



Memory

The Newsletter
of Friends of
Straus Park
Summer/2003

The title
Memory is
derived from
the name of the
memorial statue
of the weeping
woman reclining
above the fountain
in Straus Park.

Letter from the Editor

A couple of our members wrote in. And with their permission, I include their letters for you to enjoy, as well:

Since moving to the neighborhood three years ago, I have made Straus Park my special Eden. The beauty of the park is a wonderful escape from everyday city life.

I love to come and read in the morning or afternoon but I sometimes find myself distracted by the lovely garden! As well, gazing at the memorial to the Strauses, I often contemplate the beauty of love. Oh, that we can all delight in such devotion at least for some part of our lives!

Sincerely,
Craig Plaxe

A few months ago I read a biography of Saul Bellow, who won the 1976 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Unfortunately, I forgot the name of the author. But I do remember reading that while in New York as a young man, Bellow lived at 333 Riverside Drive (between 105th and 106th Streets).

Since I live at Riverside Drive and 105th Street, I went down to look at the building. A man came out, and I said to him in a very excited tone, did you know that Saul Bellow lived in this building? He looked at me and walked away. I guess he did not share my excitement.

Best wishes,
Rosy Stub

In preparation for the next Friends of Straus Park newsletter, I would like to receive your comments about our park. I'm especially interested in what Straus Park means to you, and if you've had any special experiences here you would like to share.

At our first Book Fair in July, one of the vendors was so smitten by the glorious day that he suggested creating an event for children in the park. If any of you would like to help to launch a special children's day in the park (children's books, entertainment, face painting, etc.), please contact me. (The same goes for a concert series in the park, but we need more organizers and helpers.)

We wish all of the children and parents a happy new school year!

Margie Kavanau

Summer Book Fair

Straus Park's first book fair was held on July 12, 2003. The skies were blue and it was a lovely sunny day. Nine book vendors set up their tables, encircling the flowerbed, statue and fountain, and people began to arrive and stroll through the park, and browse. We did not have a musical group, but a transistor radio carried some music a short distance. Soft and blended fruit drinks were sold.

The vendors included book-sellers and local folk, and we had a blanket on the ground for books donated by neighbors. Our membership table was up and running, with T-shirts, botanical maps, our donation can, and printed matter about Straus Park and its origins.

The book fair graced the park with a touch of the days when life was a tad more rooted in the quietness of times.



Evening of Music in Straus Park

The Leif Arntzen band joined us, once again, for a June evening of music in the park. Leif played trumpet and sang, backed by vocals, bass, electric guitar, and drums. The music filled the air. Several children ran round and round, gleeful, while a couple of us trafficked their pace. It was a wonderful spring evening under sky and trees.

Leif's group plays about town and has CDs available for sale, for those of you who have become quite fond of their mood and soothing tones.



District Supervisor Jorge A. Gabino Gives the Background on NYC Department of Sanitation Local Plans

By Leon Auerbach

District Superintendent of our local district, Michael McDonnell, was forced to miss our Community

forum on June 25, 2003. His Deputy, Jorge A. Gabino (8 — 4 Garage Supervisor) acted as his substitute and did a great job of informing a small but appreciative audience. (It was one of the hottest evenings of the summer.)

Gabino gave a run-down of coverage and pick up by Sanitation. In spite of financial cuts, our regular pick-ups and recycling will be maintained. Metal and plastics recycling will be continued, with glass planned for next spring.

The rat problem is under the supervision of the Department of Health; however, Sanitation is encouraging building owners and superintendents to keep garbage covered in cans, particularly food-related trash. Rodents and vermin follow food! Gabino gave us his direct phone number: 212-586-7269. He suggests being in touch for any additional questions.

Our next Community Forum with Battalion Chief Mike McPartland, scheduled for August 13, 2003, was postponed because Chief McPartland was being temporarily

transferred with a group of fire fighters to help fight fires in Montana. More information to follow.



Augustus Lukeman, Sculptor of *Memory* in Straus Park

By Margie Kavanau

The memorial fountain in Straus Park was first unveiled at a dedication with "impressive ceremonies" begun at 4:30pm on the evening of Sunday, April 15, 1915. The Memorial Committee had chosen *Memory*, created by Augustus Lukeman, sculptor, and Everts Tracy, architect, from among 59 submitted designs. Competition rules had stipulated that "the design should reflect the unostentatious but purposeful character of the Strauses, [and] avoid all loud or spectacular features. . . ." The monument, whose estimated cost was \$10,000, was a gift to New York City from the Memorial Committee.

Augustus Lukeman (1871-1935, b. Richmond, Va.) had studied with Launt Thompson and the well known Daniel Chester French in New York, at the National Academy of Design, and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Genoa, at the U.S. Custom House, one of 12 cornice statues symbolizing ancient and modern seafaring and commercial powers (1907); *The Shrine* in Prospect Park (1920), with Daniel Chester French as associate; and *Manu, the Law Giver of India* at the Appellate Court are



Setting up for the July Book Fair in Straus Park.

**IN REMEMBRANCE
OF ALL THOSE
WHO LOST THEIR
LIVES**

9/11/01

other Lukeman works that can be seen in New York City.

In addition, throughout the United States and in Canada, there are a large number of other notable works by Lukeman: *The Circuit Rider* commemorates President William McKinley, shortly after he was shot to death by a deranged anarchist (Adams, MA) (10/10/03); four giant allegorical female marble figures at the National Archives in Montreal, Quebec, represent Manufacturing, Transportation, Agriculture, and Fishing (1908); *Angel of Death*, a brooding figure holding a lotus, the symbol of rebirth, as part of a memorial for U.S. Grant, Jr., in Greenwood Cemetery Memorial

Park, TX (1911); General William Shepard, a Revolutionary hero (Westfield, MA) (9/3/19); an equestrian memorial statue of Bishop Francis Asbury, *the Prophet of the Long Road* in Washington, D.C. (10/15/24); the Jefferson Davis Bust at Transylvania College (10/21/31); an equestrian statue of Kit Carson (Trinidad, CO); and a statue of Patterson at the University of Kentucky. Lukeman's designs for the Kentucky Daniel Boone Bicentennial half-dollar were questioned by the Commission for their historical accuracy. The issue was resolved by Lukeman agreeing to remove a dog that had initially accompanied Daniel Boone on the reverse side of the coin (1934).

In reviewing Lukeman's works as they relate to *Memory*, of most interest is his vision for an *An American Monument to Surpass the Pyramids*, at Stone Mountain, Georgia, a few miles northeast of Atlanta. Lukeman took over work on the memorial, which had become mired in strife and scandal, from

Gutzon Borglum (Mt. Rushmore) in 1925. Colossal monumental figures of Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson and Jefferson Davis were to be carved into the side of the largest chunk of exposed granite in the world. The theme of the revived glory of the Confederate era had been spurred by D.W. Griffith's movie, *The Birth of A Nation* (1914). In 1928, when the family who had originally owned the land reclaimed it from the Memorial Association, Lukeman had only completed Lee's head, Davis' head, and had outlined Lee's and Davis' bodies and Lee's famous war-horse, Traveler. (After a 30 year standstill, the State of Georgia began work once again on the monument, and it was eventually completed in 1970.)

Lukeman's vision for Stone Mountain had included a great reflecting pool ("sunken lagoon") at the base of the carving, a gigantic memorial hall to be cut into the mountain "under the procession of the heroes," and a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Inside the hall was to be "a colossal female figure, representing Memory." Prior to recent renovations, what is now Straus Park's beautiful flowering area near the base of our *Memory* statue had been a reflecting pool, but it was a pool largely in name only, as insufficient rain and accumulated garbage gave it an unkempt appearance. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Stone Mountain actually had some elements very reminiscent of the Straus Park statue and setting created earlier by Lukeman, in collaboration with the architect, Everts Tracy.

FRIENDS OF STRAUS PARK, INC.

Join and Participate:

Memory is our newsletter to involve present and new volunteers in our activities and to get feedback, ideas, and opinions on ways to improve our efforts. Please fill out the coupon below and let us hear from you. Please indicate how you could help us to maintain Straus Park as a very special place. Mail to: Friends of Straus Park, Inc., Cathedral Station, P. O. Box 2021, New York, NY 10025.

Name _____

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FRIENDS OF STRAUS PARK, INC.
Cathedral Station
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New York, NY 10025

Address Correction Requested

SAVE THE DATE

ART IN THE PARK
Saturday October 18, 2003 (rain date: 10/19/03)

11 am - 5 pm

**A Day-Long Celebration of Art, Dance, Music &
Food**

Our annual Art in the Park is around the corner! An excellent group of artists will be selling their work, clothes, pottery, food, and other wares will be available at other vendor booths and there will be face painting for the kids. Our musical events and activities will include the Soh Daiko dancer/drummers, a Cuban music group, and the Fred Astaire dancers. Every year Art in the Park is a high-spirited and happy day. Please join us!

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