



STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 24 Number 1

Straus is the German word for ostrich

August 2022

Straus Historical Society 2022 Scholarship Program

Introducing SHS Scholarship Winners:

Rachel Joy Boakye, Ania Ruiz Borys, Amy Patania Lyons, and Richard Ellsworth Stecker III

The Straus Historical Society Scholarship Program was created with the goal of supporting the continuing education of a graduate student whose professional goal is in the field of public service. Thanks to your generous contributions, the Straus Historical Society has awarded ten scholarships to date. We are pleased to announce that in 2022, Rachel Joy Boakye, Ania Ruiz Borys, Amy Patania Lyons and Richard Ellsworth Stecker III have been selected to each receive a \$5,000 Straus Scholarship.



Rachel Joy Boakye is a graduate student at American University School of International Service where she is pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Global Governance, Politics and Security. Upon completing her degree, she hopes to become a diplomat-lawyer with the United Nations or United States Department of State. Rachel has always been passionate about solving

the migration crisis and helping refugees from around the globe. She plans to start a nonprofit in Washington D.C. called International Freedom Relief. The organization's goal will be to help refugees and migrants whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict or disaster that has caused them to be displaced. Her dream is to use a career in public service to positively impact the lives of those who need help the most.

Ania Ruiz Borys is a graduate student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University where she is pursuing a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy. She is also pursuing a Master of Science in Food and Nutrition Policy at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. She is concentrating on Human Security, International Conflict Resolution, Gender Analysis and Food Systems. Ania, who immigrated to the United States from Mexico, is particularly interested in working to change how food is used to educate people about culture, economics, gender, biology, politics, love and more. She aspires to join the world of public service where she can create innovative solutions and influence a future where food brings communities together, bridges gaps, and empowers all people to think sustainably about their place in the world.



Amy P. Lyons is a graduate student at American University School of International Service and American University Washington College of Law where she is pursuing both a degree in Law and a Master of Arts in International Studies. She is specializing her studies on peace and conflict resolution, and international

law with a concentration towards atrocity prevention and humanitarian rights. Amy, whose early childhood was spent in Malaysia, didn't learn English until she moved to Maine with her family when she was a child. She experienced culture shock, which severely affected her education and self-esteem. Amy would like to create a program for language learners and immigrants that would help Asian immigrants adjust to their new life in the United States. Although she may start with the Asian community, she dreams of expanding her work to serve many other underserved and underrepresented communities.

Richard Ellsworth Stecker III

is a graduate student at American University where he is pursuing a Master of Arts degree in United States Foreign Policy and National Security. He plans to join the FBI or the Foreign Service to represent the United States abroad. He would like to protect the United States from foreign or domestic threats, while also maintaining an unwavering sense of integrity and historical knowledge of incidents. In this manner he would be able to make a positive contribution to the public good. Richard has a desire to do his best possible work on behalf of the nation. To do so would be a recognition that he is a part of something much greater than one individual.



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

by the

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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
SHS Board Chair
David H. Kurzman**

As the world seems to be tumbling out of control, we at SHS have kept to our mission to collect, preserve and to interpret the history of the Straus family. We have been steady in our mission and moving forward to create new projects and complete those in progress.

I am pleased to report that we have awarded scholarships to four accomplished graduate students who are preparing for a career in public service. Oscar S. Straus once said, "If public service were a career, that's what I would do." And then he made it so. You can read about our four 2022 SHS scholarship awardees on the front page of our newsletter. Their award winning essays are presented on pages four through seven.

We are pleased to report that we have two new volunteers who are making significant contributions to SHS. We welcome Bina Patel, who is serving on the Finance and Archives and Curation Committee, and Oluwatomi (Tomi) Hassan, who is serving on the Social Media and Archives and Curation Committee. Both Bina and Tomi are enthusiastic about their participation on their chosen committees and are making suggestions that have proven to be quite helpful.

We have four interns from SUNY Stony Brook University on Long Island who are converting the documentation of our collections from a Word document into spreadsheet format. In addition, Tomi Hassan, who is working toward a degree in Machine Language, has been working with the Archives and Curation Committee, and guided by longtime SHS board member Liza Loop, to create an automated method of transferring the information from the Word document to a spreadsheet, saving us countless hours.

Joan Adler continues to give Zoom presentations. She will be speaking to an international group on August 22nd about Isidor and Ida Straus and their final trip aboard Titanic. She will also be speaking to the Oregon Jewish Genealogical Society on September 18th. That topic is "Write What You Know."

Social media has become even more important during the pandemic. SHS hosts a Facebook page that regularly posts interesting articles and photographs as well as announcing upcoming events. Our Instagram and Twitter accounts contain companion posts that keep even more people informed of Straus history as well as upcoming events. Visit us frequently - and Like us.

Facebook: @straushistoricalsociety

Twitter: @straushistory

Instagram: @straushistoricalsociety

YouTube: Straus Historical Society

The work of SHS, and its programs, can only continue with your support. Please consider making a contribution of any amount in support of our projects. You can donate to a specific fund, like the Morse Grant, the scholarship program or the digitization initiative, or donate to the general fund. All donations are important, and welcome. We would also enjoy hearing from you about how we are doing: what you like about the Society and its projects, what is of interest to you, and what new projects you would like us to undertake.

Let us hear from you.



Rachel Joy Boakye

American University School of International Service

I HAVE A PURPOSE

"Hello, Rachel. It's a pleasure to meet you," said the assistant director of the Freedom Hub as I sat in her corner office. "Do you have any questions for me about the organization?"

"Yes, actually. Do you enjoy your job? I asked, expecting to hear a lengthy, rambling statement about the personal satisfaction this woman gained from being responsible for helping thousands of refugees arriving in Sydney who have experienced modern slavery within Australia's borders.

Her reply: "Yes, it's a nice job, mainly paperwork. I expected to be moved again through the organization, probably back to human resources" My face fell in disappointment as I realized that the world, even those in positions to help others continually, was not motivated by the same passion as I am. Everyone does not need to see an ultimate purpose for their career or even their life. Everyone does not have the burning desire to make a large-scale impact on the lives of others. Everyone does not want to leave a legacy that outlasts their life and lives on after death. Everyone is not Rachel Joy Boakye. I have a purpose.

As I returned to my desk, I opened a case, read it, summarized it, and enjoyed the mental task of analyzing it; but I knew, at that moment, that there was much more. I knew that I wanted to take my interest in law and international affairs and eventually my writing skills and apply them to more than research for the benefit of an organization. I wanted to use my knowledge to the advantage of those who genuinely need my help and those who are not fully capable of helping themselves.

Fueled with a new passion at the end of my internship, I dedicated myself to the African Students Association (ASA), of which I am the founder and past president. The ASA serves as the only organization to assist international students from all backgrounds and welcome refugees into our programs and activities. In addition, using the ASA as a basis, I spoke at the World Relief in Rock Island to motivate refugees experiencing hardships in the U.S.

In watching the organization's new president continue our articulated vision, I realized that I had made my mark upon the entire Augustana College and its surrounding community through an organization that, I hope, will outlast my academic career. My vision was transformed from an idea in my head to a functioning reality. I now have a newfound perception and a clear sight of the path to make it a reality.

My path will begin with the opportunity to obtain the Straus Historical Society Scholarship. Public service has always been my professional goal and having the chance to impact

people's lives will always be my dream. At SIS, I could gain knowledge for my future through a combination of classes in global history and political dynamics. But my ambitions are stronger, and my vision is larger. I want to join the newest generation of changemakers, leaders erasing problems that continue to affect us. I want to be a lawyer-diplomat and a CEO of an organization. To achieve the foundation necessary for the hard road ahead, I want to surround myself with people who understand my desire to make a difference and share my purpose.

Assisting refugees and migrants has always been my goal; how society mistreats refugees and migrants in the world has damaged many innocent lives. Everyone in this world deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. We cannot live in a world where people die because they cannot enter a country. The first step in tackling the social problems refugees and migrants might face in society is serving with honor and respect. To serve refugees and migrants, I plan to start a nonprofit organization named "International Freedom Relief. The organization's goal is to help refugees and migrants whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict or disaster that has caused them to be displaced. My vision of the organization is to allow refugees to survive, recover, and gain control of their lives. Along with this massive plan, I hope to work as a lawyer diplomat to empower communities, institutions, think tanks, governments to address the needs to help refugees and migrants globally. Public service is more than a goal to me; it is a way for me to be the voice for the voiceless and use the power of my voice to create a change that will last forever.



It is my purpose to empower my community and impact the world. I look back and know that I have given the youth a safe place to learn the importance of higher education and as a voice of change for issues that affect our daily lives. I believe I will have the ability to make a difference through the Straus Historical Society Scholarship. My ambition may be strong, and my vision may be large, but my determination is powerful, and my purpose is clear.



Support the SHS Scholarship Program

The Straus Historical Society has awarded scholarships to deserving graduate students who are pursuing a career in public service or philanthropy.

We would like to continue, and even expand, this very worthwhile program. When thinking of making a donation to a non-profit, please consider supporting SHS with a targeted gift earmarked for the scholarship program.

Ania Ruiz Borys

Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

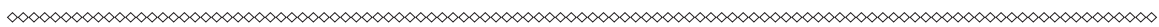
What do you want to do when you grow up? I have probably heard that question as many times as I have heard my own name. It is an overly common question to ask kids and young adults, probing their curiosity for the adult world; yet it was always a rather complicated question to answer for me because I knew that any career showcased at career day didn't feel right. I never would have thought that food would be part of my answer.

In the first year after immigrating to the United States from my home country, Mexico, food became a way for me to develop my English language skills as I practiced pronouncing various snack names during snack time at school. Every day during recess, my peers and I would fantasize about which bag of chips or what candy we would buy from the snack bar if we had the money for them. I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, an area rich with Latinx culture and heritage, but riddled with poor Latinx people. I never knew how drastic the economic disparities were between my hometown and the rest of the United States until I came to Tufts for my undergraduate studies. I learned that almost everyone I was at school with had paid for lunch their entire K-12 lives. Further, I learned that it was extremely rare to attend a school that qualified for the entire student population to receive free lunch, like mine did back home. Of course, I must acknowledge that at a school like Tufts, a private and expensive institution, the average student does not necessarily represent the average student in the entire country; but the realization struck a chord, and I knew I could not end my academic journey with only a minor in Food Systems tacked onto my major in International Relations. Therefore, I am studying Food and Nutrition Policy



at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and Law and Diplomacy at the Fletcher School through a dual-degree program of three years.

As I alluded to in my introduction, during my elementary years, lack of food was a key topic of conversations with my classmates, but it was never a subject we talked about with our teachers. In high school, "Home Economics" was the only course that remotely discussed nutrition but was understood to be a class for young women wanting an easy elective. I want to work on influencing changes in how food is used to educate people on culture, economics, gender, biology, politics, love, and more. Growing up as a minority exposed me to thinking across disciplines, making me aware that to solve problems, we must address many aspects of such problems simultaneously. That is why I am focused on engaging food systems with human (in)security and the politics of nutritional access. I envision myself working on environmentally focused, sustainability solutions for our food systems that also address income disparity. Food policy is focused on allocating specific funds for public school lunches or grants and subsidies for farmers amongst other important food-related projects. While those policies have done a lot of good, I want to push the world of public service to find innovative long-term solutions that motivate Big Ag to donate "imperfect" cucumbers to low-income school districts, redistributing "waste" and nourishing children in need. I foresee a future where food brings communities together, bridges gaps, and empowers all of us to think sustainably about our place in this world.



Amy Patania Lyons

American University School of International Service and American University Washington College of Law

I was born in Kota Kinabalu, Borneo, Malaysia. I did not grow up knowing what it was like to have plumbing, a landline, or even a paved road. This village gave me life, but it also imbued me with the difficulty of learning a new, complex language. I grew up speaking Malay and Kadazan, but when my family moved to the United States, I was confronted with English. Neither of my mother tongues are similar to English, and due to this difference, I was placed in a special education program.

When we moved to Maine, I experienced culture shock that severely affected my education. Through the eyes of a child, I believed I was a complete failure. I was behind in every class, struggling to meet homework deadlines, and facing social difficulties. I stayed in during recess to feverishly read in the library, befriending the librarians, all driven by a burning

desire to reach the level at which my peers were reading. I only allowed myself to watch educational programs – there was no time to play outside. At an early age I was tested, and I had failed. I was below average in reading and comprehension. I did not realize that my difficulties stemmed from grappling with multiple cultures and languages; as an adult, I have learned to see how advantageous being multicultural truly is.

I grew up never quite knowing where I belonged. I constantly felt as if I were too American to identify as Malaysian, but also too Malaysian to identify as American. Growing up in one of the lesser diverse states, Maine, only emphasized this limbo of emotions and uncertainty. It is because of this uncertainty that I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life – to help others find where they are comfortable and

Amy Patania Lyons

continued

to meet them halfway. To me, that means bridging the gaps between cultures and languages.

To this day, I still mispronounce English words simply because I grew up speaking two other tongues. While that used to unsettle me, I now recognize it as a bigger challenge I have overcome. All of these challenges I faced growing up, whether it be socially or culturally, has made me want to create a program for language learners and immigrants. While I know these programs exist, I also know that there could always be more of these programs. Thanks to some experience I have had as a Spanish interpreter and translator in Maine, I want to open up a program that specifically caters towards Asian cultures. From the experiences I have had, Asian countries tend to be more reserved. We do not like to ask for help and we certainly do not want others to know we need any help. Therefore, one of my future goals in the field of public service is to open up this specialized program to help

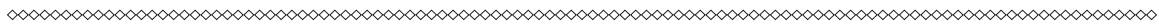


Asian immigrants and newcomers adjust to their new life here in the United States. While I would want to start with Maine, my dream is to expand across the northeastern states. This is because, growing up, I did not see much Asian diversity in those bordering states. And I know those communities exist, so I want to help them feel seen, heard, and understood.

I moved to Washington, D.C., to pursue my legal studies in international law with a concentration towards atrocity prevention and humanitarian rights. I chose to attend the

American University Washington College of Law (AUWCL) because of how diverse the school is and also because of the opportunity to receive this dual degree with American University's School of International Service. While here in D.C., I have found a vibrant, supportive Asian community. I never knew this community was quite what I was looking for, but as soon as I found it, I knew this was what I had been pursuing my whole life. I was looking for a place to belong without any questions. This sheer joy of belonging is exactly what I want to recreate back in Maine and ultimately across the nation. While it may start with the Asian community, I dream that it can expand to many other underserved and underrepresented communities as well.

While I recognize that this is quite a large endeavor, I have never been one to say no to something that I know will ultimately help so many people, and I am certainly up for that challenge. I want to be the person who can help others who feel as if they have failed, as if they are not where they should be, as if they are lost. My challenges have only allowed me to embrace diversity and the absolute beauty and awe that comes with the unique story of each and every person. Through the generous support of the Straus Historical Society, I can begin to achieve those dreams and goals. I know I would not be where I am today without the support of so many donors, friends, scholars, and mentors who believed in me and I want to pay that support forward through my future acts of public service.



Richard Ellsworth Stecker III

American University

When I enter the public service upon graduation roughly 15 months from now, or perhaps sooner, I anticipate immense pressure to meld into the current and accepted paradigm of my branch of service. There is merit to this approach, after all, many of my peers will be experts and have long experiences with my current assignments. However, I believe that while knowledge is valuable for its own sake, what is wise must be something I decide for myself. To this end, I intend to compromise where I can, on issues or on procedure. However, when I cannot compromise, for doing so would be against what I know and believe to be right and true, I will not stand aside. This is a problem in society right now. People tend to keep their heads low, even if actions are occurring that they know are wrong. When people are in public service, they have a right to serve the public. It is not intended to be the other way around, that is, the public does not serve the state or



its representatives. Therefore, when I enter public service, I intend to keep who I am intact, and encourage others to do the right thing, even when it is challenging, scary, or may come at personal discomfort.

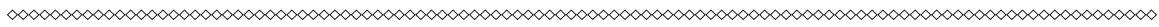
There are many news items of people standing by while another wreaks destruction on the public good, but that will never be me. I know that my education, background, and hard work will put me in a position to execute my job responsibilities with great outcomes for my organization and for the United States. However, a life's work is meaningless and not worth living if it is not pursued with integrity and with the utmost intent to better the world around them. It is not enough to say I served in the government, one must use their position to change the attitudes of their peers, and of the public to become beacons of positive affirmations.

Richard Ellsworth Stecker III

continued

Being a lighthouse of integrity is not easy, or common. Doubtlessly there are millions of Americans with the paper qualifications to properly serve in an acronym government institution. However, what is not shown on paper is whether these people are honorable or deserving of serving the public based on the content of their character. I've met a lot of people in Washington, some with incredible pedigrees and positions. But many seem either arrogant about their accomplishments or completely disaffected with their posts. Both attitudes are dangerous, and the public is undeserving of them. Public

service requires pride in one's work, but also the constant reminder of Memento Mori. This is what I would bring to a dedicated career in the government. Not only a desire to do the best work possible on behalf of the nation, and for myself, but to do so as a recognition that I am a part of something so much greater than one individual. In summation, I will join the public service and not only do a great job but will encourage and bond with others to become pillars of their community and their organizations so that these positions are truly serving the public good.



Updates from Two Previous Scholarship Recipients

IRIS HINH- 2021: Are you still in school? I graduated with my M.A. in Politics and Education from Teachers College, Columbia University this past May.

DILLON COOKE - 2021: Are you still in school or have you completed your degree? I completed my Master of Public Administration degree in May 2022.

Are you working, volunteering, or do you have summer employment or a permanent job? After interning with the State Fiscal Policy (SFP) Research Team at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), I started as a Research Associate with the team in December 2021. CBPP is a nonpartisan research and policy institute that advances federal and state policies to help build a nation where everyone — regardless of income, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ZIP code, immigration status, or disability status — has the resources they need to thrive and share the nation's prosperity. On the SFP Team, I have written about state child tax credits, earned income tax credits, K-12 unfinished learning, immigrant-inclusive policies, grocery sales taxes, and spending State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds from the American Rescue Plan of 2021.

Are you working, volunteering, or do you have summer employment or a permanent job? I am still working full-time for Rep. Scott Peters (CA-52), though I was promoted in April 2022 from Legislative Correspondent. I am now a Legislative Assistant for Rep. Peters, working on the following policy areas: health care, education, labor, pensions, government reform, oversight and investigations, gun violence prevention, along with judiciary and postal issues.

How did the scholarship help you complete your educational goals? Did it make a difference? Absolutely! I was able to finish grad school without debt. The scholarship reduced financial stress and allowed me to complete my degree part-time in 2 years, rather than full-time in 1.5 years. The course load was more manageable and enriching because I could spend an academic year in-person to connect with my peers and faculty. Part-time status also allowed me to work full-time, which helped to finance my degree.

How did the scholarship help you complete your educational goals? Did it make a difference? In combination with the merit aid American University provided to me, the Straus Scholarship allowed me to complete my postsecondary education and attain a Master's degree without incurring further costs to my family. The scholarship helped me focus on getting my education, rather than finding ways to pay for it.

What are your plans over the next few years? The Research Associate role is a two-year contract, and I hope to be a policy analyst with a more specific focus on K-12 education research in the next few years.

What are your plans over the next few years? - I am proud of my career progression. At this time, my plan is to spend the next few years achieving excellence in my current role. I consider myself extremely grateful for the opportunities I've received at a relatively young age and want to live up to the responsibilities to which I've been entrusted.

Have your ideas about your career path changed since receiving the SHS scholarship? I wouldn't say my career path has changed. I'm grateful to say that I am working at a think tank in Washington, D.C. that strives to expand state policies for families and individuals. While my current role is not specific to education policy, state and local governments primarily fund K-12 education, and I'm enjoying learning more about how states raise and spend revenue for education.

Have your ideas about your career path changed since receiving the SHS scholarship? When I received the SHS scholarship, I had a strong interest in strengthening the State Department and our diplomatic corps. Since my promotion, I have become more interested in global health. While I cover a broad portfolio for Rep. Peters, health care is my primary issue area and my interest lies more with ensuring that our public and private institutions are working for everyone, both at home and abroad.

Honorary Straus Scholars

The Award Committee was very impressed with the high quality of the scholarship applications. Out of a pool of 56, the Committee recommended that two applicants be designated Honorary Straus Scholars. They are Sam Cheuk-Hin Hau and John Farah.

Titanic Museum Attraction, Pigeon Forge TN

April 5-6, 2022

On Monday, April 4th, David H. Kurzman and I traveled to Pigeon Forge, TN to participate in a very special event. David is SHS's board chair and the great, great grandson of Isidor and Ida Straus. David's father, Paul A. Kurzman, is the owner of a very special locket that was found on Isidor Straus' body when it was recovered after Titanic's sinking. The locket was given to his grandmother, Sara Straus Hess who gave it to her oldest daughter, Eleanor Hess Kurzman, who, in turn, gave it to her son Paul, her youngest child and the one of her four children who had the most interest in family history. The locket has been Paul's prized possession for many years. He has never lent it for exhibition – until now.

Titanic Museum Attraction (TMA) in Pigeon Forge, TN and Branson, MO are venues where the great ship has been recreated in three quarter scale. One can walk through its hallways and see what the passengers must have seen on their ill-fated voyage. Many of the exhibits are interactive, giving the visitors a true “feel for” and understanding of the many artifacts and displays that abound. Docents are thoroughly knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the role they play. They have assumed a character, one of the crew or passengers, and stay in character throughout the day. Visitors can have their photograph taken, ask questions, and converse, with “Captain Smith” or a first class steward or one of the musicians on board.

Several of SHS's artifacts are on loan to TMA. Isidor's wedding band is on display in Isidor and Ida's recreated first class sitting room. Many photographs adorn the walls in the same area and several are framed and placed on the furniture in the sitting room. We are told that the Straus' sitting room is one of their guest's favorite areas aboard “Titanic.”

Paul Burns is VP of Programming and TMA's liaison with SHS. We have had a long relationship, as SHS's first loans to TMA occurred many years ago. Throughout this time, Paul has asked many times if it were possible to get the locket on loan. But Paul Kurzman was not anxious to have it out of his possession.

Paul Burns contacted me about a year and a half ago to explain that TMA was planning a special year-long exhibition called “The Jews of Titanic.” He asked if Paul Kurzman would be willing to lend his locket for this special exhibition. This time, Paul agreed. And so, on April 4th, David Kurzman and I traveled to Pigeon Forge to

participate in the ceremony created around the installation of the locket.

Mary Kellogg-Joslyn and her husband John are the co-owners of TMA. Mary wrote, “Privately held, one of Titanic's most important and emotionally charged artifacts ever recovered is the watch fob locket belonging to famed New York merchandizer and co-owner of Macy's Department Store, Isidor Straus. His story is one of legend, and we're excited to tell it while in the presence of his most personal possession, says Mary Kellogg Joslyn, COO/Co-owner of the Titanic Museum Attractions in Pigeon Forge, TN and Branson, MO.

“The locket was found tucked in the marketing mogul's vest pocket when he was pulled, lifeless, from the sea. It has remained in the possession of Straus family descendants ever since, never to be seen by the public until now,” explains Kellogg-Joslyn.

“To me, this beautiful Titanic artifact is important because it was witness to one of maritime history's greatest disasters and one of its greatest love stories, as well. Isidor and his beloved wife, Ida, were inseparable in life and in death. When she was given the chance to board a lifeboat and save herself, she refused to go without Isidor, saying, “We have lived together for many years. Where you go, I go.”

The Titanic Museum's curator, Paul Burns, was told of the locket's existence more than 20 years ago by Joan Adler, executive director of the Straus Historical Society. He has worked tirelessly since then to bring it out of obscurity and into the view of thousands of Titanic Museum followers,” says Kellogg-Joslyn.”

Mary, Paul and their staff could not have been more gracious. Every moment of our time was scheduled with personal appearances, opportunities for the press to document the event and to do interviews, interviews for TMA's Social Media forums, the presentation of the locket, the installation of the locket, a tour of the museum with an emphasis on the new exhibits relating to the Jews aboard Titanic and the special accommodations made for them, multiple wonderful meals

and time to interact with the staff.

An arrangement was also made for me to give a presentation to the members of the Knoxville, TN Jewish Community Center. I was asked to speak about my book, *For the Sake of the*



Press Briefing Before the Presentation of the Locket
David Kurzman, Craig Sopin (collector), Joan Adler,
Mary Kellogg-Joslyn, Paul Burns at the podium

Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. Alison Vick, an historian with the Tennessee Holocaust Commission, interviewed me about the book and about the people involved. This was an opportunity to expand on some of the material that I was not able to put into the book. She was also interested in my work on behalf of the Straus family and their history.

There was also time for a book signing in TMA's shop. It was wonderful to learn that so many of the staff of TMA has purchased a copy of my book and now wanted me to inscribe it. It was also wonderful to see so many of the staff

that have been there since the museums opening and who I have previously met. I was greeted as an old friend, a lovely experience.

We are grateful to Paul Kurzman for allowing his precious locket to be loaned for display at the TMA and to Mary Kellogg-Joslyn, John Joslyn and Paul Burn for the respectful manner in which it was installed and is on display. SHS's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret and share knowledge about the Straus family and its history. Participating in TMA's year-long exhibit, *The Jews of Titanic*, is one way in which we accomplish our mission.



David Kurzman (center) presenting the locket to Paul Burns as "Captain Smith" looks on



Paul Kurzman with "Captain Smith"



Isidor and Ida Straus' Sitting Room

Flora Stieglitz Straus - Part Two

by Catherine Smith

Flora Stieglitz Straus was the wife of Hugh Grant Straus, son of Nathan and Lina Straus. Shortly after she started working with the Straus family, Joan Adler was privileged to meet Flora. Flora was already in her nineties but still active and sharp. She was very busy compiling a Straus family history and generous with her stories. She wrote a memoir, "Bits and Pieces," that contained many stories about the members of her family. In the February 2022 newsletter, we retold many of the stories about Flora's family and childhood. Here, we will continue her story and share additional information about her life as a Straus.

Flora's father was the family physician for Nathan and Lina Straus. In the summer when Flora was seventeen, the Strauses invited "the dear Doctor's wife and his daughters" to visit them for a week at their summer home on Cherry Island, in NYS's Thousand Islands. She reported that her first meeting with Grant was amusing and complicated. When the family arrived, Grant was only staying for two more days before a trip to Wyoming. He was not happy to have to be nice to the Stieglitz daughters when he only had a short time with his parents. "I remember that we spent an afternoon on the yacht while Grant was out in their new Gar Wood speedboat, the 'Ostrich.'... Grant circled the yacht with the smaller boat, much to the displeasure of his father... We rather disliked each other, for I thought of him as a rather foppish young man, and he thought of me as a pretentious teenager."

The next summer, Grant's parents were ill and Flora's father was called to take care of them as a "physician-in-residence." Once again, Flora and her mother visited, while Flora's sister refused to go. This time, Grant and his brother Charlie, were delighted to see Flora. It was not long before Grant and Flora fell in love. He proposed July 27, 1913. Though she had been determined to go to college before getting married, Grant convinced her that it would cheat them out of happiness to wait so long. Grant was 23 while Flora was 18.

They married on October 22, 1913. They honeymooned for three weeks in White Post, Virginia. While there, "Grant asked rather sheepishly whether I would mind going to Wanamaker's Department Store. He just had to look because it was reputed to be most excellent and successful. While at Wanamaker's, we passed a figurine dressed in a purple coat and hat and I said, 'Oh, how lovely.' Grant replied, 'I'll buy it for you,' which he did. I felt most embarrassed having this strange young man, and not my father, pay for my clothes...It is a delightful memory."

"Becoming part of this family of Strauses...introduced me to worlds I had not known – business, wealth, political activities, and philanthropy, 'our crowd' and much more. In this setting, Sissie, my sister-in-law, was an important figure...I had

great respect for her through the years that followed and am eternally grateful for her warm welcome into the family to a shy unsophisticated girl."

In May 1915, the couple welcomed their first son, Hugh Grant, Jr. and two years later, his brother Jerome arrived. They had two daughters as well, Ann Elizabeth and Virginia Babette. Flora took great care in the education of her children, sending each of them to the Lincoln School of Teachers College. She joined the PTA and became very involved in the school. She felt that the progressive education movement was an important development fostering responsible and independent learning. Though her eldest three children thrived in this environment, Virginia did not and Flora transferred her to the prestigious Brearley School, which was a much better fit. In tenth grade, the boys were enrolled in boarding schools. Hugh spent two years at the University of Virginia and Jerome went to Dartmouth. Sadly, he passed away during his freshman year. Both Ann and Virginia went to Vassar. Ann married the year before she graduated and Virginia graduated in three years due to World War II.



Flora continued her passion for learning by attending special courses at Teachers College and Columbia. During her time in the PTA at the Lincoln School, she was tasked with contributing to a handbook of suggestions of things to do and see in New York. Flora listed and described the historic buildings of the City, a project that was truly a pioneering effort as nothing like it had ever been done before. Flora became more and more interested in architecture and projected a book for children on the buildings in New York that exemplified famous edifices in Europe. Though she submitted the idea to several editors, the need for expensive photography kept the project from developing further. Flora joined the Child Study Association Board of Directors and was assigned to the children's book committee. She was a member for more than fifty years. She was also a longtime supporter of the Play Schools Association.

Along with her educational efforts, Flora volunteered for political campaigns. Her father-in-law, Nathan, was closely affiliated with the Democratic Party in NYC's Tammany Hall. Her relationship with Sissie and her husband Irving Lehman involved them naturally in Eleanor Roosevelt's activities by helping her husband run for Governor of New York with Herbert Lehman as his Lieutenant-Governor. Later, when Herbert Lehman became Governor, he asked Flora to become one of the five Commissioners for the Blind. She worked hard in this important position for many years. "I ended up by being chosen chairman of the Commission and when there were resignations or deaths, Herbert Lehman consulted me on the new appointments." When Governor Dewey was elected, he did not reappoint Flora.

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continued

Concerning politics, Flora described herself as more liberal and socially conscious than most of her affluent friends. The charitable tradition existed on both sides of the family and she believed her privileges need to be balanced by serving and supporting community and family. She wrote, "I am less afraid of Communism for this country than I am of the reactionaries...all of our social progress and social idealism is threatened by it. I believe in Planned Parenthood, I believe in abortion, I believe in every phase of civil liberties, and they are all threatened by the forces of reaction."

The Straus family traveled extensively. Flora wrote considerably about her two trips to Russia, as well as her many other trips to Europe, the Caribbean, North and South America. "We very much enjoyed primitive living and I think that with our high pressure, so-called civilization, some escape is increasingly necessary. It is important that holidays should provide a different kind of life, more dependent upon your own resources and much simpler and closer to nature."

During WWII, Grant and Flora joined the civilian war effort. They served on Red Cross committees and sold government war bonds. In their barn in the country, space was provided to a neighborhood emergency training unit of the Harrison Red Cross. Flora managed the group and was glad to learn the routine procedures of first-aid.

Like his father, Grant was a horse lover, and he shared his passion with Flora. Soon after they were married, she learned to ride and continued to take lessons in horsemanship with Grant. All four children also learned to ride. Skiing played a big part in their lives. Beginning by experimenting on gentle slopes during their Christmas vacation in 1919, and continuing with serious lessons at Chalet Cochand at Ste. Marguerite in the Laurentians, the whole family enjoyed the sport. The family shared a love of music as well, with each learning an instrument or supporting the symphony or theater in some way.

"Looking back now, I am astonished how, without planning, I had embarked on two 'careers' – raising a family and community service – much like many professional women do today. Despite setbacks along the way, I found deep satisfaction in caring for those in my household and pride in working for a better world. I have always enjoyed 'work' more than so-called social amusements and diversions because, in working, I would learn and serve and commit myself to issues I cared about."

"I was...glorying in his love and returning it with devotion and confidence. However, his sustaining affection was shadowed again and again by his bouts of depression and especially by his manic periods, when he would elaborately and violently reorganize his office and also try to reorganize me, our home

and my 'inadequate' housekeeping. In those periods I tried to shield the children from the upheavals he proposed." Sadly, Flora and Grant divorced in 1955. "Grant's recurring illness, for which he had been treated since the early 1920s, led years later to the end of our marriage... At the time of our divorce in 1955. I was sixty and had had a difficult twenty years, so that I was glad at the prospect of living quietly and alone." In 1958, Grant married Marcelle Vignette. Three years later, he died following a massive heart attack.

"As I write about my life, the events in it seemed to be compartmentalized – family, art, music, public service, politics, education and physical activities...My memories are rather a patchwork – small and large bits and pieces – but overall interesting for me to relive in this way. I am too busy living to prepare for dying. The end is part of living. Peace, eternal peace, is the meaning of the end. I have been most fortunate in having had many sunny days in my life and I am grateful that I was able to meet with courage the dark stormy days that tore at my spirit. I learned from my mother to find comfort in the little joys that lay along the wayside when the big ones were shattered. I feel blessed to see the glory of a sunset, to behold the tender loveliness of a flower, to sense the lift of music, to hear the cadence of words, to take satisfaction in tasks well done... As I look back on this record, I wonder if I have conveyed the happiness that each and every member of my family has brought me. I feel surrounded by affection and concern. I am proud of my children and grandchildren as they build their lives, and I rejoice in the growing of the young great-grands."

Flora continued her active lifestyle throughout the rest of her long life. She found much joy in her family, and social commitments. She passed away on January 24, 1994, just two weeks shy of her 99th birthday. Her memorial was a celebration of her life, filled with fond memories, anecdotes and love. While many spoke of their adoration for Flora, her grandson Michael Gertler said it well. "In a life that spanned several eras, she combined many aspects of the modern and the postmodern. She was concerned with institutional reforms, justice and with peace. But also, on a personal level, with commonalities and differences. She was able to transcend many boundaries, including those of age, gender, class, race, cultures and languages. With prodigious memories of the past, she operated in the present, while focusing on the future. She engaged with people locally, and followed events worldwide... She remains a model for old age and younger ages. In terms of engagement and appetite for life, she savored every moment and contact. She was in no hurry to give up this life. She spent much more time focusing on others than on herself. More time appreciating and celebrating than criticizing or complaining. Generous of spirit, she gave freely. Many have experienced her hospitality, attention, interests, support and acceptance."



Flora and Grant
1923

Friends of Straus Park

by Al Berr

Photographs by Joe Arbo

On Saturday, April 16th, we held our customary Titanic commemoration. The custom has been to observe it on a weekend closest to April 15th, the date the ship sank. Last year, the pandemic prevented this event, so we were especially pleased that, conditions, including the weather, were sufficiently amenable to allow the custom to continue.

For approximately three hours in the afternoon, we displayed our collection of photos, books, and memorabilia of the Straus family and the fabled ship. Our board member, Ian Richardson, was unable to attend, which was unfortunate because he brings objects from his vast maritime collection, and because he is usually eager to recount the events of that fateful night in 1912. However, Virl Andrick, Friends' president, and Joe Arbo, our esteemed horticulturist, were ready to respond to questions from passersby. No surprise that there is continuing interest in the Straus family, the Titanic voyage, Macy's, and the Park.

The photo of the original dedication of Straus Park on April 15, 1915 is a certain attention-grabber. So are the photos of the Straus home, which looks as if it belongs in some leafy suburb. And that brings us to a neat segue regarding our item in the previous SHS newsletter.

We wrote of the Straus home at 2745 Broadway, corner 105th Street, being sold after Titanic to the builder who erected a twelve-story apartment building called the Clebourn, completed in 1913. It still stands, as 924 West End Avenue, with its original porte-cochere entrance for horse-drawn vehicles on 105th Street. A restaurant has occupied the Broadway side of the building for many years. Recently, it was Henry's, then a fish restaurant of short duration and, late last year, Ellington. The name derives from the stretch of West 106th Street from Central Park West to Riverside Drive which was re-named Duke Ellington Boulevard in honor of the musician who once lived on the Drive between 105th and 106th Streets.

When we learned that Ellington has named its back section the Straus Room, we decided to meet the owner and ask if she would like some photos of the Strauses from the SHS collection with which to decorate the room. She was delighted to accept the offer, and, thanks to Joan Adler's generosity, Ellington now has about a dozen glossy photos of the family and their residence in our neighborhood. At this writing, according to the owner, the photos are being framed by the restaurant's decorator. We look forward to the result and will report on it. So, as they say in the media, stay tuned for the next installment.



Please Note: Our annual fall event, ART AND MUSIC IN THE PARK is scheduled for the afternoon of Saturday, OCTOBER 1, with a rain date of Sunday, OCTOBER 2, weather permitting for either date. Check out our website – fospark@gmail.com. See you there!



Support the SHS Scholarship Program

The Straus Historical Society has awarded scholarships to deserving graduate students who are pursuing a career in public service or philanthropy. To date we've awarded ten scholarships over a four year period.

The judges have worked hard selecting the four awardees for 2022 out of a field of 56 applicants. You can read about our past scholarship winners in the August 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 issues of the SHS newsletter. They are all very accomplished young people and we are pleased to support them.

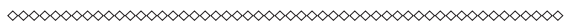
We would like to continue, and even expand, this worthwhile program. When thinking of making a donation to a nonprofit, please consider supporting SHS with a targeted tax-exempt gift earmarked for our scholarship program.



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Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

www.straushistoricalsociety.org/publications

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 Gutherz 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.