

Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand Vol. 31

edited by Christoph Schnoor (Auckland, New Zealand SAHANZ and Unitec ePress; and Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2014).

The bibliographic citation for this paper is:

Keith Eggener, "How Christopher Wren Came to America: The Relocation and Transformation of a London Parish Church," in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 31, Translation,* edited by Christoph Schnoor (Auckland, New Zealand: SAHANZ and Unitec ePress; and Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2014), 71-80.

Published in

Auckland, New Zealand: SAHANZ and Unitec ePress [ISBN - 978-1-927214-12-1]; and Gold Coast, Australia: SAHANZ [ISBN - 978-0-9876055-1-1]

All efforts have been undertaken to ensure that authors have secured appropriate permissions to reproduce the images illustrating individual contributions. Interested parties may contact the editor.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.







## Keith Eggener, University of Oregon

## How Christopher Wren Came to America: The Relocation and Transformation of a London Parish Church

As historian David Lowenthal wrote, every interaction with the past involves an alteration. We transform and translate historical images, ideas, and artefacts, their material elements, contexts, and meanings, into ones we can understand and use in our own time. Yet some translations are more radically transformative than others

So it is with the practice of structural relocation. Buildings are not usually conceived as portable, so what happens when one is moved from its original setting to one its builders never imagined? Numerous historically significant structures, from Abu Simbel and the Temple of Dendur to London Bridge and Newark International's Building 51, have been relocated. Such moves may carry benefits – rescue from demolition or decay, heightened accessibility, availability to new audiences, reuse of resources – but they also raise thorny questions of aesthetic and material integrity, historical authenticity and meaning, and the value of historical and environmental context.

This paper considers these issues through a case study involving the 17th century English architect Christopher Wren. Wren's influence was pervasive in England's North American colonies and the young United States, yet the U.S. contains just one building directly connected to him. St. Mary Aldermanbury (1671-81) was one of the 51 London parish churches Wren built after the fire of 1666. Gutted by German bombs during World War II, its remains stood on their original site until the 1960s, when they were shipped to a small town in the American Midwest. In Fulton, Missouri, site of Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, the reconstructed building now stands as a Churchill museum and memorial.

Every interaction with the past involves an alteration. We transform and translate historical images, ideas, and artefacts, their material elements, contexts, and meanings, into ones we can understand and use in our own time. Yet some translations are more radically transformative than others.

So it is with the practice of structural relocation. Buildings are not usually conceived as portable, so what happens when one is transferred from its original setting to one its builders never imagined? Numerous historically significant structures, from Abu Simbel and the Temple of Dendur to London Bridge and Newark International's Building 51, have been relocated. Such moves may carry benefits – rescue from demolition or decay, heightened accessibility, availability to new audiences, reuse of limited resources – but they also raise thorny questions of aesthetic and material integrity, historical authenticity and meaning, and the value of historical and environmental context.

Imagine you've just landed in St. Louis, Missouri. Eero Saarinen's gleaming arch stands poised between a muddy Mississippi River once plied by real riverboats, now lined with immovable "riverboat" casinos, and a blighted, depopulated rustbelt city centre still struggling to effect its own revival; the place smells faintly of hops from the nearby Anheuser-Busch brewery and more powerfully of exhausts from the freeway dividing downtown from the river. You drive west on Interstate 70, past 50 miles of exurban sprawl ranging in quality from bland to bleak, and on past another 50 miles of soybean fields dotted by occasional truck stops and fast food restaurants. Turning off the Interstate at exit 148, you head south for about a five miles on Highway 54 to the pleasant but unremarkable town of Fulton, population 13,000, home of Westminster College and of one remarkable feature. It is in Fulton that you find the one building outside of England incontrovertibly connected to England's greatest architect: St. Mary Aldermanbury, attributed to Christopher Wren and built during his lifetime (fig. 1). What the devil is it doing here, you ask yourself, the first of many reasonable questions.



Fig. 1. Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke, St. Mary Aldermanbury, west end, built in London, England, 1671–81, destroyed during bombing raid, 1941, ruins moved and rebuilt at Westminister College, Fulton, Missouri, USA, 1965–69. Photograph by Keith Eggener, 2013.

St. Mary Aldermanbury as it stands today was originally built between 1671 and 1681, but its story is much older. A small rectangular-plan Norman church called St. Mary had stood in the Aldermanbury

<sup>1</sup> David Lowenthal, The Past is Foreign Country (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 263.



district of London since at least 1181, near the site of the ancient Saxon palace and the east gate of the still-older Roman fort. Among the many curious stories connected to its early history is that of a man who called himself Christ and was crucified there in 1222. In the mid-15th century, a Perpendicular Gothic-style building replaced the then-dilapidated Norman structure. Later, by royal charter, the church became the home of the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers. Later still, it became a centre of the Puritan movement in London, presided over by noted Puritan clergyman Edmund Calamy. It was the parish church of Robert Rich, one of the founders of the Virginia and New England colonies in North America. Two of Shakespeare's closest friends - the actors Henry Condell and John Heminges, editors and publishers of his *First Folio* - attended mass there and it is likely that the Bard, who often stayed in Aldermanbury and frequented the nearby Axe Inn, did so too. Notices of Puritan poet John Milton's second marriage were first published at St. Mary Aldermanbury in 1656, although the marriage probably took place in the nearby Guildhall.<sup>2</sup>

On 2 September 1666, a bakery located along London's Pudding Lane caught fire. The fire spread and by the time it was done, it had destroyed much of the city north of the Thames, including most of Aldermanbury parish. St. Mary was one of 87 churches lost in the Great Fire. It was one of the first to be rebuilt, beginning in 1671 - one of 51 churches rebuilt according to the designs of Christopher Wren and, to a degree that remains uncertain, his assistants Robert Hooke and Nicholas Hawksmoor.<sup>3</sup> The new building blended the simple Palladian classicism of Inigo Jones with more elaborate Baroque features such as the large cartouches - which Nikolaus Pevsner called "grossly oversized, very proud and jolly volute scrolls"<sup>4</sup> - and a broad classical pediment framing the round-arched window at the east end (fig. 2). The rectangular plan featured a central nave with side aisles erected atop the charred foundations of the 15th century church. The square, turreted west-end clock and bell tower was built upon surviving portions of the old tower. New walls were made of brick and stones taken from the ruined church. Made for the sake of speed and economy, these moves also linked the new building directly with its predecessors and its ancient site.

<sup>2</sup> Historical sketch drawn from Christian E. Hauer, Jr., and William A. Young, A Comprehensive History of the London Church and Parish of St. Mary, the Virgin, Aldermanbury (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> At St. Mary Aldermanbury, the parish paid both Wren and Hooke: Wren received twenty guineas, Hooke ten, though Hooke may have had the greater hand in the design. See Paul Jeffery, The City Churches of Sir Christopher Wren (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 64, 85, 93-109, 175-77.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: London I, The Cities of London and Westminster (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957), 151.



Fig. 2. Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke, St. Mary Aldermanbury, east end, built in London, England, 1671–81, destroyed during bombing raid, 1941, ruins moved and rebuilt at Westminister College, Fulton, Missouri, USA, 1965–69. Photograph by Keith Eggener, 2013.

In the mid 20th century Pevsner called Wren's London churches "the outstanding accents of the City" and "the ideal field in which to study Wren's mind", by the yevsner's time, fewer than half of them remained intact. Today, of the 51 London parish churches whose building Wren oversaw, only 23 still stand intact on their original sites, and half of these have been substantially rebuilt. Along with the depredations of time and neglect, these central city churches faced declining parish populations as people left the centre for the suburbs and commercial interests moved in. Many parishes were consolidated and church buildings deconsecrated and demolished. By the late-19th century, warehouses had replaced most of Aldermanbury's small-scale medieval residential and commercial buildings; today, the modern offices of international corporations and government agencies stand where warehouses once did. Like a rock jutting from the sea, St. Mary stood unmoving while successive waves of development and redevelopment swirled around it.

St. Mary's shrinking congregation successfully resisted several Church-led efforts to demolish the Wren building and combine the parish with that of another nearby church. Eventually, though, German bombers did what English churchmen could not. In September 1915, Aldermanbury was the target of a Zeppelin raid; several of the church's windows were blown out but otherwise the building was unharmed. The next war took a greater toll. On the night of 29 December 1940, an incendiary bomb dropped from a Luftwaffe plane hit the church directly. The Aldermanbury neighborhood was devastated by the bombing and the fires that followed. St. Mary was left a burned out shell - one of 13 Wren churches destroyed that night.

The ruined church stood untouched and almost unnoticed on its ancient site until 1959, when another demolition threat loomed. This time, given the state of the building's fabric, that threat would almost certainly have been carried out. Yet ten years later, on 7 May 1969, the completely restored church - comprised of all that remained of the original building fabric, save the foundations - was re-consecrated as a place of worship. Only now it stood in Fulton, Missouri, not far from the Arch, the riverboat casinos, the soybean fields, and all.

<sup>5</sup> Pevsner, The Buildings of England: London I, 63.



The catalyst for the building's relocation and renewal was Winston Churchill. In 1946, Churchill was invited by Westminster College to deliver a lecture in Fulton. U.S. President Harry Truman, a Missouri native, seconded the invitation and Churchill accepted. Titled "The Sinews of Peace", the lecture quickly became famous for its reference to an "iron curtain" descending across Eastern Europe. By 1961, college administrators were discussing plans for a suitable memorial to the celebrated "Iron Curtain" speech of 15 years earlier. The idea of transporting a London church to Fulton – inspired by a recent *Life* magazine article on Wren's parish churches, many of them now ruined – was raised. Remarkably, the plan was realized. It was done so with the involvement of many people on both sides of the Atlantic, most notably Churchill himself, who called it "an imaginative concept" that might "symbolize in the eyes of the English-speaking peoples the ideals of Anglo-American association on which rest, now as before, so many of our hopes for peace and the future of mankind.6" Several damaged churches by Wren and others were considered before St. Mary was selected. Between 1965 and 1969, the building was dismantled, transported in six 100-ton shipments to Fulton, and painstakingly restored. Meanwhile in London, St. Mary's original foundations were preserved as the centrepiece of the small park now located on the former church site.

Contemporary news reports indicate that Londoners were puzzled and bemused by the project. As one wire story from London put it, "Americans are known for being sentimental softies. But the current American project of snipping 650 tons of bombed-out church ruins to Fulton. Mo., is seen here as the last word in sentimental extravagance." The "smoke-charred ruins" and weed-clotted site were seen as "eyesores", the church as a second-rate Wren design even before the bombing. Locals were glad to be rid of it. As one architectural student put it: "If the Americans are so intent upon having a Wren church why don't they copy one of his better examples?" His assessment was supported by no less an authority than John Summerson. Within a year of the bombing - a time when his own sentimentality might have been expected to reach its peak - Summerson called St. Mary "an unattractive building" whose "naïve" detailing suggested that Wren wasn't closely involved in its design.8 In other words, the destruction was unfortunate, perhaps, but no great loss.

Today, the church is the pride of Fulton. It serves Westminster College, Fulton, and the surrounding region in a variety of ways. It operates first of all as a college chapel, a centre of ecumenical worship for the Westminster College community. The building also hosts concerts, lectures, and other such public events. Major scholars, including the philosopher Paul Ricouer, and world leaders such as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Lech Walesa, and Mikhail Gorbachev, drawn by the building's association with Churchill, have visited the place and spoken to crowds either within the building

<sup>6</sup> Hauer and Young, A Comprehensive History, 378.

<sup>7</sup> Tom A. Cullen, "Britons Wonder About Yankee Extravagance," The Daily Times-News (Burlington, North Carolina, 4 August 1965), 26. Cullen's byline reads "European Staff Correspondent, Newspaper Enterprise Association, London." His story appeared in papers across the US, including ones in North Carolina, Kansas, Arizona, West Virginia, Ohio, and Nebraska.

<sup>8</sup> J. M. Richards and John Summerson, Bombed Buildings of Britain, A Record of Architectural Casualties: 1940-41 (London: Architectural Press, 1942), 21.

or outside on the plaza that fronts it. The historic church is also a popular place for weddings and family reunions.

More than a place of worship, a setting for events, or a historically significant piece of architecture, St. Mary Aldermanbury is today best known as a memorial, museum, and library devoted to Churchill and his famous speech. The reconstructed building was officially rededicated in May 1969, as the "Churchill Memorial Chapel", More recently it was designated the National Churchill Museum by an act of the U.S. Congress. In this capacity it is, perhaps, the leading tourist attraction in central Missouri. Billboards on the Interstate and brochures in hotel kiosks urge travellers to leave the highway and make the short pilgrimage to "The Winston Churchill Memorial and Library ... A Magnificent Memorial [that] Symbolizes the Triumph of Freedom". Once there, visitors find two bronze statues of Churchill standing just outside the church - one defiant with cane and hat in hand, the other behind a lectern and a spate of microphones. Nearby looms a large graffiti-splattered section of the Berlin Wall, carved upon by Churchill's granddaughter, Edwina Sandys. The church exterior and interior were restored as near as possible to their original designs, but in its Fulton incarnation, the building was raised above a partly buried base, a visible sub-story or undercroft that houses the library and museum. This area features exhibits telling of Churchill's life and times and artefacts such as his childhood toys, letters and manuscripts in his hand, and examples of his oil painting. A room in one corner houses a small exhibit on Wren and the building and restoration of the church, but this is outside the main circuit of the exhibition space. The museum gift shop brims with 'Churchilliana collectibles', Union Jack coffee mugs, 'Keep Calm' T-shirts, stuffed bulldogs, and the like.

However careful its restoration, in moving across the Atlantic, St. Mary Aldermanbury inevitably became a thing apart from the building Wren once knew. Certainly, there are contextual and environmental factors to consider. Lifted from the dense urban fabric of one of the world's largest cities, the church was set down upon a sparsely built college campus in a small town surrounded in every direction by miles of Midwestern farm fields. Without its original setting, the building looks much different than it did: instead of being boxed in by other buildings, it now stands raised and isolated upon a pedestal, set before a deep plaza that frames the west end and provides stand-back views of the steeple - views that would not have been available to late-17th century (or for that matter, 20th century) Londoners. Moreover, Missouri's freezing, snowy winters and its sweltering, humid summers are far removed from anything that Wren or Hooke would have considered when designing for the much more mild and even climate of London. This fact has brought new stresses to the building's fabric and challenges to its on-going maintenance.

There are substantial symbolic shifts as well. Imbued with a thousand years of English history, built on ground that witnessed a thousand years of history before that, St. Mary was uprooted from its native soil, severed from its source and floated across the ocean to be transplanted in strange, new ground - rather like Captain Bligh's ill-fated breadfruit trees. Once relocated, the building was effectively grounded in a whole new set of associations. It now became an emblem of



Anglo-American relations, of post-war American triumphalism and Cold War vigilance, a torch passed literally from old world power, old empire, to new. It seems fair to say that for most visitors over the past forty-odd years, Churchill and Truman have to a substantial degree displaced Christ and Christopher Wren as the animating spirits of this place. Those other spirits - Shakespeare, Milton, Edmund Calamy, the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers, the crucified lunatic of 1222, and so many others - they too still haunt this place, but they are now much harder to see, in most cases invisible.

It is one thing to move an idea, a portable artefact, or even a portion of a structure from its original setting. It is quite another to move an entire building - lock, stock, and lintels. Such moves are conducted in one of two ways: either the structure is lifted up using a system of frames, jacks, cribs, and dollies and moved whole; or it is dismantled, moved in pieces, and reassembled on a new site. The first method is seen by most preservationists as preferable, less damaging to the original building fabric, much of which (foundations, mortars, etc.) is inevitably lost in the moving process. It is, however, nearly impossible to move stone or brick buildings more than a short distance without dismantling them.<sup>9</sup> Either way, relocation is a complex, risky, costly procedure. Yet it is often the only alternative to outright demolition. The practice has been around for centuries- the website for the International Association of Structural Movers (IASM) claims that "relocating structures is the world's oldest and largest recycling industry" 10 - but it really picked up in the early 20th century with increasing developmental pressures and improved technologies. In recent years, movers have relocated houses, libraries, hotels, theatres, lighthouses, grain elevators, bridges, airport terminals, multi-story office buildings, and virtually every other building type imaginable. According to engineer Peter Paravelos, author of a recent guide to structural relocation, some thirty to forty thousand structures are now moved each year in the United States alone.11

While much of what has been moved during the past two or three centuries is ordinary stuff, re-sited for economic or sentimental reasons, a substantial number of historically significant structures have also been moved. Some of these have been relocated due to environmental changes or major construction projects. For instance, Egypt's Abu Simbel Temples were moved because of a dam project, North Carolina's Cape Hatteras Lighthouse on account of beach erosion. Many other structures have been acquired by museums or wealthy collectors and relocated as exhibits or trophies or tourist attractions. Great Britain and the United States are littered with open-air museums full of relocated historic structures - the Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings outside Birmingham, England, Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, and many others. New York's Cloisters Museum is built from portions of several medieval European buildings acquired early in the 20th century by George Grey Barnard. William Randolph Hearst, a collector of gargantuan appetites, twice purchased medieval Spanish Cistercian monasteries but

<sup>9</sup> Peter Paravelos, Moving a House with Preservation in Mind (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 62-63. See also John Obed Curtis, Moving Historic Buildings (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Technical Preservations Services Division, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> International Association of Structural Movers, accessed 15 May 2014, http://www.iasm.org/about/

<sup>11</sup> Paravelos, Moving a House with Preservation in Mind, xiii.

was unable to rebuild either one; one ended up in Miami Beach, the other in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.<sup>12</sup> Manufacturer and developer Robert B. McCulloch bought London Bridge for \$2.5 million U.S. dollars and plopped it improbably down in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, amidst an English-styled theme park and mock-Tudor shopping mall. Berlin's Pergamon museum contains the pilfered Pergamon Altar, the Market Gate of Miletus, and the Ishtar Gate. The Ara Pacis stands inside a new Richard Meier-designed building in Rome, the Egyptian Temple of Dendur inside its own gallery within New York's Metropolitan Museum, Mark Twain's birthplace cabin inside a northwest Missouri pavilion reminiscent of Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal in New York. As these last three examples demonstrate, whatever their intrinsic character and external circumstances, buildings set inside other buildings almost inevitably look like miniatures inside enormous snow globes.

There may be good practical or ideological reasons for moving a building, just as there may be for restoring that which has degraded or been damaged. Yet there remains something unsettling about these practices, particularly when they're connected to historic structures. Both restoration and relocation wreak havoc on contemporary notions of authenticity and heritage, which valorise direct and specific connections to historical circumstances of person, event, or place. Since 1964, the Venice Charter from UNESCO's International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has guided architectural conservation and preservation efforts internationally. Central to this document is the importance of a building's original setting. As Article 7 states, "A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding or that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance." In the U.S., recent National Park Service guidelines on "The Movement of Historic Structures" follow this line of thought, allowing for relocation only as a last resort; National Trust policy in Great Britain, New Zealand, and countries around the world take a similar line. A recent article on the Historic New England website spelled out the perils of ignoring such standards:

"Moving a house off site divorces it from the many material and cultural associations that are intrinsic to its history: its ownership sequence, topographic and historical setting, even the archaeological evidence buried in and around its site, all contribute to the authenticity, the 'realness,' of the building. Moving can trivialize a building, turning it into an artifact, or souvenir." <sup>15</sup>

Beyond this and the potential for damage or loss of original fabric, relocated historical buildings often must comply with modern building codes, a condition which further compromises authenticity

<sup>12</sup> John Harris, Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007): on Barnard and the Cloisters see 149, 165; on Hearst see 219-228.

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO-ICOMOS, "Venice Charter," 1964, Article 7, accessed 15 May 2014, http://www.icomos.org/venicecharter2004/

<sup>14 &</sup>quot;Selections related to Cultural Resources Management from National Park Service Management Policies, 2006," accessed 15 May 2014, http://www.nps.gov/nationalmallplan/Documents/106/Handouts/3-30-09%20NPS%20Policy%20-%20Cultural%20 Resources%20Management%20Moving%20Historic%20Structures.pdf

<sup>15</sup> Historic New England. "Preservation Hot Topics: Moving Historic Homes,", accessed 15 May 2014, http://www.historicnewengland.org/preservation/regional-resources/preservation-hot-topics/?searchterm=truck



and adds considerable expense to the rebuilding process, thus undermining the economic rationale that often supports arguments for reusing historic buildings.<sup>16</sup>

Unease with structural relocation is a peculiarly modern preoccupation, one that doesn't appear to have bothered Europeans in ancient or medieval times, when the use of *spolia* was seen to revive not ruin earlier buildings.<sup>17</sup> Modern relocation-aversion is related to the distaste for restoration that became widespread in the mid-19th century, when Gothic-Revival polemicists such as Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin proclaimed as inseparable the relationship between truth, beauty, and morality. Restoration resulted in fakery, unbeautiful and immoral. Ruskin admonished readers, "Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a lie from beginning to end... It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed." The "lamp of truth" demanded that things be left as they were found.

This particular strain of Victorian moralizing undergirded much of mainstream modern architectural thought and practice- from its antipathy toward historic revivals to its concerns for truth in materials, honest expression of structure and mechanical systems, the relationship of building to site, and the 'proper' preservation of authentic historic places. And as is so often the case, authenticity's value rose with the recognition that it might be in limited supply. With the rise of modern industry, modern transportation and communication systems, and increasingly globalized economies came mounting concern over cultural homogenization and the 'placelessness' of so many built environments. These worries grew alongside new technologies that made architecture more portable than ever before: hydraulic jacks and motorized dollies that eased the moving process; catalogue houses and standardized, mass production technology; genuinely portable types such as mobile and modular homes. Further, as people became more mobile, they too inevitably became less rooted and more prone to mourn the loss. Alterations of the past, explained historian David Lowenthal, "run counter to our desires for a fixed and stable heritage", desires that only intensify as they become harder to fulfil.<sup>19</sup>

These concerns were most pointedly expressed in modernist theories of organicism, which focused a near-fetishistic attention on the site. To remove a building from its original location was to cut it off from its connection to the earth, its source of vitality. Richard Neutra, in terms that evoke Ruskin's finger-wagging, wrote in his 1951 book *Mysteries and Realities of the Site*: "My experience, everything within me, is against an abstract approach to land and nature, and for the profound assets rooted in each site and buried in it like a treasurable wonder." In introducing that same book, *Architectural Forum* editor Douglas Haskell spoke of the site as that "piece of ground to which

<sup>16</sup> Jenny Gregory, "Reconsidering Relocated Buildings: ICOMOS, Authenticity and Mass Relocation," International Journal of Heritage Studies 14:2 (March, 2008), 127.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, ed., Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine (London: Ashqate, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Statement of 1849 quoted in Nicholas Stanley Price et al., ed., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 322.

<sup>19</sup> Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, xxiv.

the house will forever be happily, or perhaps unhappily, wed."<sup>20</sup> The key word here is "forever": for Haskell, the prospect of relocation was unthinkable; a building divorced from its original site was a lifeless, alien thing, beyond comprehension, unworthy of consideration.

Historical authenticity was a priority for the Missouri-based rebuilders of St. Mary Aldermanbury, and toward that end they used all available means to achieve the most accurate possible restoration. But the building's original setting was forever lost with the move across the Atlantic. If we accept Neutra and Haskell's terms, St. Mary, removed from its native setting and transplanted to an alien one, is as dead as dead can be.

This might matter less than we have been led to believe. As historian Jenny Gregory recently noted, the continuing significance of a building is often only scantly related to its setting. Physical context inevitably changes over time. Apart from the position of some of its streets and the soil beneath them, Aldermanbury in the 1960s bore little relation to the Aldermanbury of Wren's time. Most of the buildings that once shaped the space immediately surrounding St. Mary were already gone by 1941, when German bombs destroyed the rest. Purist, site-based perspectives on architectural authenticity regularly overlook issues of contextual evolution, though these may be contributing to the greater flexibility around questions of relocation seen in some more recent preservation documents and practices.<sup>21</sup>

There is still another way to look at the matter. Think of the Parthenon Marbles, ripped two hundred years ago by Lord Elgin's workers from the face of Athens' greatest ancient temple, and now one of the greatest treasures of the British Museum. There are many compelling reasons for returning these marbles to Athens, and a few for keeping them in London. One of the latter is that after all this time in England, after two centuries away from their place of origin, after all the generations of British school children that have paraded past them, the poems and paeans written to them, they are by now as much a part of British culture as they are of Greek culture. Something similar might be said of St. Mary Aldermanbury. The building's connection to English soil and to pre-war English history was severed long ago. But during the past forty years it has been embroidered with a new history, a history of Cold Warriors, Midwestern weddings, and generations of college students who have wandered in its midst. In short, the building is dead. Long live the building.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Neutra, Mysteries and Realities of the Site (Scarsdale, NY: Morgan and Morgan, 1951), 14, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory, "Reconsidering Relocated Buildings," 127, 113.

<sup>22</sup> John Henry Merryman, "Whither the Elgin Marbles?," Imperialism, Art and Restitution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 98-113.