

Gillette Castle State Park Hiking and history map

Designed by the Friends of Gillette Castle State Park,
using trail maps originally designed and created by DEEP



Overview and navigation

Most of the historical features of the Gillette Castle grounds are found along two trails.

The 1.14-mile train trail (marked by purple cross-hatches on this map) follows the original path of Gillette's quarter-scale, narrow-gauge railroad. It is blazed with the logo of the Seventh Sister Rail Road.

The river trail (gravel drive and blue trail) leads to the home of Gillette's valet and confidant Yukitaka Osaki and to the wreckage of Gillette's houseboat, the Aunt Polly. This wide and rocky route features a steep incline down to the river and back up again.

Gillette Castle Trail Mileage

Blue	- 0.34
Orange	- 0.67
Purple (Train Trail)	- 1.14
Red	- 0.41
White	- 0.49
Yellow	- 0.65

Map Date - June 26, 2020

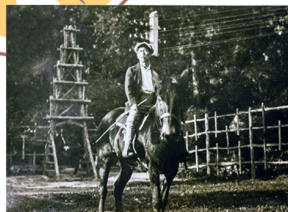
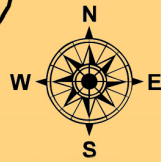
Explanation

Trails

- Bridges
- Bridge Closed
- Blue
- Orange
- Purple - Train Trail
- Red
- White
- Yellow
- Unblazed Trail
- Paved Road
- Gravel Road
- Paved Parking
- Gravel Parking
- Gillette Castle State Park

- Aunt Polly
- Bathroom
- Bench
- Car Top Launch
- Chester/Hadlyme Ferry
- Foot Bridge
- Gillette Castle
- Grand Central Station/Picnic Shelter
- Maintenance
- Osaki House
- Park Office
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Scenic View
- Tunnel
- Visitor Center
- 125th Street Station

The boundaries of State-owned properties as shown on this map are approximate.



Gillette's historic train trail: William Gillette built his railroad at a cost of \$50,000 in 1927. The electric engine was restored by the Friends of Gillette Castle and is on display at the visitor's center.



Friends of
Gillette Castle
State Park

Preserving a Connecticut treasure • Celebrating a theatrical icon

1. Grand Central Station and archway. Grand Central Station was the main terminus for Gillette's rail line, and is now a covered picnic area. From here, walk to the striking archway nearby. During Gillette's time, there was a moveable swing bridge that carried the train tracks across the archway and could open to let people pass through. Looking right, you will see the only remaining piece of the railroad track atop the stone wall. Keep this stone wall on your left and walk up to the cedar gate and paved road. Turn left onto the trail behind the guard rail.

2. The water tower: As you pass over the long wooden bridge, you see an attractive stone structure called the water tower. It never actually held water, but it is an excellent making point for this juncture where the train tracks diverged. Look to your left and enter the trail marked with the Seventh Sister Rail Road logo.

3. 125th Street Station: The sheltered area at the station is surrounded by open forest and has fine river views in fall and winter. The trail itself may be the most scenic trail on the grounds, with many visible embankments, bridges, and cuts that were engineered to keep the track level in the rocky and hilly ground. Follow the trail until you get to the paved road. Turn right along the road. Enter the parking area that you will soon see on your left.

4. The bridge between ponds: As you walk through the parking area, you see Goldfish Pond, with a small island, on your right. The "bridge between ponds" is at the far end of Goldfish Pond. Built in 1936, this bridge is the last addition Gillette made to the property. It spans the space between the Goldfish Pond and the larger and more natural Frog Pond. From here, you can choose to cross the bridge and return to the Castle, perhaps to visit the river trail, or walk along the wide stony path (not the footpath) away from the Goldfish Pond to visit stop 5.

5. The old coal road and tunnel: This wide stony path is the old coal road. Along the way, keep your eye out for the decrepit railroad trestle on the left, and the nature-filled Frog Pond on your right. Stay left on the wide path at each fork until you see a short incline and the hill that leads to the tunnel. From this side of the tunnel you can see that this feature was entirely man-made. Gillette created the hill just to make the ride more fun. Gillette also designed the dark tunnel with a curve, which enhanced the excitement of the train ride, and makes the tunnel dark and spooky! Use a phone or flashlight to light the way, since the ground is uneven and rocky. Exit the tunnel the same way you came in, returning down the coal road to the right.

The river route (original driveway and blue trail):

Start at the archway near Grand Central Station and walk along the wide gravel road. Admire the retaining wall on the right and a deep valley to your left. This original, steep driveway was used in Gillette's time, allowing easy access to the ferry landing. Follow this route, noting the stonework along the sides of the driveway. When you reach Ferry road, turn right. Soon you will notice the stone walls that bounded some of the lush gardens tended by Yukitaka Osaki. Osaki-san was Gillette's right-hand man and a stalwart companion for most of his life. Turn-in to the parking lot to Osaki's house (stop A).

A: Osaki's House: Hugging the hillside is the red and brown shingled home of Yukitaka Osaki. Gillette built this home for Osaki-san, and gave him lifelong residency in his will. Nearby is a reproduction of a tall folly that was part of the decorative structure of Osaki's garden. Walk along the river past the picnic areas to the small beach area and stop B across from the Castle Stairs.

B: Aunt Polly. Just across from the stairs that lead back to the Castle is a small beach area where Gillette's houseboat the Aunt Polly was docked. Along the water's edge during low tide, part of the remains of the hull will be visible. The boat was destroyed by fire in 1932. Local rumors were that Gillette had set it on fire to collect insurance, but William squashed that rumor by publicly expressing his regrets that he had not thought to buy insurance ahead of time! Return to the Castle using the path and stairs behind you.

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