

Colonel Elliott White Springs, president of Springs Cotton Mills, made a unique purchase in May 1939.¹ He bought a railroad car owned by steel magnate and philanthropist Charles M. Schwab for a reported cost of \$2,376.50 (roughly \$57,100 in 2026 dollars).² Although it was suggested that it would be available for use on the Lancaster and Chester Railroad, which connected cotton mills operated by the Springs Company,³ there is no evidence that it ran on the railroad. It primarily sat on a railroad spur in Fort Mill near the Springs Home.⁴ In fact, by September 1939, air-conditioning had been installed in the car, and it was connected with the city water system.⁵ Colonel Springs was using it as his private office.

After the rail car's purchase, during the summer of 1939, the train car was sent to Spartanburg, SC, for repairs. It was then sent to Lancaster, SC, and then on to Fort Mill, where it stayed for almost 40 years.⁶ During its stay in Fort Mill, the rail car was used as Colonel Springs' office, an executive dining room, and was headquarters for the South Carolina Civil Air Patrol after Colonel Springs was named commander of the state's organization in 1951.⁷ After his resignation from his position in 1952, the headquarters was moved back to Rock Hill.⁸ The railcar also served briefly as a temporary residence for Bill and Anne Springs Close.⁹

The story of the rail car purchased by Springs began in 1901, when millionaire and recently-named president of United States Steel Corporation Charles M. Schwab commissioned the private railroad car from the Pullman company. It was to be named the "Loretto," a nod to Mr. Schwab's boyhood home.¹⁰ The car contained an observation room, two bedrooms with a full bath between them, a dining room, an open section, a half bathroom, a porter's room, and pantry and kitchen. The woodwork was done in Cuban mahogany with elaborate inlays and carvings throughout the car. Both bathrooms were finished in Italian marble. The bedroom ceilings were hand-painted, and intricate stained glass adorned the windows.¹¹

In 1912, the Loretto was rebuilt by the Pullman Company at their shops in Calumet, Illinois. Steel underframe and sides were added and the car was reduced in size so that it would fit through the tunnels leading into New York City.¹² In 1916, Schwab placed an order for a second private rail car, which was also to be named "Loretto." The original rail car was

¹ McLaughlin, Patrick O. "Charles M. Schwab and Loretto," Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 8.

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>, accessed 24 August 2026.

³ "Springs Fits Car as Private Office," *Rock Hill Herald*, 28 July 1939, p. 5.

⁴ Dennis, J.D., letter to J. Fred Corriher, Jr. 16 November 1977.

⁵ "Death of Schwab Reminder of Car," *Fort Mill Times*, 21 September 1939, p. 4.

⁶ Dennis, J.D., letter to J. Fred Corriher, Jr. 16 November 1977.

⁷ Dennis, J.D., letter to J. Fred Corriher, Jr. 16 November 1977. "Col. Springs Named State CAP Head; Headquarters to be Located in Fort Mill," *Fort Mill Times*, 11 January 1951, p. 1.

⁸ "CAP Headquarters Moving From Here to Rock Hill," *Fort Mill Times*, 14 February 1952, p. 1.

⁹ McLaughlin, Patrick O. "Charles M. Schwab and Loretto," Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 9.

¹⁰ McLaughlin, Patrick O. "Charles M. Schwab and Loretto," Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 3.

¹¹ McLaughlin, Patrick O. "Charles M. Schwab and Loretto," Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 2.

¹² McLaughlin, Patrick O. "Charles M. Schwab and Loretto," Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 5.

subsequently renamed “Bethlehem,” in reference to the Bethlehem Steel Corporation that Schwab founded in 1905.¹³

Perhaps one of the Springs’ rail car’s most famous passengers was Winston Churchill. During a visit to the United States in 1929, Schwab loaned one of his private rail cars for his travel during part of the journey. Although it is hard to know for certain which of Schwab’s two private cars he lent to Churchill, some researchers believe it was the “Bethlehem.”¹⁴ Churchill travelled in the Schwab’s rail car from outside Yosemite in California to the Grand Canyon in Arizona, and then made an 1,800 mile trip to Chicago.¹⁵

After serving the Springs company for nearly 40 years (and being renamed “Lancaster and Chester 10,” the rail car was donated to what is now the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, where it is on permanent display.¹⁶

¹³ McLaughlin, Patrick O. “Charles M. Schwab and Loretto,” Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 5.

¹⁴ McLaughlin, Patrick O. “Charles M. Schwab and Loretto,” Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 8.

¹⁵ “Schwab Car on Way West,” *Kansas City Star*, 20 September 1929, p. 16. “Churchill Will Write of Valley,” *Merced Sun-Star*, Merced, Calif. 28 September 1929, p. 2.

Churchill, Winston letter to Clementine Churchill, 29 September 1929, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/churchill/interactive/_html/wc0087.html, “Churchill and the Great Republic,” accessed 7 April 2024.

Gilbert, Martin. *Churchill and America*. New York: Free Press, 2005, p. 119.

¹⁶ McLaughlin, Patrick O. “Charles M. Schwab and Loretto,” Spencer Shops, North Carolina. Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1983, p. 9.