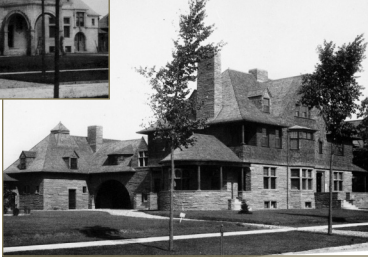


Col. Frank J. Hecker was President and Charles L. Freer Vice President of the Michigan Peninsular Car Company, a railroad freight car manufacturer. Hecker and Freer built their remarkable homes next door to each other in 1890-92. Freer, a world renowned collector of American and Asian Art, founded the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. His aesthetics influenced Col. Hecker, who collected some of the same artists. The American painters Freer favored, such as Dewing and Tryon, are known today as Tonalists, and were strongly influenced by the art of James McNeill Whistler, whose works Freer also avidly collected.



Hecker House  
(c.1892)



Freer House  
(c.1893)

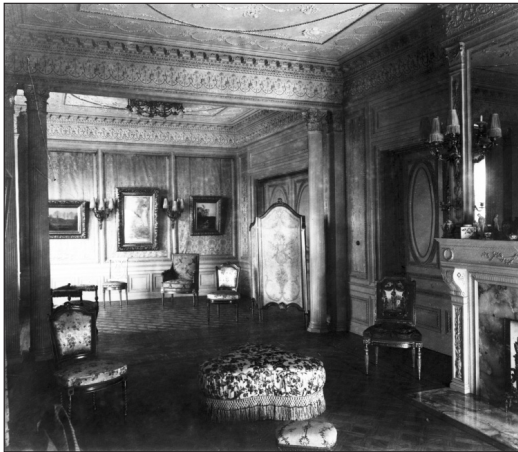


Image courtesy of the Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library

Hecker's music room (above), c.1892, shows three paintings that the Dewing and Tryon commission would replace, and the silk fabric wall coverings that decorated Hecker's home. Completely restored by the law firm of Charfoos and Christensen, the Hecker House was recently acquired by Wayne State University.

## JOIN US!

### FREER HOUSE MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION

The Freer House membership organization works to preserve the shared legacies of the Freer and Hecker Houses as part of Detroit's architectural and artistic heritage.

The organization sponsors public education, tours and fundraising for restoration. Recent accomplishments include reproduction of original paintings for the Freer House interior and a new historically appropriate roof. Future goals include revitalization of the Freer House courtyard garden and restoration of the former Whistler Gallery.

**For membership and more information:**  
313-664-2500 or [william.colburn@wayne.edu](mailto:william.colburn@wayne.edu)

71 East Ferry,  
Detroit Michigan, 48202



### THE FREER HOUSE

MERRILL PALMER  
SKILLMAN INSTITUTE  
for Child & Family Development



WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

[www.mpsi.wayne.edu/freer/index.php](http://www.mpsi.wayne.edu/freer/index.php)

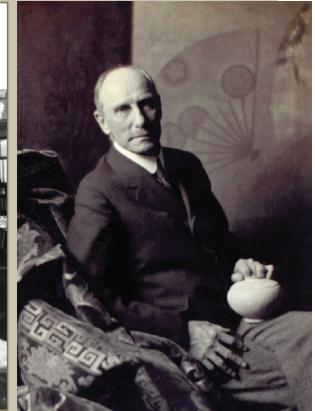


<http://instagram.com/thefreerhouse>

## A Collaboration of Artists and Friends: the Hecker Triptych



Col. Frank J. Hecker (c.1915)

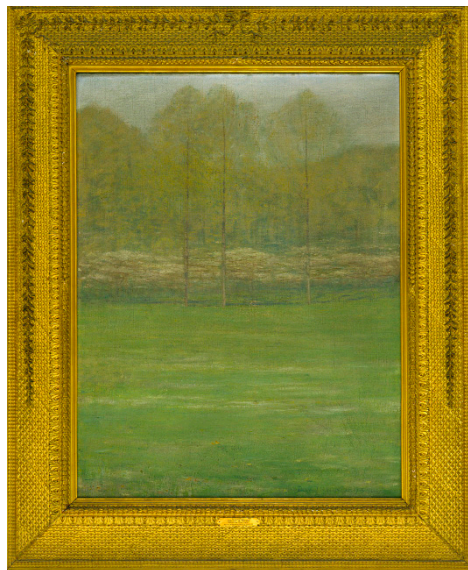


Charles L. Freer (1915)

The triptych commissioned in 1893 by Col. Frank J. Hecker (1846-1927) for his home on Woodward Avenue was the result of Hecker's close friendship with his business partner and next-door neighbor Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919), and the artistic collaboration of painters Thomas W. Dewing and Dwight W. Tryon. Hecker desired paintings similar to works being created by Dewing and Tryon for Freer's home. The result, *Spring, Summer, Autumn* (1893), originally graced the walls of the Hecker's music room and today is a highlight of the DIA's American art collection.

*The Hecker triptych is a new addition to the DIA's Inside/Out program, installed between the Hecker and Freer Houses on E. Ferry, from April through July, 2015.*

## THE HECKER TRIPTYCH AT THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS



### Spring, 1893

Dwight William Tryon (1849-1925)

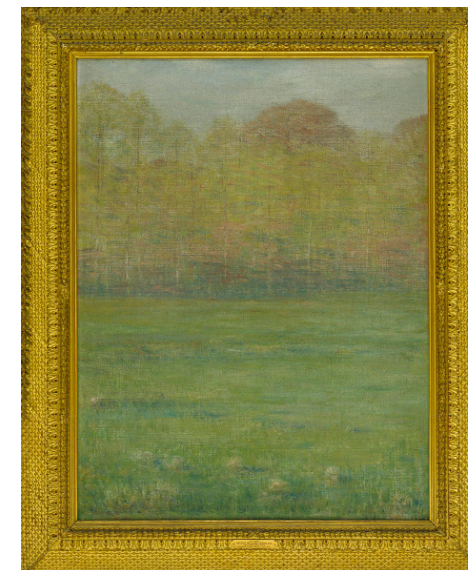
In the early 1890's, industrialist Col. Frank J. Hecker commissioned *Spring*, *Summer* and *Autumn* from the American artists Thomas W. Dewing and Dwight W. Tryon to decorate the music room of his French Chateausque style home on Woodward and E. Ferry Avenue in Detroit. The commission was influenced by his business partner, friend and next door neighbor, Charles L. Freer. A prominent art collector, Freer engaged the same artists to create paintings and decorative treatments for the walls of his Shingle style home next door to Hecker's on E. Ferry. The works by Dewing and Tryon for both houses share similar compositions and seasonal themes.



### Summer, 1893

Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1938)

Thomas W. Dewing's exhalant *Summer* forms the centerpiece of the Hecker triptych. The most emotionally charged painting of the three, *Summer* features ethereal female figures which appear in many of his paintings. Some scholars read Dewing's women as metaphors for concepts like "beauty" or "consciousness." Dewing lived in Cornish, New Hampshire and lush, green scenes like *Summer* show his love of the New England landscape. This evocative work is complemented on either side by the more reserved *Spring* and *Autumn* by Tryon. The original works are mounted in frames designed by noted architect Stanford White.



### Autumn, 1893

Dwight William Tryon (1849-1925)

While painting *Autumn* in 1893, Dwight W. Tryon wrote Charles L. Freer to send a sample of the gold fabric lining the walls of the Hecker's music room. Tryon's goal was to harmonize his paintings with both the interior of the Hecker's home and Thomas Dewing's *Summer*, which was in Tryon's studio as he worked. When the three completed paintings arrived in Detroit, Freer had them installed as a surprise while the Hecker's were away on vacation. Freer congratulated Tryon writing, "When you see them in place you will be perfectly satisfied with the general harmony of the effect." The triptych was bequeathed by Hecker in 1927 to the DIA and is on view in the American Wing.