

THE SEVENTH SISTER...THE EAST HADDAM HOME OF WILLIAM GILLETTE

The east bank of the Connecticut River in East Haddam is defined by a chain of seven forested hills known as the Seven Sisters.

William Hooker Gillette chose to design and build his "castle," formally known as the Seventh Sister, on the peak of the southernmost of those hills overlooking the historic landing of the ferry from Hadlyme to Chester, and surveying a broad sweep of the river as it widens near Long Island Sound.

The 24-room mansion is indeed reminiscent of a medieval fortress on the Rhine River, and its 184-acre natural surroundings are laced with pathways ideal for easy walks with family and friends, as well as for energetic hikers.

The castle was built to very modern standards for the years 1914-1919: it took 20 men five years to assemble its steel framework, embed thousands of tons of local fieldstone in its walls, and hand-hew the interior woodwork from solid white oak. Mr. Gillette himself did most of the design and drafting, incorporating ingenious design tricks which reflected the experience of his stage-production days.

The 47 doors (no two identical), sliding table, built-in couches, clever locks, numerous interior windows, and other curious details are hallmarks of his playful, theatrical creativity.

The expansive grounds were also touched by his imagination. He had a fascination with railroads and operated a miniature train with some three miles of track laid throughout the woodland and granite ledges. Indeed, he delighted

in playing the engineer of his steam and electric engines for distinguished guests from around the world. Gillette's electric locomotive was meticulously restored in 2007 through the efforts of the Friends of Gillette Castle.

The Seventh Sister Short-Line railway once had trestles, bridges, a tunnel, and a Grand Central Station — adorned with two sculptures of cats, among the 60 cat images in and around the estate.

Join us as we savor Mr. Gillette's eccentric, cheerful genius, and share it with others who visit his home!



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We gratefully accept your contributions; your membership fees and other donations are fully tax-deductible. Please make your check out to the **Friends of Gillette Castle State Park** and mail to the address below. Thank you for your generosity!

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