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The Manhattan Residences of Isidor and Ida Straus

by Robert Garber¹

Although they were a wealthy couple who could have lived luxuriously in any neighborhood they chose, Isidor and Ida Straus elected to raise their children and to spend most of their married life in a comfortable but decidedly unglamorous wood frame house on Manhattan's Upper West Side. They moved to 105th Street in 1884, twenty years before the subway reached the still semi-rural neighborhood and remained there even as the surrounding blocks filled with apartment buildings. Recent archival research has revealed new insights about Isidor and Ida's homes, even as some puzzles remain.

Isidor's Early New York Residences

When Lazarus and Sarah Straus relocated to Manhattan shortly after the end of the Civil War, they settled in a three-story brick townhouse just west of Broadway at 136 West 49th Street² with their four children and their daughter Hermine's husband Lazarus Kohns. Isidor Straus is listed in city directories and census records as living at this address until 1870. Following his marriage to Ida Blun on July 12, 1871, the couple moved to 28 West 38th Street and in 1875 to 26 East 55th Street, a four-story brownstone owned by Ida's father Nathan Blun. When Nathan died in 1879 and willed the house and its contents to Ida, there was a \$14,600 mortgage on it. She sold it in January 1885 for \$36,000. Isidor and Ida began their family on East 55th Street, where all six of their children except the youngest, Vivian, were born.

Moving Uptown

Even a four-story townhouse proved to be too small for the Straus clan. Isidor and Ida wanted their young children to have more room to roam, and the west side of Manhattan north of 59th Street still had large patches of undeveloped property, with many tracts held by wealthy New York families (think Astor, Goelet, Huntington) who knew that growth was

inevitable, and their land would eventually become much more valuable.

At this point, a mystery emerges concerning Isidor and Ida's real estate transactions: they bought two substantial residences

within 18 months and retained them both. One was a 20-year-old three-story frame and stone house on property between 105th and 106th Streets that stretched from Broadway (then called The Boulevard) to West End Avenue (then called 11th Avenue)³ which they purchased in January 1884. In July 1885 Isidor bid \$30,000 at a foreclosure auction and bought a 25-year-old Italianate villa on 4 acres of land six miles further north, in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan.⁴ If 105th Street was semi-rural in 1884, Inwood was decidedly more so. Although Inwood was isolated and largely undeveloped, a street called Bolton Road that ran along



Isidor & Ida Straus and their family on their 25th Wedding Anniversary. From left to right: Ida (seated), Minnie, Herbert Nathan, Lazarus (Isidor's Father), Irma Nathan (Jesse's Wife), Jesse Isidor, Vivian, Percy Selden, Sara, and Isidor Straus; July 12, 1896

a wooded ridge just a few hundred yards from the northern tip of Manhattan at Spuyten Duyvil Creek was favored by a handful of families who welcomed the solitude, spectacular views of the Hudson River, and cooler summer conditions at the highest elevation on the island. There were several impressive mansions on Bolton Road, and one of them was on the estate purchased by Isidor. Why did Isidor and Ida want two residences?

The evidence is compelling that the family considered the 105th Street house their primary residence, and they later built summer homes on the New Jersey shore and in the Adirondacks, so the Inwood property does not appear to have been bought as a summer estate. It's possible that Isidor saw it as an investment or even as a bargain since he purchased it under the distressed circumstances of a court-ordered foreclosure sale, but why was he even looking for another home in 1885? As an investment, property in Inwood would have been much iffier than, say, land between 110th and 125th

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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.

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**A Message from
SHS Executive Director
Joan Adler**



We began corresponding with Rob Garber in April 2023. He lives not far from Straus Park and is a member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. Rob attended the April 2023 Titanic Memorial event at Straus Park where he spoke at length with Friends of Straus Park treasurer, Al Berr. Rob asked about the Isidor and Ida Straus residence at West 105th Street in New York City.

We have several photographs from several different sources showing what purports to be the Straus' residence. But there is more than one building identified as the Straus home. Rob wanted to know the history of these buildings and which one truly was the Straus' residence and in what years.

Rob quickly determined that the building in a photograph owned by the New York Public Library is actually a stable built by the Strauses in 1894. The application for a construction permit describes five floors; a cellar where the horses would be housed, a basement, ground floor, second floor and a loft. The Strauses tore down their existing wooden stable in 1893 after the neighbors complained that it was encroaching on West 105th Street. Census records for the time show that the stableman and his family lived at 2747 Broadway, the new stable. We've discovered city directories and census records which sometimes, in error, show that Isidor and Ida were living at 2747 Broadway.

Rob's research into the history of the Straus' ownership and residence at 2745 Broadway led him to other interesting questions. I knew that Isidor and Ida bought a house in Inwood, the northern most tip of Manhattan. SHS has photographs of their house on Bolton Road in Inwood. The family story was that they wanted to get their children out of the congestion of midtown during the summer months because they felt fresh air and open fields for play were healthier for them. At the time, Isidor and Ida and their children were living at 26 West 55th Street in midtown Manhattan.

The rest of what I thought I knew was that they found the Inwood house too far north and too isolated and that is why they bought the West 105th Street house in 1884. From a biography of Jesse Isidor Straus, we learned that Herbert, Isidor and Ida's youngest son, was butted in the stomach, and into unconsciousness, by a goat they owned at Inwood. Jesse mounted a pony and galloped to a distant doctor to get medical aid. After that experience, Ida decided Inwood was too isolated and the family abandoned their plans to use the house as a summer residence. In a July 1890 letter, Ida wrote to Isidor from their summer home at Lower Saranac Lake, "Sarah looked real badly on her arrival yesterday but has already regained some of her hilarity. According to her statements, she seems to have had a little virus – but I imagine she mistakes some of her symptoms and that her malady was induced by her being so much alone in Inwood ..." The Sarah Ida was referring to was her sister-in-law, Sarah Lavanburg Straus, Oscar's wife.

Rob Garber has discovered that Isidor bought the Inwood house in July 1885, one year after he bought the West 105th Street house. The Inwood house was still in Isidor's estate when he died in 1912 even though there is no evidence his family lived in it for any extended time. That said, we do have records with Nathan and his family, or Oscar and Sarah, living in the Inwood house at various times but we have no idea for how long, or even why, since both

Streets, soon to be called Morningside Heights, just a few minutes' walk from their new home on 105th Street. Let's look at each of Isidor and Ida's Manhattan residences.

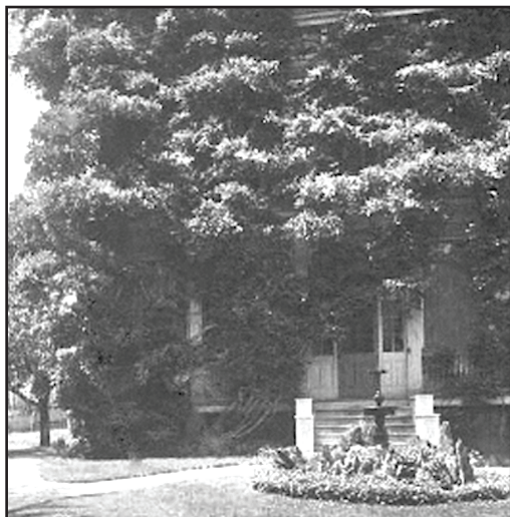
2745 Boulevard at 105th Street

The property that Isidor and Ida purchased at 105th Street consisted of 8 lots totaling 0.4 acres. Like most Manhattan real estate, it was once part of a larger block of land whose European ownership sequence can be traced back to Dutch colonial days. The parcel changed hands a dozen times in the 18th and 19th centuries before taking its final dimensions in 1864, when Matthew T. Brennan bought it from the widow of William B. Moffat, a patent medicine mogul. Brennan was a Tammany Hall stalwart who served as police captain, comptroller, and sheriff of New York City. The first map to indicate a structure on the property was drawn in 1867, so Brennan built the house that the Strauses later lived in during the first couple of years that he owned the land. Brennan died in the house in 1879. After having been in the Brennan family for 16 years, the property was sold in 1880 to Daniel Dexter Allen, a grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt. Allen died of tuberculosis just a year later, and the property was bought by Theodore W. Myers, a Jewish banker and—like Matthew Brennan—onetime New York City comptroller, who shared Isidor's affiliation with the Democratic Party. Isidor Straus bought it from Myers for \$49,000.⁵



The Straus home at 105th Street

The photograph was taken from across West End Avenue looking northeast towards the back of the Straus home and was taken after 1898 because the Westbourne apartment building abuts the Straus property on the uptown side.

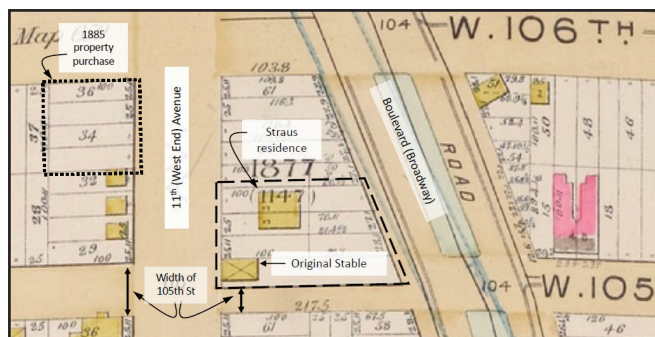


The Straus home at 105th Street

An undated photograph of the Broadway-facing front entrance to the Straus home, showing a fountain and the dense growth of wisteria vines.

Photographs of the Straus home show it from both the Broadway-facing and West End Avenue-facing sides. The Broadway-facing side was the front entrance, with a circular path and a fountain between the street and the front steps. The house was characterized as a “three story high stoop frame villa, with mansard roof.”⁶ A heavy growth of wisteria vines nearly obscured the Broadway side and was so pronounced that an 1890 description referred to the house as “covered with creeping plants.”⁷ Architectural historian Christopher Gray described it as a “clapboard, Italianate-style building with a mansard roof, particularly ornate dormers and a six-sided cupola on top, all topped with spiky iron cresting.”⁸

An 1891 map shows that the only outbuilding at the time of the Straus purchase was a stable, which clearly extended into what became 105th Street.⁹ In the 1890s, many Upper West Side streets were still in the process of being leveled, sewered, and gaslit. Most were unpaved. So, it was not as remarkable as it would be today for a street to be 50% narrower than surrounding blocks because a residential outbuilding sat in it.

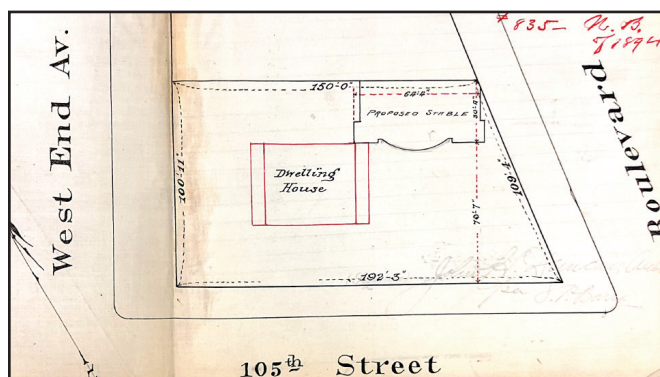


1891 map¹⁰ showing Straus properties at 105th Street and Boulevard (dashed line) and at 106th Street and West End Avenue (dotted line). Note how the property and stable protrude into 105th Street.

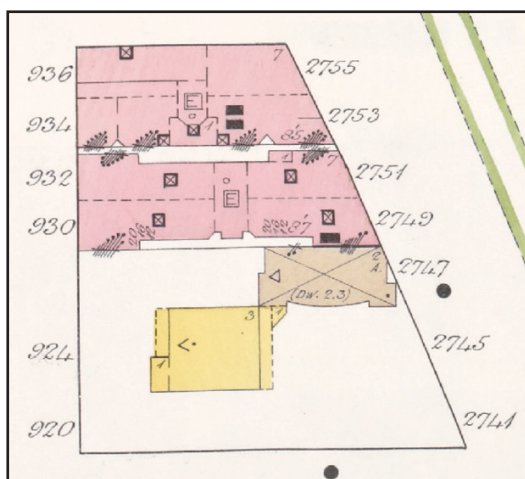
Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection

Still, an anonymous 1893 letter to the editor of *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide* complained that the Straus family's well-publicized friendship with New York City mayor Hugh Grant was undoubtedly the reason that 105th Street had not been put through and the Straus stable allowed to remain.¹¹ Perhaps in response to the complaint, Isidor filed plans with the city the next year to build a stable on the uptown margin of his property, facing Boulevard. It was a rather grand three-story granite structure with a slate roof, designed by the well-known architect John Hemenway Duncan (who also designed Grant's Tomb) and featured tilework by the famous Guastavino firm.¹² With a construction budget of \$30,000, the stable was completed in January 1895 and assigned the address 2747 Boulevard. It also served as a residence for the Straus family's household staff, which numbered eight in the 1900 census. In 1908, Isidor applied for a permit to stable ten horses in the cellar of 2747 Boulevard,¹³ a notably large number given that it was close to the end of the era when horses ruled New York City streets. Interestingly, we know that in 1908 Isidor used a car for transportation, because just four weeks before his permit application was filed, Isidor's chauffeur was arrested (twice!) while rushing to pick his boss up from the ferry at 23rd Street.¹⁴ A plausible justification for such a large stable might be that Isidor's brother Nathan was known to have a love of thoroughbred horses, some of which

he owned jointly with Mayor Grant.¹⁵ But the Straus-Grant horseracing partnership was 15 years earlier, and we do not know why Isidor sought permission to stable ten horses in 1908, or exactly when he transitioned from using a horse-drawn carriage to a chauffeured limousine.



1894 sketch of proposed Straus stable from building permit filed with the city of New York by architect John H. Duncan.¹⁶
Source: New York City Municipal Archives



1902 configuration of the block at 105th Street, showing the Straus stable facing Broadway and two new apartment buildings filling the northern half of the block.
Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections

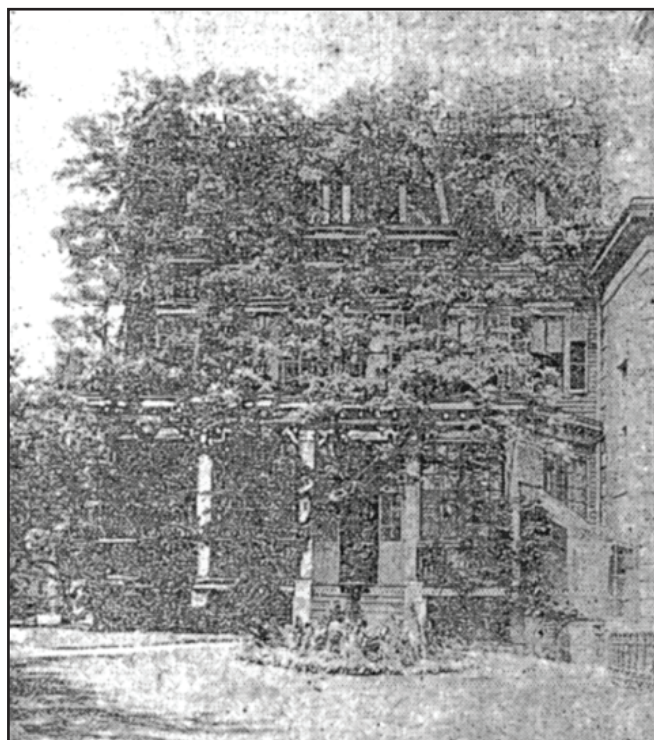
The Straus family lived at 2745 Boulevard from 1884 until Isidor and Ida perished on the Titanic in 1912. The Boulevard was renamed Broadway in Upper Manhattan in 1898, and as 2745 Broadway it was frequently cited as the Straus address in city directories and in newspaper or magazine references to them. In a 1998 letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Straus researcher Howard Matson described the house and property as “having an apple orchard, a small baseball field, pear trees, chicken coops, a barn with cows and goats and a stable. The frame and brick house, with its cupola, was painted brownish-gray...The front porch was glass enclosed...To the left of the hall were a library, dining room and pantry and on the hall’s right were the drawing room and billiard room. The second floor had a room with one of the city’s first porcelain bathtubs, and the house beams had to be reinforced when the tub was installed.”¹⁷ It’s difficult to envision how all of the features described by Matson could have fit into 0.4 acres, but in 1885 Isidor bought another property a couple of hundred feet away at the corner of 106th Street and West End Avenue, and a family biography written by June McCash

described Straus family memories of property that stretched to the neighboring estate of Woodlawn.¹⁸ It must have felt spacious to Isidor and Ida’s children because there were so few buildings in the vicinity.

That changed around the turn of the 20th century, when two apartment buildings were built on the wedge of property adjoining the Straus land on the 106th Street side, and a subway station was built at 103rd Street as part of the IRT’s long-awaited push uptown. Previously, Isidor took the 9th Avenue El to his Macy’s office at 34th Street from its closest stop at 104th and Columbus Ave. That station was a 3-minute walk from home¹⁹ unless his groomsman Patrick McDermott dropped him off or met him with a carriage, as described in Reginald Kauffman’s biography of Isidor’s son Jesse.



The house at 2745 Broadway, nearly obscured by vines, and the masonry stable building at 2747 Broadway.
Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection



The vine-covered house as it appeared in a final *New York Times* article in May 1912 shortly before it was torn down.
Source: *New York Times*

Straus family life at 105th Street and Broadway continued through the first decade of the 20th century, even as Isidor and Ida's children became adults and moved out. The 1900 census recorded eight servants for the family: a gardener, waitress, maid, chambermaid, kitchen maid, laundress, cook and valet. By 1910 there were only two, both living in the stables building at 2747. Between 1900 and 1910, there's another puzzle: the 1905 New York State census record for 2747 Broadway lists Nathan Straus, dry goods merchant, born in Germany in 1847 and emigrated to the US in 1865, as well as his wife Fanny, three daughters and five sons. There were also several household staff. But no such members of the Straus family are known! Isidor's brother Nathan wasn't married to a woman named Fanny, did not have three daughters and three sons, and did not arrive in the United States in 1865. In 1905 brother Nathan lived at 27 West 72nd Street. How could there be another Nathan Straus, also a dry goods merchant born in Germany in the 1840s, living in Isidor's house²⁰ in 1905? When Isidor and his family returned from Europe on May 21, 1905, their ship's passenger manifest gave their address as 2745 Broadway—so there's no reason they wouldn't have been in residence at this address eleven days later when the census was taken. Compounding the mystery is the fact that none of the eight Strauses in the 1905 census record appear in any other public records, and none of the eleven household staff at 2747 are known to have worked for Isidor and Ida—or any of the other Straus siblings, for that matter. Who were these Strauses!?

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--------|--------|----------|---|----|---------|----|------------|---|
| 2747 | Straus | Nathan | Head | M | 48 | Germany | 40 | at college | ✓ |
| | | Fanny | Wife | M | 32 | Germany | 35 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Maude | Daughter | M | 22 | U.S. | 16 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Sennie | Daughter | M | 20 | U.S. | 14 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Ida | Son | M | 16 | U.S. | 10 | at college | ✓ |
| | | Harry | Son | M | 15 | U.S. | 9 | at college | ✓ |
| | | Nathan | Son | M | 14 | U.S. | 8 | at college | ✓ |
| | | August | Son | M | 12 | U.S. | 6 | at college | ✓ |
| | | Harvey | Daughter | M | 10 | U.S. | 4 | at school | ✓ |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|---------|-----------|---|----|---------|----|---------|---|
| 2747 | Ida | Bottler | Conductor | M | 30 | Germany | 8 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Conductor | M | 28 | Germany | 6 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 26 | U.S. | 10 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 24 | U.S. | 8 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 22 | U.S. | 6 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 20 | U.S. | 4 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 18 | U.S. | 2 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 16 | U.S. | 0 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 14 | U.S. | 0 | at home | ✓ |
| | | Amelia | Butler | M | 12 | U.S. | 0 | at home | ✓ |

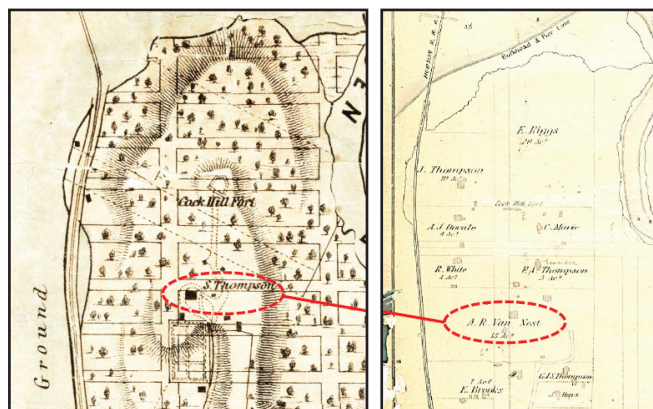
1905 New York State Census entry for an unidentified Straus family listed at 2747 Broadway and several household staff at the same address.

By 1910, Isidor and Ida's household help consisted of just a coachman, George E. Haines, and a laborer, John Walsh. In January 1912, Isidor and Ida left on their fateful trip to Europe. After they perished in the Titanic disaster, the family quickly settled their estate²¹. Ownership of the property at 2745 was consolidated into the names of Percy and Edith Straus, and then immediately sold to the developer Harry Schiff. The sales deed specifies the price only as "one dollar and other good and valuable considerations,"²² but a note in *Real Estate Record and Guide* gave the price as "a little more than" \$600,000. The sales deed was dated July 17, 1912, but on May 26th, the *New York Times* described it as a done deal in an article that called the Straus home "one of the most interesting of the few remaining old-time residences on the upper west side," noting its "wisteria vines which in the Spring covered the old wooden

house with a mass of purple blooms."²³ Harry Schiff built the Clebourne, an imposing 13-story apartment house with a porte cochère on 105th Street. Schiff promptly went bankrupt, and the building was sold to Lawrence Phipps, who was treasurer of Andrew Carnegie's United States Steel Corporation. The Clebourne is now a cooperative.

Bolton Road, Inwood

As the northernmost and hilliest part of Manhattan Island, the Inwood neighborhood was slow to develop as a residential area.²⁴ An important early owner of Inwood property in the post-Native American, post-Dutch and post-British era was Samuel Thomson (1784-1850), who was wealthy from work as an architect and builder. Thomson bought 84 acres of Inwood in the 1830s and built a large house on an estate known as Mount Washington. Unlike many later Inwood residents who built or bought estates to escape the summertime heat and diseases of the city, Thomson seems to have lived in Inwood full time. Six years after his 1850 death, Thomson's family broke up and sold the Inwood property. Nearly 14 acres of it were bought by Abraham Van Nest. Van Nest owned saddlery and hardware businesses; he was also an alderman and president of Greenwich Savings Bank.²⁵ During Van Nest's ownership, the former estate of Samuel Thomson featured extensive gardens and a greenhouse, as illustrated in one of a series of detailed drawings created as part of a survey conducted in the early 1860s for an ambitious but never-executed plan by Francis Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux to develop Manhattan north of 155th Street.²⁶



The Inwood neighborhood at the extreme northern tip of Manhattan, as mapped in 1851 (left) and 1867 (right). The mansion of Samuel Thomson, later acquired by Abraham Van Nest, is noted. The map on the right shows several estates carved out of the Thomson property, including that of Francis A. Thompson immediately above and to the right of Van Nest. Someone has annotated the F.A. Thompson property with the word "Schmieder"—the name of the owner immediately before Isidor Straus.

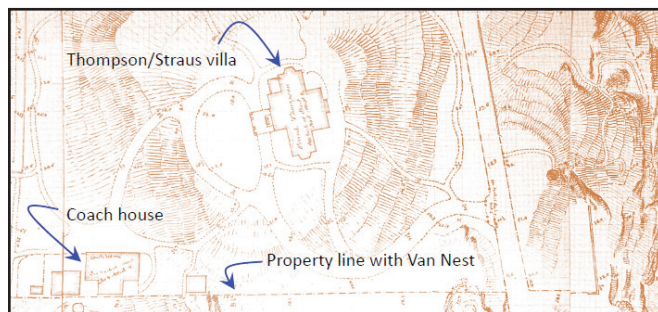
Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections

During the 1850s, Van Nest's brother-in-law and business partner Francis A. Thompson (1822-1869) acquired a 4.13-acre plot of land adjacent to Van Nest's, and built an Italianate villa on it. After Francis Thompson died at the age of 47, his heirs sold the estate to florist Charles Schmieder, who lived there with his family, 3 boarders, and 11(!) servants. But Schmieder was foreclosed on, and after a legal battle with Thompson's heirs that lasted six years, the property was sold by court order at public auction on June 10, 1885.²⁷ Isidor Straus placed the winning bid of \$30,000 and, after a hiccup

whereby the property was determined to be about 1/3 acre smaller than advertised and Straus sued successfully to get the price decreased, the estate entered the Straus family.



The Inwood villa of Francis Thompson, acquired in 1885 by Isidor Straus. The photograph was published in 1860, not long after its construction. Source: A.A. Turner. 1860. *Villas on the Hudson*



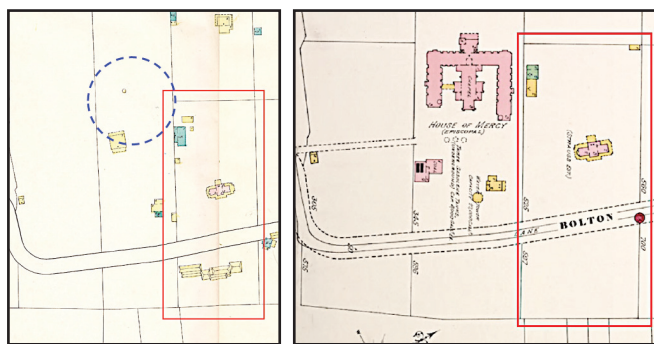
The Inwood villa of Francis Thompson, acquired in 1885 by Isidor Straus. The map shows the sloping landscape on all sides as well as pathways leading to Bolton Road on the right and to the coach house.

Source: Virginia Tuttle Clayton, 1992. *The Hudson River villas of upper Manhattan: rediscovered maps and plans. J. Garden History* 12(4): 269-297.

As a corollary to the mystery about why Isidor and Ida felt they needed two substantial residences six miles apart, there is uncertainty about just how much they used the Inwood home. There is a family story that when the family was at Inwood, the Straus' son Herbert needed medical attention and it was slow to arrive at their rural location, causing Isidor and Ida to change their plans and settle instead at 105th Street.²⁸ If that was the case, and if the Strauses did not use their Inwood residence much, why did they keep it? Records show that the property stayed in the Straus family until at least 1912, when it was transferred to the Straus's real estate firm, Fourteenth Street Realty Co.²⁹ There are no city directory entries, census records, or other documents that demonstrate Straus residency in Inwood, but there are a handful of documents showing activity at the Bolton Road property for several years after their purchase, including two filings with the city in 1889 for improvements to the estate.³⁰ Both of those documents give Isidor's address as 105th Street, reinforcing the idea that 105th was their primary home. An August 1889 newspaper story about a visit to Inwood by a committee tasked with evaluating locations for a possible World's Fair noted that Straus, who was on the committee, invited the members "to go up to his

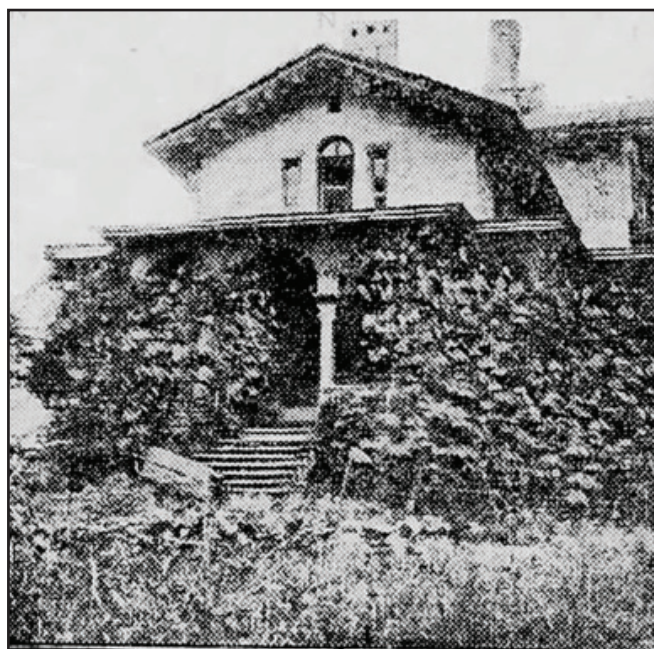
house on Inwood Heights. It is the highest point on Manhattan Island."³¹

Another factor that might have influenced the family's decision about where to spend their time was the construction of a large institution on the adjacent plot of land, where the Episcopal Church built and operated a home for 'wayward girls' called the House of Mercy. It was constructed in the early 1890s, and photographs shows that its vast size (200 rooms!)³² dwarfed even the substantial Straus villa--and it was just a few hundred feet away. A newspaper note in 1905 said that Oscar Straus had leased his Inwood house and land to the House of Mercy.³³ There's no evidence that Oscar owned the Inwood property, so it may have been a reporting error that confused the brothers—Oscar was often in the news as the US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The House of Mercy was the subject of occasional public scandals, accused of abusing and essentially imprisoning its residents. It surely changed the atmosphere of living on an otherwise bucolic road—a *New Yorker* article written decades later claimed that the "wailing of the girls at the House of Mercy was a disheartening sound."³⁴ That same article associated the decline of "gay society" on Bolton Road with the construction of "certain establishments



The Straus property before (1893) and after (1900) construction of the adjacent House of Mercy.

Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections

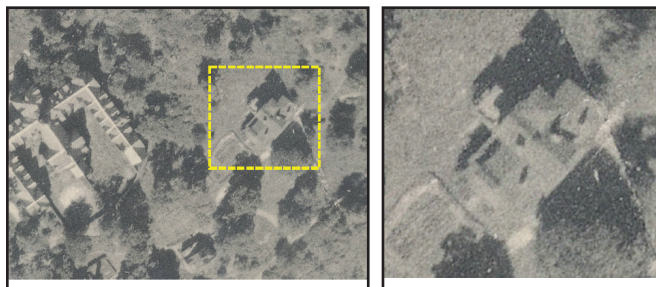


The Straus villa in 1921

Source: *New-York Tribune Magazine* 6 November 1921

of fixed unhappiness”—the House of Mercy, but also a facility for tuberculosis patients.

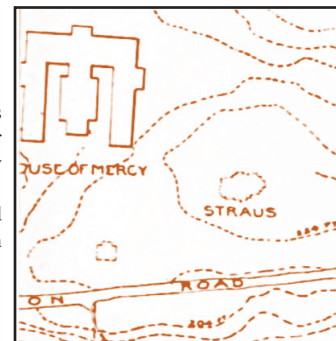
During the period 1900-1930 some of the Bolton Road mansions were abandoned and decayed, others were destroyed by fire, and still others were razed by the city as it developed and expanded Inwood Hill Park. It's not clear when



The House of Mercy and Straus villa in a 1927 aerial photograph, with the Straus villa enlarged on the right.

Source: *The Hamilton aerial map of Manhattan*, American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

the Straus villa was torn down, but it appeared intact in an aerial photograph taken in September 1927. The *1930 Annual Report of the New York City Department of Parks* described its efforts to demolish “the old buildings which had outlived their usefulness and were rapidly becoming dilapidated.”³⁵ A 1932 map indicated that the Straus villa was gone,³⁶ and today there is only a debris field to mark the once-grand building.



A 1932 map indicating the Straus villa (dashed outline) is gone or decayed, while the House of Mercy is still standing.

Source: R.P. Bolton. 1932. *Inwood Hill Park on the Island of Manhattan*

Footnotes

¹ Please address comments or corrections to rcg2147@columbia.edu

² 130 West 49th was subsequently renumbered to 220 West 49th Street

³ Broadway and West End Avenue were called The Boulevard and Eleventh Avenue until the late 1890s

⁴ New York County Conveyances, 1885, liber 1900, pages 429-431

⁵ New York County Conveyances, 1884, liber 1778, pages 16-19

⁶ *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide* 20 December 1890 Supplement page 61.

⁷ Op cit.

⁸ Christopher Gray. “A restored memorial to 2 who died on the Titanic.” *New York Times* 23 August 1998

⁹ It was not uncommon for older properties such as this one to include buildings that were in the way of a cross street, because the orderly Manhattan grid established in 1814 by the Randel map was superimposed onto an existing pattern of properties and structures. Old houses and mansions sometimes ended up in the middle of a planned street or avenue and had to be moved or torn down, but even structures built later were sometimes in the way, and the Straus stable was one of those. It took decades for the city to grade and pave all the streets. In the Bloomingdale neighborhood where the Strauses lived, the actual creation of cross streets proceeded in fits and starts throughout the 1870s-1890s.

¹⁰ G.W. and W.S. Bromley. 1891. *Atlas of City of New York*. Manhattan Island. Plate 37. New York Public Library Digital Collections

¹¹ *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide* 4 March 1893 pages 318-319

¹² New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Buildings collection, Projected Buildings, 1894 file #835

¹³ *The City Record* 8 April 1908 page 3860

¹⁴ *New York Evening Post* 6 March 1908

¹⁵ *Evening World* 26 November 1892; *The Sun* 5 September 1893

¹⁶ New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Buildings collection, Projected Buildings, 1894 file #835

¹⁷ *New York Times* 6 September 1998

¹⁸ Woodlawn was the colonial-era Nicholas Jones estate, between 106th and 107th Streets and West End Avenue. See Tom Miller. “The lost Nicholas Jones house — West End Avenue and 106th Street.” *Daytonian in Manhattan* 26 April 2021 at <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2021/04/the-lost-nicholas-jones-house-west-end.html>

¹⁹ *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide* 22 February 1896 page 298

²⁰ More precisely, Nathan Straus is listed in the 1905 New York State census at 2747 Broadway, but this is likely to be an error since there is no census entry for 2745 Broadway, and 12 household staff are listed on a different census sheet at 2747 Broadway. The Straus family was probably at 2745.

²¹ *New York Times* 18 May 1912

²² New York County Conveyances, 1912, Liber 159, pages 355-356

²³ “Straus home sold to builder.” *New York Times* 26 May 1912

²⁴ There is abundant historical information about Inwood at myinwood.net.

²⁵ <https://emuseum.nyhistory.org/objects/8047/walkingstick>

²⁶ Virginia Tuttle Clayton. 1992. The Hudson River villas of upper Manhattan: rediscovered maps and plans. *J. Garden History* 12(4): 269-297

²⁷ Auction ad, *New York Times* 8 June 1885

²⁸ June McCash. 2012. *A Titanic Love Story: Ida and Isidor Straus*, page 89. McCash cites Reginald Kauffman's biography of Jesse Isidor Straus for this anecdote, but the order of events seems wrong: the incident couldn't have led to the family buying their residence on 105th Street because they purchased their estate in Inwood 18 months after buying 2745 Broadway.

²⁹ *Real Estate Record and Guide* 15 Jun 1912 page 325

³⁰ One described a 70x25 foot stable to cost \$4,500; the other a 25x12.6 foot chicken house to cost \$300. Both were designed by Ralph S. Townsend, an architect who specialized in residential buildings on the Upper West Side. *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide* 11 May 1889, page 681 and 29 June 1889, page 932

³¹ *New York Times* 30 August 1889

³² Morris Markey. “A reporter at large: Inwood.” *New Yorker* 9 December 1933 page 114

³³ “Institution leases Inwood parcel.” *New York Tribune* 11 August 1905

³⁴ Morris Markey. “A reporter at large: Inwood.” *New Yorker* 9 December 1933 page 114

³⁵ *Annual Report of the Department of Parks*. Borough of Manhattan. 1930, page 6. https://www.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4088annual_report_manhattan_dept_parks_1930.pdf

³⁶ Reginald P. Bolton. 1932. *Inwood Hill Park on the Island of Manhattan*, page 11

³⁷ Don Rice. “Discovering the Gilded Age mansion sites on Inwood Hill, NYC.” 5 April 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHk1tBDbVT4>



continued from page two

families had houses elsewhere in Manhattan; Nathan's at 27 West 72nd Street and Oscar's at 20 West 46th Street.

Other interesting information that is new to us is that the Straus family owned two real estate companies. I knew they didn't invest in the stock market, feeling they did not want to be subject to its fluctuations. They bought real estate with the profits from their businesses. Rob found many listings for real estate transactions all over New York City and in Westchester County that were made by the Fourteenth Street Realty Company. Apparently the brothers were also equal partners in Abrast Realty Company with Lee Kohns, their sister Hermine's son and with Abraham Abraham, the co-owner in Abraham & Straus, a Brooklyn department store.

We looked at the wills of Isidor, Nathan, Oscar and of Abraham Abraham to see if there was mention of either of these companies. We also looked at the partnership agreements we had in our collection. Rob has compiled a lengthy list of properties owned by the Strauses, whether in Fourteenth Street Realty, Abrast Realty or privately owned by one of the family members. Over the next several months, we will be working together to learn about these properties.

Thanks to Rob's interest, thorough research and willingness to share, we've been very busy with totally new projects and new information. Even after working for 33 years as the Straus family's historian, I am still learning.

It's been fun to find the intertwining of so much information from unexpected sources. And, it's been gratifying to put so much information into a chronological framework when much of what I receive, and process, is out of context.

We keep on working, happily researching Straus history, interacting with family members and those interested in Straus history, visiting repositories, and writing about our latest discoveries.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Rob Garber. His initial interest in 2745 Broadway quickly expanded into a project to identify all of the Straus-held properties and to learn as much as possible about them. This supplemental newsletter issue, researched, written and formatted by Rob Garber, is the result of his work on this project. We plan to present additional supplements as we learn more from Rob and his research. Thank you Rob for your scholarship and guidance.

Social Media Call to Action

What would you like to see posted on our social media platforms? Do you want to see more about: family members, our collections, events, family history? Let us know what would be most meaningful and interesting to you as we continue to develop these new opportunities for communication.

Don't forget to Like, Follow and Subscribe!

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

www.straushistoricalsociety.org/books

Strauses and the Arts, a collection of articles about family members who are artists, patrons of the arts, musicians, dancers, or involved in the arts in some other manner. Personal interviews with the artists reveal details about their creative process and their philosophy of the arts. Images of the artists' work are included at the end of each article. Available from the SHS website as an eBook (\$4.99) or paperback (\$25).

The Autobiography of Isidor Straus privately published by Sara Straus Hess in 1955, greatly expanded and updated by SHS in 2011, including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$30.00

Disease in Milk: The Remedy Pasteurization by **Lina Guthertz Straus**, a loving tribute to the life's work of Nathan Straus, greatly expanded in 2016 including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover - \$40.00

Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft, the autobiography of Oscar S. Straus. This recently re-published autobiography includes a new supplement with articles about Oscar S. Straus from past issues of the Society's newsletters and new photographs. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$40.00

For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. by Joan Adler published in 2013. When Otto Frank realized he had to get his family out of Europe in April, 1941, he wrote to his Heidelberg University roommate and lifelong friend Nathan Straus Jr. for help. This book describes their struggle to find a way to save the Frank family. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$30.00

The History of the Jews of Otterberg by Dr. Hans Steinebrei,
translated by Frank and Sue Kahn and Dr. Andreas J. Schwab.
This publication contains a large section about the Straus family.
Many photographs complement the text. Published in English
by the Straus Historical Society. Hard cover - \$35.00

My Family: I Could Write a Book by Edith Maas Mendel. 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. Hard cover - \$25.00

Additional items are available for sale on the SHS website. www.straushistoricalsociety.org/publications. Contact Joan Adler by phone: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: info@straushistory.org if you have questions about ordering.

The Straus Historical Society collection contains many photographs, articles and other items that are also available. Contact Joan Adler if you want to learn more about the SHS collections or if there is a specific photograph or article you wish to purchase.