

Herr village tyrant

**Someone
everyone
will hate**

The man everyone in the Alpine Village loves to hate, Herr Gessler, is synonymous with Alpenfest, which has become one of the Gaylord / Otsego County Chamber of Commerce's greatest successes.

Herr Gessler debuted in 1969 when he arrived at the Otsego County Airport for Alpenfest, and he's been trying to ruin Alpenfest ever since.

According to legend, Gessler was a medieval ruler in Switzerland and Austria who forced everyone to bow to his hat as a symbol of his authority.

When William Tell returned to the town square from a hunting trip, he refused to bow to Gessler's hat and was arrested. As punishment, Gessler forced Tell to shoot an apple from his own son's head.

Tell succeeded and then ousted Gessler from power.

The evil ruler escaped the country and found his way to Gaylord a few hundred years later.

Today, he finds joy in disrupting the festive mood of Alpenfest.

Gaylord resident Bill Merrill introduced the concept of Gessler, according to Alpenfest General Manager, Jim Mongeau. "We were looking for a focal point, something to identify Alpenfest with," Mongeau said.

The first Herr Gessler was Biff Audrain. The villain's identity has been kept a secret since the earliest festivals in the mid-1960s.



The Herr Gessler character is a protected, registered trademark of Alpenfest, Inc., and cannot be used without the corporation's permission. Alpenfest's year-round headquarters are in the chamber building.

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