



# STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 15 Number 2

Newsletter

February 2014

## Georgia - October 2013

By Catherine Smith

with comments by Harold P. Kurzman

The Straus family originated in southwestern Germany in the Rheinpfalz area. They were grain merchants and landowners. After the Revolution of 1848, political and economic conditions in the area forced Lazarus Straus to rethink his options. More information about the early history of the Straus family may be found in past issues of the SHS newsletter. They are posted on our website in the Archives section.

Lazarus moved from Otterberg, Germany to Oglethorpe, Georgia in 1852 where he became a pushcart peddler. After he felt established, in 1854, having opened a dry goods store in nearby Talbotton, the Talbot County seat, he sent for his wife and four children. The children spent much of their childhood in GA, where Lazarus worked hard to become a successful businessman. In 1862, during the Civil War, when the economy of the south was falling apart and people were looking for a scapegoat, Talbot County issued a presentment accusing the Jews of usury. Lazarus, who up until that time thought of himself as a valued member of the community, was hurt by the implications of the presentment, packed up his family and moved 38 miles west to Columbus, GA. Columbus was destroyed in the last battle of the Civil War and the family lost everything. On the advice of his 18 year old son Isidor, Lazarus packed up once more and moved his family north. In New York, the Strauses opened a china and crockery business, L. Straus & Son, and then became partners in R. H. Macy & Company. Yet they never forgot their roots in the south and often visited the community in which they grew up. And Talbotton is very mindful of the incredible impact of the Straus family who chose this city as their home.

The Straus Historical Society hosted two previous heritage trips with family members to the area. Now,

Joan Adler, the director of SHS, was invited by Michael H. Buckner, a member of the SHS board of directors and the president of Historic Talbotton Foundation, to speak at his home in Junction City, GA for the Talbot County Historical Society. Joan gladly accepted and scheduled several other presentations, events and tours during her time there. I was very fortunate to be included in this trip as well.

We arrived in Atlanta on Thursday, October 31<sup>st</sup> and drove to Junction City where we would be staying for the duration of our trip. Mike Buckner and his wife Debbie graciously welcomed us into their lovely antebellum home. In the evening, Mike and Debbie hosted a pot-luck dinner that was advertised in the local newspapers. More than thirty guests brought a variety of southern dishes and we all dined on the back patio of Mike and Debbie's beautiful home. After dinner, Joan gave her presentation, supplemented by a slideshow. A few weeks earlier, Mike Buckner had given a presentation to a similar group about the Straus family's history during their time in GA. Joan moved the timeline forward and discussed the Straus family

after they left GA. The presentation was well received. It was followed by a brief speech by Harold Kurzman, the great-grandson of Isidor and Ida Straus, who traveled from his home in Florida to represent the SHS board and the Straus family. After a short Q&A, Harold and



The Michael H. and Debbie G. Buckner  
home in Junction City, GA

*"History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are."*

David McCullough

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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  
Board Member  
Michael H. Buckner**

Joan Adler and Catherine Smith arrived on Thursday, October 31, 2013. They presented programs to the local historic societies for Taylor and Talbot counties. Many of us have heard the early history of the Straus family, however, this program featured the years after they left Talbot County continuing through the years to the present. Joan presented an outstanding PowerPoint program that was both informative and entertaining. An extra special treat was having Harold Kurzman, the Great-Grandson of Isidor and Ida Straus and Board member of SHS in attendance for the weekend.

Joan and Catherine stayed for the annual Harvest Days Festival, presented by the Patsiliga Museum, Saturday and Sunday, November 2 & 3. Patsiliga Museum, Inc., which is located eight miles southeast of Talbotton in Talbot County, is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational museum which is centered around a water powered grist mill and cotton gin. This educational museum has as its primary focus the preservation of Southern industrial equipment during the time period of 1840-1940. During this brief 100 years industrial equipment was powered by hand, horse, water, steam, kerosene, gasoline, and electricity. It is truly amazing to realize the rapid development that occurred in such a few years and is important for children and youth to learn about it.

At the annual Harvest Days the huge display of pictures, books, information, and newsletters drew the attention of many festival visitors throughout the weekend. These visitors took advantage of learning about the Straus family from Joan and Catherine, asking questions and viewing the display materials. Between 700-800 people attended Harvest Days. People who visited the exhibit learned about the Straus family and their impact on our community and our country.

Since the occurrence of these events, numerous people have commented on the gracious, interesting manner, Joan and Catherine shared Straus family information. Most of the program participants or Harvest Day visitors had heard of the Straus family but they greatly enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the family.

Harvest Days is an annual event the first weekend in November. We welcome Straus family members and encourage them to return to their American family's first hometown. It is truly an opportunity to experience the sights, sounds and smells of a bygone era.

Michael H. Buckner  
Board Member  
Talbotton, Georgia



Joan offered to sign copies of *The Autobiography of Isidor Straus* for those who wished to purchase the book.

Friday was a rainy day, but we didn't let that stop us. In the early afternoon, Debbie took Joan, Harold and me



Harold P. Kurzman at Straus-LeVert Community Hall

on a tour of Talbotton. We stopped at Straus-LeVert Community Hall, once a women's college, and were able to go inside the building where Hermina Straus attended school. We continued on to see the location where the Straus home once stood and the Courthouse for Talbot County. We saw where Lazarus' store would have been and the last home they lived in in Talbotton, which is still standing and in use.

That evening, Joan spoke at Temple Israel in Columbus. Services were led by Rabbi Beth Schwartz followed by a pot-luck dinner. Joan then spoke in front of the congregation of more than 60 people about her new book *For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr.* The audience was captivated by the amazing story of lifelong friends and their desperate efforts to get the Frank family out of Europe during World War II. A Q&A session followed the presentation. Joan, and Harold, who also attended the presentation, were available to sign copies of both books.



Joan Adler signing books at Temple Israel in Columbus

Descendants of Amanda Blun Rothschild also attended this event. Amanda was Ida Blun Straus' sister.

Saturday began Harvest Days in Old Talbot, a weekend festival held each year by the Buckner family on their property. Between 700 and 800 people came out to see the many attractions, including their working gristmill and steam engine. A variety of vendors sold local goods. In the dining room of the Buckner's home, we set up photographs, informational pamphlets, and books for

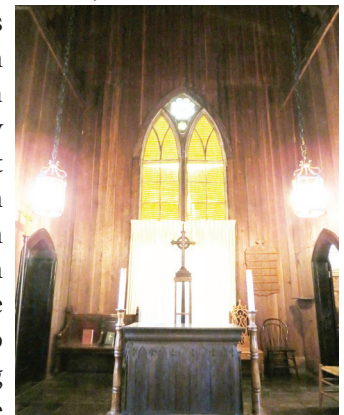
the visitors who passed through. Many people stopped to find out who we were and were interested in the Straus connection to GA.



Harold P. Kurzman with Straus materials in the Buckner's dining room

In the evening, Joan, Harold and I were invited by Debbie Buckner to attend a cocktail party at Warm Springs Rehabilitation Center where Franklin D. Roosevelt was treated for polio and where he eventually died. The Roosevelt family gathered at the Center for a family reunion and for the screening of a documentary about F.D.R., Eleanor, and Theodore Roosevelt by Ken Burns. The Roosevelt documentary will air in 2014 as a 14 hour mini-series, of which 1.5 hours were shown at the screening. Afterwards, we attended a cocktail party with the Roosevelt family members and met Ken Burns. It was a very interesting evening.

Sunday the festival continued. We greeted visitors and met many interesting people. Toward the end of the event, we were driven to Zion Episcopal Church in Talbotton by David and Katherine Johnson. The Church was founded in the 1830s and would have been right down the street from where the Straus family lived. It remains in almost the exact state it was in when the Straus' lived in Talbotton and still has an active congregation. In the evening, we were treated to a lovely dinner including grits straight from the grist mill on the Buckner's property.



Zion Episcopal Church - Talbotton

Monday was a very busy day. Joan and I drove to Columbus where we met Harold Kurzman. We started the day with a tour hosted by the Historic Columbus Foundation. Our tour guide, Justin Krieg, took us through the Walker-Langdon-Peters House on the Historic Street in Columbus. The house was built in 1828, the same year the city was founded. We then drove to the Swift-Kyle-Spencer House, a home that was once owned by the Rothschilds, Ida's sister Amanda's family. The tour of this home was led by Ashley Smith, the Assistant



The former Rothschild home  
in Columbus

Director of Trees Columbus (www.TreesColumbus.org), an environmental organization that shares office space in the house with several other environmental organizations.

The last stop was at the Phenix & Eagle Mill which has been turned into upscale condominiums. The buildings front the Chattahoochee River and has become an important Columbus tourist destination in recent years. In fact, there is world class white water rafting on the river.

After the tour, Joan, Harold and I had lunch at the Cannon Brew Pub on Broadway in Columbus. Then Joan and I continued with a tour of the Springer Opera House. We were met by Jennings Palmer who brought us inside and introduced us to Paul R. Pierce, the historian of the Opera House. He explained its incredible history and impact on the city of Columbus. He even showed us the behind the scenes areas. Oscar S. Straus spoke at the



Springer Opera House

opera house in 1908 and was treated to dinner on its stage. Paul is an enthusiastic tour guide and we were captivated by his stories. They were fascinating.

We then drove to the Columbus Museum where we were met by a Trustee and Docent of the museum, Gail Greenblatt. We met Gail at our presentation at Temple Israel on Friday night and she invited us to come to the museum for a private tour. The museum features a history of the Chattahoochee River and the city of Columbus as well as a vast collection of American art. We were delighted to see the museum on a day when it is normally closed and to be able to linger at many of the exhibits. It was quite interesting to see so many



Columbus Museum

historical exhibits alongside the museum's large art collection. Gail has obviously guided people many times before and was a font of knowledge. After this exciting tour, Joan and I had some time to spare and so Gail invited us back to her lovely home. We spent some time chatting with her and resting after the long.

In the evening, we had dinner with family member Dickie Straus, a descendant of the Moises Lazarus branch of the family. He picked us up at Gail's home and the three of us picked up Harold at his hotel. We went to dinner at Country's Barbeque on Broad. This southern restaurant is located in the old Greyhound bus station built in the 1930s. It was a fun location made even better because the meal was delicious and it was topped off with "Goober Pie." After a long day, we returned to Mike and Debbie's home where we told them all about our exciting day and relaxed in front of their kitchen fire.

On Tuesday, Joan and I returned to Columbus where she gave a presentation at the Port Columbus National Civil War Naval Museum. She discussed the Straus family and their experiences at sea. After a Q&A session, light refreshments and lunch was available and Joan signed copies of both *The Autobiography of Isidor Straus* and *For the Sake of the Children*. The talk was very well received. Many people we met earlier came to the Museum for the presentation.



Joan signing a book at  
Port Columbus Museum  
after her talk

After returning to Junction City to say goodbye to Mike and Debbie, we were sorry to leave for Atlanta as it was time to begin our journey home.

It was a long, eventful trip. We had a wonderful time touring and meeting so many interesting people. We gave several successful presentations during our stay in Georgia. We hope that someday soon, we will be able to return to Talbotton and Columbus.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who travelled to Georgia to meet us, everyone who participated in the events, and all those people that made our trip truly special. Without your support, none of this would be possible.



**Comments from the great grandson of Isidor and Ida Straus and SHS Board member Harold P. Kurzman:**

My clearest and strongest impressions came from visiting the Buckners on their farm, land which has been in their family for generations. We are very fortunate that he and his wife are passionate about history and historical preservation in TALBOT county, Georgia. Their ante-bellum home was saved from demolition at another county location by their purchase, disassembly, and rebuild, piece by piece, over 10 years! They have adopted the Straus family history as an important part of their county legacy and consequently he is on the SHS Board.

Our visit was timed to coincide with the Buckner's annual Harvest Festival, a public event on their property. The festival highlights local crafts, antique farm machinery and vehicles, still maintained operable and a small locomotive that was running. They invited us to convert a room in their home into a display of Straus memorabilia which helped our sales of Isidor's Autobiography and Joan's book.

On a visit to nearby Columbus we saw other evidence in the value given to historical preservation. Several 19<sup>th</sup> century homes had been preserved and moved to a quiet street, the old cotton mills had been converted to condos, a museum traces the naval history of the Civil War, and houses the remains of Confederate warships recovered from the adjacent river. The huge former home of the Rothschilds, home to Ida's sister, was saved from destruction in the siege of Columbus when the Union general selected it as his headquarters, is maintained as an historical site and houses several non-profit organizations.



Pumper car on Mike's railroad

Michael H. Buckner and a friend  
at Harvest Days



Olivia Buckner and her mom Debbie  
displaying quilts at Harvest Days



Mike's engine, which he drives  
on a half mile track on his farm  
- we all got rides



Friends played typical folk music  
in a room in the Buckner's home



The former Straus home in Talbotton



## Strauses and the Arts

For many years I've heard about the Therese Kuhn Straus Rooms donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and about artwork donated by other Strauses to various museums around the country. I've been aware of many family members who are artists, musicians, dancers, authors, photographers, sculptors, patrons of the arts, etc. It has become clear that this was a long overdue topic for an article in the newsletter. However, once we started doing research, it quickly became apparent that there was far too much information for one article, or even for a series of articles.

This article will feature the artistic endeavors of some of the past Strauses. But we will also begin work on a new book, a compilation about family members in the arts. We will write about the current members of the family, conduct interviews where each person can speak about their own vision and their art and we will present photographs of their work. If you are an artist and wish to be included, please let me know about it. And if you know of others in the family who are pursuing their art, let me know that as well. We expect to include the visual arts as well as art education, music, dance, performing arts, sponsors and donors. As we learn more from you, the scope of the book will take shape. Please let us hear from you.

The earliest information we have in the SHS archives about a Straus interested in the arts is about Ida Blun from a time before she married Isidor Straus. We know that Ida was an accomplished artist. We have several images of her pencil drawings that were completed before she married Isidor.

Unfortunately, we have no further images of Ida's artwork after this period or any evidence that she continued to draw or paint after her marriage. We do know that both Isidor and Ida were collectors and patrons of the arts.



Two of Ida Blun's pencil drawings

Early in the twentieth century, Isidor and Ida were collectors of medieval and Renaissance paintings, sculpture and works of art. In 1905 Isidor Straus began a long correspondence with a sculptor's studio in Florence and in Rome with the aim of purchasing a model of Antonio Canova's Cupid & Psyche. He hoped to donate the sculpture to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. "When I chanced in your studio a few days ago you showed me a model of Cupid & Psyche that you stated to me to be Canova's original cast." The model was sculpted in 1794. M. Ezekiel wrote to Isidor on April 18, 1905, "I am glad to inform you that the plaster group of Amor & Psyche you refer to is the original made by Canova. This plaster model was copied in marble several times ..." Subsequent letters arrange for an agreement on the price and for application to ship this sculpture free of duty "as a work of art imported expressly for presentation to a public institution ..." On July 11, 1905 Henry Siegel of L. Straus & Sons, 42-46 Warren Street, New York City received a note from the U.S. Customs Appraiser stating, "I regret to learn through Examiner Ward, of this office, who visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and examined the importation that the same was found badly damaged." Catherine Smith and I visited the Museum in September and found that, although damaged, Cupid & Psyche is on display in Gallery 614 in the European Painting area. It was wonderful to see this sculpture after having read the collection of letters relating to its purchase and shipment. Thank you to the Met for granting permission to use this image in our newsletter.

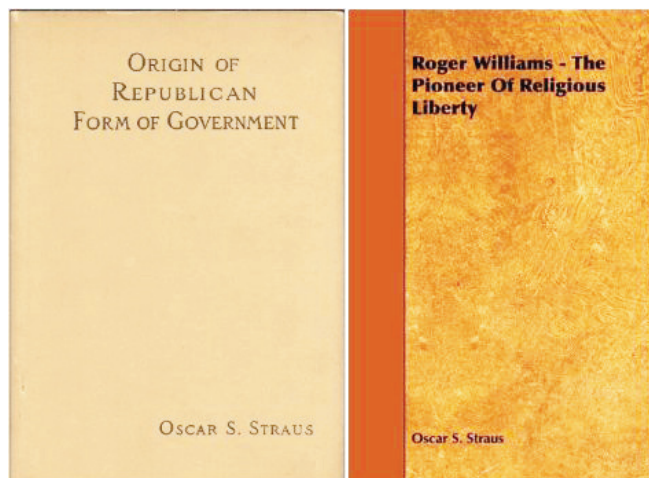


Canova's Cupid & Psyche

Lina Gutherz Straus was the wife of Nathan Straus. In 1917 she wrote *Disease in Milk: The Remedy, Pasteurization*, to get the word out about her husband's important work. Her family was related to the Strauses in five different ways. Brothers, Edgar and Oscar, Gutherz apprenticed in Europe at the Strauses porcelain factories. Oscar worked at the L. Straus & Sons decorating studio in Limoges, France. He is the holder of many patents for his designs. Edgar began work at the Straus' glassware factory in their Kamenicky Senov Bohemia factory. Together with a cousin, Maximilion Marx, they opened Marx & Gutherz, creators of fine decorated porcelains.



Isidor's youngest brother Oscar S. Straus was an author who penned many articles and books including *The Origin of the Republican Form of Government in the United States* (1886), *Roger Williams, The Pioneer of Religious Liberty* (1894), *The Development of Religious Liberty in the United States* (1896) and *Under Four Administrations, his memoirs* (1922).



Composer Oscar Straus was the great grandson of Fradsche Straus. She was the sister of Isaak and Salomon, the fathers of Lazarus and Sara, respectively. Oscar was born in Vienna in 1869. He studied composition with Hermann Gradener at the Vienna Conservatory, harmony and counterpoint with Anton Bruckner at Vienna University and with did graduate work with Max Bruch at the Berlin School for Advanced Music. He was a theatre conductor successively in Brunn, Teplitz, Mayence and Berlin, 1895-1900. He was the conductor of Wolzogen's "*Ueberbretti*" for which he wrote a number of musical pieces: "*Der Lustig Ehemann*", "*Die Haselnuss*", and "*Die Musik Kommt.*" Among the pieces for which he became known were the "*A Waltz Dream*," which was his first major success when produced in 1907. "*The Chocolate Soldier*" followed. It was based in George Bernard Shaw's play, "*Arms and the Man.*" It was first produced in New York on September 13, 1909. He had more than 50 light operas to his credit, in addition to many more serious works of music.



In 1939, during World War II, Oscar Straus made many trips to the United States. When he was forced to flee and took up residence in Paris. He was made an honorary citizen and decorated with the Legion of Honor. When the Nazis invaded Paris he was forced to flee a second time and came to New York where he lived during the latter part of World War II. He was known to American audiences as a conductor and a composer of scores for several Hollywood movies.

Edgar J. Straus was the son of Emanuel Straus who was the brother of Isaak and Salomon. This branch of the family lived in San Francisco, CA. Edgar emigrated to Sydney Australia in 1888 where he was a cellist of some repute. He was a cello professor and examiner at the Kellerman Conservatoire de Musique. He became ill with tuberculosis while in his 20's in 1897 and retired from his musical activities. He lived for a time in Adalong in Australia before returning to the San Francisco aboard the "*Moana*," in 1899. He died shortly after his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and is buried in San Francisco.

Isidor and Ida's oldest son Jesse and his wife Irma Nathan Straus were enthusiastic collectors. During her lifetime, Irma donated many works of art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Among them are paintings: Saint Claire, by Lippo Memmi; Madonna and Child by Berlinghiero; Saint John on Patmos, Madonna and Child Enthroned, and Death of a Virgin: The Crucifixion by Pacino di Bonaguida. Images and more information about Irma's many other donations (as well as information about these) may be found on the Mets website. Pictured here is Madonna and Child: by Master of the Magdalen (Italian, Florence, active 1265-95). Photo courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



In 1970, after her death, the Park-Bernet Gallery auctioned The Irma N. Straus Collection of Old Master Drawings. There were 50 works of art including some by artists: Francois Boucher, Jean Honoré Fragonard, Francesco Guardi, Jean August Dominique Ingres, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and Jean Antoine Watteau.

Irma also donated two works of art to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, GA in memory of her late husband, Jesse Isidor Straus: a sculpture, Bust of a Man (possibly St. Jerome) dated 1525 by an unknown artist and a painting, Portrait of Duke Henry the Devout of Saxony by Lucas Cranach the Elder dated 1528. It is unknown why she chose this museum. Photo courtesy High Museum, Atlanta



Percy S. Straus was Isidor and Ida's second son. He and his younger brother Herbert owned large farms in Middletown, NJ. Percy's home was burned to the ground in 1915. Newspaper accounts tell of a large number of important pieces of art that were burned in the fire. He never rebuilt on that property.

Percy continued to build his parent's collection after their deaths. He was part of a small group of American collectors in the 1920's who bought Old Masters. Each year he traveled to Europe with his family where he consulted with scholars, dealers and museum directors before making his selections. Letters between Percy and some of these experts reveal the careful manner in which he researched each piece before making a purchase.

In 1941 Percy pledged the donation of his collection of XIV - XVI Century Italian paintings to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, TX partly to help his son, Percy Jr. establish himself in the Houston community but also to support the future economic prosperity of the Southwest. According to MFA curator Edgar Peters Bowdon, "He believed strongly in stimulating the growth of art centers in regions of the United States outside New York." Photo courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Saint Anthony Abbot Shunning the Mass of Gold by Giovanni da Fiesole (Fra Angelico)

In 1996 a book, *Italian Paintings XIV - XVI Centuries in The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*, by Carolyn C. Wilson was published by the Museum in association with Rice University Press and Merrell Holberton Publishers in London describing their collection. Much of the artwork described in this book is attributed to Percy. An appendix contains copies of correspondence between Percy S. Straus and various gallery owners or art dealers regarding the purchase of a particular piece.

Percy was also instrumental in the creation of the 1939 New York City World's Fair. It is said that he is responsible for its Art Deco look and feel as well as the moving force behind its overall success.

Herbert N. Straus was Isidor and Ida's third and youngest son. He and his wife Therese Kuhn Straus were interested in many aspects of the arts. In 1921 Herbert donated two pen and ink anatomical studies; one of a leg and one of a knee, from the School of Michaelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. He donated a book: *Astronomicum Caesareum* by Michael Ostendorfer (ca. 1490-1549) to the Met in 1925.

Herbert and Therese rebuilt their Middletown, NJ farm in January 1930. They were criticized for spending so much money during the Great Depression but they felt they were providing much needed employment to the area's laborers.

In July 1930 the *NY Times* announced that Herbert and Therese planned to build a home at 9 East 71<sup>st</sup> Street in New York City. Therese wanted to use authentic materials purchased in France and Italy. According to family members, she was a true Francophile. One story attributed to Therese is that Maurice Trumbauer, a Philadelphia architect and builder of the 71<sup>st</sup> Street home, wanted to reproduce a marble staircase rather than import one from a castle in France. He said, "No one will know the difference," to which Therese replied, "I will know."

Herbert died unexpectedly in 1933. Therese held onto this seven story building until 1944



Grand Salon from the Hôtel de Tessé - Paris - 18<sup>th</sup> century



when she sold it to the Roman Archbishopric of New York at a large financial loss. Two rooms, which are now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City we purchased in their entirety for use in this house. One is the Grand Salon from the Hôtel de Tessé, Paris (shown above) made by Nicolas Huyot (1700-1891). The other is from a hotel in the Cours d'Albret, Bordeaux. The carving is attributed to Barthélmy Cabirol (1732-1786) and his workshop. When it became clear that the East 71st Street house would not be completed, Therese used these two rooms in her 960 Fifth Avenue



A room from a hotel in the Cours d'Albret  
- Bordeaux - mid 1700's

apartment. When she downsized later, she donated the rooms to the Met. Photos courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Herbert played the cello and was also a collector of fine musical instruments. At one time he had seven violins. Four were Stradivariuses. He had seven violin bows including one made by François Tourte. Grandson William Helburn Straus tells me that Herbert had Stradivarius violas and cellos as well, outfitting a Stradivarius string quartet. Herbert owned and played a Davidov Stradivarius cello and also owned a Guadagnini violin which he directed in his will be given to friend Samuel Gardner. Gardner played this Guadagnini at Herbert's funeral. Herbert left his beloved Stradivari violins, viola and cello as well as a Guadagnini viola to his wife Therese with instructions that they "should not be sold during the lifetime of his wife except with her consent and that they should be kept preserved by my wife in her home during her lifetime." Therese lent these instruments to famed musicians during her lifetime.

Edward Schafer, the husband of Mildred Straus, Oscar and Sarah's daughter, was also interested in fine musical instruments. He played the violin and was described as a

great music lover. In 1917 Edward Schafer bought the Rougemont Stradivarius violin for \$16,000 as a gift for Elias Breeskin, a young Russian Jewish immigrant with great musical talent. Edward also agreed to undertake Breeskin's musical education with Franz Kneisel of the Institute of Musical Art in New York City. Breeskin became concertmaster of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and then the first conductor of the reorganized Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in 1926.



The photograph above is of a Stradivarius violin that is on display at a museum of musical instruments in Berlin, Germany.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City was the recipient of a donation by Mrs. Roger W. Straus. In 1964 Gladys Straus donated French linen and silk lingerie dating from about 1914. While this lingerie is not currently on display, it is cataloged and an image of it may be found online.

Further research will have to be conducted to learn if any of the other children of Lazarus and Sara, or their children, or members of other branches of the family, were involved in the arts or were artistic themselves. Certainly, in subsequent generations, many family members found pleasure and satisfaction through their artistic endeavors. Space does not permit further exploration of this topic here. But we look forward to working with **all** family members to present their stories, and the stories of their parents and grandparents, in our forthcoming book.

Please contact me if you wish to be included or if you know of a family member whose work should be included. We are interested in **all** generations and **all** members of the family, not matter how distant the relationship. We will be presenting brief biographies of these artists and supporters of the arts. And we will present examples of their artwork (where appropriate). All aspects of the arts will be included. Whether you or a relative is a practicing artist, author, dancer, musician, patron or supporter of the arts, we want to hear from you.

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## Lower Lab & PS 198 International Night

On Thursday, January 23rd, Joan and Catherine, representing the Straus Historical Society, attended the P.S. 198 & Lower Lab School's International Night. This New York City public school was dedicated The Isidor and Ida Straus School in 1958.

International Night celebrates cultures from around the world through displays, crafts, and ethnic food. The children who attended were given passports as they entered the event. They were advised to visit each "country," located at tables throughout the cafeteria, to work on a craft and collect stickers (flags of each country) for their passport.

SHS hosted the German table. We shared stories of the family through photographs and found that the parents and teachers were especially fascinated. The children were told the story of the Straus family and each was given a piece of paper that read, "Straus is the German word for Ostrich." The children were then asked to draw and color an ostrich using examples provided. Once they

finished their drawing, they were given a sticker with the German flag to place in their passport.

Many volunteers and children were dressed in traditional outfits from the country of their heritage. In the center of the cafeteria, the PTA set up tables that were filled with platters of food from cultures around the world. In the auditorium, a number of performances were held including Irish dancing, Salsa dancing, Samurai Ninja dances and Korean drum dances.



The SHS table at International Night

The event was a huge success and SHS was pleased to have been a part of it. We were delighted to be invited and look forward to our continued partnership between SHS and P.S. 198 The Isidor and Ida Straus School.

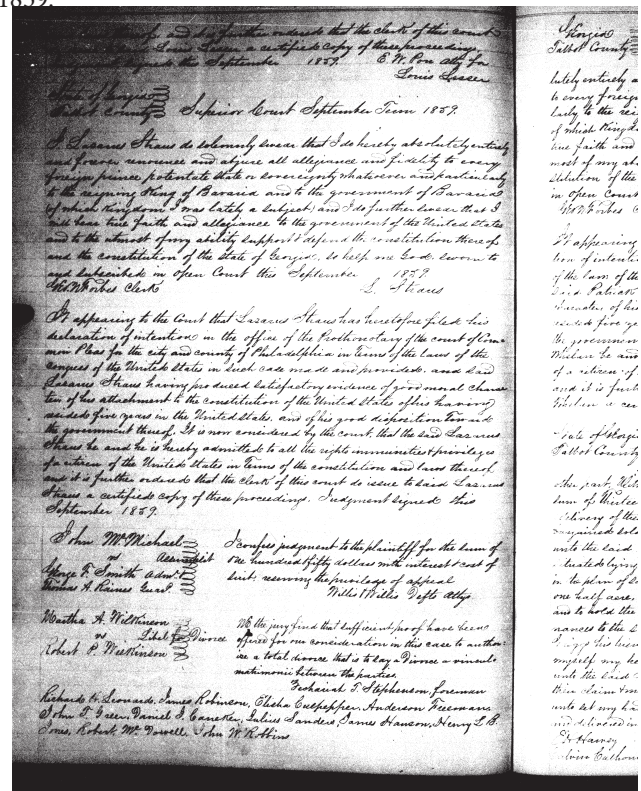
## Lazarus Straus - U.S. Naturalization September 1859

We are pleased to announce the acquisition of a copy of the U.S. Naturalization of Lazarus Straus in the Talbot County Superior Court from September 1859 thanks to Jeremy Katz, Archivist, Cuba Family Archives, The Breman, Atlanta's Jewish Museum.

"State of Georgia, Talbot County, Superior Court September Term 1859. I, Lazarus Straus, do solemnly swear that I do hereby absolutely entirely and forever renounce and adjure all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign prince potentiate state or sovereignty whatsoever and particularly to the reigning King of Bavaria and to the government of Bavaria (of which Kingdom I was lately a subject) and I do further swear that I will have true faith and allegiance to the government of the United States and to the utmost of my ability support & defend the constitution thereof and the constitution of the state of Georgia, so help me God. Sworn to and subscribed in open court this September 1859. Signed by L. Straus.

In appearing to the Court that Lazarus Straus has heretofore filed his declaration of intention in the office of the Prothonotary of the court of Common Pleas for the city and county of Philadelphia in Terms of the law of the congress of the United States is such case made and provided and said Lazarus Straus having produced satisfactory evidence of good moral character of his attachment to the constitution of the United States of his having resided five years in the United States, and of his good disposition toward the government

thereof. It is now considered by the court, that the said Lazarus Straus be and he is hereby admitted to all the rights immunities & privileges of a citizen of the United States in terms of the constitution and laws thereof and it is further ordered that the clerk of this court do issue to said Lazarus Straus a certified copy of the proceedings. Judgment signed this September 1859."





## NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF STRAUS PARK

By Al Berr

October 5, 2013 was the date of the annual ART IN THE PARK day presented by the Friends of Straus Park. The weather cooperated in appropriate fashion by giving us a clear, pleasant, early autumn day. The park was at its early autumn finest, thanks to Joe Arbo, our fairly new gardener and Eddie, his fairly new assistant. Joe had pared back much of the ground cover which allowed for more planting space. The reflecting pool area in front of the monument was planted with chrysanthemums of various colors. It all looked splendid, and received many admiring comments from the visitors who came in a steady stream throughout the day.

Joe has also been diligent in trying to keep the park free of the vagrant population who seem to find the park attractive, especially at night. He continues to be in touch with the proper authorities on this matter. Although there is some progress, it remains a problem that may accelerate when the warmer weather arrives. Joe is not new to Friends of Straus Park; he has been on the board for many years. He dutifully stepped into the position when the former gardener, John Olin, resigned, and we commend him for his much appreciated work.

The musical entertainment for the day was provided by the five-man ensemble known as Baby Soda. They played New Orleans-style jazz and songs from the thirties and forties in a style reflecting those periods. They were an obvious hit with the crowd, and we intend to book them again. We also have to report that the food for sale, very generously contributed by stores and restaurants in our neighborhood, was completely consumed. All in all, a successful day.

There will be more concerts in the Park once the lovely spring and summer days arrive. Look for announcements on the Straus website and on our Friends of Straus Park Facebook page.

We plan the next:

**ART IN THE PARK**  
**A Celebration of Music, Art,**  
**Dance and Food**  
**Saturday, October 11, 2014**  
**10:00 AM to 5:00 PM**  
**Rain Date: October 12**



Above: Winter 2013. Photo by Joe Arbo  
Below: Art in the Park - October 2013. Photo by Joe Arbo



Above: Baby Soda performing. Photo by Joe Arbo  
Below: Artist with his artwork. Photo by Margaret G. Kavanau



## Macy's Custard Cup

Early in December a box arrived at the SHS office marked FRAGILE. We had not ordered any supplies and were not expecting anything. What a wonderful surprise was in store when we unwrapped its contents.

William J. Korntheuer sent SHS a wonderful gift. He is the son of Barbara and Walter Korntheuer. Barbara's father, Herbert Woodger, was the superintendent of the Percy and Edith Straus estate, Hilholme, in Portchester, NY. Barbara and Walter have already donated items from this estate and have participated in a conference call conversation with Tom and Brad Straus, the grandsons of Percy and Edith. We've heard some interesting stories and enjoyed listening as Barbara, Walt, Tom and Brad collectively recalled their youthful memories of Hilholme.

William, "Bill," sent a note explaining the box's contents. He wrote, "One may consider this incidental and maybe it is but I wanted you to decide the fate of this object from the 1930's. What we have here is a "custard cup" that was made in England, with scenes of the Cotswolds & countryside. There was, I was told, an upscale bakery in NYC and Mr. Straus just loved their custard. Around the holidays one year during the '30's Macy's ordered these exclusively for the store. They were sent to the baker where, after sterilization, they were filled and sealed with this delicious custard. I'm certain, Joan, one would have to search high & low to even find one of these perfectly preserved specimens. Nana, my grandmother (Annie Woodger) had been given some that year and later the children played and had tea, etc. This one is the only one I'm aware of that made it through without so much as a chip."

The custard cup will be added to our growing archival collection and be made available for display whenever it is appropriate. Thank you Bill for this fascinating bit of Straus history and for the charming custard cup it accompanies.



Two views of the custard cup

## 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. In 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. 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. - 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. This book is published in English by the Straus Historical Society, Inc. - Hard cover - \$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. - \$ Hard cover - 25.00

Shipping and handling is included. **Straus Historical Society, Inc.**, P.O. Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416. You can contact Joan by phone: 631-724-4487, or e.mail: [info@straushistory.org](mailto:info@straushistory.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 Thursday, March 6, 2014 at the office of board chair Paul A. Kurzman in New York City at 6 PM. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society. This invitation is extended so that all interested in SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share their views. Please contact Joan Adler 631-724-4487 or Paul Kurzman 212-396-7537 for further information.