

*'Legacy of Beauty'
The Frick Collection
1935*

NEW YORK 1995

The Trustees of
The Frick Collection
have the honor to announce
that the Collection
will be opened to the public
on Monday, December sixteenth
nineteen hundred and thirty-five
One East Seventieth Street
New York



Oval Room

Introduction

The opening of The Frick Collection on December 16, 1935, created great excitement in the American press. For years, while his family still lived in the residence, Mr. Frick's treasures had been viewed only by close friends and by others who gained special permission. After Mrs. Frick's death in 1931, the home was converted to a gallery that could accommodate the general public. When the doors opened, the revelation of the full extent of Mr. Frick's beneficence was greeted with astonishment and awe.

The Collection has preserved many cuttings from newspapers and magazines reporting the occasion. It seemed to us fitting to mark the sixtieth anniversary of our opening by printing a booklet reproducing a sampling of excerpts from the contemporary press; they offer a delightful and interesting range of reactions to the event, which bring vividly to life a chapter in the history of the Collection and of American museums. One editorial (from *The New York Times*) is reprinted in full. In addition to portions of these articles, we have included much of the press release from the Collection which explained the ideals and goals of the founder and Trustees. There are also illustrations to show some of the rooms as they appeared when first opened to the public.

We begin four years earlier with the announcement of the bequest in October 1931, exactly one week after Mrs. Frick's death. The article provided a detailed examination of the art in the Collection: four columns of text, with a separate list of all of the paintings left by Henry Clay Frick to the public and the subsequent additions to the Collection by the Trustees since his death in 1919. Some of the very large prices paid by Mr. Frick for paintings

were given accurately in the press at this time and in later years, the most expensive single purchase being that of the portrait of Philip IV by Velázquez (\$400,000). These notable prices are emphasized because alongside the announcement in 1931 is a report on the sale of paintings in the London auction rooms for the preceding year: "It has not been a good year for picture sales.... The highest price paid for a picture was £6,825 given for a charming portrait of a little girl by Romney, who is one of the surest draws in the auction room."

The next significant news reports are from January 1935, when the new building of the Frick Art Reference Library was completed and opened immediately adjacent to the Collection. It housed thirteen floors of book and photograph stacks. At that time it was announced in the press that the Library was connected to the Frick mansion, "which contains the famous \$50,000,000 Frick collection of paintings and which, in accordance with the will of the late owner, probably will be opened to the public next summer." Summer turned into fall, and it was nearly winter before the Collection was finally ready for visitors.

Then in December the papers devoted numerous pages, sometimes four or five in one issue, to descriptions of the Collection room by room. The *New York Herald Tribune* listed the names of all of the 700 persons invited to the preview and reception. Among many who were celebrated in the social and political worlds — including the Chief Justice and the Mayor — were some of the best-known industrialists, financiers, collectors, dealers, artists, and art collectors. There were Col. and Mrs. Lindbergh, as well as



Library

members of the Astor, Bache, Carnegie, Mellon, Rockefeller, Straus, Sulzberger, Vanderbilt, and Warburg families. In the first two weeks after the preview, there were more than 3,700 visitors to the Collection. In the first five months the average was 720 persons a day. Total attendance for the year ended December 15, 1936, was 131,742; that was for six days a week for eleven months (the Collection was closed in August). The hours were from ten to four o'clock; after nine months, the Collection was opened on Sunday afternoons and closed on Mondays and the time extended each day by an hour. Tickets, which were first required to control the large numbers expected as visitors, were soon eliminated, and many of the guide-ropes, which initially created passageways through all the rooms, were done away with or lowered.

The Director and Trustees were extremely sensitive to the criticisms concerning such measures taken as precautions in the early months. As soon as attendance dropped, many changes were made, not only concerning the opening hours and the restrictive controls of the visitors between the guide-ropes; in addition, the double hanging of paintings in the large galleries was eliminated, inadequate lighting on some of the pictures and sculpture was improved, some of the relatively modern furniture which crowded a few of the rooms was removed, more seats for resting were provided, and there was further labeling. A handbook of the entire collection, very much needed, was being prepared. Throughout the first years, month after month saw improvements in viewing the works of art.

There was actually little criticism, however, when the museum first opened. Lewis Mumford writing in *The New Yorker* was a

notable objector: he deplored showing the paintings in the environment of a home and wished that the Trustees would banish the "sculptural bric-a-brac" to the cellar. His was certainly a minority opinion. There also was a remarkable lack of critical remarks of a social or political nature considering that 1935 was the year that the Social Security and Work Projects Administration programs were initiated in response to the Depression. Many critics regarded the new museum as a "People's Museum"; also many said that the quality of its collections was "unsurpassed anywhere." They believed that the opening was of major importance to the art world in every land and a milestone in the history of the city. It was a "legacy of beauty"; "here has been captured the very essence of beauty," one of the more florid authors wrote, "the spirit itself of fine and lovely things."

Charles Ryskamp
Director

This publication is above all indebted to the investigation of Bernice Davidson, Research Curator of The Frick Collection. It has also profited greatly from the comment of Joseph Focarino, Editor for the Collection. Susan Galassi, Assistant Curator, helped us at every turn. Don Swanson, of the Frick Art Reference Library, has offered invaluable support. The design is the work of Ron Gordon of the Oliphant Press.



Fragonard Room

from *The Art News*, October 10, 1931

Masterpieces of Frick Collection Willed to City

Under the terms of the will of the late Henry Clay Frick, who died in 1919, New York City will acquire what is probably the finest collection of its kind in the world. For, with the death of Mrs. Frick at Pride's Crossing on October 3, the famous Frick mansion and its treasures become public property under the administration of a corporation endowed by the testator with \$15,000,000. It is not yet possible to ascertain definitely how soon the house will be opened as a museum, but when this occurs the Frick collection should be to New York what the Wallace Collection has long been to London.

Over a considerable period of years the Frick mansion and its contents have remained more or less inaccessible to all save a small circle of friends and experts and it was only on very rare occasions that single works were loaned for benefit exhibitions in New York. The remarkable nature of the collection, is however, generally known. In artistic importance and scope the... gallery, numbering about one hundred and forty examples, is by general consensus of opinion of outstanding significance. Almost every canvas comes from some famous collection or is in itself historic....

from the *New York Herald Tribune*,
January 6, 1935

Mr. Frick's collection of early bronzes and enamels is likewise considered by connoisseurs to outrank any other in this country. Especially notable are the famous Limoges enamels and several rare bronzes and triptychs from the Morgan collection which are said to have cost their purchaser in the neighborhood of \$1,500,000. The Renaissance bronze group is also exceptionally fine. Among the sculptures are to be found important works by Clodion, Falconet, Houdon, Pajou, Pollaiuolo and Sansovino....

Frick Library of Art Opens in Its New Home

...Miss Helen Clay Frick, daughter of the once prominent coke and steel operator, is director of the library and is responsible for its collection of more than 200,000 photographic reproductions of the masterpieces of sculptors and painters, both past and contemporary, in Europe and America.

Second to Witt Collection

Miss Frick has succeeded in building up the institution to a point wherein, in number of items, it

ranks second only to the collection of Sir Robert Witt, in London, while it outdoes his display in the amount of information gathered about and appended to each picture.

The Frick Art Reference Library was organized by Miss Frick in 1920, a year after her father died leaving his rare art collection and home to the public with the stipulation in his will that it be held for the personal enjoyment of his wife during her lifetime. Mrs. Frick died in 1931 and since then alterations have been started to convert the mansion into a suitable public gallery for the pictures....

Has Vast Photographic Resources

The library...has vast photographic resources.... The work of this department has proved particularly valuable to genealogists because of its exhaustive collection of pictures of early American families. Recently one of the institution's constantly traveling photographers obtained 2,000 family portraits on one trip to Baltimore.

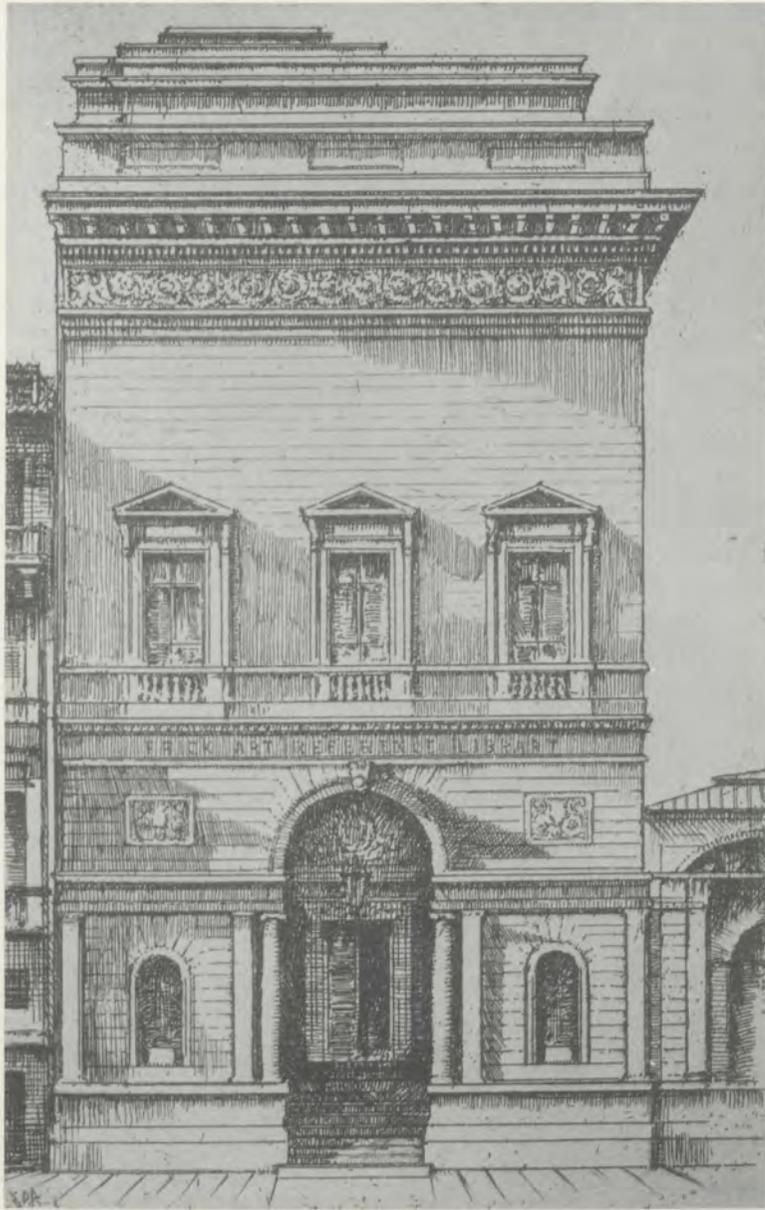
The Frick collection was scheduled to be opened to the public last year, but shifts in the rock formation below it have greatly delayed the work of converting the mansion into an art gallery... Blasting, of course, is impossible because of the fragile collection stored in the building's vault, with the result that all foundation excavation has had to be done by hand.

from *The Art News*, January 12, 1935

New Frick Reference Library Is Ideally Equipped for Art Research

The long-anticipated public opening of the Frick Art Reference Library, which will take place on January 14, is an event of no small importance to the art world in general and to the scholar in particular. With the completion of the new \$850,000 French Renaissance building, equipped with every modern facility and designed for the utmost usefulness, the wealth of material in the library's collections now becomes available to an even wider public than it has formerly served. Students who have hitherto used the library will be admitted to the building without further preliminaries and admission cards will be issued to new students presenting suitable references....

The Indiana limestone structure, with a frontage of fifty feet and a depth of 150, was designed by John Russell Pope to harmonize with the former Henry Clay Frick mansion, with which it will ultimately be connected with a wing, when the residence is opened as a museum....



Etching of the Frick Art Reference Library by Ernest P. Roth, 1934

from the *New York Herald Tribune*,
January 6, 1935

from *Time*, January 21, 1935

from *The New York Times*, December 8, 1935

The Documentation of the Masterpieces of the World

By Royal Cortissoz

The Purpose of the
Frick Art Reference Library

The first week of the new year is most auspiciously marked by the opening of the new building of the Frick Art Reference Library at 10 East Seventy-first Street. I speak with peculiar feeling on this subject, for I have been for many years a collector of books and photographs illustrating the history of art and I know what it means to grapple with, for example, thousands of reproductions. Segregate them as you may, they still fall upon moments of disorder, they overflow their cabinets and altogether cause trouble. At the Frick one realizes as in a dream the fulfillment of one's dearest wish. In the beautiful new building designed by John Russell Pope Miss Frick has organized her material in consummate fashion....

Picture Library

....Many years ago Miss Helen Frick began to study art seriously so that she could better appreciate the things her father's dealers were buying for him. She acquired an extensive collection of art books, was glad to let fellow students use them. The Frick art library grew and grew. A librarian had to be hired, then assistants; finally a house was built to hold it all. The Frick Art Reference Library, like Sir Robert Witt's in London, chose to specialize in photographs of works of art. It did not content itself with buying prints of pictures in museums, private collections and dealer galleries. Instead, it put special photographers under contract in France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.S., sent them to obscure collections, little-known churches, private houses....

At its opening bang-haired Royal Cortissoz, most learned of Manhattan's art critics, sat himself down to test the library's resources. Shooting his cuffs, he called for material on Botticelli's *Abundance* in the British Museum and the portrait of Alessandro del Borro in Berlin. The telautograph squiggled and in a few minutes stack girls emerged with two folders. Critic Cortissoz' little goatee waggled with pleasure to find attached to an excellent photograph of the Botticelli drawing the date, a list of all the reproductions that have ever been published, all previous owners, all exhibitions [and] passages from text books....

Frick Art Will Go to Public Dec. 16

Steel Master's Collection
to Be Turned Over to the City
As People's Museum.

Expansion Is Complete

Fifth Avenue Home
With Priceless Treasures
Will Be Shown at
Reception Wednesday.

The superb art collection of Henry Clay Frick is about to be turned over to the public to whom the steel and coke pioneer willed it sixteen years ago.

Long awaited as of major importance in the world of esthetic creation as well as in the history of the city, the event will take place on Monday, Dec. 16, following a formal reception next Wednesday afternoon, at which city officials, museum executives, critical authorities and leading artists will be present. Five days later the celebrated mansion on Fifth Avenue between Seventieth and Seventy-first Streets will become in fact the museum its owner intended it to be.

Mr. Frick died on Dec. 2, 1919. The same day Elbert H. Gary, a long-standing friend of the industrialist, announced that the treasures which

specialists considered to comprise an institution in themselves would eventually become city property. The filing of the will a few days later confirmed this announcement....

It will be difficult for visitors to the new institution...to forget that the man who assembled the paintings was himself a figure of tremendous proportions in the industrial development of this country. Henry Clay Frick, who did not believe in compromise, who did things on a grand scale and built up a fortune of scores of millions, was certainly one of the most fabulous capitalists produced in America. The collection he has bequeathed to the City of New York seems certain to be of the same stature.

Press Release

The Frick Collection, including the works of art and residence at 1 East 70th Street of the late Henry Clay Frick, will open officially this afternoon with a reception between 4 and 7 o'clock to state and city officials, trustees of museums, museum directors and others especially interested in art, as well as people prominent in the life of the city. During the remainder of the week, final details in the organization of the Collection will be completed and on Monday morning, December 16 at 10 o'clock the Collection will be open to the public in accordance with the provisions of

Mr. Frick's will.

On his death in 1919 Mr. Frick bequeathed his great art collection and his residence on Fifth Avenue as The Frick Collection "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a gallery of art," of "encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts, and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects...to the end that the same shall be a public gallery of art to which the entire public shall forever have access, subject only to reasonable regulations," and subject to use by Mrs. Frick during her lifetime.

This collection is recognized as one of the world's great treasuries of art. It was assembled by Mr. Frick not only as an art lover himself but for use as part of his home and practically every piece of it fitted into his conception of that home. It was his desire, too, that that conception be carried out in bequeathing the Collection to the public.

In carrying out the provisions of Mr. Frick's will, the Trustees have maintained the residential character of the building. In order, however, to accommodate as many persons as possible at one time in a residential building of limited capacity, the area for the display of the objects of art has been more than doubled by new construction undertaken since the death of Mrs. Frick in 1931. Plans for the issuance of tickets of admission have been devised which the Trustees believe will enable the founder's will to be fulfilled for the benefit, as he wished, of "the entire public."

These tickets will be issued without charge on

week days between 10 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon at the ticket office of the Collection and will specify the hour and day when the holder may visit the Collection.

In order that as many people as possible may view the Collection, visitors will be required to follow only the indicated direction of circulation which will be marked by ropes on standards.

The Trustees hope by these arrangements to accommodate a maximum number of visitors and at the same time allow each one a sufficient time to examine the works of art, as well as prevent the obstruction of view which would necessarily accompany admission of large crowds....

General Information

The Bequest

Under the will of Henry Clay Frick, who died in New York on December 2, 1919, his residence on Fifth Avenue between 70th and 71st Streets and "all the books, pictures, ... porcelains, enamels, bronzes, statuary, rugs, tapestries,...antique or artistic furniture and furnishings" were bequeathed to a Board of Trustees....

The will also established an endowment fund for the maintenance, guarding, and eventual enlargement of the house and the collection, under the direction of the Trustees. The will further provided that Mrs. Frick should enjoy the use

of the house and its contents, if used by her as one of her residences.

The Trustees

The Trustees named by Mr. Frick were his wife, the late Mrs. Henry Clay Frick; his daughter, Miss Helen C. Frick; his son, Childs Frick; George F. Baker, Jr., John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Horace Havemeyer, the late J. Horace Harding, the late Walker D. Hines, the late Lewis Cass Ledyard.

As at present constituted the Board consists of Childs Frick, President; Andrew W. Mellon, Vice President; George F. Baker, Jr., Treasurer; Helen C. Frick, Secretary; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Horace Havemeyer, Junius S. Morgan and Maitland Griggs.

In 1920 the Trustees formed the corporation provided for by the will and became the owners of the Collection, the building and the fund. Mrs. Frick continued to occupy the building during her lifetime.

Meanwhile, to round out her father's intentions, Miss Frick at her own expense organized in 1921 the Frick Art Reference Library, which today ranks as one of the greatest institutions of its kind. In 1924 the Trustees joined her in erecting for it, on an unused site belonging to the Collection, at Nos. 6 and 8 East 71st Street, a building contiguous to the Frick residence....

Conception Adopted

Making the Frick Collection available to the public implied more than merely opening the doors and treating the building and its furnishings as a museum. The Collection does not aim at competing with vast institutions that attempt to illustrate the art of every country and period. The house was primarily a home. From the beginning it was seen that to apply to it a technique that would necessitate exhibiting its works of art in surroundings stripped of their individuality and furnishings would be to alter irreparably its meaning and appeal. Every epoch, in its more active and personal aspects, tends to reuse the art of the past in new combinations as part of a living whole.

The Trustees foresaw in the Frick Collection an example of American domestic architecture and life in the early 20th century, comparable to the houses of the 18th and early 19th centuries which are now being preserved as historical monuments. The mansion itself, designed in 1913 by Carrere and Hastings, was a work of art of its period. In other words, there was an historical factor in the house and in the way in which its works of art were arranged that surpassed in interest any possible methodical or chronological grouping of the paintings and sculpture.

Consequently, in planning to open the Collection to the public, the Trustees felt that its residential character should be maintained, and that only such alterations should be made as might be

counseled by administrative necessities or that would make possible and easy a one-way circulation of a large number of visitors.

New Construction

....It was desired that... [any additions to the] architecture should be made consonant with that of the old house, yet given an aesthetic appeal of its own.

On the remaining north end of the old carriage court and on the site of the original Frick Art Reference Library, an Oval Room, a new East Gallery and a small auditorium were projected. The last, designed for lectures to be given by the Collection, was to be so located that, without disturbing visitors to the Collection, it might also be used for lectures given by the Art Reference Library. These new galleries and lecture hall it was planned to make distinctive in their decoration but not without a feeling of harmony with the old house....

Of the minor rooms on the main floor only one was sacrificed. Another was converted into a small gallery, while a third was reconstructed to contain the Boucher panels painted for Madame de Pompadour's boudoir in her chateau at Crecy, transferred from its former location on the second floor....

It was found necessary, without damaging or defacing the original house, to install a complete air-conditioning system, in which was also included all the new construction—Oval Room,

East Gallery, Lecture Room, and Court. The air currents, of a fixed temperature and relative humidity, are directed so as to preserve the paintings and furniture.

Meanwhile the old library building, no longer large enough to house the books and photographs it had acquired, had to be replaced by a new building, also completely air-conditioned, on a site acquired by the Trustees for the purpose at Nos. 10 and 12 East 71st Street, immediately adjoining the Collection building....

Building Procedure

From the outset it was realized that, while such extensive operations were in progress, the paintings, enamels, and other valuable objects which the house contained could not be left in place. The Trustees accordingly decided to construct at once, in the basement of the house, a fireproof, water-proof, burglar-proof, air-conditioned vault, large enough to contain the most precious and delicate objects in order to protect them from deterioration or damage while construction was going on in close proximity....

Home to Serve as a Gallery For Collection

By William Engle

In the great stone mansion at 1 East 70th St. one of the world's great art collections—paintings, enamels, sculpture—was revealed and what Henry Clay Frick asked before he died on December 2, 1919, was granted.

It is the Frick collection, shown this afternoon to State and city officials, museum trustees and artists....

It is endowed. So is the building. Old, bewhiskered, dreaming Henry Frick, after he piled up a mighty fortune as a steelmaker who would not take back talk even from Andrew Carnegie, said in his will that he wanted that old home of his and those paintings of the masters to keep alive in America an appreciation of what a God-given mind can do with a brush or a chisel.

Unlike Other Galleries.

He did not have the chance when he was young to see what he has left for the rest of us to see. He had holes in his shoes and he worked when others were going to high school dances.

His gallery of art, he said, was to be established "to the end that the same shall be a public gallery of art to which the entire public shall forever have access."

But the place does not seem to be an art gallery. It is unlike any other art gallery anywhere. It is Mr. Frick's old homestead, and that is what he wanted it to be as long as marble and canvas last.

Throughout his lifetime he got together the treasures that catch the light from the tall windows today, and almost every piece that he took into the place was chosen for a specific nook or patch of wall; he wanted that kind of art gallery to stay on after he was gone. And here it is today, something to take away the breath of anyone who likes the majestic work of the dreamers of the ages.

Bequeathed to Trustees.

The whole thing no longer is essentially a part of Mr. Frick. The will made it something for every one. It bequeathed "all the books, pictures, porcelains, enamels, bronzes, statuary, rugs, tapestry, antique and artistic furniture" to a board of trustees, and it instructed the board to get the works ready for the public. Now it is ready.

Mr. Frick's Monument

It is remembered that Mr. Henry Frick, in showing a friend his art collection, expressed the wish that it should be his monument. A more impressive monument to that which dominated all of Mr. Frick's other interests, activities and aspirations could hardly be found. It was to be built in the opportunity which he wished to give the American people of seeing the famous paintings and other works of art of his choice without crossing the ocean.

An American traveler in Ireland in the "Black and Tan" period, pausing for tea at an inn in County Galway, found a portrait of Mr. Frick in the dining room. The selection may have been prompted by the fact that he was a notably handsome man of distinguished appearance and that his portrait would adorn any room in which it was placed. But he was not the type to become a popular idol. He was an innately modest man who shunned public attention. The distinction which he thought to deserve was that of giving back to the public, out of the smoke of flaming ovens whose fires he lighted for the age of steel, something as near the infinite as finite hands can fashion.

The collection, with an appropriate setting for every painting or vase or bit of sculpture, was

described in fullest detail in yesterday's Times. Every reader should put the page aside in preparation for a visit to this new possession into which the American people, and especially the people of New York, have come, after the years of the sister arts' preparation for its perfect presentation, in background, in lighting, in arrangement. The house with all its art is something more than a museum. It is a potential addition to the home of every person, whether in tenement, apartment or mansion, who becomes intimately acquainted with what it holds of beauty—away from all the ugliness in the world. The monument is not the collection; it is the love of the best things which the collection stirs in all who take the time to know it thoroughly. Provision has been made to give every one who wishes it this opportunity.

Frick Museum Finally Opened to the Public

More than four years after it was supposed to be turned over to the public the Frick art collection was opened today—to the press at noon and to an extensive gathering of private guests later in the afternoon. Visitors, however, found the delay

amply accounted for. The entire interior of the residence on Fifth Avenue, between Seventieth and Seventy-first streets, has been remodeled, redecorated in lavish style and converted into a fitting setting for the display of the paintings and other objects of art housed there....

Remodeling is Effective.

Too much credit can hardly be given to Frederick Mortimer Clapp, organizing director, for the manner in which he has remodeled the interior to provide for the effective exhibition of the objects displayed. The result is far removed in its quiet and reserved richness from the bleak atmosphere of the usual art gallery. One has rather the feeling of entering some private palace—as indeed this is—designed for the eyes of a favored few only. The color scheme of the various walls has been subtly varied to afford the best possible background for the paintings. It runs through various grays, ranging from subdued blue-greens, to ashes-of-roses linked by harmonious intermediate tints. The rich stuffs used take on under varying lights, a silver sheen that weaves the whole into a quiet harmony that is particularly appealing. The long vista from the Fifth Avenue end of the old art gallery down through the intervening rooms to the east wall, where the portrait of Mme. d'Haussonville by Ingres is enthroned in the center, is most effective and emphasizes the...care...taken to present the collection as a harmonious whole.

from the *New York Herald Tribune*,
December 12, 1935

Changes and Contrasts.

The porte-cochere on the Seventieth street side of the building has been converted into a reception room. Here the visitor to the gallery will enter. The old carriage court beyond, formerly uncovered, has been housed over and turned into an interior court with pool and fountain bordered with formal greenery....

Frick Gallery of Art Opens With 700 at its Preview

Vast Treasure, Centered On
136 Master Paintings,
Becomes Accessible To Public Monday

Donor's Children Receive the Guests

The Frick collection, one of the world's great treasure houses of art, opened its doors yesterday for the first time. Seven hundred persons visited the great house at Fifth Avenue and Seventieth Street for the private view....

from the *New York World-Telegram*,
December 12, 1935

Mellon Visits Museum

To see the collection, which has been almost hermetically sealed since Mr. Frick's death, while Mrs. Frick occupied the house, and while it was being altered and enlarged, came an extraordinary group. Andrew W. Mellon, the associate of Mr. Frick's youth, who began his even more remarkable art collection at the suggestion of his friend, was there with his daughter, Mrs. David K.E. Bruce. John D. Rockefeller jr., co-trustee of the collection with Mr. Mellon, was also there with several members of his family.

Then there were figures from the world of art, like Herbert E. Winlock, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and William Zorach, the sculptor. Many older men and women who had known Mr. and Mrs. Frick were present, to be received by Miss Helen C. Frick and Childs Frick, children of the gallery's founder....

THE FRICK COLLECTION

1 East 70th Street, New York

LECTURE TICKET

Carnegies at Preview of Frick Mansion Art

They Join the Throng
of Sable-Wrapped Dowagers
in Viewing Treasures Left to City.

By Helen Worden.

Andrew Carnegie's widow and daughter were among those invited to the preview yesterday of the art collection left to New York by his lifelong enemy, Henry Clay Frick.

Mrs. Carnegie and Mrs. Roswell Miller good-naturedly buried the hatchet and joined the throng of sable-wrapped dowagers who climbed the red velvet-carpeted, white marble steps of the Frick mansion at 1 E. 70th St.

Police Headquarters was also well represented. I went in with the bomb squad. The Holmes Protection Agency had fifty private detectives guarding special entrances.

The soiree was the last social fling of the Frick family in the mansion built by steel millions. Helen Frick and her brother, Childs Frick, trustees of the art collection left to the city by their father, received the guests.

Fifth Avenue Home Remodeled to Display Great Collection

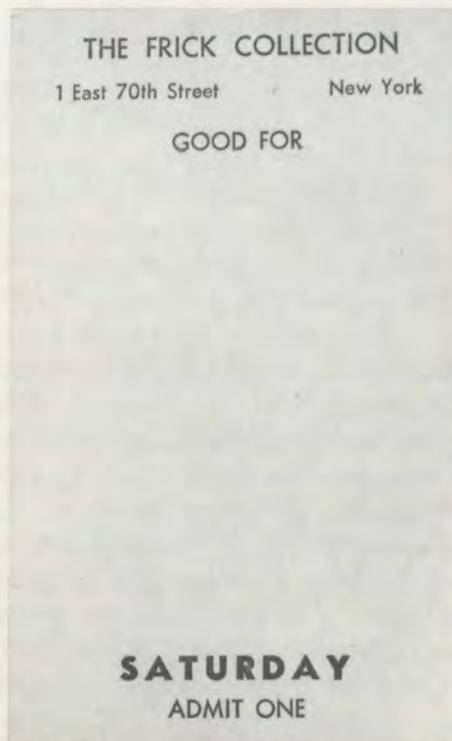
By Dr. Alfred M. Frankfurter

...Today...the Frick Collection far transcends its purely memorial function. Its opening is one of the most important events in the history of American collecting and appreciation of art—not only because it makes available to scholars as well as to the public a group of paintings and objects of a standard of quality unsurpassed anywhere and yet hitherto almost impossible of access, but also because it marks for New York the first occasion upon which one of its great private collections, intact and in its original surroundings, has become public property. In America, as a matter of fact, only the Gardner Collection at Boston and the Johnson at Philadelphia have, in a less grand manner, antedated the Frick Collection as a cisatlantic parallel to the Wallace, the Jacquemart-André, the Horne and the Liechtenstein houses in London, Paris, Florence and Vienna.

That New York now also will possess a, so to speak, private museum is an interesting commentary upon the maturity of collecting in this coun-

try. And, with such a beginning, one may safely hope that there will, one day, be other collections, like the Frick, left to the public amid surroundings personal to their originators; there are several such in New York which are not difficult to imagine as handsome companions to the great house at Fifth Avenue and Seventieth Street.

It is good, I think, that there should be such institutions in a huge city like New York—smaller



art centers beside the great, impressive bulk of a museum like the Metropolitan. For they seem to me far to outweigh in the intimacy and charm and personal quality which are their great advantages, the defect of decentralization which is so often charged against them. Predicated this is, of course, on a standard of excellence attained by the Frick and perhaps three or four other collections in New York City...

Frick Art Museum Opened to Public

Tickets Are Required

But They Are Given Out Free—
Dr. Clapp, Director, Pleased
With Working of Plans.

At 10 o'clock yesterday morning the doors of the Frick Art Collection were opened at 1 East Seventieth Street, and the public had its first opportunity to see the magnificent legacy it received from Henry Clay Frick, coke and steel pioneer....

At the end of the day Dr. Frederick Mortimer Clapp, organizing director of the collection, was thoroughly satisfied with the operation of the museum.

from the *New York Post*, December 16, 1935

from the *New York World-Telegram*,
December 14, 1935

Wants Collection to Be Enjoyed.

“We are interested in having the largest number of people see the collection under conditions which will enable them to see it with greatest enjoyment,” he explained.

It appeared that about 750 persons a day would be the right number. The visitors yesterday gave every evidence of enjoyment, and the rooms were never uncomfortably crowded.

Although a few persons breezed rapidly along the prescribed route which has been arranged through the house, the majority walked through slowly, studying individually the great paintings which Mr. Frick acquired to adorn his home.

It was calculated in advance that the average visitor would wish to spend about an hour and a half seeing the collection. This proved an accurate forecast. Those who wished to stay somewhat longer were not disturbed, and visitors found that an air of quiet hospitality pervaded the house....

Art Lovers Flock to See Treasures at Frick Museum

John D. Jr. and Former Boxing
Champ Among First Ten to Enter

The late Henry Clay Frick’s huge mansion on Fifth Avenue, between East Seventieth and Seventy-first Streets, was thrown open to the public as an art museum today.

Jack Britton, former welterweight boxing champion, and John D. Rockefeller Jr. were among the first ten to enter. Thirty persons had stood in line for the free admission tickets from 9:30 until the opening at 10 A. M. More than 300 had passed through the public galleries before the noon hour.

The first person to enter, as well as the first in line, was Gladys Collins, a young art student, who lives at 135 East Sixty-third Street. She had rushed home from England to be present at the opening. This morning she arrived breathless at 9:30 o’clock, having, she assured reporters, run all the way from home.

Mr. Britton’s cauliflowered right ear identified him as the second in line. He is something of an expert in visiting public galleries by now and was tremendously impressed.

“I turned from punching to painting some time ago,” he explained. Then, “I was an artist in my own line—I used to paint eyes,” he grinned.

But it wasn’t publicity, it was a genuine interest in art that drew Mr. Britton from his training gymnasium in Yonkers to the Frick Museum....

Each Picture Hung to Best Advantage

By Emily Genauer

The magnificent art collection acquired by the late Henry Clay Frick, Pittsburgh steel magnate, before he died in 1919 and bequeathed by him to a board of trustees for the purpose of “establishing and maintaining a gallery of art...to which the entire public shall forever have access” will be opened to that public on Monday....

Experts Stunned at Preview.

There was a preview of the collection on Wednesday afternoon—and hundreds of art experts and collectors, familiar with the fine pictures of the world, were stunned by the experience.

In the first place, there is nothing here of the arid, barren frigidity of so many art museums.

from *The New York Times*. December 12, 1935

Instead of being hung on endless, cold, stone walls, with perhaps a stone bench fifty feet away where one may rest and meditate, each picture is hung to fit in best with its surroundings to catch the light from the windows properly, to harmonize with its neighbors from the point of view of color, to go with furniture and rugs and porcelains—to make, in short, a home. This, you may say, is taking one's Rembrandts and El Grecos too lightly. Not really. Each picture stands out like a perfect jewel in a marvelous diadem, enhanced alike by setting and surrounding jewels....

Frick Art Exhibition Reveals a Rich Pageant of Paintings

By Edward Alden Jewell

While wealth is a prime requisite to the building of a great art collection, it is by no means the only one.

Paintings such as the world-famous self-portrait by Rembrandt, the "Philip IV of Spain" by Velasquez, the Duccio "Temptation" (originally in the glorious zebra-striped cathedral at Siena), the Bellini "St. Francis in Ecstasy" and Titian's amaz-

ing portrait of Aretino, to mention but a few of the most important works in the Frick collection; the peculiarly splendid group of sixteenth century Limoges; the rare porcelains and Renaissance bronzes—the process of acquiring these must presuppose possession of vast material means.

However, an assemblage of art worth journeying far to see cannot be created through the instrumentality alone of funds available for a purchase. Taste and knowledge, a genuine love of art—these constitute considerations of the utmost importance. And one realizes at a glance that they have played their indispensable role in the forming of a collection such as that of the late Henry Clay Frick, which, housed in its sumptuous palace on Fifth Avenue, opened with an official reception yesterday afternoon and may be visited by the public beginning next Monday.

This splendid aggregation does not exemplify the preference of a specialist who concentrated all his energies upon one school or period or type of art. Without being aimlessly indiscriminate, it argues an interest on the part of the collector sufficiently catholic to embrace Italian primitives; the Renaissance; Dutch, French and English painting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, together with diverse yet always characteristic products of the century just preceding our own....

As for the Frick collection considered in its entirety, it cannot, we may be quite certain, turn any one away empty-handed. And thanks to it

from the *New York Herald Tribune*,
December 15, 1935

many of us are likely to find our horizons enkindlingly widened.

The Late H.C. Frick as an Art Collector

By Royal Cortissoz

There is an old story about Mr. Frick which is apposite today. It relates to his acquisition of one of the greatest pictures in his collection, "The Polish Rider" of Rembrandt. From Roger Fry he learned of its existence, hidden away in the Galician castle of Count Tarnowski. After making a few inquiries Mr. Frick himself set negotiations for it in motion and bought it "off his own bat." It was the coup of a true collector. He would listen to advice but he knew what he liked and wanted. Legend has it that he bought the Fragonard room on a decision that it took him only an instant to make. But it does not require legend to give confirmation to his flair. That is provided in the superlative quality of his works of art. There was a time, long ago, when, passing through the usual novitiate of an American connoisseur, he was content with a Martin Rico or a Ziem. That phase, however, soon passed. He seems to have escaped altogether the banalities of the Paris Salon and to

have gone on, at a stride, to the Barbizon school and the Old Masters. Interesting light is thrown on this subject by dates in the catalogue. The beautiful Millet, "Woman Sewing by Lamplight," was bought in 1906. So was the Ilchester Rembrandt, one of the noblest things in all portraiture. Portraiture, I may note in passing, was his special predilection. It crops out in virtually all the schools represented in the collection. There are some religious subjects and there are many landscapes, but the portraits outnumber them.

As for the schools, Mr. Frick was, like most collectors, a wide-ranging eclectic. There are Italian, Dutch, Spanish, French, British and American paintings in the collection. Its nearest analogies are the Wallace collection in London and the Gardner collection in Boston, inasmuch as these also present works of art assembled in a private mansion, but beyond this the analogy breaks down. The pictures in the Wallace, far more numerous, are predominantly French. Fenway Court, while containing such salient pieces as the Chigi Botticelli, the "Europa" of Titian, and the two Raphaels, is not so rich as the Frick in major masterpieces. In what, then, does the distinction of the Frick consist? In its persistently high quality, marked every once in so often by some canvas of unique splendor. I need only mention at random the two Rembrandts already cited, the Velasquez "Philip IV," the Titian "Aretino," the Bellini "St. Francis," Vermeer's "Mistress and Maid Servant," Gainsborough's landscape with

figures, "The Mall," and the "Comtesse d'Haussonville" of Ingres. These glorious things would by themselves furnish forth a museum—and there are more. This is truly a cosmos of great works of art, and Mr. Frick's dream of bequeathing it to the public, filled not only with pictures but with sculptures, enamels, porcelains and other treasures, has been beautifully fulfilled. Installed in a stately yet intimate and friendly atmosphere, in a house which Mr. Pope has enlarged without depriving it of its essential character, the collection stands out as a landmark in the history of art in America....

Fifth Avenue's New Museum

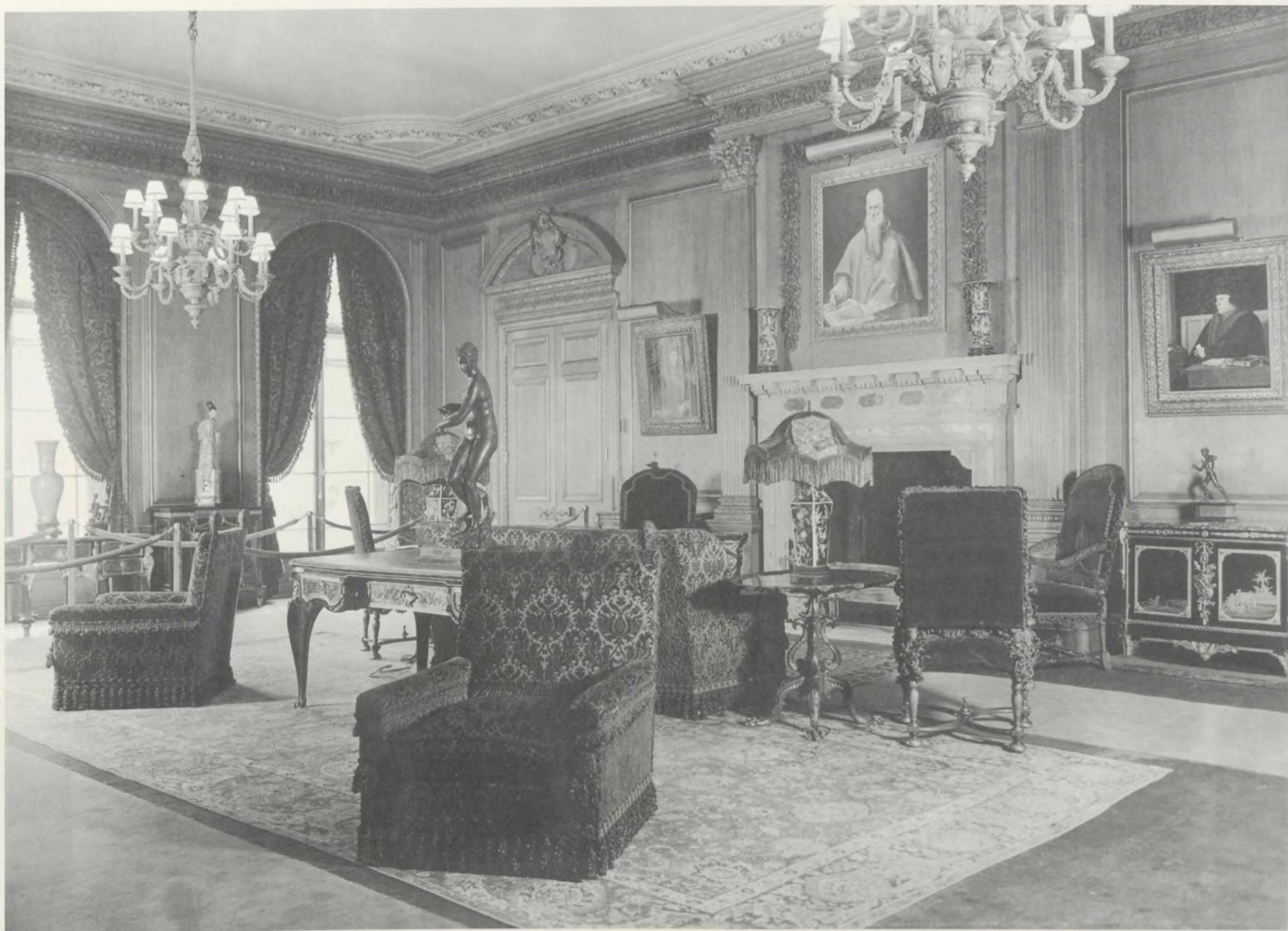
[By Lewis Mumford]

Thanks and rebellion contended for a place in my heart as I went through the newly opened Frick museum, and I am afraid that my baser feelings have won out. For the moment, I should like to look our new gift horse impolitely in the mouth, and not merely bite the hand that feeds us but take a nip or two at the ankles for good measure....

No doubt the barriers protect the carved chests, the Renaissance chairs, and the sculptural bric-a-brac from the prying hands of the curious, but

unfortunately they completely sacrifice the paintings to these very minor works of art....

Mischief like the misconceived administrative regulations can easily be repaired, even if this involves putting the bric-a-brac down in the cellar. But what shall one say of the general scheme of converting a private mansion into a public museum, and making the new galleries conform, in their general design and fulsome decorative background, to the rest of the house? The latter step, it seems to me, merely doubled the original error. A historical collection of paintings represents fifty different modes of life and physical settings; and the best background for the paintings and sculpture of the past is no background at all—the bare walls of a modern building, such as Barnard provided in the original Cloisters. While the scale of the Frick museum is fine, the decorative scheme—except in the Fragonard and Boucher rooms, where the rooms themselves are the frame—is a nuisance. The paintings are lost in the background. That may have satisfied the taste of Renaissance princes, or even that of American millionaires during the first part of the present century, but it no longer meets today's standard of presentation.



Living Hall

from the Washington, D.C., *Sunday Star*,
January 5, 1936

Legacy of Beauty Left by Frick Spread Before World

By Lucy Salamanca

Well-known novelist and short story writer.

...Surely in all the annals of art there is no museum comparable to this! There are vaster halls and more architecturally overwhelming corridors of art, but here has been captured the very essence of beauty, the spirit itself of fine and lovely things. "Four centuries look down on you," Napoleon told his army before the Sphinx; here all time breathes along brocaded walls....

©1995 by The Frick Collection

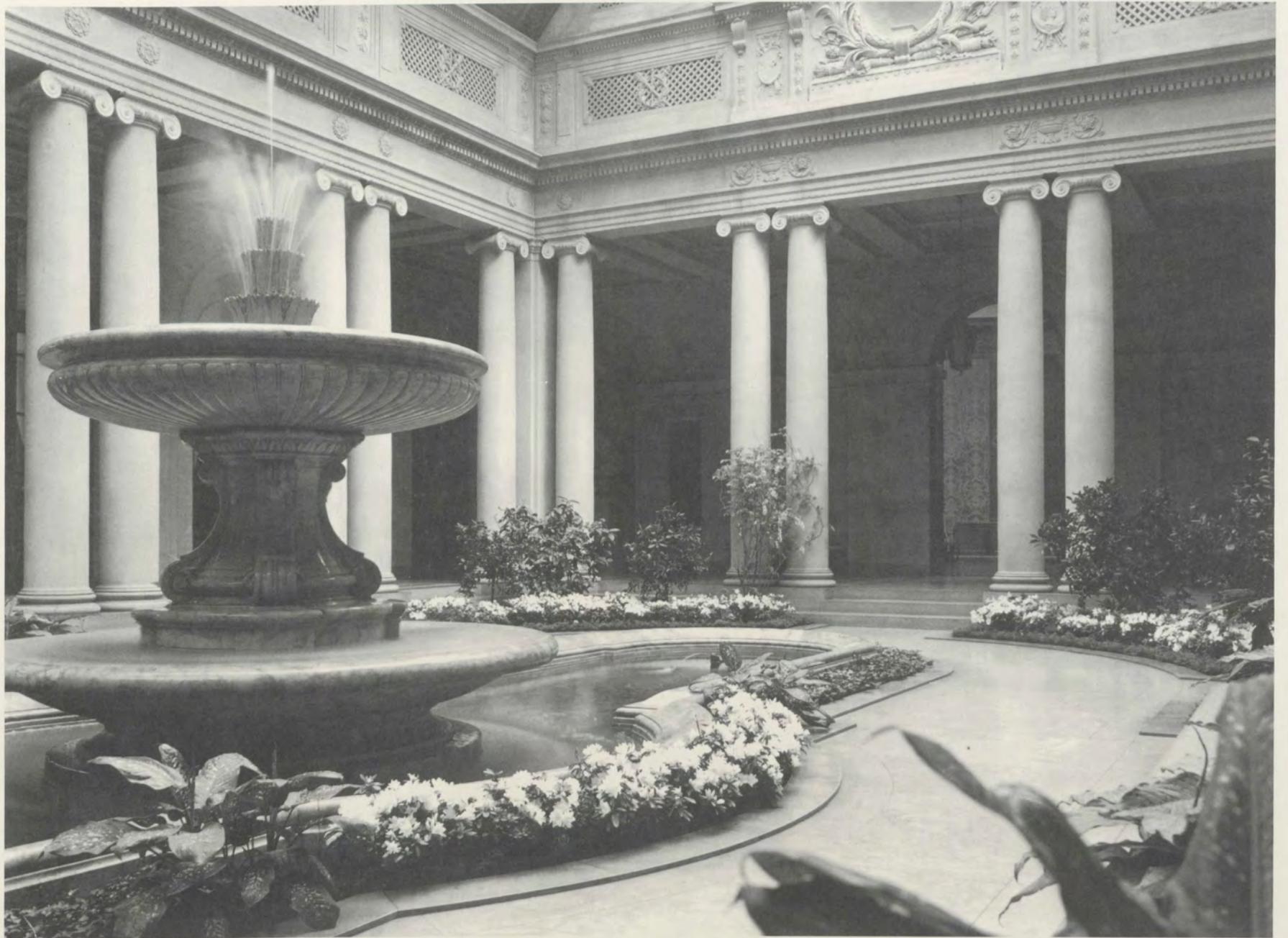
Excerpts from "Masterpieces of Frick Collection Willed to City," Oct. 10, 1931; "New Frick Reference Library Is Ideally Equipped for Art Research," Jan. 12, 1935; and "Frick Art Gallery to Open to Public On December 16," Dec. 14, 1935, all © *The Art News*, courtesy of the publisher.

Excerpts from "Picture Library," Jan. 21, 1935, copyright 1935 Time Inc. Reprinted by permission.

Excerpts from "Frick Art Will Go to Public Dec. 16," Dec. 8, 1935; "Frick Art Exhibition Reveals..." by Edward Alden Jewell, Dec. 12, 1935; "Mr. Frick's Monument," Dec. 13, 1935; and "Frick Art Museum Opened to Public," Dec. 17, 1935, all copyright © 1935 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

Excerpts from "Art Lovers Flock to See Treasures at Frick Museum," Dec. 16, 1935, © *The New York Post*.

Excerpts from "Fifth Avenue's New Museum," published in *The New Yorker*, Dec. 28, 1935, reprinted by permission of Gina Maccoby Literary Agency, copyright © 1935 by Lewis Mumford, renewed 1963.



Garden Court

