

FREER HOUSE *is home to MPSI faculty, administrative offices and meeting rooms*

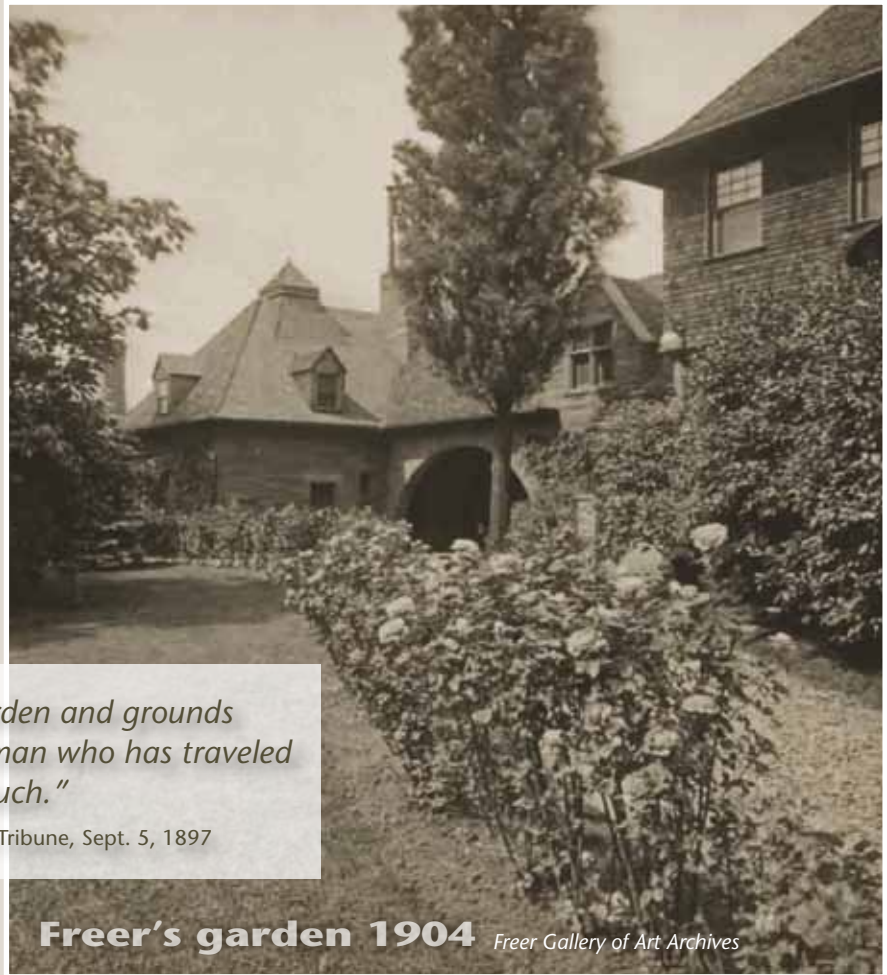
Bringing Freer's Garden Back to Life

Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919) made his fortune manufacturing railroad freight cars in Detroit, but he made his mark in the art world as a revered collector of Asian and Middle Eastern art who also generously supported American masters like Whistler, Dewing and Tryon. He built his remarkable shingle-style home on East Ferry Avenue in 1892 to house this large collection and designed the exterior landscape as the perfect frame to his home.

After construction of his house was completed in 1892, Freer designed the gardens with careful attention

to detail. He consulted his architect, Wilson Eyre, and several artist friends from New York, including Thomas W. Dewing, to help him attain a garden of quiet beauty and harmonious character. On a deeper level, the gardens mirrored the attention to detail and blend of Asian and Western cultures so evident on the interior of his home. He used Asian and Western plant varieties. An Asian stone lantern, a 1906 gift from S. Yamanaka of Yamanaka and Co., a leading Asian antiquities dealer, became a focal point of the garden.

Today the Freer House contains the offices of Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute's faculty and staff. In the decades since Freer occupied the home, the courtyard garden underwent many changes. After Merrill Palmer School purchased the home in 1920, the garden became a playground complete with sandbox, swings and sliding board. In 1958, the playground moved to its current



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

Detroit Sunday News Tribune, Sept. 5, 1897

Freer's garden 1904 *Freer Gallery of Art Archives*

Knapp building location. A new minimalist green garden design by Eleanor Roche was installed in 1966. This has since deteriorated with only a few hardy plants surviving.

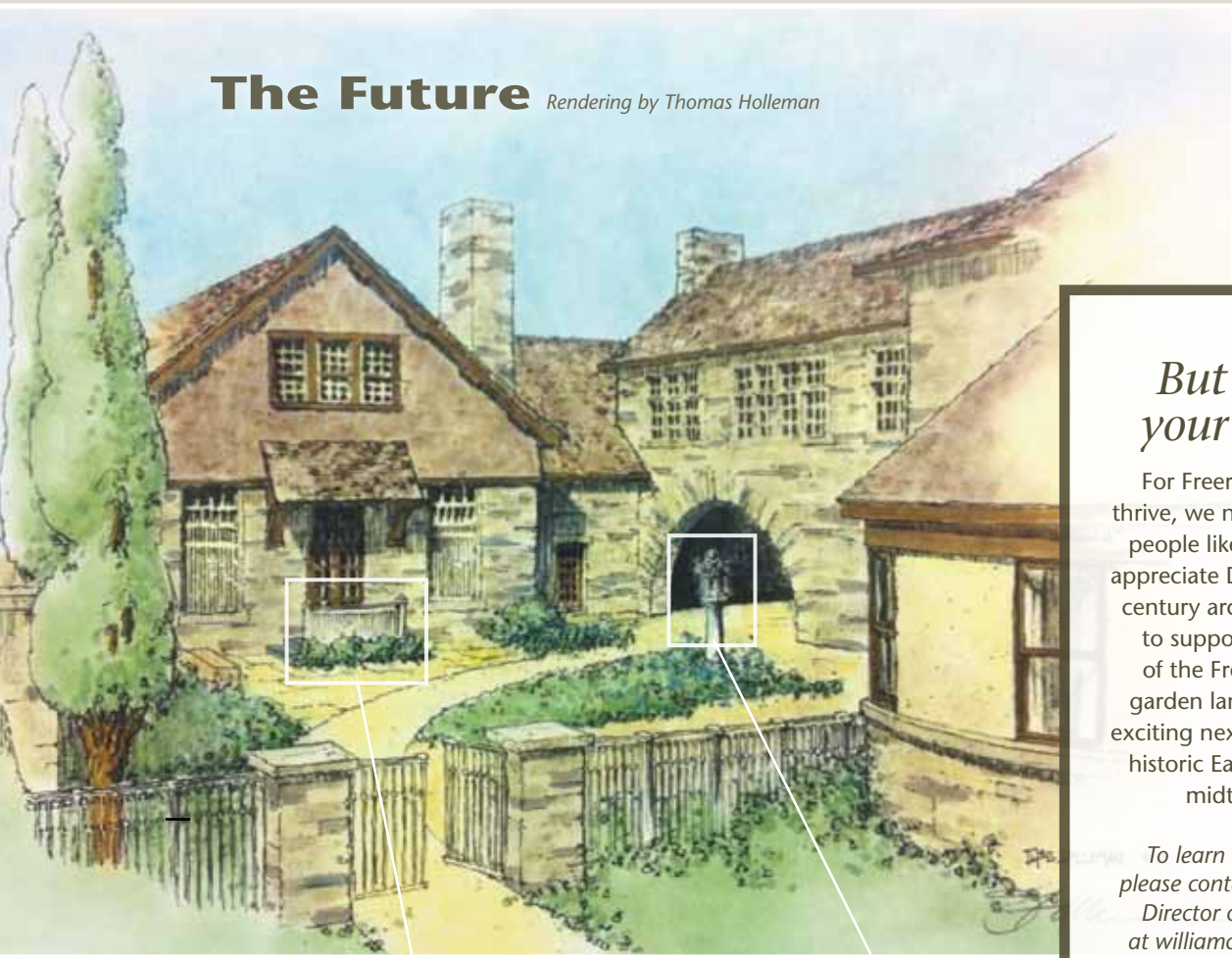
The Freer Garden Campaign will restore this secluded spot in Detroit's midtown to an outdoor space that reflects Charles Freer's original aesthetic vision while providing an inviting courtyard equally suited to small gatherings or solitary reflection. In addition, the project goal is to create a revitalized garden landscape this is low maintenance and environmentally sustainable.

Planting the Seeds of Success

Progress is already being made on the garden project. The recently formed Garden Restoration Committee has identified

historically appropriate plantings through the advice and research of members David Michener, Ph.D., U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens curator, and historian Thomas W. Brunk, Ph.D, author of *The Charles Lang Freer Residence: the Original Freer Gallery of Art*, The Americana Foundation funded a detailed garden plan created by K.C. Runci-man Landscapes (see watercolor). Plans include replicating the missing railings on the steps to the Peacock Room and appropriate new perimeter fencing. Before the garden plan can be undertaken, drainage system repairs and grading of the site are required. Efforts are underway to address these immediate concerns, with Wayne State University and the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute continuing to provide generous staffing and administrative support.

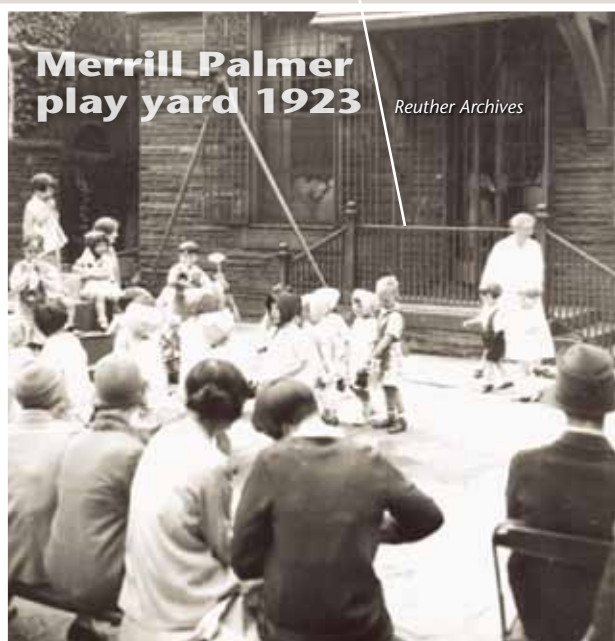
The Future Rendering by Thomas Holleman



But we need your help, too

For Freer's garden to truly thrive, we need donations from people like you, people who appreciate Detroit's turn-of-the-century architecture and wish to support the restoration of the Freer House and its garden landscape. This is an exciting next step in revitalizing historic East Ferry Street and midtown Detroit.

To learn how you can help please contact William Colburn, Director of the Freer House, at williamcolburn@wayne.edu or 313-664-2500.



Merrill Palmer play yard 1923 Reuther Archives



Replication of the Peacock Room wrought iron railing and original Asian stone lantern, located today outside the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., are priority goals in the Freer Garden Campaign.