



Clara Lewisohn Rossin
1880 - 1927

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Clara Lewisohn Rossin Trust in

The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

The Clara Lewisohn Rossin Trust, to be administered for charitable purposes, was established in The New York Community Trust by Edgar L. Rossin in memory of his mother.

The doors of the music salon were opened wide and Clara Rossin stood just inside the room. Its walls were muraled with art that was avant garde even for the mid-1920's. She greeted each of her guests warmly, and, when they were settled in their gilt chairs, stood before them. Clara was a small woman with finely-chiseled features and a bearing that, despite her short stature, could only be described as regal. After a few words of welcome, she introduced the musicians who had come to her home on East 68th Street. They were members of the Hans Lange Quartette. Lange, at one time assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, was also founder and conductor of the New York Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

Those guests who regularly attended the Rossins' monthly musicales knew the performers, but they were probably not familiar with the music they were about to hear, for it was Clara Rossin's pleasure to entertain her guests with the new music of the modern composers: Ravel, Varese, Bartok, Hindemith, and others. It was an honor to be invited to attend one of Mrs. Rossin's musicales. It was even more of a distinction for a young artist to be invited to make a public debut at the elegant Rossin home.

Although Clara Rossin's avant-garde taste in music was startling to some, her reputation as a music-lover whose patronage of musicians helped them to create and flourish was no surprise. For Clara was the daughter of Adolph Lewisohn, the well-known philanthropist who gave Lewisohn Stadium to the people of New York City. He helped to found the Stadium Concerts that were for years the summertime delight of countless New York music-lovers.

Clara Lewisohn, born September 20, 1880, was one of five children of Adolph and Emma Lewisohn. Like so many other German Jews of his time, Adolph, the son of a prosperous business man in Hamburg, Germany, had left the family business in Europe and emigrated to America in 1867, at the age of 18. He and two older brothers established Lewisohn Brothers, a general importing firm that became involved in mining and smelting metals during the 1870's. Adolph was particularly interested in the future of copper, having seen Thomas A. Edison demonstrate the recording of voices on small metal spools. Within twenty years, the Lewisohns had amassed a fortune and were considered the "copper kings".

Adolph Lewisohn was among the earliest settlers of Butte, Montana, where his copper fields lay. It was a wild, unsettled country, 250 miles from the railroad, and supplies were brought in by cattle train. But in 1878 Adolph was spending less time in the Wild West and more time in the civilized East. In that year he married Emma M. Cahn, who was related to a well-known investment banking family. With his family safely settled in New York, Adolph continued to make frequent trips to the West. In fact, he was a passenger on the first Northern Pacific train to cross the country to Portland, Oregon.

Like her brothers and sisters, young Clara grew up attending private schools in New York and dividing her time between the family man-

sion at 881 Fifth Avenue, a hilltop castle called "Heatherdale Farm" in Westchester County, a summer place on the Jersey shore, and a mountain retreat at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks. When he was not travelling on business, Adolph Lewisohn strived to instill in his children his own love for art and music and his humanitarian concern for people. He felt especially successful with Clara. While she lived the life of a properly brought-up young lady, her interests were growing and deepening.

In 1889, the nineteen-year-old Clara's interests expanded to include a bachelor who happened to be thirteen years her senior. Alfred S. Rossin had been born in New York in 1867. He, too, was educated in private schools before he joined his family's tobacco business, S. Rossin and Sons. Like Adolph Lewisohn, the elder Rossin, Samuel, had come from Hamburg. With these common roots, the young couple had no trouble persuading both sets of parents to give their blessings to the marriage.

Although her family quickly grew to include five children — Edgar, Natalie, Florence, Carol, and Alfred Adolph (a sixth child died in infancy) — Clara Lewisohn Rossin developed a life-style that suited her well. She was a devoted wife and mother, but she also found time to channel her energies into a number of interests.

After the family, music came first and foremost. In 1908, Clara's father had offered to donate \$200,000 for a concrete stadium in upper Manhattan, and seven years later the completed Lewisohn Stadium was dedicated. In 1915, Adolph Lewisohn founded Stadium Concerts, and his daughter, Clara, served on the Board of Directors. At the first concert, on June 23, 1918, Arnold Volpe conducted before an audience of 5000. For many years thereafter, an eight-week summer session of classical music programs was presented under the open New York skies. When Adolph died on August 17,

1938, at the age of 89, it was the day of the last performance of the twenty-first concert season. Audiences by then had swelled to 17,000 and Adolph Lewisohn had lived to enjoy his dream of making fine music available to people in all walks of life.

Clara shared her father's enthusiasm for music, but not necessarily his musical taste. Adolph adored the familiar classics. Clara preferred the contemporary. In addition to the monthly musicales in her own home, Clara worked for the Society of the Friends of Music, a group founded with the purpose of giving a hearing to musical works not usually available to concert-goers. The Society's first concert was presented on December 8, 1913, in the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. One of its most ambitious productions involved more than a thousand performers, when the Philadelphia Orchestra, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski, was combined with a huge chorus for a special presentation of Gustav Mahler's Eighth Symphony.

Dance, painting, antiques and golf all fascinated Clara Rossin. She was particularly enthusiastic about the work of Isadora Duncan. She commissioned a young painter of the time, Clagett Wilson, to paint murals on the walls of her music room at home. On the family's frequent trips abroad, she acquired Italian Renaissance paintings, tapestries and furnishings dating from the fifteenth century. She played golf and often won trophies at the Century Country Club in White Plains, New York, which her family had helped to found.

Clara Rossin's life was full. Her husband, Alfred, retired from his family's tobacco business in 1922 and became president of Public National Bank and Trust (which through merger, later became part of Bankers Trust). Her family was growing up, and two had already left home: Edgar, the eldest son, was associated with his grandfather, Adolph Lewisohn, in the

investment firm to which Mr. Lewisohn had directed his energies after his fortune had been made in copper mining. Clara's daughter Natalie had married and moved to London. The three younger children, ranging in age from five to twenty, remained in the family home at 40 East 68th Street.

On December 17, 1927, Clara Rossin set out on her daily walk. But she had gone only a few steps into the wintry air when she collapsed and within hours died, the victim of a heart attack at the age of 47.

The loss of this active, intelligent woman in her prime was a shock to her family and friends and also to New Yorkers who knew her only by reputation. She had been unsparing of her time, energy and money in her patronage of music and art. Knowing that his mother would want this beneficence continued, her son Edgar set up a memorial trust which in 1945 established the Clara Lewisohn Rossin Fund in The New York Community Trust. The fund is used to further music and art, as Clara Rossin did in her lifetime.



The New York Community Trust is a public-supported community foundation which provides centralized management for many charitable funds. New York's major banks serve as trustees. Trustee for the Clara Lewisohn Rossin Trust is Bankers Trust Company.