for three weeks in the summer. They were outdoors, given healthy meals and participated in sports.

Fred Moses, who was brought to the US with his family in 1938 by Sissie and Irving, told me he was permitted to stay the entire summer. For him this was an amazing gift, one he never forgot. I asked if he ever saw Sissie or Irving. He told me he only saw her once, from afar.

Family members were asked to provide recollections of various Lehmans for the book *Lots of Lehmans*. Among them were recollections by: Irving Lehman Straus, son of Sissie's brother Nathan Straus Jr., who wrote, "Sissie was a soft, lovely lady with white hair who was typically old school. Before eating she used to say, "Wash your paws." (Several other family members told me this as well. One of the people she told to "wash his paws" was Albert Einstein who was a frequent guest.) She wasn't a mean person but she had a biting tongue. ... She was definitely a 'character' in the best sense of the word. I think people were a little frightened of her. She was very proper, demanding, fastidious in her habits, You couldn't be late by one minute. ... she sure had strong religious convictions. Anybody who wasn't Jewish she called an *oetlaender*."



Henry Morgenthau III, grandnephew of Irving and Sissie wrote, "Sissie was very punctilious and Irving was her baby. ... Sissie would sit at the table with him, and as each dish would be served, Irving would look up to get Sissie's okay or disapproval."

Niece Ann Straus Gertler wrote, "My strongest memory is of tea with Aunt Sissie and Uncle Irving. After a suitable interval, Aunt Sissie said to Irving that he should 'say a nice word to each of the guests and go upstairs to write decisions' because

she did not want him to be writing decisions after midnight.”

Granddaughter June Rossbach Bingham Birge wrote, “Aunt Sissie had a beautiful face but a dumpy figure, not fat, just shapeless. But nothing about her was less than perfect in the eyes of Uncle Irving. And the same was true about him from her point of view. He was huge-nosed, and prematurely bald, stooped and unathletic, but in her eyes he was *le beau ideal*. Irving was an idealist without being naïve, a realist without being cynical. Unflinching in facing up to evil, he also never gave up hope. The only one of the seven Lehman siblings to be devout. To be around them was a pleasure because they were so happy together. I can still see them swimming sidestroke, he on the left, she on the right, so that they could face one another. (Several family members also mentioned this.) I adored Aunt Sissie. ... interested in everything ... She was very bright and very well read and loved to laugh. She was also direct in expressing approval and disapproval.”

Sissie and Irving were very close with Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo who was considered one of the great legal thinkers in American history. It was Cardozo who married them in their civil ceremony. In fact, he considered Irving his brother. Sissie babied both of them equally.

In 1939, Herbert was the governor of New York and Irving was chief judge in the NYS Court of Appeals. It was the first time in history that brothers were at the head of the executive and judicial branches of NYS government at the same time. Irving was being considered for appointment to the US Supreme Court but because of his close association with Justice Cardozo, having a brother who was governor of NYS and himself the chief judge of the highest court in the state, there was concern that too much power would be concentrated in representatives from one state. Brother Herbert wrote, “I was extremely proud of my brother’s record. I think the Court of Appeals had a record of probity and intellectual honesty and ability second only to the Supreme Court of the United States.”

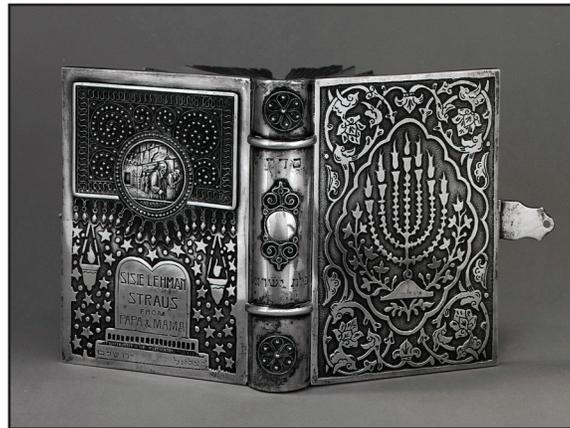
Harry Schneiderman wrote an article about Irving Lehman in the *American Jewish Yearbook 1946-1947*. He wrote of the family, “Like Mayer Lehman, their father, Irving and his three brothers, Sigmund, Arthur and Herbert, Irving [sic] cheerfully accepted a double responsibility, - service to the city, state and

nation, on the one hand, and service to the Jewish community in America and overseas on the other.”

Throughout his life Irving was active in Jewish philanthropy and in the improvement of Jewish educational institutions. He was president of the Jewish Welfare Board from 1921 to 1940, president of the YMHA centered at the 92nd Street Y, a member of the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee and honorary secretary of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Temple Beth El merged with Temple Emanu-El in 1927. Irving became president of the congregation in 1929 following the death of Louis Marshall, and served for many years. He was keenly interested in young lawyers’ preparations for the bar and was a member of the board of visitors of Columbia Law School. He was interested in social work and volunteered at the Henry Street Settlement from the time he graduated from college in 1896 until his 1908 election to the bench.

Irving died in 1945 of a heart condition a week after falling over his pet boxer, Carlo, and breaking his ankle in two places. After his death Sissie largely withdrew from public life and never stopped mourning him. One of her last public appearances was in late 1948 at the opening of a youth center dedicated to Peter Lehman, the son of Herbert and Edith Lehman. Peter was killed during World War II.

June Bingham Birge wrote, “In 1950, when Sissie had a sharp heart attack, Dr. Stieglitz, was summoned, “Is it a bad one?” she asked. “Yes, Sissie, I’m sorry to say it is.” She turned away from him, smiling blissfully, and closed her eyes. “I’m coming, my darling,” she said – and died.”



Sissie Straus Lehman's silver prayer book cover
Given to her by her parents Nathan and Lina Straus
Made in Jerusalem in 1925
Courtesy of the Herbert & Eileen Bernard Museum
of Judaica, Temple Emanu-el.
Bequest of Judge Irving Lehman, 1945.



Joined in death as they were in life:
Sissie Straus and Irving Lehman tombstone
Lehman Family Plot
Salem Field Cemetery, Queens, NY

Sissie Straus Lehman and her husband Irving made enormous contributions through their public service and philanthropy. Although childless themselves, they populated the world with the many people they saved before and during World War II. These people, both family and non-family members, went on to live happy and productive lives in their adopted country, the United States, ever grateful for the opportunity of life and freedom because of the beneficence of Sissie and Irving Lehman. We are honored to present you with this article about their lives and about their love for each other and for their fellow man.

L. Straus & Sons

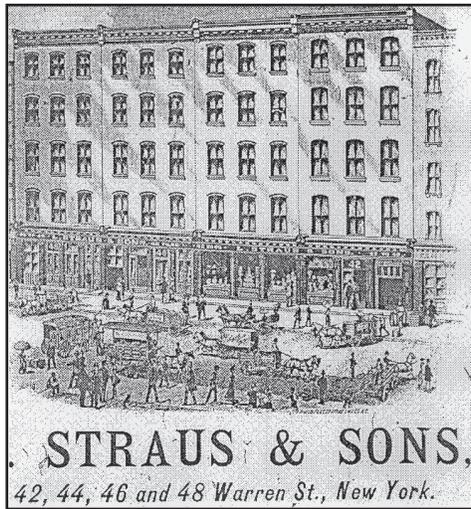
In 1998 Craig E. Carlson, an expert on L. Straus & Sons American brilliant cut glass, sent SHS many articles he had written about the family firm and the people who founded it. Among them were a series of articles about L. Straus & Sons written by Craig and Micki Doros for Hobstar, a trade journal. We liberally quote, with Craig's kind permission, information about the formation and operation of L. Straus & Sons.

"It was in 1865 that the Straus family came to New York. Lazarus Straus was led to the crockery business from the fact that he had always found it hard to get stock of crockery for his Southern store. He had bought the most of his line of these goods in Philadelphia prior to the war, and the rule was to put the order in and await the good pleasure of the shipper. So he hired the store 165 Chambers street, and bought about 400 crates of English goods. The business was a moderate one. Staple goods were first dealt in, and gradually fancy goods were introduced, and more ware room space was added."

"In 1873 the firm, which had originally consisted of L. Straus and his son Isidor, under the style of L. Straus & Son, was changed to L. Straus & Sons on the admission of Nathan Straus and his son-in-law Lazarus Kohns." In the fall of that year Nathan convinced Rowland Hussey Macy to allow L. Straus & Sons to rent space in the basement of his 14th Street store. They would take all the risk and Macy would receive a fixed percentage of their sales as rent. The following March the Strauses opened their china department at Macy's.

Craig reported that it looked like the Strauses were experimenting with glass cutting prior to 1888. An 1887 advertisement of their glass cutting operations brought shoppers to Macy's, which played up their on-premises cut glass operation and often encouraged the public to come in and see how the cut glass was made. It wasn't until July 1888 that L. Straus & Sons began cutting glass for their own store. It is supposed that they used Macy's as a trial run before fully committing to glass cutting in their business. The New York Times reported in 1892; "This is one of the secrets of the present revival of cut glass, which is now the most popular produce of the glass maker's art. It is popular for the reason that the cut glass of the current period is superior in every respect to anything that was made years ago, when cut glass was fashionable. Messrs. L. Straus & Sons anticipated this result four years ago when he began to produce cut glass at their Jay street shops with twenty-four frames. At that time they thought that they had a force of glass cutters remarkably large for a city shop just starting in the business, and the probabilities are that they would have smiled if anyone had predicted the steady operation of one hundred and twenty frames in August, 1892."

The factory operation was described in August 1892: "Machinery has transplanted the nimble and deft fingers of our grandmothers in weaving and sewing, the hammer and smithy have given way to the nail machine, and almost every branch of industry has more or less been transformed by the inventive genius of man in the introduction of machinery, automatically filling the place of the eye and the hand. Even the potter's art has evolved the jigger and the pull-down pug mill and the shaping tools. Glass cutting alone preserves its primitive methods and gives the finish, effect and durability of hand work."



1890 L. Straus & Sons advertisement

"Along the sides of the lofts a hundred or more men sit before wheels of steel and stone upon which funnels drop water and sand just as was done a hundred years ago, but steam provides the motive power instead of the treadle and the foot. Heavy glass blanks of various forms, in which the artist sees the possibilities of beauty through their almost ugly plainness, are marked in red with lines and circles and stars and crosses; the revolving wheels of steel cut deep into the glass, the smoothing wheels of stone take off the roughness and finishes in checkers and stars the finer figures. Pretty in form but dull and lusterless, the glass is then polished with wooden and cork wheels, tambigo

and felt brushes; is cleaned and washed, and becomes a scintillating, coruscating, silver white gem of artistic shape and magnificent beauty."

"Four years ago Messrs. L. Straus & Sons realized that there was a field of industry if properly conducted that would enable them to supply cut glass of original designs and of a quality that should be unquestioned for weight or brilliance. ... The visit to the factory told the secret of the success. The uniformity of color and quality, the foreman's devotion of his time in examining every piece as it comes from the cutters, and the stress he laid upon the polishing, readily showed how difficult it was from any piece of the highest perfection to pass his notice. But the forty-eight handsome patterns, all original and some patented (for they do not believe in copying) have contributed in no small degree to the development of the business."

The Strauses advertise, "Being believers in quick sales a moderate profit becomes your interest to patronize us, rather than those who make few goods and sell them at exorbitant prices."

One can tell by the tone of the Straus ad how proud Straus was of their glass. Thank you to Craig E. Carlson for permission to reprint from his very interesting and informative article.

STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

SHS is pleased to announce the inception of the Straus Historical Society Scholarship Program. The goal of the Program is to help support the continuing education of a student or students whose professional goal is in the field of public service. The Program is intended to reflect the Straus family's long and honored history of public service and philanthropy.

For the sake of the Program, we define public service as employment in government, the uniform services, public interest in non-governmental research and/or educational and nonprofit organizations, such as those whose primary purposes are to help needy or disadvantaged persons or to protect the environment.

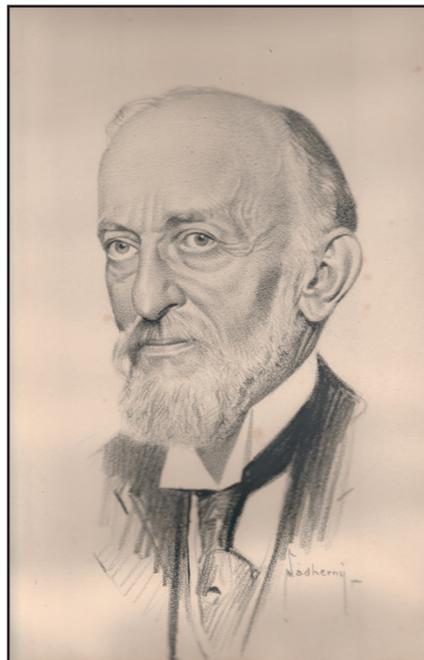
We plan to award \$5,000 in 2018 to a qualified college graduate who has accepted admission to a strong graduate program that emphasizes preparing graduate students for a career in public service. The award will be based on academic achievement and the submission of an essay that describes a social problem the applicant considers important and offers ideas on steps that might be taken to meet that problem. The essays will be judged by an Award Committee of outside educators with no relationship to the Straus family or SHS board members.

The Scholarship Program is administered by a committee of SHS board members. Richard Gerstman and Al Berr have recently asked Liza Loop to join them on this Administrative Committee. The application period is scheduled to begin in November, 2017 and end in January, 2018. The Award Committee will evaluate applications in February and March, and the award will be announced in late spring, 2018.

It is gratifying to report that we have already received pledges of funds toward this Program. However, we need to reach the \$5,000 goal before the end of the year to assure the success of what we hope will be an ongoing annual commitment. We

anticipate that the amount will grow in successive years as the Program gains momentum and recognition.

As an historical society, SHS honors and documents the past; the Scholarship Program looks to the future. We welcome contributions specifically directed to the SHS Scholarship Program.



The Straus Historical Society Scholarship Program reflects the Straus Family's unique history of public service. Oscar S. Straus, shown above, was the progenitor of the idea that public service could be a career, creating public service as a profession, not only for family members but for the field in general. Some of his accomplishments between 1887 and 1926 include Minister to Constantinople, Ambassador to Turkey, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, and Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague.

Virtual Museum of Public Service

In October 2014, the Straus Historical Society partnered with Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration to create the gallery The Straus Family: A History of Public Service and Philanthropy at the Virtual Museum of Public Service (VMPS). This room contains photographs, stories and links to information about various family members.

VMPS was created with the mission "to depict the largely unrecognized achievements of individuals in public service. We do so by drawing upon digital representations of great works of visual art, film, video and significant documentary artifacts which reflect the long history of public service. The Museum highlights how individual or collective efforts can contribute to the common good." The Straus Room exhibits

represent many family members who were actively involved in the formulation of American public policy for more than 100 years. As a consequence of their involvement in this broad spectrum of American life, the family exemplifies, and brings to life, the true American story and its spirit.

The Straus Room in the Virtual Museum is an excellent source for information about the history of public service within the Straus family. We look forward to our continued relationship with Rutgers University as well as the exciting future of the Straus Room. We would like to thank Marc Holzer and Lois Warner for their dedication to this partnership. To view the Straus Room, please visit www.vmps.us/straus-family.

1917: How One Year Changed the World

The Straus Historical Society (SHS) announced in the February 2017 newsletter that we loaned artifacts from our archival collection to the exhibition, 1917: How One Year Changed the World. We partnered with the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH) in Philadelphia and the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) in New York City for this interesting exhibition.

In March, SHS board member Richard Gerstman and his wife JoAnn, Joan Adler, Catherine Smith and intern Marissa Pelliccia attended the opening reception of the exhibition at NMAJH. We found the letters, newspaper articles and print materials as relevant today as when they were created. We were pleased to see our SHS artifacts so appropriately and beautifully displayed.

The exhibition was open at NMAJH in Philadelphia from March 17th through July 16th after which it traveled to AJHS in New York City where it will be on display from September 1st through December 29th. There are also plans for it to be taken on the road around the country once the exhibition closes in New York.

According to the NMAJH's Press Release, "1917 is the first exhibition to demonstrate how three key events of that year—America's entry into World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the issuing of the Balfour Declaration, in which Great Britain indicated support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine—brought about political, cultural, and social changes that dramatically reshaped the United States' role in the world and directly affected everyday Americans. The exhibition will feature approximately 130 artifacts, including an original draft of the Balfour Declaration, to be exhibited in the U.S. for the first time, composer Irving Berlin's draft registration card, a decoded copy of the Zimmermann Telegram, and Justice Louis Brandeis's judicial robes. Through uniforms, letters, photographs, and posters, as well as films, music, and interactive media, 1917 will take visitors on a journey into the trenches of WWI, revolutionary Russia, and debates over the future of Britain's colonial empire in the Middle East."

We would like to encourage each of you to visit AJHS located at the Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16th Street in NYC to experience this very interesting exhibition that includes artifacts from SHS's collections.

SHS Digitization Project - Online Databases

Since the beginning of 2016, SHS intern Marissa Pelliccia has been working to digitize the Straus Historical Society's extensive archive. In the February 2017 newsletter we announced that the L. Straus & Sons collection became available online to all those who would like to learn more about this small piece of Straus family history.

We are pleased to announce that as of April 2017, the Georgia Collection is available online.

The Georgia Collection contains information about the Straus family's time in Georgia, after Lazarus Straus immigrated to the United States in 1852. The family remained in Georgia until the end of the Civil War in 1865,

at which point they relocated to New York City. Students, researchers and many others will find this information interesting and vital to understanding the history of the south, German immigration, Jewish history in America, and countless other facets of historical inquiry. In addition, this collection features photographs and documents from the Straus Historical Society's heritage trips and family reunions in Columbus and Talbotton, Georgia.

To view the online catalog, go to www.straushistoricalsociety.org and go to the menu item "Archives." A dropdown menu will appear with the option to go to the "Online Collection." The online collection page is filled with information about how to search through the materials. You can go directly to the different parts of the collection including the "Archives,"

"Photos," "Libraries," and "Objects." You could also look through "Random Images" from the collection. If you are looking for something specific, this page gives one the option to do a "Keyword Search," or an "Advanced Search" to find an item. Each entry has an image of the item and information about its content, its creation date, as well as other relevant descriptors. You can magnify the image, request a copy of that image, e-mail the entry to a friend, or send us feedback.

This is a work in progress. Marissa continues to digitize our additional collections. Once they are completely processed we will launch them online and an announcement of this will be sent to everyone on our mailing list.

If you do a Word Search now, only those materials that have been digitized and uploaded to our website are available to you. There is much more to come. We selected two very small collections for our initial foray into the digitizing process. You may not see everything you are looking for online right now. That's coming. All of our materials are available to family members, students, authors and researchers by contacting SHS directly info@straushistory.org All past issue of the newsletters are online on our website <http://www.straushistoricalsociety.org/newsletters.html>

We hope you enjoy looking through the latest additions to the online collection. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. We are pleased to announce that the the Lazarus Straus Collection will be online soon. We look forward to bringing you more of our digitized archives in the future!

SHS Presentations

by Catherine McIlvaine Smith

Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center March 12th

On March 12th, Joan Adler was a Guest Speaker at the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center's Reel Upstanders presentation of the documentary film *No Asylum: The Untold Chapter of Anne Frank's Story*. This film, directed and produced by Paula Fouce, is based on the recently discovered letters written by Anne Frank's father Otto. *No Asylum* features Anne's surviving family members, Buddy Elias and Eva Geiringer-Schloss, discussing the Frank family's last efforts to seek refuge in America before going into hiding in 1942.

After watching a portion of the film, Joan Adler gave a presentation about her book, *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr.* The film was then completed and was followed by a Q&A. Filmmaker Paula Fouce participated via SKYPE. The event was attended by more than 80 guests and was well received by all. We are so grateful to Tracy Garrison-Feinberg and Mireille Taub for planning this wonderful afternoon. At the end of the event Joan was approached by several people from the audience who asked her about the possibility of doing her presentation to their organization. We are pursuing these options. We hope to return to the museum again in the future!

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies July 25th & 26th

In July, Joan attended the IAJGS Conference in Orlando where she gave two presentations. The first presentation, entitled Write What You Know, included Joan's personal experiences and advice about writing what one has discovered about their genealogy and family history. She suggested small articles that could be compiled into a newsletter, online article or book, and distributed to family members about one person, a family line, or anything interesting that they've learned about their family. Writing helps a researcher organize what they have and discover what they may be missing. Joan's talk encouraged those who attended to start the process of writing about their family as a tool for further discovery.

Joan's second presentation, entitled My Family: I Could Write a Book, is based on a book by Edith Maas Mendel. The Straus Historical Society compiled vignettes written by Edith about her family and published this collection of stories in book form. Joan's presentation suggested this same method for those who are seeking a solution to organizing and preserving their research and stories for the future. She discussed the different kinds of books and platforms that can be used. Those in attendance were given the tools to start the process. Both presentations were well attended by conference participants.

Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles October 8th

On October 8th, Joan Adler will be speaking at a meeting of

the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles about the West Coast branch of the Straus Family. One large branch of the Straus family moved from the Rheinpfalz area of Germany to the northern most parts of Washington State, where their experiences differed greatly from what they had known back in Germany but also from those of their German immigrant counterparts who settled in the eastern United States. This colorful bunch showed its spunk by accepting, even embracing, the rugged and often difficult life of a Jewish immigrant in the American frontier. Using their stories Joan will show how to flesh out the lives of these people by writing vignettes about them and how to publish these stories in book form or post them on a family Web page with photographs where available. This presentation is based on one she gave in July at the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Society Conference in Orlando.

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society October 15th & 16th

On October 15th and 16th, Joan will be speaking to the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society. These two presentations will be the same as the presentation given earlier in the month to the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles. The October 15th presentation will be held at the Rhoda Goldman Plaza, 2180 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94115. Doors open 1pm, and the program begins 1:30pm. The October 16th presentation will be held at Congregation Etz Chayim, 4161 Alma Street, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Doors open 7pm, and the program begins 7:30pm.

Harvest Days in Old Talbot - Georgia November 3rd - 6th

Once again, Joan and Catherine have been invited to attend Mike and Debbie Buckner's annual Harvest Days in Old Talbot Festival. Harvest Days will be held the first weekend in November on the 4th & 5th from 10 am to 5 pm. Joan is speaking with several organizations in the area about the possibility of doing a presentation there during her stay in GA. As her plans solidify, they will be presented on the SHS website and sent out in a flyer.

We encourage everyone to attend our presentations and to support our educational efforts. If you belong to an organization that might be interesting in hosting one of our presentations, please contact me. Each talk is individually prepared and can be tailored to the interest of the membership of that organization. And if you know of any school, library, historical society, genealogical society or other organization that might be interested in sponsoring one of our presentations, please give them our contact information. We find that audiences are enthralled with the information we present and we are pleased to share it.

info@straushistory.org

FRIENDS OF STRAUS PARK

By Al Berr

Photographs by Joe Arbo

This year, April 15th fell on a Saturday, which made our annual Titanic event on that day even more appropriate. Every year, on or about the anniversary of the sinking in 1912 and the dedication of Straus Park in 1915, Friends of Straus Park holds a modest reminder in the park, weather permitting, and usually on a Saturday, to commemorate the two April 15 occasions.

This year, our event lasted about two hours in early afternoon, and featured Titanic artifacts from the collection of Ian Robertson, who has made similar and valuable presentations for us recently. We were also grateful for the presence of two important local legislators. Daniel O'Donnell is the New York State Assemblyman representing our area, and Helen Rosenthal is the Councilwoman for our district, number 6. Each of them made brief addresses in which they expressed their appreciation of the park and its importance to the quality of life for the neighborhood. Of course, we gladly concurred.

On Thursday, May 24th, just prior to the Memorial Day weekend, in a gesture to welcome the summer season, Friends of Straus Park presented the music of the Blue Vipers of Brooklyn. We have presented the Vipers at previous events and always to appreciative audiences. (Recently, someone asked us, citing the repeated appearances of the Vipers from Brooklyn, if that questioned our allegiance to our own borough, Manhattan. Our response was that good music knows no boundaries.)

The Vipers are four young men who play old songs of the 20s and 30s in contemporary fashion. They play guitar, trumpet, bass, and percussion. The guitarist is the vocalist and the leader. They continue to be a delight, as evidenced by the number of park visitors and passers-by who stopped to listen. Ian Robertson was present and gave a brief account of the park's dedication. There were also brief announcements by Friends of Straus Park President Viri Andrick and Gardener Joe Arbo.

Our annual day-long event, Art in the Park, was cancelled for the past two years due to inclement and unaccommodating weather. Hoping not to be foiled for a third consecutive year, we are scheduling two dates – Saturday, September 23rd and a rain, or inclement weather, date of Saturday, October 14th. (Those dates avoid Saturdays for Yom Kippur on September 30th and the Columbus Day weekend on October 7th.) The hours for either day will be 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. We are keeping our fingers crossed.

Art in the Park

A Day Long Celebration of Art, Food, Music
Saturday, September 23rd, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Rain date: Saturday, October 14th



Above: Memory and the floral reflecting pool
Below: April 15th Titanic event



Above: Blue Vipers of Brooklyn
Below: Lovely allium in the Park



Did You Know

Shortly after Isidor and Ida Straus died together in the Titanic disaster, a *New York Times* article reported, "Found Lifeless in Stable the Morning After the Titanic Sank. Friends of Isidor Straus, who, with his wife, perished in the Titanic disaster, told yesterday of a peculiar coincidence concerning Mr. Straus and his favorite horse Bess. Before he sailed to Europe Mr. Straus sent the horse to Bedford Hills, N. Y., where the Montefiore Home, with which Mr. Straus was connected, has a farm. Part of this farm consists of some fine pasture land, and Mr. Straus decided to give Bess a vacation and let her roam at will over the pasture until he returned.

"Bess was six years old. She had been owned by Mr. Straus for several years and was his favorite driving horse. On the night of Sunday, April 16, Bess was locked in the stable by the employees at the farm as usual. Next morning one of the stable hands found Bess dead. A veterinary surgeon could not tell of what malady the animal had died. The night of Sunday, April 16, was when the Titanic was wrecked and Mr. Straus and his wife died."

Thank you to Irish author Nicola Pierce (*Spirit of Titanic*) for alerting us to this very interesting new information.

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We've received two donation checks from AmazonSmile!
Keep on shopping!

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

www.straushistoricalsociety.org/publications

Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft, the autobiography of Oscar S. Straus. This newly published autobiography includes a new supplement with articles about Straus from past issues of the Society's newsletters and new photographs. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$40.00

Disease in Milk: The Remedy Pasteurization by Lina Gutherz Straus, a loving tribute to the life's work of Nathan Straus, greatly expanded in 2016 including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover - \$40.00

For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. by Joan Adler published in 2013. When Otto Frank realized he had to get his family out of Europe in April, 1941, he wrote to his Heidelberg University roommate and lifelong friend Nathan Straus Jr. for help. This book describes their struggle to find a way to save the Frank family. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$30.00

The Autobiography of Isidor Straus privately published by Sara Straus Hess in 1955, greatly expanded and updated by SHS in 2011, including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover with dust jacket- \$30.00

The History of the Jews of Otterberg by Dr. Hans Steinebrei, translated by Frank and Sue Kahn and Dr. Andreas J. Schwab. This excellent publication contains a large section dedicated to the Straus family. Many photographs complement the text. Published in English by the Straus Historical Society, Inc. Hard cover - \$35.00

My Family: I Could Write a Book by Edith Maas Mendel. A must read for all those interested in family history. Even if the people in this book are not your direct relatives, their appeal is universal. *My Family* is amply enriched with photographs of the people and places mentioned. Hard cover - \$25.00

A Titanic Love Story: Ida and Isidor Straus by June Hall McCash. Extensively researched and beautifully written, author June Hall McCash honors Ida and Isidor Straus' lives in her biography of this remarkable couple. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$30.00

Additional items are available for sale on the SHS website. www.straushistoricalsociety.org/publications. Contact Joan Adler by phone: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: info@straushistory.org if you have questions about ordering.

The Straus Historical Society collection contains many photographs, articles and other items that are also available. Contact Joan Adler if you want to learn more about the SHS collections or if there is a specific photograph or article you wish to purchase.