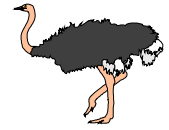


STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Newsletter

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A History of the Jews of Otterberg An Example of the History from the Palatinate in the 19th Century

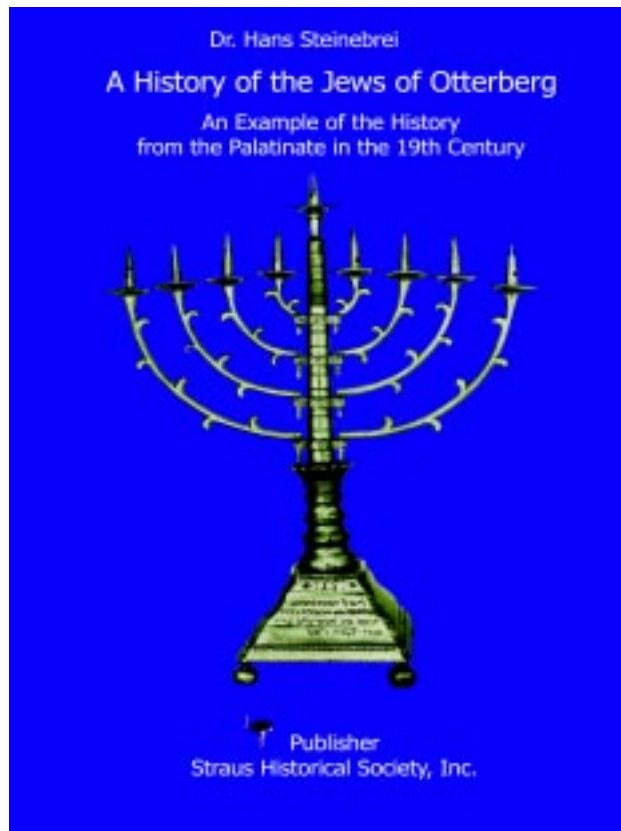
by Dr. Hans Steinebrei

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is pleased to announce the publication of the English language version of Dr. Hans Steinebrei's book, *A History of the Jews of Otterberg: An Example of the History from the Palatinate in the 19th Century*. Dr. Steinebrei, whose family can be found in the records of Otterberg going back to at least the 18th century, is an historian and researcher. His meticulous work has resulted in a comprehensive and interesting volume that includes many photographs, maps and letters written by Straus family members.

My work with the Straus family began in 1990 with Robert K. (Bob) Straus of Santa Barbara, CA. Together we formed the Straus Family Project. One of the first people Bob introduced me to was Dr. Steinebrei of Kaiserslautern, Germany, with whom he had been corresponding for years. Dr. Steinebrei is interested in the Jewish history of Otterberg and, therefore, in Straus family history. In fact, it was Bob Straus who encouraged Dr. Steinebrei to write his book.

For the past 18 years Dr. Steinebrei and I have been corresponding; exchanging information and requests for research. Our long relationship has borne fruit on both sides of the Atlantic. This book, *A History of the Jews of Otterberg*, contains information given to Dr. Steinebrei by SHS which he's expertly woven, along with the infor-

mation he's researched, into an historical context that allows one to glimpse at the Straus' world in a unique manner. His book brings the fruits of his many years of labor into a comprehensive and enjoyable document.



If you have any interest in the history of the Straus family and the history of the place where they lived, then this book is a must. The commentary brings the reader through the historical reasons why and how the Jewish community settled in Otterberg and why they eventually left, and to the social and religious fabric of their lives in their town.

Dr. Steinebrei accompanied the group on our September 2006 tour in Germany. His passion for Otterberg and for the history of the Straus family was easy to see. He has admirably transferred that passion to this book.

A History of the Jews of Otterberg is available from

the Straus Historical Society, Inc., Post Office Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416 for \$35.00. This includes shipping and handling.

*Remember the days of old.
Consider the years of
many generations.*

Deuteronomy 32:7

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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 Chair:
David H. Kurzman**

It is easy to be proud of our family's accomplishments, and so it is supremely gratifying to know that the Straus Historical Society continues on its mission to educate and maintain the legacy of the Straus family. To that end, in November, I encourage you to join us as we visit the original Straus family home in Talbotton, Georgia and explore the surrounding area. This is the location where my great-great-great grandfather, Lazarus Straus and his wife, Sara, settled in America to raise their family. They were joined by Matilda and Fannie Straus (the daughters of Moses and Magdalena Straus of Otterberg, Germany) and the Kaufman brothers (who were Lazarus' business partners and husbands to Matilda and Fannie). Participants of past trips to our family's first home were overwhelmed by the graciousness of the Talbotton townspeople for their warm welcome and excellent food.

On September 10th, the German Consulate General will be hosting a second showing of "Making Their Mark," a tribute to three German-American families and their contributions to our great country. The contributions of the Straus family are highlighted extensively and superbly narrated by my father, Paul, who is the great-grandson of Isidor Straus. I and many other family members were in attendance for the initial showing, and our hosts did a phenomenal job organizing and running the event.

The hard work of raising funds to continue our activities requires a commitment from you. Please donate annually and establish a legacy trust in the name of the Straus Historical Society so that we can expand our services and opportunities. I donate annually, as does each member of the board, as a sign of our commitment to our phenomenal heritage. Join us today to preserve our past and brighten our future.

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



I am pleased to be involved with so many interesting projects and to work with so many truly fascinating people. Almost every day something new and unexpected finds its way to my desk. SHS's exposure on the Internet through our website has allowed new family members to find us. Some of them, like Thomas Francell, (a descendant of Amanda Blun Rothschild), and Joan M. Selfa, Doris Friedrich and Stephanie Harris Morgan, (Babette Straus Maas descendants) are interested in their own genealogy and have contributed greatly to our knowledge base. We welcome them and encourage their active participation.

SHS will be sponsoring a trip to Talbotton and Columbus GA on November 6-9 with an extension to Calloway Gardens and Warm Springs. These are the places where Lazarus and his family, the Abraham Straus family and the Kaufmans first settled when they arrived in the US. Our trip will include tours of the places where the families lived and worked. It will coincide with Plantation Days in Talbotton, a local festival of customs, crafts and food. We hope many of you will join us; to meet your relatives and friends and to learn about the history of the Straus family from their earliest days in the US.

SHS's "Return to GA" Tour of Talbotton and Columbus, GA November 6-9, 2008

SHS is pleased to announce our "Return to GA" tour of Talbotton and Columbus, GA on November 6 - 9, 2008. An extension will be offered to Calloway Gardens and Warm Springs, FDR's Little White House, on November 10-11.

The response to our trip to GA in June 2001 was so positive, and there are so many new family members who have expressed interest, that SHS has decided to sponsor another trip. The group will stay at the Hilton Garden Inn in Columbus where there will be welcoming dinner and a Hospitality Suite for the use of our guests throughout our stay. This suite will be a great place for the trip's participants to meet informally, to get to know one another, to share a drink or snack, to rest after the planned tours, and to read material provided by SHS about the history of the Straus family.

We will spend Friday, November 7th in Columbus touring their historic downtown area where lovely older homes have been restored with particular attention to historical accuracy. We will tour Springer Opera House and the Rothschild homesite. This was the home of Amanda and Frank Rothschild. Amanda was the sister of Ida Blun Straus, wife of Isidor. This house was lovingly restored and will serve to give the trip's participants a good idea of the kind of house Lazarus and Sara Straus lived in as their house is no longer standing.

On Saturday we will board our bus for the 38 mile ride to Talbotton. Our ride will include a tour of the plantation homes Lazarus might have served on his peddler's route. We will learn about what his life must have been like as he sold dry goods to the local plantation families, brought news from the other plantations and took orders for his next visit. Then we will visit downtown Talbotton, see the site of Lazarus and Sara's first house and his dry goods store, visit the home of the Palmer family who own the dining table that once belonged to the Strauses, and visit the last home the Strauses owned in Talbotton.

Our trip coincides with Plantation Days in Talbotton. Michael H. and Debbie Buckner have a variety of activities and tours planned for the group including a demonstration of their mill. Mike is the seventh generation in his family to live on this land. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the area, and is a generous host. His stories captivated the group on our previous trips and I am certain this trip will be no different.

A dinner is planned at Community House. We will be treated to many local delicacies as well as talks about the history of the area and how it relates to Straus family history.

Sunday we will tour Port Columbus Naval Museum where their fascinating exhibits will surely bring new insights to our understanding of the blockade running experience and local history during the war years. We will also visit the home of Miss Effie Bowers, a direct descendant of Lloyd G. Bowers, the captain of the blockade running ship Isidor took out of Charleston Harbor in 1863. Miss Bowers has Lloyd Bowers logbook from that trip and can show the group notations of interest.

After our visit to Miss Effie Bowers house it will be time for people to begin leaving for the airport. Those who have chosen

to stay on for the trip extension will move to Calloway Gardens for the remainder of their stay. Transfers will be available. This lovely facility has a spa, golf course and restaurants on its grounds. Planned tours include Calloway Gardens and FDR's Little White House at Warm Springs.

By now you all should have received a flyer by e.mail or in the mail with detailed information about this trip. If you have not received the announcement, or need further information please don't hesitate to contact me. Contact information may be found in the sidebar on page two.

Reservations must be made by October 1 to hold your spot. The group size will be limited so don't delay. We are booking up quickly.



The last Straus house in Talbotton

Making Their Mark

A Video by Todd Weinstein and Steve Zehentner

On Thursday, June 12, 2008 the documentary film, "Making Their Mark - From German Immigrant to New York," premiered at German House in New York City. This film was commissioned by the German Consulate General of New York in celebration of the 400th anniversary of German immigration to the United States. It tells of the success stories of the members of three families and their influence on US society; the families of Johann August Roebing, Heinrich Engelhard Steinway and Lazarus Straus. In each of the film's three segments a family representative spoke about his own heritage and how the familys' present day members feel about their German roots. Each family "made their mark" on the history of New York and the United States. Unfortunately, a family emergency prevented the video's producer Todd Weinstein from attending. Co-videographer Steve Zehentner greeted the audience and sat in on the panel discussion that followed the film.

Dr. Heinrich Neumann, Consul for Press and Public Relations, complimented the documentary's producers on their use of historic photographs within the modern design of the video. In his opening remarks he said that he hoped this film would serve as an example for other German-American communities to create similar documentaries and to share their views on the impact their ancestors had on the United States today. He said he hoped it would be used to trigger a transatlantic dialogue about the interaction of cultures.

In addition to the three segments about these illustrious American families of German descent, the narration and visual effects of the video serve to highlight the fact that many other Germans came to America and became successful. Between each segment the names of well-known people like Albert Einstein,

Babe Ruth, Sandra Bullock, Max Weber, Marlene Dietrich, Wernher Von Braun and Elvis Presley are noted. These are truly a minuscule number of the Germans who emigrated to the US and made successful new lives for themselves and their families. The photography and sound mixing enhanced the impact of the entire documentary.



©Annette Baran
Steve Zehentner, Kriss Roebing,
Consul General Heimsoeth,
Paul A. Kurzman, Dr. Heinrich Neumann

Kriss Roebing, great-great-great grandson of Johann August Roebing, spoke in one segment of the film about what it meant for his ancestors to have the opportunity to try many different types of occupations, from farming, to civil engineering, to architecture and most famously for designing and building the Brooklyn Bridge. The Roebing family came from Muehlhausen Germany. Kriss said that he first felt a connection to his German heritage when he returned to the town where his family originated. Kriss is a musician and film maker.

Paul A. Kurzman, great grandson of Isidor Straus, one of the owners of R. H. Macy's, the largest department store in the world, spoke about the entrepreneurial skills of his ancestors. He emphasized that their financial success enabled them to embrace public service and philanthropy. As an example, he said that they were instrumental in establishing The Educational Alliance, a settlement house that helped to assimilate the next wave of immigrants and is still doing so today. His great uncle Nathan Straus brought the pasteurization of milk to this country and then to the world at his own expense, thereby saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.

The Straus family lived in Otterberg in the Palatinate, the southwestern region of Germany. Paul is a professor of social work, a field very much in tune with his ancestor's philosophy of public and social service.



©wwwLaura Weber
Steve Zehentner, Kriss Roebing,
Consul General Heimsoeth, Paul Kurzman

Henry Ziegler Steinway, the last living descendant of the Steinway family was unable to attend the evening. He still works in his family owned business, Steinway & Sons, a firm that has been building pianos since 1840. His ancestor, Heinrich Engelhard Steinway emigrated to America because he thought there would be more opportunity to sell his hand made pianos in this growing country. The Steinway family originated in Seesen in Lower Saxony. Mr. Steinway's endearing responses during his family's section of the film made it clear that his pride in workmanship and the skill required to build these fine instruments is still alive today.



©wwLaura Weber
Erin Kelly, David H. Kurzman,
Gerald Levy in the front row of the audience

The capacity crowd included many Straus family members. After viewing "Making Their Mark," Consul General Dr. Hans-Juergen Heimsoeth led a panel discussion that included Steve Zehentner, Kriss Roebing and Paul A. Kurzman. Dr. Heimsoeth asked the panelists to speak about their feelings, or lack thereof, for their German identity. Steve Zehentner said that, although he had German grandparents, he never felt German until he visited the town where his ancestors lived and met his cousins who still lived there. This feeling was echoed by Kriss Roebing. Steve continued, saying that his German identity waxes and wanes as he expects it will during the course of his lifetime.

When asked how these particular families were chosen for the film, Steve said that it was not an easy task. He and his co-producer Todd originally thought it would be difficult to find subjects. But once they began looking at the possibilities, it was actually difficult to narrow the list to the three families represented in the documentary. He added that each family could have been the focus of an entire film, and that it is possible they will begin work on a series of films focusing on these and other families in its entirety.

When Kriss Roebing and Paul Kurzman were asked to share their views on their German heritage, Kriss said, "I think the work ethics of John Roebing were really remarkable. For him things had to be as productive as possible, everything had to be happening on time and that

helped him and his son to succeed." Paul told the story of his great-great grandfather Lazarus Straus, father of Isidor, who first settled in Georgia after arriving in the United States. After the Civil War Lazarus moved his family north to Philadelphia and then to New York. He'd accumulated some debt as a result of the desperate conditions in the south during the war and began paying off this debt. People who lent him money asked him how much he expected to repay. He said, "100 percent of it. I expect to leave my children a good name if I leave them nothing else." Paul said, "He had integrity and that was an enormous ingredient for the achievement of immigrants."

He also pointed to another commonality, the willingness to use their financial success for public service and philanthropy. "The Straus family felt the importance of civic service. It was an absolute obligation to a country that had given them so much."



©wwLaura Weber
Irving Straus

During the question and answer period, Anna Straus, wife of Irving Straus, told the audience that she was born in Hannover, Germany but moved with her family to Israel when she was just a small girl. Although they lived in Israel for many years, they maintained a totally Germanic household, speaking German, dressing as they did back in Germany, and eating German style foods. Irving Straus, grandson of Nathan Straus added a charming story to conclude the presentations. His family was very friendly with Albert Einstein, a German immigrant himself. Irving said, "I was maybe ten years old and I met Albert Einstein. I talked to him and he listened to me as if I had something really important to say. He was such a lovely person."

As the panel discussion ended Paul Kurzman thanked the Consul General, "It's your leadership that made this happen."

The documentary will be posted on the German Consulate's website which is currently undergoing an update. A limited number of copies of the video are available from the Consul General. Please contact me if you would like one, or more information about the project.

The Letters of Sara Straus - 1854

SHS board member Paul A. Kurzman recently gave me two letters written by Sara Straus in 1854. Each was written shortly before she left Germany to join her husband Lazarus in the United States. In a sense, they are letters of good-bye. One letter is to her unnamed brother-in-law and sister-in-law and the other is to her stepdaughter Karoline (Lina), daughter of Lazarus and his first wife Fannie Levi.

Shortly before writing these letters Sara suffered a paralytic stroke. Her arm and hand troubled her the rest of her life. We have several letters that reference her being unable to write, or being slightly better and taking up the pen. In the first letter presented here it is clear that Sara cannot write much at that time. We don't know which sister-in-law helped her to write these letters. We are doing research to put the pieces together.

The letters were written on July 9, 1854. Sara left Otterberg on August 24, 1854 accompanied by her father, four children and a nursemaid. She and the children traveled the eight kilometers to Kaiserslautern in a carriage while her father was on horseback. From there she and the children took a train to Forbach, a French frontier town where they remained overnight. The next morning they proceeded to Paris. On August 29th they left LeHavre on the maiden voyage of the steamship "St. Louis," arriving in New York on September 13, 1854. Lazarus met them at the dock.

We are indebted to Dr. Andreas J. Schwab of Beaconsfield, Quebec, Canada for his excellent translations.

Sara Straus,

My dear sister-in-law started writing, but for the last month it strains her much more than before, so I took over the pen.

Otterberg, the 9th of July 1854

Dear Brother-in-law and dear Sister-in-law,

I am very sorry that I could not keep my promise to write you as soon as I arrived, but I was really downcast. I could not at all get used to the idea that Lina could not and was not allowed to come with me. It hurts me a lot in my heart. In the last two years I had to get used to so many humiliating and heart-breaking things. Yet I am consoled by the thought that Lina will be able to rejoin me in very few years.

For the affectionate and friendly welcome during my stay at your home I say my most cordial thanks to you.

My departure from here will be at the beginning of August. In any case I shall write you again. So, for today, my cordial goodbye.

*Your faithful sister-in-law
Sara.*

Now it is your turn, my dear good Karoline. How is it going with you. Have you not yet received any letter from your esteemed fiancé while I was away? This interests me much. I want to thank you many times for the pleasant company and for that of the esteemed Mr. Joseph. I will try to find very soon the opportunity to reciprocate at least partially.

*Your friend that loves you dearly forever and that will never forget you,
Sara.*

*My good dear Lina, I have nothing else to ask you than to be obedient, in good spirit, and joyful, to listen carefully to the words of your teacher, and to transmit my friendly regards to her. As soon as we arrive in America we shall write you.
Your loving mother*



And you, my kindhearted and beloved Palmyre, I think of you so often, and I have been telling a lot about you, and you can be sure that it was always good things. You and dear Lina, each of you will get from me as a small keepsake a little silk apron; I am sorry that I could not get them in the same color. Thus, my dear girls, (unreadable) and give me the pleasure of a swift reply.

The above. Please transmit my regards to the whole family, most of all to dear Flora, the grandparents and also the good Simon and his esteemed wife. I greet my dear uncle and aunt and my dear Lina and Palmir

*Your ever loving
Isidor Straus*

Hermine, too, sends you her greetings, dear Palmir and Lina. She is crying because she is not allowed to write. Isidor cannot stop talking about dear Palmyra.

*Mr. Abraham Levi
Bleikastel
Postage Paid*

As you can see from the letter from your uncle, we have received the message from you dear father. Thus, dear Lina, you are determined to travel to America next year so G_d wills. So be well prepared so that you learn your mother tongue thoroughly and do not fall behind your peers. And, above all, that you acquire a large knowledge in domestic affairs, and keep following the advice of your dear aunt who certainly means you well from her heart.

Your loving S. St.

*I, too, dear Lina, greet you cordially,
Your friend Augusta*

Hermine greets you too, dear Lina, also Isidor, Nathan, and dear Oskar. When, dear Lina, are you going to come home for once? I would love this very much.

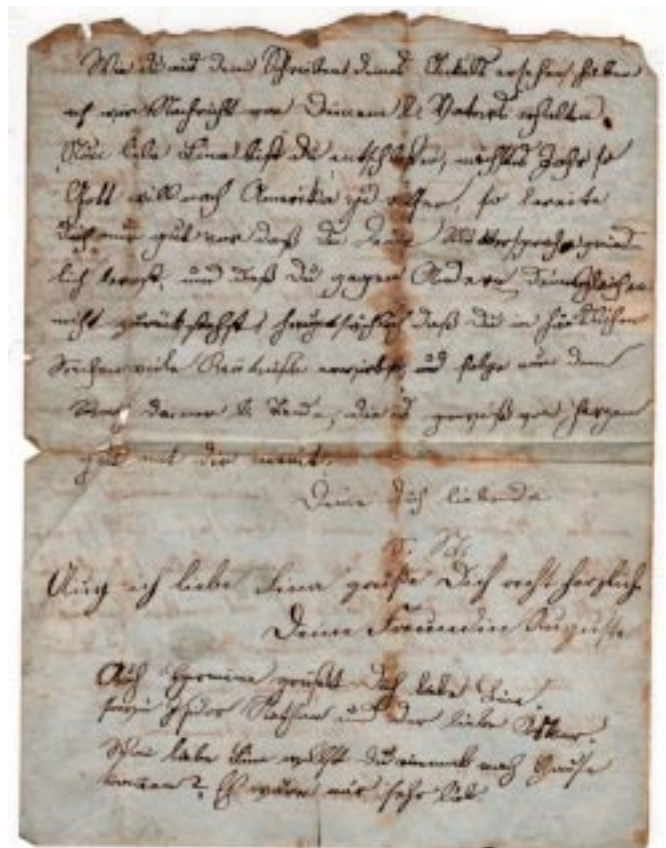
Last Saturday I received a letter from my dear husband, and in order to keep my promise I inform you that my dear husband has written me a partly satisfying letter. His is doing, thanks G_d, good business, and he will travel to Philadelphia before the end of February where he wants to buy the supply of his merchandise for half a year. Please do not take offense, dear brother-in-law and dear sister-in-law, that I hesitated so long to answer the letter, as it was my intent to wait for a letter from my good husband, and I am answering now with pleasure, although it is still hard for my with my ailing limb, as you can see, my dear ones. Hoping that all of you, my dear ones, are still doing quite well, I conclude with many greetings to dear Karoline, Palmir, and Joseph, and if I may ask to add greetings on my behalf to dear Alphons, your faithful friend,
Sara Straus

We have much to learn from these letters. Even after almost 20 years of research, I was surprised to read about Palmyra, Mr. Joseph and dear Alphons. When Isidor wrote letters to family members during the Civil War, he did reference a Mr. Joseph. But until we saw him mentioned in these two letters written by Sara in 1854, we had no other indication that he was closely related to the family.

Although family lore suggests that Karoline stayed in Germany because she was no longer a child, and had established a life for herself there, we had no idea she was engaged. It is unclear from the content of these letters if the fiance referred to is Mr. Joseph or if her fiance is nameless and is, in fact, Moritz Weiss, the man she eventually married. We didn't know about the very good relationship between Sara and Karoline or that Sara wanted and expected her to join the family in the United States. Although we have hundreds of letters written by Lazarus, Isidor, Nathan and Oscar, none gave any indication of their close relationship and the warm feelings family members had for their daughter and sibling who remained in Germany.

In the many letters we have in our collection, Isidor wrote to Augusta on more than one occasion. Although I am not certain, I believe that Augusta is the youngest daughter of Salomon Straus and his third wife, Sara Mayer. Salomon was the brother of Lazarus' father Isaac. For those of you who traveled to Germany in 2006, it was the house of Salomon Straus we visited in Otterberg. He was said to be the richest man in town and a leader of the community. Augusta was born in 1840 which made her two years younger than Karolina and five years older than Isidor.

When Sara wrote of the "humiliating and heartbreaking things" in her first letter, she was, not doubt, referring to the troubled economic times and the bankruptcy claimed by Lazarus in 1952. Sara remained in Otterberg with her children for two years before Lazarus was sufficiently established in Talbotton GA and could send for them. Because of her handicap, we have few letters written in Sara's hand or expressing her thoughts. These two letters are an important addition to our collection.



Above: Page One
Below: Page Two

Sara Straus' letter to her step-daughter Karoline (Lina) Straus



Max Altschuler: His Experiences in the New World

The following article, which is excerpted here, was originally written by Johannes Bruno for "Die Rheinpfalz" newspaper. The article describes Max Altschuler's experiences in the New World. The information in these letters, which were written in 1897, were sent to Max's brother Julius who remained in Speyer. Max and Julius were the sons of Ferdinand and Henriette Maas Altschuler. Henriette was the daughter of Abraham and Babette Straus Maas.

Max's son Otto Altschuler sent this article to SHS. Otto wrote, "My father Max was 26 years old (in 1897) when he went to New York to meet his relatives for the first time, and possibly to find employment. According to the official statistics, the migration of Germans to far away countries has again increased. The number in the last five years fluctuated between 145,000 and 155,000. In the history of the Pfalz there have always been periods when people left their homeland in order to find better job opportunities, or to learn about other countries as visitors. This is also visible from the letter Max (born 1872) wrote to his brother Julius (born 1874) on June 9, 1897, in which he talks about his journey and his first attempts at finding his way in the new world. Both Max and Julius had a close relationship. Other members of the family include their father Ferdinand, mother Henriette, born Maas, and the three "girls" - Jenny (1871), Coelestine (1873) and Carolina. All the children were born in Speyer.

"In the beginning of the journey Max had to fight motion sickness. "In Paris I took a 6 o'clock train to Le Havre, where I arrived shortly before midnight. Then I went straight to the ship which brought me to Southampton, much lighter however, since during the trip I have ... I had seasickness, or better the seasickness had me. The weather was also too rough." The rest of the journey to the new world aboard St. Paul went really well for him, except on a few occasions. He was a man with a zest for life, so he enjoyed good company during the trip. "In the presence of my French acquaintances I felt like among old friends. We had such a good time on the steamer that upon arrival to NY on Saturday morning May 1, we were all really upset to see the end of this cheerful companionship."

In the land of unlimited opportunities, where he wanted to learn the export trade, he experienced the first disappointment, because there appeared to be no welcome committee, as promised, and he was unable to get employment. "Upon landing I found neither cousin Karl nor madam Schwarz, I had already been a long time on land when they arrived. Sir Isidor Straus had no use for me. On Monday I went to talk to (L. St U.S. ?) again nothing. The business is too bad, personnel too numer-

ous. So I have wandered for a week in the "Eldorado." You can imagine how I felt."

He then set all gears in motion in order to find a position. "I have put an ad in the official newspaper, written letters offering my services, found references at different business corporation, everything in vain."

But Oscar Straus, who like Isidor, was his mother's relative, has not forgotten about him. He provided a position for him in an office at Macy's from May 10. "I was given the place in an office only temporary, until something more suitable comes along. In my office there are ca 140 ladies and only four gentlemen. You can't imagine how people work here! The office is divided into departments and personnel from each department is so focused on their work ... that the work is almost the same each day (monotonous) when compared to home. They write so quickly and add in a blink. One really has to work hard, not to fall behind."



The Altschuler Children: Max, Julius, Jenny, Coelestine and Carolina

He was probably not used to the 12 hour work schedule and with his wage he was not able to make big leaps. "In the morning I creep out of bed at 6, half past 6. Quarter to 7 I have my coffee, at 7 I am on the train. At 7:30 I arrive at the office, where I immediately take hold of the book that keeps record of the arrival time. I have to keep the arrival of personnel precisely under control. No employee can get out. They even eat in the firm at noon in a lunchroom assigned for this purpose. During the midday I have one hour break, when I get out in the fresh air and eat my bagels. Then I continue to work until 6 PM. By 6:30 I am home, and I have my dinner at 7. In the evening I feel weak and dead tired. First, I am not used to this life style. Second, I don't get to move enough. I earn 8 dollars per week, and that goes only as far as they say. I eat and lodge at Ms. Schwarz, that is at her in laws. I pay 5 dollars for the rent, 50 cents for the laundry, 50 cents for the barber, the train and the street car ca 1 dollar, money here drains quickly, even more quickly than by you."

Nevertheless, he earned 2 dollars more than his cousin Karl, the salesman in the same firm. On Sundays he was able to meet with his former acquaintances. "Last Sunday I was addressed by Aloys Mayer from Speyer, former friends and colleague of Ludwig Haas at the concert. I haven't recognized him right away. He heard from his parents that I was here, and brought me greetings from you. On Sunday I am invited to Mr. Nathan Low." In the end he congratulated his brother Julius on the occasion of his 21st birthday on July 21: "I wish you all the luck, that you celebrate this occasion in good health, many,

many times. I hope to hear from you soon, best regards from your pudgy brother Max."

Max stayed in New York until the beginning of 1899, but he didn't feel quite good in his own skin. American life-style didn't go well with his understanding of life, so he returned gladly back to Europe, this is to Karlsbad, since this town was the centre of the porcelain and glass industry. He was engaged there as a buyer for Nathan Straus & Son, (Macy's) for the rest of his life. Unexpectedly their father Ferdinand died in Speyer on December 30, 1910. Max married Suse, born Altschul, a Parisian woman who he met in Karlsbad, Austria, They were married on January 12, 1913 in Vienna, Austria. Since the German empire got into World War I at the beginning of August the following year, Max, who moved with his family to Speyer, served as an officer of the "Landsturm-Pionier-Erztz-Kompany" (?some kind of army unit) of the Second Army Corps on the front. He was decorated many times, which is a clear evidence of his love for his homeland. One April 18, 1918 his son Herbert was born in Speyer. After the end of the war, Max settled with his professional activity in Karlsbad, was a town in Czechoslovakia, now Czech Republic. On January 25, 1920, his son Otto was born.

As the National Socialists took over power in Germany on January 1933, Max guessed that what it meant for Europe was again the war, the harshness of which he was already familiar. So he discussed the political situation with his brother Julius in Speyer. At the same time he undertook his emigration procedure. Since the immigration policies in the USA were very restrictive at the time, in his application for the visa at the consulate he explicitly drew attention to the fact that he worked for an American firm and that he had already lived in New York for some time. With the help of Mrs. Claire Kohns, a member of the Straus family, he and his family obtained an early affidavit to obtain entry to the US, a visa. He was allowed to leave the "Protektorat Boehmen and Maehren" occupied by Germany, almost penniless, and on July 23, 1939 set aboard the Cunard White Star ship "Georgic" for the US. 39 days later, World War II broke out.

The daily struggle for survival began again. Suse managed to get a job as a worker in a laundry store, while Max got a small pension and their children were able to survive. His brother

Julius managed to immigrate to Great Britain on February 22, 1939. Sadly, all their sisters ended a few years later in Nazi concentration camps. Only on January 19, 1948 was Julius able to return to Speyer. This was exactly a week after Max died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania without ever forgetting his German nationality. He certainly later understood that he owed his and his family's survival to his first journey to America. What a unique coincidence!"

Editor's Note: The first time I met Otto Altschuler he told me the story of his family's emigration. They were sponsored by Claire Kohns. The Altschuler family arrived in New York with no money, But each of the men; Otto, his brother Herbert and their father, each had a custom-made tuxedo because they knew they would be invited to dinner at the apartment of their "rich" cousin and they wanted to be certain they were dressed properly.

When they arrived in New York on 1939, Otto and his brother Herbert quickly adapted to their life in their new country. Each served in the US military during World War II, only a short time after emigrating. After the war Otto continued in the occupation he learned in Karlsbad. He was a ceramics engineer. His brother Herbert became an accountant. Today the brothers and most of their families live in New Jersey or southeastern Pennsylvania, still grateful for the opportunities they've had in their adopted country.



Max and Suse Altschuler 1912



Max Altschuler 1945



The Altschuler firm in Speyer

Macy's: The Store. The Star. The Story.

by Robert M. Grippo

On October 28, 1858, Rowland H. Macy, a native of Nantucket and a former seaman, opened a ladies' and gentlemen's emporium in New York City. The businessman had experienced several failed ventures, and many felt that his new enterprise wouldn't last very long. But Macy firmly believed that his "Fancy Dry Goods" store would captivate New York's hustling crowds -- and he was right.

Macy's: The Store. The Star. The Story. traces a hundred and fifty years of one of the country's premier retailers. The story begins with Rowland Macy's colorful roots in Massachusetts. It then details the founding of the store, including the innovative advertising and pricing practices that made the fledgling business stand out from its competitors. Later chapters describe how Macy's made history by being the first retailer to promote a woman to an executive position, how Isidor and Nathan Straus created the beautiful flagship store on Herald Square, how the once-cluttered lower level became the famous cellar, and much more. Throughout, lively text, rare photographs, and colorful illustrations highlight the people and events--the trends, tragedies, and traditions--that transformed Macy's from a modest storefront into the World's Largest Store.

More than just the account of a successful business, Macy's is the story of how one man's dream found a home in the heart of Manhattan. Whether you're a long-time Macy's customer or just someone who enjoys watching the legendary Thanksgiv-

ing Day Parade, this book will draw you into the continuing miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street.

An Illustrated History of America's Most Celebrated Retail Emporium



The Star. The Store. The Miracle.



Robert M. Grippo

About the Author: Robert M. Grippo grew up on Long Island, New York, and spent twenty years in the credit card industry. His earliest childhood memories include watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and enjoying the classic film *Miracle* on 34th Street. This led to a lifelong avocation as a Macy's historian, and even to a brief stint as a Macy's balloonist. Now retired, Robert is a full-time writer whose works include *Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade*.

The Straus Historical Society worked extensively with the author and the editor, contributing information and making certain that the information presented in this book is accurate. Many photographs from SHS's archives were used. Family members and friends of the Straus family will find the information presented in this book compelling. After all, the story

of Macy's includes the history of the Straus family, owners of the World's Largest Store for almost one hundred years.

Thank you to Joanne Abrams, editor, Square One Publishers for permission to use the text for this article.

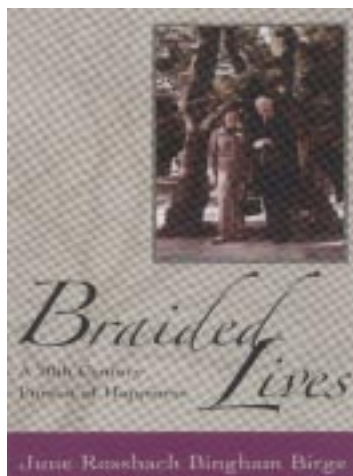
Macy's: The Store. The Star. The Story, published by Square One Publishers, is available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc. in either hardcover or quality paperback. The hardcover is \$40 and the paperback is \$30. Both include shipping and handling. A portion of each sale supports SHS.



Braided Lives: A 20th Century Pursuit of Happiness

By June Rossbach Bingham Birge

As a cousin to the celebrated Lehman family, Birge grew up among colorful and eccentric members of New York's high society. Following a whirlwind romance, she married Jonathan Bingham, who served as ambassador to the United Nations and became a nine-term congressman from the Northeast Bronx. Her own career began with freelance writing for newspapers and magazines. She went on to become a successful biographer and playwright. With candor and wit, Bingham brings to life the events and the people she encountered, including such luminaries as Katherine Graham, Indira Gandhi, W. Averell Harriman, and U Thant.



The Straus Historical Society is the publisher of record for this interesting 480 page paperback autobiography. It includes 20 black and white illustrations.

Braided Lives is available from the Society. If you would like to purchase a copy, please send your check for \$30.00 (includes shipping and handling) to the Straus Historical Society, Inc. Post Office Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416.

Thank you to Mary Selden Evans of Syracuse University Press for permission to use the text for this article.

Friends of Straus Park

By Joan Adler

Friends of Straus Park had more luck with the weather this year than last year. Several planned events went off without a hitch and without rain, something that delighted both members of FSP and neighbors.

On Wednesday, June 11th from 5:30 to 7:30 FSP hosted our Evening in the Park event. Eli Yamin and his quartet performed. Eli wrote, "It was a beautiful night with an appreciative audience of all ages. Some danced, some listened, some friends stopped by for a lick or two on their way home from the market. We played quartet: Eli Yamin, piano; Chris Byars, saxophones; JJ Shakur, bass; Dave Gibson, drums. We played swinging standards like Stompin' at the Savoy and originals by myself like I Want to Be a Teacher and Katiana's New Start from my CD release, You Can't Buy Swing, due out in the Fall."

One of the most popular events of the year is the Book and Photography Fair. This year it was held on Saturday, July 12th from 10 to 4. Straus Park was created to memorialize Isidor and Ida Straus who went down on Titanic. So the people of the community feel particularly connected to them. Ian Robertson sold Titanic memorabilia at the Fair. This was one of the most popular booths. The Titanic materials were of special interest this day. They provoked lively discussions and were the source of many sales. Many vendors participated. Crowds of shoppers and viewers came to enjoy the lovely photography and to buy books.

A schedule of events for the remainder of the 2008 season is printed below. Both events have been crowd pleasers in the past and we expect them to be wonderful again. Please join us in the Park at West 106th Street between West End Avenue and Broadway.

Saturday, October 18th

(Rain date: October 19th)

12th Annual Art in the Park

**A day-long celebration of
art, music, dance & food**

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Friday, December 19th

Luminaria and Song

Lights and music for the winter solstice

6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

If you would like more information about Friends of Straus Park, would like to make a contribution, or to suggest artists or ideas for future events, please contact Friends of Straus Park, PO Box 2021, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. E.mail can be sent to Margaret G. Kavanau, secretary: margkav@msn.com



Photo supplied by Eli Yamin

Eli Yamin

Eli Yamin and his group performing at Straus Park



Photo by Margaret G. Kavanau



Photo by Margaret G. Kavanau

Above and below: Book and Photography Fair



Photo by Margaret G. Kavanau

Royal Austria Porcelain by James D. Henderson, Jr. DVM

I am pleased to announce the February 2008 publication of *Royal Austria Porcelain* by Dr. James D. Henderson, Jr. This is his second book. His first book, *Bohemian Decorated Porcelain*, was also published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd.

Jim and I have been corresponding for years. SHS supplied Jim with information about L. Straus & Sons for his first book and also put him in touch with the descendants of the Guthertz family because Oscar and Edgar Guthertz, brothers of Lina Guthertz Straus (Nathan's wife), ran their porcelain factories. Jim's new book contains beautiful photographs depicting the many styles of porcelain made at the Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) porcelain factories in Western Bohemia.

Nathan Straus worked in his family's china, crockery and porcelain business, L. Straus & Sons in New York City. He was their outside salesman. He traveled throughout the United States opening new markets. He also made buying trips to Europe. On one of these trips he met Lina Guthertz and her family. Within five weeks Nathan and Lina were married.

Lina's physician father died in 1866. Her mother taught the girls of the family needlework. In the late 1870's and early 1880's Lazarus Straus assisted the Guthertz family by providing educational opportunities for the Guthertz sons. Sometime before 1883 Oscar Guthertz worked for the Strauses in their Limoges factory. He proved to be an innovative designer who was awarded several United States patents for his designs.

L. Straus & Sons established New York and Rudolstadt Pottery in 1882. Edgar Guthertz apprenticed at the glassware factory in Kamenicky Senov (Steinschoengau) Bohemia. He joined the Strauses pottery firm and by 1893 he was its vice president.

Maximilian Marx was the son of Lazarus' sister Sara. He and Oscar Guthertz formed a partnership, Marx & Guthertz. They had an exclusive contract to export their wares to L. Straus & Sons in New York. Later Edgar Guthertz became a partner in this firm. The photographs from this book come from porcelains produced at Marx & Guthertz and also from Oscar & Edgar Guthertz' factories.

If you have any interest in the family porcelain businesses, or if you are a collector of porcelains, this book will make a wonderful addition to your personal library. You may purchase the book through your local bookstore, from Amazon.com, from the publisher, Schiller Publications or from the author, James D. Henderson, Jr., D.V.M., 7350 North Longview Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53209, jhenderson4@wi.rr.com, phone 414-351-2309. If you would like a signed copy, please contact Jim. His website is: <http://home.wi.rr.com/bohemianchina>



Please let me know what you want to read about in this newsletter. If you want to see articles about a particular topic or about a branch of the family, let me know. If you want to contribute an article, I'd be please to include it.

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coming Soon: *My Family: I Could Write a Book*
by Edith Maas Mendel

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 Tuesday, September 23, 2008 at the office of board member Paul A. Kurzman, 129 East 79th Street, New York at 6 PM. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society. This invitation is extended so that anyone interested in the SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share his/her views. Please contact Joan Adler 631-265-0383 or Paul A. Kurzman 212-452-7035 for further information.