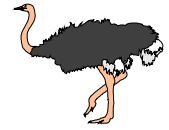


STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 7 Number 2

Newsletter

February 2006

The Bizet Connection

Robert K. Straus of Santa Barbara, CA had already done quite a lot of research into his family's history when I first began working with him in 1990. He produced two volumes, *Straus Genealogical Miscellany* and *More Straus Genealogical Miscellany*. The stories he wrote were fascinating. One compelling story was about Emile Straus and Genevieve Bizet, the widow of George Bizet. Recently a photograph of Emile Straus and Genevieve Bizet was sent to me along with many other items from the apartment of Mildred Morse.

Written by Robert K. Straus: "When I first read Mr. Altmeyer's letter of January 10, 1936, addressed to father (Mr. Altmeyer was for years the manager of the Macy's office in Paris. "Father" was Jesse I. Straus.), it made little impression. I just realized that there had been a French branch which I, at least, had never heard of. It seemed to account for the rumor that one of the Strauses had gone to San Francisco around the time of the Gold Rush. Apparently it was Leopold. When the Altmeyer letter was written in 1936, his (Leopold's) widow was still alive and being supported by a grant from the Rothschild foundation, presumably in Paris.

"In May 1972, Mildred and David Morse invited Barbara and me to have lunch with them as we passed through New York on our way to France. Mildred said that, in her many visits to Paris over the last 20 years, she had gotten to know a Madam Verne and that Madam Verne lived in the same house that has been described in the Proust novels as the Chateau de Guermantes. Mildred was told that apparently "Proust was related to the one-S Strauses" and Mildred wondered whether this was true.

"While I was in Paris I started to investigate this story. I first looked at various biographies about Proust. In any one of them, one will see listed in the index a Madam Genevieve Straus. It appeared that she was the lady whom Mildred's friend had in mind as the tie between the one-S Strauses and Marcel Proust.

"Further investigation revealed that Madam Genevieve Halevy Bizet Straus had been married to Bizet, the composer of the

opera "Carmen" and was herself a daughter of Fromantel Halevy who had written an opera, "La Juive." Her first husband, Bizet, had died very shortly after the first production of "Carmen" in 1875 and she subsequently married Emile Straus.



Charles Haas, Genevieve Bizet Straus, Albert Cave & Emil Straus on the right

"The books about Proust referred to Emile Straus as "a wealthy Paris attorney whose origins were vague but who, according to rumor, has been an illegitimate descendant of the Rothschild family." Mr. Altmeyer's letter had listed Emile Straus, or at least a man named Emile Straus, as one of the five children of Abraham Straus who lived in Verdun, France, and who had also spent some time in the United States. Mr. Altmeyer's account had said that this Emile Straus had married the widow of Georges Bizet and that he was buried in Paris in the cemetery of Montmartre in the Halevy family vault. Mr. Altmeyer's letter also said that he had bequeathed \$6 million francs to the Ophthalmological Institute of Paris on the Rue Manin.

"So apparently the Emile Straus who had married Genevieve Bizet was, in fact, the son of Abraham Straus who at least according to Mr. Altmeyer, was related to our branch of the family and, therefore, was not an illegitimate Rothschild - more the pity!

"It was not until I returned to the United States and had a chance to look up what I had been told was the most complete biography of Proust that I got the full story. This biography was written by an Englishman, George Duncan Painter, and was published in English by Little Brown & Company in Boston in 1959.

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

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

by the

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Society, Inc**

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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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**Meet the Members of the Board of the
Straus Historical Society, Inc.**



**Hugh Grant Straus III -
Treasurer**

Hugh is a great-grandchild of Nathan and Lena Straus. In the family he's known as Tertius. He grew up in New York City where he attended Fieldston School in the Bronx. Close to home he was within walking distance of Park Avenue Synagogue where he learned about his heritage and served as President of the Junior Congregation after his Bar Mitzvah. During summer vacations from school and college, among other things, he worked at the New York State Attorney Generals Office, Westport County Playhouse, Hunter College Playhouse, and as a counselor at University Settlement Work Camp. After graduating from Hobart College Tertius served in the US Army Reserve. Then he moved to Greenwich Village. There he was a founding member of the Grove Street Block Association.

Hugh began his career in commercial credit management with Dun & Bradstreet. He continued in the same field at Wilcox & Gibbs, GAF Corp., John P. Maguire & Co. and Jonathan Logan.

Hugh currently splits his time between his weekend home in Bearsville, NY and his apartment in NYC. Bearsville is close to the Kingston NY homes of his mother, Helen Straus and his sister, Leone Straus. He remains active at the Park Avenue Synagogue and can be found there at many happenings. He's also a member of Congregation Ahavath Israel in Kingston, NY where he has worked in the library as needed.

Hugh joined the board of directors of SHS in June 2004 and was elected to the executive board as treasurer in January 2006.



**Al Berr
Board Member Since
2004**

Al Berr has been a Deputy Director of the New York State Council on the Arts since 1980. He served as Acting Executive Director of the Council from April 1995 to August 1996. Before his tenure at the Council, he was the General Director of Opera Today, the General Manager of the City Center Joffrey Ballet, and the General and Business Manager of Tahse Theatrical Productions.

Al became a board member of SHS in February 2004, taking over the unexpired position of long time board member, and Friends of Straus Park chair, Leon Auerbach. He brings to the board his particular expertise working in the not-for-profit field.

The Bizet Connection (continued from page one)

Mr. Painter, is a curator of the British Museum and the book to which I refer as "The Early Years," the first volume of his two-volume biography of Proust.

"Apparently the young Marcel Proust attended a preparatory school where one of his schoolmates was Jacques Bizet, who was the son of the composer of "Carmen." Painter speculates that Proust first met Genevieve Bizet, the mother of his friend Jacques Bizet, at this school which was called the Cours Pape-Carpentier.

"Later it appears to have been through his friendship with Jacques Bizet that he started to frequent the salon of his mother who, according to Painter, was one of the "two chief mistresses of salons in the layer of society immediately below the nobility."

"Jacques Bizet's widowed mother a few years earlier had married Emile Straus, a wealthy Jewish lawyer, after a long and ardent courtship; when asked why she had become his wife, she answered, "Because it was the only way I could get him to leave me in peace." But Jacques Bizet remembered his mother saying, "Listen, my child, if I were to marry again, whom would you like best for a stepfather?" "Emile," he replied without hesitation, and she kissed him, for she too preferred Emile Straus.

"The social ascent of Fromental Halevy's daughter and Bizet's widow, had been extraordinary, almost impossible - thought she never forgot her middle-class musical origins, and once, when asked by a great lady whether she was fond of music replied: "They play a great deal of it in my first family." Her portrait by Delaunay, white and appealing in widow's black, had created a sensation in the salon of 1878: Degas found his way to the house in the Rue de Douai where she lived in retirement with her uncle Leon Halevy, and begged to be allowed to see her combing her hair. Then, as we have seen, Emile Straus, the favorite lawyer (and it is said, the illegitimate half-brother) of the three Barons Rothschild, Alphonse, Edmond and Gustave, insisted on marrying her. He came up to town every morning with Joseph Reinach, who used to say: "I could always relax on the train with Emile - he did all the talking, it was Genevieve, Genevieve all the way." "You must see Genevieve," Straus told the Rothschilds, and soon all society was saying, "We must see Genevieve." Long lines of carriages drew up in the Rue Douai, and following their marriage in 1886 to their apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann, at the corner of the Avenue de Messine, opposite the statue of Shakespeare. Jacques Bizet, now a medical student, found it convenient to open a ground-floor window at dead of night and disappear along the boulevard on

business best known to himself. In the morning M. Straus would rise early to wait for him on the stairs, to the amusement of his indulgent mother: "Emile has such a sense of theater," she said. Whether or not Jacques' escapades were connected with his friend, M. Straus decided that Proust had a bad influence on his step-son; next that, on the whole, he had not. He made a call of reconciliation at 9 Boulevard Malesherbes, and amid bronzes, potted palms, plush and mahogany of the drawing room, looking for something to be polite about, noticed a little drawing by Henri Monnier. It was a present to Dr. Proust from a grateful patient, Caran d'Ache, the caricaturist. "Charming, charming," murmured M. Straus.

"Emile Straus was a slim little man with gray hair and a smile of extreme but amiable irony. His eyes, owing to a disability acquired in the Franco-Prussian War, were always half-closed. Like Swann, he devoted his life and his enormous wealth to the clothing and social career of his wife: his friends recognized him immediately when they read the scene in "A l'Ombre" where Swann peeps benevolently through the curtains at Odette's guests. There is, indeed, a distinct likeness between his photographs and those of Charles Haas, the chief original of Swann. Both are dressed with the same exquisite, imperceptible elegance; their features are whimsical and Jewish; but M. Straus lacks the melancholy, puzzled look of M. Haas. Sometimes, however, when he asked his guests, "Have you heard Genevieve's latest?" he resembled for a moment the Due de Guermantes saying the same of his wife Oriane; and he would go on to explain, like the Duke, that his wife's intelligence was admirable not so much for its wit as for its sound common sense. He as an exceedingly but quite unjustifiably jealous husband.

"One last quote from George Painter's biography of Proust describing how the Straus salon played an important part in the Dreyfus affair. In fact, apparently it was Madam Straus's part in the Dreyfus affair which led to the downfall of her salon.

"The bourgeois salons, however, were either neutral or Dreyfusist. The Affair, it might be claimed, had almost begun at Mme. Straus's. The rumor that she had worn black on the day after Dreyfus's condemnation was no doubt baseless; but her friend and former platonic lover, Joseph Reinach, was one of the chief agitators for revision. Reinach was an old boy of Condorcet, and had been one of the suspects in the Panama scandal through his relationship with his uncle, the crooked financier Baron Jacques de Reinach. He was a squat, bearded Jew of simian appearance; "Reinach had a voice of weed and leather," wrote his enemy Leon Daudet, "and used to leap from chair to chair, in pursuit of bare-bosomed lady guests, with the gallantry of a self-satisfied gorilla." "He was comic but nice," Proust told Jacques Emile Blanche, "Although we did have to



Genevieve Halevy Bizet Straus
1849-1926



pretend he was a reincarnation of Cicero." Reinach revealed the truth about Dreyfus to the Strauses at their Trouville villa, the Clos de Muriers, as early as August 1897. At one of her Saturday at-homes in October, Mme. Straus announced to her guests: "My friends, Mr. Reinach has an important announcement to make to you." Reinach declared his certainty that the bordereau was written by Esterhazy, but spoiled his case by maintaining that Dreyfus was innocent. The Byzantine scholar Gustave Schlumberger, a bore with enormous feet, tried to defend the good faith of the Army, and was set upon by Hervieu, Portoriche and Emile Straus, who was apt to use unseemly language when crossed. Schlumberger left in a huff and broke with the Strauses, for which Proust never forgave him; and the same evening also cost them the friendship of Jules Lemaitre, who henceforth confined himself to the nationalistic salons of his mistress, the Comtesse de Loynes, and of Forain, who soon afterwards started his anti-Semitic magazine *Psst*.

"Mme. Straus's salon, under Reinach's influence, became the G.H.Q. of Dreyfusism: It was here that her son Jacques Bizet, her nephews the Halevys, and Proust organized the first *Aurore* petition. Her noble guests, for the most part, remained loyal and continued to attend her Saturdays. But some awkwardness was inevitable, and the affair marked the beginning of the decline of her salon; for like Zola, Picquart and Proust, Mme. Straus was capable of sacrifice in the cause of truth.

"I found a photograph of Genevieve Straus in the Painter book, with her husband Emile, and Charles Haas, who according to Painter was the prototype for Swann in the Proust novel, and Albert Cave, who is identified in the photograph as a friend of Degas. Apparently both Degas and Forain were among the artists who frequented Madam Straus's salon.

"Emile Straus, who had been born in Paris in 1884, died in San Raphael in 1929. He is buried in Paris in the cemetery of Montmartre in the Halevy family vault. He left no children. None of the children of Abraham, as far as I can now determine, have any descendants, either in Europe or in the United States. His oldest son, Leopold Straus, who reportedly settled in San Francisco, may have descendants there who are not known to me at this time.

"The remaining question is how Abraham Straus, the founder of the French branch, is related to our branch. We know that he

was born in 1802 in Ober-Moschel, west of the Rhine in Germany, a town which is quite near Otterburg where our branch lived. Abraham died in 1881 in England and is buried in Willesden Green in London. Abraham married Fanny Frank, also of Ober-Moschel. Abraham was a coal dealer. He emigrated to the United States in 1830, made several trips to and from Europe and settled in Georgia in 1840. He went into the shipping business and dealt in wheat which he purchased and sold in France during the Crimean War. The cessation of the hostilities between the Russians, English, French, etc., ruined Abraham Straus due to the fact that he has a tremendous shipment of wheat on the water when business relations were again re-opened with Russia and he was unable to sell this shipment. Abraham and Fanny had four sons: Leopold, Daniel, David and Emile and two daughters: Caroline and Victorine. Leopold lived in San Francisco. Daniel was born at Verdun, France January 1, 1834. He died December 15, 1931 at the age of 97 and is buried in Paris in the

Cemetery of Montmartre. He also lived in Pennsylvania for a number of years before making France his final residence. He is supposed to have introduced into France the product known at the time as "Black Oil" and worked in collaboration with Deutsch de la Maurthe in the analysis of this product and the extraction therefrom of petroleum. Daniel Straus married Miss Levy on Dec 26, 1872 who father was the first manager of the Cunard Line Steamship Company. Daniel was known in England as a commercial agent. In France his business was not very definite; he dealt in antiques and lived on his income. He was known to love horses. Daniel spent the latter years of his life paralysed and deaf. He was looked after by his devoted wife until his death. She died in 1932 shortly after the death of her

husband. Her death was followed three days later by that of Mrs. Caroline Straus Frank, Daniel's sister. Daniel and his wife had no children. David Straus emigrated to the United States, served in the Confederate Army and was killed in Georgia. Caroline Straus was born in Verdun, France May 12, 1837. She married a man of means (whose surname was Frank) and lived in Boston, Philadelphia and New York before returning to France. She lived in Paris for nearly 40 years. She claimed to have met Oscar S. Straus on various occasions in France, namely on the outbreak of the 1914 War. Up to the last days of her life she was a very active person, of brilliant intelligence, excellent company and a wonderful memory. Caroline had sons Victor and James. Victorine Straus lived in France. She married Gabriel Sibilat who son, Rene Sibilat was president of the *Chambre des Assureurs Maritime de France*.



Did You Know ...?

Dr. Alfred Fabian Hess discovered the bone building effects of vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. He is credited with finding the prevention and cure of rickets, a disease of childhood caused by the lack of vitamin D in the diet.

Dr. Hess was the husband of Sara Straus, daughter of Isidor and Ida Straus. Look for more information about Sara Straus and her husband Alfred Fabian Hess in the next issue of the newsletter.

Bijur Family Update

My apology to Doug Weiss and his family for omitting information about them in the Bijur family article that appeared in the August 2005 issue. And thank you Doug for sending the following information.

Douglas J. Weiss, grandson of Eugenie Bijur and Nathan Bijur and son of Jean Bijur Weiss and Joseph D. Weiss, has been happily married to Marianne Lieberman Weiss since 1974. They have two children, Jennifer Weiss Handler, married to Adam Handler, and Matthew J. Weiss, engaged to be married to Meghan Woo.

Jennifer is a graduate of Swarthmore College and worked with Simon and Schuster in New York City as an editor in their children's book division, editing the Hardy Boy and Nancy Drew series as well as other properties. Jen and Adam currently live in Atlanta, GA where Adam has recently been promoted to deputy director, Field Operations, for CARE. Jen continues to provide editorial assistance to authors and writes articles on various subjects.



Doug Weiss, Marianne Weiss, Adam Handler, Jennifer Weiss Handler, Matthew Weiss, Meghan Woo
April 17, 2005

She is a frequent contributor to ethnicgrocer.com.

Matthew graduated from Tufts University, became the chief technical officer of Circle Lending, a Boston startup, then started a technology consulting company with a partner. While he still consults for both companies, Matt is currently a full time student attending Sloan Business School at MIT studying for his MBA. Matt and Meghan's wedding is planned for 2007 after Matt re-enters the workforce.

Doug and Marianne currently live on Siesta Key in Sarasota, FL. Marianne, a registered investment advisor, manages assets for her clients around the world. After 38 years, Doug retired from IBM as a program director in 2005. Finding retirement somewhat non-exciting, he became a licensed Realtor and joined

RE/MAX on Siesta Key where he focuses on helping clients, buy, sell and invest in Sarasota waterfront properties. Doug is always willing to provide local boating and fishing advice in his spare time, if he's not out fishing.



A Message from the Executive Director: Joan Adler



The Straus Historical Society would not have become the premier organization for the research and dissemination of information about the Straus family without the active support and assistance of many people. I would be remiss if, from time to time,

I did not say thank you to those people who have made extraordinary contributions to the Society.

When I first began work with Robert K. Straus of Santa Barbara in 1990, he told me about Gus B. Kaufman from Georgia "who was somehow related to the Lazarus Straus family." Gus has been involved with our project from its inception and became a member of the board of directors in 2001. I don't know who was more thrilled when we were able to prove the connection of the two families through DNA testing. Sadly, Gus must now step down from the board due to poor health. We thank him for his many years of friendship, support and service.

Oscar S. Straus III has served on the executive board as chair and treasurer for the past three years. I can assure you that the efficient and timely manner in which the SHS accomplishes many of its goals derives from Oscar's work on behalf of the Society. At the January 5, 2006 meeting of the board, Oscar stepped down from the position of treasurer. I am pleased to announce that Hugh Grant Straus III was elected to fill that position and Barbie Douglas was elected vice chair.

Welcome to new board member Lawrence A. Kahn and thank you to board members Al Berr, Michael H. Buckner, Robin S. Dillon, M. Brett Gladstone, David A. Kurzman (SHS secretary), Paul A. Kurzman, Jack Grier Schafer, Barnard Sachs Straus, Sr., and Thomas P. Straus for their continued support. It is truly an honor and a pleasure to work with these people.

As I begin my sixteenth year of work with the Straus family and for the Society, I realize how fortunate I have been to meet so many interesting people and to be involved in a project that I love. Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time, materials and support. I look forward to the years ahead and to all we can accomplish.



Isidor and Ida Straus during their final moments aboard "Titanic"
Drawing by Michael Rutter, an art student from Phoenix, AZ

United Nations International Day of Remembrance In Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

Friday, January 27, 2006 was the United Nations International Day of Remembrance in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

Several months ago, journalist and family member Irene Pastarnack of New Rochelle, NY asked if I would write an article about the family members who died in the Holocaust. As I began to research I soon found that the number of family members who perished is far more extensive than I could have imagined. And I'm certain that I haven't found everyone.

Some of the information below came from online sources. Family members supplied additional information.

Yad Vashem is an organization in Israel whose mission is that of making certain those people who perished in the Holocaust will never be forgotten. They have a website, www.yadvashem.org where one can learn more about the Holocaust, submit Pages of Testimony about people who were killed or do online research.

If you know of anyone who perished in the Holocaust and who is not remembered on the list below, let me know. Please submit a Page of Testimony to Yad Vashem. If you prefer to give me the information, I will submit the Page of Testimony for you. It's one way to make certain that your family members, who died during World War II, will never be forgotten.



Lina Altschuler - Gurs - France
Adelheid Emile Blun Benjamin - Gurs - France
David Benjamin - Gurs - France
Clara Tuteur Blun - Auschwitz - Poland
Cornelia Tuteur Bodenheimer - Concentration Camp
Hermine Marbach Eberstadt - Theresienstadt -
 Czechoslovakia
Ludwig Maximilian Eberstadt - Theresienstadt -
 Czechoslovakia
Alexander Feldheim - Lodz Ghetto - Poland
Erna Isabelle Mayer Feldheim - Lodz Ghetto -
 Poland
Alfred Herzberger - Gurs - France
Johanna Herzberger - Gurs - France
Markus Herzberger - Gurs - France
Marie Kirschheimer Herzberger - Gurs - France
Emma Nathan Israel - Theresienstadt -
 Czechoslovakia
Frieda Kaufmann - Auschwitz - Poland
Louis Kaufmann - Auschwitz - Poland
Paul Kaufmann - Auschwitz - Poland
Margot Feldheim Leipziger - Auschwitz - Poland
Ludwig Leven - Auschwitz - Poland
Erna Klara Strauss Levy - Auschwitz - Poland
Elise Cahn Loeb - Gurs - France
Johanna G. Feldheim Lowenthal - Sobibor - Poland
Ludwig Maas - unknown
Otto Mich. Maas - Auschwitz - Poland
Selma Nathan Maas - Auschwitz - Poland
Clara Mayer - Theresienstadt - Czechoslovakia
Bella Grunebaum Metzger - Unknown
Hedwig Tuteur Muschkatblatt - Concentration Camp
Hermine Tuteur Nachmann - Concentration Camp

Adele Mayer Neumann - Auschwitz - Poland
Rosalie Tuteur Oppenheimer - Theresienstadt
 Czechoslovakia
Florestine Tuteur Simons - Gurs - France
Betty Maas Straus - Auschwitz - Poland
Leopold Straus - Auschwitz - Poland
Moritz Straus - Auschwitz - Poland
Moses Max Straus - Sobibor - Poland
Elisa Rifka Strauss - Auschwitz - Poland
Helene Kann Strauss - Westerbrook - Poland
Lea Susanne Strauss - Birkenau - Poland
Richard Strauss - Auschwitz - Poland
Edward Moses Tuteur - Auschwitz - Poland
Erich Tuteur - Concentration Camp - Poland
Franz Phillip Jakob Tuteur - Concentration Camp
Hans Tuteur - Concentration Camp
Hilde Tuteur - Concentration Camp
Karola Tuteur - Auschwitz - Poland
Lisa Mayer Tuteur - Concentration Camp - Poland
Ludwig Tuteur - Majdenek Camp - Poland
Mathilde (Tillie) Herz Tuteur - Auschwitz - Poland
Paula Tuteur - Auschwitz - Poland
Robert Tuteur - Dachau Germany
Ruth Tuteur - Concentration Camp
Frieda Alexander Von Den Porten - Gurs - France
Ernest Von Den Porten - Gurs France
Eugenie Hirsch Altschuler Weinberger -
 Theresienstadt - Czechoslovakia
Guglielmo Weinberger - Vienna - Austria
Mathilde Tuteur Wisbrum - Concentration Camp
Morris Wisbrum - Concentration Camp
Anna Wolf - Gurs - France

Eugenie and Guglielmo Weinberger

Maximilian Altschuler, his wife Suse and two sons, Herbert and Otto, left Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia in 1939 for the United States under the sponsorship of Mrs. Lee Kohns (Clare). Once Maximilian and Suse were in the United States they began trying to get Suse's mother and stepfather, Eugenie and Guglielmo Weinberger, out of Europe. They turned to Mrs. Kohns.

On November 2, 1939 Guglielmo wrote to Clare, "We are informed by Suzanne that our call for help addressed to her was received by you on her entreaty in the most noble magnanimity. We are in the greatest dilemma whether we have abused your generosity and only the sad circumstances under which we are constrained to live here may excuse the audacity of applying to our daughter, although we know that she and her family have no footing as yet over there, but by this while, it is quite impossible to exist here. I don't need picture details and I am sure you know more than needs. Our son cabled us that you have been so kind as to mail to the Vienna Consulate General of U.S.A. affidavits for myself and Mrs. Weinberger in the early part of October. We are missing the careful words to speak our heart and to express our thanks to all eternity full of gratitude to the Almighty who created such a benefactor as you are: there are none in all Europe." In this same letter Eugenie wrote, "I am sorry to say I do not write nor speak English, and am probably too old to learn it. Where is my knowledge from my youth when I studied at a private academy in Dresden? I have to express therefore my deepfelt thanks to you in the German language, for all the wonderful deeds you have already performed for my children and now extend the same for us old folks. How can we ever repay this great debt since we have been stripped of our honor, human dignity, our roof, our wealth, and homeland? You are certain of God's blessings and we hope that we will still be able to shake your hand in the land of the free."



Sophie Zimmerman, Clare Kohn's secretary wrote to Max and Suse on November 24, 1939, "An affidavit for each was sent to the American Consul in Vienna on October 3rd, 1939, together with the necessary enclosures. I understand that your parents wrote you about November 2nd, which was one month later that they had not heard from the Consul. In view of the conditions, it is possible that mail to Vienna takes at least one month, and Mrs. Kohns is hopeful that they have heard from the Consul since their last letter. ... In the meantime, it might be well to advise your parents that tickets on the Italian Line from Italy to America can be purchased only in American Dollars. Furthermore, the law in Italy is that no one is permitted to take out of the country more than 300 lira. The Italian Line states that any additional money will be confiscated - I read a notice that the death penalty could be involved." In a letter of January 24, 1940 she wrote, "In the affidavit to be filed by the Altschulers it is suggested that they embody the phrase, "We have set aside a

room in our home for our parents where they may live with us always. Our means are modest but we live modestly and we can very well take care of our parents for all time." On March 6, 1941 Max and Suse were still trying to get Suse's parents to America. Sophie Zimmerman wrote, "... if the children (meaning your family and Doctor Weinberger) earn \$50 a week between you there is no deposit necessary for your parents if they do not suffer from any other ailment than old age. Of course, if the doctor does not pass them, the Consul may insist upon a deposit, but in view of the affidavits which have been filed the deposit is not necessary. ... She suggests you write to the American Consul in Vienna, reviewing the situation stating that Mrs. Lee Kohns has filed the affidavits, one for each of your parents on October 3, 1939, when these expired another complete set was sent December 3, 1940 together with your affidavits; that you could support your parents in a modest but nice way in this country and that you want them with you, and ask why the Consul should withhold his consent. ... You should ask the Consul to write you immediately if there is anything wrong or if anything is necessary to make them acceptable."



On July 8, 1941 Clare Kohns wrote to the Department of State, Washington D.C., "We all are very eager to have Mr. and Mrs. Weinberger here at the earliest possible date. ... In June 1940 both were sworn at the United States Consul at Vienna and promised visas as soon as they could provide ship tickets. Now, being able to avail themselves of transportation, as arranged by the Jewish Community, Vienna, they were refused the visas promised to them in June 1940 in spite of the fact that I renewed my affidavit in November 1940 and Dr. Weinberger and Mrs. Altschuler renewed their affidavits in February 1941. ... I can assure you Mr. and Mrs. Weinberger will never be a burden to this country."

Suse wrote to Clare Kohns about her parents, "I do not know anything concerning the whereabouts of my mother, Eugenie Weinberger, Vienna, born 1868. Since the outbreak of the war with Germany. I sent 2 Cuba visas by cable via Cuban Legation, Berlin to Vienna end of November 1941, of which receipt was acknowledged by my parents with cableanswer. Through a Swiss friend I learned of the death of my stepfather, Guglielmo Weinberger, 77 years, in Vienna December 1941 (shortly after Pearl Harbor). My mother, expelled from her home, was taken to various rooming places in succession to live with other people, could not be reached by mail, letters came back to the sender with label "left without giving address" in July 1942, which means she was deported to an unknown place. To my various inquiries, also by the Red Cross I got no answer up to this. My mother, old and frail, was she able to survive constant privation and hardship, alone, irresolute, deprived of money and other means of living." Eugenie died in November 1942 in Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia of typhus and other complications after a short stay.

Abby Straus

A Mini-Biography

This past summer SHS chair Oscar S. Straus III and I each received a very moving letter from Abigail (Abby) Straus describing her ambivalence about her Straus background and her desire to make peace with the memory of her father, Oliver Herbert Straus, who died in 1971. She wrote, "On the one hand I feel the pull of my lineage, and on the other, I feel as if I have no family – as if I've sprung from the air without ties or support."

I was so touched by Abby's experiences and her ability to communicate her feelings, some of them obviously still very painful, that I felt compelled to follow up with a call. Abby invited me to her home and allowed me to interview her for an article in a future newsletter. It was a wonderful day and I am so glad I made the trip to Pleasantville, NY to meet this remarkable woman.

Abigail Straus, Abby, and her younger brother Oliver Herbert Straus Jr., were raised in Boston, MA. They are the children of Oliver Herbert and Sally G. Strong Straus, grandchildren of Herbert Nathan and Therese Kuhn Straus, and great grandchildren of Isidor and Ida Straus. Abby's parents divorced when she was seven and she had very little exposure to her father from that point on. Abby wrote, "At no time during his life did my father ever speak to me of his family. I developed a passion for horses as a child; and while he came on one of his rare visits to buy me my first saddle, he never said a word about the fact that he spent so much of his own youth on horseback." It wasn't until after her father's death that Abby learned anything about the history of the Straus family.

Abby attended The Dana Hall School in Wellesley, MA, and college at Wellesley, Brandeis and Hampshire. She has a natural talent for music, and has been a professional singer/songwriter, musician, producer and audio engineer. After college she toured New England with her own band. In 1984 Abby moved to New York City where she became interested in audio engineering. It didn't take long before she had created her own studio. "I had no patience with trying to explain my ideas to engineers," she said, "so I decided to do it myself." Abby produced her own debut album, "The Road," in 1999. Her style has been called soulful rock flavored with rhythm and blues and jazz.

Combining her love of horses and her musical talent, Abby created Music for Sport, a company that designed musical freestyles for the branch of horsemanship known as Dressage. She was one of the first people in the United States to do this professionally, and she accumulated an international clientele, including Olympic and Pan American competitors.

In 1989 Abby married fellow audio engineer Carl Casella, and in 1992 Andrew Oliver Casella was born. Although Abby and Carl have divorced, they remain friends. Their son Andy shares his time between both parent's homes. Abby says that Andy, in addition to being a fantastic young man, is a talented musician, playing bass in his own band.

After her divorce, Abby's path took a sharp turn toward her life-long interest in spirituality and human development. "I was kind of shoved into it because I underwent a huge and painful transformation around this time. But I know that my experience was preparing me to help others make profound shifts in their own lives. It taught me a lot about what people are going through, and pointed me to the things I would need to learn in order to be of service." She says that her many interests have combined to create a strong base from which to help others create transformation in their lives and the lives of those around them. She has acquired a degree in cultural anthropology, certifications in energy work, Feng Shui, counseling and a masters degree in Divinity from the newly formed Gauden University, in Petaluma California, where she is also a faculty member.



Abigail "Abby" Straus

In addition, Abby is an ordained interfaith minister. She feels deeply connected to the principles of Tibetan Buddhism, but is quick to point out that all the great spiritual traditions have something to offer. She sees her ministry and her work in the secular world as one entity. "It's not about religion, about established theory or dogma. I'm interested in helping people connect to the great intelligence of the universe in new and unexpected ways—ways that are just right for them. People are looking for meaning in their lives—at work, at home, in relationship. I'm here to help them make the connection."

One of the ways she does this is through what she calls Environmental Dynamics. On her website Abby writes, "Environmental Dynamics asks the question: How can we live in harmony with our natural environment and, at the same time, create built environments that best serve our needs as human beings?" She combines many aspects of the ancient practice of Feng Shui with cutting edge concepts like systems theory and electromagnetic evaluation to help individuals and organizations create physical environments that support their inhabitants on all levels.

Abby is also dedicated to her role as a teacher and motivational speaker. People, she says, are increasingly open to new ideas, among them the notion that they can create a positive future—that they can manifest abundance and happiness in their lives, regardless of what many perceive as the indelible influence of the world around them. She draws on much Eastern wisdom in

her work, but believes that the knowledge is universal, and has developed language that people of all cultural backgrounds can easily understand.

Several years ago Abby founded her present company, Gaia Lifeworks. You can find it on the web at www.gaialifeworks.com

“One of the most important things I do, in all aspects of my work, is to give people permission to believe in a positive life, and to show them how it is possible to make the changes necessary to achieve it. We live in a civilization that still believes there isn’t enough to go around—not enough money, not enough food, not enough



Andrew "Andy" Casella

love...you name it. Most of the choices that are made, by individuals and businesses alike, are based on this assumption. I’m here to show people how to do business differently.”

After spending the day with Abby Straus, I can see that she is truly living and learning from the lessons of her life. She is really walking her talk, and helping many people in the process. Like many other family members, Abby has chosen not to take the easy path. Instead, she has chosen a path of service. This is just one of many ways she is finding new and meaningful connections to her Straus heritage.



Deep Ocean Expeditions

Tom Straus and his son Stephen recently had lunch with Richard Garriott, an investor with a company called Deep Ocean Expeditions. Tom wrote that they "conduct deep sea dives to the Titanic. He (Richard) has been down and brought up some small souvenirs of his dive to the lunch." Tom suggested that it might be interesting to publish information about this company in the newsletter in case our readers find it interesting, or might like to participate in one of their expeditions. The next trip is scheduled for July 2006.

Deep Ocean Expeditions' website can be found at: www.deeptoceanexpeditions.com. Tom sent me a log of their most recent trip that I will be happy to forward to you. If you would like a copy, please let me know. My contact information may be found on page twelve of this newsletter in the right had column.

Ken Marschall, the man who took some of the photographs shown here, wrote to explain that the Discovery Channel expedition last June/July resulted in a program, "Last Mysteries of the Titanic." Ken wrote, "I urge you all to get the expanded "director's cut" edition of "Last Mysteries " on DVD which is offered for sale soon (if not already) from the Discovery website. Here you will see much of the Straus exploration (more than was aired in the "live" show in July.)"

The double photo presented here shows the clock on the mantel in the Straus' sitting room. The photograph on the right was taken during the Deep Ocean Expedition. The photo on the left is of a virtually identical clock in Titanic's sister ship Olympia. "No photographs are known to have been taken in the actual Straus suite aboard Titanic." Ken wrote, "By the way, as you may know, it is the style/decor of this room that was carefully copied by James Cameron for one of his movie sets. The famous scene of Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio) sketching Rose (Kate Winslet) occurs in this very room."

Thank you to Ken Marschall and Jennifer C. Sullivan for their extra effort obtaining the necessary permissions.



Left: Clock in its original condition, Credit: Harland & Wolff/Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
Right: Clock photograph taken on the Deep Ocean Expedition Summer 2005, Credit: KM_Collection



Sitting room on the Titanic's sister ship Olympia.
Credit: Ken Marschall, TM_Collection
Note: This room was identical to the sitting room in Suite C55 booked by Isidor and Ida Straus on their Titanic voyage.
Additional Credit: Earthship Productions and Discovery Channel

Visit Germany - The Land of Your Ancestors

Proposed Dates: September 13-20, 2006

Visit the towns and villages in Germany where your ancestors lived

See the houses your ancestors lived in

And walk on the same streets walked on by Strauses more than two centuries ago

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is pleased to announce that plans for our upcoming trip to Germany, to the towns in Rheinland-Palatinate where the Straus family originated, are being finalized.



Germany: The arrow indicates where Otterberg is located

and Dr. Hans Steinebrei, author of several books about the history of the Jews of Otterberg and an expert on the Straus family's history in this area, will accompany us on selected days.



The Straus house in Otterberg where Isidore, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar were born

visit Otterberg. You will walk down the same streets as your ancestors and see some of the houses they lived in. The town is planning a reception in honor of the family's visit.

We will be staying in a four star hotel in Kaiserslautern and venturing out each day in a comfortable, air conditioned bus. We will be accompanied by an English speaking guide who is thoroughly familiar with the area and also with the history of the family. In addition, Roland Paul, an historian with the Institute for Palatinate History,

We will spend at least one full day in Otterberg, the town the Strauses lived in at the beginning of the 19th century. If time permits, and if there is interest, we can re-

We will also visit Dirmstein, Niederkirchen, Eichtersheim and Worms, all towns where members of the Straus family lived. Fegele, the wife of the first Lazarus, was born in Eichtersheim about 1720. There is a restored castle we can visit in Eichtersheim. We will also visit the city of Worms, the place where Ida Blun Straus was born. Worms was the center of Jewish life in the area and there is much to see there today. Jakob Loesser (Jacob Straus) lived in Dirmstein in the mid to late 1800's. Although the house he lived in is no longer standing, the house right next door is still there and we can visit that house.



The cradle used by Lazarus and Sara Straus' children: Isidor, Hermine, Nathan & Oscar

If there is interest, we can also visit the cemeteries in the area where family members are known to be buried.

The trip is tentatively planned for departure on September 13, 2006 and we expect to be in Germany for one week. Participants may choose to extend their visit on their own as there is much to see in the area including river cruises and sight-seeing in the city of Frankfurt.

Once it is known who will be going to Germany with us, every effort will be made to visit the towns where the ancestors of each trip participant originated.

Space is limited. A formal letter with all the specifics, including firm dates and the cost of the trip, will be mailed out as soon as possible. For now, please keep these dates open. And let us know if you intend to join the Straus Historical Society on this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Interest is running high. Only a small number of people will be able to participate in the first ever SHS sponsored trip to Germany. Please let Joan Adler know if you plan to travel with SHS. info@strauhistoricalsociety.org phone: 631-265-0383, fax 631-724-4487.

Friends of Straus Park

The Ninth Annual Art in the Park, a day-long celebration of art, music, dance and food was held in Straus Park on Saturday, October 1, 2005. There was full compliment of performers who entertained including: Suzy Schwartz and her Boto Fogo Band playing Brazilian Jazz, Soh Daiko Japanese Drummers, Squeaky Clean (Rock n Roll), Dance Star Academy, Floyd Lee and the Mean Blues Band and YeraSon (Cuban). As people wandered through the Park enjoying the music and dancing, they also sampled food donated by local restaurants and residents. This year there was a special treat for the children. An exceptional face painter decorated their faces. They were so beautifully done that many adults wanted to have their faces painted too. This is an event that is remembered throughout the year as one of the Park's highlights.

The annual meeting of the board of directors of Friends of Straus Park was held Tuesday, January 17, 2006 at the apartment of Mimi Cherney at 7:30 PM. This meeting was well attended and plans for the coming year were enthusiastically agreed upon.

John Oland, FSP's gardener, spoke about his ongoing landscaping projects and his wishes for the future of the gardens. He also addressed the issue of how to advise parents about the possible ill effects of allowing their children to play in the fountain's waters during the warm summer months.

A full program of events is planned for the upcoming 2006 season. This lovely neighborhood vest pocket park reflects the very best of New York City and its neighborhood associations. We urge you to visit the Park at any time to enjoy the beauty of its landscaping, and the monument "Memory," dedicated to the memory of Isidor and Ida Straus. Visiting during one of Friends many events adds an additional dimension.

Saturday, April 22 (rain date April 23)
9th Annual Straus Park Commemorative Celebration
11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Saturday, May 13 (rain date May 14)
Photography in the Park
11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Wednesday, June 7 (rain date June 8)
Evening Concert in the Park
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Saturday, July 8 (rain date July 9)
Book Fair
11:00 am to 5:00 pm

Saturday, October 14 (rain date October 15)
10th Annual Art in the Park: A day-long celebration of art, music, dance & food
11:00 am to 5:00 pm

Christmas Eve in Straus Park - 2005

Photograph courtesy of David Karp, David Karp Photography, 2005



Walking Tour of Woodlawn Cemetery

Did you know there are several branches of the Straus family that own plots and have erected monuments to their family members at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, NY? Would you like to see the Straus family's mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery? Learn about the three beautiful buildings comprising this lovely monument to the Isidor Straus branch of the family and about the sculpture in front of it that holds Isidor's remains. Learn more about the history of the "Titanic" disaster and what that has to do with Woodlawn Cemetery. Learn about other Straus family members buried at Woodlawn Cemetery and about their history.

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is pleased to announce that we will be sponsoring a walking tour in Woodlawn Cemetery on Sunday, June 4, 2006 at 11 AM (rain date June 11). Lunch at a local restaurant will follow. Susan Olsen, executive director of The Friends of Woodlawn Cemetery will lead the tour. She is an historian specializing in the history of its buildings, their architecture, and the people they hold. In addition, Joan Adler, Straus family historian will supplement Susan's presentation with additional stories about the Straus family members who are interred at Woodlawn.

We invite you to join us for this one-of-a-kind experience. The group size will be limited. So reserve your spot early. Further details and driving or public transportation directions will be mailed in the early spring. At this time, please let me know if this kind of event is of interest to you.



Straus Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY

New Information - Contributions to the Society

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

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

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You Are Invited

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

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, May 23rd, 2006 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 Straus Historical Society may have an opportunity to participate and to share his/her views. Please contact Joan Adler 631-265-0383 or Paul A. Kurzman 212-452-7035 for further information.