



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Helps Commemorate 75th Anniversary of Oswego Safe Haven

BRIAN DWYER August 9, 2019

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State Senator Patty Ritchie this week attended a special remembrance ceremony held at Riverside Cemetery as part of a day of events organized to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of nearly 1,000 European refugees of the Holocaust to Oswego's Fort Ontario.

During World War II, Fort Ontario served as the nation's only emergency shelter for refugees. The refugees, arrived as 'guests' of then President Franklin D. Roosevelt and were

welcomed into Oswego with open arms by community members.

At the Riverside Cemetery remembrance ceremony, Senator Ritchie was able visit the gravesites of refugees who are buried there. In addition, she talked with former refugees and their family members, including 94 year-old Eddie Levitch, who came to Fort Ontario as a teenager.

“To hear the stories of those who sought refuge at Fort Ontario is inspiring,” said Senator Ritchie. “The Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter and all those who called it home will forever be part of the fabric of the City of Oswego. I am hopeful that the stories told and memories shared at these commemoration events will continue to be passed down so that we never forget this important part of our history.”

After the war, many of the refugees were naturalized as United States citizens. It is believed that approximately 30 of them are still alive today.

*(In the above photo Senator Ritchie is seen with former refugee, 94-year-old Eddie Levitch, who came to Fort Ontario as a teenager)*