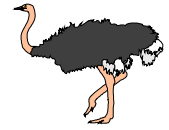


STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 11 Number 2

Newsletter

February 2010

"Driftwood" - The Field/Siegel/Straus Estate Orienta Point, Mamaroneck, NY

For almost twenty years my work has included researching and writing about the history of the Straus family. For almost all of that time I've made an incorrect assumption, that "Driftwood" in Mamaroneck, NY was the country home of Nathan and Lina Straus in the 1890's when Nathan Straus first realized that, if a cow had tuberculosis, the milk of the cow must also be contaminated. I'd always assumed Nathan and Lina Straus owned "Driftwood" when he began his work with pasteurization.

A writing project unrelated to the articles I write for the newsletter made me wonder when Nathan bought "Driftwood." It was 1914. In 1892 he opened the first pasteurized milk laboratory. From that point on he began his crusade to bring safe, disease-free milk to the children of the world. Therefore, he could not have been living at "Driftwood" when he started this endeavor.

In the early 1890's Nathan and Lina owned a house with a very large parcel of land at Lower Saranac Lake in Franklin County, NY. His brother and sister-in-law, Isidor and Ida, owned an adjacent house. When Nathan and Lina's son Jerome died in February 1893, they did not want to return to Lower Saranac Lake, the place where they had so many happy family memories. By 1897 they'd moved their summer home to Villa Olympia, Cherry Island in the Thousand Islands, NY. I now believe that it was during the time Nathan Straus owned the house in Lower Saranac Lake in the early 1890's when he realized that diseases could be transmitted from a diseased cow to its milk and then to children. Perhaps this is where he had the tubercular cow that died.

My quest began with an investigation into the history of "Driftwood." And now, after realizing the error in my

earlier thinking about when Nathan and Lina lived there, I will resume that story.

Last fall I was invited to visit "Driftwood." Eugene and Emily Grant are owners of part of the parcel that once belonged to Nathan and Lina Straus. Although the high stone wall fronting on Orienta Avenue in Mamaroneck is still there, the house that Nathan and Lina once owned is no longer standing. In fact, Eugene and Emily Grant built the house they are living in today. The property they own

does not include all of the land bordered by the stone wall. The existing stone wall may demarcate only part of the former Straus estate. One can still see a bas relief section running along the top of the wall with the word "Driftwood" visible.

When I visited with Emily Grant last fall she took me on a tour of her lovely home and property.

She told me what she knew of the history of "Driftwood."

The property is bordered by Orienta Avenue on the north and by the Long Island Sound on the south. The Sound is the body of water that separates Long Island from Westchester County and Connecticut. Mamaroneck is in Westchester County and on the northern side of the Sound. Emily explained that many of the families that lived in the area during the time the Strauses lived there, and even before then, had long piers that jugged out into the water. People who worked in New York City could motorboat or



*"History it can be said, lives in the details
which are universally valid."*

*Moshe Davis
Immigrants to Freedom*

Straus Historical Society, Inc.
Newsletter (ISSN 1536-9188)
is published semi-annually

by the

**Straus Historical
Society, Inc**

Post Office Box 416
Smithtown, NY 11787-0416
631-265-0383
631-724-4487 (fax)
info@straushistoricalsociety.org
http://
www.straushistoricalsociety.org

**SHS Board of Directors
Executive Committee**

Paul A. Kurzman, Chair
Barbie Gurgan, Vice Chair
Mark Altschuler, Secretary
Lawrence A. Kahn, Treasurer

Board Members

Al Berr
Michael H. Buckner
Richard B. Gerstman
M. Brett Gladstone
George Gurgan
Manfred (Fred) Moses
Jack Grier Schafer
Barnard Sachs Straus, Jr.

Executive Director

Joan Adler

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

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

© 2010, Straus Historical Society, Inc.

**Mission Statement of the
Straus Historical Society, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) organization**

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. (Society) has as its principal purpose, the fostering of educational activities with respect to the settlement of Jews in the United States, and in particular, the family of Lazarus and Sara Straus, their ancestors and their descendants.

In carrying out its educational activities, the Society will conduct research and exchange information with individuals and organizations having an interest in the settlement of Jews in the United States. In addition, the Society will disseminate the results of its research in the form of newsletters and reports.

The focus of the Society's activities on the Straus Family is based on the family's involvement in government, commerce, and philanthropy. Beginning in the 19th Century and continuing into the 20th, members of the family have served in governmental positions at the federal and local levels. More particularly, family members have served in the House of Representatives, as Ambassadors, and as Presidential Cabinet Members. By virtue of their positions, as well as a consequence of their acting as advisors and confidants to a number of American Presidents, family members have been actively involved in the formulation of American public policy for well over 100 years. Furthermore, in the context of American finance and commerce, family members were the owners of Macy's for nearly 100 years. In addition to their participation in the commercial development of the City of New York and America in general, family members have been in a position to assist others less fortunate throughout this period of time. Members of the family have served on the boards of innumerable philanthropic organizations. As a consequence of the family's involvement in this broad spectrum of American life, the family exemplifies and brings to life the true American story and its spirit. Thus, it is not so much the story of one family that is sought to be told, but rather the American experience as seen through and lived by a family during this period of growth of America.

Information will be disseminated by the Society through mailings of newsletters that it will produce, participation in educational seminars as well as through presentations at schools and public fora. In addition, the Society will make available to researchers, authors, and students, materials that will assist them in their research not only of

sail to their country homes, docking at their own piers. When they entertained it was commonplace for their guests to arrive by boat or yacht. One can still imagine these large boats docking at a pier along the rocky shoreline and guests being escorted to the house by carts or carriages. Emily also commented on the horseshoe crabs one finds along the shore. She's collected several of the animal's shells and has them displayed outside her home.

Ann Straus Gertler, Nathan and Lina's granddaughter, spent the fall and spring at "Driftwood" during her early years. Her two older brothers were in school in New York City. Ann's parents, Hugh Grant and Flora Stieglitz Straus, were worried about their young daughter contracting polio if she stayed in the city. And so Ann and a nurse stayed in the country with Nathan and Lina. She recalls the sandy beach on Long Island Sound where she learned to swim. Today that beach is completely covered with small stones with sand underneath. She also recalls the long ramp down to the pier that jutted out into the water. There the Strauses kept motor boats that Ann learned to drive during her many visits to "Driftwood."

Emily Grant told me she had a letter from the great grandson of Henry Siegel. Siegel owned "Driftwood" during the 1890's until the Strauses bought it

The Honorable William Cavendish, the great grandson of Henry Siegel visited "Driftwood" in 2002, unannounced, hoping for a glimpse of the house and property. No one was home at the time and he was unable to learn much. Cavendish shared a taxi ride back to the train station with a neighbor of the Grants. He asked if he could write to the Grants. The neighbor agreed to deliver his letter. Emily Grant gave me a copy of William Cavendish's letter and permission to write to him.

I was interested in the early history of the estate and what life was like during those years. From his rapid response to my letter, it was clear that William Cavendish was also interested in "Driftwood." He commented that his ancestors rode a carriage to the train station for the short ride back to New York City. On the day I visited, Emily Grant was just returning home after dropping her husband at the train station for his ride back to his office in the city. Cavendish had taken a taxi back to the station in order to catch the train. His ancestors took their carriage for the same purpose. Aside from the mode of trans-

portation, not much has changed.

When William Cavendish and I began writing, I was hoping to learn more about "Driftwood" from him. I had no idea how much the Siegel and Straus families had in common.

William Cavendish's great grandfather was Henry Siegel, a German Jew who was born in Baden in 1860. Henry immigrated to Washington DC in 1875 and then to Pennsylvania and finally settled in Chicago in the 1880's where he opened a state-of-the-art department store, Siegel-Cooper & Company with partner Frank J. Cooper. William Cavendish wrote, "He moved to New York in the 1890's to open what must have been the largest department store in the world, larger than Macy's or Wanamakers. Siegel-Cooper was located on Sixth Avenue and encompassed the whole block between 18th and



Driftwood owner- Henry Siegel

19th Streets. The expression 'meet you at the soda fountain at Siegel-Cooper' was familiar to the ears of New Yorkers." A *New York Times* article from August 16, 1896 explained that Siegel-Cooper & Co. would sell "Dry Goods, Animals, Provisions, and a Great Variety of Other Things – A Grammar School, Sick Rooms, and Two Banks for the Help – One Floor to be a Canning Factory."

In 1901, when the Strauses were getting ready to move R. H. Macy's & Company from 14th Street and Sixth Avenue to 34th Street and Herald Square, Henry Siegel leased the Sixth Avenue property where R. H. Macy's was located.

Henry and Julia Rosenbaum Siegel's daughter Julia was born in Chicago in 1886. William Cavendish believes that Henry Siegel's family bought "Driftwood" about 1898. Siegel's wife died there in the 1890's leaving her husband with a young daughter. He then married Marie Vaughn Wilde.

I found a *New York Times* ad from March 27, 1898 offering the sale or lease of the residence of the late David Dudley Field, the owner of this property before Henry Siegel, "On the Sound at Orienta, Mamaroneck. Offered were, "nine acres of excellent land, including lawn. Abundant shade and fruit trees and also six acres of land under water (including an island). Four hundred and forty-eight feet of frontage on the water. Stable – 5 stalls – plenty of carriage room. Gardener's cottage – 6 rooms. All build-

ings connected with sewer which enters at low water mark.” Henry Siegel must have bought “Driftwood” in 1898 from the David Dudley Field estate. Since the name “Driftwood” is not mentioned in the ad, nor was I able to find reference to it before Siegel’s ownership, it’s possible that he was the first to use this name.

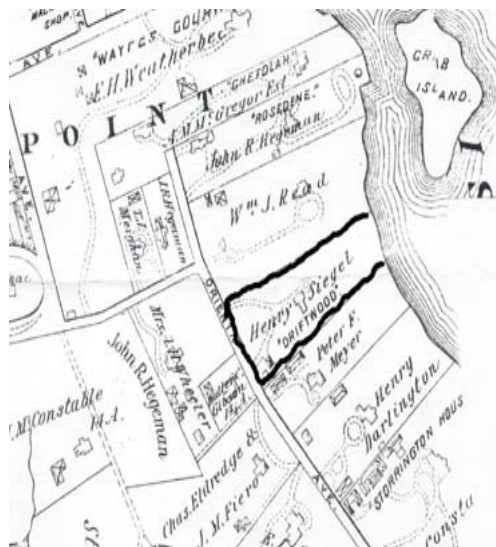
A 1901 ball held at “Driftwood” was described in an article in the *New York Times*, “In addition to the large house party that has been staying at Driftwood for some time, a special train from New York took a large number. A number of yachts belonging to guests lay off shore in the Sound prior to the ball, ... found the spacious grounds stretching down to the Sound on one hand and far back into the point on the other ... Italian gardens in the rear of the house and the Venetian bridge running to Mr. Siegel’s private island ... the entire island used ordinarily for a boat landing ... platform in a little stone Moorish structure ... entertained a party of forty for dinner ... For dancing the ballroom, the music room, and the large halls had been thrown into one. Lander’s orchestra was stationed in the library near by. ... A midnight supper was served at little tables, ... in the terraced gardens at the rear of the house.”

Henry’s daughter Julia was sent to “finish” in Europe. At a ball she met the heir to a British title, Tyrell William Cavendish. They were married within weeks over the objections of her father who thought she was too young to marry. In 1912 Julia Florence Siegel Cavendish and her husband and their two sons, then ages 2 and 4, and a maid, were scheduled to sail aboard “Titanic.” They were going to visit the boys’ grandfather, Henry Siegel, at “Driftwood.” The older boy, William’s uncle, was ill with the flu. Both boys were left in England and only their parents sailed along with Julia’s maid, Ellen “Nellie” Barber. Tyrell and Julia Cavendish occupied first class cabin C46. The Strauses were in first class cabins C55 and 57. A dining room seating chart reveals that Tyrell and Julia sat at the same table as the owners of R. H. Macy’s, Isidor and Ida Straus. William’s grandfather perished but Julia survived. Tyrell made certain that his young wife and her maid were put into lifeboat six. The maid reported that he said, “I will not leave the ship while there is a woman on board.” This is similar to reports that Isidor Straus would not get into a lifeboat with his wife while

women and children were still on board “Titanic.” Tyrell Cavendish’s body was recovered by the ship MacKay Bennett as was Isidor Straus’ body. Ida’s maid Ellen Bird survived after the Strauses insisted she enter lifeboat eight.

William Cavendish’s father and uncle, the two boys left behind in 1912, were brought to “Driftwood” in 1913 to visit their grandfather. When he wrote his first letter to me in December 2009, William commented on stories his father Henry Siegel Cavendish told him about “Driftwood.” His father remembered the removable jetty that was “there in season when guests arrived for balls and parties by yacht and motor.” Henry also remembers the horseshoe crabs which he always associated with “Driftwood.”

William believes that Nathan Straus would have known Henry Siegel because both were New York merchants, German Jews and the family of people who had been aboard “Titanic.” We know that both men were members of the Buyers Association of America in 1900. They probably moved in the same business and social circles. Nathan and Lina might even have attended parties at “Driftwood” while Henry Siegel owned it.



1901 Map showing "Driftwood" in dark outline

In 1914 Henry Siegel’s fortunes changed dramatically. He declared bankruptcy. A *New York Times* article from April 8, 1914 stated, “The estate, which was once the home of David Dudley Field, was bought by Henry Siegel for \$50,000 It embraces fifteen acres, and the house contains thirty rooms, including a ballroom and conservatories. There are also a cottage, garage, bath houses, and yacht pier, fine big lawns, groves, and decorative fountains. Mrs. Siegel formerly kept horses there for the Horse Show.” On April 14, 1914 a *Larchmont Times* article stated, “The large, handsome residence and grounds of Henry Siegel, at Orienta Point, have been purchased by Nathan Straus, New York City, who paid \$125,000 for it.” The *New York Times* article reported that the property was bought by Nathan Straus Jr. whose office was in the Puck Building. This will be another avenue to investigate, whether Nathan Straus Jr. bought “Driftwood” for his parents or if the *Times* report was incorrect and the property was bought by his father.

After Nathan and Lina died, in 1930 and 1931 respectively, the house and property were sold. An auction notice in the *New York Times* on October 13, 1935 stated, "Magnificent Antiques & Modern Furniture and Works of Art ... Orienta Point (Driftwood) Mamaroneck, N.Y. Known as the Nathan Straus Estate ..."

I started out trying to learn more about the family that owned "Driftwood" before Nathan and Lina. But, as usually happens, the facts become so compelling that I want to know about much more. In this case I wanted to learn whatever was available about the property, the house and its owners. I want to know when the property was first developed, who developed it, and what happened to the house and property after the Strauses sold it. Ann Straus Gertler told me the house and property were sold immediately after Lina and then Nathan died. William Cavendish believes that Nathan and Lina sold "Driftwood" to a convent. I am told the house burned during the time the convent owned it.

Gloria Pritts, the historian for Mamaroneck Village sent me a 1901 map showing "Driftwood" with Henry Siegel as the owner. Margaret A. Crawford, Assistant Deputy County Clerk of Westchester County sent me informa-

tion about the various real estate transactions for this particular parcel of land. It seems that the property was much larger when Henry Siegel owned it than what today encompasses the frontage with the stone wall. It's possible that Nathan Straus' property was as large as when Henry Siegel owned it. Family stories indicate that "Driftwood" was a completely self-contained farm with three or four greenhouses, vegetable gardens, animals for food and cows for milk as well as a large breeding program for guinea pigs. Nathan raised guinea pigs exclusively for scientific research for Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City. I will follow-up on the leads Ms. Crawford has provided and, perhaps, write another article if there is interest in learning more about this topic.



Nathan & Lina Straus on their 50th wedding anniversary outside "Driftwood"

I have found it fascinating to learn the many similarities between the Siegel and Straus families who both owned "Driftwood;" from their German Jewish heritage, to their mercantile history and their shared tragic family experience aboard "Titanic."

Emily Grant allowed me to have an imagined glimpse of what life might have been like for the Siegels and Strauses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when each family lived at "Driftwood" on Orienta Point in Mamaroneck.



Two Boys From England

During World War II Edgar Gordon and Niel Sebag-Montefiore were lucky. They were both sent to the United States. Edgar lived with Hugh Grant Straus and his wife Flora Stieglitz Straus. Niel and his nanny lived at Quarry Lake in Mt. Kisco, NY, the home of Hugh's brother Nathan Straus Jr. and his wife Helen Sachs Straus. I am told that many families brought British children to the United States during the war. I've only recently learned about Edgar and Niel.

Edgar is a dentist and professor of dentistry. He must have been about seven or eight years old when he arrived. He wrote, "... was fortunate to have benefitted from the Flora and Hugh Grant Straus's offer of hospitality 1940-1945." Hugh Grant Straus III sent me several photographs of the two of them playing. Hugh is the younger child. His mother remembers Edgar as a great kid. She has fond memories of him.

Niel Sebag-Montefiore was sent to the US in 1940 accompanied by a nanny. He was not yet two years old. He



Hugh Grant Straus III and Edgar Gordon

wrote, "It was not at all clear that the Germans would not invade the U.K. If they did, it was plain from the radio broadcasts on Lord Haughhaugh (a pen name) that the Jews would be treated badly ... Niel doesn't know why he was chosen but suspects it was because his name might have been mentioned as a special target by Lord Haughhaugh. He believes the contact with the Strauses must have been through his paternal grandfather Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, the managing director of Shell and a mild Zionist.

continued on page 7

Nathan Straus and the “Father of Zionism”



Rev. William Blackstone Nathan Straus, Louis Brandeis, Rabbi Stephen Wise

“Mr. Brandeis is perfectly infatuated with the work that you have done along the lines of Zionism. It would have done your heart good to have heard him assert what a valuable contribution to the cause your document is. In fact he agrees with me that you are the Father of Zionism, as your work antedates Herzl”.

Nathan Straus to William E. Blackstone, May 8, 1916

Nathan Straus changed the course of American Zionism, a story hardly known.

Rev. William E. Blackstone was a fundamentalist Christian evangelist and missionary. In 1891, Blackstone gathered 413 signatories, major American leaders, such as John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, Cyrus McCormick, Senators, Congressmen, religious leaders of all faiths, newspaper editors, the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and others, to a petition to President Harrison urging American support of Jewish restoration to Palestine. The Blackstone Memorial, as it became known, proposed an end to the terrible suffering of Jews in Russia enduring horrific anti-Semitism. The petition presaged, and eerily paralleled, the later ideas of Theodor Herzl. Herzl outlined his call for Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish State in his book, *Der Judenstaat*, 1896.

A committed philanthropist and supporter of Jewish needs, Nathan Straus had established a food kitchen in Jerusalem in 1906. Six years later, he wrote to Chaim Weizmann offering a gift of land in Jerusalem for the creation of a center of higher

learning. The center was to become Hebrew University. Nathan Straus did more than simply give money. The same year, 1912, Nathan Straus joined with Louis Brandeis, later the first Jew appointed to the United States Supreme Court, using their names to promote a hardly known organization, the Federation of American Zionists. The nationally recognized, respected names of Straus and Brandeis raised enormous credibility for the tiny Zionist cause.

World War I brought terrible atrocities to the Jews of Eastern Europe. Hundreds of thousands were forcibly relocated, starved and murdered. It was unrecognized at the time; a precursor of the Holocaust twenty five years later. Straus actively joined rescue efforts, donating huge personal sums for the benefit of the refugees, enlisting others and raising money. He used his name and leadership to help focus attention on the human crisis.

The war by 1915-1916 was a war of attrition. Millions

were being thrown into the charnel house of slaughter. The fate of the Jews in the middle was desperate. Nathan sought a way to raise American support for the Jews, to find a solution for the "Jewish problem". Early 1916, Nathan Straus directed an obscure publication to Brandeis. Brandeis was the head of the American Zionist movement. It was something that Nathan recognized Brandeis needed to see. The document that Nathan forwarded to Louis Brandeis was a copy of the Blackstone Memorial of 1891. Brandeis immediately understood the political importance of the Memorial. The Memorial was a clear, major Christian/ Jewish political affirmation of Zionism and a solution to the Jewish problem. It was the statement needed to bring to President Wilson to resolve international Jewish suffering and promote Zionism.

Researching the background, history and evaluating the political impact of the Blackstone memorial, Brandeis requested that Nathan Straus contact Rev. William E. Blackstone to reintroduce the Blackstone Memorial. Brandeis was deeply involved in his Supreme Court nomination proceedings and could not directly approach Rev. Blackstone on such a politically sensitive matter. Anti-Semitism was rising in America in 1916. It had been less than one year since Leo Frank had been lynched in Georgia. Brandeis could not make the contact, Nathan Straus could.

Rev. Blackstone immediately agreed to reintroduce the Memorial. Though in his 70's, Blackstone energetically, swiftly, obtained the support of the Baptists, Method-

ists, mainstream Christian groups and, most importantly for Brandeis, the Presbyterians. Brandeis intended to use the Blackstone Memorial as a political tool to convince President Wilson to support Zionism. President Wilson was a religious Presbyterian.

Blackstone worked closely with Brandeis and the Zionists deferring the public presentation of the Memorial to President Wilson until Brandeis felt the timing was right. Privately, Rabbi Stephen Wise presented the Memorial to President Wilson for his comment and opinion. Wilson was deeply moved. He agreed to support the Memorial and the Zionist objectives outlined in it. Brandeis waited for the right time to publically present the document with President Wilson's endorsement. The right time never came.



Instead, the American political backing that the Blackstone Memorial represented eventually permitted and convinced President Wilson to support the British Balfour Declaration of 1917. The Balfour Declaration led directly to the creation of the State of Israel.

Long since buried in history and little told, Nathan Straus' knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Blackstone Memorial shaped the course of America's support for Zionism and the future state of Israel.

Article by Jerry Klinger, President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation www.Jashp.org



Two Boys From England - continued from page 5

Niel stayed at Quarry Lake most of the time. He remembers the Strauses as warm people, especially Helen. He thought of Nathan Jr. as a grandfather-like figure. Niel ate most of his meals with them when they were at Quarry Lake and says that most of their "petrol" went for their garden equipment. He used to go to the lake to look for frogs.

By the time Niel was sent to America, the four Straus sons were grown and all were in the US military. The only son he knew was Nathan III.

Niel doesn't remember going to Washington DC where Nathan Jr. was Housing Administrator during FDR's ad-

ministration. He did go to their New York City apartment when he briefly attended preschool in the city.

When he returned to England after the war he had to be introduced to his parents. He'd he left when he was so young, and spent so much time in the US, that he didn't remember them.

Niel visited the Strauses in the 50's and 60's and last year Nathan III's son Joseph Nathan Straus and his wife Sally Goldfarb visited with him in England. He was happy to renew the acquaintance through Nathan Jr.'s grandson and has asked to be kept informed of the family's activities. We hope to see him at a future Straus event.

Dinner at Luchows, 14th Street in New York City

Paul A. Kurzman, chair of Straus Historical Society, owns a rather remarkable photograph which he was kind enough to share with us. This photograph was taken in about 1910 or 1911 and shows eighteen family members at a dinner at a restaurant I have tentatively identified as Luchows, a German-American restaurant in New York City. I've identified most of the people in the photograph by comparing them to their likeness in other photographs donated by family members. These photographs are catalogued in SHS's archives. If I have made any errors, or if you know who the two unidentified people are, please contact me.

This 11" X 17" photograph is available from SHS in sepia tones for \$40. It will be shipped in a mailing tube to prevent creasing.

If you have any old photographs of family members, please consider donating them to SHS. Alternately, you can allow me to scan the original which will then be returned to you. In this way the collection of materials about the Straus family and documentation of their lives will be enriched. An additional bonus is that you will receive a photographic restoration of damaged images.



Seated around the table beginning in the front left of the photograph are: Edith Abraham Straus, wife of Percy Selden Straus; Vivian Straus Scheftel, wife of Herbert A. Scheftel and seventh child and youngest daughter of Isidor and Ida Straus; Jesse Isidor Straus, oldest son of Isidor and Ida Straus; Therese Kuhn Straus, wife of Herbert Nathan Straus; Minnie Straus Weil, wife of Dr. Richard Weil and fifth child, second daughter of Isidor and Ida Straus; Dr. Alfred F. Hess, husband of Sara Straus Hess; Lina Gutherz Straus, wife of Nathan Straus; Isidor Straus,

oldest child; unknown woman; Percy Selden Straus, third child, third son of Isidor and Ida Straus; Sarah Lavanburg Straus, wife of Oscar S. Straus; Nathan Straus, third child, second son of Lazarus and Sara Straus; Irma Nathan Straus, wife of Jesse Isidor Straus; Sara Straus Hess, wife of Dr. Alfred F. Hess, oldest daughter and fourth child of Isidor and Ida Straus; Oscar Solomon Straus, fifth and youngest child of Lazarus and Sara Straus; Herbert Nathan Straus, sixth child and fourth son of Isidor and Ida Straus, unknown woman; Standing: Dr. Richard Weil, husband of Minnie Straus Weil.

The Shoah Project How It Can Help The Straus Family

Each summer I attend a week-long conference dealing with the subject of Jewish genealogy. The topics offered each year are innovative and informative. Several years ago a new project, The DNA Shoah Project was introduced there. Since that time I have attended a seminar about their work at each subsequent conference. I am amazed at the creativity of people as they use modern technology in new ways.

One of the founders of the company is Dr. Michael Hammer, a world renowned geneticist whose work has been at the forefront of DNA research for years. In fact, his laboratory at the University of Arizona in Tucson is the lab that did the DNA testing to prove the relationship between the Lazarus Straus and Moises Lazarus branches of the family.

The Shoah Project's mission is to use science and technology to reunite families, to identify the missing and to educate future generations. This is a nonprofit, humanitarian effort to use modern genomic technologies to reunite families torn apart by the Holocaust (Shoah). They are developing science-based curricula for teaching the Holocaust in middle school, high school and community college. Eventually, when the database has reached sufficient size, it is expected to be able to assist European governments with Holocaust-era forensic identifications.

Mindful that time is running out for Holocaust survivors, Dr. Hammer's Shoah Project, while multifaceted, is attempting to find Holocaust survivors and their descendants to participate in the project by donating a DNA sample right now. These samples will be stored in a secure facility. The privacy of each individual is assured. Then, when the remains are unearthed; sometimes because of building projects, sometimes in systematic attempts to find mass graves, and by other means, the DNA found in these remains can be compared with that of the survivors and their families. It is the hope of the project leaders that closure and comfort can be provided to those who lost loved ones but have no idea where their final resting places are.

One of the most interesting aspects of The DNA Shoah project is the educational module that will combine a science based curricula with social studies, history, art and language studies to teach youngsters about the Holocaust. As the last survivors die, and the Holocaust's immediate witnesses are gone, it will be more and more important to keep the memory of this atrocity alive through educational projects such as this one.

By now you might be wondering what this has to do with the Straus family and with SHS. If you have been reading the past issues of the SHS newsletter, you know that many people in the family stayed behind in Europe. Some were lucky enough to be saved, immigrating to the United States and elsewhere. But many others perished. Although family members have sketchy details about the final locations of their loved ones, many do not know the details of their eventual demise. However painful this might be, it is important to honor the memory of our loved ones in whatever way possible. Perhaps they were buried in a mass grave somewhere in Germany. Or killed and buried in their hometown or in a concentration camp in southern France. As the remains of more and more people are being discovered, having the means to identify these remains allows family members to mourn their loss respectfully and to finally honor them properly. And, contributing to this project provides a vehicle for the education of today's youth in a multifaceted curriculum.

If you are a survivor, lost a loved one in the Holocaust, or if you know of anyone who did, please contact The DNA Shoah Project to learn how you can contribute DNA or to make a financial contribution. If you are an educator or have contact within your local school system, please pass their contact information along to the teachers, administrators or the school board for follow up. Or if you simply find this information interesting and want to know more, please contact The DNA Shoah Project, The University of Arizona, Thomas W. Keating Bioresearch Building, P. O. Box 210240, Tucson, AZ 85721, Phone (520) 626-6203, or outside Arizona (866) 897-1150 info@dnashoah.org www.dnashoah.org



Eugenie and Guglielmo Weinberger - Lost



Manfred Moses - Saved



Kurt and Egon Maas - Saved

Straus Festival 2012

The board of directors, at their recent board meeting, approved the plans of a new Steering Committee who have taken on the responsibility for organizing Straus Festival 2012.

The festival's goals include celebrating the outstanding achievements of Isidor, Nathan and Oscar Straus and their families in the fields of commerce and labor, public and government service, immigration, education, public health and science and philanthropy. A statement about the goals of the committee reads, "To encourage present and future generations in giving of their time and talents to public and government service as illustrated and exemplified by the achievements of the three Straus brothers."

A two day event is being planned. It will be held at Straus Park on West 106th Street and Broadway in New York City. A tent will be erected at the Park for a formal sit-down dinner. At this dinner the committee expects to show a documentary film about the lives of the brothers, give out awards in the above mentioned fields and present scholarships to deserving students. An exhibit of family artifacts and photographs will be on display in the tent. There will also be entertainment and a speaker or two.

On the second day of the Festival an event at Straus Park will include music, food, art, and performances by children from the schools named for various Strauses.

For now we are looking for people who want to help plan this exciting event, Straus Festival 2012. We need your ideas and your energy. We also need people who have experience with fund raising and grant writing.

The Steering Committee meets once a month to work out the details as they organize this event. Your participation can be in person, by phone or e.mail. You can volunteer to work on one aspect of the Festival's planning or dive right in and become a fully participating member of the committee.

The Straus Historical Society needs your expertise. As part of our ongoing efforts to step up our communications and public relations, we are looking for Straus family members and their friends with expertise in Web Design, Search Engine Organization, Branding, Advertising or Public Relations.

If you have such expertise and would be willing to help, please contact Joan Adler at: info@straushistoricalsociety.org or call 631-265-0383 Together we can take the Straus Historical Society to the next level.

Titanic Museum, Pigeon Forge, TN

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. has been talking with the producers of a new museum, the Titanic Museum in Pigeon Forge, TN, about the possibility of lending them some of our artifacts for display.

There is already a Titanic Museum in Branson, MO which is owned by the same company. Family members Geoff, Colleen and Katherine Douglas visited there last summer. Colleen thought they'd done an excellent job of presenting the materials and information in a tasteful manner. She wrote to ask if she could give them our contact information. She thought SHS might be interested in working with them when they opened their new Titanic Museum in Pigeon Forge.

The new building, like the one in Branson, is a scale model of Titanic. Based on my communication with them, I believe they have made every effort to build the ship with great detail and accuracy. A First Class cabin

is being reproduced. It is one of the rooms Isidor and Ida Straus occupied on their ill fated journey.

We have agreed to participate in the grand opening event. SHS Board Chair Paul A. Kurzman and I will be on hand for the grand opening of the Titanic Museum on April 8th.

We are told there will be abundant media coverage and that Regis Philbin will be hosting the opening event.

While I have not personally seen the Branson MO Titanic Museum, my dealings with the people in charge lead me to believe they will present a first class venue. They plan to give credit and publicity to the Straus Historical Society including the addition of our website URL on their promotion materials such as boarding cards given to visitors

as they enter the museum and on the displays of our artifacts. If you visit this museum, we'd be interested in learning about your experience.



Friends of Straus Park

By Joan Adler
Photos by Joe Arbo

I inadvertently left out Margaret G. Kavanau's photo credit in the last issue of the newsletter. I apologize for the omission. Margie has been wonderful about responding to my urgent requests for photos at the last minute. She always seems to be able to handle the rush and has never left me without wonderful photographs of the events at Straus Park. Her photographs enhance the FSP page in almost every issue. For this issue we have wonderful photographs of the statue "Memory" taken by professional photographer and FSP volunteer Joe Arbo.

Both last year and this year the weather has not been very cooperative. Many of FSP's events were rained out. But the weather has not deterred FSP from making plans.

The Book and Photography Fair is one of FSP's most popular events. Luckily, September 12th, the day selected for the Fair, was beautiful and the event was a huge success. A steel drum group performed. They were rained out on June 17th. The Fair was well attended, FSP made money, and everyone who stopped by had a wonderful time.

The premier event, the 13th Annual Art in the Park, A Day-Long Celebration of Art, Music and Food was held October 10th from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. All fingers and toes were crossed that the rain date would not be necessary. It was not. Crowds of people came for the music, to taste the delicious foods, to buy from the many vendors, to see (and hopefully buy) from the artists displaying their work, and to visit the lovely Park. The vendors brought an array of interesting items to sell and entertainment was provided throughout the day. Everyone was grateful for the cool, sunny day.

FSP is an active neighborhood association that is interested in hearing from you. Landscaper/gardener John Olund takes wonderful care of the flowering plants, trees and the foliage. Help in this sphere is always welcome. It takes many people to arrange and man the booths at the events sponsored by FSP. Your input and assistance is welcome.

Please let FSP's president Kate Ford know if you would like to participate in their planning or volunteer to help at any of their events. 212-666-1439 OTCSings@aol.com or Margie Kavanau 212-866-9038 margkav@msn.com As this is an organization supported solely by donations, your contributions are always welcome.

2010 Calendar of Events

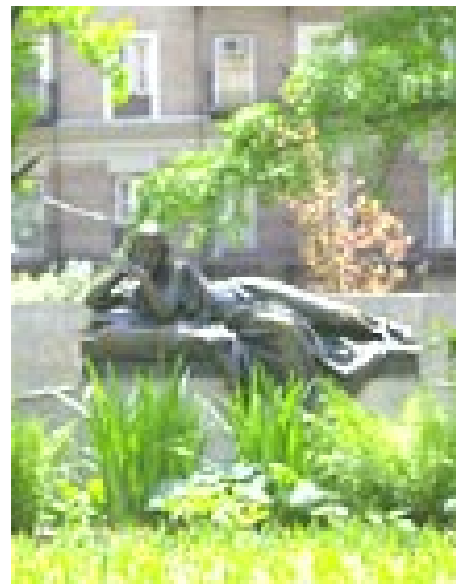
Tuesday, February 23
Annual Board Meeting/Friends of Straus Park
7:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Thursday, May 13
Evening Concert in the Park
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

Thursday, June 17
Evening Concert in the Park
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

Saturday, September 11
Book and Photography Fair
10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Saturday, October 2
(Rain date: October 3)
14th Annual Art in the Park
A day-long celebration of
art, music and food
10:00 am to 4:00 pm



Monuments, Buildings. Memorials and Library Collections Dedicated to Straus Family Members

Submitted by Marianna B. Kaufman: The Kaufman Bird Window at the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Macon, Georgia is named in honor of my parents, Gus and Marian Kaufman. It was dedicated January 19, 1997 before a crowd of 300-400 people, of whom some 200 were patrons or other donors to the Window. My parents were honored for their years of service to Macon, from civil rights to service to blind people to the Macon Little Theatre and the Boy and Girl Scouts, to the Jewish community of Macon and many, many more activities. Both parents were troop leaders in the scouts for many years, and began their lifelong interest in birdwatching this way. The Window continues to draw hundreds of visitors who watch birds in a garden established at the time by a young Boy Scout as a project for his Eagle Badge.

Gus Bernd Kaufman, who died in January 2008, was the grandson of Matilda Straus Kaufman of Columbus, GA. In late 2001 the DNA link was established between Lazarus Straus' family and the sisters Fannie and Matilda Straus who Lazarus brought over from Germany to Talbotton, GA. Fannie and Matilda are descended from Moises Lazarus. Gus and his cousin Clarise Illes spent many years conducting research, looking for the illusive paper trail to connect these two great families. It took science to find the link. We are still working to find the documents that will give us the vital records showing the relationship between the Lazarus Straus family and the Moises Lazarus family.

Errors

In the lead article of the August 2009 newsletter I stated, in the paragraph about the Isidor and Ida Straus School, Public School 198, that Sara Straus was the sister of Isidor Straus. Sara was actually the daughter of Isidor and Ida Straus.

On page 6 of the same newsletter, in the paragraph about the Nathan Straus Houses, I stated that the houses were dedicated to Nathan Straus Jr. They were dedicated to Nathan Straus (1848-1931), Nathan Jr.'s father. He was a philanthropist and served as the head of New York City's Department of Health

On page 7, paragraph 3 I wrote that Elizabeth (Liza) Straus Loop went to Milton Academy. It was her brother Jonathan Oliver Straus who attended Milton Academy.

My apologies for these errors and thank you to the family members who pointed them out.

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

DVD Slide Show of the Straus Family History Tour in Germany September 13-19, 2006 - \$20.00

DVD Video of the Straus Family History Tour in Germany September 13-19, 2006 - \$20.00

"The Autobiography of Isidor Straus" privately published by Sara Straus Hess, in softcover - \$40.00

"Genealogical Miscellany" a family genealogy compiled by Robert K. Straus with addenda - \$40.00

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

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

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

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

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

You Are Invited

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

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at the office of board member Paul A. Kurzman, 129 East 79th Street, New York at 6 PM. There is no obligation to join the board nor to contribute to the Society. This invitation is extended so that anyone interested in the SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share his/her views. Please contact Joan Adler 631-265-0383 or Paul A. Kurzman 212-452-7035 for further information.