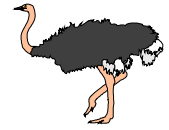


# STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 11 Number 1

Newsletter

August 2009

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

Several years ago I was asked to compile a list of the monuments, buildings, memorials and collections dedicated to members of the Straus family. While the following list is in no way complete, it is my hope that upon reading this article you will be inspired to notice other monuments dedicated to family members and let me know about them. If you have additional information about any monuments, buildings, memorials or collections noted here, I welcome that information as well.

Straus Junior High School, Public School 109 is located on Dumont Street in Brooklyn, NY. It was dedicated on April 14, 1916. This school named the boys department for Isidor and the girls department for Ida. Family members Jesse Isidor



Straus, Percy Straus, Sara Straus Hess, Hermine Straus Kohns and Lee Kohns attended the dedication ceremony. A *New York Times* article about the dedication ceremony stated that the local school board "emphasized the moral worth and the unassuming dignity of the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Straus and of the incentives and inspiration to noble effort the names should furnish to succeeding generations of pupils." This was one of the first schools in New York City to honor a person by using his/her name.



Isidor and Ida Straus School, Public School 198, 1700 Third Avenue at 96<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY was dedicated in 1958 to honor the Straus'

philanthropy. It is the second school in New York City to bear Isidor and Ida's names. Isidor's daughter Sara Straus Hess and grandson Jack Isidor Straus attended the dedication ceremony. The program at this school is an accelerated one for gifted students. SHS has worked with their active parent's association and has presented information to the students about Isidor and Ida Straus.

Nathan Straus Preparatory School, Public School 140, 123 Ridge Street, New York, NY. This school was dedicated in 1959 with



Nathan's grandson Nathan Straus III representing the family. On June 5, 2009 a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was held there. Grandson Irving Lehman Straus and great grandson Hugh Grant Straus III attended the 2009 ceremony. An article about this ceremony appears on pages 8 and 9 of the current newsletter.

Nathan Straus Playground, Rivington and Attorney Streets in New York City. Information from the city's Parks Department states: "... the city of New York acquired land on the two blocks in the Lower East Side for a new elementary school and playground. Before P. S. 140 opened in 1959, part of Attorney Street was closed and several buildings were torn down to make room for the playground. Landscape architect George C. Green designed the relatively conventional area with a variety of play equipment as well as basketball, volleyball and handball courts."

*"The greatest thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving."  
Oliver Wendell Holmes*

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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 Vice Chair:  
Barbie L. Gurgan**



Greetings to all from the State of Texas, where it is 105°F in the shade!

As I think about all that Straus Historical Society has done and what it stands for, I am reminded of how important our mission is, not only to our family, but our nation as a whole. I am specifically drawn to reflect on how, during the midst of crisis, our ancestors have seen and grabbed a hold of opportunities to do something great in spite of the circumstances,

to bring about success, not only for themselves, but for those family members, friends, neighbors and societies which their lives touched.

As we all know, about a year ago our nation experienced an economic downturn that has given us quite a ride since it began. I am reminded of how Isidor Straus began his career during a time when our nation was experiencing a time of even greater peril and difficulty, that is, the Civil War. During a time when trade was cut off in the South, the ports were blockaded, and the economic situation of the region was very bleak, Isidor did not let that discourage or stop him. He had the guts to run the blockades and make a small fortune for himself and his family trading the South's cotton in England. Therefore, because of this great life story that we keep alive, and many more inspiring life stories of our family members, we should continue to give our ever increasing support and involvement to the Straus Historical Society. This is so that we can not only continue to inspire each other, but to bring much needed inspiration to our nation today.

One reason why Isidor, his brothers Nathan and Oscar, their sister Hermine and our other family members were so successful is because they were fortunate enough to live in the United States of America, a land that guarantees liberty and justice for all. They had the freedom to develop so successfully in the areas of business, politics, benevolence and more. They had the freedom to demonstrate that the American Dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, not only worked well for them, but was given openhandedly with the countless many who were less fortunate, with whom they generously shared their blessings. This is why it is important to support the Straus Historical Society. Small as it may be, we are playing a very important role in helping to preserve and promote these ideals and freedoms that our ancestors lived by as Strauses, and as Americans, so that we can continue to enjoy these values today and pass them on to our children for tomorrow.

Jesse Isidor Straus School, Public School 199, 270 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street, New York. This school was dedicated in 1964. In attendance were Jesse's widow Irma Nathan Straus, son Jack and his wife Margaret, grandson Kenneth and his wife Elizabeth (Chou), great grandchildren Melinda and Timothy and nieces and nephew Alison, Elizabeth and Robert Levy. A two part biography of Jesse Isidor Straus appeared in the August 2004 and February 2005 issues of the SHS newsletter. They can be found on the Archives page of our website: [www.straushistoricalsociety.org](http://www.straushistoricalsociety.org)



Nathan Straus Children's and Young Adult Library was dedicated in May 1941 with Nathan's son Hugh Grant Straus in attendance. It was the first children's and young adult library in Manhattan. The original building at 348 East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street near First Avenue once housed the Nathan Straus free pasteurized milk laboratory. Almost



Nathan Straus Milk Laboratory, Later Nathan Straus Children's and Young Adult Library  
348 East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, NYC

12,000 books were in the original collection. In 1953 the collection was moved to the Donnell Branch of the New York Public Library at 20 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. At the Donnell Branch the collection was revised and became Nathan Straus Teen Central serving children ages twelve through eighteen, grades seven through twelve. The Donnell Branch was recently closed and the collection moved to the Schwarzman Building at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Teen Central contains approximately 28,000 books, 70 magazine titles, its own collection of CDs and DVDs and twelve computer stations.

Nathan Straus Jr. Recreational Park, Town of North Castle, Westchester County, NY. This 7.7 acre park contains a small grassy area with no playground equipment and a large wooded area located in the Quarry Heights section of North Castle on Old Orchard Road. Nathan Jr. and Helen Straus owned a home at Quarry Lake. Their property abutted Old Orchard Road. In September 1966 the land for this park was donated by the four sons of Nathan Straus Jr.: Nathan Straus III, Barnard Sachs Straus, Irving Lehman Straus and R. Peter Straus. Al-

though it is not an active park, the town of North Castle mows the grassy area and maintains the parkland. During a recent visit it became clear that the area's residents use the park as a lovely, peaceful place to walk their dogs. In 1968 the sons of Nathan Jr. also sold 130 acres to what is now part of the Cranberry Lake Nature Preserve.



Bronze plaque on the doors at Macy's, 34<sup>th</sup> Street, New York dedicated to Isidor and Ida Straus after the Titanic disaster. The plaque, "a voluntary token of sorrowful employees" reads:



"Their lives were beautiful and their deaths glorious." The name of every employee who worked at Macy's at the time is inscribed on the plaque. It

was presented in the restaurant of the Macy's Building on June 8, 1913 with almost 5,000 people in attendance. Isidor and Ida's son Jesse Isidor Straus accepted the plaque on his family's behalf.

Straus Park, West 106<sup>th</sup> Street between West End Avenue and Broadway, New York. This lovely park contains an allegorical statue called "Memory" and a fountain dedicated to the Strauses. The architect of the park was Evart Tracy and the artist whose sculpture, "Memory" graces the park was Augustus Lukeman. Behind the statue there is a plinth forming a bench which is inscribed with a Biblical phrase from II Samuel: "In their death they were not divided." This site was chosen because it is near where the Strauses home was located on Broadway and West 105<sup>th</sup> Street. An active civic association, Friends of Straus Park, maintains the park and its landscaping as well as hosting concerts and fairs there. Information about these events can be found on the SHS website. An article about the April



1997 rededication ceremony of Straus Park appeared in the August 1997 issue of the SHS newsletter.

Oscar S. Straus Memorial in Washington DC was dedicated by President Harry S. Truman in 1947. The proposal to honor



One of two sculptures that is part of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial

was actually made following his death in 1926 by a Joint Resolution of Congress. The government donated a site on the Federal Triangle and agreed to provide for its maintenance. Controversies over the site delayed construction until 1939. By then the cost of construction had escalated so much that the plan had to be pared down. A much simpler plan was drawn up and approved by January 1941, but the declaration of war delayed its construction. It wasn't until 1947 that the monument was finally completed. The Oscar S. Straus Memorial, comprised of two sculptures and a memorial fountain, can be found between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues at 14<sup>th</sup> Street. An article about this monument and its rededication appeared in the Society's newsletter. You can access the article in the February 1999 issue of SHS's newsletter on the Archives page of our website. A biography of Oscar Salomon Straus can also be accessed from the Archives page in the August 2003 newsletter.

Straus Square on the corner of Rutgers, Canal and Essex Streets, New York, NY was dedicated in 1931 following the death of Nathan Straus. A rededication ceremony was held in June



Virginia Bersohn, Thomas P. Straus, Anne Gertler and Hugh Grant Straus III with the rededication plaque at Straus Square

1998 attended by family members Barnard Sachs Straus Sr., Ann Straus Gertler, Virginia Straus Bersohn, Hugh Grant Straus III, Tracy Straus, Thomas P. Straus and Paul A. Kurzman. This triangular "square" is near the site of

the first milk station. A report issued by the Commission on Public Thoroughfares proclaimed: "... the designation of Straus Square pays tribute to the memory of a beloved son of New York who distinguished himself as a citizen, philanthropist and patriot."

The Straus Family Papers can be found in the New York Public Library, Rare Books & Manuscript Division, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street & Fifth Avenue, New York, NY. Materials from this collection came from many sources. Major contributors to the collection were Flora Stieglitz Straus, daughter-in-law of Nathan and Lina, and the R. H. Macy's & Company Archives. <http://catalog.nypl.org/>

The Nathan Straus Papers can also be found at the New York Public Library. Use the URL above to request the Finding Aid.

The Oscar S. Straus Papers can be found at the Library of Congress in Washington DC. This extensive collection includes speeches, books, information about his public service, photographs and even old films of Oscar S. Straus. Many of the photographs are accessible through the LOC's catalogue for viewing on your computer. It is also possible to see old films of OSS from your computer. You can find information about this collection at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

The papers of Nathan Straus, Jr. can be found in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY. Nathan Straus Jr. was the administrator of the United States Housing Authority in the FDR administration from 1937 to 1942. Access to the Finding Aid is available on the FDR Presidential Library's website: [www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu). The collection is available for public inspection on site.

Oral histories done by Nathan Straus Jr. and Roger Williams Straus Jr. can be found at the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University, 801 Butler Library in New York City. Both are available for public inspection following approval by library staff.

The Papers of David A. Morse, Director-General of the International Labor Organization can be found at the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University Archives, Public Policy Papers, 65 Olden Street, Princeton, NJ. Ben Primer is the University Archivist for Rare Books and Manuscripts. [www.princeton.edu](http://www.princeton.edu)

Nathan Straus Synagogue and Jewish Center was located at 3512 DeKalb Avenue in the Norwood section of the Bronx NY. Its congregation was Orthodox, In November 2005 the center, which had been purchased by Montefiore Medical Center in the 1990's, was dedicated as the



M o s h o l u  
Montefiore Com-  
munity Center. It  
also houses  
Montefiore's  
School Health  
Program. This  
program provides  
wellness services  
to more than

10,000 children per year. The building's name, Nathan Straus Jewish Center, can still be seen above the entrance to the building.

Straus Window at Montefiore Congregation, Hewitt Place, Bronx, NY was dedicated to the memory of Isidor and Ida Straus on May 27, 1912. The window bore the inscription, "Where thou wilt go I will go, Where thou wilt die I will die." Family members Percy and Herbert Straus, Supreme Court Judge Irving Lehman and Mrs. Lehman, Hermine Kohns and her son Lee Kohns were present at the dedication. This congregation is no longer functioning and the building now houses the United Church-Iglesia Unida, also referred to as the Hewitt Place United Church. (I am trying to learn if the window is still part of the church. It is possible that it is behind one of the opaque plexiglass windows on the side of the entrance to the church.) At the 1912 dedication of the Straus window Edward Lauterbach spoke of his relationship with the Straus family. "No one was more to be praised for the advance of the Jewish people in this country than my dear friend Lazarus Straus. His descendants have nobly carried out the duty and the trust that devolved upon them." He described Isidor as "calm, modest, unassuming, self-obliterative, always actuated by love for the people and interested in every scheme of altruism. ... There was no sectarianism in Isidor Straus. He gave alike to Christian and to Jew."



S t r a u s - K o h n s  
Mausoleum, Beth  
El Cemetery,  
Machpela Section,  
Jamaica Avenue,  
Brooklyn, NY.  
Family members  
interred here are:  
Lazarus and Sara



Straus, Nathan and Lina Straus, Oscar and Sarah Straus, Roger and Gladys Straus, Jerome Nathan Straus, Lee and Clara E. Kohns, Hermine and Lazarus Kohns, Ethel Wise, Clarence Elias Straus, Sara Gutherz Straus, Flora Caroline Kohns, and Clara Louisa Kohns. The building has two lovely Tiffany windows and heavy bronze doors. Plaques outside each crypt include the signature of the person interred there. SHS sponsored a walking tour of Beth El Cemetery in June 2007.

Salem Fields Cemetery, Jamaica Avenue, Brooklyn NY is where many family members are buried. Participants of a walking tour in June 2007 visited the final resting place of the Kurzman family, the Lehman family and the Schafer family. Both Beth El and Salem fields are the cemeteries of Congregation Emanu-El in New York City. Additional information about Salem Fields Cemetery can be obtained from SHS.

Straus Family Mausoleum, the Levy family plot, the Hess family plot and the Scheftel family plot are all located at Woodlawn Cemetery, Webster Avenue and E. 233<sup>rd</sup> St., Bronx, NY. The Straus Family Mausoleum was built by Jesse, Percy and Herbert for their families. The remains of Isidor Straus, whose body was recovered after the Titanic disaster, was originally interred at Beth El Cemetery in the Straus-Kohns Mausoleum. Once the Straus Family Mausoleum was built at Woodlawn Cemetery, Isidor's body was moved there and is interred outside the buildings in the courtyard under the replica of a stone galley ship. Susan Olsen is an historian who is associated with The Friends of Woodlawn Cemetery. She is very knowledgeable about the people who are buried at Woodlawn Cemetery and is pleased to give walking tours. SHS sponsored such a tour in June 2006. If you want information about the family members buried at Woodlawn Cemetery, contact Susan Olsen at [SOlsen@thewoodlawncemetery.org](mailto:SOlsen@thewoodlawncemetery.org). Information can also be obtained from SHS.



The Oscar S. Straus family home and property in Purchase, NY was recently bought by a developer who is calling the development Sarosca Farm Estates. Until their recent deaths, the main house, which was originally the home of Oscar and Sarah Straus, was owned and lived in by Oscar and Sarah's grandson Roger Williams Straus Jr. and his wife Dorothea. Dorothea told me that the house

burned to the ground at one time and that the only two items that were saved, and they were untouched, were Oscar's desk from the time when he served as Secretary



of Commerce and Labor and a large portrait of him. Access to the house is from a private street named Sarosca Farm Road. Three houses were originally erected there with the idea that the children of Sarah and Oscar could also live on this property. At the time of my visit in the early 2000's, one house was occupied by Nina Pelikan, a former daughter-in-law of Roger and Dorothea. Another house was owned by someone who was not a family member. Alan Hockstader remembered living in that front house with his parents Albert and Kathryn during World War II and again in 1946. The house belonged to his grandparents, Aline and Leonard A. Hockstader. Aline was the daughter of Oscar and Sarah Straus. Of the original houses, only the main house and Nina Pelikan's house remain. New enormous houses are being built on the remaining property of Sarosca Farm Estates.

The Percy S. Straus home, Hilholme, in Port Chester, NY was located on King Street, across the street from Bernard Gimbel's home. It was sold by his estate after his death in 1944. The new owner, Dr. Alexander Grainick, transformed the house and property into High Point Hos-



pital, a private psychiatric hospital. In 1998 the hospital was destroyed by fire. Percy's grandsons Thomas P. Straus and his late wife Carol, Bradford P. Straus and his wife Diane and I toured the grounds of Hilhome many years ago. We visited the stables, pool, the house and walked around the grounds. It was wonderful to see this lovely old estate before the house and other structures were torn down. Today a housing development is located on that site.

Northview in Mt Kisco, NY was the home of Jesse and Irma Nathan Straus. After Jesse's death Irma had the house demolished because she thought it was too large. She had it rebuilt using the same bricks as the former building, No one but Irma was surprised when it

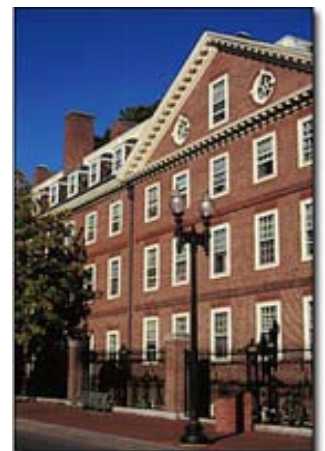


took additional bricks to rebuild the house to her specifications. The house has been owned by Seema Boesky for many years. She has also added onto the house. I was pleased to be invited to tour the house and property several years ago with Pat Harrah, Jesse and Irma's granddaughter. Noview, which was on a adjacent piece of property was the home of Jesse and Irma's son Jack and his wife Margaret. Across the street Beatrice and Robert Levy, Jesse and Irma's daughter and son-in-law owned a home. All three houses are still privately owned today but not by family members.



Nathan Straus Houses are two large apartment buildings located on East 27<sup>th</sup> and East 28<sup>th</sup> Street between Second and Third Avenue in New York City. The buildings, which contain 267 apartments were completed in 1965 and were named for Nathan Straus who was a philanthropist and head of New York City's Department of Health. The New York City's Housing Authority website states that there are 522 residents in these two buildings.

Straus Hall at Harvard Yard, a freshman dormitory, was a gift of Jesse, Percy and Herbert, the three sons of Isidor and Ida Straus. It was built to commemorate their parents who were lost on Titanic. It was the last dormitory to become coeducational. This dorm supported business history. The income from its occupancy was used for an endowment of the Isidor Straus Professorship of Business History. Straus Hall opened in 1926. Robert K. Straus, Jesse's son, was going into his senior year at Harvard



at the time. Even with the family connection he was unable to get a room at Straus Hall because he was not an incoming freshman. In 1982 Straus Hall was turned over to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in exchange for additional endowment credits. The endowment continues to support the Isidor Straus Professorship of Business History.

Jesse I. Straus Chair at Harvard Business School was created and funded by Jack I. Straus and Robert K. Straus in 1973 in memory of their father. Max Bazerman is the current Jesse Isidor Straus Professor of Business Administration. His research is centered on decision making, ethics and negotiation, something that has interested many Straus family members.



Illustration of what Straus Library will look like from Milton Graduate Bulletin June 1928

reads: "In honor and appreciation of Herbert N. and Theresa K. Straus who gave this library to Milton Academy May 1929." In the 1960's the library became too small for the school's needs and a new library was built. Straus Library, as it is still called by students and staff alike in spite of the name change, is now a multifunctional building. Concerts, informal class meetings, student events and college counseling offices are there. Some of the Straus family members who attended Milton Academy and surely studied at Straus Library were: Donald, Edward, George, Jonathan Oliver, John Wendell, Oliver, Kenneth, Elizabeth Browne Straus, Ken's wife.

Dr. Rachel Lauer is director of the Straus Thinking and Learning Center at Pace University, Dyson College of Arts and Sciences in New York City and Westchester. Their website states, "The Straus Thinking and Learning Center serves as an integral component of the Dyson College of Arts and Sciences' mission to provide all Pace students with a general education that fosters a community of learners among faculty and students. The Center will assist faculty in creating, developing, and teaching innovative Core courses that: incorporate interactive learning methodologies; are focused on student learning outcomes; foster critical thinking skills; and link content, pedagogy, competencies, collaborative learning, and reflection." The program was conceived to encourage interdisciplinary

education in a program called Roots of Knowing. The idea for the learning center grew out of Robert K. Straus' interest in the teachings of Alfred Korzybski, the Polish-born scholar and fountainhead of general semantics. It was funded by an endowment from the late Robert K. and Barbara Straus of Santa Barbara, CA.

Nathan and Lina Straus were very active Zionists. They established a domestic science school for girls in 1912, a health bureau for fight malaria and trachoma and a free public kitchen. Nathan and Lina also established a Pasteur Institute and Hadassah's Nathan Straus child welfare stations. The Nathan and Lina Straus Health Center in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israel were built with funds donated by the couple. The cornerstone proclaimed that the health centers were for all the people of the land.

Netanya, a seaside city in Israel was named for Nathan Straus in the hope that he would donate money to them. When he told them that he had no more to give they were disappointed but decided to keep the city's name anyway.



The foundation for the Oscar Straus School in Netanya, Israel was laid in July 1932 in the presence of many Arabs and Jewish notables.

The Educational Alliance on 197 East Broadway in New York City was founded by a group of Jewish philanthropists including Isidor Straus. The building was erected in 1891. Originally it was a settlement house for East European Jews immigrating to the New York City where English was taught as was vocational instruction. Today The Educational Alliance provides community services and activities to neighborhood residents at several locations. The Lee Kohns Cultural Arts Center is part of the original Educational Alliance building. The entrance on Jefferson Street bears his name. Lee Kohns was the son Lazarus and Hermine Straus Kohns. Hermine was the daughter



Dark bar below window reads Lee Kohns Cultural Arts Center

of Lazarus and Sara Straus. A plaque where the Educational Alliance's auditorium is located is dedicated to Lee Kohns. A second plaque bears the name of his son, Robert Lee Kohns and the Robert Lee Kohns Foundation. continued on page 12

# Nathan Straus Preparatory School of Humanities

## Public School 140, New York City

The dedication of the Nathan Straus School, Public School 140, 123 Ridge Street in New York City was held on June 3, 1959. Nathan's great grandson Nathan Straus III was in attendance along with members of the New York City Board of Education, the Manhattan Borough President and local members of the clergy. Fifty years later, on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009 there was an anniversary celebration at the school. Nathan Straus' descendants Irving Lehman Straus and Hugh Grant Straus III were pleased to represent their grandfather and great grandfather respectively. Joan Adler served as the liaison between the school and the Straus Historical Society.



Joan Adler, Hugh Grant Straus III, Vice Principal Carmen Fulford, Irving Lehman Straus in front of a Nathan Straus statue

The program from the school's dedication in 1959 states, "In its name, the school honors the memory of a distinguished citizen, philanthropist and humanitarian, Nathan Straus (1848-1931), who served the City of New York as President of the Board of Health and Commissioner of Parks. A renowned authority in pasteurization, he wrote extensively on this and other social problems. Mr. Straus originated and maintained at his own expense for 28 years a safe and swift method for the distribution of pasteurized milk."

Although June 5<sup>th</sup> was a rainy day, nothing could dampen the spirits of the students and teachers of P. S. 140. All year they had been preparing for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. They already knew quite a lot about Nathan Straus. Guided by artist Gustavo Astos of SMARTWORKS, the students made a life sized Paper Mache statue of Nathan Straus. It was prominently displayed in the front hallway of the school during the anniversary celebration and was brought on-stage in the auditorium for the presentations. Students on several grade levels prepared songs, skits, artwork and poetry that were directly related to their study of the life of Nathan Straus.

Assistant Principal Carmen Fulford and I met in May to

discuss how the SHS could provide assistance. We went over the proposed presentation by the students and Ms. Fulford asked for photographs of Nathan Straus that could be displayed in the school's hallways. She showed me

several original letters and documents that were given to the school by a Coast Guardsman when a South Street Seaport museum was closing. Some of these were letters written by Nathan or Lina Straus regarding the use of the Third Street Pier and other venues for their summer milk depots. Other documents included photographs of the school's construction. After agreeing to loan these materials to SHS for scanning and inclusion

in our archives, Ms. Fulford subsequently agreed to donate them to SHS. We made lifelike copies of them for the school in return. These copies can easily be displayed without worrying about security for the original items or about the need for their acid free display.

When Irving, Hugh and I arrived at the school early Friday morning we were greeted by Ms. Fulford. We were assigned to three student ambassadors who politely and



The students of PS 140 at the 50th anniversary ceremony

ably maneuvered us through the hallways and led us to a room where breakfast was being served. Our ambassadors were courteous, polite and efficient. They carried our umbrellas and outerwear. They made certain each was returned to the right person at the end of our stay. Each student presented "his/her" charge with a t-shirt made especially for the day. It had a logo stating, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Nathan Straus School, Public School 140. And they made cer-

tain we were in the auditorium and in our proper seats on time. Many of the teachers and school's volunteers met us in the breakfast room. It didn't take long before the conversations grew lively. Everyone seemed interested in our relationship to Nathan Straus and many had their own stories to tell. People were excited to meet Nathan's



descendants. Many had questions. It became clear very quickly that everyone at the school knew who Nathan Straus was and were pleased to be associated with an institution that honored his memory.



Then & Now skit presented by the third graders

The anniversary celebration took place in the school's auditorium. Once the students settled into their seats

Ms. Fulford started the program with a welcome to the students, teachers and honored guests. She introduced Irving Lehman Straus and Hugh Grant Straus III. This created quite a stir. Everyone seemed delighted that Straus family members were in attendance.

An invocation was delivered by Pastor Lee Lawrence of the DeWitt Reform Church. Then the Straus Color Guard marched into the auditorium bearing the American flag and the flag of the City of New York. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. It is interesting to note that Ann Straus Gertler, a granddaughter of Nathan Straus, recently donated to SHS the original New York City flag that was presented to her grandfather. She also sent us a photograph of Nathan Straus with his son and two grandsons. The text below that photograph reads, "The citizen who had done the most for New York: Nathan Straus, Philanthropist, Receives a Banner From the City of New York for His Work."

Following the pledge, the third grade classes presented a skit called, "Then and Now." Then the Nathan Straus statue was brought on-stage by two representatives of the fifth grade students who created it. The sixth graders created tenement books which looked like tenement houses. Each student did the artwork on his/her own book and wrote a poem which was read during their presentation.



50<sup>th</sup> anniversary time capsule

A time capsule, a clear plastic globe with artifacts from the students' lives, was then shown to the audience. The time capsule will be on display in the main hallway of the school for fifty years. Then it will be opened in 2059. The student council president and student council vice president showed how much the student body listened to Nathan Straus' message of

philanthropy by telling us about their community service projects. After the presentation of a plaque commemorating the anniversary to Irving Straus, Vice Principal Fulford gave the original letters to Hugh Grant Straus III. Then Ms. Fulford introduced the closing performance by the first and second graders. They sang, "Let It Be," accompanying the lyrics with gestures to illustrate the words. It was a moving finish to a thoroughly wonderful celebration. We were invited to the school's art gallery where



"Let It Be" performed by the first and second grade classes. Tenement books can be seen in the foreground

photographs taken by the students of the photography club were on display. This installation will be traveling to Rome for an exhibit called

"Without Borders." Their work is amazing. It's wonderful that they will be getting the recognition they so richly deserve.

After the official celebration was completed there was an opportunity for the students to meet the Strauses and for us to meet them on a more informal level. Many of the students came forward to shake a hand or to ask a question. We were touched by their interest and excitement and by their knowledge of the events in the life of Nathan Straus.

After the formal presentations were completed we all thanked Ms. Fulford who was the driving force behind this anniversary celebration. We pledge to continue our relationship with the school and to provide whatever support they deem appropriate. It is a pleasure to see the



positive activities happening in this school when so much of what is reported in the media is negative. There could be no better representative of what is right with our students and programs than what is happening at Public School 140, The Nathan Straus School Preparatory of the Humanities, and we were pleased to be invited to participate.

## Straus Day at the Titanic Exhibit

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> SHS board members Paul A. Kurzman and Hugh Grant Straus III and I met with Tomm Miller of Running Subway Productions and a representative from their public relations firm. Tomm's firm is the local producer of the new Titanic exhibit at Discovery Times Square Exposition in New York City. We discussed the possibility of holding "Straus Day" at the Titanic exhibit.

To quote from the promotional material given to us during our meeting, "Discovery Times Square Exposition is New York City's first world-class exhibition center ... The ground breaking partnership between producer Running Subway and the Discovery Channel brings blockbuster exhibits to Times Square, the heart of New York City, and showcases them in immersive experientially-driven settings."

350 artifacts from Titanic are on display along with many photographs and interesting text. Many of the displays include an interactive component, like a representation of an iceberg where visitors are invited to place their hand upon the ice to make a handprint. The outline of one of Titanic' lifeboats is projected onto the floor and visitors can try to determine how many people will fit inside.

Both Isidor and Ida Straus perished in the Titanic disaster. Many of their descendants are active in SHS and ably represent their ancestors. Great grandson Paul A. Kurzman owns the locket that was found on Isidor's body. It will be on display during "Straus Day." and loaned to the exhibitors for the duration of their production. The

wedding band that Ida gave to Isidor on July 12, 1871, the day they were married, was recovered when Isidor's body was found at sea. Bradford P. Straus recently donated this ring to SHS and it will also be on display at the exhibit. Two other artifacts that will be on display include a large album of condolence notes, cards and letters written to the family and another large album that contains the press clippings from immediately following the disaster.



Family letters, photographs and other items will also be on display for "Straus Day." If you have family artifacts, photographs or memorabilia about Isidor or Ida Straus, or other items that are germane to this exhibit and are willing to share them,

please let me know.

SHS is working with Tomm Miller to determine how best to utilize the wealth of information and materials available from SHS. One proposal is that we do a presentation in the afternoon for Discovery Channel's 1,000 teacher ambassadors. This will be followed by an evening cocktail party and tour of the exhibition. We are still discussing when to hold this event.

Information about the event will be sent to you by e.mail or "snail mail" once the details are finalized.

**We will have a limited number of tickets available and they will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Please let me know if you are interested in attending this exhibition on "Straus Day." [info@straushistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@straushistoricalsociety.org) 631-265-0383**

## Information Wanted

Leo Mazow, Ph.D., Curator of American Art at Palmer Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania State University, has written to me about the art collection of Isidor and Ida Straus. He is preparing "for an exhibition on money and economic themes in American art" which will be at his institution from September 28 through December 29, 2010 and at The Huntington Library and Art Collection in San Marino, CA from January 29 through May 30, 2011.

Dr. Mazow's research has revealed that Isidor and Ida Straus were collectors of artwork by John George Brown (1831-1913). He wrote, "Our exhibition explores rents, taxes, and shifting standards of value, in American art of this period. We are therefore very interested in Straus, as a department store pioneer, collecting works by the artist Brown, who so often tackled economic themes."

In my search for information to assist Dr. Mazow I realized that there were many family members who were/are art collectors and many who donated their artwork to museum collections. I am asking you to let me know about these works of art, the titles, the dealers, their collection and their disbursal. Dr. Mazow is particularly interested in the collection of Isidor and Ida but I would like to know more about any family members who collected and/or donated art. What happened to Isidor and Ida's personal collection after the Titanic disaster? What happened to it after the passing of their heirs? Jesse and Irma, and Percy and Edith, as well as Percy Jr. and Marjorie, were also great collectors. Where is their artwork today?

## Friends of Straus Park

By Joan Adler

Photos by Margaret G. Kavanau

I inadvertently left out Margaret G. Kavanau's photo credit in the last issue of the newsletter. I apologize for the omission. Margie has been wonderful about responding to my urgent requests for photos at the last minute. She always seems to be able to handle the rush and has never left me without wonderful photographs of the events at Straus Park. Her photographs enhance the FSP page in every issue.

The weather has not been very cooperative this season. Every one of FSP's planned events has been rained out. The only event held in the Park so far this season was a gala sponsored by the Broadway Mall Association. They must have an "IN" with the weatherman.

The weather has not deterred FSP from making plans for the September 12<sup>th</sup> Book and Photography Fair. In past years this has been one of the most popular events sponsored by FSP. It is scheduled for 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. There is still room for additional vendors and they are accepting donations of new and used books that can be sold as a fund raiser. FSP is planning to have a performance at the Book and Photography Fair by the steel drum group that was rained out on June 17<sup>th</sup>. Whether you stop by for an hour or stay for the whole day, you will be glad you visited Straus Park on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

The premier event, the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Art in the Park, A day-long celebration of art, music and food will be held October 10<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. A rain date, October 11<sup>th</sup> is planned. All fingers and toes are crossed that the rain date will not be necessary.

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

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



Above: Early Library of Congress photograph of Straus Park

Below: Recent photo of the same scene



Right and below:  
Two photographs from from a recent Book and Photography Fair



## Did You Know?

Lazarus Kohns and his brother David lived in New York City in 1857. They had an embroidery business at 55 John Street. It is not known when or why they moved to Georgia but Lazarus married Hermine Straus there in 1863.

Hermine Straus and Lazarus Kohns were married by Minister Hebrew Congregation James K. Gutheim in Muscogee County, GA on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1863. Hermine was the daughter of Lazarus and Sara Straus of Otterberg Germany. Lazarus was the son of Louis and Clara Kohns of Giebelstadt Germany. Lazarus Kohns worked at L. Straus & Sons on Warren Street in New York City when the family moved to New York from Georgia after the Civil War.

As per Dr. Stuart Rockoff, Director of the History Department of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, MS, Rabbi Gutheim "was quite an interesting figure. He was the rabbi of the Dispersed of Judah Congregation in New Orleans at the start of the Civil War. He was a big supporter of the Confederate cause, and when New Orleans was conquered by the Union, he refused to pledge loyalty to the U.S. and left the city. The Columbus, Georgia congregation tried to hire Rabbi Gutheim, but he decided to take the pulpit in Montgomery instead. Columbus got him to come to town to lead services once every six weeks. After the war, he took a job at Temple Emanu-El in New York City, before returning to New Orleans to lead a Reform congregation there." The congregation in Columbus, B'nai Israel, was founded in 1854.



## Monuments, Buildings, Memorials

Continued from page 7

tion. A third plaque in this hallway reads: "Isidor Straus, philanthropist, humanitarian and ardent supporter of programs to help the poor and downtrodden become part of the American dream. A man of vision and compassion, committed to the growth of America as a democratic homeland and a land of freedom and opportunity. A

founder and the first president of the Educational Alliance 1891 - 1912." SHS plans to work with The Educational Alliance as they begin a large capital improvement project.



## Available from the

## Straus Historical Society, Inc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## You Are Invited

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

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, October 6, 2009 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 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.