



STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Newsletter

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FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN THE LETTERS BETWEEN OTTO FRANK AND NATHAN STRAUS JR.

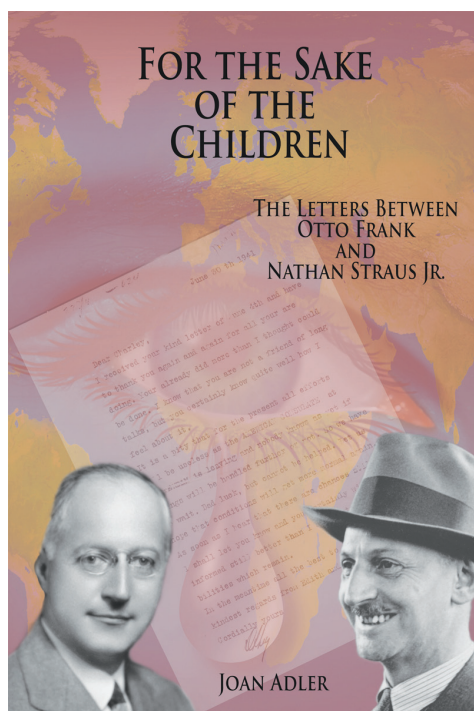
Joan Adler, executive director of the Straus Historical Society, is pleased to announce the publication of her new book, *For the Sake of the Children, The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr.*

know how daunting the task would be. Fortunately Buddy Elias and his board proved amazingly patient. And I had the total support of my own board at SHS. This book could not have been completed without it.

In 2007, a file of letters between University of Heidelberg roommates and lifelong friends, Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr., was found in the archives of YIVO: The Institute for Jewish Research. The letters revealed for the first time that Otto Frank, diarist Anne's father, tried desperately to get his family out of war torn Holland in 1941, fifteen months before they went into hiding in the now famous attic at Prinsengracht 263, Amsterdam. The letters also show the lengths Nathan Straus Jr., then Housing Administrator under FDR, and many others, went to to help. But the tightening restrictions of the U.S. State Department, along with the deteriorating conditions in Europe, prevented even those with powerful connections and money, from securing the necessary documents that would allow the Frank family to immigrate.

An article about the letters was featured in the August 2007 issue of the SHS newsletter. (It can be found on the SHS website on the archives page.) As a result of this article, Buddy Elias, Otto Frank's nephew and head of ANNE FRANK-Fonds, Basel/Switzerland and his board of directors offered me a grant to work on a project relating to the letters. I proposed writing a book. Little did I

We have long known of the relationship between these



two men. The story of the letters, however, is being published in a book for the first time. It enriches our understanding of the relationship between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr., about the history of the Frank family and gives us greater insight into this tragic era.

I am delighted to announce the publication of *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr.* It is available for purchase directly from the author, on the SHS website and on Amazon.

I will be speaking about the letters at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and in Boston and will be happy to make other presenta-

tions and do book signings.

Please contact me through the Society.

info@straushistory.org

*"The past is never dead,
it's not even past."*

William Faulkner

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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
Catherine McIlvaine Smith,
Assistant to the Director**

I've had the privilege to work with Joan Adler and the Straus Historical Society, Inc. as a volunteer since May 2010. Thanks to a grant from the David A and Mildred H Morse Foundation I'm now compensated

for my work. I've been able to work on some amazing projects, including archiving the backlogged Straus material into our bibliography, preparing and executing the many Titanic anniversary events, and creating and managing the SHS website.

The last is the closest to my heart, as I worked with the old website and endured the cumbersome process of making simple changes to an out-dated and old-fashioned page. I saw the opportunity to create a more interactive website which can easily be updated. After much research and with the approval of the board, I began to work on the new design using Weebly.com, a website design platform with incredible new features.

We were able to keep much of the content of the old website but made access more dynamic and interesting. The header stayed the same to keep consistency and the new design was created around it. We were able to add a Merchandise page in which we could sell the newly republished Autobiography of Isidor Straus as well as many other items. The Archives page changed drastically as we were able to add a photo gallery and documents page. In addition, we've added a new page under the heading About Us. This new page contains board member photos and bios.

The past year also saw the introduction of SHS to Facebook! Over the summer we created a Facebook page in which we could even more easily disseminate information to those who "Like" us. With several updates each week, users are able to read stories, learn about upcoming events and hear the latest news about SHS instantaneously. Please visit [Facebook.com/StrausHistoricalSocietyInc](https://www.facebook.com/StrausHistoricalSocietyInc) and "Like" us to join in the conversation about SHS and the history of the Straus family.

With the new website, everyone who visits is able to more easily navigate to acquire new and more up-to-date information about SHS. In addition, Facebook has allowed us to reach out to a younger and more tech savvy audience.

It is with the SHS mission in mind that the website and Facebook page were created and I'm so proud to be a part of these projects. I hope everyone enjoys the website as it is truly a labor of love for me. Please let me know if there is anything you would like to see on our website or on our Facebook page by e-mailing me directly at cat.smith@straushistory.org. Thank you for your support. I look forward to what the future holds for me at SHS!

The Nathan Roos Letters - 1938-1939

In 1990, when I started working with the Straus family, I learned that Lazarus Straus had a wife and daughter before he married his first cousin Sara, mother of Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar. Although I was curious about this family, it took years before I had the clues, and the time, to find the descendants of Lazarus' first family.

Lazarus' first wife, Devora (Fannie) Levi was a cousin to Lazarus, just like his second wife Sara, although the cousin relationship was not as close. Lazarus and Fannie had one daughter, Karoline. After Fannie died in 1843 Lazarus married Sara. We learned from Sara's 1854 letters that her step-daughter Karoline was a much loved member of the family. But when the Strauses immigrated to America, Karoline, a teenager, chose to stay in Germany. She married Moritz Weiss and had one child, Ferdinand. When Lazarus died in 1898, he left money to his grandson Ferdinand. This was the first clue that the two families remained in contact. Then, after the sinking of Titanic and the loss of Isidor and Ida, Ferdinand sent a condolence note to the family. From these two clues we began to reconstruct what became of Lazarus' first family.

Ferdinand Weiss married Amelia Kunstler. They had three children: Frieda Luise, Friedrich (Fritz) Wilhelm Siegfried and Ernst Weiss. Fritz was killed in World War I. Ernest immigrated to the United States in 1927. Frieda Luise, known as Luise, married physician Nathan Roos. They had one daughter, Ellen, born in Pforzheim in 1921. The family remained in Germany until they were forced to leave in 1939.

I met Ellen and her daughter Jessie at Ellen's Manhattan apartment. Ellen graciously shared a large collection of photographs and letters, many of them written by her father to her mother during 1939 when the family was desperately trying to get out of Europe. The story of their effort, as told in these letters, is both poignant and inspiring. Translations from German and French were done by Dr. Andreas J. Schwab, Eve Line Blum, Eric Loehwing and Gerard Simonette.

Several letters were written by Ida Straus and by Ida's sister-in-law Lina, Nathan's wife. Ida corresponded with eighteen year old Luise in 1911, advising her to learn languages and suggested what kind of work would be suitable for a young woman. Isidor and Ida visited with Ferdinand and Amelia in 1912. They wanted to take Luise back to the United States with them aboard Titanic. Fortunately, Ferdinand was reluctant to allow his only daughter to leave. Later, when Luise married physician

Nathan Roos in 1919, it was Nathan Straus who provided her large dowry.

Nathan Roos received his medical certificate at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet Muenchen (Munich) in 1914. Lina wrote, "He has gotten along splendidly and we hear from them occasionally, as being very happy."

Photographs reveal that the family traveled extensively throughout Europe. But as the political climate changed, their travels were curtailed. As early as 1933 Nathan Roos began gathering genealogical information to show his wife's relationship to the Lazarus Straus family. An October 11, 1937 letter from Sissie Lehman (Nathan and Lina's daughter, New York State Appellate Court Judge Irving Lehman's wife) states, "I cannot now say whether it would be possible for me to do anything for your daughter should she decide to come over here after her studies in Switzerland are finished. ... I

would advise you to get in touch with other more influential branches of our family. There is Mrs. Alfred Hess, who is the daughter of Isidor Straus." On November 20th Nathan Roos wrote to Mrs. Alfred Hess (Sara Straus Hess), "We have a daughter of 16 years who now is studying in Switzerland. She will get her commercial diploma next year. Our chief anxiety is of course the future of our daughter - and it is with this object in view that I am writing to you. I am anxious to pick up connections with

you but I want to add that we do not intend to ask for financial help. Should one day our daughter go to USA it would perhaps be possible to get a position through your influence and also to ask your advice."

In early November of 1938, a German diplomat in Paris was assassinated by a Jewish dissident. The November 11, 1938 newspaper Paris-Soir reported, "As was to be expected, the death of the counselor von Rath has provoked a wave of hostility against the Jews, the consequences of which cannot yet be measured. ... Serious incidents have been seen in most of the provincial towns where the crowd, in the course of "spontaneous" demonstrations and to the cries of "We want to avenge the gun shots of Paris," set afire synagogues, and pillaged Jewish stores." More than 3,000 men were arrested and sent to concentration camps in response to the "assassins in the service of the Jewish cause." Dr. Nathan Roos was among them.

The "Final Solution" was not decided upon until 1942. In November 1938 men were arrested, detained for several weeks, and then allowed to leave after promising to leave Germany forever. They had two months to do so.



Amelia and Ferdinand Weiss

Nathan was released after three weeks at Dachau. The Roos' passports were issued in Pforzheim on December 21, 1938.

On February 18, 1939 Nathan, Luise and Ellen traveled to Paris with all of their belongings. They had transit visas that were renewed for nine months. By April 9th Nathan Roos began writing letters, trying to learn how he could obtain the visas and ship's tickets the family required for immigration to America. On August 2nd he received authorization to immigrate. Their visas are dated September 14, 1939 and would expire on December 21, 1939. Sara Straus Hess, sister to the late American Ambassador to France, Jesse Isidor Straus, guaranteed their visas. Nathan Roos purchased tickets for his family's departure from Rotterdam aboard the "SS Staaten-dam." Unfortunately Luise developed parathyroid disease and was unable to travel. Nathan and Luise decided to send 18 year old Ellen to New York alone while Nathan sought treatment for Luise's illness. On September 3rd, France declared war on Germany.

In late September of 1939 Nathan Roos was required to report to Maisons-Lafitte where he was interrogated and detained. From there he was sent to a detention/internment camp, Athis Camp No. 9 near Flers in north-western France. Although France was not yet occupied, restrictions were being placed on German citizens.

Nathan gave Luise the certificate for tickets aboard a Hapag Line ship that was leaving on September 29th.

His letters to Luise begin on October 7th. From this time until their eventual immigration, he wrote almost every day, sometimes several letters in a day, imploring Luise to try everything possible to get their visas extended and to get tickets aboard another ship. One must remember that in 1939 married women generally stayed at home to take care of their family. They were not accustomed to dealing with the authorities. With her husband detained, it was necessary for Luise to get their papers in order and to interact with the authorities to prove their eligibility for immigration. Nathan's daily letters provided the instructions. It was up to Luise to follow through. Although we don't have the companion letters Luise wrote to Nathan during this time period, we can tell from his letters to her that she was struggling to remain positive and strong.

We have mental images of the horrors awaiting people who were sent to internment camps. Later in the war many people were subjected to unspeakable deprivation and inhumane treatment. From Nathan Roos' letters, we learn that this was not the case early in the war. On Octo-

ber 7th Nathan wrote, "I was in Flers at a (female) dentist. The car, a military vehicle, was heading there and so I could get a lift. Flers is about 8 km from the camp. ... It was a fabulous Friday outside. ... When I reflect on the day and let all the facts of November 1938 pass through my mind, with all its monstrosities, I ask myself more and more how we, who are the victims of this regime, could all have ended up being here, ... But perhaps this situation has also its good side, yes, ... inasmuch as, as I always stress, we two came close to each other, as we have never in life before."

Nathan wrote about his daily activities. He said he didn't come in contact with the other 270 internees. "Friday evening we had sausage soup again; ... Today they brought a piano to the camp; ... Starting today there are three showers in the furnace room (sic.: steam room). ... It is not like at Maisons-Lafitte where one cannot see

anybody." The Jews in Paris who were ordered to report for detention, including Nathan Roos, first gathered at Maisons-Lafitte before being sent to other camps.

October 11th, "I just received the following news. To go out sooner, we will need an exit visa. In this purpose, you must speak to Mr. Tessier, in the (French) Department of the Foreign Affairs. His office is on the 3rd floor. He is the man whom I already spoke to several times. Ask him whether it's the Department of Foreign Affairs or the "Prefecture de Police" that deals with our problem. Certainly the Department of Foreign Affairs will make contact with the Department

of War. You must show him our emigration papers and also your passport with the visa for America. My own passport is kept in Versailles by the "Surete" (French Security Office) when I was questioned in Maisons-Lafitte. Tell him that we received the visas for America on 3 August, but you became ill on 5 August (parathyroid fever). Then, when we asked for the 2nd September on Holland Line, from Rotterdam, we were told that this boat was reserved for the Americans going back to their country. Then, they proposed us only two seats on a boat on the 5th September, but we sent our daughter aged 18 years alone because they didn't want to let me go alone. Afterwards, they gave us seats for 23rd September on the Veendam with a visa transit via Belgium and Holland. Then, I had to go to the internment camp. ... that our daughter is already in America ... which costs us \$25 a month as a deposit. And assure them that we don't want to return to Germany. You can also show him the tickets."

Nathan Roos' October 18th letter is filled with philo-



Luise and Nathan Roos
in Cannes - 1927

sophical expressions of love for his wife. He also wrote, "I request you write a detailed letter to Mrs. Roosevelt, White House in Washington, and tell her that we want to leave."

The language of his letters switched from German to French. He wrote that he spent his time studying English. "Today the commission began studying our case. ... the need for these certificates seemed to be a hindrance for our release. These certificates must be authorized by the superintendant. ... the last year in Dachau and now here. It's a non-deserved fate. But who could believe about a war? My nerves are still good mainly because I can see the light on the horizon."

October 20, "Have patience and soon we will be together and how I hope for a happier life in a country where we will be able to love, free from vexatious politics, and will be able to live as a family and experience family life."

October 21, "... try to obtain a written confirmation that we have already paid the tickets for 23 September or 5 October and you could give money again for a ticket available for the day I'll be released. ... If they refuse again, you'll have to try the same step at the United States (Consulate) ... That certificate is necessary for my file to be released."

October 22, "I just heard that the American Joint Distribution Committee ... is dealing with our cases. I ask you to go there immediately and to tell them that if we can't leave we would be obliged to live here without money or job. I will write too and insist on urgency. Don't be hopeless, be courageous, ... Here everyone is happy; there are concerts, songs, a good dinner and supper and no work. There are many who have never had such a life, but I can't laugh because I am always thinking of you..."

On October 22, 1939 Nathan wrote a desperate letter to the Selection Committee, "I'm taking the liberty to draw your attention to my extraordinary case that, indeed, asks for an immediate solution. ... our visa for the United States will expire if we can't reach the port of New York on 2 December 1939. When that delay is exceeded, the visa will definitely be out-of-date. According to the laws of immigration, in such a case we will be able to enter America only after having waited for fifteen years. That law doesn't suffer any exception. On 18 February 1939 my wife, my daughter and I entered France with a transit visa that was renewed for nine months. In the meantime we received American visas. I'm a German Jewish refugee. First I was imprisoned in the concentra-

tion camp in DACHAU and I was released providing that I leave Germany with my family within two months. My daughter and our furniture are already in America. I'm 53 years old. It's only in America that I can earn our living with the help of Mr. Jesse Straus former American Ambassador in Paris. Mr. STRAUS, who died in the meantime, was a cousin of my wife and Mrs. STRAUS gave us all the necessary guarantees for America. Then, if we can't leave France before 15 November 1939, my visa is likely to expire during 15 years, which means forever. I will have to remain here, in France, without knowing how to earn our living. That's why I'm asking you insistently to decide about my release as quickly as possible."

Nathan wrote to the Consul for the United States in Paris October 23, "In spite of all my efforts I won't be able to leave before that date. (The date his visa expires.) I ask that you prolong the visas. This is not my fault, but a "force majeure" because of the War in Europe."



Luise, Ellen and Nathan Roos - about 1924

Nathan became increasingly fixated on "force majeure" as it became closer to the time of their visa's and passport's expiration dates. He was hoping that the unexpected and unavoidable delay in leaving Europe would be sufficient reason to get their papers extended. After all, he and Luise were doing everything in their power to leave. It was beyond their control. "... they are very kind to me and want to help me where and with what they can, but in Versailles people work slowly, and so

it would always be a good idea to nag them. ... I will also come up with the energy to get through everything with you, as you write so beautifully, we are one for the other. This gives me all the hope and courage to start a new life with you, my heart's full treasure, the way you wish it."

During early November Nathan's letters begin to show his increasing desperation. He asked Luise to contact several people and agencies that were working to help detainees leave the country; to write or visit each person or office with their visas, passports, letters of recommendations, certificates and other documentation showing that their only desire was to leave France.

On Nov. 2nd he sent more instructions. "If you can, take tickets for an early date, ... Perhaps phone Alencon and, because of "avis favorable" (favorable notice) and the papers are in order, ask them to release me to Le Havre under supervision so that I can wait with you in the hotel for the departure of the steamer while reporting daily to the police."

On Nov 3rd Nathan sent a postcard to Luise, "I was asked to come to the office; they have called up the divi-

sion but imposed the condition that I take a French or an English ship that is escorted, perhaps I can reach an American ship. Find out and telegraph me when ships are leaving."

Nov 5th, "I hope to be able to be freed before November 17th (when a ship leaves), but if this does not work, I hope to be given freedom in a way that I may reach a ship arriving in New York before December 2nd. Make inquiries at once as to whether I have to actually be in New York before Dec. 2nd, or if it suffices to be on an American ship before Dec. 2nd. At the same time find out about American ships leaving during that period. ... I have written to you today in two postcards to go to the American (Jewish) Joint (Distribution Committee) ... But this time be very forceful, even if it is against your nature, and don't let yourself be in any way refused. ... I implore you to reserve a place for yourself for November 17th; for if you are successful at making your way to America on your own, you will certainly be able to work there so that I may be able to follow soon on a non-quota contingent. ... Maybe I will have to give you my spousal consent in order for you to be able to travel alone ... love me as I do you, then our hearts are unshakeable and we will overcome all obstacles."

Nov 6, "HICEM has announced that visas will be renewed but not extended for ten dollars." Nov. 7, "It goes as follows: they must note that if I'm released from Versailles, my file is at the subdivision in Alencon ... and this subdivision called Athis. If I have my visas and tickets, if the files are in Alencon, usually people are released within 3 or 4 days, then I don't understand why I'm not released since I got favorable notification. You have to go to HICEM with Max and speak with that organization, one point after the other, and tell them to call ... Alencon, because all the people who got favorable notification must be released. It doesn't even depend on a possible trip to America." (HICEM is an acronym for three Jewish migration societies that joined together to help European Jews emigrate during World War II.)

Nov 8, "As I am in the habit of doing, I go to bed for an hour but I don't sleep. Next to me or under my head your photo rests as that makes me peaceful and calm. ... The dinner was good broth with rice and roast beef with potatoes; and as I always write you, life would be bearable, but the thoughts of you never leave me. And in spite of the hope I have all day, the uncertainty of the duration of the captivity affects me. ... Up to the time you receive

this letter I will be absent 8 weeks and, on that day, it will be one year since I left for Dachau."

Nov 9, Nathan's wrote that that he was able to read the French newspapers daily and was aware of the world situation. He commented on an attempt to assassinate Hitler that he believed was propaganda to incite "people who are not enthusiasts." I'm doing my utmost to remain in good health. I spend my time writing to you, learning English, but my thoughts of you never leave me."

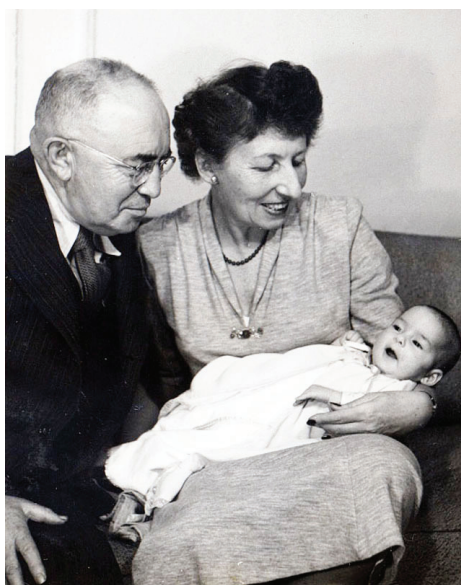
In an additional letter written November 9th, it is easy to see Nathan's frustration. "I had handed in my identification card with photo pass at Maisons-Lafitte. You had both documents in your hand. When and to whom did you give these documents? Who is going to give them back to us? Have you inquired if you can get them in time? When approximately shall the steamer depart? Is

it enough if we are on the boat on Dec. 2, or if we have to set foot on American soil? Do you still have your ticket for the Holland Line? Have you inquired if you can travel with me? Did you go to Rue Vaurigard because there is doubt if you could travel with me, or did you have to register there because I have been arrested, so that you can travel on the same boat? All these are just questions that torment me ... Concerning censorship, you can write every bit, you can be sure of that. ... do not despair, please hold on and be as strong as a lion! For once, have nerves like a ship's rope! We are at the final phase of our struggle for a new life and happiness - I promise you both. Therefore, be cheerful,

even if the few days in our lives are still hard."

On November 11th Nathan quoted from a letter from the American Embassy. "To Dr. Nathan Roos Athis, Please find herewith a certificate testifying to your situation, concerning the American visa that was given to you to present to the French authorities." "Certificate to the proper authority. the undersigned certify that Mr. N. Roos, born on 12 June 1882 in Lichtenau (Germany) is the holder of an immigration visa Nr 4958, issued on 2 August 1939 and valid until 1st December 1939. His passport Nr 1905 was granted him on 21 December 1938 by the Prefecture of Pforzheim, Germany, and valid until 21 December 1939. Having these documents, Mr. Roos must be able to enter the United States and settle there permanently. Leslie A. Weisenburg," American Vice-Consul.

On November 13th he wrote, "I have to know where the documents are and when the ships leave. ... I will send



Nathan and Luise with granddaughter Jessie Tager

you right today the letter from the American Embassy instigated by Governor Lehman, and you should show this letter to the Office for the Interned Aliens, Ministry of the Interior, where our files are, and from there in the necessary steps have to be taken. ... I love you with all the fervor of my heart ... It is not necessary that you worry about me. The treatment here is really humane, at Dachau it was different. There, you had to be scared." (Note: Governor Herbert Lehman was Sissie Straus Lehman's brother-in-law.)

A postcard to Max Rothschild on November 13th stated, "I had this afternoon a visit from your friend. I didn't have permission to speak with him. He only shouted from afar that I would be free next week and that we could leave. I hope that his words are based in facts. I want to believe it."

A decree signed by S. E Ricard, for the "President du Conseil, Chief General of E., General of the Army inside the country" gave final proof that German Jews, like Nathan Roos, would be permitted to leave France.

On November 16th Nathan wrote to Colonel de Pascal, Commandant of the subdivision of Orne-Alencon, "The situation is very difficult for me if I cannot be released within a very short delay because my visa to enter America will expire on December 2nd, and my passport will expire on 21 December 1939. The American Embassy told me that they will grant me a short prolongation of my visa if I am able to take the next French boat that will leave Le Havre on 10 December. To do the formalities of prolongation on the American visa, and to have a medical from the sworn doctor from the American Consulate, I will have to go to Paris a few days before the departure of the boat. That's why, Colonel, I request your high benevolence to do the necessary steps to release me before that date."

On November 20th Nathan wrote to Luise, "I just had a meeting this Sunday morning with a representative of HICEM who came to our camp. I was the first to be questioned and happily the outcome is favorable. ... the visas for the two of us will be able to be extended beyond December 2nd by means of 10 dollars per visa. Under these conditions we will now be able to wait for our turn given that the entry into America would be guaranteed to us."

Although Nathan now felt that his release was guaranteed, ... he didn't know the terms of his release. The list of his uncertainties goes on and on. But one can read the

tone of this letter and know that Nathan Roos believed he was about to be reunited with his wife and that his immigration to America was assured.

We don't have the exact date Nathan Roos was released from the camp. We do know that he and Luise held passports that were due to expire on December 21st. They finally sailed from Le Havre aboard the French ship "SS De Grasse" on December 23, 1939 and arrived in New York on January 8, 1940. The passenger manifest states Nathan and Luise traveled under visas 4958 and 4959 issued in Paris on December 6, 1938 and that Nathan paid \$60 each for their tickets.

Once safely in America Nathan and Luise moved to an apartment on the upper west side of Manhattan. In 1941 Nathan applied to Munich for confirmation of his medical degree only to be told that it had been revoked on July 17, 1940 based on the revocation of his citizenship. The

revocation read, "These individuals are unworthy of a German academic degree. therefore, the degree conferred to them by the University of Munich has been revoked by decision of the competent committee of 17 July 1940. The decision is effective immediately. No appeal is possible."

Despite his inability to prove his medical training, Nathan Roos did open a private practice.

In August 1949 he tried once again to get his medical certificate reinstated. Dr. Andreas J. Schwab researched this aspect of Nathan Roos' history for SHS. He wrote, "After consultation between the Dean and the Rector, the Rector informed him that the Medical Faculty had reinstated his revoked doctoral degree. The Rector stressed that the university considered this reinstatement as "an undeniable duty of honor and restitution of an injustice."

Nathan and Luise never forgot where they came from and appreciated each day in their adopted country. Ellen Roos married Fred Tager and had three daughters, Jessie, Colette and Lorette. Ellen and Jessie continue to live in the same upper west side neighborhood.

Ellen doesn't know why her part of the family lost touch with the descendants of Lazarus and Sara. And Lazarus' descendants weren't aware of the existence of Lazarus' first family until I began writing about them.

We are grateful to Ellen Roos Tager for allowing us to share the story of her family through the letters of her father, Dr. Nathan Roos.

Joan Adler



Nathan and Luise Roos
with Ellen Roos Tager and Fred Tager

I am pleased to present excerpts from an article written by French professor Yves-Marie Perion based on his research, including extensive research in the SHS archives. The article was published in 2012 in the French journal, *revue d'histoire diplomatique: societe d'histoire general et d'histoire diplomatic*. Permission to reprint from the article was granted by the author and by the journal's editor, A. Pedone. Copies of the entire article in French and in English may be requested from SHS. Translation from the French was done by the author, Dr. Andreas J. Schwab, Eric Loehwing and Gerard Simonette.

Jesse I. Straus (1872-1936) "Businessman for Roosevelt" and Ambassador in Paris

In the course of the twelve years he spent at the White House, Franklin D. Roosevelt successively named four ambassadors to France: Jesse I. Straus (1933-1936), William C. Bullitt (1936-1940), William D. Leahy (1941-1942) and Jefferson Caffery (1944-1949). ... Friend of the president without being a part of the circle of his intimates, high profile member of the New York Jewish high society, Straus was, above all, the dynamic owner of Macy's department store. He was at the heart of the network woven by Roosevelt in a very diverse milieu, among the "old boys" of Harvard, in the world of business and in the one of the elites of the great Atlantic metropolis. At the moment when isolationism was triumphing in Congress, the ambassador took an active part in the negotiations concerning the Franco-American commerce treaty and the monetary accord of 1936, that opened the way to a rapprochement between the two countries. The confidential letters that he addressed from Paris to the president are read with attention and contribute to shape the world vision of this thwarted Francophile.

A Businessman for Roosevelt

Faithful above all to paternal engagements, Jesse Straus was a Democrat, of a conservative sensibility. ... Straus' interest in politics, however profound it might be, did not lead him to seek elected office. His name was put forward in 1928 during the election for the post of governor of the State of New York, but he withdrew to the advantage of Roosevelt.

Shortly after his victory, the new governor was confronted with the dramatic consequences of the Great Depression. In September 1931, he launched the Tem-

porary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), prototype of the federal agencies created by the New Deal. He convinced Straus to become its head. ... The State Legislature funded him twenty million dollars destined for emergency aid to the unemployed. In February 1932, 160,000 New Yorkers benefited from the assistance of TERA.

When Straus resigned from TERA in March 1932, he did not withdraw from public life. For several years he had seconded, with others, the presidential ambitions of his friend. ... Straus deployed his capacities of organizer, defining the architecture of the national committee and of local committees,

On the day after the election of November 8th, 1932, Straus congratulated the new president and sent his best regards: "Your campaign has been a marvel of political sagacity and of understanding of the public mind. ... I am

convinced that with a few rare exceptions, even your critics on Wall Street are happy with your victory." When Roosevelt announced the temporary closing of American banks, Straus contributed to fighting the panic of the depositors by having appear in the New York newspapers an unambiguous message: "I have confidence in my government. I have confidence in our banks. ... I am going to keep a cool head."

"Galleries Lafayette, here we are!"

At the beginning of 1933, Straus expected to be a part of the presidential cabinet. He saw himself filling the post of Secretary of Commerce, the very one in which his uncle Oscar distinguished himself under the first president Roosevelt. But the powerful senator from California, William G. McAdoo, ... obtained the post for one of his protégés, Daniel C. Roper. Straus was furious to learn the news ... But he was named the American ambassador to Paris.

Before his departure, Straus had the opportunity to have a personal discussion with the president, who imparted to him his conception of the ambassador's role: not to be satisfied with collecting and transmitting news about France, but also to directly address its citizens. In order to clarify for them the economic situation in the United States, much less favorable than they imagine, he must notably cultivate a relationship with the press.

The press saluted the arrival of a "friend of Roosevelt's and of France." Tall, with an austere bearing, always elegantly dressed, Straus adjusted to the difficulties of diplomatic customs and the Parisian milieu. He was quite familiar with the capital, where he had visited on several



occasions for business, and fluently spoke the language of his interlocutors ... The Strauses cut a good figure when they were received by President Lebrun, or in London by King George V.

From the beginning of his sojourn in Paris, Straus undertook the reorganization of ambassadorial services; ... Familiar with directing a large commercial enterprise, he was often exasperated by the slow functioning of the State Department. Following his resignation in 1936, he still joked about his desire to be nominated as "Secretary of State" for one or two days in order to fire a few State Department bureaucrats.

Since the beginning of the thirties, the economic crisis was leading to a contraction in the volume of international commerce. ... The decision by Roosevelt to devalue the dollar, notably, was perceived very badly by the French, who regard it as reprisal for increasing the customs duty on American products. The ambassador played an important role in the ratification by France, April 9, 1935, of a fiscal agreement aiming to avoid the double imposition on American enterprises rooted in its territory.

Direct Presidential Access

Straus addressed Roosevelt without going through an intermediary in the State Department hierarchy. ... employed a style direct and without gimmicks. He also knew how to flatter. In June 1935, he ended a letter to the president affirming that: "confidence is returning and your courageous policies are producing results."

In his letters, Straus mentioned current affairs, but he painted, above all, a mixed picture of French politics.

... Straus was very well aware of the deterioration of the European situation. ... In January he took the initiative of addressing to Roosevelt an eleven page handwritten letter, in which he intended to formulate his "impressions of France after his two and a half year sojourn. They are extremely stern. You must always remember ... there is little of intellectual and moral honesty among the French politicians ... The press, they say, is almost without exception mercenary. ... The state of affairs is deplorable. ... The members (of the Deputy Chamber) conduct themselves like a gang of undisciplined children in nursery school. The financial situation is deplorable. The budget continues to be unbalanced, and, in my opinion, will continue to be despite the government's declaration to the contrary ... The evasion of fiscal responsibility, by reason of an absence of control, of dishonest and corruptible officials, and of general poor will of the French

middle class,... is so widespread, if you can believe it, that you hear it on all sides. ... There is a lack of leadership that is courageous, vital, unselfish, and complete with resources and creativity.

"The atmosphere in Paris and in France is doleful. [The French] are expecting that a miracle will occur, but they have no miracle worker. ... God knows. ... (The French) are shrouded in a huge fear of Germany, and that fear is justified. Will they end up as vassal, or succeed in forming an effective military coalition?- no one knows."

The Straus missive added a number of warnings dispatched at the beginning of 1936, by American diplomats posted in Europe and Asia. Roosevelt's response expressed some variation with the ambassador: "In (my) most pessimistic moments I had been forced into thinking exactly as you in regard to France and its future- and yet I tell myself that on former occasions France always succeeded in regaining control. ... Since May 1933, that anxiety increased: the course of military preparations

means capitulation or war-- there is no other solution possible for this problem."

Unaccomplished Mission

In France 1936, Roosevelt's response to Straus' long confidential letter ended with the assurance of renewed confidence: "You are at the best observation post during a period which may be that of the last days of peace before a long chaos, and I am truly very happy to benefit from your prudent judgment after these two and a half years of observation. ... Continue the good work!" Straus' health did not allow him to respond to the president's expectation. ... He retired to his family residence in Mount Kisco, and in a letter dated the 18th of August 1936 presented his resignation to the president. The latter

accepted it "with profound regret ... regret that your need for total rest compelled you to resign, and regret that you would not be able to continue the wonderful work that you have accomplished for the United States as ambassador to France."

Straus died in his Park Avenue residence on October 4, 1936 at the age of sixty four. An experimenter unburdened by a prior ideology, he took care to envelop his boldest initiatives with the caution of the good sense conservative. The illness of the businessman-ambassador did not allow him to achieve his mission in Paris. It deprived the president of a heeded advisor, whose service, one may believe, would have continued to be utilized--and perhaps, as well, his considerable resources.

Yves-Marie Perion



Irma and Jesse Isidor Straus
Presented at court - 1935

Nathan Straus Monument

June McCash, author of *A Titanic Love Story: Ida and Isidor Straus*, recently sent me an image of a Nathan Straus monument. I had never seen this image before nor did I know anything about the intended monument. Its inscription reads:

Pasteur
Great Master of Medicine
Strauss (sic)
Savior of Babies

June put me in touch with Jim Leonhirth, a journalist who is working on a book about the Cartaino brothers, a family of sculptors from Palermo, Sicily. Jim believes this monument was to be for a competition for a proposed monument for Nathan Straus. It would have been sculpted by C. S. Pietro, one of the Cartaino brothers.

Jim cited two *New York Times* articles that may help to explain the competition for this proposed monument. On August 17, 1917 the *Times* published, "For Nathan Straus Testimonial." The article explains that an executive committee for the Nathan Straus Testimonial met and that its chair, Harry Schlacht would see the Park Commissioner "for the purpose of obtaining his consent to the creation of the projected testimonial structure in Seward Park. The testimonial is to memorialize the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the first Straus milk depot in this city for the poor."



Photo courtesy of Starr Abbott

Two days later an additional article stated, "Straus Declines Memorial. Asks East Siders to Give to War Relief Instead. Nathan Straus announced last night that he would not accept a testimonial from the children of the east side until the war was over. ... "My heart is broken over the miseries of the war, ... and I cannot accept such a testimonial now. Let the people of the east side who are able concentrate on relief work until happier times."

Nathan Straus died January 11, 1931. On the 13th, a former American Ambassador to Germany suggested a memorial "not only to honor his memory but as an example for the young." (Rev.) J. Lane Miller wrote, "This is a splendid suggestion, to which people of all races and religious denominations ought to respond with eagerness in the same spirit as characterized the large-hearted generosity of this philanthropic American."

On March 10, 1931 a *New York Times* article revealed that President Hoover favored a Straus Memorial. "I always had the highest admiration for the late Nathan Straus and when plans for a suitable memorial to his memory reach the stage where all are agreed as to what it shall be, I shall be glad to help further that project."

The Broadway Association, headed by August Janssen, was working to decide if the memorial should be erected in New York or in Washington, D.C. and what form it should take. Janssen wrote, "I have never known of any one more deserving of recognition. Nathan Straus gave the best part of his life to saving the lives of poor children and to humanitarian effort everywhere. His unselfish devotion to childhood endeared him not only to the mothers of New York but to motherhood the world over. A monument indicative of his noble works is a tribute which none can deny him."

A resolution proposing that a new Hudson River bridge spanning upper Manhattan with the New Jersey Palisades be called the Nathan Straus Memorial Bridge was introduced to the New York State Legislature in Albany, NY.

Circulars were distributed in March of 1931 telling of a move to create a children's organization to keep alive the ideals that motivated Nathan Straus. Dr. John H. Finley, New York State Commissioner of Education, spoke to a group at the Nathan Straus memorial exercises at the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association. He said, "Nathan Straus was an example of the highest type of

wealthy American - an individual so concerned with the good of others that he gave not only his wealth but himself to help all others."

Straus Square, a triangular piece of land at the corner of East Broadway, Essex and Rutgers Street in New York City was dedicated to Nathan Straus within a month of his death. It is located on the site of his last milk station. (An article about the rededication of Straus Square can be found in the August 1998 issue of the SHS newsletter. It can be accessed on the archives page of SHS's website: www.straushistoricalsociety.org) Descriptions of other memorials to Nathan Straus can be found in the August 2009 issue of the newsletter, also posted on SHS's website archives page. However, as far as we know, the memorial sculpture shown in this article was never commissioned.

Friends of Straus Park

By Joe Arbo

We had a banner year for excitement as 2012 was the 100th anniversary of the sinking of Titanic. If you don't already know, Straus Park was so named to honor the memory of Isidor and Ida Straus, neighborhood residents who perished in the disaster. We had a commemorative event on April 15th and another on June 27th.

ART IN THE PARK was held on October 13th. It was a cold day, but sunny. Many people turned out to support our area artists and vendors surrounding Straus Park. Food was graciously donated and sold to help with revenues. Next year we will hold this event on Oct. 5th as we all felt that the two week difference in temperature makes for a more enjoyable day. We are planning a Concert on June 26th 5-7PM.

We have fallen short in donations - \$4,000.00 from our needs last year. We hope it will be made up in the upcoming months as more new people will be reminded, and care, to help us in any small amount for the upkeep and gardening required each year. This year we were hit by Hurricane Sandy but most didn't see the damage because volunteers worked very quickly to clean up the park and sweep out the foliage left on the sidewalks from her strong winds.

We have a page on Facebook. Look for Art In The Park- Straus Park. Thanks to everyone from the Straus Historical Society who made 2012 a special year of remembrance.

Note from Joan: In the last issue of the newsletter I neglected to mention that Friends of Straus Park (FSP) planted two Red Bud trees to honor the memory of Isidor and Ida Straus during their April 15, 2012 100th Titanic memorial anniversary event. Red Bud trees were chosen because they are hearty, will do well in the shade of the garden and have heart shaped leaves which FSP felt honor the love of Isidor and Ida. What a lovely tribute to two very special people.

Concert in the Park

Wednesday, June 26th

5 - 7 pm

Art in the Park

Saturday, October 5th

all day

check SHS website or FSP Facebook page
further for details and updates



Straus Derivation

SHS Board Member Al Berr sent the following: "I have sometimes wondered about the etymology of Straus and ostrich, and I think I've found the answer. I came across the word struthious, which means relating to the ostrich. It has been an English word since about the 18th century and derives from the Latin avis struthio which means ostrich bird, which English speakers shortened to ostrich. It's not hard to see the Germanic leap from struthio to Straus."

SHS Website Updates

The Straus Historical Society's website is now fully searchable. When you visit www.straushistoricalsociety.org you will find a search bar on the upper right hand corner of the Home Page. Type any search term in this bar and click on the magnifying glass. You will be directed to all instances where that search term is located on our website.

Visit the newly updated About Us page where you will find photographs and mini-biographies of all the board members, Joan Adler and Catherine McIlvaine Smith. If you ever wanted to know about the people serving on the board, this is the place. Each board member also expressed his/her reason for serving on the board in this space.

We hope you find these new features interesting and helpful.

Welcome Back to the SHS board to Oscar S. Straus III who was re-elected to the board in December 2012 after an absence of several years. Oscar was not only on the board but also its chair. We look forward to his active participation and to our continued work together.

Special Offer

SHS is pleased to offer a copy of the original Oscar S. Straus Memorial Volume: A Record of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association published in 1949, an invitation to its October 1998 rededication ceremony and the program for that ceremony for a \$15 donation to SHS.

An article about the history of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Fountain and about the rededication ceremony appeared in the February 1999 issue of the newsletter which can be found on the archives page of SHS's website. Limited numbers of copies are available. Don't delay in ordering.

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

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, in hard cover with dust jacket- \$40.00

Genealogical Miscellany a family genealogy compiled by Robert K. Straus with addenda - \$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. - \$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. This book is published in English by the Straus Historical Society, Inc. - \$35.00

My Family: I Could Write a Book by Edith Maas Mendel. This charming volume of stories about the members of Edith Mendel's family is 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. - \$25.00

Large black & white photograph of the Isidor and Ida Straus family taken at Elberon NJ in 1905 - \$40.00

Large black & white photograph of the entire Lazarus Straus family at Luchows Restaurant in 1910 - \$40.00

Shipping and handling is included for all items. Send your tax deductible check to Joan Adler, payable to: **Straus Historical Society, Inc.**, P. O. Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416. You can contact Joan by phone: 631-265-0383, fax: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: info@straushistoricalsociety.org

You Are Invited

The board of directors of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. invites you to attend a meeting of the board. Attendance can be in person or by conference call.

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at the office of board chair Paul A. Kurzman in New York City at 6 PM. There is no obligation to join the board nor to contribute to the Society. This invitation is extended so that anyone interested in SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share his/her views. Please contact Joan Adler 631-265-0383 or Paul Kurzman 212-396-7537 for further information.