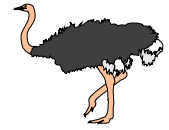


# STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 7 Number 1

Newsletter

August 2005

## *The Bijur Family*

### *Descendants of Babette (Barbara) Straus and Abraham Maas*

Part of the Society's mission is to research, archive and disseminate the history of the Straus family. The featured article in the current issue of the newsletter, an article about the Nathan I. and Eugenie Bijur family, is based on the information gleaned from our research and from interviews with family members. Materials from this research, and those contributed by the family, are now in the SHS Archives.

The Straus family originated in the German Palatinate, the southwestern region. Strauses were found in Darmstadt, Neiderkirchen, Kaiserslautern, Otterberg, Winnweiler and Neustadt. The progenitor of the family was Lazarus who was born about 1715. Two of his grandsons were brothers Isaak and Salomon Straus. Isaak was the father of Lazarus Straus. This Lazarus married Sara Straus, daughter of Isaak's brother Salomon. Salomon was married three times, fathering eleven children in all. His first wife, Johanna Weil had five children: Lazarus, Sara, Moritz, Babette (Barbara) and Phillipine. Babette (1819-1890), sister of Sara, married Abraham Maas (1815-1896). They had nine children: August, Henrietta, Bertha, Lina, Johanette, Rosa, Max, Siegmund and Jakobine. The family lived in Neustadt, Germany.

The sixth child, Rosa Maas (1852-1929), was born in Neustadt on the Hart River. She married Leopold Blum (1853-1936), pronounced Bloom. Leopold was a lawyer and he became the Consul of Neustadt. Family lore tells us that Nathan Straus



Rosa Maas Blum

helped him obtain this position. Leopold was very tall, impressive and charming according to his daughter Eugenie. Rosa was small, energetic and sharp tongued. She was the head of a household that included five daughters: Laura, Lisel (Alice), Pama (Paula), Flora Franseska (Eugenie) and Adele.

A letter written in August 4, 1923 by the American Consul, L. Blum, appears

in Dr. Hans Steinebrei's new book, *The History of the Jews of Otterberg* (See SHS newsletter, page 12). Leopold wrote to Mrs. Philipp Retting whose family owned the Straus' former house in Otterberg. This letter was translated by Frank and Sue Kahn of NJ. "Mr. Nathan Straus, a relative on my wife, sent me your letter ... Also please let me know whether there are any repairs necessary to the house and, maybe, they would sell the house to Mr. Straus under the condition that the children would be able to live there." Dr. Steinebrei wrote that the Strauses wanted to buy this house with the idea of turning one room into a museum or a memorial. Apparently, due to continuing inflation, nothing further was done.



Leopold Blum

In 1909 Nathan Straus attended a Jewish Congress in Europe. He visited his first cousin Rosa Maas and met her family and suggested bringing the 21 year old Eugenie to America. She accompanied Nathan, Lina and their son Charles (Nathan Jr.) Straus to America aboard the "Prinz Freidrich Wilhelm," from Bremen, arriving in New York October 18<sup>th</sup>. It's possible Nathan was bringing Eugenie to America to find a husband. Family members believe she thought of this trip as a "glorious adventure." They describe the Maas women as strong, feisty, independent, adventurous, full of life. Whatever the true purpose of the trip to America, Eugenie met Nathan Isaac Bijur within weeks of her

**The past is always with us.  
It behooves those who were part of it  
or remember  
to pass the experience and memories  
on to those who follow.**

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

by the

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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.

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**A Message from the Executive Director:  
Joan Adler**

Publication of the August 2005 issue marks the 12<sup>th</sup> year the newsletter has been published. This year, more than any other, has truly solidified our position as a recognized and respected member of the historical and genealogical communities.

Public response to the Straus Historical Society's website has been gratifying. We are averaging more than 3,000 "hits" per month. Several months this year we've had more than 8,000 "hits." Many people have contacted us, contributed information, or requested it, as a result of this exposure. Our message is clearly being disseminated via the Internet.

Attendance at my speaking engagements in Los Angeles, CA and Boston, MA prove that people are interested in the history of the Straus family. The response to my talks has been both enthusiastic and complimentary. Thank you to all those who have come to a talk, written to the Society with questions, sent information, or purchased materials. We've learned about people in other Straus families and are actively seeking to discover if they are related to the Lazarus Straus family. An article I wrote about the origins of the family will appear in the year-end anniversary issue of the LA Jewish Genealogical Society's newsletter.

In July I attended the annual International Jewish Genealogical Society's conference in Las Vegas, NV, a conference I've attended for the past eight years because of my ongoing interest and research into my own family's genealogy. This is the first year that my work for the Society was so obviously and universally recognized. For the first time, my personal interest took second stage to my professional endeavors.

For the remainder of 2005 and in 2006 the Society is planning to conduct oral history interviews with as many senior family members as possible. If you know of someone who would like to be interviewed, if you would like to be interviewed, be present at an interview, or to conduct an interview, please contact me.

I am convinced of the importance of getting the younger generations interested and involved in the history of the Straus family and in the Society. A suggestion was made by board member Barbie Douglas that we make donations more manageable for the younger generation. Please see the side-bar on page twelve for details.

We are working on the itinerary for the proposed Straus Historical Society sponsored trip to Otterberg and the surrounding towns in Germany in the spring or fall of 2006. Please see the side-bar on page twelve.

Anything we can do to involve as many people as possible seems like a good thing. We will continue to reach out to the community through appearances at local events. The website will be updated when new issues of the newsletters are published, at least twice a year. As time permits, more frequent updates will be added. And we will continue to move forward with our ongoing collection and dissemination of information and materials.

Please let us know what else we can do to serve you and what projects you would like to see in the future. **Let Me Hear From You.**

arrival. On January 31, 1910 Percy Straus wrote to his parents, Isidor and Ida, who were in Europe: "I suppose you have heard before this of Miss Bloom's (sic) engagement to Nathan Bijur, nephew of the lawyer, Nathan Bijur. He is a very nice fellow. I went to school with him for ten years at Sachs. I have accordingly known him for twenty-seven years. I think he is easily the most attractive of the three brothers, one of whom married Edith's cousin, Otis Marks. Financially he is very well fixed, so that even from the German point of view there is nothing to be desired." (Note: Edith is Edith Abraham, Percy's wife.)

On February 5, 1910 Percy wrote to again about the upcoming nuptials. "You have heard before this of Eugenie Blum's engagement to Nathan Bijur. They have determined on a short engagement. The wedding is to take place at Aunt Hermina's on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Bijur called me on the phone last evening and asked whether I would help him get married in so far as an usher can. Naturally I thanked him and accepted. The poor girl is in rather an unfortunate position, as we (third cousins) are the nearest relatives within reach. This, however, does not seem to affect her good spirits and general happiness. I am rather surprised that neither her father nor her mother are coming over for the event."

Nathan and Eugenie had four children: Herbert Isaac was born February 6, 1911. Daughter Jean was born March 18, 1912. William Leopold was born April 30, 1914 and Arthur Henry was born in 1918. Granddaughter Vicky told me that her grandparents were in Europe during the summer of 1913, traveling home in July. A simple calculation points to the likelihood that her father William was conceived during that journey home. Passenger manifests corroborate the timing.

Nathan and Eugenie Bijur lived on West 83<sup>rd</sup> Street in New York City in a house they bought from his sister and brother-in-law, Bertha and Solomon Salinger. They later bought their own house on West 73<sup>rd</sup> Street off Central Park West. Vicky believes they bought their large Victorian or Edwardian house in Long Branch, NJ the year they married. This house was the center of family gatherings. Vicky remembers that it had sleeping porches, huge gardens and a tennis court. It was part of a Jewish enclave with many Straus families having homes in Deal, Elberon, Long Branch and Red Bank. The Bijurs belonged to the Hollywood Country Club in Deal.

Nathan's family were from Posen. His father emigrated to America in 1852. They were in the tobacco business. Nathan enjoyed the excitement and challenge of the business world and was recognized for his expertise in the cigar tobacco business by being elected president of the National Leaf Tobacco Association for three successive terms.

When Eugenie eulogized Nathan at his memorial, she said that "Nathan was an artist from his earliest youth and became a great amateur painter. He recognized very early the genius of

the young Arshile Gorky and was not only his student but his friend and benefactor." After work every day he would go to the Art Students' League where he studied with Gorky, who was an Armenian painter of some note. Gorky left the League to set up a studio of his own and Nathan Bijur followed him. Today many family members own paintings by Arshile Gorky and Nathan donated several paintings to various museums. An article in the *Washington Post* on January 28, 1923 states, "A visit to the exhibition of 100 etchings by the Brooklyn Society of Etchers, ... is well worth while, especially if one may have the guidance of the curator, Ruel Pardee Tolman, who is a well-known etcher and painter of Washington. Mr. Tolman will point out many subtleties in the prints and introduce new names. For example, ... Nathan I. Bijur, otherwise unknown, has two very subtle little drawings, New Jersey scenes." Nathan Bijur later sponsored an annual \$25 prize for etchers in the Brooklyn society's exhibits.



Nathan and Eugenie Bijur

While doing research for this article I found that Nathan Isaac Bijur was a regular contributor to *The New York Times* Editorial Page. He had a wide variety of interests and commented on current affairs with regularity. On December 17, 1934 he wrote, "I believe that if there would be some authority who could express ... thoughts about the whole New Deal ... that the government would not go into business, was not contemplating going into business, and would immediately, or as soon as possible, withdraw from all actual business ventures - there would be such a response from business and such an impetus toward prosperity that we would immediately be on the high road to prosperity." A May 13, 1935 letter states, "Business cannot proceed if it has to await the leisurely decision of the government

at every step." April 28, 1938 he wrote, "The one outstanding evil that is doing more to hold back business and create fear is the lack of enforcement of personal and property rights." February 23, 1941: "Unless strikes stop the public will demand new codes for labor that today do not exist, Such codes are likely to include incorporation of labor unions, yearly financial reports, with detailed accounts of all outlays and salaries, and government supervision of free elections at yearly intervals." February 17, 1942: "It is time for Congress to stop playing politics." September 21, 1942: "It is admitted by every one that the United States needs more income. It cannot get enough by increasing taxes in the corporation and higher income brackets, so it is compelled to levy a tax on some broader base. A sales tax would accomplish this. ... the further advantage of a sales tax would be that it would be an immediate check on inflation." February 17, 1944: "At recent hearings in Washington the testimony of all the high Army, Navy and Government officials has been that the war would be shortened and many lives spared if war material production was speeded up. It is therefore illogical that the unions should continue to limit the speed of production during the war."

In 1939 the Bijurs sold their house on West 73<sup>rd</sup> Street and moved to Long Branch. Other Maas relatives remember walking on the boardwalk with them. They all recall the style and elegance of the couple. Family members wore their best clothes for these visits and many reported that it was like visiting royalty.

On October 10, 1969 Nathan I. Bijur wrote a brief autobiography for the Columbia University Alumni pages.

*"I was born in New York City in 1875. Columbia University accepted me as a special student because I did not know Latin or Greek. At college I was on the track team and tied for second place in the broad jump in the Intercollegiate Games. I sang in the Glee Club and illustrated for "The Spectator."*

*As a partner in a cigar leaf tobacco firm, I bought and packed Connecticut tobacco and, later, under my management, we became the largest buyer and packer in Wisconsin, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Subsequently, I was elected President of the Cigar Leaf Tobacco Association for three successive years. During my term of office I originated "Father's Day" to promote cigar sales. Several times I appeared before committees of the House and Senate, successfully.*

*Since the middle thirties, about 700 of my letters written to the New York papers have been printed in New York and in later years about 100 in the Asbury Park Press. None of them has been disputed.*

*At 37 I took up etching and within a year my etchings were accepted in the Brooklyn Society of Etchers. I gave up etching ten years later and took up oil painting at 50. My large painting of my family was accepted and exhibited in a Biennial Show of the Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C. The National Gallery of Art of the Smithsonian Institute accepted two of my etchings and two of my oil paintings for their permanent collection. I am a veteran (Corporal) of the Spanish American War and my three sons, with my approval, were all in the Second World War. The two single boys volunteered; William became a First Lieutenant and Arthur, the youngest, as a Captain, saved his Company and was awarded, posthumously, the Silver Cross. I correspond with important members of the Foreign Relations Committee and receive replies from several of them, as well as from Cabinet Members, Congressmen, Senators and from Presidents and Vice Presidents of the United States. These letters will not be shown while the writers are still alive.*

*Nathan I. Bijur '96 Alumnus."*

Nathan and Eugenie were a family oriented couple who enjoyed having their children and grandchildren visit. Stories from family members invariably involve a visit to Long Branch and many of their family photographs were taken there.

Daughter-in-law Marion Bijur eulogized Eugenie at her memorial service in 1978. She said, "She was bright, gifted and headstrong. It made little difference that she didn't finish school - she was always learning something. A natural cook, she wrote her own cookbook, which still exists today, beautiful in its ornamental German script. The Dobostorte, the sponge cake, the

mandelsnitten and spritz cookies that still emerge from our own kitchens today on festive occasions, are a culinary legacy from Mom. She embroidered, knitted, crocheted. She read and studied widely on her own, and early on began to develop a connoisseurship and a taste that were almost impeccable." Eugenie did beautiful needlepoint. Her large sewing bird collection was donated to the Monmouth Museum in Monmouth County, NJ. Daughter-in-law Hilda Reis Bijur has several of Eugenie's sewing birds on display in her lovely apartment.

Every year on Eugenie's birthday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, the family gathered in Long Branch. The same menu was always served: salmon on little pumpernickel or brown breads without creamed cheese, liver pate and dobos (pronounced dobosh) torte which is a seven or eight layer cake with a rock hard caramelized sugar topping. Eugenie died in 1980 at the age of 94. Nathan Isaac Bijur died in 1969. He was also 94.

Herbert Isaac Bijur was the oldest child of Nathan and Eugenie. He graduated from Haverford College in 1932. He worked in retailing early in his career for John Wanamaker and for Jane Engle specialty shops. He moved McCall's Publishing Corporation, ultimately becoming president of McCall's Pattern Company. He sat on the board of directors of their parent company. An article in the Elyria Ohio *Chronicle Telegram* on March 4, 1959 speaks of Herbert's approach to his work. "Ten years ago, when he became a pattern service executive, he decided that he could not function sensibly without being able to do what women had to do. He went to adult education classes at night and within six weeks had made his wife an evening gown which caused matrons for miles around to wonder when Mrs. Bijur went to Paris." Herbert Bijur was a collector of early Americana, especially things relating to Mark Twain. He was also an orchid grower active in the New York Botanical Garden and Bartlett Arboretum. He was a flutist and fisherman.



Herbert, Arthur, Jean and William Bijur

Herbert married Marion Halpert on February 1, 1939 at the Plaza Hotel. They had three children; Peter, Priscilla and Polly. Marion Bijur was an advertising executive and managing editor of Vista, the magazine published by the United Nations Association.

Peter I. Bijur spent his entire career at Texaco Corporation beginning in 1966. He was named Chief Executive Officer in 1996. When Chevron and Texaco merged in 2001, Peter took early retirement. Peter married Anne Montgomery. Their children are Kristin, David and Matthew. Kristin is a teacher and principal of a school in San Francisco. David is the Director of External Relations for the Air Transport Association. He manages their national campaign on taxes. Matthew graduated from Stanford Business School. He is president of a division of a sports management company in New Jersey. One of their projects is to run the land transportation for the Olympics. Matthew lives in New York City. None of Peter's children are married. Peter lives in

Connecticut with his second wife Kjestine M. Anderson whom he married in 2000.

Herbert and Marion's second child is Priscilla who is said to look exactly like Eugenie except that Eugenie had red hair. Priscilla graduated from New York University. She married Gerald Kane in 1980. They have sons Andrew and Peter. Priscilla recently retired after working her entire career at Time Inc., Time Warner and the AOL Time Warner. For the last fifteen years she was Vice President of Human Resources for Corporate Headquarters. Since her retirement Priscilla has kept busy. She is on the board of directors of the Citizens Committee for Children of New York, the oldest advocacy group for children in New York City, founded in 1944 by Eleanor Roosevelt to ensure that every child in New York City is healthy, housed, educated and safe. Priscilla is also cochair of the Community Leadership Course. She wrote, "The nine week CLC course provides New York City community leaders and potential advocates with an understanding of children's services, policies, issues and budgets." Priscilla also is on the board of a small nonprofit called The Bottomless Closet, "an organization that promotes economic self-sufficiency by providing interview skills, business clothing and ongoing career development to New York City women moving from public assistance into the workforce." Priscilla's husband Gerry is president of a home furnishing company that makes decorative fabrics. Son Andrew graduated from Princeton and is in investment banking. Peter is a history major at Tufts University.

Polly Bijur is Herbert and Marion's third child. She has a Ph.D. in epidemiology from Columbia University. She got her first job, on an epidemiological project, at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "I just stayed there. In fact, I'm in the same office I started in too." Polly works in the field of pain management at the Office of Emergency Medicine. She is also a yoga instructor. Her husband Morri Markowitz, who she married in 1976, is a pediatrician. He is the Director of the Environmental Science Clinic at Montefiore Medical Center and a professor at Albert Einstein doing research on lead poisoning. They have three sons, Jonathan, Ezra and Aaron. Jonathan went to Yale and is currently in graduate school at Simmons in Boston studying



Joan Weiss  
Douglas Weiss, Vicky Bijur, Peter Bijur  
Priscilla Bijur  
Polly Bijur

library science. He plans to be married September 12, 2005 to Rebecca Benefiel, a fund raiser at a nonprofit, The Food Project. Ezra is an undergraduate of Vassar College where he runs cross country. Aaron is a high school student and the only child still at home. Polly says he is very independent.

Jean Bijur, Nathan and Eugenie's second children married Hungarian architect Joseph Weiss

in 1936. They had children Joan and Douglas. Jean is an artist who has exhibited widely. Her husband Joseph specialized in geriatric nursing homes and hospitals and was a consultant to the United States Public Housing Administration. When it came time for Joseph to meet the Bijurs, Eugenie prepared by baking. There was a whole table of pastries. Vicky Bijur said, "I don't know if this was the first time he'd met them, but he clearly thought that if he married Jean this was what their life would be like." Joan Weiss married Jay Knox and has sons Kenneth and Thomas. Joan was one of Eugenie's favorites because she is strong and outspoken. Joan collected Eugenie's recipes and letters and has saved them for the family. Kenneth is married to Lisa and has two daughters. He is an engineer in Pittsburgh PA. Tom is a partner in a law firm in Washington DC. Tom and his wife Cathy have four children. Douglas has an electrical engineering degree from the University of Pennsylvania and an MBA from New York University. He lives in Sarasota FL where he works for IBM. Daughter Jennifer recently married Adam Handler. She is a children's book editor for Simon & Schuster.

William Leopold Bijur was the third child of Nathan and Eugenie. He was active in amateur theater. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Brown University in 1935. During World War II he was stationed at Bletchley Park where he served as a crypto-analyst. He is mentioned in several books but never spoke with his family about the work he did there because it remained top secret throughout his lifetime. Vicky said, "He was very bright. He spoke German. He always did puzzles. When I worked at Oxford University Press there were three of us there whose fathers worked at Bletchley. So I assume it had to do with a facility for language." William married Hilda Reis in 1952 when he was 39. They had daughter Victoria and son Arthur. After the war William was an advertising executive with Schenley Distillers Corporation and then with Ogilvy, Benson & Mather, Inc. He died suddenly in 1960. Hilda is an accomplished photographer whose body of work includes many photo exhibits.



Arthur Henry Bijur

Victoria (Vicky) Bijur married Edward Levine in 1982. Vicky is an independent literary agent who also handles her husband's thriving literary career. Ed is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times* Food Section. His most recent book, *Pizza: A Slice of Heaven: The Ultimate Pizza Guide* was published in February 2005. Their son William Leopold will begin his freshman year at Kenyon College in September 2005. Arthur Bijur is the President and Executive Creative Director of the advertising firm Cliff Freeman & Partners. He is married to Judy D'Mello. The couple have a son, Benjamin Leopold, who was born in 2000.

Nathan and Eugenie's youngest child was Arthur Henry Bijur.

*continued on page 8*



## Beile and Meir Moor: A Survivors' Story

Several months ago Margie Kavanau, editor of the Friends of Straus Park newsletter, contacted me about a possible story for our respective newsletters. She had the name and contact information for Carl Moore whose grandmother and father were "Titanic" survivors. I could not have anticipated how interesting this story would be nor how intertwined the fate of Carl's family was with that of the Straus family.

I wrote to Mr. Moore, telling him who I was and that I was interested in writing an article about his relatives and about their experience aboard "Titanic." I asked if he would mind my calling him for an interview. Many Strauses are tired of being known as the family of people who lost their lives on "Titanic." More than once I've heard, "Why is this the only thing people are interested in? We are SO much more than that."

Fortunately, Carl Moore did not feel this way. He called me as soon as he received my letter and we spoke at length. He was very interested in learning more about Isidor and Ida Straus' experience and was quite open about his family's survival story.

Carl's grandmother Beile and his father Meir Moor were from Russia. Beile's husband did not return home, and was believed killed, after conscription in the Russian Army. At this time in Russian history, the oldest son of each Jewish family was routinely conscripted into the Russian Army and required to serve 25 years in the worst assignments. Few survived. Beile didn't want to lose her only son so she and Meir decided to leave Russia. They hid under a haystack in a cart to get across the border.

From there they went to England where Beile had cousins. She and Meir adopted the name Moor at about this time. Years later, Meir was still so worried that he would be tracked down for conscription into the Russian Army that he never told anyone his original family name.

The voyage aboard "Titanic" was Beile and Meir's second attempt to reach the United States. They traveled to the States once before but were turned back. Carl didn't know why. Beile and her son returned to England where they stayed with a relative, Mr. Isaac Slater of Whitechapel, London, until they were able to raise enough money for a second passage.

Beile paid 12 pounds and 9 shillings for their third class ticket, about \$60 in American money. It was a joint ticket, number 392096. The original ticket was for passage on the "Adriatic" but that voyage was cancelled at the last minute. Beile and Meir were shifted to "Titanic."

Steamship lines of the time knew from experience that passengers who were ill would be turned back at Ellis Island, New York

Harbor, and that the steamship line was required to pay their return fare. Therefore, the health of all third class passengers was inspected before being allowed to board the ship. Whatever problem caused Beile and Meir to be turned back the first time, their health did not keep them from leaving England this time. They became two of the 2,228 passengers aboard "Titanic." They were assigned Room 121 on E Deck, steerage, deep in the bowels of the ship.

Beile was 27 and her son was 7 years old when they boarded "Titanic." They were looking forward to beginning a new life in the United States. They were headed for Beile's uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kaufman of Chicago, IL. After the ship got underway, third class passengers were allowed on deck for brief periods during the day. There was no entertainment provided for third class passengers and they were left to their own devices to pass the time. Meir went from passenger to passenger asking if he could have the decorative cards that came with each pack of European cigarettes. They were colorful playing cards, some of them with pictures of cowboys and Indians that were packed along with the cigarettes. Fortunately it was common for people to smoke at that time and Meir amassed a large collection of cards in a few days.

It is not clear why Beile Moor was on the deck when "Titanic" hit the iceberg on the night of April 14, 1912. Carl thought his grandmother was having trouble sleeping and that she had gone topside for a breath of fresh air. According to family lore, Beile had some kind of royal or regal connections. This is undocumented. Linda Moore, Carl's ex-wife, thought Beile knew some of the first or second class people aboard and was visiting with them when the collision occurred.

When Beile died the family found many letters that had been written to her by royalty. No one in the family knew why she had them or if the family lore about her being descended from royalty was true.

No matter why Beile was topside, when "Titanic" hit the iceberg Beile immediately ran downstairs to E Deck where she reunited with Meir. Together they donned their life vests and started back to the upper deck. Beila and Meir were somehow pushed up the jammed staircase. She suddenly found herself on the upper deck with Meir in tow but didn't remember how she got there. The only thing she took with her was her purse. She was so concerned about being turned back again in New York that she made sure she was carrying her documentation and the names of her sponsors. She was a strong-willed woman with a very powerful survival instinct.

When the rescue ship "Carpathia" picked up their lifeboat, Beila and Meir didn't remember how they got into that lifeboat, one of the last to leave "Titanic." Beile knew that they were alive because someone got out of the lifeboat at the last minute and they were pushed into it to take their place. Meir recalled sitting



Beile and Meir Moor

Photo permission courtesy Judy Geller *Titanic: Women and Children First*

in the lifeboat watching "Titanic" sink with all of his collected cigarette cards aboard. Only 705 people survived.

When I spoke with Carl, his family knew little more of the story that I have just recounted. They believed it was Lady Astor, Mrs. John Jacob Astor, who got out of the lifeboat, thereby giving Beile and Meir their chance for a new life. This he reconstructed from public information about the disaster and from the little his father was willing to tell him about the experience. It was not something Meyer, as he was known in America, spoke about frequently or easily.

I sent Carl a copy of an article I'd written about Isidor and Ida and their last trip aboard "Titanic." A copy of this article, "Many Waters Cannot Quench Love - Neither Can The Floods Drown It," may be found at the Society's website on the Archives page: [www.straushistoricalsociety.org/archives.php](http://www.straushistoricalsociety.org/archives.php) You can obtain a paper copy upon request. Contact information may be found on page 2 and page 12.

Once Carl read the article he called me back. He was in tears. He now believes that it was Ida's refusal to leave Isidor's side that saved his grandmother and father. It seems that his grandmother and father were given a seat because Ida Straus vacated it, not because Lady Astor gave up her seat. In fact, Lady Astor was one of the survivors.

When "Carpathia" reached New York there was, once again, some problem with Beile and Meir's immigration status. They went to Canada where they lived for several years before finally emigrating to Chicago. There, Beile remarried, opened a dry goods store and was widowed a second time.

Once grown, Meyer married Henrietta. The couple had three sons and, later, four grandchildren. They moved to El Paso, Texas when Henrietta's arthritis worsened. Meyer was a jobber, traveling around, opening dry goods stores. His first store was in El Paso. He always kept that one because his mother lived above it. Carl believes that the family stopped there because they saw a sign above a store with their Russian surname, Wasserzug, on it, perhaps thinking there were other family members in El Paso. Another family story is that Meyer always worried about the Russian Army coming after him. He is supposed to have wanted to live near a border so that he could make a rapid escape if necessary. Chicago, their first home in the United States, is not too far from the Canadian border. Their next home, El Paso, suited Meyer's requirements for proximity to a border and Henrietta's requirement for a dry warm climate.

Meyer suffered with heart disease for many years. Ironically he

finally succumbed on the anniversary of "Titanic's" sinking, April 15, 1975, 63 years later. To his dying day, Meyer would not step foot in a boat of any kind, not even a rowboat.

Carl, Meyer's son, lives in Santa Fe, NM where he owns and runs The Community Store. <http://www.thecommunitystore.com> His website home page contains a definition of community: "Community exists when people struggle with the traditions that bind them and the interests that separate them." Carl is a facilitator who offers services in facilitation skills and conflict resolution that are adapted to the needs of specific groups. "The Community Store is committed to inventing and adapting strategies and processes that help to address the predictable,

recurring problems that get in the way of group productivity." Both Carl's daughter Lee and his ex-wife Linda also have a background in facilitation and conflict resolution. Several Strauses work in this field as well. Carl mentioned that he collects European cigarette cards with cowboys and Indians on them as a tribute to his father.

In June 2005 I visited with Linda Moore who is Vice President of Emerson College and Dean of Academic Affairs. She graciously spent several hours with me telling me about the Moore family and about Beile and Meir's survival story.

Carl and Linda's daughter Lee attends Hebrew College in Boston where she is studying to become a rabbi. She often comes to New York City and commented that she enjoys visiting Straus Park. She had no idea of her family's connection to the Strauses but, somehow, knew that this beautiful vest pocket park was a special place for her. She just didn't know how special. Carl

and Linda's son Chris is a professor of neuroscience at MIT.

Linda met John Wendell Straus at a professional conference many years ago. They spoke of the two families and their connection to the "Titanic" disaster but never realized how truly connected they are. Linda noted that her wonderful children would not have been born if Carl's father hadn't been saved by Ida's heroic refusal to leave Isidor's side.

When I first decided to write the article about the family of a "Titanic" survivor, I had no idea just how emotional this journey would be. Nor did I have any idea that the random person I contacted would be so completely tied to the Straus family. I could have contacted any one of the descendants of the 705 people who survived. It seems amazing that I contacted the Moores. The two families are bound together by fate and by history. I hope to bring them together one day, in person, perhaps at a future Friends of Straus Park event.



Beile and Meir Moor's "Titanic" tickets.



"Adriatic" is crossed out and "Titanic"

## Letters to Ferdinand Weiss

Lazarus Straus' first wife was Fanny (Davora) Levi. They had daughter Karoline May 23, 1838 in Otterberg. Fanny died in 1843. Lazarus then married his first cousins Sara Straus on March 21, 1844. When Lazarus and Sara and their four children emigrated to the United States, Karoline stayed in Germany. She married Moritz Weiss and son Ferdinand Weiss was born on January 26, 1862 in Asselheim Germany.

We recently learned that Lazarus and his children maintained contact with his grandson Ferdinand. Thanks to Ellen Tager and Jessie Hirsch, descendants of Lazarus' first family, we've learned about their correspondence. Several letters and Ferdinand's report card were translated by Frank and Sue Kahn of Westwood, NJ and by Dr. Hans Steinebrei of Kaiserslautern, Germany. Thank you for your excellent translations.

Ferdinand, 15 years old, son of Moritz Weiss of Grunstadt, attended business/trade school in Durkheim. His report card of August 17, 1877 reflects his courses: Religion, German, French and English Language, Arithmetic, Business Studies, History, Geography, Natural History, Science, Handwriting and Drawing. His grades reveal that he was a good student with the poorest grade being given in French and the best in handwriting.

July 11, 1877: Lazarus Straus to his 15 year old grandson, "I received your kind letter sometime ago and we were all overjoyed with your nice letter. Please write more often. When I come to Germany I shall give you a lovely present. Tell your mother, she should also write to me again and give her my love. When Uncle Nathan is finished with his business he will come to Durkheim and to Grunstadt, spend the evening and depart from there. Tell your uncle and your aunt Weil that I send loving greetings and ask why they haven't written to me in many years? Greetings to my friend Mr. Weil, whose school you attend. For you, receive my best wishes and heartfelt greetings from your grandfather."

June 25, 1879: Lazarus Straus to Ferdinand. "Hopefully and God willing you feel quite well and you are a busy young man, pleasing your family. You have the advantage to study to be a good businessman and should strive to learn more languages, namely English and French. From your mother I hear nothing. Give her greetings from us. I always enjoy your letters. Many sincere hugs and kisses from your grandfather."

September 26, 1879: Lazarus Straus to dear Ferdinand. "I received your letter with your good birthday wishes which arrived a couple of days ago. It gave me great pleasure. I would love for you to write to us from time to time because I am very concerned about you and your dear mother's health. Today I

have the pleasure to send you a check with a small amount of 100 marks which should arrive in time for your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and send additional heartfelt congratulation. Please accept our best regards and kisses from your loving grandfather. My children Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oskar send loving greetings."

May 9, 1881: Lazarus to Ferdinand. "Last Saturday I got your letter and will help you by sending 200 Marks to our bank in Frankfurt. Please tell me in your next letter what business you intend. It is a good business when you can learn something. Please send me a receipt for the money immediately. Many heartfelt greetings."

May 9, 1881: Oscar Straus to Ferdinand. "It is very difficult for me to write in German but I must answer your letter. We were very sorry that we couldn't see you before you left. We were late getting to Heidelberg. We will stay here 3 weeks and we will be happy to hear from you. Your uncle Oscar."

February 2, 1891: Lazarus Straus to dear Ferdinand. "As per your wishes, I send you today 200 Marks. I feel thank G\_d very good. With my best wishes I remain your loving grandfather. Please send me a receipt for the money."



Ferdinand Weiss, Lazarus' grandson

In January 1898 Lazarus Straus died. He left Ferdinand \$10,000 in his will. June 1, 1898: Oscar Wollheim wrote to Ferdinand to inform him of this bequest as per Oscar's instruction.

More information will appear in future issues of the newsletter.

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continued from page 5 - *The Bijur Family*

Arthur attended Brown University where he distinguished himself in theater, athletics and in the arts. Arthur went to war in 1941, right out of college. He was a captain in the Army Signal Corps. While stationed in the Philippines he made jewelry from pieces of downed Japanese plane's fuselages which many family members are proud to own today. Arthur was killed in Luzon in the Philippines in 1945. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart. The citation for his Silver Star praised him for his "keen devotion to duty, loyal consideration for his men, and great courage." A facility in Fort Monmouth, NJ to house bachelor officers was dedicated in honor of Arthur Bijur by Army officials in 1965. Nathan and Eugenie and brother Herbert I. Bijur were present at the ceremony.

When I first decided to write about the Bijur family I interviewed Vicky Bijur. She arranged for me to meet her mother and cousins. I was impressed with their intelligence, accomplishments and warmth. Particular thanks must be extended to Vicky, her mother Hilda Reis Bijur and cousins Priscilla Bijur and Polly Bijur who shared their stories and photographs with me. It has been a pleasure to meet them and to learn about this wonderful part of the family.



## Gail Kohns Nutku 1933-2005

Gail Kohns Nutku, a warmhearted mother, grandmother, and friend to many, died on April 2, 2005 at the age of 71 surrounded by loving family. Daughter of the late Paul L. and Katharine Bach Kohns of Rye, NY, and a founding member of the Straus Historical Society Board, Gail was the great granddaughter of Hermine Straus and Lazarus Kohns.

A graduate of the Cranbrook School, Oberlin College, and the Katherine Gibbs School, she worked for over thirty years at Anderson, La Rocca, Anderson, Haynes Architects in Rye, NY retiring as Comptroller in 2004.



well, always returning to her cozy, intimately decorated bungalow in the woods of Greenwich, CT. It was there - when not bowling, training at the gym, or taking ballroom dancing lessons - that she and Pippa, her tiger-striped cat, entertained a great and diverse circle of devoted friends.

A contributor to cultural, civil liberties, women's and hospice organizations, Gail was curious, worldly and generous. She will remain ever in the heart of her loving children and their families - Rana Nutku; Kerim and Elisa Nutku and their children Sophie, Annie and Mimi; and Suzan and Philip Setel and their children Jalia and Imara - and in those

With children and grandchildren living in as far-flung countries as Australia, Papua New Guinea and Tanzania, Gail traveled of her extended family and friends.

### Karl and Joel Straus - Ostrich Jewelry

Karl Hermann Straus and his son Joel Theodore are descendants of Fradche, the sister of Lazarus' father Isaak. Karl is a lawyer who lives in Asheville, NC. Joel is an associate director of Richard Gray Galleries in Chicago, IL

Karl wrote, "Many years ago (around 1958 or so) my Dad had seal rings made in Germany with the ostrich engraving and my youngest son, Joel, found a jeweler in Chicago who found the same blue stone for the ring as my Father used for the original rings."

Karl and Joel were kind enough to send me photographs of this jewelry. Joel wrote, "The carving was done in Germany and is a

copy of the original design." The stone is a composite, blue over black. Pieces were made for both men and women, including a ring and a pin for the women and a ring for the men. Karl commissioned the work and gave them to family members.

Karl also wrote that he visited an ostrich farm in Africa where many hand-made items, such as silk ties and clay pottery, had the ostrich design on them. He also saw small bowls that were in the shape of an ostrich. Karl offered that, if the Society was interested in obtaining some of these items to be used as a fund-raiser, he would find the information about the source. Please let me know if you would like more information about the jewelry or about purchasing "ostrich" items.



Left: Gent's Ostrich Ring,  
side view  
Below: Gent's  
Ostrich Ring



Right: Woman's  
Ostrich Pin  
Below: Women's  
Ostrich Ring



## Liberty Ship "Oscar S. Straus" Launched November 22, 1943 in New Orleans, LA

World War II caused a dramatic increase in the demand for cargo ships. Military facilities were overburdened and could take on no more shipbuilding orders. As a result, the US Maritime Commission began a Liberty Ship program in 1941. Nine private emergency shipyards were formed by the commission. One of these yards was the Delta Shipbuilding Company of New Orleans, LA where 188 Liberty Ships were built between 1941 and 1945, some of them in as little as 97 days. Each Liberty Ship carried more than 9,000 tons of cargo. In all, more than 2,700 Liberty Ships were built. In an August 2, 2000 article for *The Buffalo News*, Tom Buckham wrote that President Franklin D. Roosevelt called their service "the "bridge of ships" which delivered two thirds of the military cargo that turned the tide against Hitler."

The "Oscar S. Straus" was an ET 1-S-C3 type Liberty Ship. It was the 79<sup>th</sup> ship built in the Delta Shipbuilding Company's yard. Its keel was laid on August 16, 1943 and it was launched November 22, 1943. Several of Oscar S. Straus' family members were present for that launch. Oscar's daughter Aline Straus Hockstader christened the ship. Aline's husband Leonard A., their son Albert F. Hockstader, his wife Kathryn, their son's Leonard A. II and Alan F. and Aline and Leonard's daughter Mildred Hockstader Morse were in attendance.



Aline Straus Hockstader christening the "Oscar S. Straus"

Aline christening the ship with these words: "I should like to express my thanks - as well as those of the members of my family who are here with me - to Mr. Ackerman and to the members of the organization of the Delta Ship Building Co - for their courtesy and consideration - and to assure them that we greatly appreciate all they have done to make our stay in New Orleans an interesting and enjoyable one. I pray that this ship,

which is to bear my father's name, will have a long and useful life in the service of the country he loved so well. I christen thee Oscar S. Straus and wish you Godspeed."

An undated note given to me by Mildred Morse describes the history of the "Oscar S. Straus." It was written by H. Dean Hellis, for Spenser Kellogg & Sons, Inc., agent for the War

Shipping Administration. "The Oscar S. Straus has been operating continuously since Nov. 22, 1943, in the service of the War Shipping Administration - The vessel made numerous voyages with fuel oil, so necessary to us and to our Allies for the successful culmination of the war, from United States ports to the Mediterranean, including such ports as Gibraltar, Azores, Malta, etc - The vessel also carried numerous cargoes under Lend Lease from Haifa to Bizerte, Palermo, Naples, Taranto etc during the critical period of the war. These voyages were made in convoy, & fortunately the "Oscar S. Straus" met with no misfortune, thro' enemy action throughout this time. The vessel is now operating in ... & nearby foreign service carrying cargoes of crude & fuel oils under charter to commercial interests."

Liberty Cargo Ship - Oscar S Straus



The "Oscar S. Straus" was sold to private operators in 1947 and scrapped in 1970.

The "Oscar S. Straus" was sold to private operators in 1947 and scrapped in 1970.



Launch of the "Oscar S. Straus"

Thank you to Alan F. Hockstader who sent me the photographs of his family at the christening of the ship and of the

"Oscar S. Straus" and to Mildred H. Morse for allowing me to photocopy and archive the description of the ship's service.



Kathryn Hecht Hockstader, Albert F. Hockstader, Aline Straus Hockstader, Leonard Albert Hockstader, Mildred Hockstader Morse. Boy in front on left: Alan F. Hockstader. Boy on right in front: Leonard A. Hockstader II



## Friends of Straus Park

Reported by Al Berr, Edited by Joan Adler,  
Photos by Margie Kavanau

The annual anniversary celebration of Straus Park was held Saturday, April 13, 2005 between 5:30 and 7:30 PM. This event is scheduled to occur as close to April 15 as practical in order to commemorate the loss of Isidor and Ida Straus aboard "Titanic." It was also the date the Park was dedicated three years later. Food and music were available and, among the speakers were the inimitable Leon Auerbach and two representatives from the new high-rise across the street, Opus, which has given a generous contribution to Friends. We are especially grateful to Daniel Hollander and Alison L. Barabas for the creative exchange of ideas which helped bring about their support of our ongoing efforts to keep Straus Park a very special place on the Upper West Side.

On Sunday, April 17, 2005, at the 30th Anniversary celebration of the Three Parks Independent Democrats held at Meridiana near Straus Park, the Jesse Crawford Community Service Award was given to Friends of Straus Park, and accepted by Leon Auerbach, Al Berr, and Margaret Kavanau. As noted in the 30th Anniversary celebration program, Friends of Straus Park was originally organized by Leon Auerbach and others "... raised money to transform the formerly derelict island park ... into an oasis ... From 1995 to 1997 Straus Park was renovated and expanded to the west by an addition of 15 feet of West End Avenue. An \$800,000 capital project resulted in many improvements including the addition of benches, lighting, shrubs, fencing, and paving ..." A special "thank you" to Theresa Canter, President, for making this award ceremony a memorable one.

On June 11, 2005 the first annual Photography Event was held in Straus Park between 11 am and 5 pm. Local photographers submitted their work for sale. It was reported that the day was successful for artists and purchasers, as well as for the browsers.

June 15<sup>th</sup> was the evening of a concert in the Park. Between 5:30 and 7:30 pm, Suzy Schwartz and Boto Foga delighted us with their music. A lively crowd attended the event. Children danced to the music and couples swayed to the lovely rhythms.

The second annual Book Fair was held July 9<sup>th</sup> from 10 am to 3 pm. Neighbors donated books to be sold for the benefit of Friends of Straus Park. The weather cooperated handsomely, which pleased the book vendors and the Friends coffers.

### Calendar of 2005 Events:

Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> (rain date October 2<sup>nd</sup>)  
9<sup>th</sup> Annual Art in the Park: A Day-Long Celebration  
of Art, Music, Dance and Food  
11 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Thank you to Margie Kavanau, editor of "Memory," the Friends of Straus Park newsletter and secretary of Friends of Straus Park and to Al Berr, Straus Historical Society board member and liaison between the two organizations.



Above: Leon Auerbach



Left: Representatives from Opus



Above: Suzy Schwartz and the Boto Foga Bossa Nova troupe

Below: Book Fair at Straus Park



## **The History of the Jews of Otterberg by Dr. Hans Steinebrei**

In the last issue of the newsletter I erroneously called Dr. Hans Steinebrei's book, *The Emigration of Jews Out of Otterberg*. It is actually titled, *The History of the Jews of Otterberg: An Example of the Palatinate History of the Nineteenth Century*.

Dr. Steinebrei's book has now been published and has received very good reviews from the German Jewish Association. It is written in German, has 120 pages and many photographs. It is available for purchase for 18 EUROS, approximately \$22.00 plus shipping. If you would like to obtain a copy of this interesting and well researched book, please contact me.

Dr. Steinebrei has generously donated five copies of his book to the Society.

There is so much information about the history of the earliest Strauses in this book that the SHS board is considering having it translated and republished in English. If you can read German and are willing to translate a few pages, please contact me.

My apologies to Dr. Steinebrei for my error in the previous issue of the newsletter.

### **Are You Interested In a Trip to Germany?**

The Straus Historical Society will be sponsoring a trip to the towns and villages where the Straus family originated. We know that several of the houses the family lived in are still inhabited by local residents and some artifacts also exist including the crib that Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar slept in as infants. If the group wants it, we can also include visits to the cemeteries in the area where Strauses are buried.

The most likely time for the trip is late Spring or early Fall 2006. If you have not yet expressed your interest, please contact me, Joan Adler, to let me know you would like more information. It will help in the planning if we know how large a group we might expect. There is no commitment at this time. Further announcements will be made once plans are solidified.

### **New Information - Contributions to the Society**

The board of directors has decided to make a payment plan available to anyone wishing to contribute to the Society but feels that quarterly or monthly contributions would be better for them than one annual contribution.

If you wish to donate in this manner, please contact me and we will work out the details of your own particular requirements. Contact information may be found on the side-bar of page two and in the right hand column of page twelve.

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

"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

Masters Thesis of Saul Viener, "The Political Career of Isidor Straus." West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia, 1947 - \$25.00

Send your tax deductible check to Joan Adler, payable to: **Straus Historical Society, Inc.**, P. O. Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416. A receipt will be issued for your purchase. You can contact Joan by phone: 631-265-0383, fax: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: info@straushistoricalsociety.org

### **Straus Historical Society's Archived Material Is Available On-line**

Past issues of the Straus Historical Society's newsletters are posted on our website on the Archives page.  
[www.straushistoricalsociety.org/archives.php](http://www.straushistoricalsociety.org/archives.php)

Each newsletter is in pdf format and requires Adobe Acrobat to view. If you do not have it, you can download Acrobat without charge.  
[www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html)

Several additional articles, and many photographs are also posted on the Archives page. Check back frequently as newsletters, articles and photographs will be added on a continuing basis. If you would like a paper copy of past issues of the newsletter, they are also available for purchase at \$5.00 per issue.

### **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, September 21, 2005 at the office of board member Paul A. Kurzman, 129 East 79<sup>th</sup> Street, New York at 6 PM. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society.

This invitation is extended so that anyone interested in the Straus Historical Society 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.