



Reuther Archives, WSU

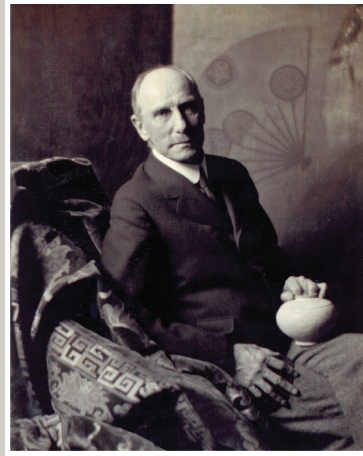
MERRILL PALMER SCHOOL PLAY YARD 1925

In 1920, a year after Freer's death, the Merrill Palmer School purchased the home. The courtyard became an outdoor play area for the nursery school children enrolled in its progressive education program. Plants and shrubs were replaced with swing sets and sandboxes as 'fresh air and exercise' were seen as integral to healthy growth. After construction of a new building in 1958, the play space was relocated and the courtyard lay vacant.

In 1965, Eleanor L. Roche designed a minimalist green garden in the yard. In the decades since however, the courtyard garden and landscape deteriorated to a state far distant from the glories of Mr. Freer's garden.

"Mr. Freer's garden and grounds are those of a man who has traveled far and seen much."

Detroit Sunday News Tribune
September 5, 1897



Charles Lang Freer, 1915.
Photograph by Edward Steichen. George Eastman House,
International Museum of Photography and Film.

FREER AND HIS HOME

Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919) made his fortune in railroad freight car manufacturing in Detroit. His remarkable shingle-style home contained one of the world's greatest collections of Asian and American art, as well as the largest single collection of Whistler's works, including the famous Peacock Room.

Freer bequeathed his collection to the Smithsonian and it is housed at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The Freer House is home to the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute of Wayne State University and is periodically open to the public for special events and tours.

*For more information or to join
the Freer House as a member, contact
Rose Foster at 313-664-2509*



THE FREER HOUSE

Supported by:
Americana Foundation & Kresge Foundation



THE FREER HOUSE GARDEN PROJECT



Freer House and Garden, 1904.
Photograph by C.M. Hayes, University of Glasgow Special Collections.

Our Vision for the
Historic Freer House
Courtyard Garden:
Restoring a Harmonious
Environment



MERRILL PALMER SKILLMAN INSTITUTE
for Child & Family Development



Freer House and Stables showing rose bushes and garden, 1904.
Photograph by C.M. Hayes, University of Glasgow Special Collections.

FREER'S BEAUTIFUL GARDENS 1904

The gardens and landscape surrounding Charles Lang Freer's residence were unique and notable in their day. Installed in 1892 and redesigned in 1906 after a major addition to his house, the gardens received the same careful attention to detail as his home. Freer consulted with his architect, Wilson Eyre, Jr. and his "New York artist friends," especially Thomas W. Dewing, and Maria Oakey Dewing, in devising the quiet beauty and harmonious character of his gardens.

A blend of Asian and Western plants reflected Freer's interests in 'points of contact' between American and Asian art. A Japanese stone lantern - a gift from S. Yamanaka - served as a focal point for the courtyard. The gardens, visible from the windows of Freer's home, served as a visual repose, in harmony with the shimmering surfaces and extraordinary art displayed therein.



Replication of the original Japanese stone lantern, located today outside the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is a priority goal as a focal point and ornament.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We offer various ways to help support the garden revitalization, from sponsoring individual plants to entire garden sections. Financial contributions and in-kind donations are also welcome. For more information contact William Colburn, director of the Freer House, at william.colburn@wayne.edu or 313-664-2500.



This fundraising campaign is dedicated in memory of **Denise Little**, whose vision and passion inspired the development of the Freer Garden Project.

The Freer House Garden Restoration Committee:

Thomas W. Brunk, PhD, Carolyn Cardoza, Carol Edwards, Mark Gibbons, Liseann Gouin, Carol Gove, Barbara Heller, Marc Herrick, Thomas Holleman, Chuck Little, David Michener, PhD

Project Consultants:

Fred Knight, K.C. Runciman Landscapes
James Viste, Edgewise Forge

HELP CULTIVATE HISTORY

We envision the garden as both a place for quiet contemplation and an inviting setting for outdoor events hosted by the Freer House, Wayne State, and the community.

The new plan will reintroduce the gentle arc of Freer's original carriage path as a walkway from Ferry Street and revitalize the garden with trees and plants authentic to Freer's original vision but updating it as an accessible and sustainable environment.

Replication of the original Peacock Room porch railings and a newly designed garden fence will complement and enclose the courtyard.



Historically appropriate plantings have been identified with advice from David Michener, PhD, Curator of Matthaei Botanical Gardens, UofM, based on research by Thomas W. Brunk, PhD. A detailed garden plan funded by the Americana Foundation and created by K.C. Runciman Landscapes will guide the project.

YES! I want to help restore Freer's gardens

Please accept my donation of:

- \$75 (1 plant)
- \$150 (2 plants)
- \$300 (4 plants)
- \$500 (1 tree)
- \$1,000 (2 trees)
- \$2,500 (iron fence section)
- \$5,000 (masonry column)
- General donation of \$ _____

Donors of \$500 and above will be acknowledged on a donor recognition plaque.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

- My check is made payable to:
The Freer House, WSU
OR

Please charge my gift of \$ _____ to:
 Visa MasterCard

ACCT # _____ EXP DATE _____

SIGNATURE (REQUIRED) _____

NAME AS IT APPEARS ON CARD _____

Mail form with payment to:

The Freer House Garden Project
71 E. Ferry Street
Detroit, MI. 48202

Donate by Phone

with credit card, call Rose Foster at
313-664-2509

