



STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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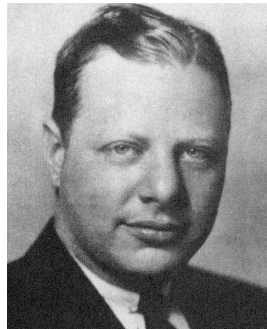
Straus is the German word for ostrich

August 2015

THE STRAUS FAMILY AND WORLD WAR II

World War II ended 70 years ago; in the European Theatre in May 1945 and in the Pacific in September 1945. We remember and honor the many family members who fought, or were somehow involved in World War II, by proudly presenting their stories.

Robert Kenneth (Bob) Straus (son of Jesse Isidor, grandson of Isidor) enlisted in the Army and was inducted in June 1942 and was commissioned Second Lieutenant. Bob became an aide to Colonel Pat Johnston at the Pentagon in charge of all the non-combat divisions of the Army. He secured a post with the Military Government in the European Theatre in January 1944 at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces).



Robert Kenneth Straus

General Dwight David Eisenhower was its commander. Bob was assigned to the displaced persons section of SHAEF's French Mission, which moved to Paris, France in September of 1944 after its liberation. He was the liaison officer to the 12th Army group in Verdun under the command of General Omar Bradley, overseeing the establishment of processing centers for the returning French prisoners of war and the thousands of French workers who had been deported to man the German factories.

While working with the Danish Mission, Bob arranged for 100,000 Russian prisoners of war from Norway to be fed and put on planes to Russia. He said it was good to know they had helped release the Danes from the rule of the Germans.

In 1945 he worked in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia under the Yalta Agreement trying to help people return home to the Baltic provinces of the Soviet Union. Then, in August 1945, he worked at the Displaced Persons Section of G-5 Civil Affairs staff at the U.S. headquarters in Frankfurt known as USFET (US Forces European Theatre.) Approximately 410,000 displaced persons were being cared for in the U.S. Zone in Germany.

On November 19, 1945 Bob was promoted to the rank of Major. He then became part of a task force commissioned by the Joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to study what could be done about the reintegration of Jewish survivors into Europe. Bob was charged with handling the logistics of the eleven man team. They traveled to displaced persons camps in Stuttgart,

Munich, Nuremberg, Prague and Vienna. In almost every case they learned the people wanted to relocate to Palestine.

Irving Lehman Straus (son of Nathan Jr., grandson of Nathan) was an officer in the Navy. He was the top night fighter ace in the Pacific, flying F4U Corsairs from aircraft carriers. Son Dan sent pages from a book, *Flying with Iron Angels* that details the actions of the 14th Squadron to which Irving was attached. Page 22: "... November 6, 1944, at 4:00 AM, Lieutenant (jg) James Bruce, Jr., and Ensign Irving Straus, two of our night



Irving Lehman Straus

fighters, took off on a heckler and night intruder mission over Clark Field. When a "Sally" (Mitsubishi Ki-21) bomber flew over the field, Straus attacked and got hits on it and then Bruce finished it off - the last enemy plane shot down in the war by Fighting Fourteen pilots." A citation from Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, reads, "The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the AIR MEDAL to Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Irving Lehman Straus United States Naval Reserve for service as set forth in the following Citation: For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Fighting Squadron Fourteen, attached to the U.S.S. Wasp, in action against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of the northern Philippine Islands, on October 18, 1944. Flying his plane against numerically superior hostile airborne opposition, Lieutenant, Junior Grade, (then Ensign) Straus destroyed an enemy fighter in aerial combat and contributed materially to the success of his squadron in the fulfillment of a vital mission. By his skill and devotion to duty, Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Straus upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

R. Peter Straus (son of Nathan Jr., grandson of Nathan) graduated from Yale University in 1943, a year early under a World War II program, so that he could participate in the war effort. He became a B-17 pilot and flew 35 bombing missions over Germany.

*History is not a burden on the memory
but an illumination of the soul.*

Lord Acton

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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
Vice Chair Richard Gerstman**

With our mission of advancing the knowledge and appreciation of the Straus family and the historical context in which they lived, I am recommending that you visit two important museums. One of the museums is a "Virtual Museum." The other museum is a "Reality (brick-and-mortar) Museum."

The Virtual Museum of Public Service, sponsored by the Rutgers-Newark School of Public Affairs and Administration in Newark, NJ has an "exhibit room" titled, "The Straus Family: A Legacy of

Public Service and Philanthropy." When you go to their website you are treated to highlights of the Straus family's history, including photographs, stories and links to information about Lazarus and Sara Straus, their ancestors and their descendants. The impetus for this exhibit came from Board member Al Berr. Joan Adler and Catherine Smith provided the vast array of information that lies within the web pages of this museum. Go to this museum's website, <http://www.vmps.us/straus-family> and you will enjoy reading about Straus history and heritage. We would like your comments about the exhibits that are offered. Keep in mind that, since the exhibit is computer-generated, it can be modified or extended if there is information you would like us to add. Feel free to contact Joan Adler at info@straushistoricalsociety.org with your information.

The second museum I highly recommend is a "Reality Museum." In my mind it is one of America's finest museums and is located in the historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia. It is called the National Museum of American Jewish History. With movies, photographs and artifacts, the museum shows how Jewish immigrants became Americans and describes their 360-year history in America. I had visited this impressive museum last year and saw among the exhibits a sampling of information about Isidor and Ida Straus. I felt strongly that many achievements of the Straus family were missing. This included their leadership in the US Congress and Cabinet, their relationships with US presidents, and their achievements in science -- including the funding for pasteurization in the United States and worldwide. After discussing at a Board Meeting what I believed was missing from this important museum, Joan prepared a presentation and she, Catherine and I made a trip to Philadelphia to meet with the Museum's curator and their program director. Joan was able to describe for the museum personnel the extraordinary achievements of the Straus family. Her presentation emphasized our feeling that the Straus family was underrepresented in their exhibits. We also suggested that the Museum should host a Straus presentation.

The curator outlined some of the artifacts they would be prepared to exhibit. This included the original milk bottles in which pasteurized milk was delivered, Nathan Straus's calling card, correspondence between Louis Brandeis and Nathan Jr. about Zionism, photographs, letters from FDR during his presidency, and Education Alliance materials. Also discussed at this meeting was the opportunity for Joan to lecture to their docents, who would then relay the information about the Strauses to the hundreds of thousands of Museum visitors.

We do hope that you will take advantage of the wonderful opportunity to visit these two outstanding museums -- the Rutgers University "Virtual Museum" and the "Reality" National Museum of American Jewish History in the heart of Philadelphia.

Nathan Straus III (son of Nathan Jr., grandson of Nathan) joined the Navy before Pearl Harbor and received his commission in March 1942. During the war he was stationed mostly at naval bases in Londonderry, North Ireland and in Nantes, France. His specialty was communications. He also served briefly on a destroyer escort across the Atlantic, where he claimed his only significant accomplishment was depth charging one or two schools of fish. His final rank was Lieutenant Commander. He served for thirty months in the European Theatre and was then stationed at the United States Naval Shipyard in Brooklyn.



Nathan Straus III



Barnard Sachs Straus: (son of Nathan Jr., grandson of Nathan) Barney's commanding officer suggested that, because he could speak French and German, he would be a good candidate for Officer's Candidate School. Disappointed, because he wanted to see active duty, but able to see the logic in this argument, Barney moved to Miami for training.

Then he returned to Harvard to Statistical School and became a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. Barney was shipped overseas in February 1943. The bombs were still dropping on Britain and he had one very close call. Barney spent the war in the European theater, surveying bomb damage, assessing how many planes we lost, how the battles had gone. John Kenneth Galbraith headed the unit. After VE Day, Barney's unit also took on the responsibility of interrogating prisoners. He learned that, in war, it is necessary to take each day as it comes and to do the best you can.

Oscar S. Straus II (son of Roger W., grandson of Oscar S.) was a U.S. Foreign Service Officer assigned to Canada. Oscar's wife Joan Sutton Straus wrote, "Oscar wanted to enlist in the Navy but they would not take him because of his eyes. His father knew the head of the US Coast Guard, who swore him into the US Coast Guard on the 18th of January, 1943, as a Lieutenant jg. He had eight weeks of Officers' Indoctrination at St. Augustine Fla. (he said that was where he really learned to sail.) He was then assigned to the Department of State as a divisional assistant in the Intelligence Section. As he was in the State Department before he joined the Coast Guard, he would say that he went out one door and came back in another. He never talked about what he did in the intelligence section -- I know he never was overseas and the only thing he ever did reveal was when I mentioned that I had met Barbara Hutton in Rome, he said that during the war



Oscar S. Straus II

(because of her marriage to the German Count Reventlow) he read her mail. Apart from that he refused to talk about what he did. He was separated from the service on December 13, 1944."

Kenneth Hollister Straus (son of Jack H., grandson of Jesse Isidor) was drafted into the Army as a private in July 1943, two weeks after his graduation from Milton Academy. He was assigned to the Infantry and was shipped to Europe in the summer of 1944. He arrived at Omaha Beach in September as an Infantry Replacement. He served in France, becoming the communications man for his unit, a job for which he had no training. He had to maintain contact with the command post, the platoon and out to the listening posts. He had to repair the lines that were cut either by mortar or by a careless driver who didn't pay attention to where his antenna was going as he drove his tank or truck through their command area. Ken saw action in Alsdorf, Schauffenberg, Mariadorf, Hongen and Kinzweiler. He was in Kinzweiler when The Battle of the Bulge began on December 17, 1944. He was in Aachen with the 30th Division heading south when the Luftwaffe discovered their position. They were fired upon for several hours. They then proceeded to the town of Malmedy in Belgium where they were at the place of the German's deepest penetration. Their job was to stop the German's advance. Ken saw quite a lot of action until their unit was told the lines had stabilized and they would be going on the offensive. He was billeted in a farmhouse where, for the first time in months, he took off his boots only to find that his feet were blue and numb; he had trench foot. He would not return to the front line again. He called this his luckiest medical problem. His next assignment was at the Bureau of Personnel at the Headquarters of the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, in Washington, D.C. There, promoted to Corporal and sporting a Combat Infantry Badge, he found that life was much more to his liking. He was in charge of the personnel files of the secret operatives who were undergoing training. He was mustered out after VJ Day, in October 1945, after twenty nine months in service. Ken received the Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, American Theater Service Ribbon, European African Middle Eastern Service Ribbon, Distinguished Unit Badge and the World War II Victory Ribbon. He said that he hated everything about the military.



Kenneth Hollister Straus

Ralph Isidor Straus: (son of Percy S., grandson of Isidor) From 1943 to 1946 Ralph Straus was in the US Army. He was commissioned as a Major when he entered and discharged as a Lieutenant Colonel in January 1946. He served in the Allied Military Government in Italy as Military Governor of Naples. He was in charge



Ralph Isidor Straus

of the transportation and distribution of solid fuels. Ralph had war medals for campaign and service in the European African Middle Eastern Campaign of 1941 to 1945, Army of the Occupation in Germany in 1945 and the United States of America Victory in World War II, 1941 to 1945. Ralph's son Bradford Peter Straus recently sent SHS multiple patches and ribbons Ralph wore including: U.S. Army European, 7th Armored Division, 5th Army, Army Service Forces, 3rd Service Command. Brad remembers visiting his father at Fort Dix, NJ where they all had K-rations for lunch. K-rations were a standard box of food that fed the troops during the war.

Donald Blun Straus (son of Percy S., grandson of Isidor) was an Ensign in the Navy in 1944. Since his eyesight wasn't good enough to become a Navy pilot, Don joined the Civil Aeronautics Board after Pearl Harbor. One day, while there as chief of personnel, the medical director of the agency called him on the phone and urgently requested five more secretaries. Don saw this as an opportunity to finesse a waiver and promised to fulfill the doctor's request if he would certify that Don's flying experience justified a commercial rating, 20/100 vision notwithstanding. With this waiver in hand, Don quit his job at the CAB and signed up for civilian flight instructor training. After about six months of enjoying himself doing loops and landings with his students, his application for naval duty was accepted. He became an Air Combat Intelligence Officer and spent time in British Guyana, Dutch Guyana and in Puerto Rico with various antisubmarine warfare squadrons.

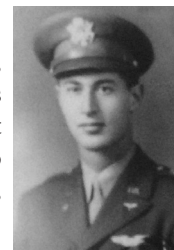
Gerald Dun Levy (son of Beatrice Straus Levy, grandson of Jesse Isidor) served in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany as a Field Artillery Forward Observer with an Infantry Division. Robert K. Straus wrote of Gerry, "He crawled out on the ground to rescue a wounded friend, and while he was under heavy machine gun fire, one of the bullets got him." For his courage under action, Gerry was awarded the Bronze Star. Gerry wrote, "I was a First Lieutenant. I was wounded in Germany at The Battle of the Bulge and spent eleven months in hospitals, ending up in Halloran Hospital on Staten Island in New York. I served in the military from 1943 to 1945."

Richard Weil Jr.: (son Minnie Straus Weil, grandson of Isidor) In a February 9, 1952 *New Yorker* article, Dwight MacDonald described Bob Weil as someone who "always had a hankering after a life of excitement and peril. ... Weil devoted as much ingenuity getting into hazardous service as some of his fellow-citizens did in keeping out of it." Bob Weil gained entry to the Army where he was commissioned Captain and assigned to Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan's Office of Strategic Services. He went to the O.S.S. base in Bari, Italy where "he was promoted to the rank of Major and, as a Service Officer, helped organize the smuggling of arms and supplies to the Partisans behind German lines in the Balkans. ... In January of 1944 he was dropped by parachute into Yugoslavia with orders to report to Tito's headquarters." MacDonald stated that "Weil was the only Allied officer Tito trusted enough to issue a blanket pass. 'All Partisans will give Colonel Weil every possible assistance under any circumstances.' Bob spent two and half months in Tito's headquarters, enough time for him

to report that if a conflict should arise between Yugoslav and Russian interests, Tito would prove disappointing to Stalin. In December 1944 Bob Weil received the Legion of Merit. The citation read: "Colonel Weil (a promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel had come through by then) so successfully supervised large clandestine shipments of arms, supplies, and troops to the Dalmatian Islands and the mainland beyond, that not a single ship of cargo was lost ... Upon one occasion, Colonel Weil led a mission in an heroic attempt to evacuate a large number of Air Corps nurses, officers, and enlisted men who had crash-landed in Balkan countries..."

A *New York Sun* article of September 13, 1945 reported, "Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Weil, Jr., ... was the officer in charge of a group which made the first trip into Switzerland in civilian clothes to arrange for the secret meetings between Allied officers and Germans reported to be seeking a plan for surrender."

John Wendell Straus (son of Herbert N., grandson of Isidor) joined the U.S. Air Corps in 1942 and spent three years teaching first Americans and then French students how to fly. He was initially stationed in Montgomery, AL.

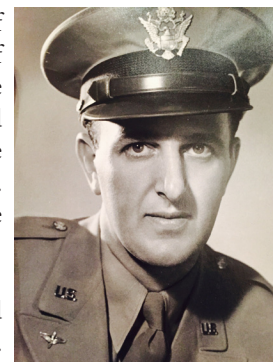


John W. Straus

Herbert Adolph (Buzzy) Scheftel Jr (son of Vivian, grandson of Isidor) was an Air Traffic Controller. He saw numerous invasions and received the Croix de Guerre.

Stuart (Boy) Scheftel (son of Vivian, grandson of Isidor) was in the O.S.S. He had had rheumatic fever as a child and couldn't get into the service. He was the first man to put de Gaulle in the air in France at the front lines. He received the Legion of Honor.

Oscar Straus Schafer (son of Mildred Straus Schafer, grandson of Oscar S. Straus) was a Major in the Army Air Forces. He was stationed in London during the war where he was an air traffic controller. He received the Belgian Croix de Guerre and six battle stars.



Oscar Straus Schafer

Edward Schafer Jr. (son of Mildred Straus Schafer, grandson of Oscar S. Straus) was a First Lieutenant in the Army Air Forces.

Roger Williams (Bill) Straus Jr.: (son of Roger W., grandson of Oscar S.) With the onset of World War II, Bill joined the Navy in 1941 but a spinal infection prevented him from seeing action. He was put to work in the Magazine and Book Section of the Navy Office of Public Relations in New York, with his friend James Van Allen. For the duration of the war, Bill wrote speeches, gave clearance to reporters traveling abroad and approved magazine copy. Lieutenant Straus was discharged in 1945. After the war he founded the publishing house of Farrar, Straus & Company. Their first title was, *Yank: The G.I. Story of*

the War. It was a collection of wartime articles from the Army magazine *Yank*.

David A. Morse: (husband of Mildred Hockstader, the granddaughter of Oscar S. Straus) When war broke out, David gave up his law practice to join the Army. From June 1943 to April 1944, Morse served as a Captain in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, where he was appointed Chief of the Labor Division of the Allied Military Government. He drafted and put into effect the labor policy and program in Sicily and Italy for the British and United States Governments and Armies. As Chief of the Labor Section of the U.S. Group Control Council for Germany under Generals Eisenhower and Clay, he prepared the labor policy and program for Germany. Promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel, he was awarded the Legion of Merit for his army service in 1946.



David A. Morse,
Harry S. Truman,
Mildred H. Morse

Albert Frank Hockstader (son of Aline Straus Hockstader who was the daughter of Oscar S. Straus) was in the Army Reserves as a Second Lieutenant when war broke out. He was activated almost immediately and sent to Ft. Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis, IN for training for the Finance Office. From there he was sent to Ft. Bliss in El Paso, TX. and then to the Red River Ordinance Depot in Texarkana, AR. He was then transferred to Panama until the end of the war. Immediately upon his return to NYC he became very sick and the doctors suspected some kind of tropical disease. They pumped him full of a new drug called penicillin and he got even sicker, and almost died until his doctor took him completely off penicillin and put him on large doses of aspirin which saved his life. He was 40 years old in February 1946. He stayed in the reserves for a few years and then resigned as a Major. Not really a war story but he was over age when he served and got a good conduct discharge when he left the Army.

Edward Kuhn Straus (son of Herbert N., grandson of Isidor) was in the Navy, a pilot during the war. Granddaughter Katie Gillin believes the Army told him he was too old to serve and that his work was mainly administrative.

Evelyn Straus de Meir: (daughter of Minnie Straus Weil, granddaughter of Isidor) Peter Richardson, Evelyn's son wrote: "I was, at the time, living with Richard Weil's family in the states, having been sent in 1939 at age 5 by my mother, then Evelyn Straus de Meir, to escape the anticipated blitz and invasion of London. She stayed in England, at Claridges, and performed nursing duties until her husband, Sebastian de Meir, who had volunteered for the Royal Air Force, was shot down and killed in a bombing run over Germany."



Evelyn Straus
Weil deMeir and
Peter Richardson

Guy Remington (fiancé of Carol Hockstader, the daughter of Aline Straus Hockstader and the granddaughter of Oscar S. Straus) was killed while parachuting behind enemy lines.

Oliver Herbert Straus: (son of Herbert N., grandson of Isidor) We've been unable to verify this information but family lore suggests Oliver's eyesight was poor and he couldn't fly, although this is how he wished to make a contribution during the war. He did have his MD degree by then and did his internship studying oxygen narcosis, a malady suffered by pilots who breathed too much oxygen. He invented the oxygen mask that restricted the flow of oxygen, thereby making a huge contribution to the war effort by enabled pilots to safely fly higher and longer.

Hugh Grant Straus, Jr. (son of Hugh Grant, grandson of Nathan) was drafted into the Army. He was initially sent to Fort Dix, NJ and then to Tampa Bay, FL. He did active duty in the Philippines where he did reconnaissance photography. He lived for some time in a foxhole.



Hugh Grant Straus, Jr.

Max Hart (husband of Florence G. Straus who was the granddaughter of Oscar S. Straus) was a Lieutenant when he married Florence G. Straus on June 18, 1945. He enlisted in February 1942 and served at the First Army Headquarters in England and in France. When he came home from Europe Max was scheduled to go to the Pacific. The bombs were dropped on Japan so he didn't have to return to active duty abroad.



Florence S. and Max A. Hart
1945

Arthur Henry Bijur (son of Eugenie Blum Bijur, a Maas descendant) enlisted in the Army after graduating from Brown University in 1941. He served in the Army Signal Corps, 23rd Signal Company, 43rd Infantry Division in the U.S. Army. In March 1942 he was appointed Second Lieutenant and was shipped to the Pacific where he took part in the Munda Campaign and the invasion of New Guinea and the Philippines. He achieved the rank of Captain. Arthur received the Silver Star and the Purple Heart for saving his company. He was out of his foxhole checking on his men during an attack when a shell exploded. He was killed in action on Luzon in the Philippines on January 14, 1945 and is buried in the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial.



A painting of
Arthur Henry Bijur
painted by his father,
Nathan I. Bijur

William (Bill) Bijur: (son of Eugenie Blum Bijur, a Maas descendant) Bill's son Arthur wrote: "Dad attended Brown (University) where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. While at Brown he excelled in languages (useful later in his wartime service) ... He was 28 when the war broke out. He enlisted and was given the opportunity to take some tests which involved crossword type puzzles and acrostics. The results landed him in a codebreaking training program based in New Jersey. He graduated as Lieutenant Bijur and was selected to become one of the first nine Americans sent to Bletchley Park to join the Ultra Project, a top-secret code breaking unit. There has been quite a lot written about this group and the general consensus was that the introduction of the Americans was highly successful and they were integral to the successes achieved at Bletchley Park."



William Bijur

Hut Six, where my father was assigned, was responsible for decoding German Army and Air Force messages and they apparently got quite proficient at it, decoding dozens and sometimes hundreds of messages a day. The overall sense of purpose and camaraderie was understandably high even though hours were long, working conditions were stressful.

An amazing fact is that even though almost six thousand people served at Bletchley during the war years, the secret that Enigma had been decoded wasn't known until years later. The workers were not allowed to talk to each other about what they did on a daily basis or what they worked on. Then after the war, Churchill had records destroyed and files shredded. He even had the computers broken apart. He had a reason; during the war, Churchill had little trust of the Russians who had become their allies. In a clever and sly move after the war ended, Churchill shared an Enigma machine with the Russians as part of the agreement among allies that they would share spoils of war including scientific information and technology. The Russians, however, had no idea that Enigma had been decoded and used the machine for many years before learning otherwise. The secrets of Bletchley were not declassified until 1964.

Bill never discussed specifics with my mother, Hilda, and would only tell her that he worked on codes during WW2 in England, that it was all still secret and it was a very fulfilling part of his life. Not surprising -- given that experts and historians generally agree that what was accomplished there shortened the war by two years. Since then, many books have been written about Bletchley. Bill went on to have a successful career in advertising and, sadly, died in 1960."

Hilda Reis, a photographer, married William Bijur after World War II. During the war she went to Washington D.C. to write for the Red Cross publication.

Herbert Bijur (son of Eugenie Blum Bijur, a Maas descendant) was drafted into the Army but spent about a month before he

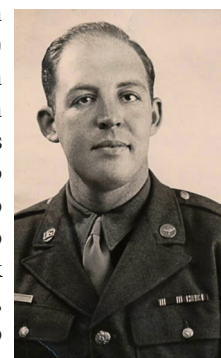
got a bleeding ulcer. Daughter Polly said he remained very active by organizing war bond campaigns.

Marion Bijur, Herbert's wife, worked in a radar factory during 1944-45.

Fred (Heinsheimer) Harris (son of Paula Blum Heinsheimer, a Maas descendant) immigrated to the U.S. from Frankfurt Germany in 1937. When he joined the U.S. Army, he was naturalized and changed his name from Fritz Heinsheimer to Fred Harris. He fought in the Pacific.

Louis Richard Schorr (husband of Claire Gerstman Schorr, a Moises Lazarus descendant) served in the U.S. Navy on active duty from April 1944 through May 1946. He held the rank of Lieutenant with the Naval Supply Corps. He utilized his training as a CPA to audit various defense contractors to determine whether they were charging the Navy the correct prices as per their contracts. Louis spent time in Washington, Chicago and New York City during this period.

Jack Bernard Straus (son of Abraham Straus Jr., a Moises Lazarus descendant) was a Sergeant in the Army Air Force in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and France with the 48th Troop Carrier Squadron. He was a supply clerk. His unit performed troop carrier and transport airlift of supplies to the advancing ground forces. They also evacuated the wounded personnel. Jack was stationed near Bapaume, France, an area of intense fighting. He wrote to his family, "I have never been in a battle or exposed to enemy fire." Jack served from May 1943 through September 1945.



Jack Bernard Straus

Otto C. Altschuler (son of Maximilion who was a Maas descendant) Written by Otto: "I immigrated from Hitler-occupied Czechoslovakia in August of 1939. ... We were lucky



to get out just a few weeks before World War 2 broke out. I was anxious to serve my new country and was delighted when I was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942. After five weeks of basic training for officer candidates a clerk notified me that non-citizens could not enter officers training and that a 3 months service was required to become a citizen. As an alternative, I was sent to a motor mechanic school ... where I was trained to become an engine rebuilder specialist. After completion of the 6 week course, I was sent to Morocco, North Africa. I spent several months with an Ordinance Unit in Patton's 5th Army where we retrieved and repaired tanks and trucks, working under combat conditions, 3 to 5 miles behind the front lines. I was the only motor mechanic who did not know how to drive and therefore I was never able to volunteer to take ammunition to the front lines. ...After about 3 months the War Department ordered me to leave my unit since non-

citizens were not supposed to be in a combat zone, for that matter should not be sent overseas until sworn in as citizens. I had to wait many months for a State Department official to arrive at the Eastern Base Headquarters in Constantine, Algeria, to make me a U.S. citizen. ... During the rest of my Army career I worked with the 5th Air Force in Italy. I was overseas for 3 years until I was returned home and discharged in December of 1945."

Herbert F. Altschuler (son of Maximilion, a Maas descendant) enlisted in the Army at the same time as his brother Otto. Herb served in the Army Air Corps in World War II. He served in Italy, Sicily and North Africa. His brother, Otto served at the same time, and at times they were stationed at the same place. Herb once paid a surprise visit to Otto in an infirmary after Otto sustained a minor injury. Herb started out as a typist, but near the end of the war, it was found that he had a special talent.



Herbert F.
Altschuler

Written by daughter Margo, "Herb grew up in the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, so he spoke German at home, but learned Czech in school. Near the end of the war, the Nazis conscripted the Czechs into the German Army. Many of them surrendered to the Allies, as the Americans and British treated their prisoners more humanely than the Germans treated these troops. Knowing the language and geography of Czechoslovakia, Herb could interrogate these prisoners as to where they had worked in munitions factories, etc. Also, because German and Czech are such different languages, Herb could tell from their accents, who was Czech and who were German spies. Although this skill was crucial to the war effort, Herb was never sent to officers' training and did this intelligence work as a sergeant. Herb was very proud of having served his adopted country, and after the war, was very active in the Jewish War Veterans."

Hans Herman (Henry) Kahn (son of Abraham, a Moises Lazarus descendant) immigrated to the US in 1938. He enlisted in the US Army in January 1941, before the U.S. was involved in the war. He was a Private. After being released from the Army, he was called back after Pearl Harbor. Henry went to Officers Candidates School eventually rising to the rank of Captain. He was sent to North Africa where he taught meteorology and German. Henry was in intelligence. He wasn't on the front lines but would follow after a town was taken over. He would commandeer the phone exchanges. He served in Austria where his job, because he could speak and understand German, was to listen to the phone conversations between the Nazi and Austrian military personnel. He was among the



Henry Kahn and
Marjorie Gerstman
on their wedding day,
June 1943

first to learn that looted art was being hidden in the caves and knew it wasn't far from his location. He often thought he could go there to see it but never did and he regretted that. He was released in 1945.

Not all members of the family served in active duty during the war. Some were too old or had professions deemed critical at home. **Mortimer Gerstman, Richard Gerstman's father** (a Moises Lazarus descendant) was too old to serve. He was an Air Raid Warden in Forest Hills, NY. **Susan Klee's father, William Benjamin Klee, Jr., (a Moises Lazarus descendant)** wanted to enlist but was told that his work in the steel industry was too important. Her mother **Margaret (Peggy) Straus Klee** joined the Women's Auxiliary, thereby giving her children an example of service to their country. **Linda Goorin Marcus' father Theodore Jacob Goorin (a Moises Lazarus descendant)** received a certificate signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt that read, "Dated this 29th day of February in the year nineteen hundred and forty four, Award from the Office of Price Administration. This award for meritorious Service in the War Effort is made to Theodore Goorin in sincere appreciation for his devotion to his country's needs through his patriotic contribution of time and effort in the execution of the price and rationing program." **Linda's mother, Catharyn Straus Goorin and her grandmother, Maude Hofflin Straus** both worked diligently to make bandages for the soldiers.

Oscar S. Straus and Ida Straus made significant indirect contributions during World War II even though both died long before the war. Liberty Ships were named to honor both of them. The S.S. *Oscar S. Straus*, a tanker, was launched October 4, 1943 and the S.S. *Ida Straus*, a cargo ship, was launched August 10, 1945. [An article about the S.S. *Oscar S. Straus* appeared in the August 2005 SHS newsletter.]

The Liberty Ship was an EC2 type ship designed for emergency construction by the U.S. Maritime Commission during World War II. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt nicknamed them "ugly ducklings." There were 2,711 ships built at a cost of approximately \$2,000,000 each. A ship could be built from 250,000 parts in 70 days or less. The first Liberty Ship was launched in September 1941. Built mainly as a cargo vessel, the Liberty Ship could carry more than 9,000 tons of cargo plus airplanes, tanks and locomotives. She could carry 2,840 jeeps, 440 tanks or 230 million rounds of ammunition. President Roosevelt said, "They delivered two thirds of the military cargo and turned the tide against Hitler."



Liberty Ship
S.S. Oscar S. Straus

No doubt there are more stories about the heroic actions of family members during World War II that have not been told here. We apologize to anyone who feels their ancestor's story was omitted from this brief article. We did our best to contact everyone and to include all the information available to us. We feel honored and privileged to share these stories.

SHS Trip to Chicago

May 6 - 11, 2015

by Catherine McIlvaine Smith

In May, Joan Adler and I traveled to Chicago to give five presentations about the Straus family. We are grateful to Brian Zakem who went above and beyond to help bring us to Chicago and to make our trip a success.

On Wednesday, May 6th, we arrived in Chicago and traveled to the Highland Park Public Library where Joan gave her first presentation: *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr.* This event was in conjunction with the Writers Theatre "From Page to Stage" program. As the event began, Michael Shaw, the Box Office & Sales Manager with Writers Theatre spoke briefly about their latest production, "The Diary of Anne Frank," which had been so well received that it was extended until August 2nd. Beth Keller, the Marketing Specialist for the Highland Park Public Library, then introduced Joan. After her presentation, there was a Q&A session and book signing. We also had the opportunity to speak informally with members of the audience who were very interested in and appreciative of Joan's presentation.

On Thursday, May 7th, we were treated to a lovely tour of the Chicago Botanic Gardens by Patricia Shanahan, the Director of Planned and Major Gifts at the gardens. Afterward, Joan and I traveled to Evanston where we met with Daniel Greene, an adjunct professor of history at Northwestern University and guest exhibition curator at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. He is currently planning a special exhibition about Americans and the Holocaust, which will open at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2018. We hope to be able to contribute Straus materials to this exciting exhibition and we look forward to future collaboration. Daniel also expressed interest in Joan's giving a presentation about her book during this celebratory exhibition.

In the evening, Joan and I visited the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie where we were greeted by Amanda Friedeman, the Harvey L. Miller Family Youth Educator, who showed us the museum's auditorium and helped us set up for our presentation. At 6:30, Amanda introduced Joan, who spoke about her book. The talk was followed by a Q&A session, and Joan was then available to sign copies of her book, which are for sale in the museum's Legacy Gift Shop.

On Friday, we met with Jeff Deutsch, the director of the Seminary Co-Operative Bookstore near the University of Chicago. We spoke with him about our giving a presentation at this bookstore in conjunction with the History, Jewish Studies and Holocaust Studies departments at the University of Chicago. We are looking forward to returning to Chicago in the fall when we will speak at the Seminary Co-Operative Bookstore on October 22nd.

In the evening we drove to Congregation KAM Isaiah Israel where we would be giving our next presentation. Friday night services were led by Rabbi Frederick Reeves, Cantor David Berger and guest Cantor Ben Rosner. Once services concluded, Joan gave her presentation. She then had an opportunity to speak with the congregants and answer questions during Oneg Shabbat, an after services gathering where congregants enjoyed wine and cake. The presentation was very well received. We are thankful to Rabbi Reeves and all those who attended.

On Sunday, Joan and I were invited to see the Writers Theatre production of "The Diary of Anne Frank." It was an incredibly moving and powerful performance. We felt fortunate to have the opportunity to attend this sold out production.

On Monday, May 11th, Joan and I travelled to Homewood Flossmoor High School to give two presentations to the AP (college level) History classes. At 7:30am and 2pm, Joan presented her book *For the Sake of the Children* to the students. This was our first presentation to a high school class and we were very pleased with the student's response. We hope to do similar presentations in the future and to use this platform to reach the younger generations. After our final presentation we left for the airport and made our way home.

We would like to thank everyone who helped to make this experience so interesting and rewarding.

We will be returning to Chicago during the week of October 19, 2015. If you know of any venue within driving distance of Chicago that might be interested in hosting a presentation, either about any aspect of the Straus family's history or about Joan's book, *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus, Jr.*, please let us know.



Joan's book for sale at the IL Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie IL



Students in Mr. Elfner's AP History Class at Homewood Flossmoor High School

Presentations

Bloomingtondale Neighborhood History Group January 22nd

On Thursday, January 22nd, the Bloomingtondale Neighborhood History Group hosted a presentation by Joan Adler. Held at 6:30 at Hostelling International, Joan gave the standing room only audience an in depth look into the Straus family's connection to the Bloomingtondale neighborhood. This is the area where Isidor and Ida Straus' home was located and where Straus Park today honors their memory. Immediately following Joan's talk, SHS and Friends of Straus Park board member Al Berr spoke about the history of the Park and about its current day events. Both talks were accompanied by slides illustrating each topic. With more than 120 people in attendance, the presentation was well received and an interesting Q&A was conducted following the talks. Joan was then available for a book signing and meet and greet session. Thank you to Batya Miller, Jim Mackin, and Al Berr for facilitating this presentation.

Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY June 28th

Joan spoke about the history of the Straus family to an appreciative group at Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY. Although the venue seems unusual, Woodlawn Cemetery's historian, Susan Olsen, has created an interesting platform for talks about many aspects of the cemetery and its history. Isidor and Ida Straus died in 1912 in the Titanic disaster. The sons of Isidor and Ida erected the Straus Mausoleum there and moved the remains of their father to the site in 1930 from the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum at Beth El Cemetery in Brooklyn. (Ida's remains were never found.) After Joan's talk the group proceeded to the Straus Mausoleum where Susan gave a fascinating talk about the architecture and landscaping of the site.

The Greens at Half Hollow - Melville, NY July 8th

Joan spoke at the Men's Club at The Greens of Half Hollow on July 8th. She presented the history of the Straus family to an extremely engaged audience with more than 100 people in attendance. There were many questions following her talk. The enthusiasm of the people in the audience was gratifying. A video of Joan's talk may be found on YouTube and on the SHS website: www.straushistoricalsociety.org

Chicago, IL October 22nd - 25th

Joan and Catherine will return to the Chicago, IL area on Thursday, October 22nd where they have scheduled a talk about Joan's book, *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus, Jr.* at The Seminary Co-Op Bookstore near The University of Chicago. Joan is working with several professors at the university to hold a seminar or to speak with the students in individual classes during the week. On Sunday, October 25th Joan will speak at a joint meeting of

the Jewish Genealogical Society of IL and the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. She will be speaking about the Greenebaum family's history. The Greenebaums are related to the Lazarus Straus family through Johanette Gruenebaum who was Lazarus' mother. The Greenebaums immigrated to Chicago in 1848 and became prominent members of society. They founded important institutions such as the Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Historical Society, the Zion Literacy Society, Greenebaum Brothers Banking House, the Hebrew Benevolent Society and the National Council of Jewish Women to name just a few. Because we will be speaking to a group of genealogists, we will also be discussing the methodology by which information about families may be found. Family member James E. Greenebaum II has been an invaluable resource in the preparation for this talk. We are also planning a talk about the Greenebaum family before the Edgewater Historical Society.

Atlanta, Athens, Columbus, Junction City and Talbotton GA November 1st - November 8th

We have been invited to speak at The Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, GA on Sunday, November 1st. Joan will speak about her book, *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus, Jr.* The following day we will be speaking at The Temple in Atlanta about the Southern history of the Straus family. We've also scheduled a talk at the University of GA in Athens for Wednesday, November 4th.

From Athens we will drive to Junction City where we will attend Mike and Debbie Buckner's fabulous festival, Harvest Days in Old Talbot, a fascinating glimpse of activities from the old South and crafts displays made by local artisans. We invite you to join us at the Buckner's farm as well as for a tour of Talbotton and Columbus, the places where the Straus family lived in GA. Catherine and I will be presenting photographs and stories about the Straus family throughout the weekend but will be available to tour Talbotton and Columbus on Thursday or Friday before the weekend. Please let us know if you are interested in joining us in GA.

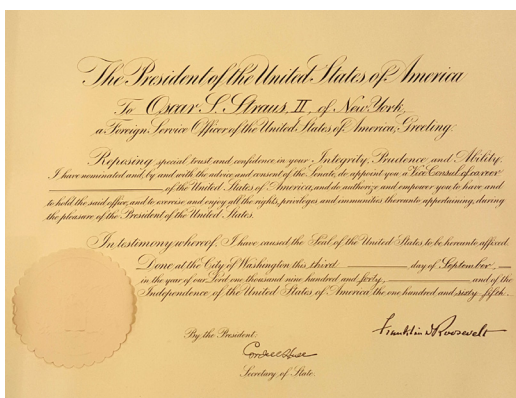
We are in the process of arranging for other talks during our trips to the Chicago area and to GA. We will keep you informed as additional venues are arranged.



Display of Straus family images and books
at the Buckner home - 2014

From Our Archives

SHS has been the recipient of several donated items that are now catalogued and preserved in our archives. Family members Joan Sutton Straus, William J. Levitt, Jr. and partner John Berryhill, Hugh Grant Straus III and Bradford P. Straus have generously donated documents, photographs, books, military insignias, ephemera and even a campaign button to our growing Straus collection. We urge other family members to consider donating their family's memorabilia to SHS's archives. They will be documented, photographed and stored in an acid free environment that enhances preservation. Your donation contributes to the body of knowledge about the Straus family and allows us to share that knowledge with educators, filmmakers, students and other interested parties.



Oscar S. Straus II - Appointment as Vice Consul to Montreal
by the United States of America
Donated by Joan Sutton Straus



Ralph Isidor Straus
Left: Shoulder Patch - Army Service Forces Patch
3/9/1942 - 6/11/1946
Right: Medal - European African - Middle Eastern Campaign
with four service stars
Donated by Bradford P. Straus



For Governor - Oscar S. Straus - 1912
Donated by William J. Levitt, Jr. and John Berryhill

Buddy Elias

March 2015 - Basel, Switzerland

The Straus Historical Society was saddened to learn of the passing of Buddy Elias, head of ANNE FRANK-Fonds/Basel, Switzerland. Buddy was the first cousin of diarist Anne Frank. He was an ardent guardian of her legacy.

When, in 2007, YIVO: The Institute for Jewish Research in New York City released a cache of letters between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. that were accidentally discovered, the Straus Historical Society was given a copy of these letters. I wrote an article for the August 2007 issue of the SHS newsletter about their discovery and about their content. Based on this article, the board of directors of ANNE FRANK-Fonds offered me a grant to do any project of my choosing based on the letters. I decided to write a book, *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus, Jr.*

It took many years to complete this project. During that time Buddy Elias showed great patience. When the book was completed, he was one of its greatest supporters. With the loss of Buddy Elias the world has lost a champion for tolerance and human rights. He said, "Only when we learn to treat each other humanely will we have understood Anne's message."

We extend our condolences to the Elias family and to ANNE FRANK-Fonds.

Disease in Milk: The Remedy Pasteurization: The Life Work of Nathan Straus by Lina Gutherz Straus

SHS is pleased to announce that *Disease in Milk*, the 1917 publication of Lina Gutherz Straus, (Nathan Straus' wife) is being republished in its entirety by the Straus Historical Society. This new edition will include many articles and photographs that were published in the SHS newsletters. They will, for the first time, be available as an addendum to Lina's book, thereby making it the most comprehensive history of Nathan and Lina Straus and of their struggle to make pasteurization the standard by which all milk is processed.

You will be notified as soon as *Disease in Milk* is available for purchase. We anticipate this will be in the fall of 2015.

A Recommendation

If you are interested in reading a concise history of Isidor Straus and of the Straus family's ownership of L. Straus & Sons, R. H. Macy & Co., and of Abraham and Straus, I highly recommend the 2010 article by Jan Whitaker, titled "Isidor Straus," in the book *Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies, 1720 to the Present*, vol. 2, edited by William J. Hausman. German Historical Institute. Last modified February 18th, 2015. <http://immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry.php?rec=27>

NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF STRAUS PARK

by Al Berr
photos by Joe Arbo

It comes as a surprise to some of us that Friends of Straus Park (FOSP), a nonprofit organization, is almost twenty years old. For about half that time, Kate Ford has been our president. Recently, she announced that she would be leaving West 106th Street, and, therefore, would be resigning. Kate has been a mainstay for our organization, responsible for the many administrative chores relative to that position, but also attending to the details necessary for the events that we present in the park. Often, this means dealing with local bureaucracy, for which a strong constitution is useful. We are grateful that Kate has more than fulfilled that requirement. She also makes the best vegetarian chili, as attested to by those who have attended our Art in the Park autumn events.

Kate and her husband Alan Mann intend to live in Connecticut, where they have been the producers of Opera Theater of Connecticut, near Madison, for the past thirty years. We will miss them both and we send them our best wishes for their future.

Our new president, elected in May, is Viril Andrick who, conveniently, lives on West 106th Street directly across from the park. He is not new to FOSP; he has assisted us at many of our events. Viril is an actor-singer who has performed in theater, opera, operetta, and film. His recent television appearances include those in "Law and Order," "Sex and the City," "30 Rock," and "The Good Wife." We are glad to welcome him to the board and we offer him our best wishes in his new post.

Viril's upcoming assignment is our annual Art in the Park event which is scheduled for Saturday, October 3rd. The theme that day will be the centenary of the dedication of the park. It was on April 15th, 1915 that Bloomingdale Park became Straus Park with a ceremony featuring principal addresses by John Mitchel, the mayor, and Seth Low, the former mayor, and attended by many family members. Straus Historical Society has a marvelous photo of that event, showing the park filled to capacity.

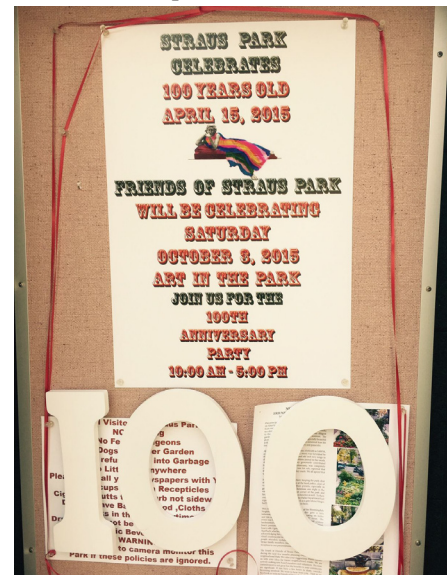
On October 3rd, beginning at mid-morning until late afternoon, we plan to have our customary array of art works for sale by local artists, a band providing music, food for sale donated by neighbors, and a few short speeches for the occasion.

So, mark your calendars for Saturday, October 3rd in Straus Park at Broadway and 106th Street, and wish us lovely autumn weather.

**Art in the Park,
A Day Long Celebration of Art, Music and Food
and the
100th Anniversary Celebration of the Park
Saturday, October 3rd
from 10am to 5pm**



Straus Park's Dedication
April 15th, 1915



Flyer announcing Straus Park's
100th anniversary celebration
October 3rd, 2015



Documentaries and a PhD Thesis

Film crews from Germany and Australia visited the SHS archives during the week of June 14th. We were happy to host Heiko Wirtz-Walter and his crew and then Robyn Kent and her crew the next day. Both groups are producing documentaries for television stations, in Germany and Australia respectively, about Isidor and Ida Straus, their lives, and their Titanic experience. SHS arranged for each group to visit Macy's, Straus Park and Woodlawn Cemetery as well as to interview Isidor and Ida's great grandson, Paul Kurzman. I was also interviewed by the filmmakers. Both groups promise to send SHS a copy of their documentary once it is completed.

The following week, PhD. candidate Carl-Eric Linsler, also from Germany, spent a day in our archives researching the German-American relationship and immigration, particularly as it relates to the Jewish population. We were pleased to be able to share some of our documents and stories with him. He will be using this information for his doctoral thesis.

We are pleased that SHS is being recognized as a significant repository for information about family members and that we are able to share our materials with these professionals.



AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support SHS every time you shop on Amazon -- at absolutely no cost to you. You'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to the Straus Historical Society once it is designated for this benefit. This money comes from Amazon's Foundation and is not added to your purchase price.

You must first select Straus Historical Society as your charitable organization by going to smile.amazon.com. You will be prompted to select a charitable organization from almost one million eligible organizations. After your selection, SHS will continue to automatically receive this added bonus for each purchase at no cost to you. After you register, you simply sign onto smile.amazon.com every time you shop in order for SHS to receive this benefit.

We've received two donation checks from amazon smile.
Keep on shopping!

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

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- \$40.00

A Reminder: Witnesses to the Past by Lothar Horter and Michael Tilly, translated by Frank and Sue Kahn. This book is about the history of the Jews in several small towns in the Rheinpfalz area of Germany. A large section contains complete information and photographs of the Mehlingen Cemetery where many Straus family members are buried. Hard cover - \$25.00

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/merchandise. Contact Joan Adler by phone: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: info@straushistory.org if you have questions about ordering.

You Are Invited

The Board of Directors of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. invites you to attend a meeting of the board. Attendance need not be in person. The next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 16, 2015 in New York City at 6 PM. Participants may join by conference call. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society. This invitation is extended so that all those interested in SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share their views. Please contact Joan Adler by phone at 631-724-4487, or at info@straushistory.org for further information.