



Outside view of St. Mary the Virgin
– Aldermanbury which houses
America's National Churchill Museum

Christopher Wren and William Shakespeare and learn how pieces of the Berlin Wall also found their home in Fulton.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Winston Churchill was born in 1874 to an English father who descended from a duke and a mother who was an American heiress. Due to their social status, young Winston was cared for mainly by a beloved nanny. Though his childhood may not have been perfect, Churchill had a successful military career and quickly rose in the political sphere as an adult.

Known for his brilliant wartime leadership, he was also a statesman and a patriot. He led Great Britain through World War II as its Prime Minister. He regained that position again a few years after the war, in 1951.

Churchill was a great orator and writer, leaving behind hundreds of famous quotes, still recognized and recited today. Another interesting fact about Churchill is that he was quite an accomplished painter. Though his painting never gained him the notoriety of his other pursuits, such as his writing, he used it in a therapeutic sense.

When hearing Churchill's name, most people of a certain age would immediately think of a straightforward, salty man in a Homburg hat, with his cigar in his mouth, flashing the "V" sign. In truth, that image should be one for a man who loved his country and rose to bring it together through a horrific time of history. He once said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

Winston Churchill recognized Adolf Hitler's threat early, well

TIES THAT BIND THROUGH HISTORY

America's National Churchill Museum

BY LISA EVANS

All photos courtesy of author

The charming city of Fulton in mid-Missouri is a quiet, beautiful area with a great downtown brick district. There are restaurants, shops, and a great deal of history. Part of that history is where Winston Churchill gave the Sinews of Peace speech, more commonly known as the Iron Curtain speech, at Westminster College.

Why Fulton, Missouri, one might ask. How did this lovely town become host to many historical figures, including Winston Churchill, President Harry Truman, and numerous other dignitaries? What is the connection? .

Let's get started! We will answer those questions and delve into the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury – an 800-year-old historical church that houses America's National Churchill Museum. You'll hear the names of



Winston Churchill the man.

before the start of World War II. Not only in Europe and Great Britain but in other parts of the world, a belief that would come to fruition and define him as a leader. Britain declared war on Germany in 1939, and Churchill took charge of the Admiralty. In addition, he also oversaw the Ministry of Defence. A coalition government was formed in 1940 when the current Prime Minister resigned. The party named Churchill as Prime Minister, primarily due to the belief that he could unite and lead the country because of his determination and dedication to removing Hitler from power.

When facing the House of Commons for the first time as their Prime Minister, he spoke another of his famous quotes. "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." He dedicated to an all-out war and victory over Hitler's Germany with those words. Churchill was able to show his wartime prowess in leadership and keep the country united through the Battle of Britain and the Bombings of London, otherwise known as The Blitz. He was

also instrumental in brokering the Great Alliance between Great Britain, President Franklin Roosevelt from the United States, and Joseph Stalin, the Premier of Soviet Russia. This allegiance lasted for World War II and was instrumental in the Allied victory. Once the war ended, the Great Alliance could not overcome the differences between the ideology and politics of the USA and Great Britain to those of Soviet Russia.

AMERICA'S NATIONAL CHURCHILL MUSEUM

Shockingly, in 1945, Winston Churchill and his party lost their power in Britain, and he was no longer Prime Minister. He then transitioned to becoming more of a world statesman and advocated for post-war peace.

In 1946, Westminster College invited Churchill to speak on their campus. President Harry Truman endorsed this invitation to Churchill and sent along a personal one of his own, "This is a wonderful school in my home state. Hope you can do it. I'll introduce you." Churchill accepted.

On 5 March, the ever-eloquent Churchill offered a speech that helped define what was happening on the world stage between former allies of World War II: The Cold War. It was entitled "Sinews of Peace" but is commonly referred to as the Iron Curtain speech. In the speech, he warned that the ever-increasing Soviet expansion had to be resisted and that Britain and the U.S., when working together, were the only way this would happen. The most quoted part of Churchill's speech reads: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of central and eastern Europe."

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of Churchill's visit to Westminster College, leaders there began a very bold project to have what once was a medieval church that had survived the Bombing of London relocated to the Westminster College campus. In future years, beneath the church, became America's National Churchill Museum.

The museum entralls visitors with a journey through the life of Winston Churchill. Through much imagination and technology, one experiences the world as he knew it through various displays and exhibits. Set up for a self-guided tour, where you follow along chronologically through his life and learn about the ups and downs of his military and political career. You will experience examples of his gifted writing and see his paintings. You realize that while Winston Churchill was indeed a world citizen, he also had varied interests and other pursuits. The museum strives to bring an authentic experience to current and future generations, showing the brilliance and leadership that was Winston Churchill.

BREAKTHROUGH - A PIECE OF HISTORY AND THE BERLIN WALL

After World War II, Soviet Russia occupied areas of Eastern Europe. Hoping to regain freedom from communism and occupied areas, residents of these newly acquired areas relocated to nearby countries. The Berlin Wall was the Eastern Bloc's answer to control these mass emigrations, constructed as a physical and ideological symbol of the differences. It was a symbol of the Cold War. It stood until 1989.

One year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the granddaughter of Winston Churchill had the idea of making a sculpture out of pieces of the Berlin Wall and have it placed on the campus of Westminster College. With the support of the college and its patrons, Edwina Sandys traveled to East Berlin to acquire these pieces. At first, faced with the reality of the cost of getting and transporting those pieces back to Fulton, the project almost didn't happen. However, when officials realized it would be constructed as a monument to the Berlin Wall and placed near the "Iron Curtain" speech site, they allowed Edwina to choose eight sections of the wall as a gift to the college.

Near the Brandenburg Gate, from an area of the wall frequented by artists, she chose sections of the wall. These pieces were colorful and contained the phrase "Unwahr" (German for lies or untruths) and expressed the vibe she sought for her sculpture. She removed portions of the massive 11 feet tall, 32 feet long wall as cutouts. The cutouts are silhouettes of a man and a woman symbolizing the newfound freedom and communication between East and West – hence the title *Breakthrough*. Interestingly, the actual cutouts of the man and woman are part of another sculpture, named

Breakfree, which is on display at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.

This sculpture is a perfect addition to America's National Churchill Museum. In striking contrast, it stands in the foreground, with St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury. Forty-four years after her grandfather's famed speech, warning of the "Iron Curtain," Edwina added to the legacy by providing physical proof of the breakthrough to regaining freedoms Churchill so championed. As he said, "All the greatest things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom; justice; honor; duty; mercy; hope."

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, ALDERMANBURY

A phoenix is a mythical bird that, out of the fire's tragedy, becomes a new reincarnation of what it once was. St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, can be described as a true phoenix.

Initially built in the late 11th century as a medieval place for worship in what is now the city

of London, the church withstood hundreds of years through civil wars, plagues, and a variety of other hardships. It could not resist fire. In September 1666, the Great Fire of London swept through the city and St. Mary the Virgin was one of its victims.

Several years later, the reigning monarch commissioned Sir Christopher Wren, at the time one of the foremost architects in the world, to rebuild the church. The first rising of the phoenix had started. The church was built on some of the original foundations. It also used some medieval stones for the stairs to the crypt. Once rebuilt, St. Mary the Virgin stood proudly for over 250 years. At one point, William Shakespeare lived close by, and reports say he would occasionally stop in to revel in its beauty and peacefulness.

But once again, fire became the enemy. On 29 December 1940, during The Blitz of World War II, St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, became a victim. Incendiary bombs dropped by the Germans struck the church and left only



Rising of the Phoenix and Cross.

the outer walls, columns, and bell tower. It sat silent and in ruins for over 20 years.

In its effort to commemorate Winston Churchill's historic speech, Westminster College decided to take on the task of relocating and rebuilding St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, to Fulton, Missouri. In what the London Times called "perhaps the biggest jigsaw puzzle in the history of architecture," the college took on the painstaking task of bringing over 7,000 stones and more than 650 tons of blocks on their long journey to the campus. They cleaned, removed, and numbered all the stones so that during the rebuilding stage, they would know exactly where to put each stone. It was a massive project of love and pride that brought yet another rising of the phoenix to St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury.

In an elaborate dedication ceremony in 1969, attended by dignitaries from both continents, the beauty that is this stunning historic church became a reality. In 1962, Mr. Churchill – now 88 years old – was humbled and honored to know Westminster College had taken on this project, and it would one day be in honor of him. Four U.S. Presidents, Kennedy, Johnson, Eisenhower, and Truman, were part of the national effort to see this project come to fruition.

To visit St. Mary the Virgin is extraordinary. When you walk through, you cannot help but be awed by the effort it took to rebuild and maintain the sheer beauty and authenticity of the church. The organ, built by Noel Mander, the fire warden when St. Mary's burned in 1940, is simply stunning and will take your breath away. There are various artifacts within the church showing the history. Housed behind protective glass does not diminish their beauty. The bell



The organ was built by Noel Mander — fire warden for St. Mary the Virgin church.

still tolls on the quarter-hour, just like Big Ben, and has become an intricate part of the city of Fulton. While reverently walking through, you will also see a beautiful painting of a Phoenix – the true spirit of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury.

CONCLUSION

Sir Winston Churchill was an extraordinary man of integrity, leadership, vision, and grit. America's National Churchill Museum and St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, is a place where one can learn and appreciate the man and what he did on the world stage.

They are a tribute to his lasting influence and should be experienced by current and future generations. In his own words,

"The price of greatness is responsibility."

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." *Wm.*

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