



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie's Community Spotlight: Oswego Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

In the face of so much terror, heartbreak and despair during World War II were stories of hope and bravery. Many of those stories involve nearly 1,000 European Jewish refugees who fled Nazi persecution, and were brought to the only Holocaust refugee shelter on American soil—Fort Ontario in Oswego.

During the last years of World War II, in an effort to help some of those being persecuted by the Nazi regime, the United States government brought 982 European refugees to Oswego, New York. At the time, immigration law did not provide for the admission of refugees into the United States. Instead, President Roosevelt invited the selected group of refugees to Oswego as his “guests,” and they remained there for eighteen months between August 1944 and February 1946.

Today, the [Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum](#) sits on those hallowed grounds. From Europe to Oswego, the museum highlights the journey of the nearly 1,000 World War II refugees. A journey that started with their escape from their war-torn homes. A journey that brought them to Oswego and the shelter, and finished with life after the war. Many refugees chose to remain in the United States long after the war.

This museum is key to ensuring that we keep alive the memories of those who came to Fort Ontario, as well as to remember the important role Oswego played in our nation’s history. Preservation of the museum and its historic artifacts is critical to not

only Oswego, but also our entire region and nation.

This summer I was proud to announce I had secured \$100,000 in state funding to help the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum upgrade its exhibits. I also sponsor legislation (S.2773) that would establish the museum as a state historic site. In doing so, we can properly commemorate the proud history of Safe Haven and provide this important site with the recognition it deserves.

I am proud that our region is known for playing such an important role in this part of our nation's history. With National Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27th, I hope you will take time to visit Fort Ontario and the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum to not only learn more about this critically important time in our past and the people who lived through it, but also to help ensure these stories will continue to be shared for generations to come.