



“wholedamfam”



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STRAUS FAMILY NEWSLETTER

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Straus-Kohns Mausoleum Salem Field Cemetery Brooklyn, NY

On September 25th, 1996, I visited Salem Field Cemetery on Jamaica Avenue in Brooklyn, NY. I believed Lazarus Straus was buried there, based on information in his obituaries, but I had little information about the death and burial of Sara. In fact, I didn't even know her date of death.

Not only was Sara Straus buried at Salem Field Cemetery, but many other Strauses are buried there too. I found a family mausoleum, the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum located in the Macpelah Section of Salem Field Cemetery. Vaults for Oscar S. Straus, Sarah L. Straus, Nathan Straus, Lina Gutherz Straus, Roger W. Straus, Gladys G. Straus, Irene Kohns Wise, Jerome Nathan Straus, Lee Kohns, Clare E. Kohns, Hermine Straus Kohns and Lazarus Kohns are in the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum. Outside, there are four stones inscribed with the names of four Straus children. Clarence Elias Straus, called Lally, was the son of Isidor and Ida. He died a few days before his second birthday on August 16, 1876. Sara Gutherz Straus was the daughter of Nathan and Lina. She was thirteen months old when she died on June 25, 1878. She was called Sissie. Clara Louisa Kohns died December 26, 1869, aged three years seven months and Flora Caroline Kohns died July 30, 1868 at four months of age.

Although it saddened me to learn that so many children had died, I was excited to learn so much new information. We didn't know about Clara and Flora, Hermine and Lazarus Kohns' two daughters. I found many new dates and facts at the Brooklyn cemetery. Errors and omissions in our database have been corrected based on this new information.

I took photographs of the interior and exterior of the mausoleum. Memorial plaques to Lazarus and Sara are affixed to the interior side walls. Beautiful stained glass windows above Lazarus and Sara's plaques depict different scenes. There is a bronze

bust of Lazarus inside the tomb and a wicker table and chair give evidence that this was a place intended for visitors and, perhaps, contemplation. Two vases are placed on the window sills above Lazarus and Sara's plaques.

This trip was an extremely important one. While some people find the idea of spending time in a cemetery unpleasant, I found both the Straus Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery and the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum in Salem Field Cemetery to be beautiful. I encourage others to visit. A written description of the mausoleum, diagrams with the placement of the crypts and photographs taken in the Brooklyn cemetery are available.



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Straus Historical Society

A meeting of the board of directors of the Straus Historical Society was held on September 25th at 7:00 P.M. in the home of Paul and Margaret Kurzman. Present were Joan Adler, Alan Hockstader, Kalen Holliday, Paul Kurzman, Gail Nutku, Barney Straus, Billy Straus, Oscar Straus III and Tom Straus.

Paul and Margaret graciously offered to serve a light supper before the meeting. This gave us a chance to get to know one another better and exchange ideas in an informal setting. The food was delicious, and Margaret certainly made its service seem effortless.

Margaret is an accomplished artist. We admired her decorating skills and particularly enjoyed the many quilts she has made which are artfully hung in their apartment. Margaret has enhanced the artistic family tree by defining the generations with Autumnal colors. Each person in the same generation has his box colored the same shade of green, yellow, orange or brown. The effect is striking. The tree has been beautifully framed. It hangs in the Kurzman's front hallway. It was certainly a stopping point for all of us. We spent quite a lot of time admiring Margaret's handiwork and tracing the relationships of people in the family. For me, it was exciting to see how much this project has been appreciated.

The following issues were discussed during the board of directors meeting:

Financial report: Rob Straus, the treasurer, was not present at this meeting, and I did not have the official treasurer's report. I gave my best estimate of what I thought would be in the treasury based on the receipt of checks and expenditures I had tracked. A more accurate and complete treasury report for the calendar year, with information supplied directly from the society's account, is on the last page of this newsletter.

Discussion of the Leo Baeck letter: The board decided to look for a repository for the large collection of material donated to the family project. We have more than 20 cubic feet of papers, and the collection is still growing. One problem is that some of the originals in this collection are now housed in the New York Public Library and, as such, the library has "ownership" of this material. It is necessary to obtain their permission before any photocopies of their material may be donated elsewhere. Another problem is that many institutions will not accept photocopied material. Our collection does contain original material

but, in many cases, the originals have been returned to the owner and only the photocopy retained.

This is the most comprehensive collection of material about the Straus family in existence and it is of interest to historical and educational institutions. The Leo Baeck Institute in New York would like to obtain our collection. It is a research institute which focuses on German Jewish history. We have been negotiating with them for the past year. They have asked for an initial donation of \$10,000 for their staff time, microfilming and storage. Bob Straus has agreed to pay this sum. However, in their most recent communication, the Leo Baeck Institute asked for an additional \$3,600 per year for the upkeep of our collection. The board agreed that these costs are high and they requested that I begin a search for another appropriate repository for the Straus family collection. I have contacted several institutions in New York City and will continue my search, looking to Harvard and Columbia next. If anyone has any other ideas about who might benefit from our collection, or if you are willing to take on this project, please let me know.

Ongoing Projects: I reported to the board that I try to communicate with the family frequently in an effort to keep people interested and informed. The board agreed that some projects of importance for the immediate future are the newsletter, continuation of our search for information about the past, the writing of tributes in the newsletter to commemorate the lives of recently deceased Strauses and taping oral histories of older members of the family. Billy Straus offered to edit the oral history tapes. Kalen Holliday offered to draft a questionnaire we can use to compile information from relatives concerning medical history, religion, education and so forth.

Contributions to the Straus Historical Society: It is agreed that each member of the board will phone members of his/her branch of the family to encourage membership in, and contributions to, the society. They will enclose a free copy of the newsletter with each follow-up invoice to pique interest in becoming a member. It was suggested that each person called be asked whether, if nominated, he/she would be willing to serve on the board.

Bylaws Modification: All present voted that the bylaws be modified to permit interim appointment of board members by the board.

The next meeting of the board of directors will be held Thursday, March 13th, at 7:00 P.M. at the home of Tom and Carol Straus in Rye NY.



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Talbotton Library

Gus Kaufman has written to let us know that a library is being erected in Talbotton, Georgia on the site of the Lazarus Straus family home. It will replace a one room store that is presently on that site. Frank Jordan, a long time friend of the Straus family, is spearheading a fund raising drive. \$13,000 is needed to reach the goal. Gus asks that, if anyone has interest in donating to this project, they contact Frank Jossey Jordan Sr. at Post Office Box 95, Talbotton GA 31827.

I visited Talbotton several years ago with Gus and Marian Kaufman and had the pleasure of meeting Frank and his lovely wife of fifty one years, "Miss" Elizabeth. Frank is a 91 year old peach farmer. He gave us several baskets of his freshly picked fruit. They were the most delicious peaches I've ever tasted.

Frank attended school at Straus-LaVert Memorial Hall for eleven years, graduating valedictorian of his class. He remembers



The original home of the Lazarus Straus family in Talbotton Georgia



Straus Home Site in Talbotton Georgia

speaking at Mercer University, his alma mater, when Nathan Jr. came to Georgia in the 1930's. Nathan was Administrator of the United States Housing Authority at the time. Frank read that speech to me during our visit. It contained high praise for the Straus family and for all their philanthropic efforts. It was obvious that Frank was proud to have known Nathan Straus and equally proud of his town, the Straus family's first American home.

Frank's brother Robert was Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court. He was the author of There Was A Land, a history

of Talbot Country. A signed copy of this interesting book is in our collection.

One of the projects facing the board of directors of the Straus Historical Society is the finding of a repository for the photocopied collection of family papers, news clippings, memorabilia, letters, awards, photographs, and books. It has been suggested that some material might be appropriately placed in Talbotton GA. If a new, modern library is erected, perhaps copies of part of our collection could be donated to it as a memorial to the family's Southern roots.

Straus Park Reconstruction Update

Plans are underway for a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate the completion of the Straus Park reconstruction project. Although specific details have not been released, the Department of Parks and Recreation has announced that the ceremony will be held on April 15, 1997. The original dedication of Straus Park occurred April 15, 1915, three years to the day after the sinking of the Titanic. More information will follow as it becomes available.



Titanic, the Musical

A Broadway musical production of "Titanic" is now in rehearsal. The actors and promotional people have been researching the event and I have been asked several questions about Isidor and Ida Straus. Did either have an accent? What were they like? What can be said about their personalities, character? It is always surprising to me to learn how many people, with such different research projects, are interested in information about the family. Now, the material in our collection has assisted in providing authenticity to a play headed for the Broadway stage.

Previews will begin previews on March 27th with opening night scheduled for April 23rd at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. "Titanic" is produced by Michael Braun, Richard Pechter and Dodger Productions. The story and book were written by Tony Award-winner Peter Stone and the play is being directed by Richard Jones, an acclaimed British opera director.

Paul A. Kurzman suggested that there might be family support for a group of Strauses to attend "Titanic." I have been talking with the press people for the production about getting a block of tickets. They seem intrigued by the idea of having members of the Straus family in their audience during the previews. I have to give them some idea how many tickets we would require. Although I do not yet have a price, it appears that we would be able to obtain a discount. Please let me know if you are interested in attending a preview of "Titanic." If there is sufficient interest, perhaps the event could include cocktails, a meal or dessert before or after the show.

The Diary of Sarah Lavanburg Straus March 18, 1887 - October 16, 1887

Mildred Hockstader Morse, great-granddaughter of Sarah Lavanburg Straus, gave me the opportunity to photocopy the diaries of Sarah and Aline Straus. It is fascinating to read about their thoughts and daily activities. I have previously published a sample of the letters Oscar wrote during his term of office in Constantinople ("wholedamfam" Vol. 2, No. 2, August 1994). We now have the opportunity to view the same time period and events through Sarah's eyes. Sarah's diary begins just before Oscar's appointment as minister to Constantinople. It covers a period of seven months.

Sarah was writing for herself. Many of her entries take the form of notes. There is a lack of punctuation and capitalization. I have kept true to her format, except when it was necessary to add punctuation or capitalization for the sake of clarity. I have done the best I could to decipher Sarah's handwriting. There are a few instances where a word or two could not be discerned. A series of three dots indicate that something is missing. Proper names are spelled as they appear, which may not be correct in all cases.

March 18, 1887: "I had not been feeling well nervous from the unsettlement of things whether we would take a long European trip or no. In other words the uncertainty of the Turkish mission which we expected might be offered to Oscar."

Sarah and Oscar went to Atlantic City on March 18th, but Oscar was called home two days later. Sarah was content to remain by herself. On March 21st, Hermina and Lazarus arrived.

March 24th: "Nothing new. I have not been feeling well. I suppose the sea air is bringing out the malaria from which I have been suffering."

March 25th: "We (Hermina and Sarah) were discussing the probability of Oscar's surprising us. I had been having headache was lying in the sofa talking to Hermina when there was a knock at the door the boy handed a telegram two very ordinary experiences but what a change in a life. It announced the appointment of Oscar as Turkish minister. A moment after Oscar came in expecting to give us a pleasant surprise, we congratulated him he wanted to know what for and when we told him, was very much pleased but not nearly so excited as I had been."

March 26th: "We have been kept busy receiving and opening telegrams and letters from our friends who all seemed very much delighted."

March 27th: "Oscar has been suffering from a severe headache all day. They always upset him awfully." Oscar and Sarah left for New York despite Oscar's headache.

March 28th: "We had a very disagreeable time. Oscar was still upstairs and visitors were pouring in from all sides. I don't know when I was so unhappy and trust I shall not have to pass such another day."

April 1st: Oscar and Sarah went to Washington on March 31st. "We called on Mrs. Cox the former minister's wife. She received us very pleasantly indeed gave me quite a good deal of information about where to settle. She was very encouraging as she liked Constantinople very much indeed. In the afternoon we walked out and in the evening Dunnell came for dinner he is very pleasant and agreeable and quite belies the first impression I had of him which was rather disagreeable. He wrote to

Lamont asking when I could see Mrs. Cleveland. The Turkish minister called. He is a young man whose father is physician to the Sultan. He is short and not very pleasant in appearance but remarkably bright & intelligent. Speaks english beautifully and promised us a hearty welcome. His name is Mavroyeni bey."

April 2nd: "We received a note saying Mrs. Cleveland would see us at 1/2 one o'clock. We sent up our cards and were received in the green room which is a very cozy home like room with the pictures of Mrs. Hays, Mrs. Tyler and one other presidents wife. Mrs. Cleveland is very sweet looking indeed. Very tall and thin her figure is rather too spare with light brown hair and bright blue eyes sweet mouth and teeth the face lights up extremely in conversation. She was remarkably cordial and apologized for keeping us waiting and asked us to see the con-

servatory but not to go if we did not wish just because we had been asked altogether treated us as if we had been personal friends."

April 4th: "Today we have an interview with Mr. Cleveland. He is more refined in appearance than one would suspect from his photographs because he is tall and carries himself well. He also was very pleasant but received us standing we did not want to detain him long as he had about 300 people waiting to shake hands with him this being his reception day. We watched for a short time and then went to the hall where we met Dave Lamont Cleveland's private secretary. A short thin red haired man and Perry Belmont a little dark man who looks awfully insignificant. The Turkish Minister called on us again and brought us letters of introduction to his father and some others of the Turkish court."

April 7th: "These two days before going on the steamer are full of excitement. I have been wanting to take a bath and have not found time all day. Presents are pouring in from all sides from a



Sarah - Five Years Old

bracelet of sapphire & diamonds to a paper cutter nothing has been neglected. It is very hard to say good bye but it must be gone through."

Oscar and Sarah took three year old Aline with them to Constantinople. Four year old Mildred was left home in the care of Grandmother Lavanburg. There is no explanation why Mildred was left behind or why Aline was taken to Constantinople. Roger had not yet been born.

April 8th: "I have been living in one excitement all day. We go on the steamer to night and poor Mama is almost heart broken as for myself I have made up my mind to one thing to try and live in the present and not to bother with the past ... I will pass over the pang of parting with baby. I do not know yet how I bore up. It is chilly and disagreeable. Aline is delighted with the electric lights thinks them stars never having been out at night before."

April 9th: "I have slept very well woke up once or twice. Saw the steamer leave and the people on the deck saying good bye. It is a most beautiful day the sun shines brightly and the harbor looks exquisitely beautiful. We lounge on our steamer chairs try to read but give up our attempt on account of the glare and wish this sort of thing would last forever. Mr. Peirin a friend of Oscar's who is on board is very anxious to see me seasick."

April 10th: "Another beautiful day a little more motion than yesterday but most delightful. They have divine service in the cabin. We do not attend but the singing of the hymns sounded delightful chiming in with the monotonous swish swish of the waves."

April 13th: After three days in heavy rolling seas, almost every one, with the exception of Sarah, was seasick. Aline was in bed and the maid had to be sent below. Even Oscar was queasy. Sarah was worried about the boat and had "three or four crying spells. This afternoon Alina (the maid) has recovered her sea legs somewhat. I thank heavens for that as she can tend to the baby while I go on deck in the rain. I feel like a different person. I have been on deck all afternoon. The officers in charge and I were the only persons on deck."

April 14th: "Today has been the worst day imaginable the waves have been washing over the deck and nobody has been able to sit on the deck. I have stationed myself on the steps of the gangway and have been very comfortable all day."

On April 17th the ship reached Liverpool. Everyone was delighted to see land again after the miserable crossing.

April 19th: "Today is our wedding day and all goes as pleasantly as possible. I thought London beautiful when we were here about 5 years ago and think so still." Oscar and Sarah were

celebrating their fifth wedding anniversary.

April 23rd: "Went to synagogue it was very strange a beautiful edifice of the moorish style of architecture the service was neither in the orthodox or reformed style I have been accustomed to. The people were quite different from our ideas of jews. The sermon was very commonplace. I followed the prayers in Hebrew."

On April 26th the family went to Paris. They took a train from London and then a boat to Bologne. All but Sarah were seasick again. Sarah's time in Paris was devoted to shopping and being fitted for dresses. She found it exhausting.

May 3rd: The Strauses had been visiting people in Paris. They went to the home of Mrs. Salmon where they "met Count and Countess Dillon very charming people. I was quite in love with her. She was so hearty & ladylike. It was the first time I have seen a lady smoke and it seems very strange. Her husband offered her a cigarette which she took as naturally as if it were a piece of chocolate. She then lit it & smoked it."

On May 10th the family left for Vienna by train. Aline became ill with a fever and croupy cough. The family remained there longer than planned to give Aline an opportunity to recover. Alina, the maid, was very helpful. Oscar was anxious to get to his post and Sarah suggested he go alone. He did not wish to leave his family. They spent their time in Vienna walking in the morning and evening and going to the theatre. They left for Constantinople on May 20th.

*Mrs. Mrs. Louis Lavanburg
request the pleasure of your company
at the wedding reception of their daughter
Sarah
and
Oscar S. Straus
Wednesday evening, April nineteenth.
from seven until eleven o'clock.
20 West 46th Street
1882*

May 21st: "... came into Bulgaria the country is very mountainous but poor the costuming all along the road is interesting some of the men wear like a long shirt with a blouse nothing else. Saw some women dressed pretty much the same with long trimming fringe like in black or red. Others in very pretty white costumes with red aprons and white head dresses."

May 23rd: On board a ship, "Got up at five to see the entrance to the Bosphorus come through the Dardanelles. I saw Asia to the left & Europe to the right of us. Beautifully green clad hills with houses & fortifications gradually castles & palaces mosques & minarets appear. The English Russian & German legations at Therapia the palaces all over. It is a sight worth coming miles to see."

May 24th: "I was pretty tired from the trip rested in the morning until it was time to go to Lady White's garden party. Mr. King went with us & here I was introduced to the whole diplomatic corps. How they did stare and take in the details of my costume."

May 27th: "We went to Selamlık. We started at 10 1/2. On the way which was dusty we ... a good many of the cavalry. They are strong looking men mounted on staunch little horses who look as if they had plenty of go in them. We went to the home reserved for the diplomats & stationed ourselves at the window to witness the visit. The house commands a magnificent view of Stainbul and Pera (the European part of Constantinople) with their houses surrounded by foliage & bel.. the Bosphorus. The distant mosques & in front of us the one in which the Sultan worships clearly defined against a pale blue sky. In the sunlight the flashing of sabres & nearer us numerous Pashas descending from carriages in full uniform ... Several Pashas & aids de camp came up & conversed. The road was strewn with fresh sand & then watered. The motley crowd clearing a central path then arose a shout or rather a loud murmur of God save the Padisha, and the Sultan driven in a magnificent carriage by a man in gorgeous uniform accompanied by Osman Pasha & one of his ministers. He was followed by about 20 aide de camp among which one an Armenian was most beautifully dressed in a white & gold costume. The call to prayers was then chanted from the minaret and a deep hush fell upon the people. From our window we could see the prostrate forms of the Turks bending first on their faces then kneeling according to the prayers which lasted almost 20 min. Then the signal being given the band played and the troops passed in review before the Sultan who was stationed at a window. The Turkish soldiers march beautifully & look as if they were good fighters. The most picturesque are the colored troops in their fantastic costumes they look very ferocious. After the review the Sultan drives himself in a phaeton followed by his aides. He came directly toward us. I could not see him on account of near sightedness but saw he was a man of medium height who stoops. After this we called on Mavroyeni Bey. I staid at home. Oscar had an appointment with the Prime Minister. During the the Sultan sent a message of welcome to Oscar."

Both Sarah and Oscar came from families with strong family ties. Their daily activities at home were bound with those of family members. In Constantinople, Sarah found herself floundering. She felt alone. Women's activities were severely restricted. She was unaccustomed to the lack of freedom. She found little to occupy her time and felt she could not turn to her husband. Oscar was busy with his work.

It is clear Sarah was finding her role as minister's wife not to her liking. Her days were spent either resting and writing letters or filled with social activities. She visited other ladies or went for short walks. Although she found some of the people interesting, Sarah had no use for their "airs" or gossiping ways. Women were not permitted to be out in public without an escort. She was unable to stray too far. Sarah and Oscar were living in the Royal Hotel as they had been unable to find a house. Oscar promised to buy Sarah a horse so that she could get some exercise. She worried that she would get sick if she didn't exercise enough. Although Sarah appeared fascinated by the unique

cultural aspects of being in Constantinople, she was bored and dissatisfied. She felt useless and unproductive.

May 28th: "In the afternoon I called on Lady White who was not home. Both she & Madam Radowitz allowed themselves airs. I shan't pay any attention to it, that's all. My position is as high. I am just as good as they are. Oscar doesn't even like me to speak of it to him but it is so."

June 5th: "I dressed just in time for the Greek minister calls he speaks only french besides his own language & they had to sit looking at each other until I came & acted as interpreter. We took a walk in the german garden which is like a maze and on our way back with the Belgium minister & daughter & son in law returned with them to receive some calls ... she overdid things a little wanted to say what she knew would please & informed me of the fact that russians had no prejudices one as good as another. I almost exploded for I had to acquiesce imagine it if you can!"



Sarah Lavanburg Straus

June 7th: "I am getting so that I hate to wake up & think of another day and nothing to do. I think I am being repaid for all the lazy wishes ever had. If I only had something to do its terribly dreary to sit within four walls or to walk out by yourself with no one to speak to & no one to interchange ideas with. Oscar really doesn't realize it & I suppose I musn't complain to him he can't help it. ... I expect a Turkish teacher & I shall begin the study of that language today."

June 11th: "In the evening we went to the Montebello's after dinner to what they call tea. They have a most beautiful house most appropriately furnished for a summer residence. These affairs are very stiff

and formal. You sit down while people come up and say good evening then move away. There is a lack of the spirit of the thing which I have been accustomed to home. And then there are so few good looking girls. Or for that matter good looking anybodies." Sarah has not embraced the social role prescribed for her.

June 12th: "Passed pleasantly I always like Sunday's because Oscar is at home & then I have someone to talk to although he generally is not very amiable wants to be let alone as he has some writing to do & then wants to rest in the afternoon. Still I feel he is there and that is a satisfaction."

June 19th: "We have just returned from looking for a garden to give a fete on the 4 of July it didn't suit but that matters little as we wouldn't be able to give one any how as Oscar has not yet been received by the Sultan. He has been put off three times after having had the appointment made rather a nuisance that especially when they wake you up in the middle of the night" to cancel the appointment. This was a common ploy of the Sultan's, to cancel several appointments before receiving a new minister.

June 22nd: "Got up at 1/2 5 o'clock to see beiram. It took place at the palace of Holme Balstu a magnificent place with they say one of the largest reception rooms in the world. We were way up in the gallery. The Sultan is seated on a throne of gold with gold embroidery covering and gold carpet. First come the officers and then the civilians. They file in one by one make a peculiarly graceful eastern reverence then place themselves in a square around the building. You can get an idea of the size by the fact that after 2000 people had been placed it still appears empty. The most interesting are the priests who are costumed as of old. The first time he raises from the ground as they bow. The next division are allowed to kiss his hand the next is ... and the last are obliged to touch the gown which is for that purpose held by Osman Pasha while they bow to him. The Sultan is a man of 45 looks older because he is very pale and stoops considerably. He looks frightened & they say he is. (He fears assassination.) Behind him are the members of his household. After the ceremony took Oscar to Pera & I returned to Therapia."

The entries for the next several weeks tell of attending and giving dinner parties. They hosted their second official dinner. Sarah seemed to be more happy with her time in Turkey. She was now fully engaged in the social scene.

On July 23rd, Oscar wrote in his letter to Isidor that they were about to secure a residence. They expected to be able to live "in as good a style as we wish for \$15,000 - which after all will be reasonable and within my durable income." This home appears to have required considerable work. It took approximately three months before Oscar and Sarah were able to move in. While Oscar conducted business, Sarah spent her days shopping for furnishings and carpets. She seemed to have been more interested in this pastime than she had been when she spent her days with the dressmakers in Paris. Sarah found the Turkish bazaars fascinating. Several of her letters, excerpts of which follow, describe her shopping sprees.

August 9th: "Madame Montebello gave a ball on the terrace which was quite the success of the season. It was a beautiful moon light night. A large raised platform was built among the trees. The long alley of grand trees was lit up until it made them appear interminable. B... draped with bright flags were arranged for the music and refreshment rooms. Bordering the terrace which overlooked the moon lit Bosphorus ... the gliding caiques chairs were placed carpets thrown about lamps on the table complete the illusion of small salons. Where couples could sit tete-a-tete."

August 10th: "I had a most delightful evening and stayed until quite late. Madame Mon is a charming hostess with a good deal of tact and quite young enough to like plenty attention herself and to know how to be attractive."

August 18th: "The Cafice's gave a magnificent ball. It was ter-
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ribly hot all day and I was quite sick. I didn't enjoy it as much as I other wise would have. Besides the Stationaire there was one of the Austrian Loyd's steamers beautifully illuminated calsium lights & leagal fire was thrown in the gardens and reflected onto the waters showing a number of caiques row boats ... and every description the crowd both inside and out is very interesting Turkish women ... to Turks and all european nationalities. A double row of soldiers lead from the deck to the house clearing the passage."

September 3rd: "Went up Mont Grand with Mrs A & Mrs Block Manther Mr Desgras & Gindliuy it was very amusing as I know Luther has been flirting with both and although Mrs A denies it one can plainly see she has been very much touched. We took cake tea & sandwiches fruit & soda water & had a pleasant time I think Mrs A got quite the best of the fight. She keeps very intimate with Mrs B in order to hear about every thing going on between them but Mrs B is quite as shrewd as she is which is saying a good deal."



Sarah Lavanburg Straus

September 8th: "The Russian gave a beautiful reception a large tent served as the drawing room where Mr & Mrs Onn's charge d'affaire received their guests. Fire works were successfully fired. It passed off pleasantly and was over at 12 o'clock. The stationaire and house were beautifully illuminated having the Cezar's cipher over the gate way and on the ship over the house the flags & God protect the Cezar written in Russian characters. I should think the Cezar required a lot of protection under existing circumstances."

September 10th: "Madame Blaire gave a beautiful ball. I staid for the kotillion what had some lovely figures but such dancing most of them look like a new style of double headed top more suited to go for a certain length of time.

Others hold themselves so as to form a complete triangle looking the mean while as if they had boards down the middle of their backs to make them hold straight. The ladies received silver bangles the gentlemen match boxes & card cases. The charm of the entertainments is the ease which with they seem given no one exerts themselves & no one is expected to do anything they are all at liberty to do what they prefer."

September 19th: "Went to L... to a synagogue it being Roshhashanuh but came too late such disorder and so different it hardly felt like being in synagogue. Had lunch & came home. Shall go to private service for Yom Kippur."

September 24th: "The Winslow's lunched & after lunch went out in caiques & walked in the french embassy garden. It seems to strike everyone how very differently we are represented from other nations. I do think things ought to be changed either have only consuls or represent properly especially here. Mrs. W. is a short rather stout woman very pleasant shrewd & clever he is tall & a typical westerner. Talks a good deal & quite interestingly. She wore a ring on all fingers and very elegant ones at that which was the only unrefined thing about her. A ring on

the 3rd finger does look out of place."

September 25th: "Oscar is quite nervous. I hope he won't be sick but of course as usual he finds fault with me. I really try my best but he usually misinterprets my acting and I am afraid finds me very unsympathetic. As for myself I feel perfectly satisfied that I could never have found anyone with whom I should have been happier but I think he thinks differently. If I complain of loneliness instead of understanding me he immediately finds fault & gets angry."

September 26th: Went walking with Aline in the morning. Say what you will it is lonely all morning I hope it will be better when I keep house I shall try to keep things straight then & enter into it with a spirit of interest. To-day is mail day I always look forward with mixed feelings of dread & pleasure on reading ones letters Dear Milly (her daughter Mildred) so far away ... I long to have you with me. I never say much about it to Oscar as he doesn't understand me and thinks a wife ought always to be smiling & agreeable otherwise it is a personal offence towards him."

September 27th: "Today is the day before Yom Kippur and home thoughts crowd upon me. We are going to the Fernandes for service and dinner. We had a nice family party & after dinner went to hear service. Through the back staircase of an unoccupied house up three flights of stairs in a large room ten men of all ages and in different costume from the European to the eastern Jewish and some in barefeet all the midst of prayer it made me think in the dim candle light of the day of persecution when they were obliged to worship in secret. Outside the glass door we sat and read the beautiful prayers which are much prettily the French prayer books then in our home ones. Thoughts of home and days spent in such a different way crowd upon me and although a vein of sadness passes through my life most is happiness."

September 28th: "... went with Aline to stay and hear service for the rest of the day. There was just then an intermission. At three the service recommenced. Aline was just as quiet and good as possible. At five the fast was broken. It was very touching the family affection displayed but especially the respect shown by grown sons and sons in law for the head of the family. They were all most kind."

September 29th: "... look after the house which is progressing very slowly."

October 1st: "Started bright & early went to the Tombs. The first thing shown you is a magnificent Plantan tree you enter several tombs some of which are beautifully tiled with inscriptions from the Koran written upon them and mostly all of a peculiarly beautiful blue. Visited a mosque from which they had a most beautiful view of the City nestled in the valley & the high mountains in the distance with lower ones on all sides. Went to the

baths which were very interesting but did not take any they are hot sulphur & Turkish baths combined. Then went to the Bazaars which are very interesting & to a silk factory. The cocoons are first placed in hot water and with the brush the ends are disentangled they are threaded into a machine which makes them into skeins of raw silk which are sold to the merchants in Bazaars & woven by hand in the homes of the women. A good many of the girls wore necklaces of gold coins which were their dowry."

October 2nd: "In the morning visited the handsomest mosque & tomb I have yet seen. It is a little gem. The whole inside of the building is tiled even the roofs of the little chapel and one can get a dim idea of how beautiful the Mosques were in their day. The outside especially the portico & window is most beautifully sculptured all along the road you can see traces of great struggles both of nature and the people. The latter are most interesting being thoroughly oriental in dress & habits very picturesque. We went to a Turkish wedding pretty. First a party of men unfurl carrying girls festooned with brightly colored

handkerchiefs. Then carriages of Turkish women in brightly variegated fringes & thin yashmaks then a closed carriage covered with India shawls and lastly the band which consists of a drum and kind of bagpipes & drones forth a monotonous monotone. We also saw a band of emeirpts with veiled women following them with straddled leg on horseback. A caravan of camels kick by a little donkey the older ones leader and the young ones following was a most thoroughly oriental sight."



A mosque in modern Turkey

October 14th: "Looked about the house which I suppose will keep me busy for

some time to come."

October 16th: "It was a lovely day and Oscar had the brilliant idea of going to Prinkips when we arrived we found a large party assembled. They are very hospitable and spent a most delightful day dear little Aline was along & enjoyed it as much. We returned after dark very tired and quite ready to go to bed. A terrible earthquake was prophesied but Thank God was a false alarm."

Oscar resigned his post in June of 1889 but was asked to resume as minister in May of 1898 by President William McKinley. A serialized version of Oscar's autobiography, Under Four Administrations, was published in *The Outlook* in 1922. Oscar wrote an account of the same period of time described in Sarah's diary and in his letters. It is fascinating to have a picture of these events from three different sources.

The next issue of the newsletter will contain entries from the diary of fifteen year old Aline Straus who again accompanied her parents when they returned to Constantinople in 1898. Mildred began the journey with them but decided to return to New York to prepare for college. Percy went to Constantinople with the family to act as Oscar's secretary.

Lazarus Bankrupt?

Dr. Hans Steinebrei of Kaiserslautern, Germany has sent me some fascinating and provocative new information regarding Lazarus Straus. For many years Bob Straus and I have been trying to learn the reason why Lazarus emigrated to America in 1852. We assumed Lazarus left Germany after the Revolution of 1848 because of his role in this cause. It had previously been suggested that Lazarus faced an indictment, a court hearing or a trial. This now appears not to be the case.

Dr. Steinebrei has been researching this question on our behalf. He has looked at the business papers of the Straus family from the 1840's and 1850's and now proposes a different explanation for Lazarus' emigration. Lazarus was bankrupt. It appears that he left Germany because he had no way to earn enough money to repay his debt.

To paraphrase Dr. Steinebrei: Lazarus' father Isaac was a money lender and cattle dealer. He died in 1838 and Lazarus, the oldest son, was made trustee of Isaac's estate. Due to the Revolution of 1848, the political and economic situation was very bad. On March 12, 1851 Lazarus' sister, Barbara (Babette), filed a complaint that her father's estate should be divided. Two lots with thirteen acres each and a house with 11 decimale (area) were contested. The first lot was given to Isaac's widow, Johanette Grunebaum, and the second to his nine surviving children. The lots could not be divided and so they were put up for public sale. The house, number 146, was bought by Isaac's widow. When the property was sold, Lazarus, as trustee of the estate, was to pay his mother 72,16 Gulden and 316,05 Gulden to each of his brothers and sisters. He did not have the money because he could not collect the "outstandings" and interest due. Complaints were made against him on May 19, 1851 and he was ordered to account to the court within four weeks for the "immouveable" properties and the accepted money. He did not appear when the time came, June 2nd. On June 14th his daughter Caroline was appointed a guardian and "it was said that he sneaked away, probably to North America." His apartment was sealed. Between 1851 and 1853 there were 54 court proceedings against him to claim the money.

Dr. Steinebrei wrote, "As a result of the investigations we would say it was no criminal act. In those bad times he couldn't get his money back to pay so much to the family members, but he gave his complains for the outstandings to a lawyer Hermann Fries (syndic). I think Lazarus lost the nerves and disappeared to go to America. The reason that he had lived in Saargemund (passeport) a short time is, that it was the way the emigrants took at that time and probably he was anxious, so he could say he emigrate from France not from Bavaria."

We recently learned from his 1852 passport, (referred to above) that Lazarus left Europe from Saargemund, not Otterberg and I had asked Dr. Steinebrei if he could learn why this was. We have not found Lazarus' name among any passenger manifests of that time. It's possible he traveled under an assumed name.

We will have to learn how this bankruptcy affected Sara and

her children. We do know that her father, Solomon, was Isaac's brother. It may be that she was able to live in his household, under Solomon's protection, until she left Germany in 1854.

We have several letters written by Lazarus in Old German to his family in Otterberg. These letters give no hint that there were bad feelings between Lazarus and his family or that he ran away from them to avoid his debt. Perhaps his immigration to America came about because Lazarus believed he could become successful here and help his family recover their losses. It would appear that Lazarus enjoyed the love and respect of his family in Otterberg.

This startling new information provided by Dr. Steinebrei casts a new light on many of the older documents in our collection. I will be having some of the business papers translated to see if there is any reference to the sale of Isaac Straus' land and house number 146. I will also be reviewing the letters written by Lazarus to see if there is anything more we can learn from them based on our new understanding. Dr. Steinebrei has promised to continue his research for us. I will keep you all informed as we learn more about the lives and business activities of these ancestors.



Alternate E.mail Address To Reach Joan

Due to the heavy demand, AOL customers are having difficulty gaining access to their e.mail accounts. If you are having difficulty reaching me on aol, I can also be reached by fax, phone or "snail" mail. I am also a subscriber to CompuServe. You can send e.mail to me at 74463.136@compuserve.com if you are concerned about my not receiving your e.mail. I try to check both addresses daily.

An Apology

Percy Solomon Straus changed his name to Percy Selden Straus. He was known by that name throughout most of his life. His son, Percy Straus Jr. was known as Percy Selden Straus Jr. I used Solomon as the middle name for both these men on the family tree. This is an error which has been corrected. I apologize for any distress this may have caused Percy's family.

A new master of the artistic family tree has been made correcting this and other errors. It is available to those who wish a new copy of their tree. It is current through January of 1997. The artist has not asked for an additional fee to make these changes and so it is only necessary to ask for \$15 to cover the cost of printing the new copy, the mailing tube and postage.

The above is an offer for those who have already purchased trees and wish to obtain the updated version. If you do not already have a tree, please send \$55 per copy for your tree. We still need to sell more than twenty copies of the tree in order to recover our initial costs.

Did You Know?

The 1860 slave schedule of Talbotton Georgia states that Lazarus Straus had thirteen mulatto slaves working for him. Clarise Illes promises to copy this page of the 1860 slave schedule for us the next time she is in Salt Lake City doing genealogical research.

A quote from an Oscar S. Straus address, May 22, 1907, reprinted in *American Spirit*, 222, "An unprejudiced study of immigration justifies me in saying that the evils are temporary and local, while the benefits are permanent and national," appears in [A Treasury of Jewish Quotations](#), edited by Joseph L. Baron. Submitted by Saul Viener of Richmond VA.

Irene Kohns, daughter of Hermine Straus Kohns, married Edmond Wise. Jesse, Percy and Herbert retained this delightful and excellent lawyer as counselor for R. H. Macy's & Co., Inc. He won two notable lawsuits to break price fixing by manufacturers. One was on book publishers and the other was on Victrola. Irene Kohns was a typical Jewish mother. She lived at Elberon, catered to the needs of her only child Ethel and plied visitors with homemade cookies. These observations were told to me by Edward K. Straus.

On May 3, 1944 Sissie Straus Lehman wrote to Corporal Hugh Grant. "I had such a happy afternoon yesterday with your Helen and your two children. Your mother brought them all in to spend an hour with me, and we had a very gay time. The children have improved wonderfully this last year. Tertius is quite a man, and the little girl is all girl -- vain about her very attractive little pinafore, and interested in dolls. They both look the picture of health ..." Tertius, who sent me this charming letter, is Hugh Grant Straus III and his sister is Leone Sue Straus.

Joan Sutton Straus, author, journalist, lifelong volunteer and wife of Oscar S. Straus II, has produced a book, [A Legacy of Caring: The Society of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center](#). Her book has been praised as a highly entertaining and informative behind-the-scenes account of The Society's fifty-year history. Kitty Carlisle Hart wrote, "Joan Sutton Straus has captured the glamor of New York's high society in their most important role - using their time, influence, and resources for the benefit of others." The book contains 312 pages and more than 150 photographs. It is available through Sloan-Kettering, 800-378-3123.

Congratulations to Robert K. Straus on the upcoming publication of his excellent article, "My Map Was Not The Territory, 1933-1996", in the Spring issue of *ETC*, a California General Semantics magazine. General Semantics has been Bob's lifelong intellectual pursuit.

The Jesse I. Straus Chair at the Harvard Business School has been reinstated after a lengthy hiatus. Mike Jensen has been appointed to fill the post. Mr. Jensen came to Santa Barbara to meet with Bob who is very enthusiastic about him. Mr. Jensen will focus his efforts on an interdisciplinary approach to education very much in line with the theories of General Semantics.

Edward Kuhn Straus 1909-1996

Edward was the first of three boys. He was born on November 12, 1909 to Herbert Nathan Straus and Therese Kuhn Straus. He had blond hair and blue eyes. A doctor was convinced Edward was an albino because of his coloring. Edward attended the Browning School and was the first member of the family to go to Milton Academy. He graduated from Harvard in 1931 with a BA in History. He attended Harvard Business School where he graduated in 1933. Edward's entire business career was spent at R. H. Macy's & Co., Inc. He served in a variety of positions including the Boys' and Mens' Wear Department and in real estate management.



Edward spent four and a half years in the Navy during World War II. During his professional years, he served on the boards of Manhattan Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital, The Children's Village, Boys Club of America and Jewish Family Service. Edward was an honorary member of the New York City Fire Department. He was involved with the reconstruction of Straus Park and attended several meetings of the Parks Department as the family's representative. He was also interested in a proposed Titanic Memorial at South Street Seaport.

Edward was married twice. Both marriages ended with the death of his spouse. He first married Catharine Monroe. They raised two children, Susan and Stephen. After Catharine's death, Edward married Kate Fraser and helped raise her daughter, Kate Fariss McNally. Kate had an extremely close relationship with Edward for more than twenty five years.

Beside his Manhattan apartment, Edward owned a home in Oyster Bay on Long Island. He once described it as his "beloved house." One of his prized possessions was a painting depicting the house and property around it. He donated the house to the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities. He wrote, "I am saddened by its loss - the place where Kate & I spent so many happy days."

I first met Edward shortly after becoming involved with the family project. He was a generous man of strong opinions. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the family project and contributed many good ideas. His was the idea to write the newsletter and to donate the original materials in our collection to the New York Public Library. He was a wealth of information, sharing many of his stories in an informal oral history.

I miss his sharp wit and insightful observations. He was one of my most staunch critics. I knew I had done well if I earned Edward's praise. And he was not stingy when offering that! Edward is buried in the Straus Family Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, NY.

Announcements

Expecting: Barnard Sachs Straus Jr. and Nancy Bercow Straus are expecting their first child in March.

Expecting: James Bradford Straus and Lisa Moulton Straus are expecting their second child in early April.

Expecting: Stephen Day Straus and Melissa Kaplan Straus are expecting their first child at the end of June.

Born: Leo Frederick Gertler to Alfred and Kathryn Gertler on November 25, 1996 in Toronto Canada. Leo joins his brother William Scott Gertler who was born November 9, 1995.

Died: Edward Kuhn Straus, on August 21st in New York after a brief illness. Edward, who was 86, leaves daughters Susan S. Voorneveld, Kate Fariss McNally Cote, son Stephen, and three grandchildren.

Congratulations to Roger W. Straus, president of Farrar, Straus & Giroux. FSG marked their 50th anniversary with a month of celebratory activities including a reception and literary readings at The New York Public Library in September. The American Institute of Graphic Arts mounted an exhibition, "Fifty Fish," and an auction of these works was held at a charity gala. During the past year, several magazines and newspapers have published articles about Roger and about Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Among them, "Literary Lion," by James Reginato, which appeared in the March 1996 issue of *W*, "Evening Hours: A Time To Applaud Creativity," and "The House That Roger Straus Built," articles published in the September 23, 1996 issue of *The New York Times*, and "Roger & Me," by Tom Wolfe which appeared in the October 1996 issue of *Vanity Fair*.

Congratulations to Carol H. Straus, wife of Thomas Percy Straus. Carol is an accomplished beaded jewelry designer. She is a partner in a cooperative venture with several other artisans, all of whom create high quality, hand-crafted items. Carol and her jewelry may be found at The Artisans' Atrium, 137-139 Purchase Street, Rye, NY, open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 to 6.

News From Geoffrey and Colleen Douglas: Geoffrey has been the Adjutant for his flying squadron this past year. He says it is not as much fun as flying airplanes but "I've sure expanded my horizons." Geoffrey and Colleen enjoyed several exciting trips including celebrating their fifth anniversary at the cabins in Red River, NM.

Geoffrey finished his Master's Degree in Aerospace Science with an emphasis on Business at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University where he earned a 4.0 grade point average. Colleen has recently completed a formal training program for Hospice and is now a fully qualified caseworker.

Geoffrey and Colleen will be moving to San Antonio in April. He has been reassigned to Randolph AFB where he will continue to fly the T-1A as an Instructor Pilot.

News From Stephen and Melissa Straus: Stephen received an MBA from Harvard Business School in May. He and Melissa moved to Austin, Texas where Stephen is working for Austin Ventures, a venture capital firm. He is working on early stage technology companies. Stephen got this job through a fellowship from the Kaufman Foundation in Kansas City from whom he gets additional training and education about the venture capital industry during his two year fellowship. He has been traveling extensively since becoming part of Austin Ventures and really enjoys his job.

Melissa is teaching third grade in Round Rock, Texas, just north of Austin. She considers herself lucky because there are only twenty one children in her class and she has the support of an excellent principal.

During last summer Stephen and Melissa traveled throughout Europe. They visited friends in Paris, the South of France, Barcelona, England and Scotland. Melissa's parents met the couple for a two week vacation in France and to help them celebrate their first anniversary.

News From Jason Campbell Sparks: Jason has been working as a computer system consultant for the last four years for LANSA, a company which develops information systems for large organizations. Although he is based in Denver, he travels all over the world. He will be in the Philippines from February through June 1997. Jason expects to return to school next year for an MBA.

News From Justin Selden Sparks: Justin just completed an MBA in international finance at Southern Methodist University. Before returning to school, he was a stock broker and is now interested in corporate finance, mergers, acquisitions and IPO's. Last summer he worked for Carrier in Mexico trying to set budgets for the coming year.

News From David and Patricia Straus: David and Patricia are on a nine month trip around the world. They have been to Africa, where they were joined by **Donald and Beth**, David's parents, for a photographic and bird watching safari. They went to Harare in Zimbabwe and then up north along the Zambezi River. They were on safari for two weeks in five different places. Early morning and late day hours were best suited to animal tracking while mid-days were spent resting and trying not over-heat. The temperature was between 115 and 120 degrees. Don reports that he and Beth returned feeling better than they had in years.

News From Sara and Marcus Byruck: Sally and Marcus and their children met David and Patricia in Egypt for a vacation during the winter break. At the same time, **Rob Straus and Sheryl Foti** and their children went to India for the Christmas break. Rob and family, by the way, are on a year long sabbatical in Paris.

David and Patricia were in Israel early in December. They expect to visit Jordan and then travel around the Middle East before leaving for the Far East. Their plans include visiting the Pacific Islands before returning home.

Thank You

To Sara Byruck for inviting Jack Schafer and me to lunch at her club, Town and Country, in San Francisco. We discussed ways to get the West Coast cousins more involved in the family project. Jack has offered to host a Spring event at his country home for those unable to come East for the family reunion. The food was great and so was the company. Congratulations and best wishes to Sara and her family on their move to their new house in Berkeley, CA.

To Paul and Margaret Kurzman for hosting the September 25th board of directors meeting. Paul and Margaret are exceptional hosts and enthusiastic supporters of the Straus Historical Society.

To Donald Straus for allowing me to tape his oral history. Don has given me a wonderful interview. His story includes glimpses into the past, with information about the lives of Don's grandparents and other relatives. Thanks also to Donald for the wonderful lunch and for his generous support of the family project and for my work.

To Melinda Schwartz for her generosity and caring. Melinda is organizing her father's papers and photographs and is sharing this valuable information with me. The information will enable me to complete her father's manuscript. Ken's book will be available sometime during the summer. If anyone is interested in receiving a copy, please let me know. We are compiling a list so that we will know how many copies to have published.

To Leon Auerbach for inviting me to join the board of Friends of Straus Park. Leon has been a moving force behind Straus Park's reconstruction project.

To all of you who have purchased the family tree, thereby, supporting the work of the Historical Society. Your comments have been helpful. My apologies to those few who have found errors in their entry. I hope they have all been corrected.

If you do not already have a tree or wish to purchase additional copies, please send your check for \$55 per copy to me. Checks should be made payable to the **Straus Historical Fund**. I have printed an updated version of the tree with corrections and new information as of January 1997. If you would like a new copy of the tree, please let me know. I will have to ask for \$15 per copy to cover the cost of reprinting, mailing tube and postage. We still need to sell about 20 copies of the tree to break even. If you know of anyone who has not yet purchased a tree, please encourage them to do so. They make great gifts. Why not buy one for a birthday or anniversary gift? What better way to remember a loved one than by giving them a piece of their history.

Questions, comments or suggestions for future articles in the newsletter may be addressed to me. This is your newsletter, written for your education and interest. Articles written by family members are encouraged. Please let me know what you would like to see in future issues. Send me your old photographs!

