

Tyrant Gessler revealed

A special treat will be in store at the 25th anniversary Alpenfest for those who have come to know Herr Gessler, the man the Alpine Village loves to hate.

An unmasking of the all-time Alpine Bad Guy is scheduled for this year's festival, the 20th anniversary of the arrival of Herr Gessler in Gaylord.

In 1969 the spoil-sport count arrived at Otsego County Airport in time for Alpenfest. He has been trying to ruin the festival for everyone ever since.

According to legend, Gessler was an evil ruler in Switzerland and Austria in the Middle Ages.

He forced everyone in the area to bow down to his hat as a symbol of his authority.

Gessler would leave his hat in the square and all those who passed it would be forced to bow.

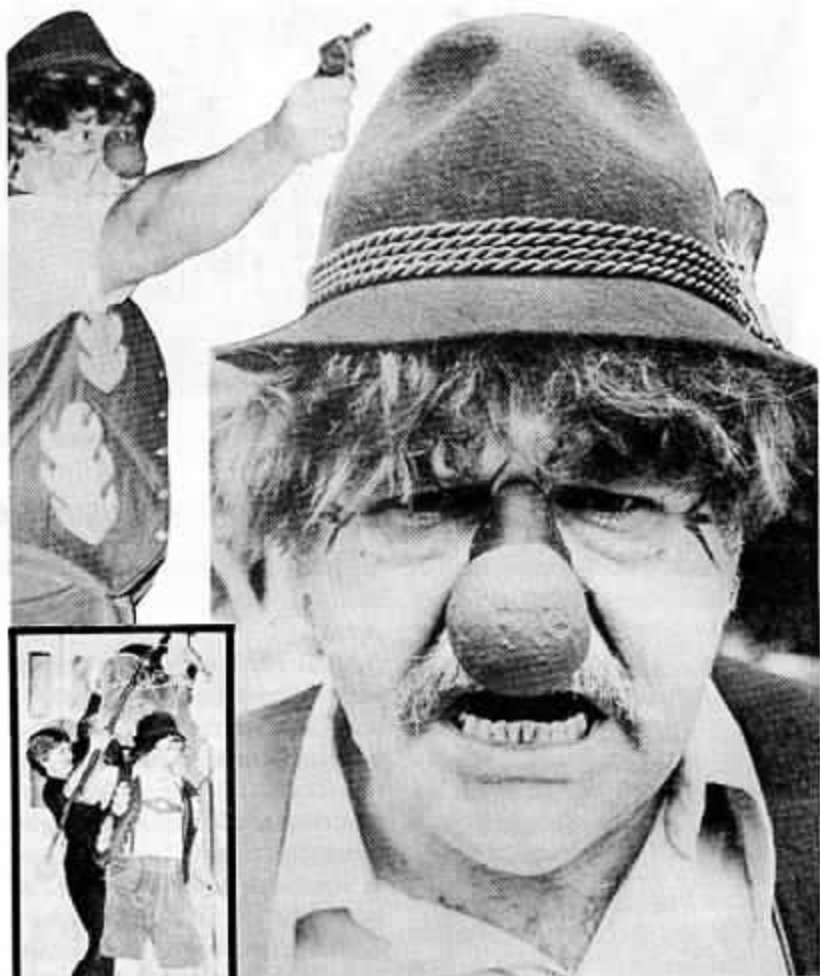
When William Tell, who had been out hunting in the mountains with his son when Gessler came to power, came into the square he did not bow down to the hat.

Herr Gessler became so enraged that he arrested Tell and his son.

As a punishment, Tell had to shoot an apple off his son's head.

Tell succeeded and then turned his bow on Gessler. Tell was able to overthrow Gessler and become the new ruler.

Somehow, however, Gessler was able to escape to Gaylord a few hundred years later.



Herr Gessler has fired blanks, been doused with water, and generally tried to wreck Alpenfest.

He now tries to ruin Alpenfest for everyone by demanding quiet and that passersby bow down to his hat.

According to Jim Mongeau, longtime Alpenfest volunteer, Gessler was the idea of Gaylord's Bill Merrill.

"We were looking for a focal point, something to identify Alpenfest with," Mongeau said.

Merrill came up with the idea in 1968 and Gessler first graced (or cursed) Alpenfest in 1969.

The identity of the person playing Herr Gessler has always been kept secret, Mongeau said.

The person who now plays Gessler is the third to do so. He has played the part for over 10 years, Mongeau said.

According to Mongeau, Gessler is tentatively scheduled to be unmasked at the Honors Luncheon on Saturday, July 22.

Gessler will be around Alpenfest before the luncheon, though.

"He's around every corner, telling everyone to stop having fun and to bow down to his hat," Mongeau said.

Gessler is a fixture of the festival, someone everyone loves to boo.

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