

The Oswald J. Nitschke House - Major Attributes



- Listed in the N.J. and National Registers of Historic Places.
- Widely supported by local, county and state officials. Recipient of New Jersey Historic Preservation Award (2008) and among six preservation projects highlighted as "Success Stories" in the New Jersey Historic Preservation Plan (2011-2016).
- Built in c. 1880, is one of Kenilworth's original farmhouses and is among the Borough's few remaining 19th-century buildings.
- Kenilworth's only museum and cultural arts center. Cited in the Borough's Master Plan as "an important focal point for interpreting the community's rich history and a significant venue for heritage tourism."
- Centrally located, next to the Kenilworth Veterans Center; within walking distance of the Boulevard, all public buildings and local schools; and within close proximity to major roadways, thereby enhancing its value as a major heritage tourism destination and promoter of economic growth for nearby shops and restaurants.



- A venue not only for "living history" programs and historical exhibits but also for cultural/community activities and events.
- The only historic house museum in the area to interpret the important story and life ways of late 19th/early 20th-century immigrant/working class families (exemplified by Mayor Oswald Nitschke and family) in an early 20th-century developing suburb.
- Has heat and air-conditioning throughout the building, thereby facilitating year-round programming.
- Is fully accessible, with an ADA-compliant restroom and an elevator that provides access to the lower-level cultural arts center, first floor "living history" museum and second floor exhibition center. *(Elevator addition/rear entrance shown at left)*

The Oswald J. Nitschke House - Programs, Exhibits and Audiences



- Provides a range of year-round educational and cultural enrichment programs for people of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and abilities. Offerings include “living history” programs in five furnished period rooms on the first floor, changing exhibits on the second floor, cultural/community enrichment programs in the lower-level cultural arts center, “teaching” kitchen/heirloom gardens and multicultural foodways programs.
- Primary focus on the interpretive period 1905-1934, the time of Kenilworth’s early development (when Mayor Nitschke, who owned and resided in the house, made his greatest contributions), and a dynamic period in regional/ U.S. history (encompassing World War I, the Great Depression, industrialization, the Great Migration, suburbanization, public health problems/ advances, temperance, advances in communication, popular culture, etc.), enhances the site’s potential to attract and benefit a large diverse audience from within and beyond Kenilworth.
- Exhibits/presentations reflect not only the experience of Kenilworth residents but also the related experience of residents from other communities (e.g., Cranford, Union, Garwood, Winfield, Elizabeth, etc.) as they confronted the challenges of community building in the face of many adversities.
- Through an illustrated historical timeline (being developed by local high school students) and other features, exhibits/programs provide a frame of reference for understanding local experiences in the larger context of regional, N.J. and U.S. history.
- Provides an opportunity to expand and further develop already existing partnerships with local schools, the Kenilworth Public Library, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and other organizations/institutions (e.g., ongoing after-school “History Detectives” program and collaboration with Kenilworth high school students in the development/presentation of exhibits for the Nitschke House).

The Oswald J. Nitschke House - Community Support/Public Investment



-- Since 2014, when the Nitschke House, in its partially restored state, first participated in Union County's annual historic sites tour, "Four Centuries in a Weekend," the site has consistently been either the most, or nearly the most, visited of more than 25 participating historic attractions, with 275-350 visitors touring the house during each year's weekend event. The Nitschke House also hosts civic/community mtgs., class trips and tours by appt.

-- From the time that the Kenilworth Historical Society launched the "Save the House Campaign" in 2000 to the present, the general public has been actively engaged in and supportive of this first-of-its-kind local preservation project through focus groups, educational programs/partnerships involving all local schools, fundraisers, volunteer opportunities and other activities that promote the excitement and value of preserving a historic site.

-- The Nitschke House preservation project has been widely recognized and supported on local, county and state levels. A number of capital grants (applied for and awarded on basis of merit), matched with funds that the Kenilworth Historical Society has raised through continuous fundraising activities (art shows, flea markets, garage sales, casino nights, teas, soup tastings, merchandise sales, direct mail campaigns, etc.), have assisted with the restoration. Grantmakers of capital funding have included:

- N.J. DEP Green Acres
- N.J. Historic Trust, N.J. Cultural Trust, 1772 Foundation
- Preserve Union County, Community Dev. Block Grant Pgms.
- E.J. Grassmann Trust
- Hyde & Watson Foundation
- Schering-Plough and Merck Foundations



N.J. Historical Commission, N.J. Cultural Trust, and Union County History and HEART grants have provided matching funds for planning documents (Historic Preservation Plan, interpretive/exhibit development, furnishing, landscape/gardens, disaster mitigation, strategic/funding, audience development/marketing, etc.).