



# STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Straus is the German word for ostrich

February 2016

## MY EXPERIENCES DURING WORLD WAR II A PERSONAL HISTORY BY KURT MAAS

The August 2015 issue of the SHS newsletter commemorated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II by presenting stories of family members who participated in the war. Many of these stories were written in that person's own words. We are pleased to share one more story, a lengthy and compelling one. It was written by Kurt (Kenneth) Maas, the son of Sally Werner Maas and Lotte Neuman Maas of Berlin, Germany.

Kurt's father Werner, as he was known, was a successful superior court judge for arbitration and commercial cases. He gave that up to marry Lotte and move to Berlin where her family were successful brassiere and corset manufacturers. Werner did well and the family lived in luxury. Werner and Lotte heard rumblings of vicious anti-Semitism in the country, but these unpleasant incidents never seemed to touch them personally. Thus, they were amazed to receive a letter from their cousin, Jesse Isidor Straus, urging them to leave Germany as quickly as possible. At that time Jesse was the American Ambassador to France (1933-1936). Werner's response was to point out that it was impossible to close up all their stores, dispose of their possessions and sell their home in such a hurry.

A second warning from Jesse was more urgent and Werner's response was to remind his cousin that his countrymen were not the barbarians he had alluded to, but were the people of Beethoven and Goethe. A third warning reminded Werner that in his government position Jesse was privy to much information that was not available to the average person. Werner should not argue or quibble, but MUST get out of Germany immediately.

Jesse's warning alerted them to pay close attention to what was going on around them and they finally decided to follow their cousin's advice. First, they sent their twin sons out of the country. Egon went to England and Kurt (Kenneth) to France. Then they proceeded to dispose of their holdings as rapidly and quietly as possible. Things moved along well and all the necessary arrangements were made for their trip to France where they planned to stay until their visas were in order for their entry into the United States. However, France was not accepting any more refugees at that point. In order for them

to gain admission, their son Kurt joined the French Foreign Legion. French law permitted residence for the families of soldiers. So all was set for their departure from Germany.

Just two days before leaving, the Gestapo stormed their home and brought Werner to a huge commercial loft that contained hundreds of cots. He was told to find an empty one but, after a search, he reported to the guards that they were all occupied.

A guard offered to find one for him. He then walked up and down the rows of cots, shot an old man and announced to Werner that he now had a cot.

This took place before the concentration camps and gas chambers were up and running and bribery was still possible. Werner later revealed that he then bought the most expensive "postage stamp" of his life; \$1,200 to get a note delivered to Lotte. With more money changing hands they made arrangement for his escape, a place to meet and to quickly leave Germany.

They wondered how the Gestapo became aware of their original plans and later learned that the "faithful" maid, who had been with their family for seventeen years, had notified the authorities of the family's imminent departure.



Egon and Kurt Maas

The Maas' twin sons were Egon and Kurt. They were 19 years old and studying at the university when Hitler required all Jewish college students to withdraw from school. Egon had been studying Economics for five semesters. He was sent to London in 1933. Egon had just applied for British citizenship when he was placed in a prisoner of war camp. The British were afraid of a German invasion. Egon had been in London eight years by then. He was taken to the Isle of

*"Isn't it wonderful that no one needs to wait a moment before starting to change the world."*

Anne Frank  
March 1944

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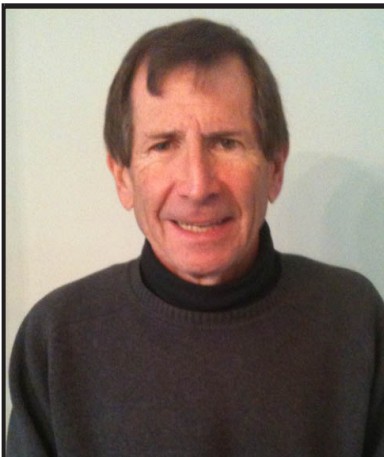
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The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is dedicated to advancing the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Lazarus Straus family and the historical context in which they lived through research and education. You are invited to submit articles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

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

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**A Message from Treasurer:  
Larry Kahn**

Hello Everyone!

I've been the Treasurer of SHS for the last several years and I thought it would be worthwhile to tell you a little about the guy who helps handle our financial matters. That's me.

My mother, Marjorie Gerstman Kahn's family, the Kaufmans, (from the Moises Lazarus family) were from a town near

where the Lazarus Straus family lived. Her first cousin, Clarise Illes, was one of the genealogists in the family. She helped facilitate doing a DNA study with a member of our branch of the Moises Lazarus family and a member of the Lazarus Straus family. Their DNA matched. That means both families are definitely related, something we only knew from family stories until then. And so, although we still don't know for certain how we are related, that relationship is proven. I couldn't be happier.

Back to my story: My wife Clara and I met our sophomore year at Cornell. Clara graduated with a degree in Biochemistry and worked in Jim Watson's lab (of Watson and Crick fame). I got my DVM in Veterinary Medicine. We have three children, all married and eight grandchildren. We've been married 47 years.

I made a buddy, Henry Kellner, in veterinary school. We bought a practice together in 1974 in Trumbull, CT. We owned it for 35 years and we're still best friends. We did all the management ourselves.

During that time I became very involved with volunteer positions at our synagogue. I was the budget chairman for five years. It was actually a fascinating job. I needed to know what every line item in the budget represented. During those years we always were balanced or had a surplus!

Our son David went to college at Emory in Atlanta. I discovered Gus Kaufman on one of our many visits to GA to see our son. Gus was a treasure. We visited him and his wife Marian in Macon where they lived. In fact, it was Gus who recommended me to the board of SHS.

As I'm sure you know, we need to run a tight ship at SHS. Our income comes basically from contributions, some licensing, loans of artifacts and income from our reserves.

We have a small account at Merrill Lynch that has a mixture of bonds and high quality equities. I am a fiscal conservative and aim to preserve principal while attempting to earn a decent return. Over the years that I have been treasurer our return has been between five and five and a half percent which translates to about \$1,600 per year for our operating budget. I still get nervous when our checking account starts shrinking.

I hope this information helps to bolster your confidence when you contribute to SHS. We have a board that is extremely hands-on and highly vested in the success of our organization. We welcome your comments and suggestions, not only with regard to fiscal matters, but also with ideas for future projects.

Mann where, he said, it wasn't terrible. The food was lousy and there was barbed wire surrounding the camp but they weren't mistreated. He played bridge from morning to night. It was a depressing situation. They didn't know whether the Germans would be coming. Egon was released and came to America January 13, 1942 where he became a brassiere designer for Maidenform. Brother Kurt's experience was quite different.

As told by Kurt Maas: "Let me tell you about this unlikely encounter in 1939 between the famous (or shall I say infamous) French Foreign Legion and a vast number of European Jews. It is autobiographical, only the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

"I was born in Berlin, went to school there and started my college career. The thunderclouds of Nazism were already noticeable in the late twenties but few looked at them. By the time I graduated high school most of my 32 classmates wore swastikas and refused to shake hands with me. My father thought that this was a passing fancy, and could be ignored. "IT CANNOT HAPPEN HERE:" the tragic illusion of many of us.

"My departure from Germany was very uneventful. I was told that I, as a Jew, could not register for the next semester, as I was studying Law and Archaeology. So, after parental consultation, I went to Geneva and from there to Paris... to get my "Junior Year Abroad" behind me. After that, all would be back to original. Needless to say, I never went back to this day, and nothing went back to normal.

"I started to work at the Sorbonne, learning French and teaching German to make ends meet. The money from Berlin stopped flowing shortly and I was alone. Soon, I had to leave the academic world, and learn a trade to make a living. I was young, Paris was a dream city, I lived and loved and all was well. I had a wonderful circle of friends, travelled, skied, fished and looking back today, wished for my sons to have a similar period of enjoying life as I did.

"In 1939, this bubble busted too. I was vacationing in Brittany when the call-ups started for the French. I was not French. They don't naturalize so fast. I had a German passport with a "J" for Jew stamped into it, and my middle name was crossed out and the word "Israel" written over it. This was one of the minor sadisms of Nazi bureaucracy.

"I hurried back to Paris, got a gasmask and ran into the basement when the alarms sounded. Of course, the real war was not to start for another nine months. One morning, a Police Instruction asked all Germans, Austrians, and Czechs to assemble in the biggest Football stadium of Paris with two days' food and blankets. I knew this was the end, and left my lovely apartment on the Bois de Boulogne with sleeping bag,

razor blades, flashlight ready for all eventualities. They soon came. We were interned. Thousands of us, old and young, Christians and Jews. We were enemy aliens, regardless of political shading.

"From Paris we were deported to farms near Blois, and I wound up with 400 others in a stable with one faucet, no toilets and guards around us. The treatment was fair. We organized purchases of food from farmers in the vicinity, had lots mail; received visitors from Paris.

"Some of us had visas for foreign countries, and transportation was arranged. They could leave. I had nothing of the sort and really never had the intention to leave France. So, what were we to do?

"I wanted to serve in the regular French Army, I begged to volunteer, but since I was not French, this was impossible.

Many wanted to do what I had in mind, for one reason foremost: this would get us out of the Camp and release our elderly fathers, also locked up, because they would become parents of combatants and entitled to immediate release.

"Finally the General came and offered us his brain-wave: we were permitted to join the Foreign Legion for the duration of the war and have the same privileges of pay, promotion and vacations as the French. I would not sign for five years (the normal contract in the Legion) but "for the duration." This made sense, and it would get my father out, and I would be able to do "my thing" for the Allies. We were sure we would lick them in two weeks with hands behind our backs. After all, we had 12 million soldiers and the Maginot line was impregnable!

"I signed, many of us signed, and we went on an oversea-furlough, made tearful good-byes and were led on the boat at Marseille: direction Oran in Algeria.

"The trip was awful, no accommodations, little food, sleeping on deck and seasick most of the time. The arrival in Algeria was a revelation, the sun was hot in December, the trees full of oranges and we were out of Europe, away from the immediate scene of war.

"After a few days in Oran, we went to Sidi bel Abbes, the headquarters of the Legion, with the huge globe of bronze in the middle of the quadrangle. This was the headquarters of a worldwide military organization, second to none...

"...Basic training was in the mountain ranges of the Central Algerian Plateau. Forty mile marches, night on end in snow and ice without socks or sturdy shoes. Close order drill until you collapsed, rifle inspections with white gloves, and diseases such as dysentery. Field exercises, more marches,



Kurt and Egon Maas



more machine gun training, up and down the hills, and always guard duty watch for the Arabs (called the Chleus), because they were hunting us as we hunted them: You see, I am again saying "WE" because in the course of this basic training, you became a LEGIONNAIRE.

"If you didn't (and many failed to make the transition) you were at the mercy of the sadist from Germany, Czarist Russia, Republican Spain...the whole gamut of noncoms, who had preceded us by a few years into this melting pot the LEGION.

"This was a very unlikely mixture. We were the middle class Jews; intellectuals, young to middle aged, with families and lots of letters, packages and political involvements. They did not "dig" us, the noncoms, and they called us the "Brigade Rothschild," especially if we dropped a rifle, or collapsed on a march, or missed the target on the range. Their scorn and viciousness was a new experience for me. They never shared their water when we had exhausted ours. They always found a speck of dirt in the rifle bore and clamped us into jail....

"...I stood up well under all this. I was a good skier and mountaineer, I was young. I was healthy. Only once was my rifle dirty and I spent a week in jail emptying latrine buckets into a big hole in the sand in the desert. Only once did I let an Arab steal a shoe and missed it at the next weekend inspection and again wound up for one week sleeping on concrete with bed bugs, deprived of siesta and wine.

"I graduated from basic training, and wondered where I would wind up: Morocco, Syria, Indochina, Madagascar... all were stations of the Legion. I volunteered for a special company called the Transaharienne, an armored half-track unit making the permanent trek from Timbuktu on the Niger to Colomb Bechar at the southern tip of Algeria, where the desert starts. Luckily I was underweight, and rejected.

"My assignment was Marrakech. The lovely oasis at the foot of the Atlas, the home of the Berbers, just pacified a few years earlier by Marechal Lyautey, one of the great successful colonializers of the last century. We had a beautiful garrison with officers' quarters, noncom quarters, barracks for the privates. The food was good, the showers ample, movies in town, places to go to and meals to buy in local restaurants on days-off...

"...The Unit in Marrakech was called the IV<sup>th</sup> regiment, and soon this unit was assigned to the "real" war, not the pacification of the Atlas but to the far-away and almost forgotten war against the Nazis."

"We always had newspapers in Algeria and Morocco... "le petit Marocain"... a terrible paper, but enough news in it to

let us know what went on. The other Legionnaires did not care, they did not buy or read a paper. What for? Their contract was for five years and then they signed up again and again and there was no point in looking for news on Nazi Germany. They went to war, or pacified colonial stretches of land.

"We, (the Brigade Rothschild) had been mixed with them after our basic training. We had lost our identity, and we could associate with the other Legionnaires, or stay amongst ourselves. Association was the better choice, because in spite of our great differences of purpose and outlook we soon learned to become buddies, to help each other and to become part of this faceless team of obedience and soldiering.

"The IV<sup>th</sup> was assigned to ship out. They started loading ammunition on trains, got warm winter clothing, new rifles, socks and parkas. The excitement grew rapidly. Where to? ... When? ... All of us or only some? ... A colonel came before us and asked if anyone had any experience in map-making or Geology or related matters. I stepped out...and this saved my life. I was assigned to a map-making team, first as a trainee later as a team-member. By this good fortune, I missed the expeditionary force to Narvick in Scandinavia. The Allies had tried to stem the invasion into Bergen with a mixture of Foreign Legion, British Navy, and Poles. Let me make it brief, thirty came back from over a thousand men. I saw them come back, broken in spirit and defeated.

"I and my small team of six men under the command of a Sergeant Guillaume went to Fez and for many months surveyed the highways, mountain passes and water holes from Fez right up to the Spanish Moroccan border. The French feared a German invasion through Spain across Gibraltar into Africa, and

needed the maps we made. We lived off the land, slept on the ground (looking for scorpions every night under every stone.) We froze, we sweated, we stank, we had little water, and the mules were always watered first. We stood guard watching for Arab marauders. We stole from the villagers in the name of pacification. Rarely did we pay for the eggs, oranges, tomatoes we "harvested." But our little unit was a close family indeed...

"...Our Sergeant was French...he was the only criminal I ever got to know well. He was a fantastic mixture. Son of a great family, probably under an assumed name, very well educated. He had been a cartographer for years for Air-France, and knew the world like his pocket. He had killed a man in a jealous rage, and escaped into the Legion. He looked every inch a Beau Geste. He was a master in his craft of survey and map design but he could not forget his past. He told me his story one evening when we were alone, sitting under a tamarisk, he with his bottle of absinth. Every night he emptied one bottle slowly, deliberately, knowing the end was inevitable. I shall never forget him.



Kurt and Egon Maas

"Nor shall I forget many other facets of this fantastic Legion now discontinued by order of De Gaulle who got mad at her for displaying too much independence and pig-headedness during his abandonment of Algeria.

"The Legion was not a bunch of criminals thrown together. Many joined for adventure, and they certainly got it. Many joined for political necessity; the Czarists, the Spanish loyalists, we Jews living in France. Very few were criminals, and it was hard to get them to talk. We others, we, the political flotsam, we talked about everything: mathematics, philosophy and art, poetry and home-sickness. But little about politics. Here we were on different ends of the spectrum.

"The end came in August 1940.

"...France had fallen. Vichy was the capital of the separated southern state of a semi-independent France under Petain. The north of France was occupied. Soon the first signs of Armistice showed up: Germans in shining Mercedes drove up at headquarters in Marrakech. Parcels arrived from Germany for all of us "Germans." The French officers, and even less the visiting Germans distinguished between us, members of the "Brigade Rothschild" and the Nazis. The packages contained German soap, razor blades, toothpaste, and a card from Adolf Hitler reading "der Fuehrer denkt und euch" the Fuehrer thinks of you. I doubt that he thought of me, but I got my package, and liked the toothpaste. I had not seen any in months and had used sand or tree bark instead.

"The German Armistice agreement instructed the Foreign Legion command to release every "German born" in the unit at his demand. When this became known all hell broke: the Nazis (mostly noncoms) painted swastika flags and howled the Horst Wessel song, and gave the French officers troubles. We, the other Germans explained painfully and slowly to the French Officers why we were different, that we did not wish to be repatriated to Germany and fight for the "Fatherland." On the contrary, our service in the Legion would undoubtedly be construed as high treason, and we would wind up in camps. We further explained that we had relatives in France, had lived there for many years and would love to return to France.

"Slowly the mess was untangled. The Nazis, some of my old buddies, wound up behind barbed wire, guarded by us, the

others. Finally they departed for Europe, hoping for a heroes' welcome which never came. According to our information, the Germans did not accept them with open arms. They were eyed with suspicion, and locked up.

"Our destiny was not so rosy either. We could only get back to Vichy-France if we had relatives there and could prove to have a job and income awaiting us. Many were unable to organize this. Their parents had been caught in Paris and unable to run to southern France. All those unlucky boys stayed in North Africa; they were assigned to road-gangs in the Atlas Mountains, and were only freed by the U.S. invasion a few years later.

"I was more fortunate. My family had first settled in Nice, and later moved to Carcassonne. They freed me with a letter proving residence, work and income, and I returned via Oran and Marseille.

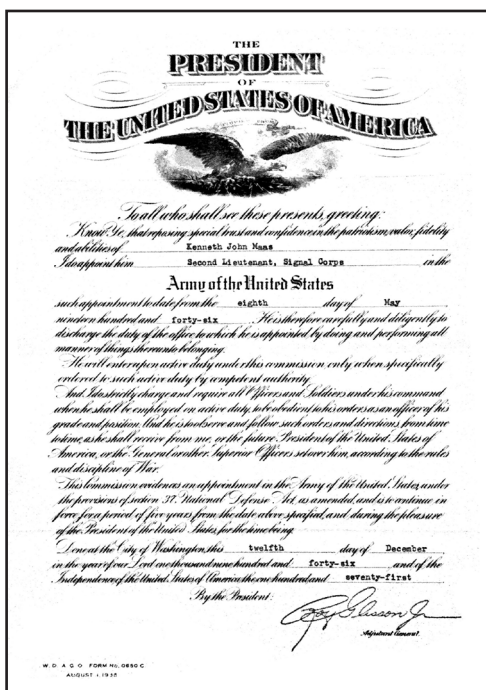
"Immediately upon my return, my parents left for the States, their visas and transportation arranged long before. I stayed another year in France, hunted by the Germans, sleeping in many hotels, in many towns and fearing the Nazi patrols and the informers. I finally made it to the states via Dakar and Martinique and joined the Army here for a four year period, often comparing my old experience in the Legion with my life as a Sergeant and later Officer in the Signal Corps."

Addendum: Kurt arrived in the United States in 1942. He and his brother Egon joined the U. S. Army and both trained at Fort Monmouth in NJ. After the war the

Maas family, Werner, Lotte, Egon and Kurt all settled in the metropolitan New York area. Kurt, now known as Kenneth, married Vera Schindler and had sons Mark and Jeffrey. Kurt's second marriage was to Elyse Goldman. He died in 1980. Egon married Lane Eschelbacher. They had son Clifford. Egon died in 2001.

Thanks to Mark and Jeffrey Maas for permission to reprint this fascinating article and to Mark for sending us so many photographs of Kurt and Egon.

We are anxious to learn more about your family's experiences, not only in Europe during the war, but from any period in their lives. Please contact us if you want to share their stories.



Kurt Maas' Letter of Appointment  
Second Lieutenant, Signal Corps in 1946



Kurt Maas' Military Identification Card

## Hannah Greenebaum Solomon

### Founder: National Council of Jewish Women

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015 I gave a presentation about the Greenebaum family in Chicago to a group Greenebaum family members, genealogists and historians. This was my first talk about the Greenebaum family. It took several months of intensive research to feel that my knowledge was sufficient. James E. (Jim) Greenebaum II of Northbrook, IL was an invaluable resource. I'm lucky that he's an avid family historian and was willing to share his information.

The Greenebaum family originated in the Rheinpfalz area of Germany. The earliest members of the family lived in Fussgonheim, Reipolskirchen and Eppelsheim. These towns are near Otterberg where the Strauses lived. Lazarus Straus' mother was Johanette Grünebaum. Her father was Nathan Grünebaum. The focus of this article is on the descendants of Elias Grünebaum from Reipolskirchen, the brother of Johanette's father Nathan. (Once Elias' family immigrated to the United States, they changed the spelling of their surname to Greenebaum.)

An article, "The Reminiscences of Jacob Greenebaum Sr." appeared in the August 2000 issue of the SHS newsletter. Please visit the Society's website to learn more about the generations of Grünebaums who lived in Germany. <http://www.straushistoricalsociety.org/uploads/1/1/8/1/11810298/nwsltr800.pdf> The focus of the present article will be on Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, a member of the first native-born generation in America.

Elias Grünebaum and his wife Marian had eleven children: seven sons and four daughters. Six sons died in a smallpox epidemic. Their only surviving son was Jacob. In 1819, Jacob married Sara Herz and they established their home in Eppelsheim. The couple had thirteen children: nine sons and four daughters. Five of their children died. Jacob wrote, "We accepted joy and sorrow patiently and praised God as well for the evil as for the good that we experience." Jacob and Sara wanted their sons to be educated to the full extent of their qualifications. With strict frugality and self-denial, they had sufficient means to educate them, "to have them instructed in all that would make them good citizens, honorable men of business and economical managers..."

Michael, born in 1824, was not the oldest of Jacob and Sara's sons but he was the first to emigrate. When he completed his education, learning the tin smithing trade, he traveled as an apprentice. When he was 20 he decided to emigrate. Michael gained his parent's permission by promising to return in four or five years. In July of 1845, 21 year old Michael Grünebaum left for America. He settled in New York but, after a year, moved to Chicago. By 1852 all of Elias Greenebaum's family

were living in Chicago. Jacob Sr. wrote, "It may be seen that there was no necessity for emigrating in our case. Neither struggle for our existence nor anything that displeased us in our old home could have been the motive for this step."

In 1848 Michael married Sarah Spiegel. They had ten children. Michael formed Michael Greenebaum & Company, a tinsmith and plumbing company in Chicago. He was active in the Abolitionist movement. He also was a founder, (and the first president) of the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1848 and one of the founders of the Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Historical Society, the Astronomical Society, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Illinois Volunteer Regiment of Veterans of the Civil War, Ramah Lodge No. 33 of B'nai Brith and was founder and first president of the Zion Literary Society in 1877.

In 1846, when Michael arrived in Chicago, it was barely possible to find ten Jewish men necessary to form a minyan (in order to pray). Two years later there were twenty Jewish men who were ready to establish the city's first Jewish congregation, Kehileth Anshe Ma'ariv (Congregation of the Men of the West). Slowly men who believed in reform within the synagogue became a cohesive group. A committee was appointed to consider changes to the wording of the ritual of the service. The committee brought back a report that noted there were many in KAM's congregation who supported Reform, so perhaps the best solution was to break away and form a new congregation. Michael was a founder, along with his brothers, of Reform Sinai Congregation. One of his strongest convictions was the importance of adapting religion to the needs and welfare of the people. In June of 1861 Sinai Congregation, a Reform congregation, was incorporated.

Michael Greenebaum died in 1894 at the age of 70.

Hannah Greenebaum was the fourth of Michael and Sarah's ten children. She was born in Chicago in 1858. We are fortunate that Hannah wrote an autobiography, *Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*. It was published in 1946. From it I was able to learn not only the facts about the people in this remarkable family but also to get some "color," the flavor of the people and their relationships. Michael and Sarah's children were all imbued with a sense of gratitude for their "joyous citizenship in their beloved country." They realized that this imposed a civic obligation, one they were only too happy to act upon. Michael and Sarah's daughter Hannah is well known in philanthropic circles. She believed that it was the responsibility of women, as well as men, to correct social injustice and to combat the lack of humanism. Hannah admired the example set by her mother, who had ten children (and all the accompanying household duties of that era) and



Hannah Greenebaum, 1877



still made time to organize the first Jewish Ladies Sewing Society in 1883. Her group made garments for the poor and aided the unfortunate.

Although grateful for the opportunities afforded them in their adopted country, Michael sent his children back to Germany to get an education. And since he felt that his daughters also deserved an excellent education, they too were given this opportunity. Hannah decided she wanted to stay in Chicago. After two years of high school she left school to devote herself to studying the piano and she became an accomplished musician. In fact, the whole family played instruments and sang. Hannah devoted three hours a day to practice and often performed in student recitals and in public. She and her sisters Mary and Henrietta along with their husbands belonged to The Beethoven Society where they sang with a large mixed chorus and performed in public concerts.

Hannah's father Michael and his brother Henry formed the Zion Literary Society so that the youth would have an additional avenue for socialization as well as education. There, Hannah served on its board. It's also where she met Henry Solomon who became her husband in 1879.

In 1877 Michael's daughter Henrietta, along with her sister Hannah, became the first Jewish members of the newly formed Chicago Women's Club which emphasized philanthropy and education. Hannah commented that many of its members had never met a Jewish woman before. It wasn't until 1882 that she was allowed to present a paper on religion, a previously taboo subject. She called her paper "Our Debt to Judaism" and it was subsequently published in Unity, the magazine of the Unitarian Church.

In 1890 Hannah was named to a committee of women to organize the World Parliament of Religions to be held in conjunction with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. She planned the Jewish Women's Congress which was the first ever convention of American Jewish women. This Congress established the permanent National Council of Jewish Women. Hannah was elected its first president and she held that post until 1905. In 1896 she helped organize the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs and in 1897 founded the Bureau of Personal Service to provide guidance to new immigrants and headed this organization until it was absorbed into the Associated Jewish Charities of Chicago in 1910.

In 1899 Hannah was elected treasurer of the National Council of Women, and with Susan B. Anthony and Mary Wright Sewall represented the Council at the meeting of the

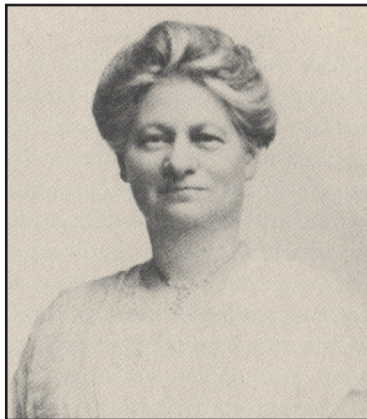
International Council of Women in Berlin in 1904.

In 1904 Hannah gave up the council presidency but did not retire from her civic duties. In fact, she called the ensuing period some of her most busy and productive years. She worked at the Reform Department of the Chicago's Women's Club investigating the Illinois Industrial School for Girls. She soon found herself president of the school's board. She also was a member of the Juvenile Court Committee of Chicago at a time when there was no separate court to hear cases dealing with delinquency.



Photo caption: *Europe looked wonderful in the Summer of 1904 and this is how we looked in Europe.*

Hannah and Henry Solomon with children Helen and Frank



Hannah Greenebaum Solomon

By 1910 there was a growing civic consciousness among the women of Chicago. More and more women were participating in all that pertained to the city's welfare. Hannah became a charter member of the Women's Civic Club tasked with investigating civic affairs. She wrote with great humor about becoming chairman of city waste. She described her sudden realization that she'd been investigating waste disposal sites while wearing a white dress with a trailing hem. She also served on the Law Enforcement Committee and the Ordinance Committee, publishing a pamphlet titled, "City Ordinances You Ought to Know." She was a close associate of Jane Addams, working in the area of child welfare. During World War I she was chairperson of all Chicago City ward leaders.

Until shortly before her death, Hannah G. Solomon worked tirelessly for the rights of women and refugees. She was honored both during her lifetime and posthumously. She died December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1942 at the age of 84. In 1995 she was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame located in Seneca Falls, NY.

Thank you to James E. Greenebaum II and his wife Lilli for their very welcoming hospitality. My appreciation also goes to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and the

Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois for inviting to speak to their members and for being so accommodating. The groups combined their meetings so that the membership of each group could attend my talk.

**The Straus Historical Society has a talk scheduled for March 28<sup>th</sup> at the Suffolk County, NY JCC. This talk will be about the history of the Straus family. We are also scheduled to speak at the Anne Frank Center in New York City on March 29<sup>th</sup> about Joan Adler's book, *For the Sake of the Children*. We will be doing a presentation as well on Yom HaShoah at Temple Beth Torah in Melville, Island on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Further information about all these talks will be forthcoming as plans are formalized.**

## Meet Marissa Pelliccia SHS's Intern

It became apparent to Catherine and me that we needed additional help if we were to accomplish some of the tasks we deem important to the Society. One such project is the digitization of all the material in our archive.

Since I began working with the Straus family in 1990, I've been collecting materials of almost every description relating to the family. I've kept a bibliography where a complete description of each item is noted as well as where in the archive it can be found. The collection has grown dramatically over the years. It became apparent several years ago that a more comprehensive and sophisticated method was required to record these items if we were to keep up with the rapidly advancing electronic age. But we had no time to go back and rescan and record these items.



her education in a Master's program in the future. Her professional goal is to work in a museum. We were instantly attracted to Marissa when we received her resume and learned that she already had experience working with the software program we'd purchased for use with this project. Our interview with her convinced us that she was a good fit. Happily, we were right.

Marissa began work at SHS after the Christmas holiday. She works two days a week scanning the material in our archives, entering information about each item into a museum standard software program and then attaching the scan to that entry. The ultimate goal will be to add this catalog to our webpage so that authors, scholars, students, and other interested parties will be able to find a reference to each item in our large archival collection and then click on that reference to see

Enter Marissa Pelliccia, SHS's intern. Marissa is a graduate of the State University of New York at New Paltz with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. She expects to continue

an image of that item. In this way the materials in our archive will be made available to all who wish to see them. Marissa has made an excellent start on the project and we look forward to having her at our SHS office for a long time.

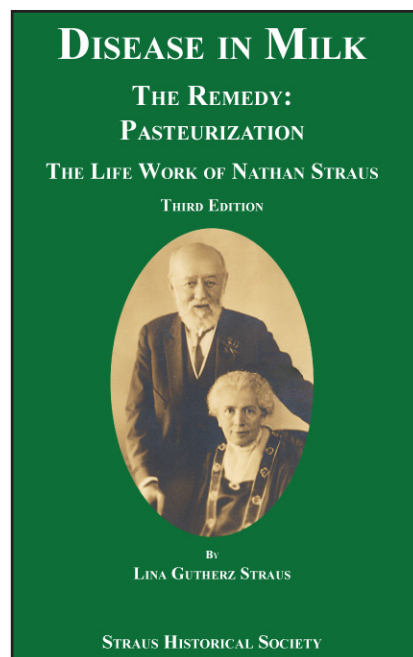
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## Publication News: Disease in Milk. The Remedy: Pasteurization The Life Work of Nathan Straus by Lina Gutherz Straus

The Straus Historical Society is pleased to announce the republication of Lina Gutherz Straus' book, *Disease in Milk: The Remedy: Pasteurization. The Life Work of Nathan Straus*. This loving tribute was originally published in 1917 by E. F. Dutton & Company, New York.

Lina Gutherz Straus was a true partner to her husband Nathan who, throughout her life, championed his work. In 1892 Nathan Straus became interested in learning how to produce pure milk. He knew Louis Pasteur, who had invented a process to heat fluids below the boiling point to destroy bacterial microorganisms. But Pasteur never made the connection between his process and what came to be known as the pasteurization of milk. It was Nathan Straus who developed the process and promoted it. At the time there was no regulation of the dairy industry and great resistance to change. Nathan built a milk pasteurization laboratory in New York City and then established milk depots where his clean, sterilized milk would be distributed at no or very low cost. Later, he offered to build laboratories around the world for any municipality that would send their

professionals to learn the process. Despite the growing body of evidence that pasteurization was saving the lives of thousands of babies, he was confronted with resistance, yet he persisted.



Lina wrote *Disease in Milk* in 1917, a compilation of facts and figures, articles, letters, testimonials, and photographs to further showcase Nathan's work.

SHS has enhanced this comprehensive tome by adding an Addendum. It includes articles and photographs about Nathan and Lina Straus and their families which were previously published in our newsletter. Given the passage of time, the life and accomplishments of Nathan Straus today they are all the more impressive.

The 457 page, jacketed, hard cover 2016 edition of *Disease in Milk* will soon be available directly from SHS, or through its website, [www.straushistoricalsociety.org](http://www.straushistoricalsociety.org). Payment of \$40 will reserve your copy now. Payment may be made to SHS by check, PayPal or credit card. Contact Joan

Adler for details: [info@straushistory.org](mailto:info@straushistory.org) or 631-724-4487



## Georgia - November 1-9, 2015

by Catherine Smith

In November of 2015, Joan Adler and I returned to Georgia for the third time. Graciously invited by Mike and Debbie Buckner to attend their annual Harvest Days in Old Talbot, we decided to give presentations around the state and to meet local Straus family members.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, we were invited to the Centennial Celebration of the Atlanta Chapter of Hadassah. This event took place at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. It featured speeches by prominent members of Hadassah as well as the opening of the Atlanta Hadassah exhibit within the museum's special exhibition space. During the luncheon, the Straus Historical Society was recognized and the contributions of Nathan and Lina Straus in the early days of Hadassah were celebrated. Later on in the day, Joan gave a presentation about her book *For the Sake of the Children* at The Breman. We look forward to returning in the future.

In the evening, we had the pleasure of spending time with Dottie Cohen and Joel Friedman of Newnan. Dottie is a member of the Moises Lazarus Straus Family. We took them up on their offer to stay with them for several days during our trip. Their hospitality and company was a treasure to us. Dottie, a gifted jewelry maker, gave each of us a handmade necklace with a silver pendent engraved with the Straus ostrich. It was a beautiful gesture and a lovely gift!

On Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Dottie, Joel, Joan and I were invited to have dinner with Don and Barbara Thomas of Peachtree City. Don arranged for Joan to speak later in the evening to his temple group. After dinner we traveled to James and Judy Freeman's home just a few minutes away where Joan would be giving her presentation entitled "From Pushcart to Macy's." This event was attended by more than 30 guests and was followed by a Q&A. We would like to thank Jim and Judy Freeman and Don and Barbara Thomas for organizing and hosting this wonderful event. We would also like to thank journalist Michael Jacobs of the *Atlanta Jewish Times* who attended Joan's talks at The Breman and at the Freeman's home. He wrote a very complimentary article for his newspaper about both talks.

The next day, Joan and I went to dinner in Atlanta at local landmark, Mary Mac's Tea Room with Felsenthal relative Nancy Prager and her mother Cecelia Prager. We were so pleased to spend the evening chatting with them about their family history at such a wonderful restaurant.

On Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, we travelled to Athens for Joan's next talk. At 5:30, Joan Adler gave a presentation about her book at the University of Georgia. In the classroom of Dr. Marjanne E. Goozé, Associate Professor in the Germanic and Slavic Studies Department, Joan spoke to a group of more than 70 students. After the lecture, Joan and I were invited to dinner by Dr. Goozé at an Athens hotspot. A thank you to Dr. Goozé and also to Kristina Petti for organizing this event.

On Thursday, Joan and I spent the evening at the home of Richard K. and Julie Straus, members of the Moises Lazarus branch of the family. Richard, known as Dickie, is a prominent local dentist whose knowledge of his own family history is unrivaled. After a wonderful dinner, we conducted an oral history interview with Dickie, recording him while he reminisced and showed us a treasure trove of photographs and memorabilia. It was a fascinating evening. We are so grateful for Dickie and Julie's hospitality.

The next morning we met with Executive Director, Holly Wait of the Port Columbus National Civil War Naval Museum. We were soon joined by museum trustee Ken Coolik, who had arranged the meeting. We were delighted to meet Holly and share information about the Straus family with her. After the meeting, Ken took us to Country's Barbecue for a real southern lunch. It was such a pleasure to spend time with Ken. His family owned the Straus house in Talbotton for several generations and he is a wealth of information on family history. We look forward to seeing Ken again on our next trip.



Students at the University of Georgia - Athens



The Buckner home in GA

After lunch we started on our way to Junction City, excited to be with Mike and Debbie Buckner and to participate in their 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Harvest Days in Old Talbot weekend festival. We were joined by SHS board member Brett Gladstone and his partner Eric Marty, who traveled from San Francisco to GA for their first visit to the family home and to spend time at the festival. Friday evening, Brett, Eric, Joan and I made our way to Talbotton, only 10 minutes away from Junction City, where the home in which the Straus family lived still stands. We had the opportunity to go inside and see the house as well as all of the outbuildings on the property. It was an exciting experience to spend time in the house where Isidor, Hermina, Nathan and Oscar grew up!

On Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Harvest Days Festival kicked off. It was a warm cloudy day with rain threatening. Several hundred visitors passed through and the rain held off until the

Continued on page 12

## 2015 List of Donors to SHS

The board of directors of the Straus Historical Society wishes to thank those who made contributions in 2015.

Your generosity made it possible to continue the important work of SHS.

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## News from Woodlawn Cemetery Bronx, New York

Paul A. Kurzman, board member of the Straus Historical Society (SHS) and descendant of Isidor and Ida Straus, recently received a letter from Eline Maxwell, Director of Development at Woodlawn Conservancy, Inc. She wrote, "We have big news to share with you about The Woodlawn Cemetery. The Straus Mausoleum is having its first bath in 100 years!"

Eline explained that three Stone Preservation Apprentices completed nine weeks of training as paid interns at Woodlawn in a "Bridge to Craftsman Careers" program. This program is a collaboration between the Woodlawn Conservancy, World Monuments Fund and the International Masonry Institute, (the educational arm of the Bricklayers and Associated Craftworkers Union). The interns learned stone identification, cleaning products and methods, foundation repair, resetting of markers, basic caulking and mortar application.



The Straus Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery

The Straus Mausoleum is comprised of three stone buildings, one each for the Jesse Isidor, Straus Percy Selden Straus, and Herbert Nathan Straus families. The buildings surround a flagstone courtyard. A gated wall with a stone replica of an Egyptian funeral boat forms the fourth side of this mausoleum

compound. Isidor Straus, who perished in the Titanic disaster along with his wife Ida, is buried inside and below the wall with the boat. Ida's body was never recovered.

The Straus family are fortunate to be the recipient of the good work of the interns during their training period at Woodlawn Cemetery. The buildings and wall are being cleaned, which includes removing all the bio growth. The joints then

will be mortared to help keep moisture out of the buildings.

We are excited by this wonderful news and will share photographs with you once the work is completed.



## News From Friends of Straus Park

by Al Berr

photos by Joe Arbo

To quote the often-quoted Robert Burns, “The best-laid schemes o’ mice and men gang aft agley.”

So it was that Friends of Straus Park, as reported in the previous SHS newsletter, planned for a special celebration on our Annual Art in the Park day on Saturday, October 3, 2015. Last year was the centenary of the dedication of Straus Park. It was on April 15, 1915 that Bloomingdale Park on Broadway between 106<sup>th</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> Streets became Straus Park in honor of Isidor and Ida Straus who had lived on Broadway and 105<sup>th</sup> Street.

We had planned a celebratory day, consisting of art works for sale by local artists, a band playing music, food for sale, and a few speeches marking the day by local elected officials, city parks representatives, SHS members, and local historians.

Alas, it was not to be. The Saturdays before and after October 3<sup>rd</sup> were pleasant autumn days, but our day was cold, windy, and wet – not a day for the kind of outdoor activity that we had wished. If we had scheduled a rain date, which we decided against because of the additional expense, we would have chosen the following day, which, although it cleared later, had an unpromising start.

It was also unfortunate that our new president, Virgil Andrick, could not be introduced during Art in the Park day. Although he has participated in past Park events, it would have been especially appropriate to acknowledge his new position on this occasion.

However, not to be daunted, Friends of Straus Park plans to celebrate the 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Park’s dedication this year. For the present, the intended date is Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>. We hope that we can duplicate the same attractions on that day that were scheduled for last year. We will corroborate these plans in the next SHS newsletter. To counter Robert Burns’ prediction, wish us good weather.





## Georgia - November 1-9, 2015

Continued from page 9

evening. Joan and I set up a table in the dining room of the Buckner's home and filled it with photographs and information about the Straus family. We had many interested visitors and we were happy to tell stories about the family.

Although Sunday turned out to be a rainy day, keeping many visitors home, several vendors came inside the house to enjoy the traditional folk music being played in the living room.

On Monday, the weather was more cooperative and we were able to travel to Talbotton once again. We went back to the Straus home with Mike Buckner who revealed more of its amazing history. In the afternoon, we said our goodbyes and left for the airport to return home. Time spent with the Buckner family, and in GA, is always a treat. We are so grateful to have been invited back.

Every year, the Buckners host Harvest Days in Old Talbot during the first weekend in November. We hope that we will be able to attend once again in 2016 and look forward to your joining us next year.

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We've received two donation checks from AmazonSmile!

**Keep on shopping!**

## Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

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

***The Autobiography of Isidor Straus*** privately published by Sara Straus Hess in 1955, greatly expanded and updated by SHS in 2011, including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover with dust jacket- \$40.00

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

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

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

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

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

## You Are Invited

The Board of Directors of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. invites you to attend a meeting of the board. Attendance need not be in person. The next meeting will be held May 5, 2016 in New York City at 6 PM. Participants may join by conference call. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society. This invitation is extended so that all those interested in SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share their views. Please contact Joan Adler by phone at 631-724-4487, or at [info@straushistory.org](mailto:info@straushistory.org) for further information.