

GILLETTE GAZETTE

- Egg Hunt Kicks Off 2009 • William Mattioli Becomes New Gillette Supervisor
- Magic Lantern Theater, Gillette Comedy Scheduled • Castle to Open on May 23 Weekend

Eggs? We Got 'Em, Eggs!



The Friends Easter Egg Hunt was favored with bright and breezy weather, and a throng of kids turned out to ferret out the brightly colored eggs and enjoy face-painting and prize drawings. The April 4 event separated the hunters by age groups: 3500 eggs were rounded up within three-quarters of an hour — more photos inside!

Eager squeals and nervous basket-clutchings burbled through a big crowd of kids as they gathered on Saturday morning, April 4, in search of that elusive, but joyously seasonal, prize: the egg. The Easter Bunny had been hard at work tucking the treasures under leaves and in the

crooks of trees, and — led by two human-size rabbits, a chick, and Smokey Bear, the children were released to do their spotting and gathering...and then popping open the plastic eggs to reveal prizes small and large.

Mattioli Named Gillette Park Supervisor

Former Park Supervisor Scott Dawley has been promoted to responsibilities covering several state parks and forests throughout northeastern Connecticut.

His successor at Gillette is William Mattioli, who had been Supervisor at Sherwood Island State Park from 2005 until February of this year.

Sherwood Island is “the second-largest facility owned by the state park system in terms of visitation and revenue generation,” he notes. Supervisor Mattioli has served in the DEP since 1997 and was involved in numerous park programs, including water safety, campgrounds, and DEP safety.

He is a Connecticut native and resides in Essex.

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MAGIC-LANTERN SHOW SET FOR JULY 23

Snowy weather deferred our wintertime showing, but we're ready again with the fun. Travel back in time with a “Magic-Lantern” show just like the early entertainments that inspired our own William Gillette of East Haddam.

A century ago, everyone joined in the fun of watching these magic-lantern shows on the big screen, clapping and stomping one minute, moved to tears the next. The classic stories unfold with humor or reverence or melodrama.

In the full spirit of the past galas, the American Magic-Lantern Theater (www.MagicLanternShows.com) has re-created this popular Gay Nineties entertainment, for staging on **Saturday, July 25.**

Reservations are strongly recommended and are available by calling the Friends at 860.434.2603.

Anyone having a lantern or slides is invited to bring them for comment by the show's director; slides of the Southeastern Connecticut area would be of particular interest, and, with permission, will be projected before the show begins.

Complete shows begin at 11:30 a.m., and 1, 2, and 3 p.m. Friends of Gillette Castle Members are \$6 and kids 5-12 are \$3. Non-members are \$10 and kids 5-12 are \$5. All kids under five are free!

Egg Scramble Attracts Kids and Grownups in The Bunny's Name!



(Photos deleted on Emailing)



Bunnies, Chicks, Sherlock...and Miss Connecticut Shoreline were on hand to make the 2009 Gillette Easter Egg Hunt fun for all.

No Child Left Inside's Great Park Pursuit Got Underway on May 9

One thousand families, seven weeks, seven parks...and mysteries and clues that lead to fun and knowledge of the state's outdoor resources. It adds up to outdoor adventure, and you don't have to be formally enrolled to enjoy it. The kickoff location is Squantz Pond State park in New Fairfield on May 9 and the series concludes at an undisclosed (check the website!) park on June 20. The No Child Left Inside initiative also includes Park Passes for Foster Families, Park and Forest Interpreters, Urban Fishing, Park Passes at Libraries, Environmental Education, and Water Safety. There's much more at www.nochildleftinside.org!

Statewide Open House Is Set for June 13

Connecticut Fifth Annual Open House Day is Saturday, June 13, a day when the state's cultural and tourism doors are open with special offers and enticements. It's a perfect opportunity to explore: check out www.ctvisit.com/featured.aspx?id=65 for the participants. We are one of the 250 featured destinations.



August Walks Offer Insights

Two of the state's foremost park experts will offer "Gillette Walks" in July and August. Ralph Lewis, former state geologist, will point out geological features of the park, which lies close to the boundary of a continental collision hundreds of millions of years ago; his walk will start at 2 p.m. July 26. Parks expert Rob Smith will highlight botanical features which make the park a historically unique resource; his walk will begin at 11 a.m. August 8.

Gillette Hosts New England Park Supervisors May 6

About 30 of the eastern states' park officials and Connecticut DEP experts convened May 6 for a day of discussion of collaboration on resources and improvements to services to residents. Deputy Commissioner Susan Frechette welcomed the visitors and the Gillette Friends' achievements of the past several years were outlined by Judi Glover. DEP's Phil Yuris and DEP retiree and Friend Ed Sypher provided detailed looks at the Castle and park curiosa, and the period-attired "Mr. and Mrs. Gillette" -- ably played by Harold and Theodora Nivers -- added a refined, local touch of hospitality.



Osaki Letters Join Friends' Archive Thanks to EHHS

Original letters written by Mr. Gillette's friend, Yukitaka Osaki, have been given by the family of the late park Supervisor Donald Grant to the East Haddam Historical Society. The society, in turn, has generously given them to the Friends of Gillette Castle State Park.

The letters are being kept in the Castle archives with the understanding that the society can use them in periodic exhibits as requested. We are very grateful!



Ideas for Events? Membership Due?

The Castle and park are perfect for regional activities that may be appropriate for Friends sponsorship and assistance. Naturally, we have to abide by DEP policies, but there are a great many possibilities out there, and we welcome your input and help!

While you're thinking, please check your membership status...and renew or upgrade. It's appreciated!

Castle Will Open to Public On Memorial Day Weekend

Saturday, May 23, will mark the official opening of the Castle for visitors, tours, and events. The Castle -- and the Friends Gift Shop -- stays open until Columbus Day weekend, and opens again for holiday celebrations between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Please feel free, as always, to say hello at the Gift Shop, stroll (or hike!) the grounds with family and friends, or volunteer for a project or the Gift Shop.

Next Friends Meeting Set for Tuesday, June 9

After the Memorial Day season has subsided, our next meeting at the Castle Visitors Center will be Tuesday evening, June 9, at 7 p.m. Topics: speakers, project ideas, new Gift Shop programs and proposals.

In Memoriam: Leigh Barton Shearer

A longstanding and faithful supporter of the Friends passed away February 23, 2009 at his home.

Leigh Shearer, 70, was a prime mover in the improvements of trails, bridges, and visitor amenities on the estate both as a volunteer and a seasonal worker at the park for some 26 years. A lifelong educator, in seventh grade he had taken classes at Wesleyan University and became a graduate of Central Grammar, Middletown High, and Central Connecticut State University with bachelor's and master's degrees.

Leigh was a career teacher in Middletown at Snow School for 36 years. In addition to the Friends, Leigh was a member of St. John's 2 AF&M, Washington Burning Bush Chapter 6, Columbia Council 9, past State Treasurer of Connecticut Court of Chevaliers, East Hampton Volunteer Ambulance Corps, and both State and Middletown Retired Teachers Associations.

His work for Gillette Castle State Park was appreciated and will be remembered. The Friends sent a donation to the East Hampton Volunteer Ambulance Association in his honor.

Short Gillette Comedy to be Staged in Summer

"All the Comforts of Home" -- a Victorian Drawing Room Comedy written by William Gillette -- will be staged this June on the Castle grounds on six summer weekends, June 13 through July 18, at 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The half-hour performances are by the East Haddam Stage Company, and the stage will be outdoors adjacent to the park's nature center. The Stage Company will also perform the playlet indoors at 3:30 p.m. at the East Haddam Historical Society.

The creative Mr. Gillette penned a good many of these dramatic vignettes. "These are plays that Gillette wrote himself, which are not Sherlock Holmes -- and require no special sets or lighting," said Friend Annlee Sortland.

FRIENDS OF GILLETTE CASTLE STATE PARK

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