

Keep The Sound of Music Alive in Bucks County! Oscar Hammerstein's Home in Jeopardy!



*By Keith Fenimore,
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It is a little-known fact that the modern American musical was born right here in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The home of the late great Oscar Hammerstein II sits on East Road in Doylestown, in the heart of Bucks County.

This Bucks County farm is the very place where Oscar lived and worked for two decades of his career. From within the walls of his beloved Highland Farm, he wrote all the memorable Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals including Oklahoma!, Carousel, South Pacific, The King and I, and The Sound of Music.

Now, the property is slated for subdivision. Despite its National Register of Historic Places designation, this national treasure could be lost forever. In response to the threat, a non-profit organization, the Oscar Hammerstein Museum and Theatre Education Center 501 (c)(3), was created to raise funds to purchase and restore the historic property as a museum for the public. The organization recently launched the #SaveOscarsHome campaign.

Oscar Hammerstein II and his partner, Richard Rodgers, won countless awards and rave reviews the world over. Oscar was a Pulitzer Prize winner, an Oscar winner, and a Tony winner. As a lyricist, poet, and humanitarian, Oscar changed people's lives and impacted the world in a way that cannot be measured, only revered. As a 20-year resident of Bucks County, he collaborated with others in the community such as James Michener and Pearl S. Buck, and even mentored

a young Stephen Sondheim, who actually lived with the Hammerstein family for a time at Highland Farm.

While Oscar's works are known across the globe, we have the unique distinction of sitting in the epicenter of his creative wellspring, his Highland Farm property, where he resided from 1940 until his death in 1960 at age 65. As stated in a recent article by Terry Teachout, Wall Street Journal columnist and biographer, "To stand in the room where Oscar wrote the words to "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" is to know in your bones that, for anyone who loves the American musical, the successful preservation of Highland Farm is the worthiest of causes."

The vision for Highland Farm is exciting and clear. Along with the existing Michener Museum, Mercer Museum & Fonthill, and Pearl S. Buck International, the Oscar Hammerstein Museum will provide the musical exclamation point for Bucks County's cultural landscape—a destination for Broadway fans and movie-goers young and old. The museum will celebrate Oscar's work as a librettist, lyricist, and humanitarian.

In the interim, the Oscar Hammerstein Traveling Museum was launched to share some key artifacts and memorabilia with the public. The tour began at Peddler's Village in Lahaska, recently moved to Fox & Holly in Doylestown, and will soon be traveling to the Bucks County Visitors Center, Delaware Valley University, and the Mercer Museum. The Traveling Museum will be touring throughout 2020.

The non-profit's initial fund-raising goal is \$2 million. We're happy to report that our local politicians and businesses have rallied behind the project: Mayor Ron Strouse is an honorary board member; and

Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, Senator Steven Santarsiero, and State Representative Wendy Ullman all have toured the home and have endorsed the project. The creative community has also embraced the project: Embue Creative, Oxford Communications, Sun Graphics Media, and ASGAV have donated their creative services to support the effort. The community as a whole is very eager and excited to see us achieve success. Because of all the support, our non-profit has made good progress to date, but much more is needed if we are to raise the funds necessary to save Oscar's home.

The clock is ticking! **Unless \$2 million is raised soon, the property is in danger of being turned over to the developer.** Here's how you can help:

1. Make an online donation at www.HammersteinMuseum.org or mail a check to: Hammerstein Museum, 70 East Road, Doylestown, PA 18901

2. Share our message and the website link with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

In Oscar's own words, "You gotta have a dream. If you don't have a dream, how you gonna have a dream come true?"

This community has a dream to Save Oscar's Home, so please join the effort now and make the dream come true!

