



"CALDAMFAM" - March 27, 1993

- by Sara Byruck

I was thrilled to receive my Straus Family Address Book, and I was astonished to discover that there are nearly fifty Strauses living in California. I was further intrigued by the fact that I hadn't even heard of more than a handful of them.

I hadn't had the Book for more than a few hours before the phone rang. It was Liza Loop, daughter of Oliver Herbert Straus, who couldn't have had the Book for more than a few hours herself, but who was already miles ahead of me, and was moving fast. Within minutes she had not only explained her relationship to me, as well as where she fit into the Tree, but she had a plan to organize the West Coast contingent, and had a format and a date in mind. Together we designed an invitation, divvied up the names, and started making calls.

I think we were both surprised by the enthusiastic reception we had to our phone calls. All the Strauses I contacted knew only a handful of family on the West Coast themselves, and were eager to meet as many unknowns as we could muster.

The gathering of the "CALDAMFAM" was held at Liza's and her husband, Stephen Smith's house on March 27th in Palo Alto. The picnic in the park portion was rained out but no one seemed to mind. There were twenty three of us who convened for introductions, conversation and potluck offerings. I'm not sure what any of us expected, but I had the feeling that most of us were pleasantly surprised.

Although we may have all been strangers to each other, we were, after all, related, and finding out the various

relationships between us was an easy way to break the ice. Liza provided nametags, derived from the Address Book, which gave us all clues to each other's identity, and then she encouraged us all to find ourselves on an enlarged family tree pinned to her basement wall, and to add to it whomever we could.

The tree inspired reminiscences and anecdotes of family gatherings back East and interesting comments on what the "right" side of the tree had in common with the "left" side. It also inspired a discussion of family traits and illnesses. It appears that both diabetes and manic depression (bi-polar disease) appear in more than one generation. We speculated on how to trace those, and other genetically linked traits. Perhaps other family members would be interested?

I was interested to see how many of the California Strauses were artists. Among the twenty three of us there were three visual artists, a composer, a playwright, and a jeweler. As there were six students in this group, that means that 1/3 of the adult Strauses who gathered were self-defined artists of one kind or another. I wonder whether this is a California phenomenon, or an indication of Straus creativity. (CALDAMFAM attendees are listed on page 13.)

There was a lot of enthusiasm for future gatherings of the CALDAMFAM, and tentative arrangements for the next one to be in the East Bay sometime in the Fall.

Come Meet the "CALDAMFAM"

A Gathering of Californian Strauses

At A Picnic In The Park
Saturday, March 27, 1993
Foothill Park, Palo Alto
12:00 till 5:00

Then continue the festivities for dinner
at
the home of

Liza Loop
760 Homer Avenue
Palo Alto

RSVP: Liza Loop (415) 322-6491
or Sara Byruck (510) 849-3087
Jim & Lisa Straus will coordinate
pot luck contributions
(415) 851 2834

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What's In a Family?

- By Liza Loop



I'd like to add a few introspective comments to "Cousin" Sara's (Sara Byruck's) narrative about the CALDAMFAM meeting.

First, thanks to Sara. I'm quick on ideas and much slower on implementation. Sara's active participation was one of several ingredients necessary to bring the idea from bud to fruit. Equally important was "Great Uncle" Bobby's (Robert K. Straus') pursuit of the address book and family research. And, of course, everyone who came contributed their personality and presence to a delightful event for all.

I have to admit to a considerable number of second thoughts once the party plans were underway. "What's the big deal about blood relations anyway?" I kept asking myself. I knew the answer. It comes from video images or reunions between identical twins raised separately. Their gestures, posture, even choice of clothes and career connect them. And, the answer comes from astonishing similarities among the displays of temper I had observed in my father (Oliver H. Straus), my brother (Jonathan O. Straus) and my son (Solomon B.T. Loop).

If my nuclear family experience with my parents had been "happier" or "better-adjusted," perhaps this question would carry less emotional weight for me. But my father, whom I never knew well, was characterized as both genius and madman by those who did know him. He flew into a rage at the mention of his mother (Teresa K. Straus, whom most of the family called "Aunt Teddy"). His tolerance for my childhood shortcomings (and my mother's) seemed equally limited. I grew up avoiding Strauses and afraid that my own worst characteristics were genetically pre-programmed into my being. No wonder I was apprehensive about bringing a whole collection of Straus relatives into my home.

As I made my invitational phone calls for the CALDAMFAM party, I was struck by recurring speech pattern -- a rapid phrase, then a pause, followed by another burst of words -- this from people who had never met and had only one ancestor in common from four generations back. There were also similarities in accent and vocabulary. How wide and deep does the genetic river run?

I am happy to report that my fears for the day were ungrounded. Whatever unpleasant personality quirks lurk behind the open, friendly and curious facades of the CALDAMFAM, none emerged while I was around. Many of us brought picture albums to share and Uncle Bobby,

senior member of the group at 88 years old, entertained about half the crowd around my dining room table for hours with historical stories.

And yet, this scene was quite different from reunions of other families I have attended, nor was it like a neighborhood gathering or an off-duty work group. My relatives knew something ABOUT each other but few of us KNEW each other. We had almost no personal history to relive nor anything to assiduously avoid. The rubbing together of old hates and loves that characterizes my husband's 4th of July Clan Picnic was missing.

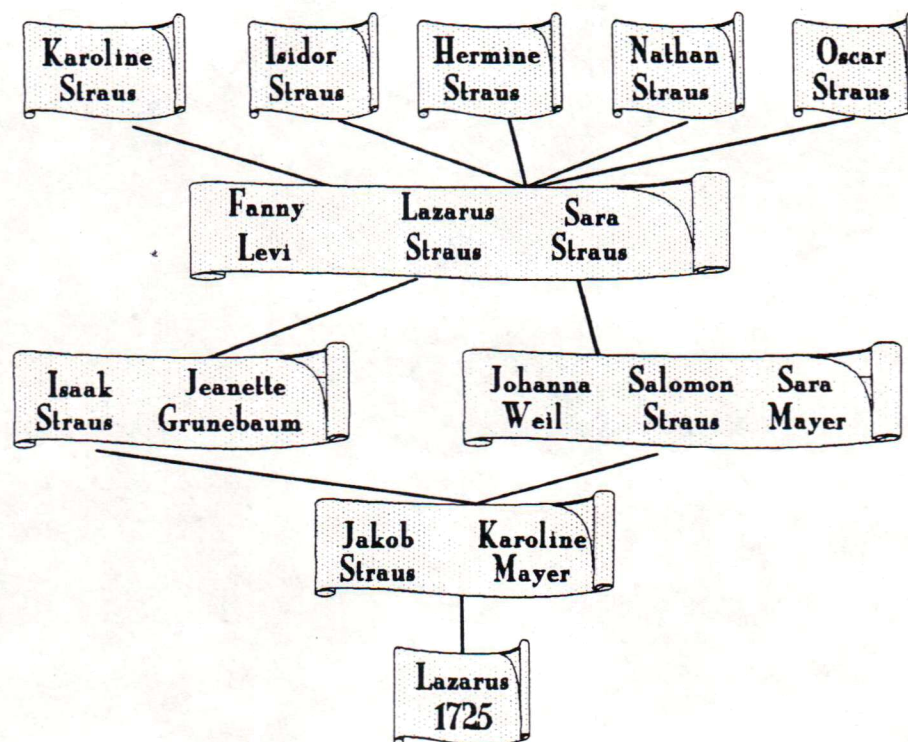
This, and a few comments several Strauses made about coming to California to "find ourselves", leaves me both reassured and extremely curious. I'm pleased not only to meet some interesting relatives, I may also have begun several valuable friendships. I am glad to see the unhappiness of my immediate family as an atypical extreme rather than the norm among a much larger collection of Strauses.

On the other hand, I'm curious about the apparent stress generated by the intelligence, artistic sensitivity, personal drive and abiding self-doubt many of us seem to carry. Are these characteristics really more prevalent among this group of blood relatives than in the general population or are we simply fooling ourselves? Can we enhance each others' lives by informing each other of what has worked well and what problems remain unsolved in our very varied lives? Can the lessons we might learn within the family benefit others whose genetic heritage is different but who face similar medical, psychological and social challenges?

I don't know what's in any family, let alone the WHOLEDAMFAM. Each of us must make our own life path no matter who our relatives are. But I see the wide genealogical network that we have already traced as an exciting opportunity. I'd like to use it to expand my circle of friends, to explore the old nature/nurture question, and to see what positive collaborations we can generate for the growth of humankind in general.

So, write me a letter, give me a call, send me a fax or an email -- better still, drop by my house in California. If we decide we have nothing in common but a few miscellaneous genes, that's okay. The risk we take is small, especially since I promise not to try to make you regret it if you are not exactly my cup of tea.

Perhaps we can contribute to the identification and treatment of a diabetic, alcoholic or manic-depressive gene. Maybe we'll promote an art exhibit, concert or learned society. At the very least, we could generate another article for this newsletter to amuse our relatives.



The Origins of the Family

by Joan Adler

Current information regarding the Straus family begins in 1725 with the birth of Lazarus (See family tree above). He was the father of Jakob Lazare (Jakob Straus), the grandfather of Isaak Straus and the great grandfather of Lazarus Straus. This second Lazarus was the husband of Sara and the father of Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar.

Otterberg and the surrounding towns of Rhenish Bavaria, where the Straus family lived, were passed back and forth between France and Germany for centuries. Educated people like the Strauses spoke both French and German. The Strauses were also educated in the Hebrew language and its literature. They were land owners and merchants, buying local crops and selling them and those of their neighbors in the larger markets of Mannheim and Kaiserslautern. Local governmental policies in this area changed with each new political regime. In 1806 Napoleon convened the Assembly of Notables in Paris with the aim of making laws to determine the status of Jews. Jakob Lazare, grandfather of Lazarus, was selected to be the representative from the Department of Mont Tonnerre. One result was the decree that all Jews who as yet had no German family name must appear before the mayor and adopt one. Thus Jakob Lazare, also known as Jakob ben Lazare, became Jakob Straus.

Among the documents I photocopied at the Macy's archives was one written in French dated March 17, 1808. It is a typewritten copy of a proclamation signed by Napoleon and H.B. Maret, Secretary Minister of the State,

enumerating the rules regulating the financial life of Jews including the regulation of commerce. The Jewish Encyclopedia states that Napoleon "issued a decree on March 17, 1808 restricting the Jews' legal rights." On June 26, 1810 a decree in the name of His Majesty the King "graciously grants" release of the Israelites Salomon Strauss and Lazarus Strauss Jr of Otterberg from the determination regarding the ordinance of March 17th 1808. Salomon and Lazarus Jr were our Lazarus's uncles, brothers of Lazarus's father Isaak.

Editor's Note: You may have noticed the double S spelling of the Straus name. Up until the beginning of the 20th century inconsistencies in spelling were common. Many proper names had more than one spelling such as: Jacob/Jakob, Isaac/Isaak, Jeanette/Johanette, and Maurice/Moritz/Morris. Karoline Mayer was also known as Sara Mayer to add to the confusion. The Straus family in this country has long identified itself as the 'one S' Straus family. Interestingly, the name Straus was most often written with the character *ſ* which denoted the double S. It was only after Lazarus and Sara came to this country that the single S spelling of the name became customary. An article entitled "Straightening Out the Straus(s)es" by Geoffrey T. Hellman appeared in The New Yorker Magazine in 1953. It deals quite humorously with the confusion the spelling of Straus has generated. This article is reprinted in Robert K. Straus's Straus Genealogical Miscellany.

One file from the archives at Macy's contains more than 60 business documents. Two are written in French, the rest in Old German. We have had several translated. The second French document relates to "benefits flowing to

Isaac Straus, among others, on the death of Nathan Grunebaum, the father of Isaac's wife Johanette." (Translation by Randy Selden) The Old German documents are marriage agreements, deeds and excerpts from old will and testaments describing money and properties inherited by or deeded to Straus relatives. The names Grunebaum and Isaac Straus appear prominently. One example is a marriage settlement dated April 3, 1818 wherein Salomon Straus, son of Jacob Straus and Johanna Weil, daughter of Salomon Weil, enter their intention of marriage and record their agreement and arrangement. Salomon and Johanna are the parents of Sara Straus. (See family tree on page three) Jacob agreed to give Salomon residential premises with half a barn on the side surrounded by a wall together with accessories and everything that is immovable, located in Otterberg, inspected (inhabited?) on one side by George Bader, on the other side by Isaac Straus estimated at a yearly profit of one hundred seventy two Franken. Jacob, Straus and his wife receive unimpaired residence in the house as long as they live with sole title reverting to Salomon upon their death. Should any argument arise between parents and child the parents have the right to sole use of the house upon payment to the son of 1650 Gulden or 3440 Franken and the son with his family must vacate the premises.

While the bulk of these documents remain untranslated, it is clear, from the information we have learned in the translated sample, that they will yield an interesting picture of the family, their lives, and aid in our tracing of names, dates and places and how they interrelate.

After their adoption of the name Straus, the families of Jakob and his siblings lived in Otterberg and towns in the immediate vicinity where they prospered. Jakob had six children. Lazarus, born April 25, 1809, the son of Isaac Straus and Jeanette Grunebaum, is the grandson of Jakob. Lazarus married Fannie Levi who died in 1843. They had one daughter, Karoline Straus, born in 1838. Little is known about Karoline other than that she married a man named Weiss. They had a son, Ferdinand, who had a daughter and a son. The son was killed in World War I. The daughter married a young physician. Her dowry was paid by the Strauses. As far as we know her family line remained in Germany.

Shortly after Fannie's death Lazarus married his first cousin Sara Straus, daughter of Lazarus's brother

Salomon and Johanna Weil Straus. It is Lazarus's union with Sara which produced Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar and a fifth child, Jacob Otto, who died in early childhood.

Lazarus took an active role in the German revolutionary movement of 1848, recruiting volunteers and spending considerable sums of money for the cause which attempted to establish a constitutional government. "We find that in addition to the 'discrimination and suspicions' directed at Straus following his participation in the movement, he was also going to face a court in Zweibrucken for his financial support of the revolution. I do not believe he would leave for less critical reasons." (The Family of Simon Kaufman (1796-1879) of Lichtenau, Germany by Gus Kaufman, page 21).



Otterberg

Two Straus family members preceded Lazarus to America. Emanuel and Marcus Straus, Lazarus's brothers, are listed on the Philadelphia Naturalization Records for 1837. By 1852 they were in San Francisco, possibly following the population shift westward during the Gold Rush. A letter written to Emanuel by Isidor during the Civil War reveals close family ties and the continued financial support of relatives in Germany. Emanuel married Frederica, a woman from Germany. His business was named Helbing and Straus.

Lazarus arrived in Philadelphia but moved to Oglethorpe Georgia, perhaps because he knew the Kaufman brothers who came from the same area of Germany. In 1851 the brothers owned two stores in Oglethorpe.

Lazarus became a pushcart peddler, selling an assortment of dry goods and Yankee notions. Peddling was a noble profession for a white man in the South during this era. Large plantations were widely scattered throughout the states and peddlers brought news from other plantations, socialized, were housed and filled orders with requested goods as well as bringing new items from the North. Lazarus arrived in Talbotton, the seat of Talbot County, during "Court Week" and found the active business and the festivities to his liking. It is reported that "this little town was the first one which made him feel that he had gotten away from the uncouth, primitive and frontier-like conditions which characterized every other settlement he had passed through." (The Autobiography of Isidor Straus with a forward by Sara Straus Hess) He and

the Kaufman brothers agreed to share space in a store. By 1854 Lazarus was sufficiently established and successful to send for his wife and children.

**J. Kaufman & Bro's
NEW DRY GOODS
AND CLOTHING STORE.**

*On Baker Street below the Oglethorpe
Hotel.*

WOULD respectfully inform the Public that they have just opened their Stock, consisting of Calicoes, Ginghams, Muslins, and all kind of Ladies Dress Goods, Hosiery, Gloves, Laces, Edgings, Silk Parasols, Fans, &c., together with a variety of Fancy Articles, and a nice assortment of Fine Jewellery. Also a fine lot of **READY MADE CLOTHING**, Shirts and Boots. All of which will be sold, for cash, at New York cost price.
May 22, 1851. 6-11.

This ad appeared in the South West Georgian, a newspaper in Oglethorpe Georgia, on July 31, 1851.

Sara left Otterberg August 24, 1854. She, her four children and a nursemaid travelled to Kaiserslautern by carriage; her father accompanying them on horseback. From there she and the children took a train to Forbach, a French frontier where they remained overnight. The next morning they proceeded to Paris. On August 29th they left for Le Havre where they sailed on the maiden voyage of the Steamship "St Louis". The family arrived in New York September 13, 1854. The passenger manifest of the Steamship "St Louis" lists the family: Marie Straus age 40, Isidore Straus age 12 years 10 months female child, Herman Straus age 10 years 4 months male child, Nathalie Straus age 8 years 6 months female child and Oscar Straus age 6 years 7 months male child; their country of origin as France. We know that Sara was 31 years old, Isidor, a male was 9, Hermine, a female 8, Nathan 6, a male and Oscar 4. We don't know if the nursemaid accompanied them all the way to America.

Lazarus met them at the dock in New York. Isidor and Nathan clearly remembered how long it seemed until they could disembark and embrace their father. After several days in New York the family traveled to Philadelphia but remained there for several weeks due to a yellow fever epidemic in Savannah. After arriving by ship in Savannah they remained all day in it's primitive suburban railway station until their train left in the evening for Geneva Georgia. A stagecoach took them the final few miles to their home in Talbotton. This trip is all the more remarkable because Sara had suffered a stroke in 1851 which left her disabled. She courageously travelled to a new life in a strange country with four young children.

Nathan described their initial reaction to their new house as one of pleasure and amazement. The house was on stilts, having no cellar and being erected on wooden posts set several feet apart. Oscar wrote, in Under Four Administrations; It was a log house with "luxurious outer and inner dressing of clap-boarding painted white. The logs of the upper story where we children played and slept had no covering, which pleased us all the more." (Preface) (A photograph of this house appeared in the first issue of the newsletter.) Sara is described as a frugal housewife who asked her husband for an allowance of \$20 from which to run the household. Out of this sum she was able to save enough in two years to buy a piano for Hermine's piano lessons. The family, while against slavery in principle, did own slaves. Their slaves were treated so well that slaves from other masters asked to be bought by the Strauses. Lazarus made certain the servants in his household learned to read and received an education. When the family came North the two youngest slaves went with them because they were too young to be on their own and had no relatives.

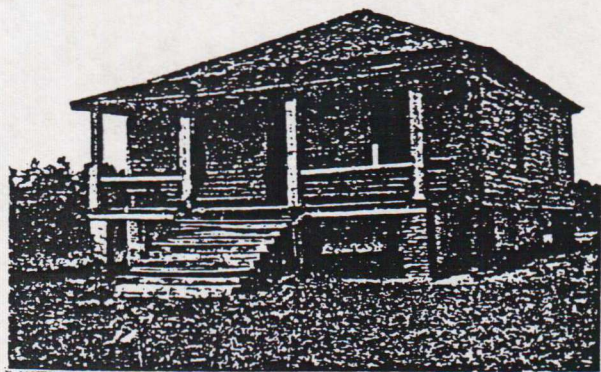


Main Street in Talbotton

Shortly after their arrival in Talbotton six year old Nathan stopped a runaway horse which was causing a panic among the farmers and townspeople. He rushed at the horse catching it's bridle in a flying tackle and hanging on until the horse came to a standstill. The owner presented Nathan with ten cents, the first money he had earned. He bought candy which he divided among his playmates.

School records from LeVert College for the period between July and December 1856 tell us that Isidor studied Latin, Mathematics and English Literature. He received the highest grades. Hermine also is reported to have attended LeVert College. Isidor and Nathan attended Collingsworth Institute, a local preparatory school, between 1856 and 1861 where they studied Orthography, Writing, Geography, Grammar, Arithmetic, Higher Mathematics, Astronomy, Rhetoric, Latin, Greek, Declamation and Composition. Isidor's grades range from good to excellent. In his autobiography Isidor states

that he received "practically all the schooling I have enjoyed" at Collingsworth Institute. (p 10) He remained in school until the outbreak of the Civil War. During the war Oscar continued his education in Columbus, first at Mr Flynn's school where he studied the 3 R's, Latin and elocution. The following year he studied the classics with Dr Dews. Nathan tells of having gone to Montgomery, Alabama for a year pursuing more advanced studies.



CHAPEL AND SCHOOLHOUSE
COLLINGSWORTH INSTITUTE, TALBOTTON, GEORGIA

Lazarus and Sara were Orthodox Jews but there was no synagogue in town and so the children attended the Baptist Sunday School. The minister, a close family friend, taught Bible studies and read to them only from the Old Testament in deference to their religion.

Family lore states that the Strauses were the only Jews in town. However, the names of other Jews are listed in the 1850 and 1860 census of Talbot County. In September of 1862 the Grand Jury of Talbot County issued a presentment which included: "The spirit of speculation and extortion is rife in every department of trade, and has become an evil of such alarming extent as, in our opinion, to seriously threaten the peace of the country." Elsewhere in the presentment it is suggested that the Jews were responsible for this speculation and extortion. Isidor wrote, in 1911, that when Lazarus was planning to leave Talbotton following the issuance of the presentment many prominent citizens and ministers approached him assuring him that nothing was further from their minds. Nonetheless, in 1863 Lazarus moved his family 36 miles away to Columbus, population 12,000, ostensibly because there would be greater opportunities but most probably due to the presentment of the Grand Jury. With two six mule teams and Nathan's horse Patrick the family was able to move all their household possessions and the stock from the store in one trip, a journey of two days duration.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Lazarus's business partner Julius Kaufman joined the Fourth Georgia Regiment. Isidor was required to leave school in order to work in the store. In the second year of the war Kaufman was

discharged from service due to an injury. He returned to Columbus. Lazarus wanted Isidor to continue his education but the high schools and colleges had been suspended because most of the teachers and students had joined the army.

Isidor's desire to enter West Point was thwarted by the outbreak of the Civil War. Boys from the local area formed a military company with Isidor elected First Lieutenant. They offered their services to the Confederate Army but Governor Joe E. Brown ordered this rebel band of self-proclaimed soldiers to disband because the state didn't have enough money for weapons for those already in uniform. Isidor travelled to Marietta hoping to enter Georgia Military Academy. While waiting for an interview he was invited to visit the quarters of a student. Finding the door to this room slightly ajar he attempted to enter. He was drenched with water from a carefully placed bucket suspended above the doorway. This ended his aspirations to a military career. Not ready to admit defeat and return home Isidor remained in the Atlanta area for two weeks trading in grain. He was able to present his family with \$1,200 as a result of his efforts.

Oscar described Nathan as constantly scheming for ways to make pocket money. During the war years the enterprising teenager sold old hemp and hemp rope, scarce commodities at the time. With the money he bought a bay pony which became his and Oscar's prized possession. It was seized by General Wilson's men at the end of the Civil War.

Although the blockade succeeded in preventing merchandise from reaching the Southern states, families grew their own garden produce and had plenty of chickens, eggs, milk and butter. The children lived largely on corn bread and molasses. Sara made a coffee substitute from dried roasted cubes of sweet potato and ground grains of wheat. Salt was reclaimed from the earthen floor of the smokehouses. The children went barefoot nine months of the year. Oscar wrote; "As in Talbotton we lived most economically. We were not poor in the sense of being needy; we never felt in any way dependent. Our home was comfortable, wholesome, full of sunshine and good cheer, and always hospitable to friends. Our wants were few and simple, so we had plenty, and I felt as independent as any child of the rich."

In 1863 Isidor travelled to Europe as the secretary to Lloyd G. Bowers. He and his colleagues hoped to buy a fleet of ships with which to get Georgia cotton through the Union blockades. This seemed to be an advantageous business venture since cotton was in great demand in England. Isidor departed Charleston with \$1,200 in gold (worth five cents per dollar) his mother had sewn into a garment resembling an undershirt. After lying quietly below the waterline for hours while the Steamer "Alice" ran the blockade he described his appearance upon

emerging on deck as that of a man who had been in the Russian baths. Theirs was the only ship to successfully leave Charleston harbor that night.

The many letters sent home, including one describing in detail Isidor's blockade running departure through the port of Charleston, comprise a good part of the next chapter, the Isidor letters. I will write about these in the next issue of the newsletter but feel compelled to print one excerpt from a letter written by Isidor from Otterberg, September 19, 1863, to Uncle Emanuel in San Francisco, Lazarus' brother.

"The war in which the South has been engaged within the last three years has called into requisition from time to time all the resources within her command, men were called out from 18 to 35 & I approached the age faster than circumstances looked favorable. This made the climate a little too hot & I began to look around for a cooler Spot. A company was made up in our city for the purpose of purchasing Ships, wherein to run cotton out, & merchandise into our country. The company was made up in the following manner; different parties Subscribed as many bales cotton as each one thought he could Stand until the amount of 8 thousand Bales were Subscribed. An agent was appointed to go to Europe, & try to negotiate a loan with this cotton as Side Security. This agent appointed me as his assistant with the understanding that I were to pay my own expenses & if he Succeeded in negotiating then I were to purchase the merchandise wherein the Ships were to be loaded. Father was very anxious for me to accept of this position, as it was one of the few chances which men offered wherewith I could So honorably bid farewell to our once happy but now almost miserable country."

At the end of this letter to Uncle Emanuel Isidor writes; "At the time of my departure from home father was under the impression that we would be able to go to work immediately after our arrival & as we both did not dream of failure. I am at a loss to know what his advice would be on that point, not being desirous to act entirely on my own judgement, & the judgement of any man in Europe as men in this country have not Sufficient experience, I thought it best to look upon you as a Suitable advisor."

During the war Nathan made a number of trips for the Adams Express Company. In April 1865, the 17 year old was put in charge of a wagon train going 100 miles from Columbus to Macon which carried immense quantities of valuables. He got only 20 miles east of Columbus when the city was captured by the Federals. By pushing hard he was able to reach Macon safely a day before the arrival of the Yankees but it took more than a month for him to obtain a pass and a horse for the trip home.

On July 7th 1865 Lazarus wrote to his brother-in-law, Jacob. He described the "last battle" lost in Columbus and

Otterberg September 19/63

Dear Uncle Emanuel (Straus)

It has been my intention for some time past to write you, but concluded the delay on account of expected letters which contained some matters concerning which I intended to ask you some advice. I left home, Columbus Georgia, on the 20th June & left Charleston South Carolina, one of our harbor towns in the vicinity of the blockade, through the blockade of the United States, then when much I should that you are aware what business is conducted with a ship from here, that I should not attempt a modest one, but a one of no matter of some importance and would not it, which I will endeavor to explain to you in as short a manner as possible. The war in which the South has been engaged within the last three years has called into requisition from time to time all the resources within her command, men were called out from 18 to 35 & I approached the age faster than circumstances looked favorable. This made the climate a little too hot & I began to look around for a cooler Spot. A company was made up in our city for the purpose of purchasing Ships, wherein to run cotton out, & merchandise into our country. The company was made up in the following manner; different parties Subscribed as many bales cotton as each one thought he could Stand until the amount of 8 thousand Bales were Subscribed. An agent was appointed to go to Europe, & try to negotiate a loan with this cotton as Side Security. This agent appointed me as his assistant with the understanding that I were to pay my own expenses & if he Succeeded in negotiating then I were to purchase the merchandise wherein the Ships were to be loaded. Father was very anxious for me to accept of this position, as it was one of the few chances which men offered wherewith I could So honorably bid farewell to our once happy but now almost miserable country."

"Uncle Emanuel" letter, the first few lines clarified.

the "robberies, fires and killings" to which they were witness. After General Wilson burned Columbus Lazarus decided to move his family to Philadelphia, a journey of 8 days. They immediately set out to let Isidor know where they were so that he could plan his return to the United States; to Philadelphia and not to return to Columbus. He had written to Isidor personally but he was unsure whether the mail will be delivered or if Isidor would receive it. He told Jacob it is his wish for Isidor to come home "if he doesn't miss anything in business." and not return to Liverpool or London. Mail was sent by steamer. During the war delivery was unreliable. Lazarus and Isidor often sent as many as six letters in a single day by differing routes to try to insure the delivery of at least one. Isidor complained of not receiving mail for four months at a time. In his letter of July 17th, 1865 Lazarus wrote to his mother-in-law, "It is already 4 1/2 years that we were separated from the outside world so it must be assumed that from the many letters we sent perhaps a few or none did arrive."

In this letter Lazarus again tells of their move to Philadelphia, their escape from the "great war tumult" and his desire to have Isidor return home. He describes Isidor as "an able young man" who must give much pleasure to his grandparents whom he has visited while in Europe. "Nathan is very valuable to me in business, only he does not have much patience to learn much, but I want Oscar to go through all schools since he enjoys learning." The rest of this letter reiterates what he has learned about the health and status of various family members in Germany. Hermine has a ten month old baby boy named Lee "who would make the great grandparents very happy". He writes that business is wonderful. "Dear Uncle, there is great business

to be done here with coal oil, fuel oil." He proposes learning more about the business from Hirsch of Mannheim. On September 12th 1865 Lazarus wrote to his uncle that the coal oil business does not seem to be profitable after all. This letter is unusual in that half is written by Isidor, (who has returned from Europe) in Old German, and the other half, written by Lazarus, is in Yiddish. (You might find it interesting to learn that Yiddish, when written, has no vowels.) Lazarus wrote, "I shall feel happy if I could make a start in some desirable business. It is hard to get hold of the right thing."

The family moved to New York on the advice of Isidor who bought his mother a high stoop, three story house at 220 West Forty Ninth Street with the \$10,000 in gold he earned from selling Confederate bonds in Europe. The family lived there for eighteen years. Lazarus disposed of his remaining cotton in order to begin repaying his debts to suppliers incurred before and during the war. Oscar remembered Lazarus saying, "I propose to pay my debts in full and leave my children a good name even if I should leave them nothing else." In his letters Lazarus tells his relatives he will be calmer and more satisfied as soon as he has a going business.

After the Civil War suppliers of merchandise to antebellum accounts remained largely unpaid. The owner of Cauldwell's crockery firm was impressed with Lazarus's integrity after his insistence on paying off his debt. He eventually offered to sell Lazarus the business. He told Lazarus an honest income could be earned in this business but not to expect to become rich. Lazarus arranged to obtain a three year lease on a store, basement and top loft on Chambers Street in New York for \$3,000 a year with Cauldwell's support. In 1866 L. Straus & Son opened for business. The first year's business grossed \$60,000. When Nathan completed his studies he joined his father and brother in business. He was their outside salesman. One of his accounts was R. H. Macy's where he induced Macy to allow him to open a 25' X 100' crockery concession in the basement.

Lazarus was determined to provide every opportunity for education to Oscar who showed the most interest and aptitude. Once the family moved to New York Oscar attended Columbia Grammar School and Columbia College where he received the honorary degree of LL.D., and Columbia Law School. Oscar never joined the family's merchandising business which he felt was devoting one's life to mere money-making. However, in his letters to Isidor when he was the Minister to Konstantinople Oscar clearly showed his understanding of the European markets and products and made suggestions about merchandising trends. He enjoyed a distinguished legal and political career which brought great honor to himself and the family.

Lazarus's letter to his family in Germany, dated September 12th 1865, gives evidence of Lazarus and Sara's deep religious conviction through their many expressions of love and good wishes, New Years greetings (Rosh Hashanah) and wishes for threefold blessings. He expressed his and Sara's fondest desire to visit "our beloved homeland so that I can embrace you - for which I have been working and striving for long years." As far as we know Lazarus and Sara never returned to Germany although they expressed their desire and plans to do so in many of their letters.

Glimpses of family life can be viewed through Lazarus's letter to his in-laws dated April 5th 1871. It was just before the Passover holiday and Lazarus was rushing to send off greetings before making the 1 1/2 hour journey from his business to home. Heinrich Grunebaum and wife from Chicago and Heinrich's brother David and his wife will be joining them for the Seder. The Grunebaums are relatives of Jeanette (Johanna), wife of Isaac, mother of Lazarus. In this letter Lazarus tells his in-laws that "Isidor is very busy since many people are here now to shop. Nathan is on a trip. Hermina is close to delivery (with her second child Irene). My wife is busy with the (Passover) preparations." He continues that his wife "regrets that she cannot write. She says sometimes that she would know more to write about than me." In a letter dated March 27th 1872 he describes an affliction which strikes his wife's hand which "had improved so very much last summer in the spa that she was able to write fluently" but which returned with the winter to its old condition "so that she now can again not write and goes this summer again to the spa." Sara suffered a stroke in 1851 which left her arm partially paralyzed.

This letter also contains several instructions about land purchase to be made at an auction. Lazarus explains that he wrote to Moritz, Sara's brother, instructing him to buy meadows in Emanuel's name if they are not too expensive but not to buy the fields. He asks his mother-in-law to buy a dozen or more tablecloths and several dozen napkins and towels - "only the best" at a furnishings auction, half of which he wants to give to his brother Emanuel whose business is Helbing and Straus in San Francisco. There are further instructions about money to buy goods to be distributed or withheld from family members.

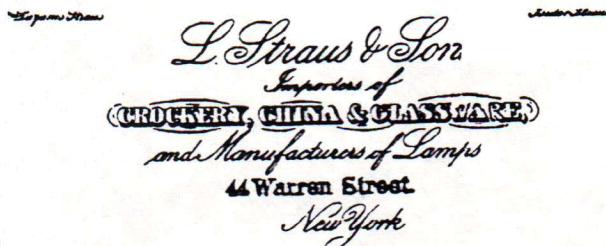
In his autobiography Isidor wrote, "On reaching New York I called on Mr Nathan Blun, as I had, when I left Columbus, taken a letter of introduction to him from his daughter, Mrs Frank Rothschild, who is a friend of our family and a close neighbor." The date was December, 1864. Mrs. Frank Rothschild was Ida Blun's sister. Obviously the families had known each other for quite some time. Lazarus wrote to his in-laws on April 28th 1871 to announce the engagement of Isidor to Ida, the daughter of Nathan Blun "who used to live in Worms." He feels that the match-up is an outstanding one in every respect and

describes his wife as "so beside herself with joy that she is not even capable of writing her own name." Ida's birth certificate lists her name as Rosalie Ida Blun.



On September 29, 1871 Lazarus and Sara wrote to Sara's parents. Sara asked if they still fast for the entire day on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. She explained that Lazarus and her children fast the entire day but she has fasted only half a day for the past two years. She continued to explain that she is much stronger, "like many years ago" and that if visiting them were only a land journey no amount of trouble or money would hold her back. She asked about the health and activities of her siblings and sent "greetings to my sisters and brothers and you my dearest are greeted thousand times from your heartily and eternally loving daughter." Lazarus told them he is very busy with many foreign buyers. He asked for the bill for the gravestone of his late mother which he wanted to pay. He expressed his faith in the decisions of his brother-in-law Moritz and said, "What he does is in mine and brother Emmanuel's name commanded as well."

As of March 1872 Isidor was living with his father-in-law. Nathan had gone to Chicago and started a business there after the "big fire." "Oscar will soon make his examination as barrister." Hermine's husband, Lazarus Kohns, is also in business with the Strauses. At that time the family was doing business under the name L. Straus and Son, Importers of Crockery, China & Glassware, and Manufacturers of Lamps, 44 Warren Street, New York. In their letters Lazarus and Sara express their desire to journey to Germany in 1874 to visit the family, a journey they never made.



On May 7th 1887 Lazarus wrote to a "worthy and honorable friend, Franz S. Frenkel". He described his pleasure at the many letters he has received in America as well as from Europe since Oscar has been appointed Minister to Konstantinople. He explained that the most astonishing thing is that "even the Konfidant himself expressed greatest satisfaction to his appointment; he was highly recommended by all ranks (classes) and namely by the clergy of all confessions (religions) and he himself never seeks the position, he never thought of it..." (I will write about Oscar's appointment as Minister to Konstantinople and include excerpts from his letters home in the next issue of the newsletter.) Lazarus wrote in this letter; "My oldest son is a very respected citizen here, who holds many honorary positions for the city. My second son has his pleasure with racehorses, which brings him in contact with honorable men." At 78 years old Lazarus was going to business daily and finding much pleasure from work and family.

One further letter from Lazarus in this collection was written in English. It is dated September 4th, 1868 and is addressed to Cousin Baum. It expresses thanks for the three gallons of fine whiskey but regrets that the Demijohn was broken. Lazarus sends regards to Baum's beloved wife and family.

We learn quite a bit more about Lazarus from the letters Isidor has written to his family while in Europe during the Civil War. Isidor continually asked for guidance and advice from his father. Since the mail was never sure of getting through Isidor found himself without parental counsel. Each letter, of which there are many, begs his father to send him instructions and funds with which to trade in bonds. As time passed without answer to his letters Isidor became more sure of himself and began acting on his own. While continually expressing his frustration at the lack of mail from home, it is apparent how much respect Isidor holds for his father's opinion. By the end of the war, Isidor has become a man, acting with assurance and beginning to give his father financial advice.

In the next issue of the newsletter I will write in more detail about the letters from Isidor during the Civil War and about the family's early entry into merchandising with the formation of L. Straus and Son in New York and the establishment of a glassware concession at R. H. Macy's. I will also include information about Hermine, Nathan and Oscar. Much of what we know about the family before and during the Civil War comes from the material found in the Macy's archives, mostly relating to Lazarus, Isidor, and the early history of their business. As the oldest child and a prodigious letter writer Isidor has left behind a valuable family legacy. What is known about his siblings is less complete, but well worth the telling. Look for their story in the next issue of the newsletter.

FAMILY STORIES

Submitted by Edward Kuhn Straus



This illustration from an old German book published in 1676 is one of Edward's prized possessions. His wife has transposed this picture into needlepoint. The ostrich, in needlepoint, is framed and hanging in their apartment foyer.

Submitted by Edward Kuhn Straus

"My favorite 'S' story of my own composing"

A Fable with a moral: Once upon a time a man called Rowland H. Macy leased the basement of his store on 14th Street and Sixth Avenue to a German immigrant who conducted a china & glass business. In a fairly short time, the latter owned the whole building. R.H. Macy died.

Moral: Never rent your basement to a Straus - (with one "S").

Displayed in Irving Straus's apartment is a photograph of a young Irving with Albert Einstein. Anna Straus, Irving's wife, explained that Einstein is promising to teach Irving the Theory of Relativity if Irving will teach Einstein how to play the piano.

Submitted by Barnard Sachs Straus Sr

The year was 1928. I was nine years old and my brother Irving was seven. We spent summers with Aunt Sissie and Uncle Irving Lehman at their estate in Portchester, New York. Aunt Sissie was my father Nathan's sister. A frequent visitor and close family friend was Albert Einstein. I recall that when my brother Irving needed help with his second grade arithmetic homework Aunt Sissie said, "Herr Professor will help you." But when Einstein tried to help he absolutely could not and Aunt Sissie said that it was "too complicated for Herr Professor". I could never understand why the father of the Theory of Relativity couldn't help with some simple math.



RED-LETTER DAY IN UNITED STATES FISCAL HISTORY - *The United States Ambassador to France, Mr Jesse Isidor Straus, former President of Macy's, settles the French Debt on a 6%-less-for-cash basis.*

Submitted by Barnard Sachs Straus Sr

I studied violin for many years at the Mannes Music School in New York and upon entering Harvard in 1937 became Concertmaster of the Harvard University Orchestra. We rehearsed Mozart's Haffner Symphony all year and our reward was having Leonard Bernstein conduct the orchestra for the big concert in Sanders Theatre. At the rehearsal the night before the concert and about ten bars into the music Maestro Bernstein dropped his baton, put both hands up over his ears and said, "I don't believe what I'm hearing" - much to our dismay. However, we got through the rehearsal and concert with flying colors. Years later when I saw Lennie at a social gathering he asked if I was still playing my fiddle. I said, "Not much - but how kind of you to remember." He said, "How could I possibly forget!"

Sarah Lavanburg Straus, the widow of Oscar S. Straus, was a very modern woman. She was interested in the Museum of Natural History and, at an advanced age, went on safari in Africa to record bird sounds. Ned (Edward) Schafer, who was a photographer for Pathe News, and his wife Mildred Straus Schafer also travelled to Africa on safari.

Oscar Salomon Straus lived in Purchase New York. He raised canaries. Roger Williams Straus remembers his grandfather's dining room being filled with birds flying all around. One would sit on Oscar's shoulder while he ate breakfast. One night their manservant stayed up all night with a canary that was having difficulty laying an egg. Roger remembers the butler giving it brandy. (He doesn't know if that helped.)



ROBERT KENNETH STRAUS

A photograph of Robert K. Straus appears on the cover of the April 1993 issue of *Diabetes Forecast*, A Publication of the American Diabetes Association, Inc. The issue's lead article is about Bob. A photograph of Bob and his wife Barbara accompany the article.

Oscar was one of two Republicans in the family, the other being Herbert Nathan Straus, son of Isidor and Ida. Oscar was the first Jew to hold ministerial rank. Constantinople was chosen for his posting because it wasn't a Christian country. He was also the first Jew to be appointed to the Cabinet, as Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Theodore Roosevelt.

William L. Wilson was Postmaster General of the United States during the 1890's. He and Isidor were friends and political allies when Isidor served in the House of Representatives in 1894. Postmaster General Wilson gave Herbert Straus, one of Isidor's sons, a ring with the Herbert family crest on it. (Mrs Wilson's family was related to a Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke.) Herbert Straus had three sons, Edward, Oliver and John. Herbert gave

MEMORIAL TO JACK DAMLOS

Jack Damlos, Senior Production Manager, Special Productions Department of Macy's and a good friend to the Straus family, died on April 7, 1993. It was with Jack's active support and cooperation that we were able to gain access to the material housed in the Macy's archives and to achieve it's eventual release to The New York Public Library. I wish to note his passing and acknowledge his contribution to The Straus Family Project.

the original ring to John, the youngest, because the youngest usually got last and the least. Oliver and Edward received copies with their birth dates inscribed on the inside. Edward remembers receiving his on his 21st birthday. The date was inscribed December 12th, instead of November 12th, his birth date. Herbert offered to have this fixed but Edward decided to leave it that way as a reminder of his father's forgetfulness. Edward continues to wear his ring to this day.

Jesse, Robert K. Straus's father, had a collection of stamps from 1893, the year he graduated Harvard. They were given to Isidor, Jesse's father, by Postmaster General Wilson.

One of the documents found in the Macy's archives was a Master's thesis written by Saul Viener; The Political Career of Isidor Straus. In his thesis Mr Viener describes the friendship between Isidor and Postmaster General Wilson. Mr Viener is one of the founders of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

I have been invited to speak at the next conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society to be held in Atlanta November 5th, 6th, and 7th. One session of this conference is tentatively entitled, "Department Store Families". My presentation will be "The Georgia Roots of the Straus Family". You are all invited to attend. Please contact me for more specific information or if you wish to make a presentation.

MACY'S ARCHIVES

The following paintings, framed photographs and miscellaneous items remain in the archives at Macys. These items are available to the family. If you are interested in owning any of them please let me know. If they are not claimed by a family member they will remain in the archives as part of Macy's collection.

Isidor - a painting - lower right corner, Pach Bros, NY - gilt frame, glass, approximately 36"X30"

Isidor - a painting - framed, no glass, oils partially crazed, approximately 36"X48"

Ida - a painting - gilt frame, glass (frame matches that of the painting of Isidor), approximately 36"X30"

Percy - a photograph - Time Magazine Cover, October 16, 1933 - framed, glass, approximately 36"X20"

Jesse - a photograph - pose is seated at a desk with stacks of business papers - framed, glass, approximately 31"X17"

Jack - a photograph - framed, glass, approximately 31"X17"

Jack's office - a diorama - wood box with glass panes, 16 1/2"X20 1/2"X29"

Oversized tennis racquet