

The legend of William Tell

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The legend of William Tell

At a time soon after the opening of the Gotthard Pass, when the Habsburg emperors of Vienna sought to control Uri and thus control trans-alpine trade, a new bailiff, Hermann Gessler, was despatched to Altdorf. The proud mountain folk of Uri had already

– unfamiliar with the lake – begged Gessler to release Tell so that he could steer them to safety. Gessler agreed, and Tell cannily manoeuvred the boat close to the shore, then leapt to freedom, landing on a flat rock (the Tellsplatte) and simultaneously pushing the boat back into the stormy waters. Determined to see his task through and use the second arrow, Tell hurried to Küsnacht. As Gessler and his party walked along on a dark lane called Hohle Gasse on their way to the castle, Tell leapt out, shot a bolt into the tyrant's heart and melted back into the woods to return to Uri. His comrades were inspired by Tell's act of bravery to throw off the yoke of Habsburg oppression in their homeland, and to remain forever free.

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Rütliwiese on the Urnersee

joined with their Schwyzer and Nidwaldner neighbours at Rütli in pledging to resist the Austrians' cruel oppression, and when Gessler raised a pole in the central square of Altdorf and perched his hat on the top, commanding all who passed before it to bow in respect, it was the last straw. William Tell, a countryman from nearby Bürglen, either hadn't heard about Gessler's command or chose to ignore it; whichever, he walked past the hat without bowing. Gessler seized Tell, who was well known as a marksman, and set him a chal-

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