



# STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Straus is the German word for ostrich

August 2020

## **Straus Historical Society 2020 Scholarship Program Introducing SHS Scholarship Winners: Corey Patrick Best, Caitlin Marie Flynn and Kristy Soojung Kwon**

The Straus Historical Society Scholarship Program was created with the goal of supporting the continuing education of a graduate student whose professional goal is in the field of public service. Thanks to your generous contributions, the Straus Historical Society is pleased to announce that Corey Patrick Best, Caitlin Marie Flynn and Kristy Soojung Kwon have been selected to each receive a \$5,000 Straus Scholarship.

**Corey Patrick Best** is a graduate student at American University’s School of International Service where he is pursuing a master’s degree in International Affairs with a concentration in Global Governance, Politics and Security. Corey feels public service is a calling for which he has been preparing his entire life. He asks the question, “Why?” as a guiding light on his journey. Corey’s background is quasi-military, having joined the Civil Air Patrol at 12 and participated in the Air Force ROTC program at Ohio University. These disciplined, value-based, task oriented, experiences have prepared him for a life of public service. He wrote, “The opportunity to contribute to the field of public service would be nothing short of an honor and privilege.”



Corey Patrick Best



Caitlin Marie Flynn

**Caitlin Marie Flynn** is a graduate student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University where she is preparing for a degree in Gender Analysis and Human Security. From a young age, Caitlin has believed in the importance of public service and education. Her experiences in the Peace Corps in Benin as a secondary school English teacher reinforced her ambition to make a difference through effective

thoughtful, nuanced, data driven programming. During her studies at Tufts University, she’s “honed her research skills, studied theoretical frameworks and has identified several steps for addressing barriers for education.” She anticipates that her graduate studies, aided by the SHS scholarship, will ensure that her positive intentions produce equally positive impacts.

**Kristy Soojung Kwon** is a graduate student at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs where she is preparing for a career in Public Administration with a concentration in Economics. She hopes to begin her career in the United States Department of Education’s Office of Evidence-Based Practices as a research analyst. Kristy feels she is uniquely qualified to help people from underprivileged communities because she moved to the United States with her family as a child and experienced, first-hand, the difficulties for immigrants. She is particularly interested in how economic analysis and human rights organizations can collaborate to produce research for firms to devise reasonable standards in the workplace and to suggest steps to reduce gender discrimination.



Kristy Soojung Kwon

The Straus family has a long history of public service and philanthropy, with family members serving in government positions at the federal, state and local levels and who have acted as advisors to a number of American presidents. The Straus Scholarship Program aims to continue the family's legacy of commitment to public service and philanthropy. An independent award panel of outside educators was appointed by the scholarship committee. They were impressed by the high quality of applications from all of the applicants. The Scholarship Program is entirely funded by contributions to SHS.

We are pleased to present the essays of the three scholarship winners on page three, four and five.



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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 Executive Director:  
Joan Adler  
SHS in the Age of the  
COVID-19 Pandemic**

During this unprecedented time, with the growing threat of the coronavirus and the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been confronted with a new normal. We have been forced to think about our health, our community and the manner in which they intersect. It seems as though much of what we used to think of as normal, no longer applies to our daily lives. We have been isolated from family and friends and, in many cases, deprived of our economic security. We long for the "good old days," when our biggest problems had to do with choices that seem trivial in light of today's realities.

While many businesses were forced to close down, we are fortunate. The SHS office is in my home. I have been able to continue my work without interruption. And, because Catherine Smith, our very able assistant director, was just beginning her maternity leave, most of the projects she was involved with, had been completed, or taken to the point where I could work on them without her assistance.

This has been a time of reflection. It has caused me to evaluate what is important to the Society and its day-to-day operation. It seems that most people were not thinking of SHS these past few months and so the daily barrage of emails and calls slowed to a manageable level. I had the ability to work on projects that have been put on hold for lack of time. Although I cannot say my desk is clear of paper, I certainly was able to make a dent.

Unfortunately, some of the programs we had hoped to offer, like a family heritage trip to Talbotton and Columbus, GA in November 2020, had to be postponed. We have no idea what the restrictions for travel, or for social gatherings, will be by November. We anticipate offering this trip to GA in November of 2021.

The requirement for social distancing and travel restrictions opened up a new opportunity; Zoom presentations. I spoke to the members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Conejo Valley (CA) on June 14<sup>th</sup>. My talk included a slideshow. Since the subject of my talk was about why writing is such an important aspect of genealogical work, I was able to show my audience several books SHS has published without the need to bring them to that venue. Another Zoom presentation is scheduled for a genealogical group in North Carolina in September. I think this might be one way to give presentations that will endure, even after the COVID-19 pandemic is brought under control. I will be exploring opportunities for other Zoom presentations with genealogical societies, historical societies and other groups. If you know of any group that might be interested in a SHS talk, which can be tailored to their interests, please let me know.

One area that has been most affected by the coronavirus has been the drop in donations. It is understandable, as most people are concerned with their health and safety, as well as the economic impact this pandemic has had on their finances. As our fall fundraising season begins, we will reach out to you in the hope that you will see fit to support SHS and its programs, like the scholarship program. Please consider SHS when you decide upon your charitable giving. We can only continue our important research, educational and scholarship programs and publications with your support.

# Corey Patrick Best

## American University's School of International Service

In many organizations, small or large, executives focus on the importance of a 'why' as a focal point of their brand. The organization itself and those working in it may know the 'what' of their work (job description) and know 'how' that work is prosecuted (their job), but sometimes the 'why' can be opaque. "Why does this organization provide this specific service?" "Why do you as an employee choose to work here?" Understanding your 'why' as an organization is vital because it anchors leadership and employees towards one common set of ethos. In the same way, understanding your 'why' as an individual serves as a guiding light in one's journey through life's uncertainty. My name is Corey Best and my 'why' is to live a life of public service grounded by a values-based approach under an umbrella of a standard of excellence to better my community, country, and world.

For me, public service is a calling that I have spent my life preparing to answer. As I have found out, this call can be answered in many ways. Originally determined to join the profession of arms, I joined the Civil Air Patrol's cadet program at age 12 where I learned important lessons in respect, accountability, followership, leadership, and service. This experience was followed up with my enrollment as a cadet in Ohio University's Air Force ROTC program. When I had to part ways with the program due to budgetary reasons, my 'what' and 'how' in life suddenly disappeared, but my 'why' remained unscathed. When one call to serve hung up, another one rang. This has led me to the School of International Service at American University where I am pursuing an MA in International Affairs with a concentration in Global Governance, Politics, and Security. Through scholarship, I am determined to enter a career of public service by advancing American interests and values across the world as a member of the Foreign Service.

I consider the opportunity to serve others as not only a job, but a privilege. If I am able to earn this privilege, I intend on incorporating my 'why' into the 'what' and 'how' of my job. Due to my unique experience of being exposed to a military-like environment starting at the age of 12, I am highly motivated, values-based, and center all that I do around a standard of excellence. Bringing these characteristics to the table only serves as a base of what I intend on contributing to the field of public service. More specifically, I intend to use my leadership skills learned, evaluated, and tested over years of training with future leaders of our Air Force in pursuit of raising the standard for myself and those around me.

In today's increasingly complex world there is a noticeable absence of good leadership. Vexing issues in our society such as climate change, the proliferation of irregular threats, and

great-power competition are squabbled over domestically and internationally in an often-embarrassing fashion. This has caused public opinion of government and its institutions in the United States to plummet—17% of Americans trust the government according to the Pew Research Center. In a democracy, a state's existence is dependent on legitimacy which is derived from the consent of the governed. While these times may thwart some from public service, I could not be more encouraged to join. It is times like these, where our institutions are being questioned, which leads to the need for the standard of governance to elevate. To regain public trust, institutions need to be better and do to that, public servants must rise to a standard of excellence more so than in recent history.

Institutions and public servants alike need to find their 'why.' I believe a values-based approach is necessary in this pursuit of excellence. Values such as integrity, respect, and service before self should serve as the foundation for any public servant. From there, the rest will fall into place under the canopy of good leadership. These values resonate through me and are displayed in everything that I do. I believe the combination of a values-based approach, a standard of excellence, and proven leadership is what I can contribute to the field of public service with the intention on strengthening the institutions for the American people.



Like the Straus family, I believe service to one's country comes in many forms at all levels of society. Also, like the Straus family, my call to service is rooted in generational examples of public service within my own family. My ancestors have fought under General Washington, marched with General Sherman, and kept General LeMay's aircraft flying. I am also a direct descendant of Simon Bradstreet, the last governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1689–1692) and his wife Anne Bradstreet, the first published female poet in North America. Driven by my education, guided by my values, and anchored by a standard of excellence, the opportunity to contribute to the field of public service would be nothing short of an honor and privilege.

### Honorary Straus Scholars

The Award Committee was very impressed with the high quality of the applications and the many excellently motivated candidates. Based on the excellence of their application, the Award Committee has recommended that six applicants be designated Honorary Straus Scholars. They are: Crystal Avila, Garrett Berghoff, Mathew Tyler Dean, Benjamin Drolet, Ihechiluru Esuruonye and Gabrielle Robertson.

Congratulations!

# Caitlin Marie Flynn

## Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

I'm honored to apply for the Straus Historical Society Scholarship. From a young age I've shared the society's belief in public service and the importance of education. When I was nine years old in 2002 the US presence in Afghanistan was all over the news and I couldn't believe Afghan girls my age weren't allowed to go to school. I promptly emptied my piggy bank, flipped couch cushions looking for spare change, and lobbied my family for donations. I collected \$17 and proudly asked my mother to mail it all to George Bush so he could send those girls to school.

Motivated by the idea of helping others, public service has been a driving force in my life. In high school I tutored kindergartners and co-led a local Girl Scout troop. In college, I manned blood drives, and taught science lessons to 4<sup>th</sup> graders. When I studied abroad in Ireland, I practiced reading with children who lived in low literacy neighborhoods, and spent three summers leading outdoor education programs with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver. In 2016, I became the first in my family to earn a bachelor's degree and joined the Peace Corps shortly after, serving in Benin as a secondary school English teacher.

In a hot and dusty classroom in the rural community I lived in, I found myself asking again, "What will it take to keep girls in school?" In Benin, a \$17 collection could nearly cover one student's tuition, but even with government initiatives lowering educational costs for female students, they rarely finished high school. It was clear the problem was more than financial, so I set out to address the other challenges my students face.

When I found a solution for one problem, another quickly took its place. A female student dropped out because of malaria, so I led trainings on malaria prevention. When there was a rise in student pregnancies, I invited a local nurse to talk to students about contraception. Teachers were prioritizing male students, so I led trainings on gender-equitable teaching practices. I led a national boys camp focused on gender equity, a national girls leadership summit, started my school's first girls soccer team, and organized a regional league that emphasized leadership and community service. Despite my best efforts, my female students were still disappearing from class. My short-term solutions failed to address the root problems and were not sustainable. I needed a more in-depth understanding of the larger forces at play and a broader skill set that would allow me to work more strategically rather than just working harder.

Three weeks after finishing my Peace Corps service, I arrived at Tufts' Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy to pursue a master's degree concentrating in gender analysis and human security. In class I've expanded my understanding of the

ways gender has influenced, and been influenced by, culture, economics and politics. I've honed my research skills, studied theoretical frameworks and have identified several steps for addressing barriers to education. First it's important to note that every situation deserves a tailored response. It is important that policy makers work with local partners from the community to identify the best intervention points and ensure that programs are culturally sensitive. For the rural Beninese community I taught in, I would propose a pilot program of cash transfers which would partially compensate parents for the labor they lose by sending their daughters to school. The program would normalize all girls going to school and offer financial cushioning to parents while they develop new financial strategies that rely less on their daughters' labor. Next, school curriculum needs to be localized and able to prepare students for jobs they can see in their community. An emphasis on vocational skills for example, will create a clear sense that the investment in education has a realistic payoff. Additionally, policy makers need to perform a gender analysis on the policies and practices already in place. For example,



Beninese teachers sit in the teachers' lounge between class periods and send students to the school cooks to deliver their lunches to them. Because women are the caregivers in Beninese society, teachers almost exclusively send female students. As a result, female students aren't given a break between classes and are often late to class because they had to wait in the long food line. When students are late to class, they miss important material and are punished with detention and lose points off of their final grade. A gendered analysis reveals how seemingly innocuous practices can compound to have serious consequences for students. Finally, more research is needed.

Female students face several, compounding barriers to staying in school. New research should focus on the holistic experience of female students while at school, rather than merely identifying the financial and transportation barriers in getting there.

My experiences in the Peace Corps reinforced that good intentions and change from the couch cushions are not enough to make a difference. Effective programming needs to be thoughtful, nuanced and data driven. What I'm learning at Fletcher will ensure my positive intentions produce equally positive impacts. I would appreciate any help in achieving that goal.

Due to your generosity, the Straus Historical Society was pleased to be able to award scholarships to three deserving graduate students who are pursuing a career in public service or philanthropy. When you are thinking of making a donation to a non-profit, please consider supporting SHS's worthwhile programs.

# Kristy Soojung Kwon

Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs

In South Korea, hiring and promotional lags within young white-collar female workers persist, despite government regulations banning such practices. Specifically, cultural stereotypes which emphasize that men are more intellectually capable and knowledgeable overall than women have contributed to discrimination and unequal outcomes in the workforce. Many firms tend to overwhelmingly favor male employees—regardless of individual talent—when assigning important projects, and are more apt to recognize and promote these men for their work. Often, high-quality products or diligent participation by young female employees have not been as greatly regarded as those from their male counterparts, in terms of employer review, consideration or promotion. These attitudes have discouraged women professionals from attempting to put in more effort into their work, while making them fall behind in job rank from other males.

Similarly, despite it being natural for young female employees to take short maternity-leaves to give birth to and take care of their newborns, employers—nevertheless, are reluctant to hire this demographic. They fear that they, along with the entire firm, will have to invest an inordinate amount of time and energy to look for other replacement candidates and take on extra duties that may detract from the focus and resources to perform current tasks in the firm. Thus, it is common for female candidates—even the highly-qualified—to not be considered for further review or receive denied job offers. These factors have decreased the willingness of female employees to find value in their organization, and have kept them from contributing additional time and energy within or beyond their required job duties in the workplace.

In order to address this problem, economic analysts and human rights organizations must collaborate to produce research for firms to devise reasonable standards in the workplace, and suggest steps to reduce gender discrimination toward female employees. By gathering and analyzing employee data through interviews and surveys of firms in geographical areas representative of young professionals, these experts will quantify and query multiple variables, and identify relevant causal factors. In turn, they can not only work to assess the impact of employer bias on the hiring and promotional outcomes within young female white-collar workers, but also detect contributing sources to the problem at-hand. Knowledge of these causes will help to elaborate on how both company-wide and legal policies can be changed to fix workplace environment and employer behavior that will enhance equal economic opportunities and outcomes.

By presenting these findings to firms, the research institutes will be able to accurately demonstrate and explain the

unfairness in the lack of opportunities for women to showcase and develop their skills, and become properly rewarded for their performance and services. Such communication will work to persuade the companies of the urgency to address hiring and promotional gaps in their female cohort, and consequently work to develop starting points from where they can improve how they treat young female professionals. Specifically, employers and employees can engage with one another to discuss how to develop and enforce gender-neutral assessment rubrics of employee work, and enact disciplinary procedures for those who prejudice female employees. These collaborative processes will not only allow company managers to adopt behavior and follow standards that value staff performance, merit and skills during hiring and promotion decisions, rather than physical traits like gender, but also enable employees to develop a consensus on the rules that will encourage gender equality in the workplace, while fulfilling organizational objectives. Thus, in the long-run, there will be respectful practices and interactions that will contribute to a setting where young female professionals can become respected and gain equal opportunities to improve their skill sets, gain access to and advance upward in the organizational chain.



Further, managers must be willing to allow their employees to temporarily leave the firm for reasons not solely limited to childbirth. Ranging from vacation to medical leaves, employers must understand that their workers are not just labor inputs, but humans trying to fulfill various other needs and commitments or care for loved ones. This will allow firms to realize that there are legitimate conditions compelling temporary exit from work, as well as value their employees beyond their services for the organization. To address the case of gender discrimination in the hiring decisions of female employees more specifically, firms should craft specific guidelines to better address maternity leave: require several weeks of notice prior to the exit date for those requesting maternity leave, while recruiting unpaid interns or volunteers to perform the duties of those individuals for the duration of the leave. This will enable the company to have ample time to look for and hire temporary replacement candidates with greater time and efficiency. In turn, this will allow employers to alleviate concerns of potential costs associated with hiring female candidates, be more open to recruiting that group and engage in selection practices that align with gender-free assessments of employee qualifications, experience and capability.

Ultimately, in order to ensure that companies create changes within their own organizations to enable equal participation and hiring or promotion outcomes within women, policy changes must occur on a national level. The Korean Ministry

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# A Business Enterprise and Social Work

By Elizabeth Evans

Published in *The Compass*, Vol 25, No. 2.

*Social Work Practice - International, National, Local, January 1944*

Paul A. Kurzman holds a dual appointment as a Professor of Social Work at the Silberman School of Hunter College and as a Professor of Social Welfare at The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, USA, where he teaches policy and practice in the MSW and PhD programs. He is a descendant of Isidor and Ida Straus, a long-time SHS board member, and former chair.

In early March we received an email from Paul with an attached article. He wrote, "I came upon this article which taught me much that I did not know about my own profession." The article, "A Business Enterprise and Social Work," appeared in the journal, *The Compass*, Vol 25, No. 2, *Social Work Practice - International, National, Local* in January 1944. It was written by Elizabeth Evans, who worked in the Social Service Department of R. H. Macy & Co.

Perhaps it would be best to give you some background into how the Straus family came to own R. H. Macy's & Co., and the reason why this article is so interesting to us.

Lazarus Straus, born 1809, arrived in Philadelphia from southwestern Germany in 1852. He was advised that there were economic opportunities in the south. He traveled to Oglethorpe, GA, where the Kaufman brothers had settled the year before. They set Lazarus up with a peddler's cart. Lazarus was an honest, industrious man, who always treated his customers fairly and with respect. He was well established in 1865 by the end of the Civil War. He was 56 years old and felt the south would take a long time to recover. In those days, 56 was an advanced age. His oldest son, Isidor, advised him to move to New York and suggested that they could go into business together. They formed L. Straus & Son, a china and porcelain importing business. In the first year, their initial investment of \$6,000 was turned into \$60,000. When Nathan, Lazarus' second son, joined the business after completing high school in New York, he became their outside salesman. He made the acquaintance of Rowland Hussey Macy and talked Macy into allowing the Strauses to set up a china and crockery department in the basement of his dry goods store. It was so successful that, in the first year, it accounted for a 60% increase in sales for the store. In 1877 Macy died while on a business trip to Europe. By 1888 the Strauses were part owners of R. H. Macy & Co, and in 1894 they became sole owners.

By 1900, Isidor's two oldest sons, Jesse and Percy, had pretty well mastered the intricate details of Macy administration

and were beginning to render valuable assistance to the senior partners, father Isidor and uncle Nathan. By 1910 Jesse, Percy and their younger brother Herbert had taken over the main tasks of management. In the spring of 1912, upon Isidor's death in the Titanic disaster, the three sons and Nathan comprised the partnership. Nathan withdrew from the partnership at the close of 1913 leaving Jesse, Percy and Herbert in leadership positions. They formed a dynamic partnership with Jesse responsible for advertising and control, Percy responsible for management and Herbert for receiving. They are credited with a benevolent and progressive attitude toward their employees: forming the first Mutual Aid Society within a company, providing medical care on-site, and even a restaurant for employees where free, or low cost, meals were served.



Macy's Flagship Store  
Herald Square NYC  
1903

Elizabeth Evans, the author of the article, "A Business Enterprise and Social Work," went into detail about the functions of a social worker within the context of the work environment at Macy's.

The Social Service Department at Macy's was established in 1916. Elizabeth Evans quoted from Ralph M. Hower's book, *History of Macy's of New York*.

*For a number of years sensational stories had circulated about immorality among departments store employees, supposedly resulting from the low wages received by the salesgirls . . . A*

*minister (of New York's Committee of Fourteen) . . . discussed the problem with Percy Straus as a result of which the Strauses agreed to give full cooperation in an investigation as a test case, among Macy employees. Three young women selected by the committee worked as employees in various parts of the store during a period of six months . . . They made detailed reports . . . The general conclusion was that the behavior of the working force . . . was about what could be expected in any large and representative group of people and that there was no connection between low wages and immoral conduct. What impressed the investigators most was the existence of a surprising degree of inefficiency and a general absence of enthusiasm among the employees for their work. Deeply impressed . . . the Strauses set about to improve conditions. Among their first step was to employ one of the investigators, Marjorie Sidney, whose reports had revealed an unusual grasp of the problems, to assist with welfare and educational work. The entire task of recruiting and training employees was centralized in a separate department and a systematic effort was made to improve personnel relations.*

Elizabeth Evans continued: *Under Miss Sidney's capable leadership the social service department developed and expanded until it consisted of herself, the director, a case worker, a recreational worker a librarian, a camp director, housekeeping and counseling assistance as was necessary. The size of the staff remained substantially the same until three years ago when the interest of our employees in war activities made the establishment of a large war relief workroom necessary and the employment of a full time supervisor for the workroom.*

*Until two years ago, we provided a number of varied recreational activities for our employees. With our entrance into the war, however, this was changed almost overnight. Camera clubs, stamp clubs, dancing classes gave way to First Aid, Nutrition, and Home Nursing courses. The Little Theatre and the Glee Club were continued, but instead of working to entertain Macy employees, these groups began to entertain service men in hospitals and canteens. Floor and departmental parties were abandoned in favor of Red Cross benefits and dances for service men.*

*The Library too reflects the changing interests of employees. It has always been well-equipped with fiction, travel, biography, etc., as well as books having to do with retail marketing. During the past two years, we have not only added to the Library most of the fiction and non-fiction books published, but we have also included material for pre-induction study and other technical books relating to defense work. At the present time our weekly circulation is about 2,000 books.*



Macy's Employee Cafeteria  
1940s

*The only one of our social activities which has remained relatively unchanged by the war is the Macy Camp. Camp Isida, named in memory of Isidore [sic] and Ida Straus, was started during Miss Sidney's administration. It is more like an informal country club than a camp. The campers live in substantial houses with modern improvements and enjoy a private lake, tennis courts, baseball field, acres of woodland with shacks for picnics and overnight stays, a toboggan run, a recreation hall and an arts and crafts lodge.*

Ms. Evans' article describes the 1944 operations of the Social Service Department and the pressing problems of social work as it attempts to work out its relations with industry. It is interesting to learn how, even 28 years after its inception, the Social Service Department was still trying to define its role within the confines of industry.

Elizabeth Evans gave several examples of how her department handled specific situations that arose at the store. She made it clear that there was danger in trying to handle all problems "in house," and that some of the issues were best left to the purview of professionals - that her department's role might be

to make a referral to that outside agency. She wrote, *In Macy's the Social Service department is, and we feel strongly should be, distinct and separate from the rest of the departments in the Personnel Division. Employees bring their problems to us secure in the knowledge that our relationship with them will be a confidential one. Occasionally a new employee will tell us of financial need in the hope that we can bring about a raise or a transfer to a better job but there are few of these and most of our employees know that specific job problems should be taken up with their personnel representatives.*

*Employees come to the Social Service office for help about almost everything. They want to know where to get all kinds of medical treatment, where to find places to live, how to spend their spare time profitably yet inexpensively, where to go for vacations. They ask questions about relief agencies and homes for children and old people, and day nurseries for children. New York City is full of highly specialized and all too often little known, resources which help to make life pleasanter and easier. Employees ask for a great deal of legal advice: whether they can be sued, can break leases, can force their husbands, parents, children, to support them. Some of these questions we*

*can answer and others are referred to our Legal Department or the Legal Aid Society.*

*Marital difficulties and child training problems bring many people to the Social Service office. Problems like these, of course, are much too complicated to be handled by advice or any other superficial measure. When it is apparent that successful handling of these cases will mean long and intensive treatment they are with a few exceptions referred to local family agencies. Occasional referrals to psychiatric clinics are*

*also necessary.*

*Social work as a profession has made tremendous strides in the past 15 years. No longer do we as social workers feel that our work is accomplished when we have given our client advice. No matter how sound such advice may be, we know now that it is of little use unless the client is able to accept it. Another relic of the past is the social worker who unsolicited, sought out employees who she had reason to think were in trouble. Today in Macy's we feel that we have no right to visit an employee unless invited, no right to question the employee unless the employee himself is asking help. The attitude of course requires considerable interpretation, particularly to executives in the store.*

*Sometimes there is actual financial need and those problems we can meet in several ways. We can grant relief outright or we can make loans to be repaid without interest and over a period of time according to the employee's ability. These loans are usually restricted to emergencies and we make every effort to see that employee use the loan fund as constructively as*

possible. In order to determine the amount to be repaid we have to go pretty carefully into individual budgets, and often we can help the employee plan his expenditures more wisely. One interesting feature of these budget discussions is that the employee becomes aware of the fact that if he can afford to repay \$1, \$2, or \$5 a week on his loan he could also save this amount, and many people who have borrowed money open savings accounts just as soon as their loan is repaid. In order to make saving easier employees are allowed to deposit money with us, which money is then transferred to a local bank. It is possible for an employee to have more than one loan but unless he has had a series of disasters we usually feel that an application for a second loan indicates that the first loan was not of any real help to him as far as learning to budget his expenses was concerned. Employees wishing loans for less emergent purposes, tuition, furniture, etc., are referred to our credit union.

Another aspect of our work has to do with retired employees. The case worker interviews each old employee about to be pensioned and helps him plan for the future, sometimes the adjustment is a very difficult one, sometimes a cut in income means moving to cheaper quarters, reducing expenses everywhere. Often the most difficult part of the adjustment is a psychological one. Most of our old employees have worked hard for many years, have never prepared themselves for leisure. The store has been their life and they don't know what to do with themselves when they can no longer work. For these people we plan fairly frequent contacts during the early months of their retirement, encourage them to renew acquaintance with other retired employees, to visit with us and members of their old department when they come into the store to shop and send our monthly magazine so that they can keep up to date on store activities.

Briefly, then, the approach of a case worker to employee problems in a business setting of this sort is three fold: informational, environmental, and psychiatric. First, there is the information service. A case worker working in a large city should be thoroughly familiar with all its resources, educational, health, recreational. She should know the functions of the various social agencies and understand their policies and practices; she should have a working relationship with these agencies. Second, the case worker should be able to recognize when help should be given on a situational basis and administer it accordingly. This environmental assistance would cover the granting of loans, relief, and actual help with budgeting problems. And third, the case worker should be able to help employees adjust to their situations; to give them insight into their own problems; to help them realize their potentialities. She should be able to discriminate between hopeful and inoperable situations and to direct her activity so as to achieve the maximum results. Finally, the case worker should be a person who understands not only the point of view of the individual employee but that of the firm as a whole as well.

One of the additional services which we have been trying to develop is a consultative one for supervisors. Management has always used us as one resource in dealing with long-service employees presenting job problems. These include employees who because of age or illness or personality difficulty cannot continue in their regular work. These interviews are preceded by one between the employee and the department manager in which the employee is told of the difficulty and that we will try to help him work out a solution. He understands that our interview with him will be discussed with management in an effort to find the best possible place for him. Recently more and more supervisors have been calling on us for advice in dealing with staff problems. "Too good a worker to lose, but ..." these appeals usually begin, and end, "How do you think I ought to handle it?"

Any firms having so-called "welfare" departments expect one person to serve as nurse, recreational leader, and social worker and in few of the present day "counselling" jobs is there any clear definition of function. Under various headings, all adding up to "Social Work in Industry," we read of social workers interviewing all late employees, calling at the home to check on absenteeism, ordering groceries and calling for manicure and shampoo appointments for employees. We have spent many years, and still have not entirely succeeded, in educating the public to a realization that we are not Lady Bountifuls, handing out well-filled baskets to those worthy of our care. This other concept of a social worker as a combination of disciplinarian and social secretary is not much of an improvement. In entering a new field we as social workers must be sure of ourselves and of what we have to offer. Industry as a whole is far sighted and we can be sure that management will not long be satisfied with the superficial services which are labelled social work today. Social work



in industry is an almost unlimited field. We have entered it; now it is up to us how long we stay.

As historian for the Straus family for the past 30 years, I have learned a great deal about the family and their professions. This, of course, means that my knowledge must include information about the Straus' ownership of R. H. Macy & Co., and about the family's attitude toward their employees. I had no idea there was a Social Service Department within Macy's or the scope of its responsibilities. Elizabeth Evans' article, "A Business Enterprise and Social Work" has certainly expanded my knowledge of one aspect of the family business; the Social Services Department. It was fascinating to learn how many aspects of the day-to-day functioning of administrators and employees within Macy's come under its umbrella. And that, although founded in 1916, and 28 years since its inception, its role within R. H. Macy & Co. was still being defined.

Thank you to Paul Kurzman for alerting us to this very interesting article.

# Dr. Richard Weil (1876-1917)

This has been an unusual time for all of us. We are concerned about the health and safety of the members of our own family and of the people in our social circles. The news media keeps us informed about the COVID-19 Pandemic, and of the dire consequences that might befall us if we don't adhere to strict social distancing and mask wearing guidelines.

This is not the only time Americans have been warned about social distancing and advised to wear a mask to protect ourselves and our loved ones from a virulent disease. The Influenza Epidemic of 1918 has been compared to the COVID-19 Pandemic. People were advised, then, to wear masks. Many of them did not. And many people died.

Richard Weil, the husband of Minnie Straus Weil, was one of the unfortunates who died during the Influenza Epidemic of 1918. As far as I know, he was the only Straus family member to lose his life to the influenza.

Richard Weill was born in New York City on October 15, 1876 to Leopold and Matilda Tanzer Weil. Leopold was a customs house broker and Matilda was the principal of a private boarding school. Census records from this time period reveal that they had as many as sixteen students living in their home, all students of her school. Richard was the sixth of seven children; three girls and four boys. In 1894, he graduated from Columbia College in New York City where he was a member of the Science Society. He received his medical degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeon at Columbia in 1900.

Biographies of Richard Weil describe him as an allopath; someone who practices science based medicine. After studying abroad for two years at the Universities of Vienna and of Leipzig, he practiced in New York City at German Hospital which served the mostly German communities.

Biographer James Ewing wrote, "By 1906 he became part of the administration team of the Huntington Fund for Cancer Research and was constantly engaged in this problem at the Loomis Laboratory where he initiated those investigations on the reactions of cancer and immune sera which became his chief interest. His contributions in the field of the serology of cancer, as well as, in the general problems of immunity, gained him a wide reputation. One of the founders of the American Association for Cancer Research, he was a founder and editor-in-chief of the Journal of Cancer Research. When the Memorial Hospital was reorganized in 1913, Weil became

assistant director in cancer research and attending physician in the Hospital and labored energetically to establish efficient routine work; here he preferred and employed the method of transfusing citrated blood. On his appointment as professor of experimental medicine at Cornell University in 1915, he resigned his directorship of the Memorial Hospital, but continued his experimental work in cancer.



Richard Weil  
1905

On the declaration of war by the United States in 1917, he offered his services to the Government, and spent the summer at the Medical Officers' Training Corps, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, and only a short time before death was detailed a chief of the medical staff of the base hospital at Camp Joseph Wheeler, Macon, Georgia, where he died from pneumonia November 19, 1917, at the age of forty-one, a major in the Medical Reserve Corps.

Weil was a fellow of the American Medical Association and a member of the American Association of Pathology and Bacteriology; he was visiting physician to Mount Sinai Hospital and to the Montefiore Home, New York."

On May 31, 1905 Dr. Richard Weil married Minnie Straus, at the Elberon, NJ home of her parents, Isidor and Ida Straus. Nearly 200 relatives and invited guests were present. Richard and Minnie had three children; Evelyn, Richard and Frederick Peter.



Minnie Straus Weil  
1905

When Richard Weil fell ill, Minnie traveled to Georgia and was with him when he died. She accompanied his body back to New York. After a brief private service at the Weil home, 1000 Park Avenue, a military service was held at Temple Emanu-El, after which his body was interred at Beth El Cemetery in the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum. Half a mile from the cemetery the cortege was met by a company of soldiers and escorted to the burial plot.

After Dr. Enelow had read the burial service, three volleys were fired over the grave and a bugle call sounded. In 1941 Richard Weil's remains were removed from the mausoleum and cremated.

Minnie Straus Weil never remarried. She continued to live at 1000 Park Avenue and at her summer home in Mt. Kisco, NY, where she died in 1940. She was a member of the Social Service Boards of the Metropolitan and Memorial Hospitals of New York.

# Relaunch of the Virtual Museum of Public Service

We are pleased to announce the relaunch of the Virtual Museum of Public Service which is hosted by the National Center for Public Performance at Suffolk University's Institute for Public Service. The museum explores digital representations of significant works of visual art, film, video, and writing that depict the expansive - and often unrecognized - achievements and sacrifices of public servants.

Public Service embodies the ethical principles of the common good, service to others, and social equity. The essential components of our society are largely carried out in the public sphere: education, health, justice and security, environmental protection, infrastructure and transportation, the arts, and more. Yet, the brilliant endeavors undertaken in government, nonprofit and volunteer settings are often overshadowed. Instead, public service is often oversimplified, receiving unjustified criticism as inefficient or inept.

The Virtual Museum of Public Service balances this stereotype, drawing upon digital representations of great works of visual art, film, video, and writing to depict the largely unrecognized achievements and sacrifices of individuals in the public service. Thereby, the museum reflects the lasting contributions that public servants have made to the public - in their communities, nations, and the world.

The museum has over 30 galleries for permanent and special exhibitions. Among these are galleries dedicated to Public Service as a Profession, Nonprofit Organizations, Women in Public Service, Security, Fire and Emergency Management, Science in Public Service, Philanthropy, Leadership in Public Service, and many more.

The Virtual Museum of Public Service aims to connect individuals with artistic representations of the societal value of public service. The museum is a tool for upholding these principles and illuminating the largely unrecognized achievements and sacrifices made by individuals, upon which the ethos of public service is built.

The Straus Historical Society has contributed a large exhibit with photographs and information about family members and their public service. It can be found in the Special Exhibit Wing of the Virtual Museum of Public Service in an area called The Straus Family – Pioneers in Public Service & Philanthropy. One can access family trees and information about the individuals by clicking on their photograph.

Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and continuing into the 20<sup>th</sup>, members of the Straus Family have served in governmental positions at the federal and local levels. More particularly, family members have served in the House of Representatives, as Ambassadors, and as Presidential Cabinet Members. 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, family members were the owners of Macy's for nearly 100 years. In addition to their participation in the commercial development of the City of New York and America in general, family members have been in a position to assist others less fortunate throughout this period of time. Members of the family have served 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 its spirit.

Thus, it is not so much the story of one family that is sought to be told, but rather the American experience as seen through and lived by a family during this period of growth of America.

During this time of shelter-in-place suggestions and social distancing, this is a wonderful way to visit a museum and to learn more about the Straus family and its public service and philanthropic endeavors. As time permits, we will be submitting information and photographs of other family members whose contributions should be noted, and celebrated.

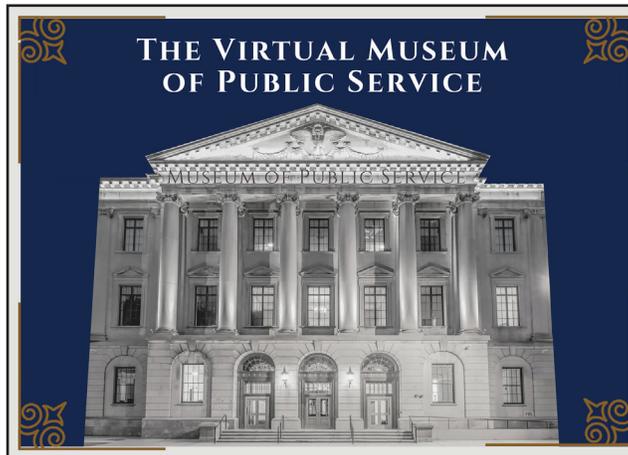
Feel free to contact us for more information, with suggestions of other family members and their public service or philanthropy that you feel should be included, or with comments and questions.

You can visit the Virtual Museum of Public Service at:

**[www.vmps.us](http://www.vmps.us)**

Information about the members of the Straus family may be found in the Special Exhibitions Wing in The Straus Family: Pioneers in Public Service & Philanthropy Room.

We hope you enjoy exploring this fascinating online museum.



# Friends of Straus Park

by Al Berr

Photographs by Joe Arbo

As faithful readers of this page know, the August issue of the Newsletter usually reports on the commemoration that Friends of Straus Park holds on or about April 15<sup>th</sup>, the date of the Titanic event. Usually, we display memorabilia pertaining to the Strauses and the ship.

As we all know, this year is far from usual, and Friends of Straus Park decided against our customary display in the interest of physical distancing and overall safety measures. However, we have not relinquished our commitment to the park and its neighbors. Thanks to the work and the dedication of our gardener, Joe Arbo, the park continues to bloom and to reflect the colorful changes of the seasons as always.

We have noticed an increase in the number of people in the park during the past few months and we thought to take an informal survey to find out why. So, we asked this question: During the siege of the coronavirus, what, if anything, has Straus Park meant to you?

Here are some of the replies:

A beautiful and quiet place to stroll through on a Spring day, or a perfect spot to meet a friend and chat at a distance. The park has been kept up beautifully during the virus; it really has become a destination spot. - Sharon Simpson

For me, walking from West 102<sup>nd</sup> Street to one of the merchants we have tried to support during the crisis, it was always a comfort to walk through Straus Park on my way there or back. It is a veritable oasis. - Terence Hanrahan

Straus Park is a refuge. Always beautifully landscaped and cared for, it is a haven of beauty and repose. I treasure it. - David Leisner

When I walk through, such a relaxed mix of folks sitting around at ease. A place of memory with the Titanic statue and the living vividness of the beautifully curated and tended flowers. And I love looking out my window in all seasons to appreciate how the park breaks up the city street grid so gracefully. - Nancy Anderson

We thank these and all friends of Straus Park and we are gratified by their appreciation.

It is also customary for us to announce a proposed date for our annual Art in the Park event, which is usually scheduled for late September or October. At this time, and in consideration of current coronavirus conditions, we have decided to postpone the event to a date to be determined in the future. In the meantime, Friends of Straus Park continues the care and tending of our neighborhood treasure, and we wish that all our friends and neighbors stay well.



Above: Two dwarf pink roses  
Below: Pink and yellow lily



Above: Baby robin born in Straus Park  
Below: Lovely orange hibiscus



