



STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Straus is the German word for ostrich

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Straus Historical Society's 2023 Scholarship Program Introducing SHS Scholarship Winners: Bukuru Anastazie, Lok Darjee, Emily Daroga and Eliza Fairbrother

The Straus Historical Society is pleased to announce that Bukuru Anastazie of Des Moines, IO, Lok Darjee of Twin Falls ID, Emily Daroga of West Newbury, MA and Eliza Fairbrother of Groton, MA have been selected to each receive a \$5,000 Straus Scholarship. 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.



Bukuru Anastazie is enrolled at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs pursuing a Master of International Affairs and a Juris Doctor in International Human Rights Law. She is specializing in the geographic region of Sub-Saharan Africa. Growing up in a refugee camp in Tanzania, Bukuru witnessed the consequences of weak political institutions and anarchy arising from a lack of proper social services.

She hopes to become a policymaker for the African Union developing regional policies and laws to facilitate economic, political, and cultural exchanges across the African continent. She also hopes to become a constitutional lawyer, working with African nations, helping them develop more vigorous and resilient constitutions.

Lok Darjee is enrolled at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs pursuing a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Economic and Political Development. As a first-generation refugee student from Nepal, he used his experience to create a nonprofit organization called Project Refugee Education to mentor refugee students in Idaho and Utah. Project Refugee Education has helped more than one hundred students attend universities, community colleges and technical schools. Lok has been recognized by national and international organizations and institutes for his advocacy in reforming refugee education and reducing related inequalities. He hopes to work with the United Nations Education Department or for an educational think tank to raise concerns and to seek a means to facilitate refugee education.





Emily Daroga is enrolled at American University School of International Service pursuing a degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution with a concentration in Reconciliation and Justice. She is seeking to understand how to maintain the humanity of people across political and identity-related differences while also addressing socioeconomic inequality. Her experience as an elementary school teacher at a Title I school helped concentrate her focus on class and income-related issues. Emily wants to help improve working conditions and compensation for those working in the most essential jobs: farmers, educators and garment factory workers by supporting labor advocacy efforts through journalism or by working as a union organizer.




Eliza Fairbrother is enrolled at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs pursuing a Master of Public Administration with a focus on International Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, and Economic Policy. As a result of experiences working with women's networks in Colombia, and with the organization, Radical Flexibility Fund, Eliza's ambition is to be a part of creating a necessary paradigm shift within the international funding system so that local actors are supported and empowered to develop their own solutions for building and sustaining peace. Her ultimate goal is to work within the US foreign assistance framework or at a major U.S. foundation or IGO where she can contribute to advancing innovative financing strategies and developing trust-based partnerships with grassroots organizations and change makers working to address some of the world's most pressing challenges.


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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 Member
Liza Loop**



I am occasionally asked why I serve on the governing boards of nonprofit organizations such as Straus Historical Society (SHS). My reasons are complex, both personal and societal.

On the personal side, I saw participation in (and subsequent board membership) as a way to get to know members of my extended family. All families have internal conflict but I felt particularly isolated amid the rancor of my strong-willed immediate relatives. I wondered if the 'inability to get along' I grew up with was a family trait that showed up among cousins of increasing degree as well as siblings, ancestors, and descendants. After 30 years of participating in SHS I have concluded that most Straus relatives share a passionate nature that can be harnessed for peaceful collaboration as well as opinion-based clashes. Happily, most of the family members who participate in SHS are the kind of people I enjoy hanging out with rather than the more belligerent type!

During my early days with SHS, I asked myself why anyone, family member or not, would want to support an organization devoted to the history of a single wealthy family. I found that the Strauses provide excellent examples of how to combine being well-to-do with deep concern for the wellbeing of others and willingness to participate in the often thankless task of governing a city, state, or nation. Those who "stayed behind in retail" at Macy's enabled government service, public health research, rescue of refugees, development of conflict resolution techniques, the building of parks and schools, museums, concerts, and hundreds of smaller activities that benefitted the less fortunate. They were also very aware that the "trickle-down" effect doesn't happen if the wealthy hoard their money rather than spending it. Their extravagant lifestyle ensured that their money circulated throughout society. And their respect for their employees and servants led them to provide high quality housing and living wages.

Today, SHS gives me an opportunity to promote some of the socially progressive values that shape my everyday actions. Our public service scholarships help to empower young people to continue to work toward a more humane society. Our genealogy programs encourage participants to connect with each other and engage in an interesting hobby. The digitization of our historical collection provides a publicly accessible, home-, school-, or library-based window on a past that might otherwise be forgotten.

This saga of how opulence can interact with poverty, and hard work, can mesh with leisure, is perhaps the most important contribution SHS can make to our mutual future. As robotics and artificial intelligence advances change the nature of our economic and social landscape, I hope the Straus legacy can help us learn how to live ethically, responsibly, humanely, and joyfully.

Let us hear from you about the projects we are engaging in and the projects you would like us to initiate. Your interest, feedback, and participation are invited - and welcome.

Bukuru Anastazie
Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs
Pursuing a Master of International Affairs
and a Juris Doctor in International Human Rights Law

I was ten years old when I witnessed the Tanzanian army kill my father, along with other refugees protesting against the government’s order to repatriate those who had fled the war-torn countries of Rwanda, Congo, and Burundi. A year prior to the protests, the government had started forcibly repatriating refugees from camps and killing those who did not comply. As I watched my father’s life disappear before my eyes, I felt the urge to grab the rock next to my feet and throw it at the officer, but before I could do that, my mother was running away with me in her arms. I remember little else about that day, but I remember what it felt like to watch my father, who had fled Rwanda to seek refuge in Tanzania, be killed by those he entrusted to protect him.

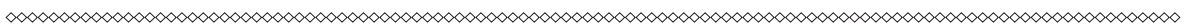
For my mother and many others, migrating to the United States became the only viable option for escaping extreme poverty, human rights abuses, and death. When we moved to the U.S., we did not speak English. However, I love learning and picked up the language quickly. School became my only escape, as it enabled me to analyze the social, political, and economic circumstances that caused our migration. My education at Drake University and immersion in America’s political, economic, and social structures introduced me to a harsh reality — culture was not the only thing that separated the West from Africa.

Through personal experience and scholarly reading, I developed an interest in African politics, international

relations, and law. I grew to see Africa as a place where one can achieve the so-called “American dream.” Africans did not need to migrate out of their beloved nations to find a better life, and the governments of African nations needed to do a better job of making Africa a land where African people could genuinely thrive. I think that this can be accomplished in two ways 1) by developing a strong, equitable international system for African states to exercise their sovereignty and develop in a culturally relevant way and 2) by empowering African governments to better provide the social services that NGOs or multilateral organizations currently provide. The solutions to many African people’s struggles are not in the U. S or other Western countries but in Africa. African people do not migrate to Western countries because they hate their homes but because their governments have failed them and failed to respect the social contract.



Throughout my lived experience, I have witnessed the consequences of weak political institutions and anarchy arising from a lack of proper social services. As a public servant, I hope to work as a policy maker, creating and advocating for social welfare policy reforms to build a safety net for low-income families in rural areas who do not have access to healthcare, education, or other social programs due to a lack of or distribution failure by the government. As a public servant, I hope to implement policies that improve access to education, healthcare, and other welfare programs to balance the social risks of economic and income insecurity.



About the Straus Historical Society and Its Scholarship Program

The Straus Historical Society (SHS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the principal purpose of fostering educational activities with respect to the settlement of the Straus Family in the US. The Straus family has a long history of public service and philanthropy, with family members serving in governmental positions at the federal and local levels and who have acted as advisors to a number of American Presidents.

The Straus Scholarship Program aims to continue the family legacy of commitment to public service. The scholarship committee appointed an independent award panel of outside educators with no family relationship to the Strauses or the SHS board members. The Scholarship Program is funded by contributions from SHS’s annual fundraising program.

Since the scholarship program’s inception in 2018, SHS has awarded eighteen scholarships to deserving graduate students who are pursuing a career in public service or philanthropy.

The applicants attend the School of International Service at American University in Washington, D.C., The Fletcher School at Tufts University in Medford, MA., and Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs in New York City.

We would like to expand this worthwhile scholarship program, both in the number of institutions from which our applicant pool draws, and in the number of scholarships we are able to award. We cannot do this without your support.

**When thinking of making a donation
to a non-profit, please consider supporting
SHS with a targeted gift earmarked for
the SHS Scholarship Program.**

Lok Darjee

Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs

Pursing a Master of Public Administration

With a concentration in Economic and Political Development

The first memory I can recall from my childhood growing up in a refugee camp in Nepal is of my mother telling me that we were from a lower caste and that we, therefore, did not have the same privileges as those from higher castes. She warned, "You are not allowed to visit your friends' huts. You are not allowed to touch their food. You must sit in the back of the class." This notion of castes and untouchability seemed rather confusing to me. Through the pain of rejection, I began to question why some people are considered to be superior to others. Why was I born into a lower caste and others into a higher one? Who makes these decisions? Who decides what is superior or inferior? My parents and ancestors who came before me suffered from great injustices created by this system of massive inequality: one that forbids millions of children from attending school, accessing fundamental rights, and, most importantly, having the opportunity to be free and to grow. As I grew increasingly aware of these systemic inequities, I knew I wanted to be a Policy Maker. To me, being a policy practitioner entails more than advocating for equality or defending human rights case by case--it is also about creating a culture of justice and decency that will transform institutional injustices.

In 2011, my family moved to the United States as refugees. Because none of my family members spoke English, I became everyone's interpreter, driver, and caregiver. While enrolled in high school full-time, I worked the night shift at a potato company and took care of my father, who was in a vegetative state from a stroke. I saw many of the same inequalities that persisted in the refugee camp in my high school. They existed between higher and lower socioeconomic classes rather than castes. Many refugee students struggled to get by. Most were uncertain about the future and the possibility of attending college. On the other hand, most affluent, non-refugee students grew up without ever thinking that college might not be a feasible goal for them.

I became further disturbed by class inequality when I moved to Chicago in 2014 to volunteer as a missionary, serving predominantly in west Chicago among the African-American and Hispanic communities. I witnessed how inequality infected society with crime, murder, drugs, and poverty while perpetuating racial and class prejudices. Children became displaced as their fathers remained in jail, while single mothers struggled to feed their children. Their present situations and futures had been shaped by countless barriers erected by empty capitalistic promises; they felt diminished by shame and guilt. For the first time, I saw a harrowing side of America that remains controlled by complex economic power hierarchies. The division of classes was much more complicated than the

one I had experienced in Nepal. It was not as obvious, not as transparent, not as black and white. It was driven by different motives and tactics and clouded with many misleading promises of social mobility not possible in the closed caste system, but similarly difficult to achieve in the U.S. given the institutional nature of socioeconomic inequalities. I concluded that if our political and legal institutions could not protect the rights of disadvantaged people, the justice system was broken and discriminatory.

After two years of service, I returned to Idaho to attend Brigham Young University, where I studied physics, economics, and finance. Given my personal experiences with inequality, as well as the experiences of others I had witnessed in both Nepal and the U.S., I realized that the only way to give someone the power to fight inequality is to give them an education. Accordingly, I founded a non-profit organization at BYU called Project Refugee Education to mentor refugee students in Idaho and Utah. Our organization provides a platform for refugee students to voice their needs. Aided by our mentorship program, over one hundred of our refugee students have attended universities, community colleges, and technical schools. Many more remain in the process of completing high school, and anticipate enrolling in college. In partnership with many local, national, and international organizations, Project Refugee Education continually participates in dialogues advocating for better educational systems for refugee students. I have brought together the governor of Utah, several mayors of Idaho,



and presidents of many universities in Utah and Idaho to discuss issues concerning the education of refugee students and immigrants in these states and institutions. Among other accomplishments, we have created collaborative efforts to increase the literacy rate of refugees in Utah and Idaho. I have spoken with many religious leaders, community leaders, refugee leaders, and non-profit organizations, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I have been recognized by national and international organizations and institutes for my advocacy in reforming refugees' education and reducing related inequalities, and have shared my experiences at many conferences, including as a keynote speaker for a conference held by the International Institute of Education, speaker at the University Alliance on Refugee and At-Risk Migrants (UARRM) conference, and presenter at the Boston College Institute. I was also nominated as a top ten global leader for the AFS global citizen prize of 2019. I will continue to leverage my experiences and knowledge to advocate for refugee rights on a more systematic level throughout my career in human rights law.

Lok Darjee

continued

The path to my dream of attending Graduate school has not been nicely paved. Being a first-generation refugee college graduate comes with many responsibilities and expectations. There were days during high school and college when I broke down and cried because I couldn't balance my responsibilities as both a student and a provider for my parents. Many times, I deeply questioned my sanity for wanting to pursue a career in education policies given the continual demands on my time and

energy. I felt like giving up. But a voice deep inside me always pushed me in this direction. It was the voice of my younger self in a refugee camp, echoing my previous realizations that change begins with me. My experiences in an unjust world will continue to drive me to rectify the intergenerational inequalities that inhibit the ability of disadvantaged people to have unencumbered access to civil rights and liberties and to enjoy the full quality of life.



Emily Daroga

American University School of International Service Pursuing a degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution With a concentration in Reconciliation and Justice

I was raised in a constant state of contradiction. This paradigm encoded within me a strong intuitive ability to understand and empathize across difficult social boundaries. My parents are an unusual pair who have different identities on nearly all fronts; race, religion, immigrant status, level of education, urban/rural childhood. As the only child in a house containing multitudes of culture and values, I developed an early habit of listening and genuinely working to understand diverse perspectives. It is through these several distinct layers of identity and life experience that I have cultivated a passion for advocating for income inequality and labor rights issues.



First, the distinction between my upbringing in an upper-middle class neighborhood and my parents' own humble, working-class backgrounds raised my awareness of my inherited advantages. Witnessing close family members become homeless due to mental health issues and suffer from drug addictions as a direct result of poverty and a lack of social services taught me the full social costs of my advantages in a privatized economy. So, while I was raised to have an eye for nuance in the dynamics of race, culture, and religion, I also learned the importance of quality public services and how wealth disparity is the root cause of many social problems.

More recently, my experience as an elementary school teacher at a Title I school further concentrated my focus on class and income-related issues. I saw how the lack of union power in Oklahoma played a critical role in contributing to wealth disparity, income inequality, and, thus, many other structural issues related to race, class, religion, etc. While there are many well-intentioned organizations and nonprofits working to support schools in low-income areas, given the severity of our education crisis, without dignified wage compensation for the actual teachers working in the most challenging environments, there will not be sustainable change.

I chose to study International Peace and Conflict Resolution to understand how to maintain the humanity of people across

political and identity-related differences while also addressing socioeconomic inequality. I think back to my time as a teacher when, even though most teachers understood and acknowledged the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion training, and worked hundreds of hours of overtime to edit curriculum for cultural competency and to accommodate diverse abilities, the poverty of the infrastructure and low wages repressed any sustained transformative change. This past month, I received a letter from an old teacher friend who informed me that our school lost more funding this year, forcing them to cut the role of reading intervention down to part-time: if schools can't afford proper support for reading, how can we expect schools to support implementing programs to address more complex and nuanced social dynamics, especially while teachers are getting paid so little in an economy with rising inflation?

On a larger scale, how can we expect to reconcile global conflicts without understanding the role of economic inequality in repressing transformative change? Data interpreted in the 2022 World Inequality Report found that the wealthiest 10% of the global population own 76% of the wealth, while the bottom 50% own just 2%. Although teachers in Oklahoma, with an average yearly salary of \$40,000, are not part of the global bottom 50%, they share in the struggle for equality and fairness, a struggle which emanates from a decades-long trend of divesting from public services and outsourcing labor – a struggle that has and always will cut across identity lines. In this shared struggle, I see myself as a dedicated public servant, as a peacekeeper and a coalition builder – someone who can bridge the gap between multiple groups to help us fight more cohesively for labor rights.

Honorary Straus Scholars

The Award Committee was very impressed with the high quality of the scholarship applications. Out of a pool of 43, the Committee recommended that two applicants be designated Honorary Straus Scholars. They are Claire Callahan and Safiya Aamira Noel.

Eliza Fairbrother

Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs

Pursuing a Master of Public Administration

With a focus on International Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, & Economic Policy

I was in Quibdo, Colombia, in March 2019, only two years into my career as a development professional, when I had the realization that has informed my career ambitions and led me to pursue an MPA at Columbia's School for International and Public Affairs.

At the time, I was managing a grant for a project developed in partnership with women's networks in Colombia and Mali to strengthen the implementation of national peace agreements based on the principles of UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace, and Security. While on a field visit in Quibdo, Colombia, I met with local women peacebuilders who spoke to the urgent challenges facing their community – from hazardous illegal mining operations along the Atrato River, to increasing threats of violence against human rights defenders. These challenges, they emphasized, could not be solved by short-term international interventions or bilateral development aid. From Indigenous activists, to LGBTQI+ and Afro-Caribbean peacebuilders, the women I met in Quibdo made one thing clear: they knew what was needed to resolve local tensions, prevent violence, and support those suffering the greatest consequences of the conflict; what they lacked was the long-term, flexible funding necessary to sustain their work.

Despite having limited financial support, the activists I had the opportunity to meet in Quibdo had developed innovative initiatives for community resilience and sustainable development in a context of increasing insecurity. They had successfully advocated for environmental personhood rights for the Atrato River to prevent further environmental devastation by extractive industries. They established a cooperative social impact venture in a small cafe and community center where they employed survivors of sexual violence and single mothers. They ran a local radio station to provide a platform for grassroots advocacy and access to authoritative information. As they struggled to access resources to support these initiatives, funding regularly came into Quibdo through international agencies in the form of restricted to short-term projects designed by external actors – akin to the capacity-building project I was overseeing at the time. These top-down interventions had little lasting impact, as they failed to recognize and invest in the critical capacity and knowledge of community members who were already working to create sustainable social change.

This experience opened my eyes to the inefficiencies and power imbalances inherent to the current international funding model, in which funds are most often structured to advance donors' agendas rather than empower local communities

and invest in sustainable, locally owned initiatives. Despite a growing body of evidence demonstrating that peace, humanitarian, and development processes are significantly more effective and economical when owned and implemented by individuals and organizations working in their own communities, there remains a major funding gap for these types of local initiatives. If a greater portion of the billions of dollars in international aid expended each year was invested in sustainable, community-owned initiatives, the impact could be extraordinary.

Given the complexity of the international funding system and the many players involved, addressing this critical funding gap will necessitate a multi-layered approach, involving policy reform among government and multilateral organizations, investment in innovative financing solutions from private actors with greater risk tolerance, and the creation of participatory funding processes within institutions that empower local civil society actors to devise their own strategies for preventing and resolving conflict and measuring impact. My ambition is to be a part of creating this necessary paradigm shift within the international funding system so that local actors are supported and empowered to develop their own solutions for building and sustaining peace.



My volunteer work with the Radical Flexibility Fund, a new organization founded on these precise principles, has exposed me to a number of innovators and leaders who are working to create structural changes in this field to better

support grassroots, sustainable change. Development agencies and IGOs on the cutting-edge of this movement, such as SIDA and Saferworld, are working to build trust-based partnerships with local organizations and provide them with predictable, flexible and long-term funding and capacity support. Civil society networks, such as the Network for Empowered Aid Response or the Global Fund for Community Foundations, have created innovative pooled financing mechanisms that are structured, governed and dispersed by community members based on local priorities. These are just a few examples of innovative approaches to advance localization and community empowerment in the peacebuilding, humanitarian and development sectors that could be replicated throughout the international funding system.

As a citizen of the United States, a global leader in the fields of development, peace and security, I am motivated to advance these types of innovative funding practices within the US foreign assistance framework and private philanthropic space. Bringing this unique motivation to Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, along with my

Eliza Fairbrother

continued

undergraduate research experience and academic background in International Studies, I will pursue research and hands-on learning opportunities to identify innovative financing mechanisms and policy frameworks to better support locally owned conflict resolution, peace, and development initiatives around the world. My coursework in comparative policymaking, conflict resolution and quantitative analysis for international and public affairs has already provided me with key tools and insights that will enable me to investigate and advance these innovative models for financing grassroots peacebuilding and sustainable development.

With the support of the Straus Historical Society scholarship in 2023-2024, I would be able to dedicate more time to coursework on social impact and development financing, take part in extracurricular activities such as the Columbia Impact Investing Initiative, pursue internship opportunities and volunteer at the community level in New York City. Leveraging the insights, experience, management skills, and connections I gain through my courses and extracurricular activities, I would be able to pursue work at a major U.S. foundation or development agency where I could influence the way in which funding is distributed and impact evaluated at the local level in conflict-affected contexts around the world.



The Straus Legacy of Education

To celebrate the back-to-school season, SHS has been posting photographs and biographies on our social media accounts demonstrating the Straus family's role in education. Straus family members were not only committed to their own education and intellectual growth, but supported many organizations with the same goals. As a result, several members of the Straus family were honored as the namesake for different New York City public schools and educational institutions. If you do not do so already, we encourage you to follow us on social media to access the most up-to-date information about SHS, as well as interesting historical content. In this brief article, we will share just some of the more recent posts from our back-to-school series.

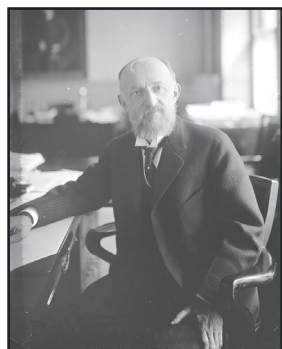
because he had any special aptitude but "because I preferred it to business. ..."

P.S. 109 Isidor and Ida Straus Junior High School



Straus Junior High School, Public School 109 was located on Dumont Street in Brooklyn, NY. It was dedicated on April 14, 1916. The school named the boys department for

Isidor and the girls department for Ida. Family members Jesse Isidor Straus, Percy Straus, Sara Straus Hess, Hermine Straus Kohns and Lee Kohns attended the dedication ceremony. A New York Times article about the dedication ceremony stated that the local school board "emphasized the moral worth and the unassuming dignity of the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Straus and of the incentives and inspiration to noble effort the names should furnish to succeeding generations of pupils." This was one of the first schools in New York City to honor a person by using his/her name. The school was decommissioned in 1995 and sat neglected for about 15 years until its restoration and conversion to artists' housing. It reopened in 2015 as El Barrio's Artspace/P.S. 109, holding 89 units of affordable live/work space and 10,000 square feet for arts organizations. Artspace is a nonprofit that operates 35 arts facilities in 15 states.



Oscar S. Straus Mini Biography

Oscar Solomon Straus was born in Otterberg Germany in 1850. He immigrated to the United States with his mother and siblings in 1854 and settled in Talbotton Georgia where he began his education. In 1865, at the close of the Civil War, the family moved to Philadelphia and in 1866, to New York. His brothers supported him

fully when he enrolled in Columbia Grammar School. After spending two years catching up on his skills, he enrolled in Columbia College where he graduated in 1871, sixth in a class of 31. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his third year and was the class poet, delivering "Truth and Error," his own work, at the commencement ceremony. In his 1922 autobiography, *Under Four Administrations*, Oscar wrote, "Isidor arranged for my schooling. A picture of Columbia College set me to thinking how wonderful it would be to study there. Considering the modest income of the family, the tuition fee and the cost for books were large, but my father, economical in all other respects, was liberal beyond his means where education was concerned. My brother, moreover, was desirous that I should have the advantage of the college training which circumstances, notably the war, had withheld from him." Oscar decided to enter Columbia Law School, not

P.S. 140 Nathan Straus School

The dedication of the Nathan Straus School, Public School 140, 123 Ridge Street in New York City was held on June 3, 1959. Nathan's great grandson Nathan Straus III was in attendance along with members of the New York City Board of Education, the



Construction of the Nathan Straus School, P.S. 140 1959

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What More Is There To Learn?

We are often asked, “After working with the Straus family for 33 years, what more is there to learn?” For Catherine and myself, this question is almost laughable. Our days are full of tasks that must be completed to keep SHS running smoothly. But there are almost always surprises in each work day. After all this time, we are still researching, learning and documenting some truly interesting facts that are completely new to us.

For the past four months, we have been corresponding with Rob Garber, a member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. He 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 they are clearly not the same building. Rob wanted to know the history of these two buildings and which one was truly the Straus’ residence and in what years.

Since we have been researching the family’s history for so many years, we have been able to assist Rob by complementing his research. We’ve answered some of his questions. But that always seems to lead us to new questions and new areas to research.

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 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. We even have one record listing a Nathan Straus family living at 2747 Broadway. But on this record, Nathan’s wife is Fannie and this family is shown with six children. None of them have names that are represented in the Lazarus Straus family.

We do not know who these people were and why they are enumerated at 2747.

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. 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. SHS has photographs of their house on Bolton Street in Inwood. The rest of what I thought I knew was that they found the 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 ...”

Rob 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 families had houses elsewhere in Manhattan.

Other interesting information that is new to us is that the Straus family owned two real estate companies. I knew they did not invest in the stock market, feeling they did not want to be subject to its fluctuations. They bought real estate with



2747 Broadway
The new Straus stable



2745 Broadway, the Straus'
West 105th Street home



The Bolton Street Inwood house
of Isidor and Ida Straus

the profits from their businesses. We've 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 found a particularly interesting map of one of these properties in the Bronx. In 1877 Lazarus Straus bought a 24 acre parcel of land on Boston Post Road in the Bronx. It was a former farm that had been vacant for many years. When Nathan Straus died in 1931, he left a modest estate because he believed so strongly in philanthropy and had given away much of his fortune. Nathan Jr. was the executor of this estate. He reasoned that his siblings, Hugh Grant Straus and Sissie Straus Lehman, would appreciate the monetary bequests left by their father. He took his share of his inheritance in land. We don't know how Nathan became the sole owner of this 24 acre parcel. Nathan Jr. used that land to build Hillside Homes, the first low income housing development in the U.S. I wrote about Hillside homes in the August 2019 issue of the Newsletter not knowing, at the time, that it was once part of the Fourteenth Street Realty Company's inventory.

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.

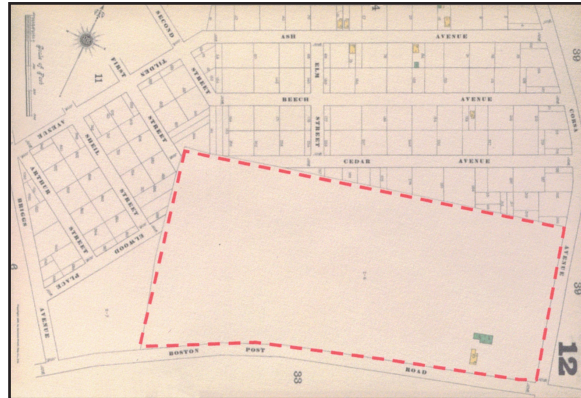
We were also working on a collection of papers shared with us by Birgitta Hockstader, the widow of Alan Hockstader, an Oscar Straus descendant. Birgitta had papers relating to a large portrait of Abraham Lincoln painted by William Willard in 1864. Oscar Straus was Secretary of Commerce and Labor at the time he bought the portrait from the artist in 1906. It is the only portrait of Lincoln that was done in profile. It was used as the model for the US penny. Because we were looking at his will in an effort to learn more

about the real estate companies, we also found that Oscar left the portrait of Lincoln to his daughter Aline Straus Hockstader and she bequeathed it to her daughter Mildred. Mildred and her husband, David Morse, donated the portrait to the National Portrait Gallery. Oscar's will also revealed that he left a portrait of George Washington that was painted by Charles Peale Polk to his daughter Mildred who married Edward Schafer. We are trying to locate what became of that portrait. And so, we wrote to the descendants of Edward and Mildred Schafer but have not heard back from everyone. We will be pursuing this.

This was all happening during the period immediately following the implosion of Titan, the submersible that was on its way to the bottom of the Atlantic to see the Titanic. Stockton Rush, the CEO of OceanGate, the company that built and was operating Titan, died in the implosion. He was the husband of Wendy Weil Rush, the great, great granddaughter of Isidor and Ida Straus. There was quite a media frenzy about this disaster and also about the connection between Wendy and Isidor and Ida. We spent a frantic week responding to media queries and requests for photographs of Isidor and Ida.

Because of the enormous media coverage, a man in Ohio reached out to SHS. He is a retired banker who is a pocket watch collector. He explained that he owned an 18 karat gold Jules Jurgensen pocket watch that was given to Nathan Straus by his brother Isidor on January 31, 1884. He explained that he felt, if there was interest, the watch should be owned by a family member. Fortunately a family member decided to purchase the watch and to donate it to SHS.

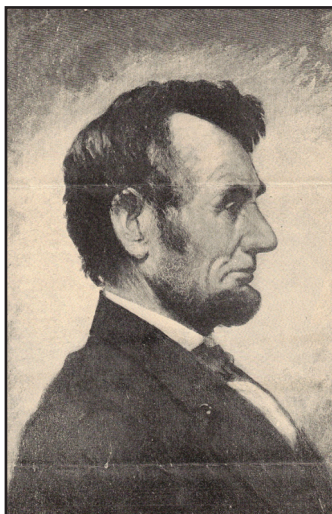
And so you can see, in the past few months, we have been very busy with totally new projects and with new information, even after all these years. It's been fun to find the intertwining of so much information from unexpected sources. And, it's been gratifying to put so much information into a chronological 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. The next time you wonder what is left to learn, think of this small taste I've shared with you.



Sanborn Insurance Map 1897
Showing 25 acres belonging to Isidor Straus



Hillside Homes 1935
Developed by Nathan Straus Jr.

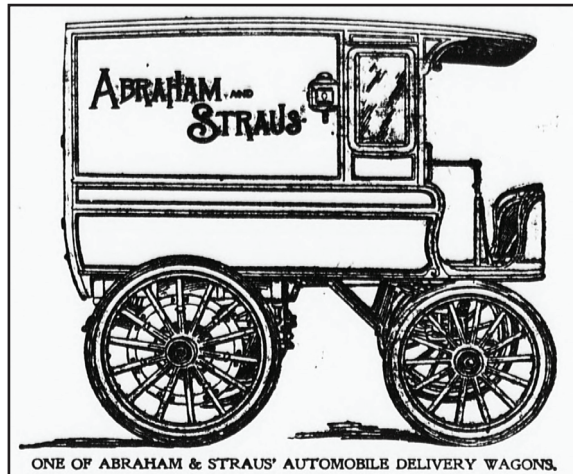


The First Automobile Delivery Wagon

We live in a wonderful era for researchers. The U. S. Library of Congress has created an online database of America's historic newspaper pages from 1770-1963. It is searchable by keyword. While doing research on a different topic within *Chronicling America*, I recently stumbled across a fascinating article.

Wechsler & Abraham was a Brooklyn, NY based department store that opened for business in 1885. Partners Joseph Wechsler and Abraham Abraham each invested \$5,000 of their own money in the concern. Abraham was convinced that the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, which opened in May of 1883, would bring shoppers to Brooklyn. The bridge was the first fixed crossing of the East River.

Isidor and Nathan Straus bought out Wechsler's interest of the business in 1893 and the firm was renamed Abraham & Straus (A & S). The Strauses managed A & S as well as R. H. Macy & Company. They became partners with Charles Webster in Macy's in 1888 and became sole owners of R. H. Macy & Co. in 1894. Under the Straus' progressive management, A & S grew so rapidly that by 1900 there were more than 4,500 employees working there.



The article I found in *Chronicling America* was published on August 2, 1899 by the now defunct New York newspaper *The Sun*. It describes the introduction of Abraham & Straus' first automobile delivery wagon. I had no idea, until I read this article, that automobiles were introduced in this country so early and even more surprised that, in 1899, the Strauses were the first to use them for commercial purposes in Brooklyn, NY.

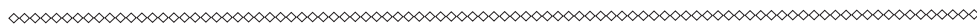
"Abraham & Straus will have the distinction of being the first concern in Brooklyn to use automobiles for delivery purposes. A few of their new horseless wagons are now ready for use and the delivery of goods by them will begin to-day. All the new wagons are very handsome affairs. They are 9 feet long and 6 feet 6 inches wide. The front wheels are 32 inches in

diameter and the rear 42 inches in diameter, with wooden spokes and solid rubber tires. They have a carrying capacity of 1,250 pounds. The motive power is electricity and they are capable of sustaining a speed of ten miles an hour. Abraham & Straus established themselves as the pioneers of the automobile delivery idea in Brooklyn, when on the afternoon of September 20, 1895, the first horseless wagon that has been seen on Long Island started from their store and made a tour of the main thoroughfares of the city. They brought the wagon from Paris for the purpose of determining by actual tests the advisability of introducing self-propelled vehicles in their delivery department. But the automobile of that time was not yet sufficiently perfected for practical use. The firm never lost sight of its object however, but continued to investigate

and experiment until now, with the introduction of the first of its self-propelling vehicles, its purpose has been accomplished. But the firm won't rest content with its present achievements if better results can be obtained. Even now Lawrence E. Abraham [Abraham Abraham's son] is in Europe studying the latest inventions in the automobile line with a view to having any practical improvement introduced into the Abraham & Straus wagons. The delivery department is one of the features of the Abraham & Straus store. The daily delivery of parcels reaches into the thousands and

with the introduction of the horseless wagon the work of distributing this multitude of bundles and bales and boxes is expected to be greatly facilitated. The success of the Abraham & Straus concern is due to the spirit of progress that pervades the entire establishment, and this go-aheadness is indicated by their being first in the field with the horseless delivery wagon."

A & S continued to grow and prosper until, in December 1994, when Federated Department Stores announced the acquisition of R. H. Macy & Co. The following month they announced Macy's merger with Abraham & Straus. The name of Abraham & Straus passed into mercantile history on April 25, 1995. To the Strauses, it marked the end of a journey.



Auto Vexes Isidor Straus

A November 15, 1907 article appeared in the *New York Sun* that stated Isidor Straus' chauffeur, Eugene Petty, was arrested for speeding. He was driving to the 125th Street station of the New York Central with Jesse Isidor Straus as a passenger. They were rushing to pick up Isidor. The automobile was impounded after the arrest and Jesse Isidor proceeded to his destination on foot.

Isidor appeared at the police station the following day to bail the chauffeur out. He said, "I'm Isidor Straus. Isn't my

name good enough to bail the operator out?" The Lieutenant responded, "It isn't that. We must have real estate." He had been holding the automobile for security. Isidor gave his house at 2745 Broadway as bail. It was said to be taxed for \$187,000.

The automobile belonged to Isidor's brother, Oscar. Isidor is reported to have said, "It's been a continual trouble and I'm going to give it back."

Friends of Straus Park

by Al Berr

Photographs by Joe Arbo

A few months ago, Rob Garber, a member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group, contacted us because they was interested in placing a kiosk in Straus Park that would hold two posters. One poster would be about the history of the Bloomingdale area and the other about the history of the Park. (Bloomingdale derives from the Dutch word meaning Place of Flowers that defines the approximate area from West 96th Street to West 110th Street and from Central Park to the Hudson River.)

We pointed out that a sign currently stands at the north end of the Park that tells the Park's history and that was installed by the Parks Department. However, we liked the Bloomingdale posters which had been written and designed by Garber, and we were interested in finding a place for them. But we soon realized that it would most likely have to be approved by the Parks Department and that looked to be a long and bureaucratic process.

Garber had a brilliant idea. In the Park there is a locked display case which we use for announcements and the like. It is just large enough to accommodate the Park history but not the Bloomingdale history. Nonetheless, it is a great solution and one that doesn't need a Parks approval.

The poster was installed recently and looks handsome as evidenced by the photo on this page. Of course, we offer many grateful thanks to Rob Garber and the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group for this appropriate and attractive addition to the Park.

**Mark your calendars:
Saturday, September 23rd
for our annual
Art and Music in the Park.
Weather permitting, of course.**

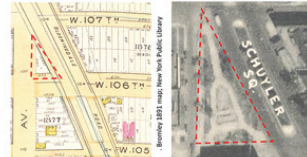
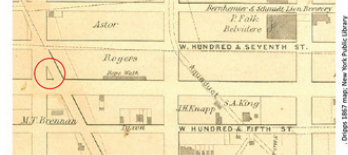


The lovely statue, Memory, by Augustus Lukeman, peacefully reflecting over the beautiful flower beds in Straus Park.

THE STORY OF STRAUS PARK

One of New York City's smallest parks, this 0.3-acre jewel is beloved by the Bloomingdale neighborhood and known to visitors from around the world for its beauty, serenity and history.

Straus Park owes its existence to the angled path taken by Bloomingdale Road as it led travelers on foot and horseback from the Dutch settlement in lower Manhattan to points North. Bloomingdale Road—now Broadway—cut across the street grid imposed by the famous Commissioners' Plan of 1811, resulting in a small triangle of land between 106th and 107th Streets.



Known at various times as Bloomingdale Square and Schuyler Square (in honor of Alexander Hamilton's father-in-law Philip Schuyler), no one cared much about this tiny sliver so long as the neighborhood remained largely rural, as it did until nearly the beginning of the 20th century.

Isidor and Ida Straus were among the families who maintained residences in Bloomingdale. Straus, a successful crockery merchant whose eventual ownership (with his brother Nathan) of Macy's and Abraham & Straus department stores made him a wealthy merchant prince, bought a rambling wooden house in 1884 on a large lot where The Clebourne apartment building now stands, at 105th Street between Broadway and West End Avenue.

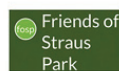


The neighborhood changed quickly after the subway came to Bloomingdale in 1904. Over the next 20 years the Columbia University built its campus on the land formerly occupied by the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum; the Episcopal Church began work on the cathedral of Saint John the Divine; and apartment houses sprang up by the dozen on now-valuable land that had previously been the site of scattered estates, wood frame houses, and shanties.



Schuyler Square (left foreground) in 1908, amidst new apartment buildings, a short-lived Dutch Reformed Church, and shops lining the east side of old Bloomingdale Road (renamed The Boulevard, but soon to be called Broadway).

By the early 1900s, Schuyler Square was fully part of the urban grid, and the wooden Straus residence nearby was a charming relic of the 19th century. Then the Strauses died along with 1,500 other souls in the sinking of the RMS *Titanic* on the night of April 15, 1912. Isidor and Ida Straus's devotion to each other and their generosity as philanthropists engendered a wave of support to honor them with a memorial in the neighborhood that they had called home for nearly 30 years. Funds were raised, a design competition was held, and three years after the *Titanic* disaster, dignitaries and citizens gathered to dedicate Straus Park. The park's centerpiece is a reclining bronze figure, sculpted by Henry Augustus Lukeman and modeled by Audrey Munson. Restored to its original beauty and lovingly maintained by the Friends of Straus Park, this triangle of once-unwanted land is a year-round oasis of serenity that honors the Strauses and all *Titanic* victims each April 15.



Rob Garber June 2023

The Straus Legacy of Education

continued from page 7

Manhattan Borough President, and local members of the clergy. Fifty years later, on June 5, 2009 there was an anniversary celebration at the school. Nathan Straus' descendants Irving Lehman Straus and Hugh Grant Straus III were pleased to represent their grandfather and great grandfather respectively. The program from the school's dedication in 1959 states, "In its name, the school honors the memory of a distinguished citizen, philanthropist and humanitarian, Nathan Straus (1848-1931), who served the City of New York as President of the Board of Health and Commissioner of Parks. A renowned authority in pasteurization, he wrote extensively on this and other social problems. Mr. Straus originated and maintained at his own expense for 28 years a safe and swift method for the distribution of pasteurized milk."

P.S. 199 Jesse Isidor Straus School

Jesse Isidor Straus School, Public School 199 is located at 270 West 70th Street, New York. This school was dedicated in 1964 and is one of the first barrier-free schools in NYC. In attendance were Jesse's widow Irma Nathan



Straus, son Jack and his wife Margaret, grandson Kenneth and his wife Elizabeth (Chou), great grandchildren Melinda and Timothy and nieces and nephew Alison, Elizabeth and Robert Levy. P.S. 199 continues today to serve and meet the needs of over 800 general and special education students and their families in a K-5 elementary school.

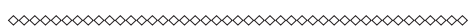


P.S. 199 Jesse Isidor Straus School

Just as the back-to-school social media series concludes with a focus on the future, the legacy of the Straus family continues with the Straus Scholarship Program. We

are proud to offer the Straus Historical Society scholarships to students who embody the spirit of public service championed by the Straus family.

We hope you have enjoyed these posts, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and support the future by contributing to the Straus Scholarship Program.



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 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.