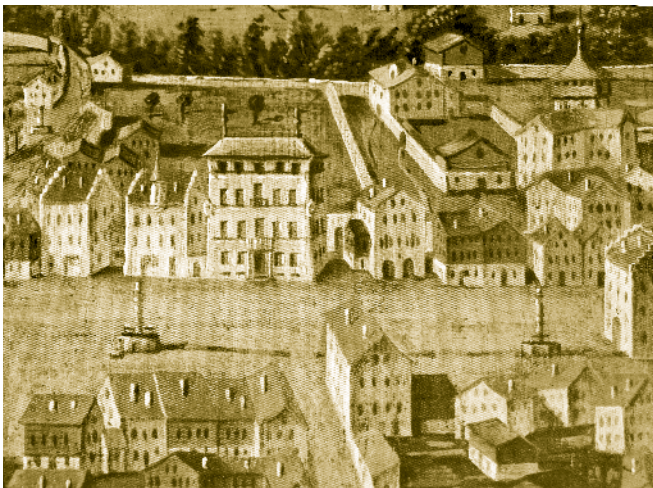




WELCOME TO THE TÜRMLI, ALTDORF

Explore the Türmli in Altdorf with its small exhibition devoted to the history and importance of the tower. Find out how Altdorf acquired the Tell monument and how the influence of William Tell is still alive today in the canton of Uri. Enjoy wonderful views of Altdorf from the top platform.

Türmli, Rathausplatz, 6460 Altdorf, www.telldenkmal.ch



WHERE TELL AIMED HIS MASTERLY SHOT

The legend goes that the dramatic confrontation between William Tell and the bailiff Gessler took place on the town hall square in front of the Türmli. It resulted in the famous splitting of the apple and Tell's subsequent arrest.

Walter, William Tell's son, is said to have stood with the apple on his head in front of the town hall lime tree. This was felled in 1567 and, in its place, Altdorf had the village's first stone well erected. In 1959 the well was moved by a good two metres off the road to its present site.

A hundred paces away from the lime tree, Tell aimed his masterly shot. Here, too, the citizens of Altdorf built a well at the end of the 16th century. And this well, too, was moved at a later date. It now stands at the entrance to the Altdorf church square.

In the oil painting by Franz Xaver Triner (1767–1824) the significance of the two wells as points of reference in the apple shooting scene is clearly visible.

ALTDORF AND ITS TELL MONUMENTS

The legend surrounding William Tell and the founding of the Swiss Confederation emerged in the 16th century. In 1582 the first chapel in Bürglen was dedicated to William Tell. William Tell's heroic acts were soon to be remembered also in the Hohlen Gasse in Küsnacht and on the Tellsplatte in the Sisikon Chapel.

The first Tell monument was erected in Zurich in 1780. In 1785 William Tell was honoured with a statue on a fountain in Altdorf. Sculpted by Josef Benedikt Curiger (1754–1819) the statue today graces the village well in Bürglen.

Following the establishment of the nation state in 1848 Switzerland was swept by a craze for monuments. Every town or region wanted to commemorate the glorious deeds of their ancestors with a monument.

In 1860 Altdorf was presented with its first Tell monument – albeit only in plaster. The huge Tell statue was a gift from the Confederation Shooting Festival in Zurich. However the statue soon disintegrated and made an ever sorer sight. In 1888, at the request of the charitable organisation, the Uri cantonal council set up a 15-member commission for the erection of a Tell monument.





THE TELL MONUMENT BY RICHARD KISSLING

The monument commission did not waste any time. They issued a public call to which 30 artists responded. A national jury short-listed four designs, from which the monument commission chose the winner. They opted unanimously for the model by the Solothurn artist Richard Kissling (1848 – 1919).

The Tell monument cost around 142,000 Swiss francs. It was funded by donations and contributions from the government and all the cantons.

The Tell monument inauguration ceremony was held on 27/28 August 1895. Three federal councillors, the chairmen of the federal councils, representatives of all cantonal governments and other honoured guests from the political, military and industrial spheres attended the ceremony with patriotic speeches and an impressive musical performance with over 330 participants. Today the bronze casting of Tell by Richard Kissling is one of Switzerland's most famous monuments.



THE TÜRMLI HAS MANY TALES TO TELL

The Türmli ranks as one of Altdorf's oldest buildings. Several building phases culminated in its present appearance. Its foundations date back to the middle of the 13th century. Shortly afterwards, a second storey was added to the tower as living quarters. In 1517 it was acquired by the canton of Uri. Over time the tower was transformed into a prestigious stately watchtower with a clock. In the late 16th century the tower was painted for the first time. However, the greater part of the building was destroyed in the village fire of 1693. The tower was quickly rebuilt, and the Uri painter Karl Leonz Püntener added a fifth and sixth storey to it. He also painted the main facades with scenes from the stories of William Tell and the liberation of the early Swiss Confederation. Only the painting on the Schmiedgasse side still exists today. The Türmli was renovated at the time of the erection of the Tell Monument in 1895. In 1968/69 the exterior of the tower again underwent thorough restoration. The rear facade behind the Tell Monument was then adorned with the fresco by the Basel artist Hans Sandreuter (1850–1901) for which it was originally intended. It depicts Bürglen, where Tell came from. In 2011 the interior of the tower was extensively restored and accessed by a new wooden staircase.

THE MANY USES OF THE TÜRMLI

The Türmli has been used for a wide variety of purposes down the centuries. It was originally built in the middle of the 13th century as a residential tower. The little fortress was the temporary residence of the chief magistrate and baron Werner von Attinghausen, who according to Friedrich Schiller played a key role in the history of the liberation. Given the inferior wall thickness, any idea that the two-storey tower was used for defence purpose can be discounted.

After its acquisition by the canton of Uri in 1517, the tower on the town hall square became a symbol of sovereign power. In the early 16th century a clock was added to the Türmli. The two bells were destroyed in the fire of 1799. In 1816 the Basel government presented Uri with two new bells, which were rung in times of danger or nights with prevailing foehn winds. The small bell was rung as the condemned were led to execution. The last death sentence was carried out in Uri in 1924.

The first mention of stocks and a sinner's stone in front of the Türmli is made in 1608. If someone was guilty of a misdemeanour, they were clapped in the stocks and subjected to the merciless ridicule of the public.

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OPENING HOURS

the Türmli is open daily
9.00 am – 7.00 pm

FREE ENTRANCE

