



STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Straus is the German word for ostrich

February 2020

A Unique Opportunity Own a Brick from the Straus' Talbotton Home 1861-1863

When Lazarus Straus brought his family to Talbotton, GA in 1854, they moved into a small, two-room house with two shed rooms at the rear. The house was located just two blocks north of the courthouse square where the present-day Talbotton Library is located. Today, only an historic marker remains on the site to remind people that the Strauses once lived there.

We know Lazarus Straus' business prospered and a more comfortable home was desired. In 1861, the family moved to the last house occupied by the Straus family in Talbotton. It was located about 1/2 mile south of the courthouse square on U.S. Highway 80. It was close to town, but more convenient to Collinsworth Institute where Isidor, Nathan and Oscar attended school. Collinsworth Institute was located about one mile from their home on the same road. The Straus' only daughter, Hermine, attended school at nearby Le Vert School for Girls.

When this house was built in 1840, it was in the typical Greek Revival style. It had four large rooms with a hall down the center and a detached kitchen and dining room at the rear. Double front and rear doors in the hall opened onto spacious porches which connect to add-on parts of the house. There were seven brick fireplaces in the house with fine Greek Revival mantels. The bricks were handmade in the 1840s of GA clay. When the Straus family lived there, it must have been a showplace. The house and outbuildings, including a smoke house, carriage house and slave quarters were painted white. There were beautifully terraced gardens with boxwoods and urns.

After the Straus family moved to Columbus in 1963, and the end of the war in 1865, things were never quite the same. The house and outbuildings began to deteriorate. The huge yard and garden could not be maintained in the same manner and a steady decline of both the house and property prevailed.

The house is known by locals as the Mrs. Tennie Smith house because she, and her descendants, owned and lived there until

2000, when Mrs. Frances Callaway Aldrich, Tennie Smith's granddaughter, passed away. (See page ten)

The last owner had plans to restore the house to its original state. Sadly, in 2017, the house was destroyed by fire during Hurricane Irma. While the outbuildings remain, the main house was reduced to rubble, with only the brick chimneys intact. With reconstruction and restoration impossible, SHS tried to figure out a way to preserve a small piece of the history of this homesite. And so, during their trip to Georgia in 2019, Catherine Smith and I salvaged bricks from the site, cleaned them and shipped them back to New York.

SHS is excited to offer the opportunity to own these one-of-a-kind bricks. After meticulous cleaning and the addition of a commemorative plaque, these handmade GA bricks beautifully

represent the enduring history of the Straus family. They would make a lovely addition to your home, or a sentimental gift to your family members. Each brick comes elegantly packaged with a Certificate of Authenticity. The funds raised by the purchase of these bricks will go directly to SHS's important programs. This is the perfect way to own a piece of Straus family history, while contributing to its preservation!

The number of bricks is limited, and will be sold on a first come, first serve basis. To order yours, contact Joan Adler info@straushistory.org or 631-724-4487. The price is \$100 including S+H.



Shop at AmazonSmile
and Amazon will make
a donation to:
**Straus Historical
Society Inc**

Get started

amazonsmile

For further details, see page 12

SHS Online Auction

December 2019

SHS's online December 1-22, 2019 auction had the goal of raising funds for our many projects, including the SHS Scholarships.

The auction opened on Sunday, December 1, 2019 at 9 am. We contracted with Bidding For Good to host. This proved to be a wonderful decision as they provided the templates and expertise to run a successful auction. We also had access to their large mailing list; many were listings of participants in previous Bidding For Good hosted auctions. Bidding For Good also maintains a large database of potential auction donors which we used to solicit donations. After two weeks of active bidding, we decided to add a third week to the auction. This proved to be a good idea as there were several more items bid upon during that third week.



Dottie Cohen's fine silver chain and pendant depicting a Bow Hunter surrounded by musical notes



New York Jets Laser Signed 2018 Team Replica Football

We wish to thank the many donors who generously provided gift certificates, or items, to our auction offerings. They were: Applebee's, Bahama Breeze Island Grille, Al Berr, (Opera DVDs), Bradenton Marauders Minor League Baseball Team, California Pizza Kitchen, Cancun Cards Resorts, Center for Jewish History, Penelope Chandra-Shekar (Artwork), Chili's Grill & Bar, City Vineyard at NYC's Pier 26, Clif Family

Winery, Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurants, Dottie Cohen (Silver Jewelry), Costco, CSz Theater Chicago, Denny's Restaurant, Dick's Sporting Goods, Doherty (Chevy's Fresh Mex Restaurant, Panera Bread, Quaker Steak & Lube, The Shannon Rose Irish Pub), The Florida Aquarium, Foxwoods Hotel & Casino (Concert Tickets), The Fresh Market, Barbara Furst, (Genealogy & DNA Consults), Kim Gerstman (Photographs), Nancy Gerstman (Video DVDs), Richard Gerstman (Art Book & Artwork), Graeter's Handcrafted French Pot Ice Cream, The

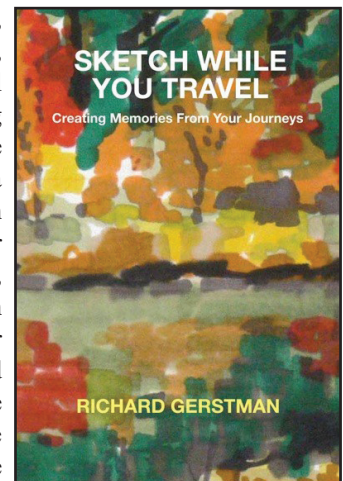


New York Philharmonic Orchestra Prime Tickets for Two



Realm Cellars Fidelio 2018

York Rangers Hockey Team, New York Red Bulls Soccer Team, Olive Garden Restaurant, One World Observatory, Irene Pastarnack (Artwork), Pasadena Playhouse, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Steelers Football Team, Richmond Flying Squirrels Minor League Baseball Team, Marcella Sabo (Artwork), Salem Witch Museum, Oscar S. Schafer (Philharmonic Tickets), Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Spuntino Wine Bar & Italian Tapas, Staten Island Yankees Minor League Baseball team, State Theatre of New Jersey, Charlotte Straus (Photographs), David Straus (Artwork), Zephyr Straus (Photographs), Target, Titanic Museum Attraction, Trader Joe's, Trenton Thunder Minor League Baseball Team, Tri-City ValleyCats Minor League Baseball Team, USS Midway Museum, Whole Foods Market, WonderWorks Orlando and WonderWorks Syracuse.



Sketch While You Travel by Richard Gerstman

We hope the winning bidders have enjoyed their items. Thank



Harold Kurzman's Naples, Florida Condo Vacation

you to all those who donated, bid or viewed the Straus Historical Society's online auction. We are grateful for your interest and support.

The Lost Oscar Straus Mansion

5 West 76th Street

Reprinted with permission of the author, Tom Miller,
From his blog, Daytonian in Manhattan

Although he was educated as an architect, William T. Evans made his fortune in the dry goods business. President of the firm Mills and Gibb, the Irish-born merchant was perhaps better known for his knowledge of art and his impressive collection. In 1890 he possibly surprised many in art circles when he sold off his entire collection and started anew, now focusing on American artworks.

At the same time he set out to provide a new venue for exhibiting his new acquisitions, not to mention a new home for his family. On November 22 that year the Real Estate Record & Builders' Guide reported that Evans "will build a semi-detached four-story residence, 40x60" on the corner of 76th Street and Central Park West. "The dwelling will be first class in every particular, and it will have an art gallery extension in which Mr. Evans proposes to place his large private collection of paintings."

Evans appears to have personally designed his new Romanesque Revival-style residence. The basement and first floor levels were clad in brownstone, while the upper three floors were brick. The asymmetrical design was splattered with openings of various shapes and sizes, a rounded bay on West 76th Street and a faceted bay on the eastern elevation, a fanciful turret that clung to the corner, gables and dormers.

The 47-year old Evans quickly filled the new house with American works. In 1891 he loaned pieces to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including Frederick S. Church's "Midnight," Edmund Tarbell's "Girl with a Violin," George Inness's "A Summer Morning," Arthur Parton's "Evening," and Homer D. Martin's "Madison and Jefferson." His wife, Mary, was a collector as well, although less passionate about American art. She loaned the museum French artist, Émile van Marcke's "Landscape and Cattle."

Evans' memberships reflected his cultural interests. He was a member of the Lotus Club (where he oversaw its art collection), the American Fine Arts and the Salmagundi Clubs,

the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History and the New-York Historical Society, among others. In 1892 he and Mary sold the plot on 76th Street corner (Nos. 1 and 3) abutting their home to the New York Historical Society. The museum paid \$21,000 for the lot, just under \$600,000 today.



5 West 76th Street, New York City

In March 1901 the Evanses sold No. 5 to Oscar Solomon Straus who had recently returned with his family from Turkey. Straus had resigned his post as Minister to Turkey after having "disputes with the Sublime Porte," as worded by *The New York Times*. The newspaper said the Government had supported his resignation "as an act of respect" and that Straus had "left the Sultan to find some way to make good his promises" without him.

Oscar S. Straus - from *The American Spirit*, by Oscar Straus, 1913. Born in Otterberg, Germany, he and his wife, the former Sarah Lavanburg, had three children, Mildred, Aline and Roger Williams Straus. Sarah had been born into a wealthy Jewish family, the daughter of banker Louis Lavanburg and his wife, Hannah. She had been educated in private schools.



The humor magazine *Puck* depicted Straus as a nurse tending to a tantrum-throwing baby during the coal arbitration. May 28, 1902

The house was the scene of a joyful gathering later that year. On December 12, 1901 Mildred Caroline Straus was married to Edward Shafer in Temple Emanu-El. A wedding supper was served in the 76th Street house afterward. Among the guests were Mildred's uncle, Isidor, part owner of Macy's Department Store, and aunt Ida Straus.

Called by newspapers the "Disraeli of America," Straus' resignation from his post as Minister to Turkey did not diminish his political activities. In January 1902 he was appointed a permanent member of the Committee of Arbitration at The Hague. And his connections in government led to highly-visible guests at No. 5. In 1903, for instance, former President Grover Cleveland was a house guest.

Both Oscar and Sarah were active in philanthropic causes. Straus was a director in the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and a

member of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society of New York.

Straus sometimes used entertainments as a means of achieving goals. When a bitter labor strike paralyzed the coal industry in 1902, Straus was made a vice president of the Arbitration Committee of Thirty-Six. After formal meetings in its Fourth Avenue offices provided no results, Straus invited all parties to a dinner in the 76th Street house. Newspapers widely credited the event--during which the strike was reportedly not discussed--as leading to a relaxation of tensions.

The humor magazine *Puck* depicted Straus as a nurse tending to a tantrum-throwing baby during the coal arbitration. May 28, 1902.

And on December 9, 1905 Straus hosted a dinner for a highly diverse group that included, among others, Andrew Carnegie, Archbishop John Ireland, Congressman Richard Barthold, and Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University. The purpose of the gathering was the formation of an American International Law Association.

President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Straus to the post of Secretary of Commerce and Labor in 1906. He thus became the country's first Jewish Cabinet member.

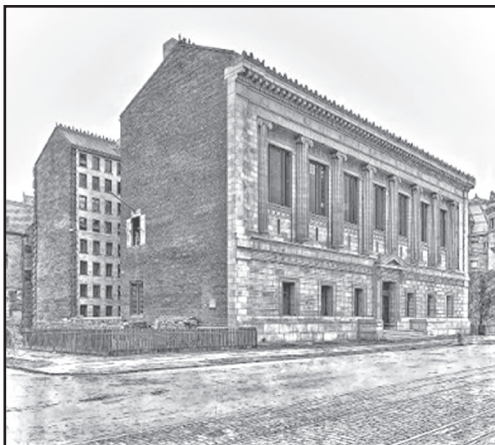
The Straus family received devastating news in April 1912. Isidor and Ida Straus had been heading home from Europe on the R. M. S. Titanic when the ship struck an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean. The elderly couple perished together after Ida gave up her seat in a lifeboat to her maid in order to stay with her husband. "We have been together a number of years," she was reported to have said, "Where you go I will go."

A letter of condolence from Mayor Jay Gaynor arrived at the 76th Street house. It said in part:

"Your brother met his death by neglecting his own safety in his eagerness to work for and save the lives of others. And his noble wife refused to leave him on board the sinking ship. And thus two noble souls went down to death together."

Oscar Straus continued on in his life of public work. On December 24, 1915 the *New-York Tribune* announced that

he had been named the new chairman of the Public Service Commission. It added "Mr. Straus celebrated his sixty-fifth birthday last night with a family gathering at his home, 5 West Seventy-sixth Street." He told a reporter "I feel as fit as I did thirty years ago. I enjoy good health and expect to be good for hard work for some time to come."



No. 5 West 76th Street can be partially glimpsed at the far left, behind the newly erected New York Historical Society building in 1902.

Sarah was involved in politics, as well. On March 26, 1920, for instance, the *New York Tribune* reported she would be hosting a meeting "of the Hoover women's campaign committee" that afternoon.

The esteem in which Straus was held among the top-most level of government was exhibited in June 1924 when the 71-year-old underwent surgery. A telegram to Sarah arrived at the 76th Street house that read:

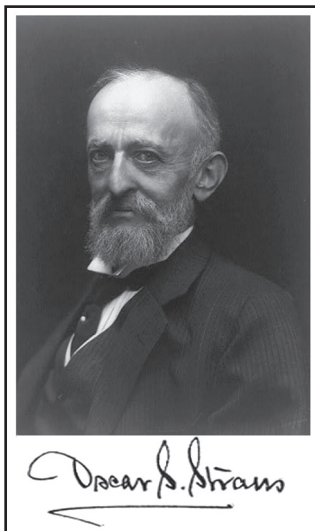
I have been deeply concerned to learn this morning that Mr. Straus has undergone an operation. Allow me to express my sympathy to both him and yourself with all hopes for his early and complete recovery. The nation he has served so well and long will wait eagerly for good news of him.

Calvin Coolidge

June 18, 1924

Sarah sent a return telegram to the President assuring him that the operation was entirely successful and that her husband would be home in two weeks.

The operation may have prompted the elderly couple to consider giving up their large private home. Title was held in Sarah's name and the following year she sold it to the New-York Historical Society. The organization announced that it would demolish the mansion for a 12-story annex to its existing museum building. That project would not come to fruition for several years, however.



Sarah Lavanburg Straus

Then on February 28, 1937 *The New York Times* reported that the former Straus mansion was to be demolished. "The classic architecture of the present building will be carried out in

the addition. Walker & Gillette are the architects," it said. The nearly seamless addition engulfed the corner plot and the Straus residence.

Thank you to Tom Miller for permission to reprint his interesting article. It seems there is always something new to be learned about the history of the Straus family.

The Bamberger/Macy's Connection

Historian Linda G. Forgosh contacted me about a book she was writing; a biography of Louis Bamberger, founder and owner of L. Bamberger & Co., a New Jersey department store. She knew that the Straus family bought Bamberger's in 1929 and wondered what information the Straus Historical Society might have in their archives relating to her research topic. We corresponded and shared information for several years. The result was a fascinating book about the life of Louis Bamberger.

The Strauses purchased L. Bamberger & Co. in June of 1929. It was reported that there would be no changes in personnel and very few procedural changes. Jesse Isidor Straus, president of R. H. Macy & Co., announced that there would not be any surrender or merger of the identities of the two organizations. The directors of R. H. Macy & Co. were elected to the board of L. Bamberger & Co., and Louis Bamberger was elected to the board of R. H. Macy & Co. Bamberger declared, at that time, that he would be retiring as president of his store and that he and his sister, Mrs. Felix Fuld, would not be retaining any stock in the business, thereby making it an outright sale of their interests. Jesse Isidor Straus stated that economics in operation and the advantages of greatly increased purchasing power would greatly react to the benefit of the public through better service and lower prices.

Louis Bamberger was born in 1855, in Maryland, to a German Jewish family. Starting at the age of fourteen, he apprenticed in an uncle's Baltimore department store. Then he opened his own store. In 1886 he moved to Newark, NJ where he became the buyer for several Western department stores. In 1893 he opened Bamberger's in partnership with his brothers-in-law, Louis M. Frank and Felix Fuld. By the end of their first year, they had fifty employees and did a business of \$26,000. When Bamberger's was sold to R. H. Macy & Co. in 1929,

Bamberger's had grown to 4,000 employees while the year's sales were expected to be \$40,000,000.

Bamberger's is credited with several innovations, such as having the first radio station, WOR, operated by a department store. It is also created a magazine called "Charm," which had a circulation among the customers of the store of about 100,000.

Both Bamberger and Macy department stores exemplify, to a marked degree, the romance of big business as it developed in America. Each grew from inconspicuous beginnings to a position of pre-eminence in the field.

Bamberger is quoted in *The Sunday Call*, a Newark newspaper, "I am in my seventy-fourth year. I had the opportunity to re-strengthen this business to which I have devoted nearly forty years of my life by placing it in strong hands. R. H. Macy & Co. is a concern that conducts its business with high ideals, and I felt that the principle upon which I and my late associates, Mr. Frank and Mr. Fuld, built up L. Bamberger into a Newark institution, the principle of the Golden Rule, would be carried on as in the past."

Like the Strauses, Louis Bamberger supported both secular and Jewish charities. He personally funded the buildings for the Newark YMHA, the Newark Museum, and the New Jersey Historical Society.

Bamberger and his sister, Caroline Fuld, worked with Abraham Flexner to found the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ. They gave a \$5 million endowment to the Institute. Louis Bamberger never married. He concentrated on running his store and on his many philanthropic activities. Upon Bamberger's death, the bulk of his estate was left to the institute.

From Bamberger's Newsletter to Employees: Counter Currents, June 1930 Camp Isida

Macy's has asked Bamberger's girls to stay at their farm, Camp Isida, which is at Burlingham, Sullivan County, New York, 90 miles from Newark.

It is a real camp, so far as things to do are concerned. Something is going on all the time – swimming, hiking, games, boating, tennis, parties, chances to make things, even to learn things, if you like, and not one thing that you have to do.

But as to roughing it, it's not really much of a camp. There are no tents to blow down on a stormy night; no ice water to wash in on a chilly morning; no curling up to sleep on the soft side of a scrub pine. But there are comfortable bed-rooms, real tubs and showers with hot and cold water, good food and lots of it.

The campers range from 16 to 60 – and they all have fun. Come and see how it's done. You're specially invited.

Rates

Macy and Bamberger girls	\$9 per week
Outsiders (June, July, Sept. only)	\$19 per week
Children 3 to 7	\$5
Children 8 to 12	\$9

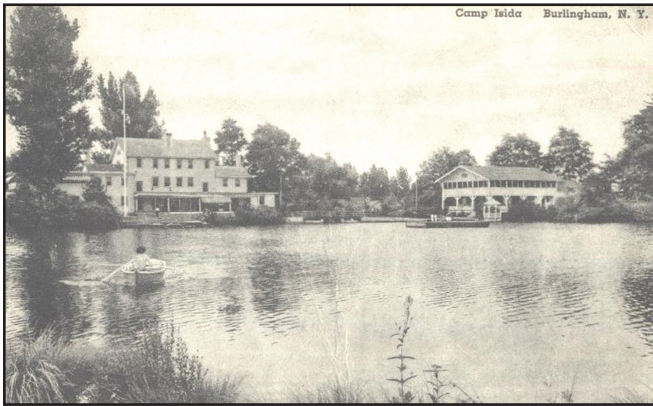
If you're interested or even mildly curious – Ask Miss MacKerness in the Social Service Department or Miss Gordon in the Training Department about it.

My Vacation At Camp Isida

by Nellie Prisk, September 1930

Sometimes after a busy day in the store when things have gone all wrong, nerves are worn, the body is weary; one's mind races ahead to vacation days. One is likely to visualize an imaginary Paradise far lovelier than any reality. Take all these dreams and roll them into one, and multiply by ten, and still you will not approach the loveliness, the beauty, the restfulness and recreation of Camp Isida. I defy any plutocrat with millions of dollars' worth of toys to play, to extract one fraction of the enjoyment from them that the girls get from their stay at this marvelous camp.

We traveled by boat up the Hudson River to Newburgh where we and some thirty other girls were met by the camp bus, which took us through twenty-five miles of beautiful country at the camp. There we were welcomed by a half dozen Councilors [sic] and a jolly group of girls.



We stayed at Sunnyside, one of the three houses at the Camp, overlooking spacious grounds, a wonderful lake, and miles of forest.

The day at Camp Isida starts with an hour of song, music, and dancing. After supper every evening the girls gather around the flag pole and sing an evening hymn.

As a special week-end item, the night we arrived at camp everyone was invited to a ball and provided with a fancy costume. We danced, were served refreshments, and then a show was put on, with talented entertainers.

Conveyances were provided on Sunday for those who wished to attend church.

Now followed a glorious week. There were many times that we rowed on the limpid waters of the lake. One section of the lake is set apart for swimming and bathing. There is a diving board and a float, and one of the councilors [sic] acts as life guard.

On the shore there is a pretty little house where the non-swimmers can sit and watch their friends' antics in the water. There are two tennis courts, baseball games, classes in

archery, instruction in classic dancing, and instruction in arts and crafts.

The last-mentioned classes I attended daily and made two bracelets of hammered pewter and change purses of suede.

We had countless hikes, moonlight swims, and one moonlight night we sat on the sweet grass and listened to the phonograph. Another night, as a big surprise, fifty girls went on a hayride to Pinehurst, under a moon as bright as day. One morning we started before breakfast for a bird hunt. We took many hikes, but one hike took us twenty miles away up in the mountains to an ice cave. My daughter, Josephine, only twelve years old, hiked all the way, though one of the girls who owned a car drove out to pick up those who had fallen by the wayside.

On Fridays might occur the big event of the week – Camp Fire, where Emblems are awarded to the Perfect Camper. The camp fire is prepared by a councilor [sic] and some of the girls, way out in the forest on a hilltop – first small wood, then larger logs, then a glorious blaze lighting the country for miles around. Just before dark the fire is lit and we sat around it singing camp songs. Someone reads poetry or tells a funny story, then we sing more songs.

Then the honors are awarded. To gain this emblem one must have completed eight of fifteen subjects given out at the beginning of the week, such as learning a new swimming stroke, joining in two games, naming fifteen flowers or ten trees, et cetera. Out of the thirteen awards made JOSEPHINE PRISK was called first. Another Bamberger co-worked, LILLIAN

BRETT and her little boy were also called. We sang again, then six torches were lit to light the homeward path. And now the time has come to bid good-bye to our lovely sylvan retreat. I cannot refrain from mentioning the bounteous and delicious food which sustained us during the strenuous days. Wonderful meals of chicken, vegetables and every kind of delicacy were served in abundance to a ravenously hungry crowd.

After one of the most delightful week I ever spent in my life my advice to Bamberger girls is – Pay a Visit to Isida Camp.



RED STARFISH: Macyites use Macy's four-season Camp Isida for play headquarters. In New York State's beautiful Shawangunk Mountains it's a happy spot for holidays. Macy's 1939-1940

Georgia 2019

By Catherine Smith

On November 2nd and 3rd, Joan Adler and I traveled to Georgia for Harvest Days in Old Talbot, the eleventh annual weekend festival hosted by Michael H. and Debbie G. Buckner of the Patsiliga Museum. We've attended several previous Harvest Days festivals and were greeted as old friends.

Joan was invited to give a presentation to the Taylor County Historical Society, which Mike and Debbie were hosting at their lovely antebellum home in Junction City. We arrived Friday evening, just in time for a quick set up of the presentation materials.

The meeting was a fundraiser for Mike and Debbie's Patsiliga Museum, which is working on a project to build a storage facility for the many pottery items fired in the museum's reconstructed antebellum kiln. The potluck dinner consisted of a variety of soups and chili. Guests were encouraged to purchase the pottery bowl they used during the meal. Each bowl has been fired in the Buckner's kiln, which made it even more special. After dinner, and the meeting's formalities were completed, Joan spoke about the Straus family's Georgia roots and their business connection to pottery, crockery and china. The group was fascinated by Joan's presentation and accompanying slides. There were many interesting questions after her talk and, with all but one bowl purchased, the fundraiser was an overwhelming success.



Photographs of L. Straus & Sons and of R. H. Macy & Co. on display in the dining room of the Buckner home

On Saturday and Sunday, we took our usual places in the dining room of Mike and Debbie's lovely antebellum home where we'd set up photographs, books and other informational materials about the Straus family. Hundreds of visitors stopped by to say hello, and to learn about the Strauses and their connection to Georgia. We were pleased to see many of the guests from the Friday night meeting who brought their family and friends to learn more about the Strauses after enjoying the presentation. Once again, we had the pleasure of staying in the beautiful and comfortable home of Mary Luna Shepherd who always welcomes us with open arms and a

delicious farewell breakfast on Monday morning before our return to New York.

On Monday, we made a quick stop at the Talbotton Post Office to send 70 bricks back to New York. Catherine and I had chiseled these from the buildings of the Straus' former Talbotton home. We packaged them, five bricks to a box, and hoped for the best. The postal worker was surprised by the weight of each box. Thinking she was making a joke, she asked, "What do you have in here? Bricks?" You can imagine the look on her face when we responded, "Yes." (See the article on page one for information about the SHS brick project.)



Straus Homesite, Talbotton, GA
November 2015



Straus homesite, Talbotton GA
November 2019

After mailing off the bricks, we started for Atlanta where we'd arranged to meet with Frances R. Francis, the senior registrar of the High Museum of Art. During our trip to GA the previous year, we met Frances at the High Museum to view the several pieces of artwork in their collection donated by Irma Nathan Straus to honor her late husband, Jesse Isidor Straus. (See articles in the August 2018 and February 2019 issues of the SHS newsletter for more information) At the time of our previous visit, Frances explained that many of the Straus pieces were in an offsite conservation and restoration facility. We agreed to meet Frances there this trip to see that artwork.



Madonna and Child
with Two Angels
by Guidoccio Cozzarelli, ca. 1485
donated by Irma Nathan Straus
currently at the conservation facility
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA

Frances gave us a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour of the High Museum's conservation and restoration facility. We saw the pieces of Straus donated art that are not currently on display at the museum and learned about the museum's history of conservation.

We learned that Irma was not the only

Straus who donated artwork to the High Museum. Brothers Herbert and Percy also donated to their collections, but that artwork has been decommissioned and is no longer at the museum. We are grateful to Frances for taking the time to research the Strauses donations and for giving us an incredible glimpse into the inner workings of the High Museum.

Without a doubt, our trip to Georgia is the highlight of our year. Each trip brings renewed friendships, more adventures, research opportunities, and the chance to be immersed in the nostalgic world of the antebellum south that the Strauses called home. Each year, we both comment that this would be a fabulous trip for any family member with an interest in exploring their roots.

In 2020, SHS would like to invite any and all who would be interested, to join Joan and Catherine, along with Mike Buckner and local guides in Columbus, on a heritage tour.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

During early November 2020, Joan, Catherine, and a group of Straus family members, will travel to Georgia for a heritage tour of the places where the Strauses first settled in America. We will visit Talbotton to see the site of Lazarus' first business and home, and follow a driving tour created by the Talbotton Chamber of Commerce. This tour is both informative and relevant, with historical information about the Strauses and the people and places they must have encountered during their time in GA.

On Sunday, we will attend the Buckner's annual Harvest Days in Old Talbot. This is a unique opportunity to experience the Old South, to interact with many local craftsmen, to see a working mill grinding grain in the same manner in which it was ground when the Strauses lived in GA. In fact, the millstone is the same one that was used during that time. The Strauses almost definitely ground their grain at this mill. There will be demonstrations of local crafts and opportunities to purchase locally handmade items. The newly reconstructed kiln is faithfully built using GA bricks and is tended by potters from around the state.

After the festival weekend, Mike, who knows more local history than anyone, will be available to guide the group on a local tour. He will take us on a route that might have been



Betty & Jack Schafer posing with a pushcart
similar to the one Lazarus Straus
would have used in the 1850s.

Photograph taken in 2001
at the last Straus Family Reunion in GA

the same one Lazarus Straus drove when he was a pushcart peddler, before settling in Talbotton. You will have the unique opportunity to visit the homes of people whose families have lived in the area for generations and to see furniture that once belonged to the Straus family.

We will also tour Columbus GA, where the Strauses lived from 1863-1865. Columbus has recently undergone an extensive revitalization program. The downtown area contains many lovely shops, a restored waterfront area with whitewater rafting opportunities, and an historic district where many houses have been faithfully restored and their history



The beautifully restored home of
Julius and Matilda Straus Kaufman
in Columbus, GA

researched. We will be invited into some of these homes and will visit Springer Opera House, where Oscar Straus gave a talk in 1908. The home of the Rothschild family is one of the beautifully restored homes and is a must-see on this tour. Not to be missed is the Columbus Museum and the National Civil War Naval Museum.

We are planning five days in total in the Talbotton and Columbus area, with guided excursions as well as time for leisure and exploration on one's own.

If you are interested in participating in this heritage trip, please contact Joan or Catherine at info@straushistory.org or 631-724-4487. Further information will be forthcoming. For now we only need to know if you would like to join us.

Mrs. Tinnie Smith House

by Ken Coolik, Columbus, GA

(See page one and eight for additional information)

A note from Joan: By the mid-1880s, Ken Coolik's family owned the house the Strauses had lived in from 1861-1863. I asked Ken if he would write a brief article about his family's connection to the Straus family and to the house in which both families lived.

My great grandparents, John Thomas Smith and Sydney Frances (Tinnie) Smith moved to Talbotton from the Upatoi/Box Springs area in the mid-1880s. They initially rented a house but subsequently purchased it. John and Tinnie had four children, including my grandmother, Kate, who married my grandfather, John Adolphus Battle. They were invited to the Davison-Paxon grand opening celebration in Atlanta in 1927. Upon returning to the house in Talbotton that afternoon, Kate's brother, Hugh, shot and killed my grandfather out of rage and jealousy that the Battles had been invited by the Strauses to attend the grand event. Hugh then went into his room, where he killed himself. The buckshot is still in the headboard. Mike and Debbie Buckner now own that bed.

The Smiths also had two daughters, Amorette, who married Claud Callaway, and Imogene. Aunt Jean never married. She eventually inherited the home and owned it until her death, at which time it passed to Frances Callaway Aldrich, daughter of Amorette and Claud, and then to Frances' son, Dr. Robert Aldrich, who sold it shortly after his mother's death, around 2001. Robbie and his mother lived in the house for many years with Amorette and Aunt Jean after they moved back to Talbotton from New York.

Aunt Jean lived in the house her entire life. Her sister, Amorette, moved back in with Aunt Jean after the death of Claud Callaway. They were very self-sufficient, growing vegetables and fruits which they "put up," and raised chickens, hogs and cows for meat. They loved to fish and had their own worm beds. Bounty from fig trees, scuppernong and muscadine arbors were plentiful. They made their own jellies and preserves as well as butter from milk from their cows.

My mother, Jean, daughter of John Adolphus and Kate Battle, was born in the house and lived there until she graduated from college.

After my grandfather was killed in 1927, my grandmother Kate took over his Ford dealership and thus, became the first female Ford dealer in the country. Just another connection to the Straus family for, had my grandparents and the Persons, who owned the bank, not gone to the big event in Atlanta that day in 1927, it is assumed that my grandfather Battle would have lived a normal life span.

My grandmother, Kate, and her sister, Amorette, saw the need for the LeVert College building to be stabilized and renovated for the community. They wrote to the Strauses asking for financial support to salvage the grand old facility. The Strauses were very generous and caused the building to be saved and improved. Now, Straus-LeVert Hall is in continuous use by the Talbotton community to this day.

Thank You to Our Donors

The board of directors of the Straus Historical Society wishes to thank those who made contributions in 2019.

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

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Friends of Straus Park

by Al Berr

Photographs by Joe Arbo

Another ideal autumn day was on Saturday, October 5th, last year, and ideal for our annual Art in the Park day. There were fewer vendors than customarily, but most of the usual artists and photographers were present, displaying their works for sale. These art works continue to be the principal attraction of the Art in the Park event and, indeed, the idea of giving local artists a local venue, similar to a gallery, was the spark that ignited the tradition. Each year the paintings, drawings, illustrations, and photographs bring a different and exciting aspect to the event.

Also on display are photographs and memorabilia from the Friends of Straus Park collection pertaining to the Straus family. As regulars know, Isidor and Ida Straus and their family lived at Broadway and 105th Street in a Victorian mansion fronted by a lawn. Contemporary photographs of the house from our collection are of continuing interest to current residents of the neighborhood. It is curious to think of the neighborhood as it once was – almost suburban in aspect. The present apartment building on that site was erected by the builder who bought the land from the Straus children in 1912.

Of course, interest in the Titanic appears to be just as keen as ever. We displayed some of our photos and books relating to the ship, and its passengers, including a photo mock-up of a first-class cabin, similar to what the Strauses would have occupied. Our board member, Ian Robertson, displayed some of his Titanic memorabilia and gave a brief speech about the history of the ship and its tragic last moments. We can usually rely on Ian for this historical insight.

We can also usually rely on the Blue Vipers of Brooklyn for its lively renditions of old-time songs. They have been performing at our Art in the Park events for years and, even though the members of the quartet are not always the same, the music is always wonderful and wonderfully performed. Their popularity is assured.

Finally, the park looked its usual, lovely autumn best, thanks to the ministrations of our talented gardener, Joe Arbo. We received many compliments from passersby.

As is our custom, on our schedule is an annual commemoration of the Titanic around April 15th, the date in 1912 of the sinking. This year, it will probably be either Saturday, April 11th or Saturday, April 18th. Once a date and specifics about this event are decided, they will be posted on our Facebook page and on our website (www.fospark.com). Please consult them for information.

We look forward to seeing our many neighborhood friends at our April event and to making new friends there as well.



Autumn:
Falling Leaves
in Straus Park



Autumn:
Chrysanthemums
in Straus Park



Winter:
Foral Heart Arrangement
in Straus Park



Winter:
Poinsettia Arrangement
in Straus Park

Stop & Shop Supermarket Giving Tag Program

We are pleased to announce that Straus Historical Society has been the recipient of an \$88 donation from Stop & Shop supermarket through their Community Bag Program.

Stop & Shop in Smithtown, NY selects a local non-profit to be the recipient of \$1 for every \$2.50 reusable bag they sell during a designated month. SHS was the non-profit designated to receive this donation for the month of September.

Stop & Shop also has a Giving Tag program. Anyone buying a Giving Bag at Stop & Shop at any time may designate any non-profit to receive \$1 of the purchase price for their reusable bag. The Giving Tag is a year-long fundraising opportunity to drive donations. Shoppers can support the non-profit they designate by directing their \$1 donation generated from the purchase of the \$2.50 Community Bag to the non-profit of their choice. Simply follow the instructions on the back of the Giving Tag to select the non-profit you would like to support!

If you do your marketing at Stop & Shop, this is an easy and inexpensive way to support SHS. If you don't do your marketing at Stop & Shop, perhaps your local supermarket supports a similar program. Why not ask? Every donation, no matter how small, is helpful and appreciated.



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

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

We've received several donation checks from AmazonSmile!
Keep on shopping!

**Available from the
Straus Historical Society, Inc.**

www.straushistoricalsociety.org/publications

Strauses and the Arts, a collection of articles about family members who are artists, patrons of the arts, musicians, dancers, or involved in the arts in some other manner. Personal interviews with the artists reveal details about their creative process and their philosophy of the arts. Images of the artists' work are included at the end of each article. Available from the SHS website as an eBook (\$4.99) or paperback (\$25).

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 - \$30.00

Disease in Milk: The Remedy Pasteurization by **Lina Guthertz Straus**, a loving tribute to the life's work of Nathan Straus, greatly expanded in 2016 including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover - \$40.00

Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft, the autobiography of Oscar S. Straus. This recently re-published autobiography includes a new supplement with articles about Oscar S. Straus from past issues of the Society's newsletters and new photographs. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$40.00

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 History of the Jews of Otterberg by Dr. Hans Steinebrei,
translated by Frank and Sue Kahn and Dr. Andreas J. Schwab.
This publication contains a large section about the Straus family.
Many photographs complement the text. Published in English
by the Straus Historical Society. 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

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

The Straus Historical Society collection contains many photographs, articles and other items that are also available. Contact Joan Adler if you want to learn more about the SHS collections or if there is a specific photograph or article you wish to purchase.