

BARBARA SICHERMAN

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August 4, 1981

Dr. Francis H. Straus
Great Spruce Head Island
Sunset, Maine 04683

Dear Dr. Straus:

Thank you for your very prompt and interesting response to my letter to Nancy Porter Straus. I am delighted at last to have some of the mystery of the Straus and Porter families cleared up. What I had not known was that you were also related to Caroline Packard, who also appears often in Alice Hamilton's letters. I shall certainly write you after Labor Day for Polly Packard Copeland's address.

I appreciate your research suggestions as well. Unfortunately the Illinois State records about the industrial poisons survey have disappeared, or so I was told. I had once been in touch with one of the Swopes, but will try again.

As for the story about Gerard Swope intervening at Harvard to ensure Alice Hamilton's appointment there, my research indicates that the story is apochryphal. After Dean David Edsall wrote President A. Lawrence Lowell that Alice Hamilton was the best person in the field, Harvard's desire to harbor the best quickly overcame its resistance to hiring a woman. Lowell actually agreed to the appointment only a few days after Edsall proposed it. The story that circulated in your family had a germ of truth however. Some of Alice Hamilton's colleagues tried to exclude her from an investigation of General Electric that they wanted to do, and Swope insisted that she be involved in it and said she was the only person who's work he knew. Much later, shortly before he died, Gerard Swope I believe also tried to get Harvard to give her an honorary degree, but with no success. I am still trying to trace all the facts about that episode, but the Harvard Corporation is being very quiet about it.

I do have a number of other questions about your mother and her friends, but I will save them until you return to Chicago. Some of them concern dates and the like, and obviously you would need to be near your records.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Barbara Sicherman
Barbara Sicherman

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8 Mar

[illegible]

Dear Sir,
The
Very
Yours

Dear Eliot

There may be
thrown away but
thou shalt you might
be interested Nancy