

# CREATING THE CLOISTERS



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BULLETIN SPRING 2013



# CREATING THE CLOISTERS

Timothy B. Husband



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

# Author's Acknowledgments

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Front cover: Photograph taken looking north toward The Cloisters, April 13, 1938, a month before it opened. Back cover: Portal from the abbey of Moutiers-Saint-Jean, France, ca. 1250 (see also fig. 72). Inside front and back covers: The Virgin Mary and Five Standing Saints over Predella Panels. Six stained-glass lancets from the north nave of the former Carmelite church at Boppard-am-Rhein in Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, 1440-46 (see also fig. 89).

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## Director's Note

The Cloisters marks its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2013. Since its opening on May 10, 1938, it has become a treasured landmark, celebrated for both its magnificent setting and its world-class collection of medieval art and architecture. Located in Fort Tryon Park, a verdant oasis on the northern tip of Manhattan, the highest point in New York City, the building commands sweeping views of the Hudson River and the towering Palisades on the river's opposite bank. The integrity of its design and materials, the superb craftsmanship, the intimacy of the spaces, the quiet of the lush cloister gardens, and the harmonious integration of the architectural sculpture create an ideal setting for the magnificent works of art it houses. This issue of the *Bulletin*, the first of a number of celebratory events scheduled for the anniversary year, tells the fascinating history of The Cloisters from its nascence in the early 1900s, when the "valuable and choice things" it incorporates began to be assembled in France, to opening day in 1938.

The story of The Cloisters has been told before, always with an emphasis on the two main characters: John D. Rockefeller Jr., who paid for the building and much of its contents as well as the park in which it is situated, and George Grey Barnard, the larger-than-life sculptor who acquired the Romanesque and Gothic objects and architectural elements that would form the core of The Cloisters collection and who erected the first building to hold them. Others who played key roles in the story have received less attention. The architect William Welles Bosworth, for example, rarely figures in the narrative, yet it was he who introduced Barnard to Rockefeller and who often served as an essential intermediary as Rockefeller's plans took shape over the years. It was Bosworth whom Rockefeller asked in 1926 to help him decide whether the tract of land he had purchased in upper Manhattan would be a desirable location for a museum and a city park. Another under-recognized principal was Joseph Breck, who was curator of decorative arts at the Metropolitan, then assistant director of the Museum, and finally director of The Cloisters. Breck worked tirelessly with Charles Collens, the architect hired by Rockefeller, to design the new Cloisters. His assiduous study of period sources, meticulous attention to detail, and fortuitous appeal for restraint in scale and embellishment produced the fundamental design of the building as we know it.

The genesis of The Cloisters is recounted here by Timothy B. Husband, curator in the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters. He has been associated with The Cloisters for more than four decades, and his investigation, based largely on intensive archival research, has produced a history of remarkable depth and nuance. His engaging account enriches our appreciation of one of New York's greatest cultural assets.

We are grateful to the Mary C. and James W. Fosburgh Publications Fund for its support of this and other scholarly publications at the Met and also to Rainer Zeitz Limited for contributing to this *Bulletin* in honor of The Cloisters' seventy-fifth anniversary.

Thomas P. Campbell

*Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

eventy-five years ago, on May 10, 1938, at four in the afternoon, The Cloisters officially opened as a branch of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. To celebrate, 250 guests gathered in the Late Gothic Hall of the new museum in the equally new Fort Tryon Park on the northern tip of the island of Manhattan.

There was no ceremony, just four short speeches. The first three speakers—Museum President George Blumenthal, New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses—all praised John D. Rockefeller Jr., who had paid for the land, the park, and the building and most of its contents. In his turn, Rockefeller protested that his contribution, “being largely financial,” was “relatively unimportant” and that the real credit belonged to others.<sup>1</sup> “If what has been created here,” he concluded, “helps to interpret beauty as one of the great spiritual and inspirational forces of life having the power to transform drab duty into radiant living; if those who come under the influence of this place go out to face life with new courage and restored faith because of the peace, the calm, the loveliness they have found here . . . , those who have builded here will not have built in vain.”<sup>2</sup>

Rockefeller’s modesty notwithstanding, his contribution had been far more than merely financial. Over the course of more than three decades and with a number of seemingly unrelated purchases of real estate and art, he had transformed a windswept, rocky escarpment into an imposing monument to medieval art and architecture surrounded by a verdant park, all the while adeptly navigating the uncertain

waters of city politics. Without his propitious orchestration, The Cloisters would not exist today.

John Davison Rockefeller Jr. (figs. 1, 2) was born the fourth and only male child of John D. and Laura Spelman Rockefeller in 1874. At the time the family lived in a generous mansarded Victorian brick house on Euclid Avenue, a newly residential tree-lined street comfortably distanced from downtown Cleveland. When he was four the family began spending summers at their country home on seventy-nine acres of sloping wooded land in Forest Hills, four miles east of the city. Rockefeller Sr.’s interests and energies were focused on the landscape; he was constantly creating new paths and roadways, moving old trees and planting new ones, opening vistas, and otherwise enhancing the natural features of his properties. It was here that the younger Rockefeller developed his lifelong love of gardens and parklands.

The Rockefellers were Baptists who espoused biblical literalism, congregationalism, the preeminence of scripture as the rule of faith, and personal conviction as the arbiter of doctrine. Modest and unassuming, midwestern Baptists imbued their evangelical belief with austerity and simplicity. Eschewing the secular and embracing the spiritual, they

did not tolerate cards, dance, theater, and opera and condemned tobacco and alcohol. All social activity was centered on the church and home, and the two were often so mingled as to be indistinguishable. Rockefeller grew up in social isolation, which was compounded by his fragile health. He described himself as a “shy, ill-adjusted, and not very robust” child whose only friend was the son of the housekeeper.<sup>3</sup> On several occasions he had to be withdrawn from school due to illness, often for long periods. This, along with his lack of physical stature (as a freshman at Brown he was five feet six inches tall and weighed 127 pounds), left him reticent and socially inept.<sup>4</sup> He was more outgoing during his college years, attending dances, going to the theater, and even hosting a musicale and dance evening in his senior year. He often communicated with his mother on these matters and generally acceded to her wishes. Although his outlook evolved and sometimes diverged from his parents’, throughout his life he heeded their admonishment to follow his conscience and always to ask himself, *Is it right? Is it duty?*<sup>5</sup>

In the years after Rockefeller Sr. founded the Standard Oil Company in 1870, business affairs increasingly brought him to New York City. Beginning in 1877 the family wintered at the Buckingham, a quiet residential hotel at Fifty-fifth Street and Fifth Avenue. In the summer of 1884 Rockefeller Sr. bought a house at 4 West Fifty-fourth Street (fig. 3) that for twenty years had been the home of Arabella Worsham, who had just married railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington. The house, which with all its furnishings and fittings cost a reported \$600,000, remained Rockefeller Sr.’s city residence when he retired in 1897.<sup>6</sup> After he moved out of his father’s house in 1905 the younger Rockefeller first lived across the street at 13 West Fifty-fourth, which his father also owned, but in 1912 he built a nine-story mansion at 10 West Fifty-fourth Street that was at the time the largest private house in the city (see fig. 3), and he eventually also annexed the house next door.

In the 1890s Rockefeller Sr. had bought an estate with views of the Hudson River at Pocantico Hills, twenty-five miles north of Manhattan near Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow, New York, and not far from Rockwood Hall, his brother

William’s 204-room mansion. Some years later, with the help of his wife, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the younger Rockefeller undertook to build for his parents on the Pocantico Hills property a substantial country residence that would reflect his father’s eminent stature. The forty-room house, named *Kykuit* (Dutch for “Lookout”), was finally completed in 1913 (fig. 4). Rockefeller Sr. himself was initially involved with the design of the vast *Kykuit* park, but in 1906 his son hired prominent Beaux-Arts architect William Welles Bosworth to design and build the gardens and later to redesign the east facade after a third floor was added. Rockefeller Jr. had met Bosworth while he was working on the gardens of a neighboring estate and later commissioned him to design his mansion on West Fifty-fourth Street. Bosworth also designed the terraces, pavilions, orangerie, teahouse, and fountains at *Kykuit* and rebuilt the stables.

Welles Bosworth (fig. 5) had trained as an architect at MIT and then at the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. He began his career with the firm of Carrère and Hastings in New York before establishing his own practice. His first major commission, in 1912, was the highly classicized corporate headquarters of AT&T at 195 Broadway. In 1913, largely due to Rockefeller’s endorsement, he received the commission to design the Neoclassical core campus of MIT. Rockefeller’s three-page recommendation explains why he and Bosworth enjoyed a close and lifelong association: “I have never worked with a man so easy to work with. . . . He is resourceful to a degree, never dogmatic in his opinions . . . , a man of unflinching courtesy and whose patience has no limit. . . . [His] good taste is unquestionable, not only as regards matters of architecture, but as regards general questions of art. . . . Were I to do over again, I should not know to whom I could go with greater probabilities of satisfactory results than Mr. Bosworth.”<sup>7</sup> In 1924 Bosworth moved to Paris, having agreed to administer the *Comité Franco-Américain pour la Restauration des Monuments*, through which Rockefeller funded the restoration of wartime damage to Versailles, the cathedral at Rheims, and the *Château de Fontainebleau*. Though he lived much of the rest of his long life in France, Bosworth remained ever in Rockefeller’s service, willingly undertaking



1. John Davison Rockefeller Jr. and his father in New York City in about 1915



2. John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1933. During the two decades in the 1920s and 1930s when Rockefeller was engaged with the development of Fort Tryon Park and The Cloisters, he was also fully committed to a number of other major projects: Grand Teton National Park; Jackson Hole Monument; the Palisades Interstate Park Commission; the United Nations Library in Geneva; the Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem; the rebuilding of the Stoa of Attalos in Athens; Colonial Williamsburg; Acadia National Park; the committee to restore Rheims Cathedral, Versailles, and Fontainebleau; Riverside Church; Rockefeller

Institute for Medical Research; and Rockefeller Center. In February 1930, when Rockefeller presented him with his formal offer to build The Cloisters, Museum President Robert W. De Forest responded, "With all the many duties and burdens upon you, I wonder how you can do it. . . . You are in the exceptional situation of not having any handicap either of resources or vision in carrying out plans, which you deem in the public interest."



3. The Rockefeller houses on West Fifty-fourth Street in New York City. John D. Rockefeller Sr.'s house, at number 4, is in the foreground, and John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s mansion is the tall building just west of it at number 10. Gardens separated the properties of father and son. (Both houses were razed in 1938, and the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art occupies much of the site today.) Living nearby at 626 Fifth Avenue was Benjamin Altman, founder of the B. Altman & Co. department store and also a benefactor of the Museum. As a young man Rockefeller visited Altman's house and was greatly impressed by his superb collection of Chinese porcelains, which was to inspire his single collecting passion.

whatever he asked of him. On several occasions that willingness would facilitate the genesis of The Cloisters.

While working at Kykuit Bosworth hired the free-spirited sculptor George Grey Barnard to create a large fountain (see fig. 4) and two lifesize sculptures for the foot of the double staircase leading to the entrance to the Kykuit grounds. There were endless delays. While negotiating on Rockefeller's behalf Bosworth lamented that reasoning with Barnard was like "trying to mould a rigid form out of a fluent substance." Rockefeller agreed, declaring that his and Barnard's viewpoints were so "diametrically opposed that I do not know that either of us could make the other see the thing from his standpoint."<sup>8</sup> The commissions signaled the beginning of what was to be a long and fraught relationship between the sculptor and the philanthropist. His ambivalent feelings were again conspicuous when twenty-five years later, in his four-and-a-half-minute speech at the opening of The Cloisters in 1938, Rockefeller credited its realization to a long list of principals—the trustees and directors of the Metropolitan Museum, Museum curator and administrator Joseph Breck and his successor James J. Rorimer, architect Charles Collins, contractor Marc Eidlitz & Son, Inc., landscape architect Frederick L. Olmsted Jr., and parks commissioner Robert Moses—but failed to mention Barnard, whose "Gothic" collection The Cloisters was designed around and who had died less than a month earlier.

George Grey Barnard (fig. 6) was one of the most renowned sculptors of his day. Born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, the son of a preacher, he grew up in Kankakee, Illinois, and studied



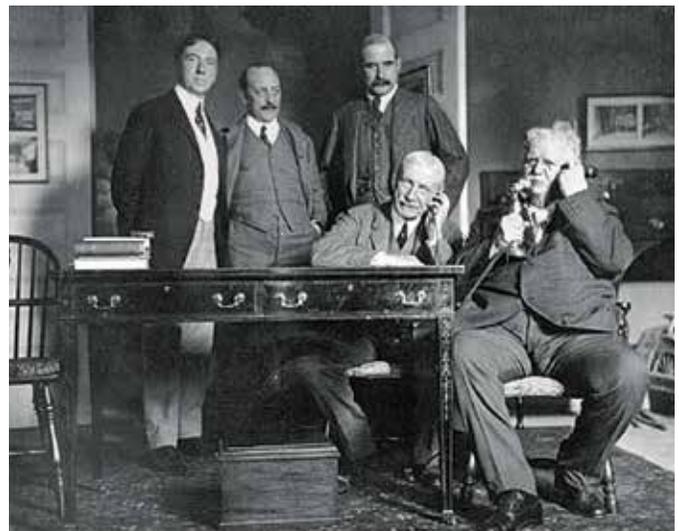
4. Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate in Pocantico Hills, New York, with a detail of George Grey Barnard's *Adam and Eve Fountain*, which was commissioned in 1916 and completed in 1923. Barnard's delays in fulfilling the commission for the fountain and the two freestanding sculptures that also stand at the foot of the grand staircase—*The Hewer* (1915) and *Rising Woman* (1915–23)—proved an ongoing frustration to Rockefeller.



sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1883, when he was twenty years old, Barnard moved to Paris to train in the atelier of Pierre-Jules Cavelier while studying at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. In the spring of 1886 he met Alfred Corning Clark of the Singer sewing machine fortune, who quickly became an ardent admirer and mentor, giving him several commissions. With Clark's support, Barnard left the Ecole and set up a studio. At the 1894 Salon du Champs-de-Mars he exhibited six sculptures, including the best-known Clark commission, *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* (now in the Metropolitan), and garnered the critical acclaim of the jury. Clark's death in 1896 left Barnard, who was then in New York, financially pressed. But his fortunes turned in 1902 when he won the commission to create a sculptural program for the facade of the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg (see fig. 7). He set to work at once, and in 1903, when he had completed the drawings and plaster models, he moved with his wife and daughter back to France, renting lodgings and a studio at Moret-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, in which he could finish the sculptures.

Indirectly, the Harrisburg commission spawned *The Cloisters*. As it became clear that the funding for his ambitious design was woefully inadequate (the initial installment was not even enough to pay for the marble, which was to be quarried at Carrara in Italy and transported to Moret), Barnard

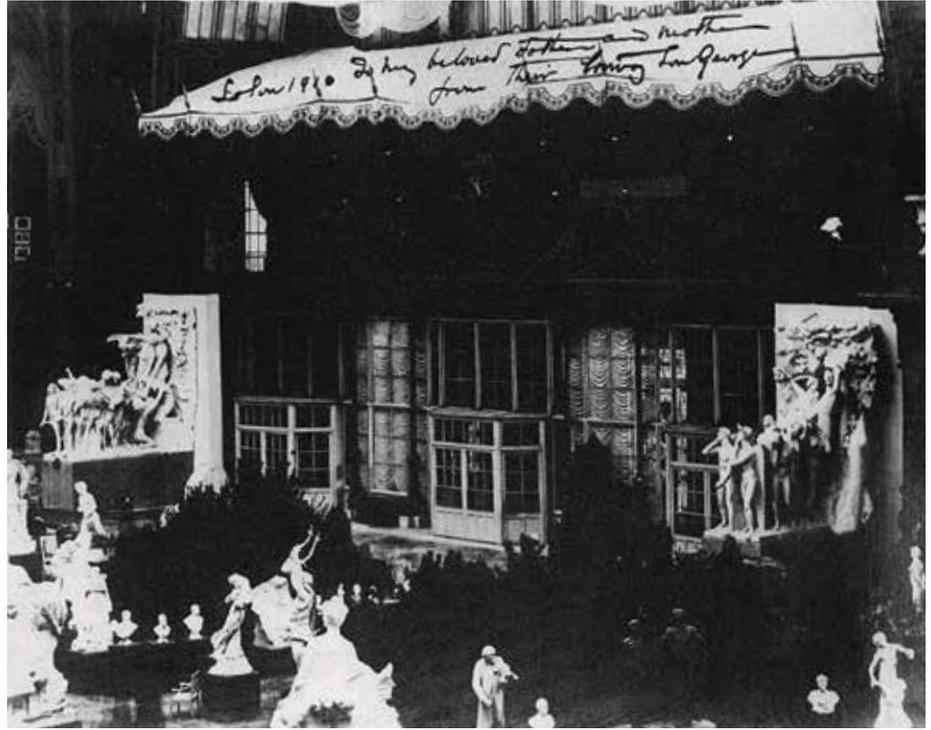
was forced to try to make money selling medieval works of art. A 1905 source mentions an "atelier d'antiquités" at his Moret studio, and the studio daybook for the following year records his frequent absences on buying trips.<sup>9</sup> By the fall of 1906 a graft and corruption scandal in Harrisburg had brought an end to all payments, and Barnard was compelled to cease



5. Welles Bosworth (at left) with architect Samuel Trowbridge, J. Pierpont Morgan, John D. Rockefeller Sr.'s brother William, and AT&T President Theodore Vail at Vail's home in Jekyll Island, Georgia, on the occasion of the opening of the first transcontinental telephone line in 1915



6. George Grey Barnard in his studio at Moret-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, ca. 1903–10. It was while he was living and working in Moret-sur-Loing that Barnard began to buy Gothic sculpture, in part for its inspirational value but mostly to sell to Paris dealers and American museums and collectors.



7. Barnard's two large sculptural groups for the Pennsylvania State Capitol—*Love and Labor: The Unbroken Law* and *The Burden of Life: The Broken Law*—on display (to the left and right of the windows) at the 1910 Salon du Champs-de-Mars in Paris, where they were admired by Auguste Rodin and Franklin D. Roosevelt, among others. In 1904, when it became clear that funding was woefully inadequate, the originally more ambitious sculptural program for the capitol had been reduced to these two groups, designed to flank the building's main entrance. The marble sculptures were installed in Harrisburg in October 1911. Barnard inscribed this photograph: "To my beloved Father and Mother from their loving son George."

work on the sculptures altogether and devote himself full time to dealing. He took great delight in relating to the press how he found extraordinary treasures in barnyards and gardens. Barnard was a man of no small ego and prone to braggadocio, and he is known to have greatly embroidered and at times outright invented his accounts. But there was also some truth in his boasting, for in the wake of the French Revolution and the secularization of religious buildings in the early nineteenth century, monastic foundations were ransacked and dismantled and the components dispersed and repurposed.

Although notoriously inept at handling his finances, Barnard was able to raise money to purchase works of art and architectural elements. He worked closely with dealers in Paris who advanced him money with the understanding that he could keep half of what he acquired. He also bought from or bartered with dealers. In 1906, for example, he acquired fragments dating to the turn of the thirteenth century from the cloister of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, twenty-five miles northwest of Montpellier, not by scavenging the countryside but directly from the dealers L. Cornillon of Paris and Antoine Lambrigtot of Carcassonne (figs. 8, 9). To finance their purchase Barnard borrowed \$10,000, part from a banker in Moret and part from friends.

By the beginning of 1907 Barnard had assembled substantial portions of four more cloisters (figs. 10–15). As he found these elements in a number of disparate sources and more than one monastery in the region used the same or similar workshops, it is difficult even today to determine the precise provenance of all this material. In a letter to his sister-in-law, Vivia Munroe, who looked after his affairs in New York, Barnard assigned a value to each group of fragments: Trie-en-Bigorre, northeast of Tarbes, \$25,000; Larreule, north of Tarbes, \$15–20,000; Bonnefont-en-Comminges, \$25,000; and Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, \$100,000. (Barnard eventually combined the Trie and Larreule elements into one cloister, and it has been determined that the elements he labeled as from the Cistercian abbey at Bonnefont were in fact from the Franciscan monastery at Tarbes and other nearby monuments.)<sup>10</sup> He had Isabella Stewart Gardner of Boston and the Metropolitan Museum in mind as possible purchasers. The Metropolitan's curator of paintings, Roger Fry, expressed interest, and in reply to a cable from Barnard, J. Pierpont Morgan, then its president, said the Museum would pursue the matter. It would be twenty years, however, before anything came of Barnard's offer.

Barnard discovered material from the twelfth-century cloister of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, an abbey founded in the



8. Columns and capitals from the cloister of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, near Montpellier in the south of France, supporting a grape arbor in the garden of Pierre-Yon Vernière in Aniane, before 1906



9. Cloister from the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert as reconstructed in The Cloisters. Languedoc-Roussillon (Hérault), France, late 12th–early 13th century. Limestone, 30 ft. 3 in. x 25 ft. 10 in. (9.2 x 7.3 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.1–124)

ninth century near Prades, in the Pyrenees in southwestern France, scattered throughout the area in the hands of several owners. By far the largest portion—ten arches and twelve columns—had been used to build a portico on to the bathhouse owned by Mme Baladud de Saint-Jean in Prades (fig. 16). In early 1906 Barnard paid Mme de Saint-Jean 500 francs to procure an option on her property, promising her an additional 5,000 to finalize the sale.

Barnard had returned to New York in 1907 to learn that a group of professionally prominent New Yorkers had resuscitated the Pennsylvania State Capitol project and secured financing for it. He also discovered that the French government, as part of a movement to preserve historical monuments and prevent their removal from the country, was threatening to classify the Cuxa material. But only in early 1913 did it proceed in earnest. In February Barnard sent a check to Mme de Saint-Jean to complete his purchase and instructed the Paris dealer George Demotte to have the bathhouse portico dismantled and removed from Prades. When Barnard himself arrived in Prades at the end of April, a representative of the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites was waiting for him. A legal tussle ensued, but by mid-May Barnard realized he was fighting a lost cause and abruptly and grandly announced that he was presenting the disputed material to the people of France. Forewarned that a new law protecting the national patrimony would go into effect on December 31, 1913, he quietly began shipping what

remained of his collections out of France. “They just got out in time, nick of time,” he wrote to his wife on November 23, referring to the final shipment of his collections. “2 days after they left Paris the French Senate voted to take possession of all works of art . . . of French origin. It was principally brought about by the Cuxa affair in Prades & the senator who was so violent about me.”<sup>11</sup>

By the summer of 1911 Barnard had already begun to think of constructing a “chapel” in New York for his collection of artifacts. An opportunity to raise funds for this project arose in 1913 when Alfred Corning Clark’s sons Sterling and Stephen hired him to act as their guide and agent on a five-week buying trip in Europe. Taking a 10 percent commission on their purchases, by late April Barnard was able to write to his wife that he had already made enough money to pay off his debts and “build a studio and house.” In September he contracted to erect what he then called his “cloister museum” on his property on Fort Washington Avenue and a studio on rented land immediately to the south.

The studio was nearly complete by the end of the year, in time to provide storage for the 120 crates of “valuable and choice things” that arrived from France in early January 1914.<sup>12</sup> The museum, still just a brick shell in January, opened to the public a week before Christmas. Barnard was later to tell Bosworth the building and installations cost \$21,500.<sup>13</sup>

Everything about the installation of Barnard’s Cloisters was calculated to intimate age and to create a churchlike



10. Remains of the cloister at Saint-Sever-de-Rustan, near Tarbes, incorporating elements from the monastery at Trie-sur-Baïse, photographed in 1934. After the Huguenots destroyed all the buildings of the Trie monastery except the church in 1571, some of the capitals from its cloister were sold to the Benedictine monastery at Saint-Sever-de-Rustan. In 1889–90 the city of Tarbes bought twenty-eight of the capitals.

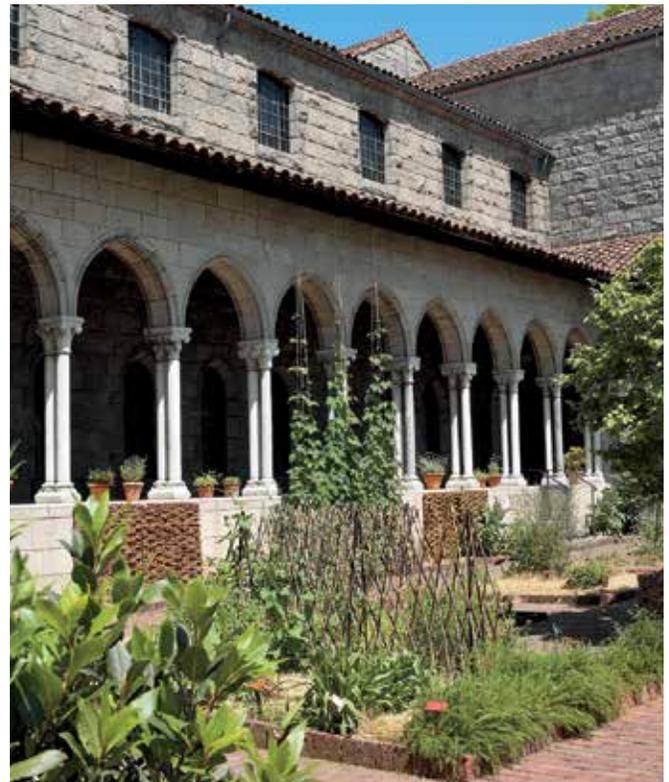
11. Cloister reconstructed at The Cloisters from monuments at Trie-sur-Baïse, Larreule, and Saint-Sever-de-Rustan. Midi-Pyrénées (Hautes-Pyrénées), France, late 15th century. Marble, 35 ft. 8 in. x 47 ft. 2½ in. (10.9 x 14.4 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.135–971). Eighteen of the Trie cloister's eighty-one capitals are now at The Cloisters.

atmosphere (figs. 17–24). The walls had been patinated by washing them while the mortar was still wet, and objects had been installed with a contrived spontaneity suggesting change over time, all with little regard to or even awareness of art historical principles. The fanciful and ethereal nature of Barnard's vision is palpable in the brief history of Western

architecture on the opening page of his guidebook: "The spirit of the Christian religion, cradled in the catacombs of Rome, and fed in the feasts of the Hippodrome, passed to childhood days encompassed by walls of Romanesque churches. Until, the day of manhood coming swiftly in the 13th century, it pushed upward and outward like a winged



12–13. Above: Remains of the Franciscan monastery at Tarbes before it was destroyed in 1907–8. The monastery was burned during the Wars of Religion in the late 1500s. The cloister survived the fire, and the other buildings were restored in the 1570s. The regional government acquired the monastery in 1789 to use as a tribunal, and in 1792 it was bought by a man who used the church as a stable. The buildings served as a jail, a weapons foundry, a barracks, a stable, and a hotel warehouse before the land was sold in 1907 to a company that demolished them to build a hotel. Barnard purchased parts of the cloister in 1912. Right: The cloister reconstructed at The Cloisters with elements from the Tarbes monastery and other monuments. Midi-Pyrénées (Hautes-Pyrénées), France, late 13th or early 14th century. Marble, 54 ft. 3 in. x 49 ft. (16.5 x 14.9 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.531–1052)





14. Two columns from Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, near Perpignan, France (and one, in the rear, from Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert), displayed in the garden of Pierre-Yon Vernière in Aniane, before 1906



15. Cloister from the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa (Sant Miquel de Cuixà) reconstructed at The Cloisters, Catalonia, ca. 1130–40. Marble, 90 x 78 ft. (27.4 x 23.8 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.398–954)

angel in its flight from earth, a thousand pinions rushing heavenward. Almost it left the earth, in the glorious triumph of lightness and spiritual glory of Gothic architecture." Barnard's Cloisters gave substance to his "Gothic dream," creating a paean to the Gothic sculptors he so revered. Barnard wished his monument to be an inspiration to young artists and a soul-enhancing experience for visitors. And for a passing moment it was.

Prior to the opening of Barnard's "cloisters museum" medieval art had little resonance with American audiences, an observation Edith Wharton addressed in *False Dawn*, which she published in 1924 as the first in the series called Old New York, four novellas each chronicling some aspect of upper-class New York society during a single decade beginning in the 1840s and continuing through the 1870s. Set in New York of the 1840s, *False Dawn* tells of Halston Raycie's son, Lewis, who at the age of twenty-one is sent off on a two-year Grand Tour of Europe with his father's mandate (and \$5,000) to bring home "a gallery of Heirlooms . . . , a Domenichino, an Albano, a Carlo Dolci, a Guercino, a Carlo Maratta—one or two of Salvator Rosa's noble landscapes." Under the influence of a young Englishman whom he met in Switzerland, however, Lewis's eyes are opened to the rarified world of Italian quattrocento paintings, and it is with crates of these that he returns to his family. Once Halston Raycie comprehends—for he certainly cannot discern—that his son has brought home not old masters but "primitives," he unleashes a tirade: "I am no blue-nosed Puritan, sir, and I'd a damn sight rather you told me you'd spent the money on

a woman, every penny of it, than let yourself be fleeced like a simpleton, buying these things that look more like cuts out o' Foxe's Book of Martyrs than Originals of the Old Masters for a Gentleman's Gallery."

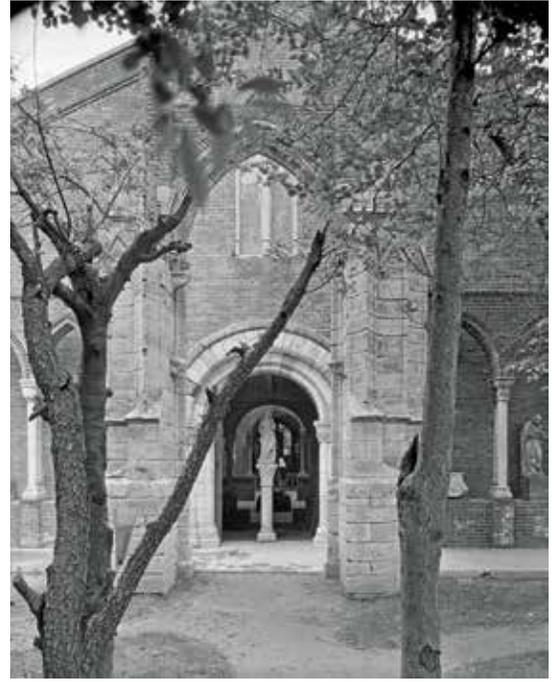
The senior Raycie was referring to *Actes and Monuments*, the martyrology John Foxe published in 1563 that describes, often in grim detail, the deaths of saints from the year 1000 to his own day, with particular attention given to the Protestant martyrs who suffered under the persecutions of Queen Mary in the 1550s. The vivid language was calculated to incite Elizabethan hatred of Spain and the Inquisition. Initially



16. Capitals and columns removed from the monastery of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa in about 1840 and reinstalled in Les Bains de Saint Michel, Mme Baladud de Saint-Jean's bathhouse at Prades. These elements, purchased by Barnard, were given to the French nation and eventually returned to the monastery.



17. Barnard's Cloisters, looking northeast, March 1926. The main building, a plain brick structure rectilinear in plan with a shallow pitched roof, was set in the northeast corner of the property. It was approached through a gateway in the stone wall and down a short flight of stairs into an open space punctuated with a scattering of trees. A gently curving dirt path passed along the south flank of Barnard's four-storied house at 700 Fort Washington Avenue (at the left in the photograph). The main entrance was flanked by blind arcades, each with three arches supported by white marble shafts and capitals then thought to be from Bonnefont-en-Comminges. Attached to the southwest corner of the building was a transitional Gothic portal that served as a gateway to Cuxa Cloister, on the south side of the building (see fig. 34). Today it serves as the entrance to the Early Gothic Hall in The Cloisters.



18. Main entrance of Barnard's Cloisters, on the west facade, with its French Romanesque portal of about 1150–75 from the church at Coulangé near Villedoin (Indre-et-Loire) and, above, double-lancet Gothic window. The massive freestanding Gothic archway was said to have been the remnants of a wayside shrine at Montault, near Avignon. The portal is today in the Romanesque Hall of The Cloisters.

popular with Puritans and enduring well into the nineteenth century, the book colored the American view of Catholics, fueling, especially, the isolationist, anti-immigrant sentiments embraced by the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s. Wharton's point was that the squeamishness displayed by many upper-class denizens in the face of things Catholic and medieval stemmed from a deep streak of Puritanism, however much Halston Raycie might demur, and that Americans, in general, were not yet ready to embrace this aspect of their European heritage, the "false dawn" of the early efforts of the likes of Lewis Raycie notwithstanding.

Wharton based the character of Lewis Raycie largely on Thomas Jefferson Bryan, one of the first Americans to appreciate and collect medieval art. In 1823, when he was twenty-one, Bryan moved to Paris, and during the twenty-nine years he remained there he assembled a sizable group of paintings, including a number of Italian quattrocento panels (thirteen of which came from the famed collection of Alexis-François Artaud de Montor, which was sold at auction in Paris in 1851). Upon his return to New York in 1852 Bryan opened the Bryan Gallery of Christian Art in his home. Although it attracted little or no attention, he continued to add to his collection,

which he gave to the New-York Historical Society in 1867. (The Metropolitan, three years shy of its founding, was not yet an alternative.) Because the pictures were European, not American, they were not considered key to the society's core mission, and in 1995 those that had not previously been sold were put up for auction.<sup>14</sup>

The "true dawn" for medieval art in America arrived only at the beginning of the twentieth century. J. Pierpont Morgan collected medieval works of art with an informed passion that bordered on the obsessive. Although collecting was for him largely a personal and private affair, he shared some of his magnificent holdings with the public. He loaned "the Gothic portion" of the Hoentschel collection, which he had bought en bloc in 1906, to the Metropolitan in 1908. The *New York Times* declared that the exhibition would "have the tang of novelty for the untraveled and for those who are traveled the far deeper interest of familiarity and reminiscence. . . . The whole collection offers an extraordinary opportunity to study the rise of Gothic art."<sup>15</sup> When Morgan's collection went on view at the Museum in early 1914, it attracted large crowds. And audiences were similarly enraptured by the Romanesque and Gothic art theatrically installed in



19. *Saint Roch*. Normandy, France, early 16th century. Oak, paint, gilt; H. 61 ½ in. (156.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.239a, b). This statue can be seen perched high atop a brick pillar at the left in fig. 20.



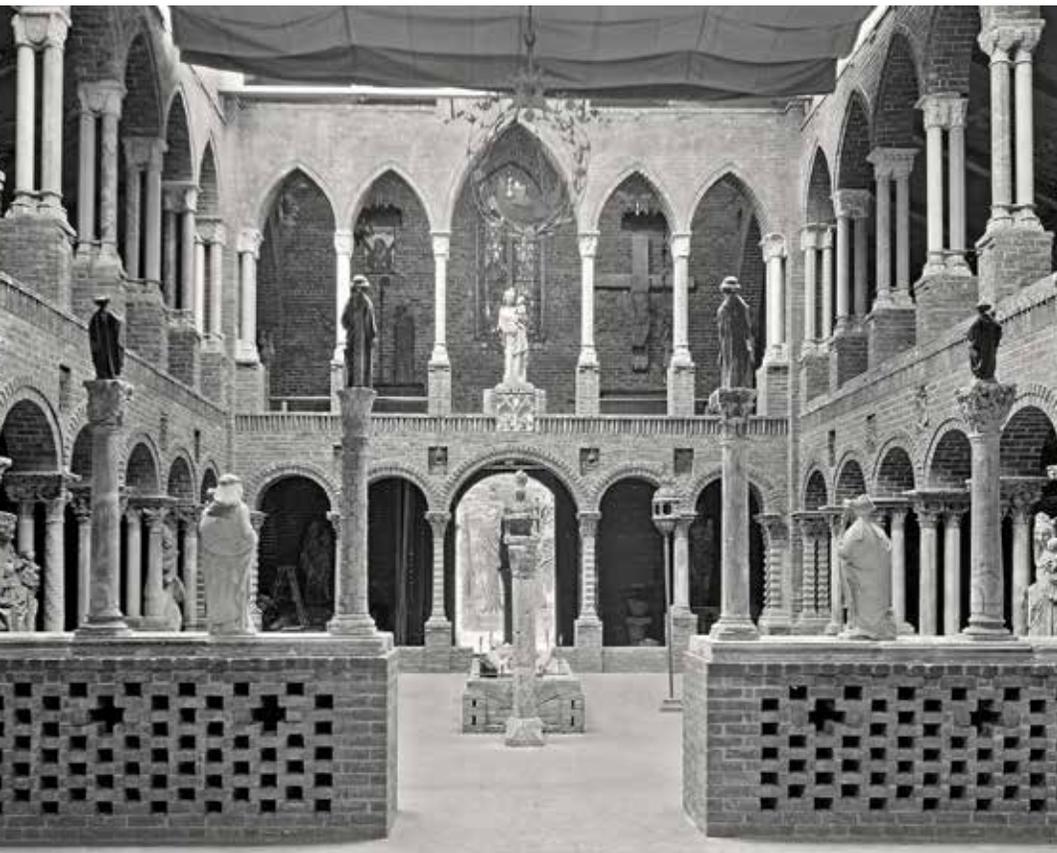
20. Interior of Barnard's Cloisters, looking east, May 1925. The interior of the 100-by-65-foot building was divided in half by a brick parapet. Both the "nave" and the "sanctuary" beyond were centered on a tomb figure, an arrangement Barnard may have adopted from Alexandre Lenoir's installations in his Musée des Monuments Français, located in the remains of the monastery of the Petits Augustins, which were an integral part of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where Barnard studied.

Barnard's Cloisters when it opened in December the same year. Pundits at the time suggested that attendance at both venues was inspired as much by the notoriety of the collectors as by their art. To be sure, Morgan's eminent stature and Barnard's well-publicized dealings and speculation did much to elevate the public's perception of medieval art. But it was the objects themselves that dazzled, and the collecting efforts of these two men quickened public interest as Bryan's had not. On the other hand, John D. Rockefeller Jr., who would come to fund one of the greatest collections of medieval art anywhere, had little inclination toward religious art of the Middle Ages and never personally collected it.

Rockefeller had nothing in common with Halston Raycie beyond the fact that, like Wharton's character, he had no taste for Italian "primitives." In 1927 the legendary dealer Sir Joseph Duveen sent the Rockefellers on approval four highly important "primitives": two panels by Duccio di Buoninsegna and two by the Master of the Codex of Saint George (today in The Cloisters).<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Rockefeller wished to acquire all four. Rockefeller was indifferent: "It is needless for me to say that the prices [totaling \$1.1 million] you are asking for these pictures is to me staggering. As I have told you before, I myself



21. Niccolò di Tommaso (Italian, active in Florence, 1343–76). *Man of Sorrows*, ca. 1370. Fresco transferred to canvas, 65 x 70 in. (165.1 x 177.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.241). Presumably from a Florentine monastery, this devotional image may have been placed above a door, beneath an arch, or in a niche above a tomb. Barnard displayed it in a niche on the right side of the east wall of the "sanctuary" (see fig. 20).



22–23. Left: Interior of Barnard's Cloisters, looking west, May 5, 1925. The lower level of the western end of the building, the "nave," was enclosed on three sides by arcades constructed from elements of the cloister of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert. Right: Torso of Christ from a Deposition. Auvergne, France, late 12th century. Poplar, gesso, paint, and metal leaf; 43 x 13¼ x 9½ in. (109.2 x 34.9 x 24.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.221). Barnard discovered this sensitively carved fragment in a field near Lavaudieu, in south central France, where it was being used as a scarecrow. For many years it was thought to be from a crucifix, and that is how Barnard displayed it on the west wall of the upper gallery of his "nave" (see fig. 22). From the position of Christ's body, however, it is more likely to have been one of a group of sculptures representing the Deposition.

have no particular interest in pictures nor personal desire to buy them. In this instance as in previous ones I am simply desirous of giving pleasure to Mrs. Rockefeller."<sup>17</sup> The price he settled on was \$950,000.

That Rockefeller declared his disinterest in early paintings on several occasions leaves the distinct impression that this was his true sentiment and not merely a negotiating stance. He bought works of art discursively, never committing to a particular artist or period. The only exception was Chinese porcelains of the Kangxi period (1662–1722), which became a lifetime preoccupation (see fig. 25). When J. Pierpont Morgan's collection came up for sale in 1915 Rockefeller wrote to his father asking to borrow the money (\$1 million) to buy it: "I have never squandered money on horses, yachts, automobiles or other foolish extravagances. A fondness for these porcelains is my only hobby—the only thing on which I have cared to spend money. I have found their study a great recreation and diversion, and I have become very fond of them. This hobby, while a costly one, is quiet and unostentatious and not sensational."<sup>18</sup> Rockefeller admired the beauty and uncanny craftsmanship of these objects, but a certain

impersonality born of centuries of tradition also had great appeal. There was in them nothing of the "self-expression" he found so objectionable in modern art.



24. North side of the upper gallery of Barnard's Cloisters, looking west, March 1926. The arcades incorporated elements from the Franciscan monastery at Tarbes and other monuments. Hanging fabric diffused the light emitted through the glass skylight.

Kangxi porcelains aside, Rockefeller in general bought art to please his wife or to serve the public good. Barnard was well aware of Rockefeller's public-spiritedness, and while experience told him that a direct approach to sell objects would inevitably be rebuffed, he thought he might well be able to engage Rockefeller's interest with a bold concept that would benefit the public. In April 1916 he sent Rockefeller a scrawled letter explaining that he had "one hundred Gothic objects" that he proposed Rockefeller buy and install on a parcel of land adjacent to his [Barnard's] cloister "as separate *as an island*. . . . Small chapels towers gothic doors in stone, *marvelous* statues [would] make of this spot a unique sacred place of Beauty and peace for artists Poets and people." Barnard declared that he had "no *material* interest whatsoever in it, only a work of truth love and Beauty, you can save these entire objects as a history together for our New York if you will, at the cost of what some pay for one picture or two." That Barnard had no material interest in the installation was, of course, quite untrue. Contrary to what he had intimated, these objects, which along with a portal and a lifesize crusader horse cost slightly more than \$103,000, were all in the possession of George Demotte in Paris. Barnard was seeking a 10 percent commission from Demotte, and later, when it was clear that he was merely acting as a middleman, he asked for an additional 10 percent from Rockefeller.

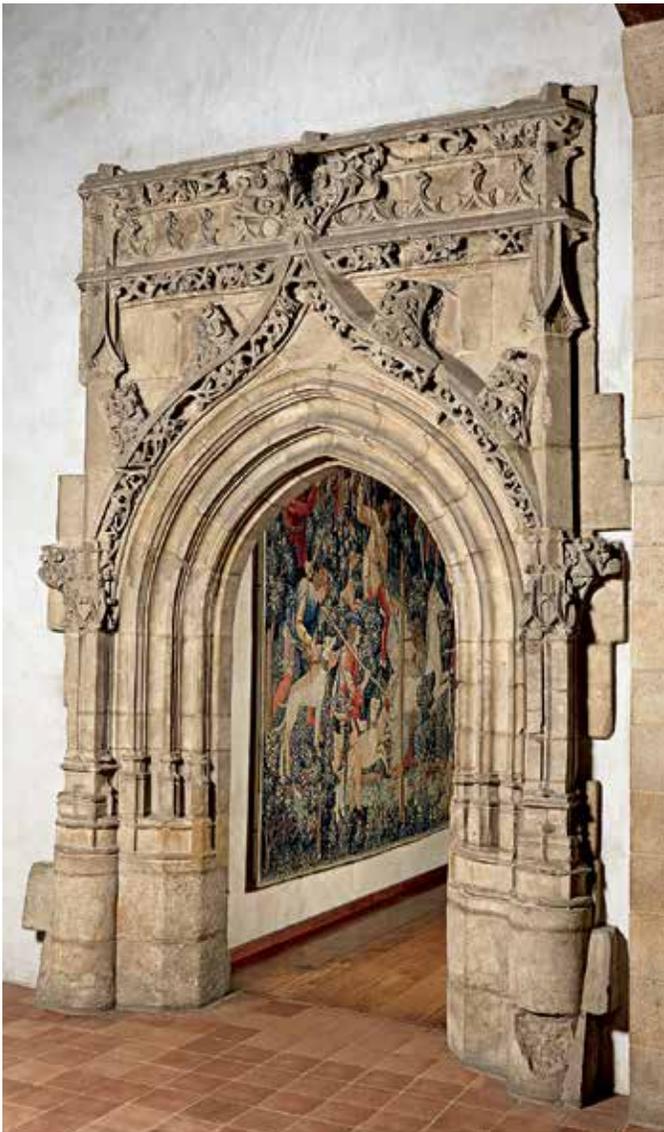
Rockefeller agreed to purchase Barnard's "one hundred Gothic objects" based entirely on Welles Bosworth's recommendation. Clearly Rockefeller was interested not in the objects themselves but rather in the project with which they were associated. By the end of the summer, however, his initial enthusiasm had been "greatly lessened if not entirely extinguished," no doubt by the difficulty of working with Barnard and the ever-shifting nature of his projects and promises. Rockefeller now had "one hundred Gothic objects" for which he had no particular use (see figs. 26–28). At first he put the objects in storage. When the expense mounted he considered selling them to Kelekian or another dealer and, failing that, entertained the idea of trading them for a "square black porcelain vase" being offered by Duveen. In the end the collection was installed at Kykuit in a service tunnel. Yet even though nothing came of this particular scheme, the concept of placing medieval art in the serenity of a public park had now caught Rockefeller's imagination.

Barnard was perpetually in need of money. In September 1916 he sent Bosworth a scrap of paper on which he had scribbled in pencil: "If Mr. R. will give me the price I have been offered twice, for the cloister collection entire . . . , I will sell it to him, at once." Bosworth passed this "flux of bird-like words" on to Rockefeller.<sup>19</sup> Rockefeller asked Bosworth to ascertain more details about Barnard's offer, but it would be another nine years before anything came of it.



25. Vase in the shape of an Archaic bronze vessel with flowers and birds. China, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), Kangxi period (1662–1722). Porcelain painted with colored enamels over transparent glaze and gilded (Jingdezhen ware), H. 18 in. (45.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1960 (61.200.66). Rockefeller bequeathed seventy-three examples of Kangxi-period Ming and Qing ceramics to the Metropolitan. This is considered one of the finest.

Six years later, on November 2, 1922, Barnard had another proposal for Rockefeller: "I have just seen the most beautiful and rare Gothic tapestries in existence. There is nothing equal to them in the Louvre . . . or Cluny. . . . It is eternal spring living in the trees, flowers, and human figures. Their possession by you or our nation will be a thing of world interest, and world history."<sup>20</sup> The tapestries (see figs. 29, 30) were in New York, Barnard continued, and were being offered for sale by the Paris dealer Edouard Larcade, "an old Beaux arts comrade" of his. About a week later Welles Bosworth received a note from Rockefeller's office asking him to go look at the tapestries, which were available for private viewing at the Anderson Galleries on Park Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street, and "advise whether in your judgment it is worthwhile for Mr. Rockefeller to see them."<sup>21</sup> Relying entirely on Bosworth's advice, Rockefeller went himself to see the tapestries. Entranced by what he saw, he purchased them for \$1.1 million (\$200,000 less than the asking price). On November 21 his lawyer arranged the closing, only to find that Barnard had negotiated a commission with Larcade and refused to sign a release until he had received an advance of \$50,000. Offered another \$1,000 as a further enticement, Barnard signed the release the next day, relinquishing "any and all claims for commission on the sale of six Gothic tapestries." (Typically, Barnard either forgot or chose to ignore this document, for he later claimed Rockefeller owed him another \$60,000, based on a 10 percent commission. Rockefeller was aghast that Barnard "was expecting to receive \$110,000 for a service which was not worth one-one-hundredth of that sum.") In the meantime, Larcade had executed an undated bill of sale for the tapestries with the understanding that he would cable a date after he returned to Paris and that Rockefeller would pay the balance in January 1923.



26. Portal from the Château de La Roche-Gençay, Poitou, France, ca. 1520–30. Limestone, 14 ft. 7 in. x 8 ft. 10 in. (4.4 x 2.7 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1940 (40.147.3). This portal arrived in New York in 1916 along with the “one hundred Gothic objects” that Bosworth eventually persuaded Rockefeller to purchase from Barnard. Barnard helped erect it in the gardens at Kykuit in 1919 (see fig. 27). Today it leads into the Unicorn Tapestries Room of The Cloisters.



27. Rockefeller's five sons with an unidentified driver on the grounds of Kykuit in the 1920s, with the portal from Poitou (fig. 26) behind them



28. *Pietà with Saints Nicholas and James the Great*. Vignory workshop, Burgundy, France, 1500–1525. Limestone, 11 ¼ x 11 ⅞ x 5 ½ in. (28.6 x 30.2 x 13 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1926 (26.63.36a). In 1926 Rockefeller gave the Museum forty-two sculptures that had been part of Barnard's “one hundred Gothic objects.” Some were exhibited at the old Cloisters before it closed in 1936. Over the years all but seven have been deaccessioned, and today only this diminutive but compelling sculpture is on exhibition at The Cloisters.

The tapestries were released to Bosworth, who removed them from the Anderson Galleries and placed them in a bank vault. On the same day, November 21, 1922, the *New York Times* announced that “a wealthy American” had bought the Hunt of the Unicorn tapestry series.

The acquisition would soon prove to be even more convoluted. Back in Paris, Larcade realized that a sale in New York might place him in tax jeopardy. He canceled the deal on January 8, 1923. On the same day the Internal Revenue Service sent Rockefeller a notice of a tax lien and an assessment of \$586,898 (based on the perceived gain between the declared value of \$110,000 and the purchase price of \$1,100,000) against Edouard Larcade inasmuch as Rockefeller may have had “possession of money and other property in which the said Edouard Larcade may have some right, title, claim or interest.” Having established that the tapestries were imported free of duty as antiques and that no sale had taken place, the Internal Revenue Service vacated the lien on the following day. Arrangements were then made to transact the sale in London. Under Bosworth's supervision, the tapestries were placed in a zinc box that was soldered shut and packed in a trunk that was in turn sealed and placed aboard the Cunard liner the *Berengaria*. On February 8, 1923, shortly after the tapestries arrived in London, the sale document was signed by Edouard Larcade, witnessed, and sealed before the United



29–30. Left: The Unicorn Tapestries installed in the Gothic Room in Rockefeller's house at 10–12 West Fifty-fourth Street, late 1920s or early 1930s. Rockefeller gave the tapestries to the Metropolitan in 1935. Right: Postcard of the Hall of the Unicorn Tapestries in The Cloisters, late 1930s. The four central tapestries are hanging on the north wall of the gallery facing the southern windows. In the late 1940s the windows were blocked, the gallery was divided to provide a separate room for the Heroes Tapestries, and a sixteenth-century window was installed on the north side looking into Cuxa Cloister.

States Consul General. On February 10 the tapestries were shipped back to New York, and when they arrived on February 19 they were placed, in their container, with the Equitable Trust Company for safekeeping while awaiting clearance from U.S. Customs.

In early March Rockefeller's lawyer spoke to the commissioner of Internal Revenue, who "simply asked if it was a fact that the tapestries had been sent back to London; and when we advised him that it was, he said that he had no further questions to ask and that the Government has no claim whatever for internal revenue taxes." Andrew W. Mellon, secretary of the treasury, instructed Customs in New York to release the tapestries, and the next day the *Times* announced that "it was evident that no attempt to evade the law had been made by Mr. Rockefeller's agents," and that "if a man of such prominence as John D. Rockefeller Jr. had not been the purchaser of the tapestries nothing would have been heard of the incident."

Two years later, in early 1925, Barnard was again trying to raise money; this time for his Rainbow Arch, a monumental sculpture to honor the fallen heroes of World War I (an ambitious project for which he produced a number of plaster models but which was never realized). To that end he was actively trying to sell his cloisters: the land, the building, and the collection (see fig. 31). Although he believed he could get more if the collection was sold piecemeal, if possible he wanted it to stay intact, in America. He had already floated offers to Rockefeller through Bosworth and the Metropolitan Museum to no avail. This time he turned to P. Jackson Higgs, an art dealer with premises at East Fifty-fourth Street just off Fifth Avenue. In March 1925 Higgs wrote to Rockefeller in the hope that he might acquire Barnard's Cloisters for the City of New York: "Unquestionably, 'The Cloisters' should be kept

intact in its present setting for here we have Gothic Art shown to students in the true atmosphere of the period."<sup>22</sup> Rockefeller was interested enough to ask Robert Gumbel, a longtime member of his personal staff, to obtain further details from Higgs. Higgs told Gumbel that the original collection inventoried in 1922, the additions made since then, and the building could probably be had for \$900,000. As Higgs became increasingly anxious over Barnard's continuing negotiations with other institutions, he asked Gumbel if Mr. Rockefeller could give "some expression of opinion. If negative, then I must not stand in Barnard's way; if positive, I must do everything in my power to prevent him from disposing of any part for this would destroy the very nature of the 'Cloisters.'" On the following day Gumbel replied, "It is quite clear to me that there is not one chance in a thousand of his being interested." Unfazed, Higgs wrote to Gumbel on April 15: "Mr. Barnard has definitely proved to me this morning that if 'The Cloisters' can be saved for New York, he is willing to forego what is for him a very large sum of money."

On April 6 Rockefeller wrote to Theodore Y. Hobby, who as curator of the Altman Collection at the Metropolitan from 1914 until 1958 advised Rockefeller on his porcelain collection and also served as a source of information concerning the Museum: "What, if anything, do you know about the Museum's attitude toward this matter or its judgment as to the value of the collection?" Apparently Hobby reported back that the Museum was indeed interested. Accordingly, Rockefeller wrote to Director Edward Robinson on April 21:

*On the assurances of yourself and your associates, brought to me by Mr. Hobby this morning, that the preservation intact in this city of Mr. George Grey Barnard's Cloisters and his entire Gothic collection is highly important from the point of*

*view of the art interest of the city, and understanding that the Museum is exceedingly desirous to retain this collection for the City of New York . . . , I am willing to contribute to the Metropolitan Museum whatever sum may be required up to Five hundred thousand Dollars (\$500,000.) to purchase Mr. Barnard's entire Gothic collection, the building and the land on which it is located. In addition, I will contribute to the Museum such capital sum as may be required, not to exceed Three hundred thousand Dollars (\$300,000.), the income of which will be available permanently for the maintenance and operation for the public benefit of the Cloisters. . . . I should like it understood that in the event of the Billings property on Washington Heights, which I now own, ever becoming a public park, if I so desired and were willing to pay the cost involved, the building, the Cloisters and the entire collection might be moved to this new site, continuing, of course, under the management of the Museum.*

On April 27, 1925, Robert W. De Forest, president of the Metropolitan, told Rockefeller, "I was determined to conduct the negotiation on the Museum side myself. There was no one else to whom I thought I could safely entrust it in dealing with so temperamental and indefinite a person as Barnard." De Forest visited Barnard to explain that the Museum was interested in buying the land and collections and that he, De Forest, was "prepared to take off [his] coat and raise \$500,000 to do it." Following the "somewhat rambling conversation" that ensued, De Forest agreed to \$600,000, he personally contributing the additional \$100,000. De Forest reported to Rockefeller that the matter rested there, although "this particular kaleidoscope is changing about once every ten minutes." Rockefeller wired back the same day that he would go to \$600,000.

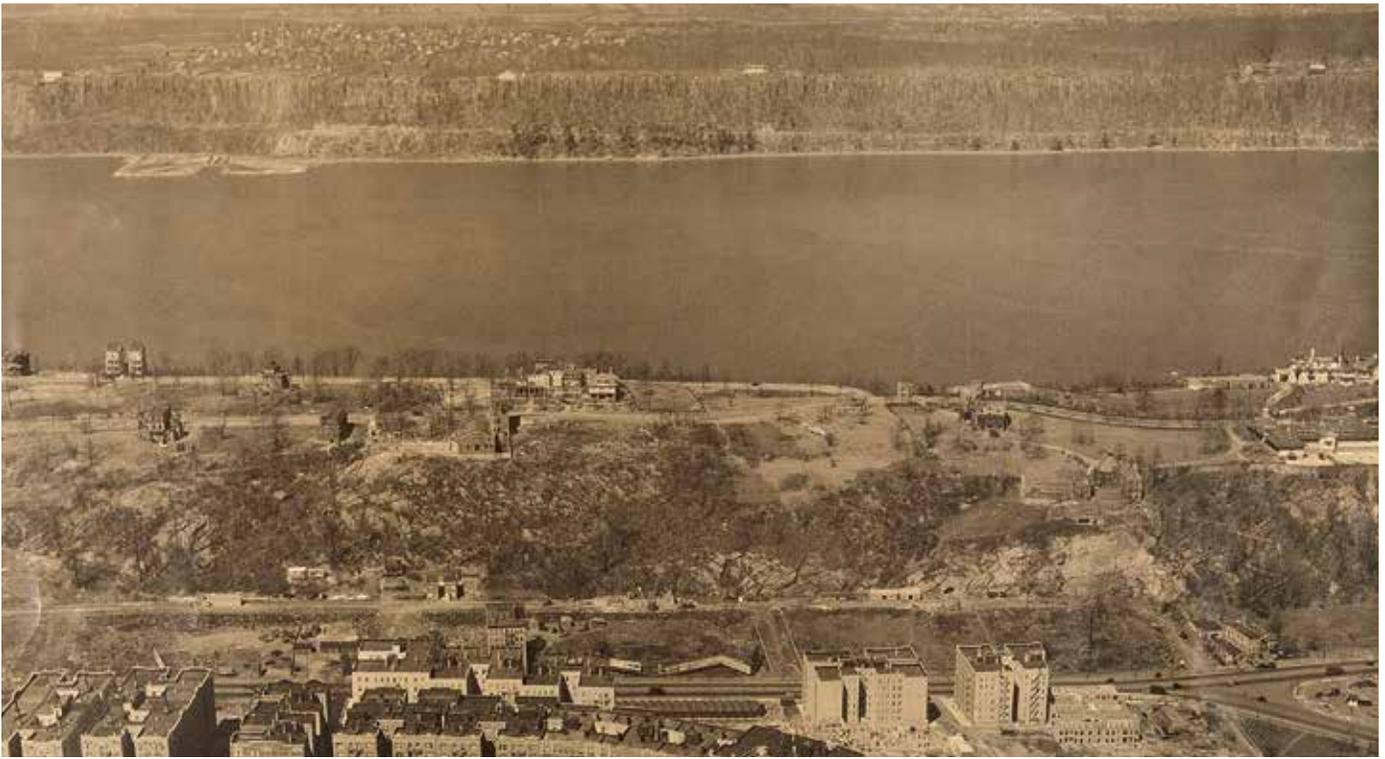
Barnard had meanwhile been talking with John Gellatly, a major patron and collector of the work of contemporary American artists (his extensive collection of paintings is now the core of the Smithsonian American Art Museum collection) who was passionately committed to keeping Barnard's Cloisters intact at its present site: "The Cloisters as erected and arranged by George Grey Barnard largely with his own hands, to me is the most beautiful and valuable contribution to art in modern times." Barnard appeared to believe that with Gellatly in the picture he might be able to leverage more money.

In early May Barnard informed Museum curator Joseph Breck, who had been the go-between in many of De Forest's negotiations with Barnard, that the negotiations were over and that he, Barnard, was now in discussions with other museums and would sell everything separately. De Forest passed this information on to Rockefeller, noting that he was

at a loss to know what would happen next, "for the psychology of our friend Barnard follows no predeterminable lines." He suggested that Barnard might reopen negotiations but for no less than \$700,000 and that he, De Forest, was willing to add \$100,000 to Rockefeller's \$600,000. If Barnard did not reopen negotiations, De Forest offered to do so through Gellatly. Rockefeller replied on May 11 with typically clear-sighted concision: "You see, Mr. Barnard has not been candid in telling Mr. Breck that the whole thing was off and the \$500,000 was all that had been offered, as Mr. Hobby told me, for, as you advised me, you left Mr. Barnard with the distinct understanding that if he gave you any encouragement you would undertake to raise \$600,000. In other words, you came away still in a trading position, with no doors closed. Mr. Barnard has arbitrarily announced that the doors are closed." He also stated that he thought Gellatly could play no useful role in their negotiations.

On May 15 Gellatly wrote to De Forest saying essentially that he was willing to pay Barnard an additional \$50,000 if Barnard would close the deal with the Museum for \$600,000, thus preserving "the beautiful poem carried out by the great sculptor's mind and heart and hands intact as at the present time in the position where he placed it." Considering this a sidebar, De Forest remarked to Rockefeller, "If Mr. Gellatly chooses to give anything himself, for himself, and not through the Museum, to Mr. Barnard, I assume this is a matter for him which does not directly concern either the Museum or you."<sup>23</sup> On the same day Barnard telephoned Breck to accept the Museum's offer of \$600,000 and notified De Forest to that effect. In the negotiations, the Museum insisted on the right to move the Cloisters to a new location should that prove desirable, in which case, it was agreed, the title to the land would revert to Barnard or his heirs. Rockefeller later offered to purchase back this right if the Museum so wished, which it never did.

On the 22nd of May Rockefeller received a message from De Forest advising him that the deal had been closed. (In fact, because Mrs. Barnard's signature was required and she was in California, the formal closing did not occur until July 7.) Rockefeller responded on May 28, sending De Forest a revised letter of pledge that no longer specified how the funds (shares yielding \$1,014,839.50) should be allocated: "It is my hope that if the collection should be bought a very substantial portion of this gift would remain, the income from which would be available for the maintenance, current exhibition and future enrichment of the collections." He noted that the amount was "somewhat in excess of the obligations assumed, giving the Museum a little leeway in the carrying out of the project."<sup>24</sup> The *New York Herald Tribune* headlined the purchase on June 13, 1925: "Museum Buys Barnard Cloisters: \$600,000



31. Aerial view of lower Washington Heights, ca. 1925–28. Barnard's Cloisters sits on the rocky and surprisingly barren knoll just to the left of center. To the south is the tall studio building on the northern end of the rectangular Nolan property, which was subsequently acquired by the Museum. Barnard's house at 700 Fort Washington Avenue abuts the northwest corner of his Cloisters. The buildings across the street belong to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart; the colonnaded structure perched over the Hudson behind them at the left is Inspiration Point, an extant landmark. Along the river at the right are the gatehouse of the Billings estate, the observation terrace over the arcaded entranceway, and Libbey Castle. Fort Washington Avenue, then curving west, intersects Northern Avenue, now Cabrini Boulevard, where Margaret Corbin Place is today. The Billings gatehouse is at this intersection, and Libbey Castle is across the avenue. At the far right, on the west side of the avenue, now Margaret Corbin Drive, is the Billings mansion, Tryon Hall, and its grounds, and on the east (near) side are the Billings stables and garage. In the foreground at the base of the escarpment is Bennett Avenue. See also fig. 40.

Given by Rockefeller Jr." Museum Director Robinson, who was vacationing in the Adirondacks, wrote to Rockefeller to express "the great gratification with which I learned of your increased generosity in the matter of the Barnard Cloisters. . . . You may be sure that the Museum will do everything it can to make the place the popular attraction it deserves to be." He reported that Breck had completed the inventory of objects, 917 of them, "including everything but the trees and the grass."

Joseph Breck (fig. 32) was named the first curator of The Cloisters. Breck had attended Harvard as an undergraduate, and while studying art history at the university's Fogg Museum in Cambridge had become close friends with Herbert E. Winlock, who would serve as director of the Metropolitan from 1932 to 1939. After graduation in 1907 Breck traveled in Europe for a year before returning to Harvard for graduate work. In 1909 he was appointed assistant curator of decorative arts at the Metropolitan under German scholar Wilhelm R. Valentiner, who had been hired by J. Pierpont Morgan. Breck resigned in 1914 to become director of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts (now the Minneapolis

Institute of Arts), but in 1917 he returned to the Metropolitan to replace Valentiner (who when war broke out had had to return to Germany) as curator of decorative arts, which in those days included European, American, and modern objects. Breck was highly knowledgeable on a broad spectrum of subjects, from Early Christian art to modern furniture design. His first assignment was the installation of the Morgan collection. In 1920, during the absence of the director, Edward Robinson, and again in 1931, following Robinson's illness and death, Breck was named assistant director of the Museum. In 1932 he was appointed director of The Cloisters.

It was immediately evident to both Breck and Robinson that charming though Barnard's Cloisters might be, with its candlelight and idiosyncratic installations, it was woefully inadequate as a branch of the Metropolitan.<sup>25</sup> However affecting, both the design and the arrangements of the art were products of an energetic free spirit who was unconcerned with art historical integrity. Constructed of brick walls with no insulation and a vast steel and glass skylight, it suffered from rudimentary heating with exposed pipes, incessant water incursion, weeping mortar joints, cracking cement

floors, haphazard installations, and no electricity, storerooms, or facilities for either staff or visitors. Rockefeller had few doubts, even before the site had been opened to the public, as to the desirability of eventually relocating the Cloisters. In late September 1925 he told Robinson that he thought it advisable “for the Museum to do at present only what is necessary for putting the buildings into sound condition, and such other work as might be required for a temporary occupation.”<sup>26</sup> De Forest therefore supported minor improvements or portable additions, both before and after the building and grounds officially reopened as a branch of the Metropolitan on May 3, 1926 (figs. 33–38), but he was exceedingly reluctant to approve any capital projects. The one notable exception was the purchase in 1928 of the Nolan property, a piece of land running 279 feet along Fort Washington Avenue that provided a buffer against encroaching apartment houses, an acquisition that Rockefeller approved but did not finance (fig. 39).

Rockefeller had long admired the rugged terrain of the northernmost tip of Manhattan, with its rocky outcroppings, wooded hills, and commanding prospects over the Hudson River and the Palisades. The area’s natural beauty was enhanced by its rich revolutionary history, as its highest point (also the highest point on the island of Manhattan) was the site of the last redoubt of Fort Washington, built in 1776 to defend the upper Hudson River against British incursions.<sup>27</sup> Known as Washington Heights, the approximately sixty-acre site was all the more attractive because it was the last substantial tract in Manhattan still unblemished by grid roads and high-rise buildings. As early as October 1915 Park Commissioner Cabot Ward had taken Rockefeller on a motoring tour of the property, and, according to a report in the *New York Times*, “the desirability of the site for a park was discussed.”<sup>28</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century nearly all of Washington Heights was divided between three estates (fig. 40). The northern property belonged to Walter S. Scheafer, a geologist from Pottsville, Pennsylvania, who purchased it in 1891 as an investment. Scheafer owned one of the largest coal mines in Pennsylvania and leased it to the Reading Railroad, which provided him with a monthly income of \$100,000. William Henry Hays had built a large country house on his slightly smaller tract south of the Scheafer property sometime prior to 1850 (figs. 41, 42). The remaining tract of land, extending south to a west–east line at the juncture of Northern Avenue (now Cabrini Boulevard) and Fort Washington Avenue, formed the estate of Cornelius Kingsley Garrison Billings. Billings acquired the lower eleven acres of his property in 1904 from William Libbey, a partner of the mercantile prince Alexander Turney Stewart, and by 1911 he had bought up a number of small lots along Broadway that added another fourteen acres



32. Joseph Breck, ca. 1917

(figs. 43, 44). A band of parcels at the south end of Washington Heights, immediately below the Billings estate, belonged to Jonas Marsh Libbey, son of William, the last vestiges of the original ninety-six-acre family estate that reached south to about 185th Street.

In the spring of 1916 Rockefeller discussed the prospect of acquiring the Washington Heights properties with his father. When in the fall of that year negotiations for the sale of both the Scheafer and Hays properties seemed promising, Rockefeller determined to proceed. “The more I have thought about the project,” he wrote to his father, “namely the purchase of the high land at the end of Fort Washington Boulevard [*sic*], the more the idea appeals to me. . . . I cannot but feel that this tract of land would make a magnificent addition to the City Park System.”<sup>29</sup> By the end of 1916 Rockefeller had acquired the Scheafer, Hays, and Billings properties (figs. 45, 46). On January 4, 1917, the *New York Times* announced that “Tryon Hall, on upper Riverside Drive and Fort Washington Avenue, one of the finest houses in the United States, has been sold by its owner, C. K. G. Billings, capitalist and sportsman, to a prominent New Yorker.” The article went on to say that it was understood that the property, or “at least a large portion of it, will be held intact by the buyer,” and that another source, “which could not be verified,” claimed that it “was to be used as a fashionable restaurant and road house, especially for automobile parties.” On January 6 the *Times* reported that the property would eventually be given “to the city for a public park” and declared that “no piece of land in the five boroughs or, in fact, in the East, is better adapted for a park.”

In 1917 Rockefeller wrote to Jonas Libbey suggesting that he donate his property to the park he was planning to



33–34. Museum members at a private opening of the Cloisters held on May 3, 1926. President De Forest had noted that, upon opening, the museum would be “practically as they were received by us from Barnard, except that the Cloisters garden will be in grass and flowers, and that the whole place will be cleaned up and planted.” The building was opened to the public the following day. Breck had indeed managed to clean up and plant the garden on the south side, where Barnard had displayed elements from the twelfth-century cloister of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa on a large raised platform erected perpendicular to the southern facade, which was undecorated save for six lean buttresses surmounted by gargoyle spouts and a slightly projecting “transept” with a shallow pediment penetrated by a single circular window:

develop. Libbey dryly replied that in regard to “the suggestion you do me the honor to make—a gift that is feasible for one may not be at all for another.”<sup>30</sup> The possible purchase of the parcels south of the Billings estate belonging to Libbey raised the thorny issue of Overlook Terrace, which ran along the edge of the bluff through a number of undeveloped lots, including three owned by Libbey, between Fort Washington and Bennett Avenues (see fig. 40). Overlook Terrace north of 190th Street, which had not yet been extended to Fort Washington Avenue, appeared on city maps as an authorized

but not yet constructed road. Rockefeller wanted the authorization annulled for the benefit of the park, but owners whose property values depended on the promised access of the imaginary road strenuously objected to any abrogation.

Rockefeller’s position was perfectly reasonable given his ultimate intentions, but Jonas Libbey may well have seen it as a tactic to force a sale of his land at a deflated price. A hearing to resolve the matter was scheduled on February 2, 1922, in the offices of Manhattan Borough President Julius Miller on the twentieth floor of the Municipal Building on

35. Postcard of the Cloisters’ south facade, 1926(?). Breck paved the walkways on the grounds with stone and added abundant, decorative flower beds. In Cuxa Cloister he created garth quadrants and laid flagstone paving over the concrete slab. When Breck introduced electricity to the main building, Barnard claimed the intrusion of the twentieth century had destroyed his “poem of the past, ‘when candle light quivered on the faces of saints.’ [Now wires are run] here in the heart of Virgin and Christ . . . they twist their ugly dead snake lengths from lanterns, to mount walls and cross altars.”

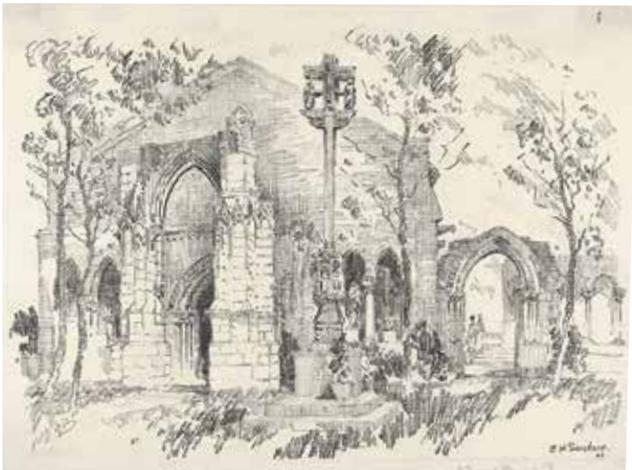




36. Entrance to the Cloisters grounds, May 1927. De Forest authorized a new gate into the property, designed by McKim, Mead & White, and a new set of wooden stairs leading from the street into the grounds. Breck also reinstalled a number of objects to greater advantage inside the building. Decrying change, Barnard had declared in October 1925 that Breck had “torn down and *moved out of this world* the spirit of peace and harmony, of gentle servitude and restful love that has been found and felt by tens of thousands. . . . Mr. Breck has *torn the heart out.*”



37. Cuxa Cloister, May 1927. The most ambitious change at the Cloisters after the Museum acquired it was completing the erection of Cuxa Cloister. Barnard had begun the process in 1907 working with Paul Gouvert, a Paris decorator and dealer who had arranged to reopen the original quarry of pink Languedoc marble and secured the necessary stone-cutters and masons. In June 1925 De Forest authorized a resumption of the project. Although Breck knew the cloister should be square in plan, he was restrained by the existing rectilinear platform. Gouvert sent a draftsman to New York to measure, draw, and number every element and compile the specifications of the new stonework. The work was completed over the winter of 1926–27 and Cuxa Cloister opened on April 1, a month shy of the Cloisters’ first anniversary as a branch of the Metropolitan. Attendance the first year was 54,423, even though the building was closed in February and March due to inadequate heating.



38. Edward Howard Suydam (American, Vineland, New Jersey 1885–1940 Charlottesville, Virginia). *Exterior View of the Entrance of Barnard’s Cloisters*, 1927. Charcoal, 11 5/8 x 15 1/2 in. (29.5 x 39.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum Accession (X.317.4). Suydam was an illustrator who contributed a number of views of American cities to books on travel and other subjects.



39. The Nolan property viewed from the south. The only building on the property when the Museum acquired it in 1928 was the studio Barnard had built on rented land. Because the future of the Cloisters was still in question, De Forest was reluctant to develop the property, but Breck was able to clean the grounds, prune trees, add plantings and pathways, and continue the stone wall along the length of the property on Fort Washington Avenue. Following Breck’s recommendations for improving the Cloisters after the addition of the Nolan property; the studio was demolished and a new service road was built to the building that had been constructed in 1927 to house the boiler and toilet facilities.



40. Washington Heights, based on maps compiled by City Improvement Record and Service Corp., 1918-51. In the early 1900s the area that was to become Fort Tryon Park was called Washington Heights. Before it was subsumed into the West Side Highway and extended north with the construction of the Henry Hudson Bridge, upper Riverside Drive followed what is now the Dyckman Street exit. Fort Washington Avenue curved west to intersect Northern Avenue, where Corbin Circle is today and ran north, looping around the site of The Cloisters, then turned east, exiting into Broadway below Sherman Avenue. Overlook Terrace north of 190th Street appeared on maps as an authorized road but was never constructed.



41–42. Left: The former Hays residence, ca. 1927–29. The house stood just within the western reach of Margaret Corbin Drive. Behind the house is the juncture of Margaret Corbin Place, with the greenhouses beyond. The Cloisters was to be sited just beyond the greenhouses. Here the road curved down to Broadway at such a steep grade that it was often used to test “the hill climbing abilities of automobiles,” according to the *New York Times* of January 6, 1917. Right: The Hays house, under different ownership, was converted to a motorists’ resort known as the Abbey Inn.

Park Row. No decision was handed down, but fifteen minutes after the meeting ended Libbey plunged to his death from the roof outside the restaurant on the twenty-fifth floor. Although his brother Frederick speculated that Libbey had committed suicide, the *New York Times* reported that he appeared to be “in feeble health.”

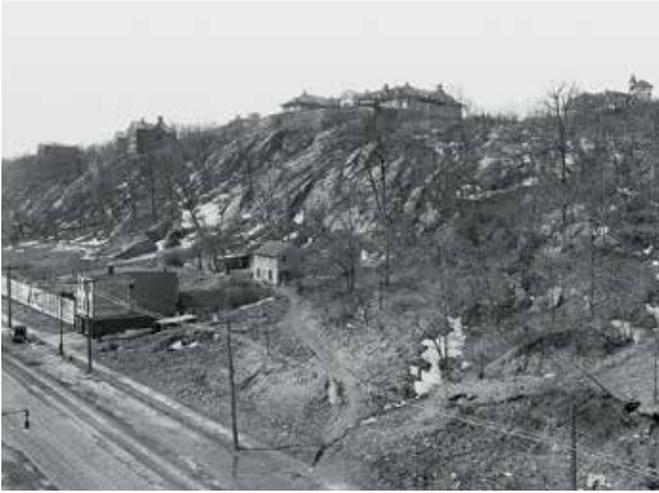
In September 1922 the Empire Mortgage Company (formed to handle Rockefeller’s real estate transactions) bought the land in northern Manhattan from Libbey’s estate for \$286,997, and over the next four years the company closed on various

small parcels along Broadway and Bennett Avenue. By early 1926 Rockefeller had spent more than \$2,472,000 on properties in Washington Heights. Taxes on the land amounted to \$467,476, but the tax burden would have been more onerous had not Rockefeller successfully challenged the assessments. The ruling justice commented that “iridescent dreams cannot be substituted for present value of land for purposes of taxation, and property largely on a side hill could not be assessed at a high figure, on the theory that locations for houses might be blasted out of the hillside.”<sup>51</sup>



43 (above left). Tryon Hall, the Billings estate; completed ca. 1911, destroyed by fire 1926. Billings, certainly the most colorful of the Washington Heights estate owners, was in his time one of the wealthiest men in the United States. On the west side of Fort Washington Avenue, on a parcel acquired in 1901, Billings built Tryon Hall, his expansive mansion in Louis XIV style. The mansion was surrounded by formal gardens and meticulous landscaping, and to the north were structures housing a “natatorium,” or indoor swimming pool; a bowling alley; and squash courts, along with a series of enormous greenhouses. To reach Tryon Hall from Riverside Drive, which had been paved and upgraded in 1908, Billings constructed a switchback drive, paved with special bevel-edged bricks to provide traction for horses’ hooves, that ran under an enormous arcaded entranceway. The arcade and the stone pillars of the gated entrance survive to this day as a curious relic on Riverside Drive at the level of 193rd Street. The gatehouse, once offered as a residence to the curator of The Cloisters, is now used by the Parks Department.

44 (above right). The Billings gatehouse, Tryon Hall, and Libbey Castle, originally called Woodcliff, ca. 1926. Augustus C. Richards built the foreboding turreted and crenellated Gothic Revival villa designed by Alexander Jackson Davis between 1855 and 1857. Davis also designed a coach house and stables. The property later belonged to William Libbey, who used it as his summer home until he sold it to Billings in 1904. Other owners included General Daniel Butterfield (1831–1901), a Civil War hero credited with composing the bugle call “Taps,” and William Magear Tweed (1823–1878), the notoriously corrupt mayor better known as the “Boss” or “Grand Sachem” of Tammany Hall. The house was demolished in 1931.



45. The lower Washington Heights properties, seen from a building on the east side of Broadway, ca. 1914–19. From left to right along the top of the Heights are Barnard's Cloisters before his abutting house was built; the carriage house and other outbuildings of Libbey Castle; the castle, its crenellations and tower just visible; the Billings stables and garage; and Tryon Hall.



46. View of Washington Heights from an undeveloped site east of Broadway near Arden Street, ca. 1919. The buildings, from left to right, are Tryon Hall, Billings's indoor swimming pool, a secondary house on the Hays estate, and the Abbey Inn, formerly the Hays house. The road in the middle ground is Fort Washington Avenue, then known as Abbey Hill Road. A billboard advertising the inn can be seen at the right.



47. The Hudson River and the Palisades viewed from the tower of The Cloisters, October 2012. The columnar structure of the rock cliff resembles a palisade defense. The acquisition of the land in New Jersey up to the state line took more than thirty years and was achieved almost entirely with private funds.

The oft-repeated anecdote that Rockefeller also bought all of the Palisades, the majestic scarp rising to 540 feet on the New Jersey side of the lower Hudson River, to preserve the splendid view from The Cloisters (fig. 47) is not entirely correct. The land acquisition was actually made possible through the generosity of another of the Metropolitan's most beneficent patrons, J. Pierpont Morgan, over thirty years before either The Cloisters or the park that surrounds it existed. In



48. Palisades quarry and dock, ca. 1897. The rock was used for everything from ballast for sailing ships to Belgian blocks for paving the streets of lower Manhattan. In the early twentieth century vast amounts of it became gravel to make concrete for the construction of roads and high-rise buildings. On September 25, 1895, the *New York Times* lamented the destruction of the Palisades, doubting "that any laudable sentiment about natural beauty will prevent dealers in rock from laying their hands upon this large and convenient storehouse of their material."

1900 the governors of New York and New Jersey formed an Interstate Park Commission to protect the Palisades from the relentless quarrying that was threatening to destroy them (fig. 48).<sup>32</sup> In June 1901 the commission asked Morgan (who regularly witnessed the devastation from his yacht as he sailed up the Hudson to Cragston, his estate near Highland Falls) to underwrite the purchase of twelve miles of shoreline and vertical rise. Rockefeller did, however, play a critical



49. Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects. *Proposed Public Park, New York City N.Y., Preliminary General Plan*, May 1930. From the start Rockefeller seems to have been perfectly satisfied with Olmsted's vision of the park. The road pattern and plaza were later altered, the proposed Bennett Avenue extension never happened, and many other refinements were made, but the initial concept held. The museum plan was based on the scheme of the firm of John Russell Pope, which was abandoned in 1931. The initial study phase was followed by the complicated and costly creation of accurate topographical maps and a one-inch-to-thirty-foot scale model. This work went slowly, as Rockefeller had no intention of beginning site work in earnest until he had an agreement with the City of New York. Indeed, Olmsted's contract to develop the park was signed only in June 1930, a few months after the City accepted a park not yet built.

role. For decades in the early 1900s he purchased land from the edge of the plateau inland. With the advent of the automobile and then the George Washington Bridge in 1931, the Interstate Park Commission proposed what is now the Palisades Interstate Parkway. Key to the realization of the parkway was Rockefeller's gift in 1933 of some seven hundred acres of land, which had all along prevented any development on top of the Palisades.

Although Rockefeller had acquired the last parcels of land for the park in Washington Heights by 1926, another decade would pass before Fort Tryon Park, as it was called at Rockefeller's request, was built.

Rockefeller first asked Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., son of the man who had designed New York's Central Park and head of Olmsted Brothers, then the preeminent landscape architecture firm in America, to consider the development of the Washington Heights properties in 1922. At the time Rockefeller was debating whether to develop the land for real estate or for parkland. Olmsted replied that he thought both uses were possible, with the park along the western side, overlooking the Hudson, and the real estate on the east, overlooking Broadway and beyond. Nothing came of these discussions, and the project was dormant until early 1927,

when Olmsted was again asked to consider the project. In May of that year he submitted a nineteen-page report that set forth, with remarkable vision and thoroughness, the basic concept on which the entire project would be developed (see fig. 49).

Although it is hard to imagine given the verdant lushness that is Fort Tryon Park today, the Washington Heights property in the early 1930s was remarkably barren and windswept, with massive rocky protrusions, precipitous escarpments on all but the south side, and meager deposits of topsoil (see fig. 50). Deforested in revolutionary times, the severely eroded landscape had been repaired to varying degrees by the three main landowners. Nonetheless, the undeveloped Heights provided a unique vantage, with unparalleled views up and down the Hudson and the Palisades to the west and over the Dyckman Valley and Inwood Hill to the north. (The view over the city to the east, in Olmsted's estimation, was "not at all inspiring.") Along the western edge of the park Olmsted envisioned long stretches of walkways at various levels of the escarpment (figs. 51–53), with numerous rest spots from which visitors could enjoy the stunning views. None of these vistas, some framed and some expansive, were to be obstructed by construction of any sort beyond



50. Site of The Cloisters in May 1933, before construction had begun

retaining walls. The park's northern end was to be similarly treated, but its narrowness required shorter and steeper grades and obviated any overlooks with parking for automobiles. On the east side gently graded walkways would connect the plateau with Broadway and Bennett Avenue below. Rather than opening up vistas, trees and other plantings would obscure the views, allowing pedestrians to catch "merely broken glimpses into the valley through the foliage canopy," so that, as Olmsted put it, "the sense of luminous space beyond and below the foliage adds immensely to the charm of the intimate little sylvan scene in which one finds oneself, almost regardless of the ugliness which lies beyond that luminous open space."<sup>55</sup>

Rockefeller closely followed the progress of the park, and he had much to say about the placement of roads and walkways, entrances and terraces, and, indeed, all the structural aspects of the project. At times he disagreed with Olmsted. Rockefeller thought, for instance, that a single



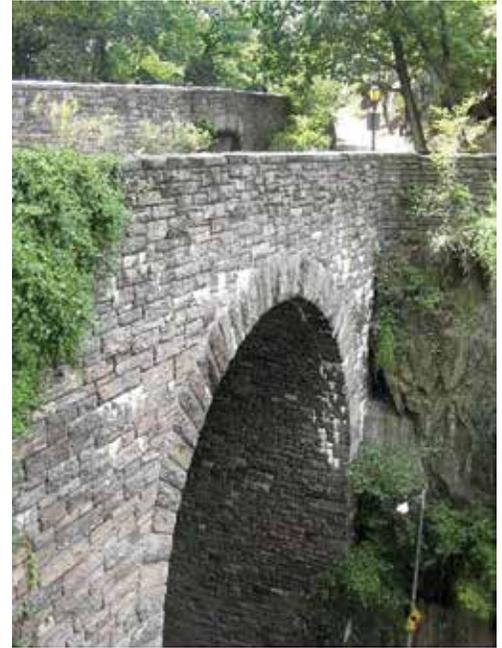
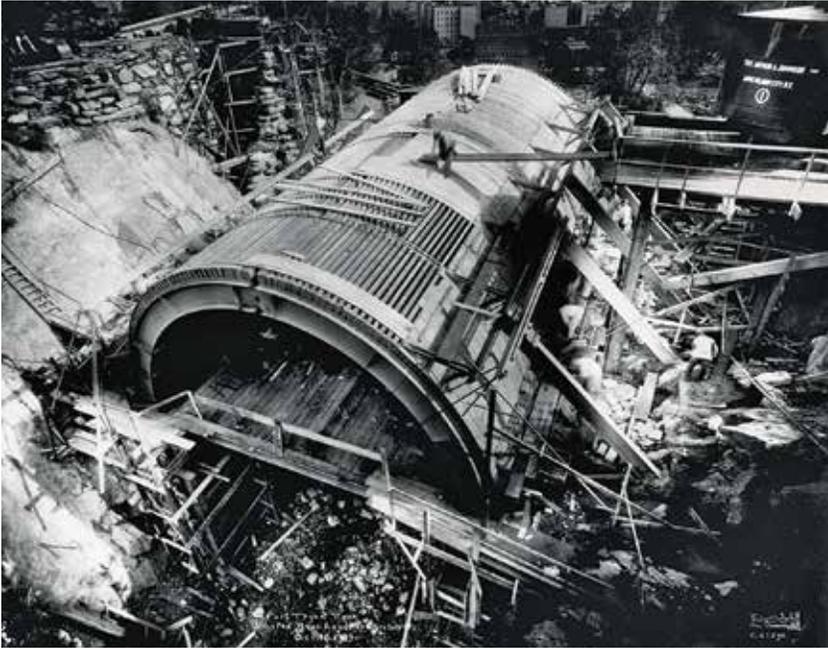
51. Parapet construction, looking northwest, November 4, 1932. Olmsted wished all the walkways, rest spots, and viewing areas to conform to the natural contours as much as possible. "To accomplish this," he said, "will involve on the steeper slopes a large amount of wall building carefully fitted to the existing trees and rocks and banks, to the directions and the qualities of the views to be maintained or created, and to plantations yet to be made on places where sufficient soil can be kept or placed when the wall building is done."



52. Walkway along the western edge of Fort Tryon Park below Linden Terrace, April 2012. Olmsted wished to emphasize the rugged and precipitous landscape, particularly on the west and north escarpments. These natural features he enhanced "by a combination of the natural and blasted crags with high, bold retaining walls [producing] a series of cliffs irregularly broken by narrow shelves, with sparse but vigorous foliage burgeoning from the shelves and crannies . . . , a bold and dominant rocky mass impending above the Drive, strikingly differentiated from the wholly tree-clad slopes to the south and on Inwood Hill."



53. Walkway through the Heather Garden of Fort Tryon Park, looking south toward the George Washington Bridge, April 2012. The relatively flat and open space near the top of the plateau contrasts with the rocky scarp of the walkways just to the west. Olmsted wanted pedestrians and motorists to be separated as much as possible. Most of the main road runs along the eastern flank just below the spine of the park, and the several but relatively small and unobtrusive parking areas were placed to provide motorists with fine views. All the land otherwise was given over exclusively to visitors on foot.



54–55. Left: The cut through from Riverside Drive into Fort Tryon Park during construction, October 18, 1933. Olmsted recognized that easy access from Riverside Drive was essential but difficult. The solution he arrived at, a cut through a massive wall of rock in the middle of the park's length, was the simplest plan, but it was labor-intensive and costly. The expense was somewhat mitigated by the use of the excavated rock in the construction of all the park buildings, rest areas, terraces, retaining walls, and revetments. Right: The cut through from Riverside Drive, 2012. The crossings for pedestrians and vehicles were separated so that neither can see the other.

bridge was sufficient over the cut that would provide access from Riverside Drive through the massive wall of rock in the middle of the park's length (see figs. 54, 55); Olmsted wanted two, one for cars and one to the west for pedestrians. The solution was a compromise: only one span was constructed over the massive cut, but it was two-tiered, with the crossing for pedestrians below the one for cars so that neither could see the other.

There is nothing in the record to indicate Rockefeller's views on the landscape design or the plantings and gardens. Some sixteen hundred species of trees (see fig. 56), shrubs, and herbaceous plants, a veritable botanical garden and arboretum, were introduced into the fifty-six-acre park, which boasted a mile of roadways, eight miles of paths, ten acres of lawns, four park buildings, a restaurant, a playground with a shelter and wading pool, a grotto, and a rustic folly. According to an accounting of July 21, 1939, preserved in the Rockefeller archives, the total cost of the park was \$6,257,780.<sup>54</sup> In his brief speech at its opening on October 12, 1935, Rockefeller admonished his fellow citizens not to abuse the park, observing that Americans often "fail to distinguish between liberty on the one hand, a priceless possession, and license on the other hand, an individual and social menace."<sup>55</sup>

Shortly after acquiring the three largest Washington Heights properties, on June 13, 1917, Rockefeller had written to Mayor John Purroy Mitchel, "I am the owner of about fifty acres of land in the upper part of the city. . . . This tract, including

the buildings on it, seems to be particularly well adapted for use as a public park, to which purpose it is in my mind to dedicate it."<sup>56</sup> In an interview published in the *New York Times* three days later Rockefeller stated, "All my life I have thought of what a fine park this land would make. When I was a boy I used to ride horseback up around Dyckman Hill [also called North Hill, the current site of The Cloisters], and I thought even then that the hill should be owned by the city as a show place. I was riding there one day last Fall and the thought came to me again." It would take eighteen years of protracted negotiation with four mayoral administrations before Rockefeller's vision would be realized.

The conditions of the initial offer of the gift required the City to develop and maintain the park and to acquire all the land west of Riverside Drive to the Hudson and east to Cabrini Boulevard. Rockefeller intended, however, to deed his land to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission with the idea of Washington Heights serving as a gateway to the parkland on the west side of the river, the New Jersey and New York parks to be connected by the regular service of the Dyckman Street ferry. Mayor Mitchel approved the plan, but his successor, John F. Hylan, rejected it. The Hylan administration was reluctant to take on the Washington Heights property as a public park given the strained fiscal condition of the City in the wake of the First World War, and as land values were increasing dramatically, it was also loath to remove so large a tract from the tax rolls. The Palisades Interstate



56. Planting one of scores of mature trees in Fort Tryon Park, ca. 1933–34. The wooded stands in the park include planes, sycamores, yews, American elms, beeches, poplars, oaks, ashes, hickories, sassafras, lindens, hawthorns, willows, privets, magnolias, dogwoods, various pines, rhododendrons, laurels, viburnum, hemlocks, and tulip trees.

Park Commission also declined the offer, because its jurisdiction did not extend to the east side of the Hudson. By the early 1920s the economic climate had improved, and the City embarked on acquiring the land that would become Inwood Park as well as the land on the west side of Riverside Drive, then called Fort Washington Park, thus preserving the view from the Washington Heights properties. In June 1923 Hylan appointed a commission to open discussions with Rockefeller, and in January 1925 he wrote to Rockefeller, “Needless to say any contribution of additional park lands is of so direct a benefit to the people and to the city that an offer of this nature should be eagerly availed of.”<sup>57</sup> But his sentiment was never acted upon, in spite of Rockefeller’s repeated offers.

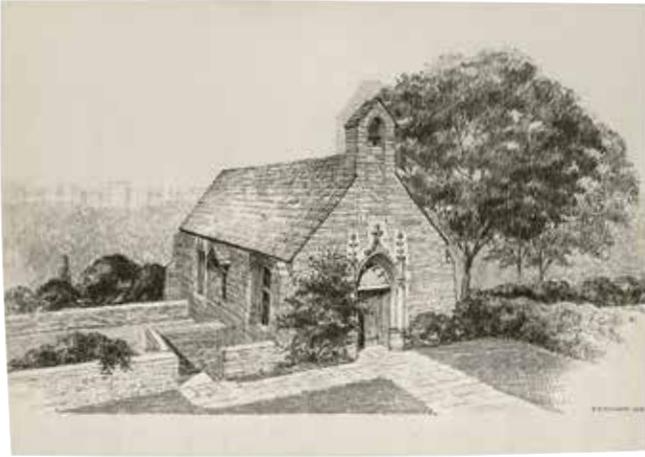
Rockefeller visited the next mayor, James J. “Beau James” Walker, to discuss the park project soon after Walker took office in 1926, and on June 5, 1929, he sent the mayor a formal proposal. To overcome a major concern of the City, Rockefeller had decided to develop the park at his expense. He would deed to the City all of the Washington Heights properties except for a 4.2-acre site reserved for the

Museum should it decide to relocate the Barnard Cloisters, and in return the City would install the necessary utilities, pave the roads, prohibit commercial traffic, provide for adequate security, and maintain the park adhering to the Olmsted plan. The Board of Estimate accepted the offer on November 24, 1930, and the formal agreement between Rockefeller and the City was published on February 9, 1931. The deeds for the park were delivered to the City on December 30, 1931. Before Walker could make good on his promises vis-à-vis the park, however, scandal paralyzed City government. Walker, facing indictment, abruptly resigned in September 1932 and fled the country. The park’s infrastructure—electrical, lighting, water, and sewage—was finally delivered, under the direction of Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, after Fiorello LaGuardia was elected mayor in 1933.<sup>58</sup>

On February 17, 1930, Rockefeller wrote to Museum President Robert De Forest to say that if the Board of Trustees was in agreement, he was prepared to proceed with his plan to move the Cloisters to a new site in the park being developed by Olmsted Brothers. He asked the board’s approval to take several preliminary steps, including seeking the legal closure of Overlook Terrace above 190th Street and the extension of 190th Street from Overlook Terrace to Fort Washington Avenue (see fig. 40). As this extension would run through the Nolan property, which the Museum had only recently acquired as an addition to the existing site of the Cloisters, Rockefeller asked the trustees to agree to sell that property to his Empire Mortgage Company at the original price plus 6 percent interest, with the understanding that at the time of closing Rockefeller would convey to the Museum the deed for a parcel of land in the new park. The sale of the Nolan property closed in June 1932, and the deed to a four-acre-plus parcel in Fort Tryon Park was conveyed to the Museum soon after. The Nolan property was never developed beyond minimal landscaping. The City closed Overlook Terrace, and the 190th Street extension ran through the site of Barnard’s studio on the Nolan property. Joseph Breck had proposed a picturesque chapel as a focal point for the south end of the property (fig. 57).

In his lengthy letter to De Forest of February 17, 1930, Rockefeller detailed his proposal for the new museum:

*I have taken the liberty of keeping you informed from time to time with reference to the plan which I have been formulating for several years to present my property on Washington Heights, consisting of some fifty acres and including the Billings Estate, to the City of New York for use as a public park. In connection with the development of this project I have told you that it would give me pleasure to give to the Museum as a site for a new building to accommodate the collections now housed in The Cloisters a piece of land about*



57. P. S. Graham for Mayers, Murray, Phillip and Associates. *Architectural Rendering of Proposed Chapel*, 1928. To provide a focal point to the south end of the Nolan property Breck advocated the construction of a small exhibition space in the form of a chapel at the bottom of the lane running along the east side of the property. De Forest initially approved the plan for the chapel, but the plan was abandoned when a survey of the property revealed that part of the lane and the proposed site of the chapel partially overlapped Overlook Terrace as it still appeared on city maps.

six acres in area located in the northerly portion of the proposed park. This location has been selected as an appropriate site to be crowned with a museum building because of the commanding overlook which it affords over the Hudson River Valley and the entire northern part of the city. If the plan should prove acceptable to your Board of Trustees, I am prepared to contribute the entire cost of a new building to occupy this site in accordance with plans acceptable to your Board and to me, the idea being suitably to house with provision for reasonable growth the Gothic collection at present displayed in The Cloisters. I am also prepared to pay the expenses of moving the Cloister collections and installing them in the new building.<sup>59</sup>

De Forest asked if the new Cloisters should be considered a Gothic museum, incorporating some of the Museum's collections, and if Rockefeller would be willing to reconsider his earlier decision not to serve on the Museum's Board of Trustees. To the first question Rockefeller replied, "I am fully in accord with your view that the new cloisters should be the Gothic collection of the Museum, present and prospective." To the second, he again responded that "in view of the duties and responsibilities which are upon me, I would not be justified in assuming this further obligation, stimulating and enjoyable though it would be."<sup>40</sup>

Rockefeller's gift was accepted by the Museum's board on February 26, 1930. The trustees further placed on record their appreciation of its great generosity and their wish "to

congratulate Mr. Rockefeller . . . on the realization of a vision which he has long entertained."<sup>41</sup> De Forest maintained his long-established policy of absolute deference: "I have sought by this letter to leave everything from this point on in your hands, as I think you would wish." In answer to an inquiry by William Sloane Coffin, who in 1931 would become the next president of the Museum, De Forest said that he thought it "a little premature to consider administration of Mr. Rockefeller's Cloister. He has chosen an architect. He has been in consultation of these points and his architect has been with Breck. . . . At present, I am quite sure he wishes to boss the job."

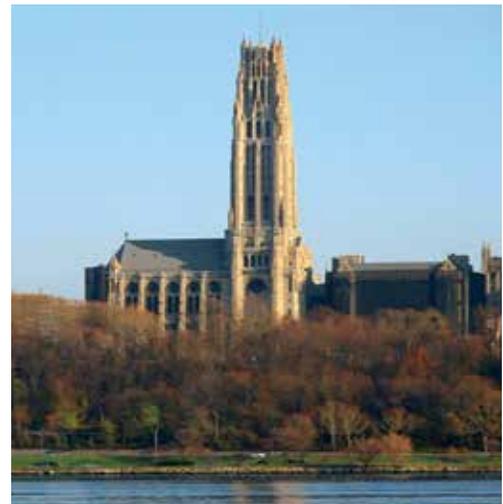
From the beginning, the park had been foremost in Rockefeller's mind; the new museum, at least initially, was merely an interesting adjunct. He told Museum Director Robinson in late 1930 that the erection of a museum on the northerly hill was "the most satisfactory of all the proposals made for the enhancement of the attractiveness of the park. . . . Should any questions arise in planning the interior of the building that involved the sacrifice of its exterior appearance, I should be strongly inclined to favor the latter rather than the former. However, to the fullest extent possible consistent with its external beauty and charm, I should want the building to be internally adapted to its purpose of providing an appropriate home for the present Cloister collection and such additions as may be made to it." He also stated, for the first time, that the new Cloisters should be thought of not as a museum of Gothic art but as one of medieval art. Establishing the fundamentals of The Cloisters' future acquisition policy, he went on to say that

*the building should always be thought of as a small Museum interesting because of the high quality of its exhibits rather than their quantity. With that in mind I should hope that as the available space for exhibition purposes is used up it might be the policy of the Museum thereafter when better material was available to replace the less good exhibits thus improving the collection rather than enlarging it. So far as concerns anything which I have given to the present cloisters or may give, the trustees of the Metropolitan Museum will always be free to trade or otherwise dispose of any of the objects so given when by so doing the quality or balance of the collection can be improved.<sup>42</sup>*

Rockefeller had originally engaged the architectural firm of John Russell Pope to develop a concept for the new museum. The resulting design, by Otto Eggers (figs. 58, 59), was a rather fanciful and romanticized Gothic abbeylike confection based loosely on the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, a monument that had captured Rockefeller's imagination when as a youth he had toured England on a bicycle (see fig. 76). Even though he had expressed satisfaction with the direction in



58–59. Otto Reinhold Eggers (American, 1882–1964). *Preliminary Design for The Cloisters: View of the West Elevation and View of the Interior of Cuxa Cloister*, 1930. Graphite pencil on mat board, 22½ x 35½ in. (57 x 90.2 cm); graphite pencil and watercolor on mat board, 15⅞ x 21 in. (40.4 x 53.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 2012 (2012.474, 476). On February 5, 1931, Rockefeller wrote to Museum Director Robinson, “I have reached the conclusion that a matter so important as this should be studied from several points of view before a final decision is arrived at. . . . I have, therefore, asked Mr. Pope’s office to regard his studies as terminated.”



60. Riverside Church, New York. Designed by Charles Collens and Henry Pelton, completed 1930

which the project was developing, Rockefeller fired Pope in early 1931. Pope’s rather abrupt dismissal occurred not long after the completion of Riverside Church (fig. 60), another of Rockefeller’s architectural projects. The Neo-Gothic temple of interdenominationalism, conceived by Rockefeller and Baptist minister Harry Emerson Fosdick, was finished in the fall of 1930. Rockefeller had commissioned architect Charles Collens, a New Yorker educated at Yale and at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris who was a partner in the Boston firm of Allen & Collens, and his associate Henry Pelton to travel Europe in search of inspiration for the church’s design. The building’s derivative architecture (the model for the nave, choir, and main entrance was the thirteenth-century Gothic cathedral at Chartres, and the

tower echoes the ones on the cathedral at Laon, near Paris, but taken to overbearing proportions) was met with critical derision. In 1934 Lewis Mumford, the acerbic critic of the *New Yorker*, numbered it among the architectural “dead colossi” of the century. Although to what degree he was familiar with the details is unclear, Mumford’s reaction in 1931 to the prospective museum in Fort Tryon Park had been no more enthusiastic: “Mr. Rockefeller, it will be recalled, wishes generously to replace the Barnard Cloisters, the most perfect museum in the city, with a ‘genuine’ Gothic building—something like the Riverside Church, one has every reason to fear.” He had not changed his mind four years later, when under the category of “Saddest News” in the art world he singled out the “approaching replacement of the original Barnard

61 (top right). "Great Central Tower and Transepts, Monsempron, Lot. Romanesque." Albert A. Chadwick, *Little Churches of France: Their Origin, Their Characteristics, Their Periods* (New York and London: Harper, 1931), pl. 43. Collens told Rockefeller that he thought the new building for The Cloisters "should present a well-studied outline done in the very simplest form of stonework growing naturally out of the rocky hill-top. After looking through the books in the Boston Athenaeum . . . we found a building at Monsempron in Southern France of a type which would lend itself in a very satisfactory manner to such a treatment."

62 (bottom right). Charles Collens for Allen & Collens Architects. *Rendering of the Proposed Cloisters*, 1931. Watercolor. This is among the first of Collens's renderings to incorporate Monsempron into the design. Satisfied with the progress, Rockefeller informed Collens on April 23, 1931, "It would be my hope that by July 1st your solution of this problem would have been carried to a point which would enable us to decide whether we wanted to adopt it as the solution of the problem." Well before that deadline Collens had produced a revised model and Breck had devised a preliminary installation plan for Rockefeller's consideration.

Cloisters with an expensive piece of copybook architecture in the manner of Riverside Church."<sup>43</sup>

In January 1931 Rockefeller asked Collens to present his proposals for the solution of "the museum problem."<sup>44</sup> It may seem curious that he would approach the architect of the much-criticized church, but Collens was resourceful and obliging and Rockefeller was comfortable working with him. Perhaps influenced by Breck, who from the beginning had favored a monastic compound with chapels but no large ecclesiastical structure, Rockefeller was specific with Collens about his aversion to the kind of cathedral-like structure the Pope-Eggers scheme represented. On February 7, 1931, he wrote to Collens:

*The whole theory of the development of the park . . . is that it is an old fortification. . . . The theory for the development of the museum was originally that it should be an old fortified castle, the ruins of Kennilworth [sic] Castle having been something of an inspiration in working up the design. Later it has been thought that cloisters, of which we have several for this museum, are not appropriate to a fortified castle although a chapel would be. On the other hand, both cloisters, a chapel and other rooms or buildings would be appropriate to a fortified monastery. Toward this type of structure we have, therefore, been leaning. Since we have in mind to call the museum not a gothic museum but a medieval museum, we have felt quite free to use such architectural forms and traditions as would generally come within that broad scope without seeking to select and adhere to any one particular type of gothic. . . . The immediate site for the museum, which is the high, rocky, wooded hill . . . north of the Billings place, . . . suggests something picturesque and romantic in outline rather than a highly sophisticated type of building.<sup>45</sup>*

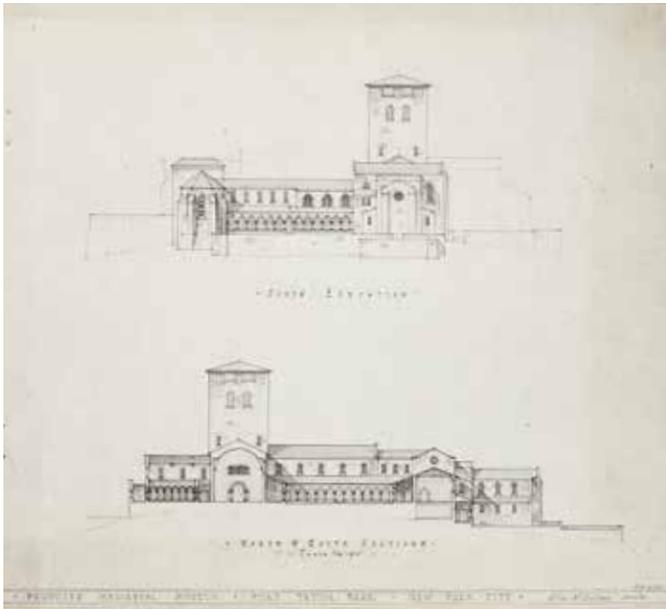


Collens found in a book of French church architecture a picture of the modest church of Saint-Géraud in the Aquitaine town of Monsempron (fig. 61). The forms and massing of Monsempron are clearly reflected in his early plan for the

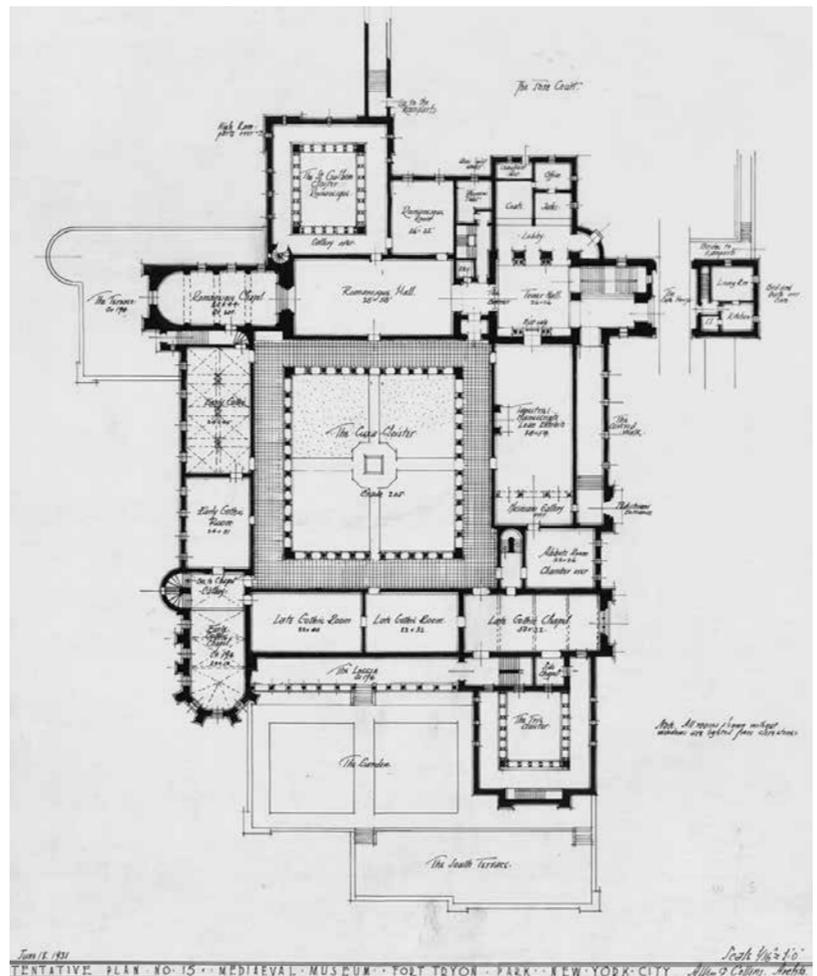
northeast elevation of The Cloisters (see fig. 62). After carefully examining the site and talking at length with Breck, Collens concluded that "it would be preferable to use a simple Benedictine or Cistercian plan." Also in consultation with Breck, he developed a concept for the internal organization of the building:

*I feel that the best result in a museum of this sort the visitor should be introduced to an atmosphere in which all the rooms are carried out in the period of architecture characteristic of the exhibits, . . . to make it possible for the visitor to pass through a series of rooms, starting with Romanesque, going through Early Gothic, then into Late Gothic, in which all the details, ceilings, the fenestration, and the other features are carried out in strict archaeology so that the entire atmosphere is without any disturbing feature. . . . I also think that the building should be self-enclosed, that the rooms should be not too large in size, and that the whole plan and atmosphere should be of a most intimate character.<sup>46</sup>*

In a very short period, from February to May of 1931, in what must have been a frenzy of activity, Breck and Collens produced a plan for The Cloisters (see figs. 63, 64) that was



63. Charles Collens for Allen & Collens Architects. *Proposed Mediaeval Museum, Fort Tryon Park, New York City: South Elevation, North and South Sections, June 19, 1931.* Pen and ink. This is one of a series of elevations and sections based on the scheme illustrated in fig. 64 that were completed just before Collens departed for Europe in July 1931.



64. Charles Collens for Allen & Collens Architects. *Tentative Plan No. 15, Mediaeval Museum, Fort Tryon Park, New York City, June 18, 1931.* Collens and Breck decided that the floor plan should be arranged "with the Cuxa cloister as a central motif and with the Trie and Saint-Guilhem cloisters placed in subservient locations; that the buildings grouped around this main central cloister should be domestic in character and the ecclesiastical element confined to a tower or three small chapels in which the better altar pieces and church carvings could be placed. It also developed that these cloisters could not be bent [rectangular] in plan, but must be square. I also felt that the exterior of this building should . . . present a well-studied outline done in the very simplest form of stonework growing out of the rocky hill-top."



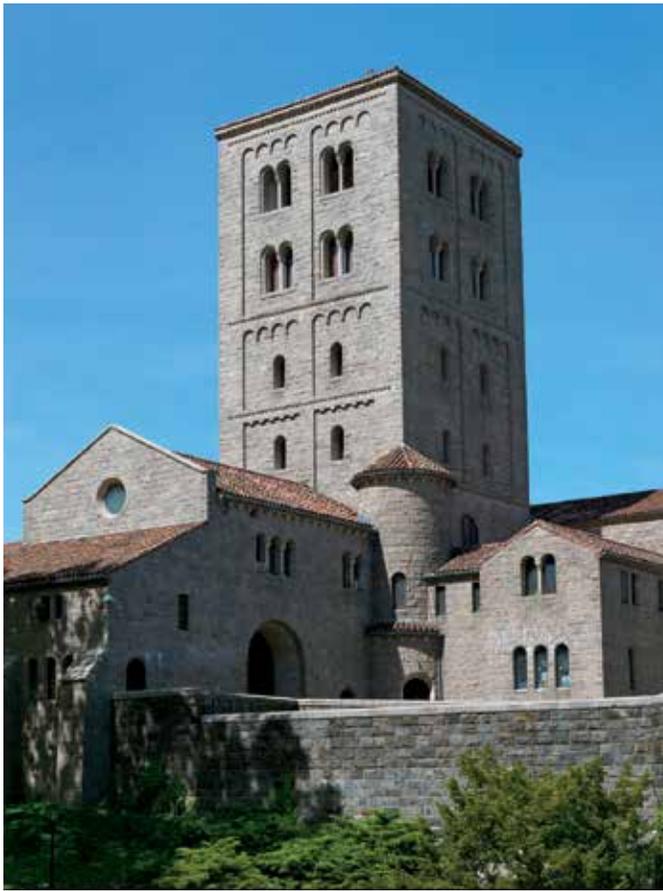
65. Twelfth-century church of Saint-Géraud at Monsempron, Lot-et-Garonne, France, on which Collens modeled the northeast elevation of The Cloisters. It must also have struck Collens that the transept facade of Barnard's Cloisters bore a marked similarity to the spare pedimented elevation of the forward wall of the Monsempron church and was similarly punctuated only with a large circular window.

conceptually and visually the essence of the building as it is today. The defining elements of the initial plan were a profile and massing of Romanesque architecture on the northeast based on the church at Monsempron and a Gothic chapel at the southwest corner linked by a low-profile building and anchored by a tower. Galleries would flow around all four sides of the Cuxa Cloister, providing a chronological and stylistic progression of rooms from Romanesque through Late Gothic. Small-scale ecclesiastical structures, including a Romanesque chapel, were to be linked by rooms of a more domestic nature. The Trie and Saint-Guilhem cloisters were to be roofed over and the Cuxa Cloister left open, fitted with bronze-framed glazing for the winter months.

By the end of May Breck had sailed to Europe to spend the summer months there, and in July Collens set off on a trip through the south of France, financed by Rockefeller, to study medieval architecture. He traveled from Bordeaux to Perpignan, visiting the many sites in between and accumulating voluminous notes, photographs, sketches, postcards, and measurements. In his lengthy report to Rockefeller, which included a sketchbook (now lost) with dozens of numbered drawings, he detailed his observations and explained how he intended to incorporate them into the design of The Cloisters. What he saw at Monsempron not only provided a model for the northeast elevation of The Cloisters but, more importantly, offered a medieval exemplar of a Gothic chapel harmoniously incorporated into a Romanesque structure (figs. 65–68). “The fact that this chapel was found

66. Thirteenth-century chapel built on to the church of Saint-Géraud at Monsempron. Collens noted that in place of the “original circular [Romanesque] chapel . . . there had been built a Fifteenth [sic] Century Lady Chapel the exact size, dimension and character suitable for the Gothic Chapel in the Museum plan. . . . The exterior of the nave . . . has some very thin buttresses and a few interesting corbels under the eaves. All of this could be incorporated into the Museum plan.”

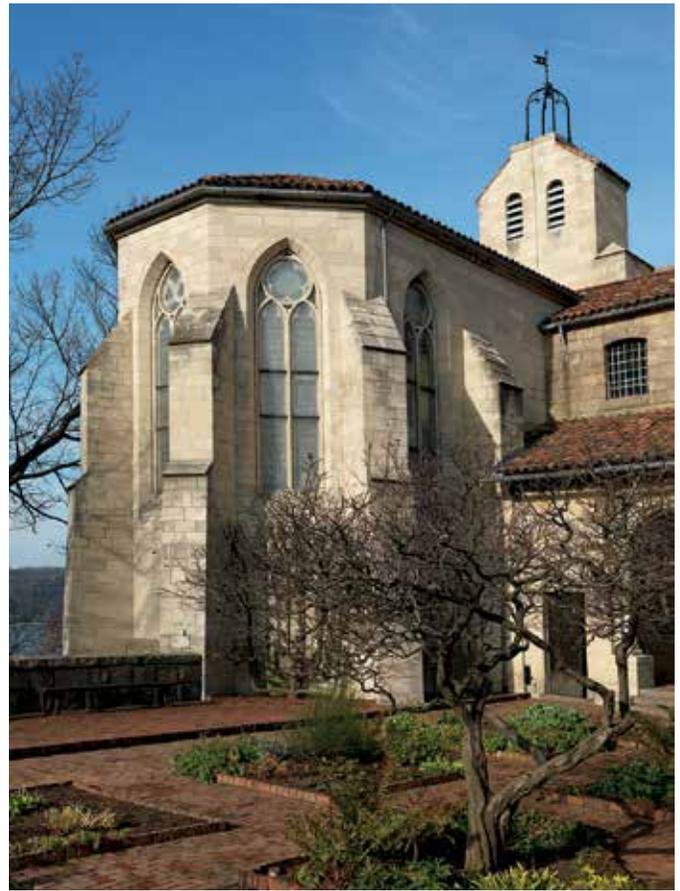




67. The Cloisters from the northeast, May 2012

in conjunction with the Monsempron church," he told Rockefeller, "makes it doubly valuable." The seminal impression produced by the illustration of Monsempron was reinforced upon his visit there, and as a result this aspect remained unchanged in his designs for The Cloisters. When he saw the church at Monsempron Collens did feel, however, that the tower was "a little too uninteresting and should be treated with a small amount of detail and stonework about the arches."<sup>47</sup> The tower of the monastery at Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, near Perpignan (fig. 69), whence had come the columns and capitals to construct the new museum's central cloister, provided the inspiration for the fenestration detailing. Collens's observations also informed numerous other details in his design of The Cloisters. The Romanesque arches in the church of Saint-Trophime at Arles, for example, provided the model for the treatment of both the masonry arches and the small rectilinear openings in the upper level in Saint-Guilhem Cloister (figs. 70, 71).

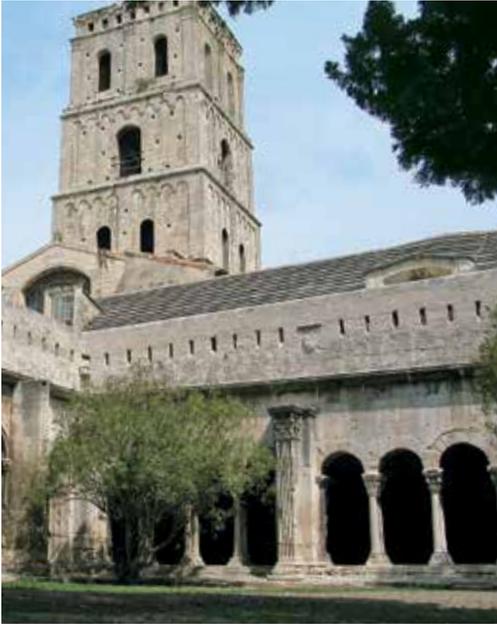
As the planning for the new Cloisters moved rapidly forward in the early 1930s, Rockefeller was offered opportunities to acquire additional architectural elements to enhance the new structure. In December 1931 the New York dealer Joseph Brummer informed him that he had just erected in



68. The Gothic Chapel of The Cloisters from the southeast, November 2012. During the months Collens was on his global trip in 1932–33, Breck revisited and revised endless details of the plans, working with Collens's associate Harold B. Willis. To achieve proportional harmony while retaining the rather hefty buttresses modeled on those of Monsempron, Breck heightened the Gothic Chapel, enlarged the windows, and added side windows in the apsidal bay, while retaining the compressed pitched roof of Monsempron.



69. Twelfth-century Benedictine abbey of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, commune of Codalet, Pyrénées-Orientales, France. In his design for The Cloisters Collens incorporated the two simple arched windows on the third and fourth floors of the Cuxa tower, as well as the pair of double-arched windows with central columns on the upper floors and the cusped stonework over the windows of the fourth and sixth levels, but he chose to retain the simple pitched roof of Monsempron.



70. Cloister of Saint-Trophime, Arles, 1150–1200



71. Saint-Guilhem Cloister, The Cloisters (see also fig. 9)

his gallery a doorway that was “a most magnificent architectural sculpture, with its original polychrome” (fig. 72, and see back cover illustration). Breck, who had also seen it, told Rockefeller that he considered the portal “an extraordinary monument of early mediaeval French sculpture, surely the most remarkable thing of its kind that has ever come on the market in recent years.” The price was \$325,000, and Breck had obtained a two-month option. After inspecting the portal, Rockefeller allowed that it was “beautiful, but the mutilations distract seriously from my enjoyment of it. In view of its condition, I cannot feel that it is worth anything like the price Brummer asks. . . . Personally I should feel that \$200,000 was a very round sum to pay for the arch, and even if it were offered at that price I am not prepared to say that I would be disposed to buy it.”

On January 11, 1932, Rockefeller wrote to Brummer to propose that he exchange the portal, which he intended to add to the collection of the Metropolitan Museum, for the *Wounded Amazon* (fig. 73), a first- or second-century Roman copy in marble of an original Greek bronze of around 450 to 425 B.C. that he had bought through the dealer in March 1930 for \$141,110. “Should you care to entertain the idea of an exchange,” he told Brummer, “I would be willing to give you \$25,000 in cash and the Amazon statue for the Gothic portal.” Through Breck, Brummer declined, saying that he would lose too much money. Rockefeller asked Breck to ask Brummer what terms he would accept. Breck admonished Brummer to “consider whatever proposition you make very carefully. Times are bad, and we must think of values today quite differently from what we did a few years ago.” On January 16, 1932, Brummer



72. Portal from the abbey of Moutiers-Saint-Jean, near Dijon, as installed in the Brummer Gallery in New York City in 1931 (for the doorway as it is installed in The Cloisters, see the back cover). Burgundy (Côte-d’Or), France, ca. 1250. White oolitic limestone with traces of paint, overall 15 ft. 5 in. x 4 ft. 7 in. (4.7 x 1.4 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1932 (32.147), 1940 (40.51.1, 2). The dealer Joseph Brummer considered this one of the “masterpieces of architectural sculpture, and no museum or private collection in the world, not even in France, has its equivalent.” The Museum acquired the doorway in 1932, the standing jamb column figures in 1940.

wrote to Rockefeller to say that he would be willing to accept the *Wounded Amazon* at the purchase price, but \$25,000 was too little. "In comparison with the portals of cathedrals in France," he said, "our thirteenth century doorway is very well preserved. . . . Almost all the cathedrals in France . . . have been damaged and restored." Rockefeller countered that he might be willing to increase the cash offer to \$50,000, and Brummer replied that even with the "tentative offer of \$50,000 cash," the distance between their positions remained "too great to admit of negotiations." When Rockefeller sternly reminded Brummer that he had not offered \$50,000, but merely indicated that he might be willing to, Brummer agreed to lower his price to \$300,000 plus the *Amazon* "at the price you paid for it, plus our commission of 5 percent, and all expenses to bring it here, as well as the cost of the marble pedestal made for it." Rockefeller's office replied that Mr. Rockefeller saw "no basis upon which a trade can be made."

Unaware of the ongoing negotiations, Breck was puzzled to see a notice in the newspaper toward the end of April reporting that Brummer had taken out a large mortgage on his Fifty-seventh Street properties. Around the same time, Brummer again approached Rockefeller. He was now prepared, "owing to the financial situation in which I find myself," to accept \$50,000 and the *Amazon* for the portal. Rockefeller refused. Three months later Brummer extended his offer again, having in the meantime negotiated the sale of the sculpture to the Museum for \$42,500, roughly \$100,000 less than Rockefeller had paid two years earlier. Knowing now that both the *Amazon* and the portal would go to the Museum, Rockefeller replied simply, "I on my part agree to the terms of this trade and have authorized my office to carry it out."

Rockefeller acknowledged to the newly appointed director of the Metropolitan, Herbert E. Winlock, that he had driven a very hard bargain. Brummer had received \$92,500 for the Moutiers-Saint-Jean doorway, less than a third of the reduced value he placed on it, a circumstance that only dire financial pressures at the depth of the Depression could have mandated. The whole affair appears to have weighed upon Rockefeller. Several years later he admonished James Rorimer, who was then engaged in one of his negotiations with Brummer, not to press so hard. "I would not want to make a purchase from any dealer at a price which I felt left him feeling a little sore. . . . I think in the long run to do so is not good business and apparently Mr. Brummer feels that he is being pushed too far." Rockefeller advised Rorimer to offer him a little more rather than force him to close a deal "under protest."<sup>48</sup>

The acquisition of two other exceptional medieval monuments seemed eminently possible for a time but failed to materialize. That the pilgrimage church of Saint Leonhard in Tamsweg, Austria, should even have contemplated selling its



73. Statue of a Wounded Amazon. Roman Imperial, 1st–2nd century A.D., copy of a Greek bronze statue of ca. 450–425 B.C. Marble, H. 80¼ in. (203.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (52.11.4). Rockefeller had originally placed the statue in the front hall of 10 West Fifty-fourth Street, but he later apparently decided that a bare-breasted female was inappropriate to confront guests as they entered the house.

famed *Golden Window*, by any standard a national monument, to Breck for \$50,000 in the summer of 1930 reflected the financial desperation of the times, as did a plan orchestrated by Bosworth to make the chapel of Saint Hubert at Chauvirey-le-Châtel, a fine but modest example of Flamboyant Gothic architecture (see figs. 74, 75), a gift of the French nation to the Museum in gratitude for Rockefeller's funding of the postwar restoration of major monuments. That scheme ultimately fell victim to politics, local fervor, and construction schedules.

In September 1931 Rockefeller had officially appointed Collens the architect of The Cloisters. To oversee the development of plans for the new museum and its construction, a Building Committee was established consisting of Rockefeller; his son Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller; Trustee George Blumenthal, who would act as chair; Breck, then acting director of the Museum as well as curator of decorative arts; Collens; the general contractor Marc Eidlitz & Son; and Raymond Fosdick, one of Rockefeller's personal lawyers who was charged with the general supervision of the development of the Washington Heights properties. The first meeting was held at Blumenthal's residence at 50 East Seventieth Street on November 18, 1931. Collens presented his plans, sections, and elevations, with the caveat that they were preliminary. The committee authorized a 1/8-inch scale model. When it met again on April 15, 1932, the committee viewed the model and the revised plans and determined that except for a few minor details they were



74. Chapel of Saint Hubert, Chauvirey-le-Châtel, Franche-Comté (Haute-Saône), France, photographed ca. 1930. Limestone, ca. 1485. With the fall of the Flandin government and the objections of the local citizenry widely trumpeted in the press, the move to declassify the chapel as a national monument stalled. The villagers and others sent petitions directly to Rockefeller, and when a strange man was seen taking measurements of the chapel, watchmen were posted. Later, Rorimer claimed to be that stranger.



75. Model of The Cloisters incorporating the chapel of Chauvirey-le-Châtel, ca. 1935. The Flamboyant Gothic chapel would have fleshed out the architectural chronology of the building as a pendant to the Gothic Chapel. After talking with his friend Georges Huisman, director general of fine arts, Bosworth believed that the French government would eventually approve the gift of the chapel. At Rockefeller's insistence Museum President George Blumenthal informed Huisman in February 1937 that the Museum could no longer accept the chapel without seriously interfering with the construction of the Cloisters museum. Rorimer had been concurrently negotiating for another chapel, the Romanesque apse from the church of Saint Martín at Fuentidueña, near Segovia, Spain, that was his and Collens's "Scheme B." Although the prospects looked dim in 1937, the Fuentidueña Chapel was finally installed in The Cloisters between 1958 and 1961.

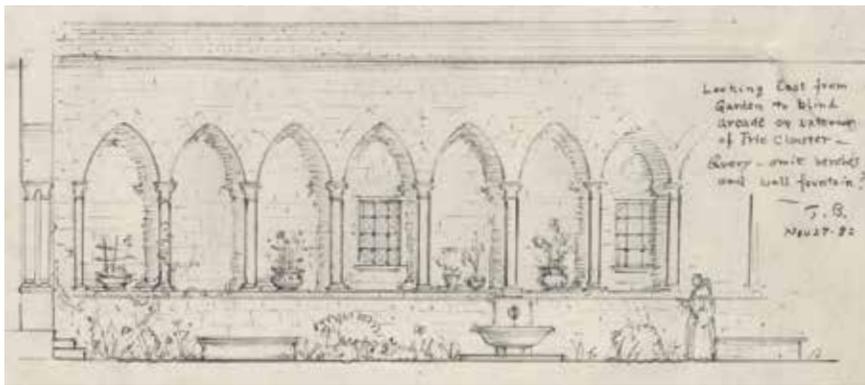
ready to be placed before the Museum's Board of Trustees. Three days later the board approved the model and detailed blueprints of The Cloisters.

On May 2, 1932, Rockefeller wrote in confidence to William Sloane Coffin, president of the Museum. The work on Fort

Tryon Park, he said, was a major undertaking that would cost "at least a couple of million dollars" and might take another year or eighteen months to complete.<sup>49</sup> He was considering whether to delay construction of the building until the park was finished. Although the word is never mentioned in any of



76-77. Left: Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire, England. Right: The Cloisters from the southeast during construction, September 29, 1934. Using the slender buttresses of Kenilworth as a model, Breck added a series of similar buttresses to the exterior of The Cloister, opening retrained apertures in between. The choice of model was no doubt made in deference to Rockefeller's fond memories of the English monument.



78. Joseph Breck. *Two Sketches for Bonnefont Cloister and Medieval Garden*, November 27, 1932. A gifted draftsman, Breck made innumerable studies of every aspect of the building. As the marginal note on the sketch at the left indicates, he relentlessly stripped away any superfluous details. His quadrant plan of the Bonnefont garden was based on fifteenth-century manuscript illuminations.

Rockefeller's correspondence concerning The Cloisters, the Depression loomed with menacing uncertainty. In August he told Nelson, "I am not ready yet to say anything definite about when it is likely I shall want to start work on the Museum. I think it hardly probable that anything will be done this fall or before the spring, and that does not mean that it will necessarily be begun at that time." Consequently, Collens decided he would take a long-overdue vacation. He traveled around the world from December 1932 until mid-March 1933.

"With the careful thought which your office will give the details," Rockefeller had told Coffin in the spring of 1932, "and the added and worthwhile opinion which Mr. Breck's study of them will bring to bear, I feel sure the result will be satisfactory to me." But Breck's continuing refinement and alteration of the plans (see figs. 76–80) began to wear on his

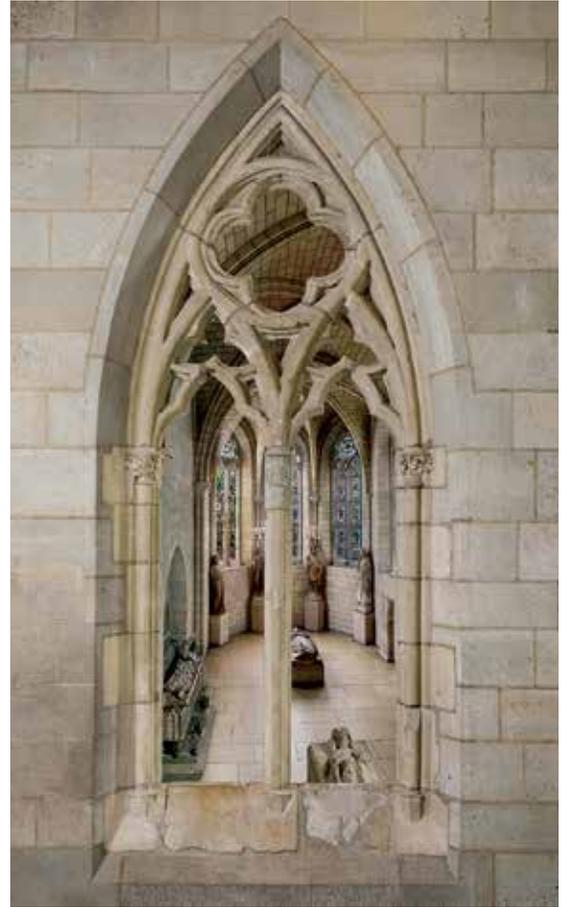
patience. "The difficulty of this whole matter is that Mr. Collens is away on a trip around the world and that Mr. Breck is making all these changes in conference with Mr. Willis [Collens's associate Harold B. Willis], . . . who realizes that he has been departing from the understanding which Mr. Collens has, but has been more or less forced to do so as a result of Mr. Breck's insistence. . . . Of course I am glad to have the plans improved, but the radical changes which Mr. Breck is making should have been made before we authorized the making of working drawings and large scale details." It was the expense of revising the drawings that grated on Rockefeller, who was under the impression that the plans had been finalized by late 1931. He asked Nelson to look into the matter. "I have been through the correspondence," Nelson told his father, "and was unable to find any statement from



79–80. Left: Allen & Collens Architects. *Rendering of Saint Guilhem Cloister*, February 13, 1933. Right: Joseph Breck. *Rendering of Saint Guilhem Cloister*, February 1933. In late February 1933 Breck sent this watercolor to Rockefeller with a note saying that he and Willis recommended replacing the high roof and clerestory windows in Saint-Guilhem Cloister—the solution Rockefeller initially preferred (see fig. 79)—with a simpler skylight roof. "By substituting a skylight for a solid ceiling . . . the sculpture is properly illuminated, since the light falls in a natural way; the visitor has the sense of being in the open; and his attention, consequently, is not attracted to the modern superstructure." Breck's design was approved on March 31, 1933.



81. Marriage panels of Wilhelm von Weitingen and Barbara von Zimmern. Sulz am Neckar, Swabia, Germany, 1518. Pot-metal glass with vitreous paint and silver stain, each 24 x 16½ in. (61 x 41.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1930 (30.113.5, 6). Breck, ahead of his time, understood that stained glass as an architectural art was equally important to the integrity of the new building as the sculptural elements it was to incorporate. He bought many other panels, all of which were glazed into the windows of The Cloisters. Both he and Collens wanted domestic elements, such as these windows, interspersed among the monastic.



82. Double-lancet window from the church of La Tricherie, near Châtellerault, between Tours and Poitiers. Poitou-Charentes, France, ca. 1275–1300. Limestone, 13 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft. ⅝ in. (4.1 x 2.1 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1934 (34.20.1). Before he died in August 1933, Breck reserved this window, which is carved on both sides, when it was offered for sale by the New York dealer Joseph Brummer. Rorimer chose to place it at the south end of the Early Gothic Hall, looking into the Gothic Chapel.



83. *Lion Passant*. Burgos, Castilla y León, Spain, ca. 1200. One of two fresco panels from a room above the chapter house of the monastery of San Pedro de Arlanza, near Burgos. Fresco transferred to canvas, 10 ft. 11 in. x 11 ft. (3.3 x 3.3 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1931 (31.38.1a, b). The monastery had been sold by the Spanish government in the nineteenth century before the frescoes were discovered. In 1931, through a dealer in Barcelona, Breck was able to secure the two finest, this lion and a dragon, both with their dadoses of fish and fantastic creatures. He argued that they would provide "a superb illustration of a branch of mediaeval art that is scantily represented either in existing monuments or in museums, . . . offering a colorful contrast to the sculpture which forms so large a part of the collection."

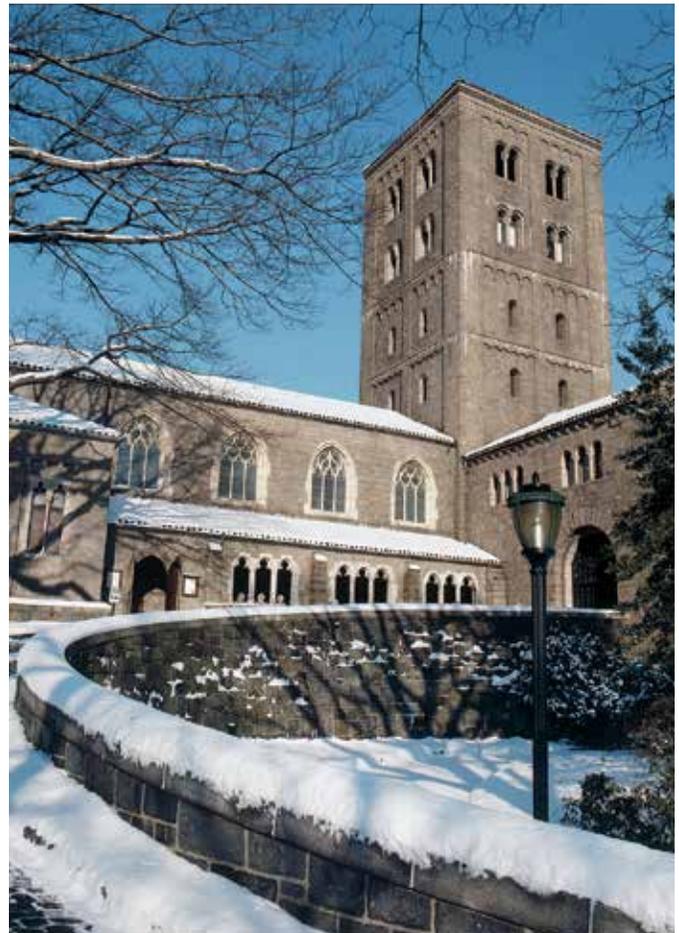


84. Salle de Musique in the park of 15, boulevard de Montmorency, the Paris residence of financier George Blumenthal, ca. 1930. Blumenthal was first a trustee and then, from 1933 until his death in 1941, president of the Metropolitan. In early 1933 Breck wrote to Rockefeller that incorporated into the building were "various doors, windows and other examples of mediaeval stonework. Mr. Blumenthal . . . tells me that if he should decide to demolish the room . . . he would be glad to give any or all of the stonework, if it were wanted for The Cloisters." Breck visited Blumenthal in the summer of 1933 and selected elements to be incorporated into The Cloisters. This photograph is reproduced from Breck's copy of the brochure on the "music room," which he had marked up with measurements.

you or from me stating that at some particular time the plans had been accepted as final and that no further changes were to be made. Therefore, my conclusion is that Mr. Breck is justified in having continued with the development of the plans." Rockefeller then wrote to Willis to say that "since Mr. Breck apparently regards the plans as still merely in process of development, would it not be wise and in the interest of economy to discontinue any further work on the final drawings and full size details until Mr. Breck advises me that he has completed his study and is through making changes? I am desirous, as Mr. Breck is, to have the final plans as perfect as possible."

In preparation for the Building Committee meeting scheduled for March 31, 1933, Rockefeller instructed Willis, "You will be prepared at that time to show us in each instance what had been accepted at the last meeting of the Committee and what change Mr. Breck is now proposing. You will also have perspectives, showing what was and what is now proposed. If Mr. Breck has not completed the restudy of the plans, I think it would be much better to defer the meeting until he has; there is no slightest hurry so far as I am concerned. As I told you, I have no thought of starting construction this spring, probably not within another year. Therefore, we have all the time in the world to develop the working plans and details when Mr. Breck's restudy is finally completed."

Breck's evolving vision of The Cloisters was reflected in the innumerable alterations and refinements he advocated. He meticulously studied medieval sources and was determined to bring an intimacy and simplicity to the detailing of the building that eschewed any artifice or excess (see fig. 78). Whereas he was not prepared to compromise any aspect of the design, he became more systematic in documenting the approval process so as to avoid any further duplication



85. Four Flamboyant Gothic windows from the refectory of the Dominican monastery at Sens and nine arcades from the Benedictine priory of Froville installed in the east elevation of The Cloisters. Windows: Burgundy, France, 15th century; Limestone, H. of each ca. 11 ft. 6 in. (3.5 m). Arcades: Lorraine, France, 15th century; Limestone, H. 6 ft. 10 ¼ in. (2.1 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of George Blumenthal, 1935 (35.35.1-4, 5-13). The windows and arcades had been incorporated into the Salle de Musique George and Florence Blumenthal built on the grounds of their Paris town house (see fig. 84).



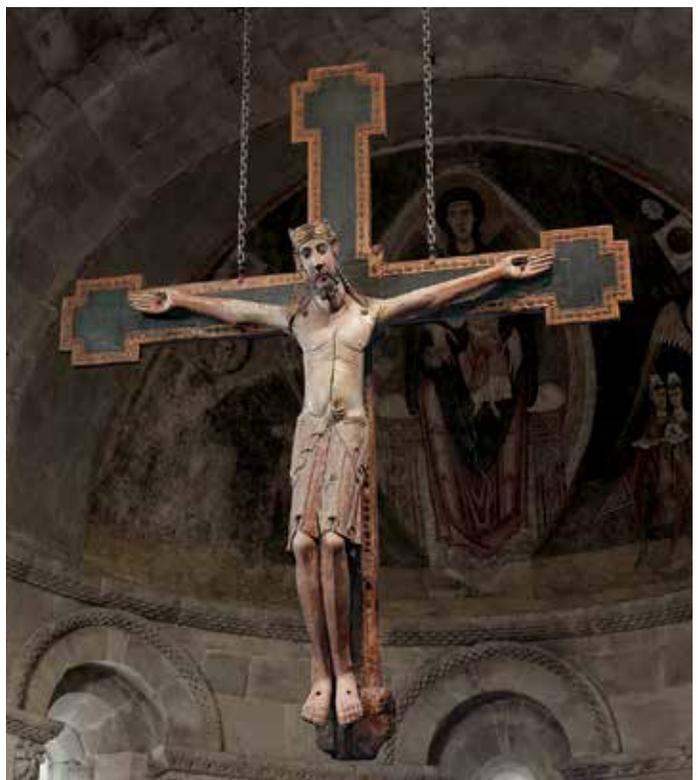
86. Twelfth-century chapter house of the Cistercian abbey of Notre-Dame-de-Pontaut in Aquitaine, France, ca. 1933. The abbey was partially destroyed in 1569 and was abandoned by 1791. By the nineteenth century the chapter house was being used as a stable. Paris dealer Paul Gouvert acquired the room in 1930. Because of Breck's interest, by 1933 Gouvert had had it temporarily erected outside Paris.



87. Chapter house from Notre-Dame-de-Pontaut installed at The Cloisters. Aquitaine, France, 12th century. Limestone and brick, 37 ft. 9 in. x 25 ft. 4 in. (11.5 x 7.7 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1935 (55.50). Like many other prospective acquisitions for The Cloisters, the chapter house was the object of protracted negotiations. In 1934 the price was set at \$235,000, but just over a year later the Museum acquired the ensemble for \$50,000. The purchase was negotiated by George Blumenthal, who was residing in Paris at the time. The high price, in Rockefeller's mind, was somewhat mitigated because the room replaced a gallery that would have had to be constructed.

of work and additional expense. On April 15, 1933, he prepared a ten-page memorandum itemizing the thirty-eight changes that had been approved at the Building Committee meetings of March 31 and April 14. Rockefeller wrote back the same day to ask if "with the action taken on these proposed changes . . . you have completed your study of the plans for the entire building and recommend their adoption as final, subject to no further change. . . . It is entirely satisfactory to me to defer further intensive work on the plans as long as you feel they are susceptible of improvement."<sup>50</sup> On May 23 the Building Committee unanimously agreed that the plans, elevations, sections, and scale drawings of The Cloisters represented "a final solution to the building problem and that no further changes will be made." Rockefeller authorized Collens to proceed with the alteration and completion of the working drawings, engineering and structural plans, and full-size details.<sup>51</sup>

Sadly, Breck would never see the realization of the plans into which he had poured so much of himself. In June 1933 he left for Europe on a study and buying trip for The Cloisters. On August 2, while visiting friends at



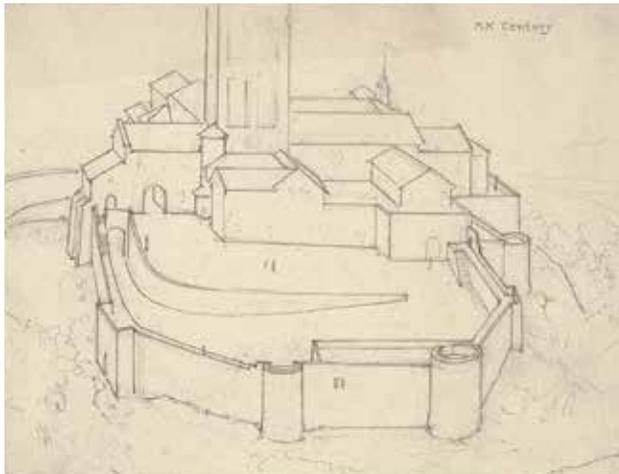
88. Crucifix. Palencia, Castilla y León, Spain, ca. 1150–1200. Corpus: white oak and pine with polychromy, gilding, and applied stones; cross: red pine, polychromy; H. of cross 8 ft. 6½ in. (2.6 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1935 (55.36a, b). When Breck enthusiastically proposed this masterpiece of Romanesque sculpture for the new building, Rockefeller, although he found it impressive, would not fund it because it was not architectural. He later relaxed this stricture and agreed to fund any medieval object the Museum recommended.



89. The Virgin Mary and Five Standing Saints over Predella Panels (detail; see inside covers). Middle Rhine Valley, Germany, 1440–46. Six stained-glass lancets from the north nave of the former Carmelite church at Boppard-am-Rhein in Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhein-Hunsrück-Kreis), near Koblenz, Germany. Pot-metal glass with vitreous paint and silver stain, each 12 ft. 4½ in. x 28¼ in. (3.8 x .7 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1937 (37.52.1–6). Rorimer told Rockefeller that he considered the Boppard windows “very brilliant in color and interesting in design, although of course they are not of the quality of thirteenth-century French stained glass” and reported that a Paris dealer had quoted a “special price” to the Museum of \$60,000. Even before he took over the project he had been studying his patron, for he closed with, “I should not recommend this purchase at so high a price,” a refrain that would be oft repeated by Rorimer and ever well received by Rockefeller. The windows were eventually acquired for \$28,380.02.

Villars-sur-Ollon in Switzerland, he suffered a heart attack and died, at age forty-eight.

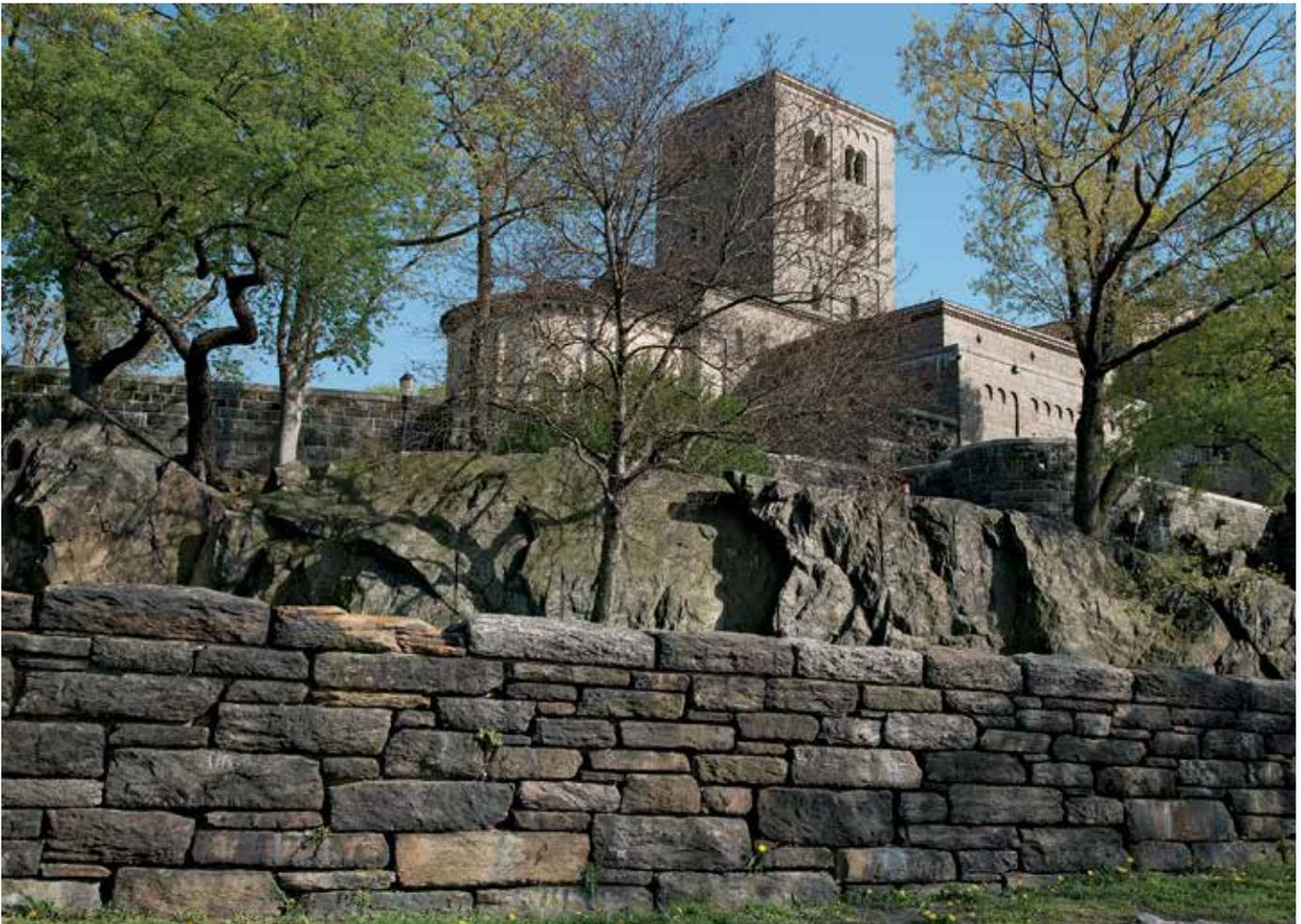
Although in the early 1930s Breck was primarily occupied with the planning of the new Cloisters, he was also actively acquiring (see figs. 81–88). Rockefeller had established a fund for that purpose, the so-called Gothic Fund, which he replenished as needed. He made clear, however, that the money was to be used only for objects that could be incorporated into the fabric of the building. (He later changed his mind and relaxed that requirement.) In accordance with Rockefeller’s wishes, all new purchases were put into storage until they could be installed in the new building. After Breck’s untimely death in 1933, James Rorimer, who succeeded Breck as curator and had worked closely with him on all aspects of the planning of The Cloisters, became the primary representative for the Museum. By then the planning was largely completed, so Rorimer devoted much of his time to new acquisitions, a pursuit for which he had considerable skill, and to determining how they would be integrated into the building (see fig. 89). The most spectacular acquisition destined for the new Cloisters came from Rockefeller himself. In March 1934 Rockefeller asked Collens to consult with Rorimer about altering the two adjacent rooms at the south side of Cuxa Cloister to house “our Gothic Tapestries,” referring to the Unicorn series he had bought some twelve years earlier, “should they ever come into the possession of the proposed Cloister Museum.” When he saw their plan in late March Rockefeller declared it “admirable, and I approve it. If the Museum authorities are disposed to authorize the rearrangement of Galleries 132 and 133 as shown in the blueprint, merely on the chance of the Museum some day becoming the owner of these Gothic Tapestries, I would cordially approve.”<sup>52</sup> It was difficult for



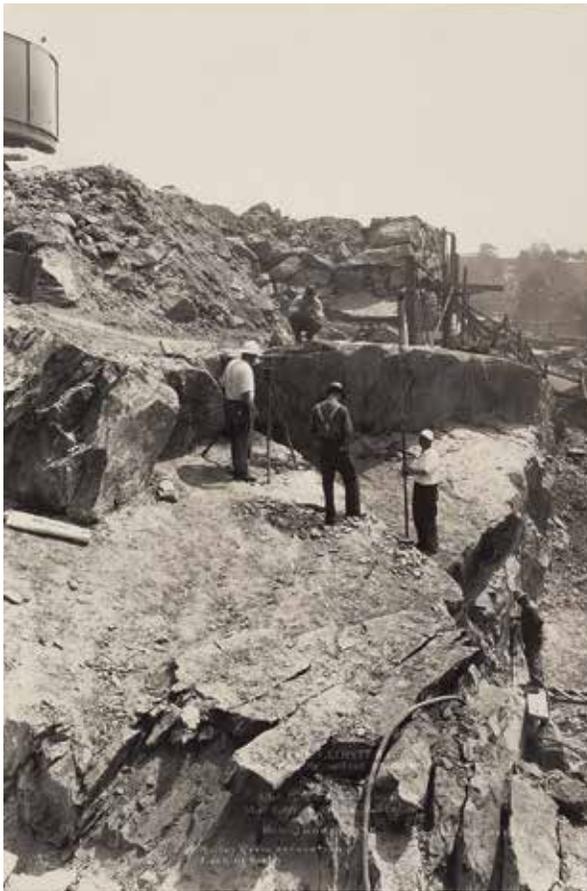
90–91. Left: Joseph Breck. *The Cloisters and the Ramparts*, January 26, 1933. Right: The Ramparts and garage under construction, looking north, July 29, 1935. At the depth of the Depression Rockefeller considered building only the Ramparts. He was keen to draw a visual as well as a historical connection between the Ramparts and Linden Terrace just to the south, the highest point in the park and the revolutionary site of the last redoubt of Fort Washington. The first work that Rockefeller authorized was the construction of the parallel drives and their retaining walls, the excavation for the postern gate and stairway, the blasting of rock to level the building site, and the construction of the Ramparts and garages.



92–93. Left: Revetment north of Margaret Corbin Place underpass, looking southwest, April 1933. Right: Looking north toward the garage wall, June 27, 1935. Olmsted used schist removed from the cut through Riverside Drive for all the walls and other masonry features in the park (left). For the drives leading to The Cloisters and for the Ramparts and garage walls (right), Collens used stone taken from the “Dyckman stone dump,” the repository of stone excavated for the Eighth Avenue subway at Dyckman Street, which he thought had a more pleasing color and took a better finish than the schist from the cut. The bright coping stone is Yonkers granite. Olmsted laid the schist in irregular courses for a rustic effect; Collens had the Dyckman stone laid in even ashlar courses.



94. The Cloisters from the northwest, May 2012. Rockefeller always thought an architectural feature of some sort, whether or not a museum, would be appropriate for the North Hill site, not only as a reminder of the revolutionary history of the park but also to provide spectacular views of the Hudson and the Palisades. Olmsted told Rockefeller that the effect he was striving for was “a frank and intimate combination of crags and walls and softening foliage as gives their inexpressible quality to certain rock-perched fortresses of the old world.” Olmsted envisioned a clear progression in the masonry work from the rough, textured schist of the park walls to the gray, coarse finish of the Dyckman stone of the outer Rampart walls, to the finely dressed pale New London Millstone granite of the building.



95. Blasting on the west side of the site for the Boiler Room and Coal Storage, June 27, 1935. From the beginning of work on the museum, men came to the site looking for day jobs.

Rockefeller to part with the Unicorns, but on January 15, 1935, he agreed in writing to give them to The Cloisters. They arrived at the Museum that May (see fig. 30).

By the fall of 1933 the design work was completed and construction of both the park and The Cloisters had been contracted to Marc Eidlitz & Son. In October, however, Rockefeller directed both Olmsted and Collens, “in view of the present financial uncertainty,” to halt all work “until the financial skies are a little clearer.” Clarity apparently arrived two months later, for in December Rockefeller authorized Marc Eidlitz & Son to begin construction of the park.

Rockefeller had long thought that North Hill, the site of The Cloisters, should be crowned by an architectural feature that “would make the top of the hill an interesting place for pleasure seekers, even without the museum, and would fit in well with the rest of the development of the park.”<sup>53</sup> He also envisioned “a reproduction of such an old rampart wall as might have existed when the property under consideration was used as a fort.”<sup>54</sup> And so it was with the Ramparts, or the “fortification walls” as Rockefeller sometimes referred to them, that construction began in earnest in early 1934. Since the Ramparts and the drives leading up to them were still considered part of the park, Olmsted had provided designs for them the previous year. Based largely on Breck’s drawings, which were in turn inspired by the walls of the fortress of Carcassonne in southern France, the Ramparts bear scant similarity to the earthworks that constituted the northernmost redoubt of Fort Washington (figs. 90, 91). But they do, as Rockefeller wished, provide a commanding prospect of the Hudson River.



96. Foundations and footings, looking south, July 29, 1935. The square area just left of center is the beginnings of Cuxa Cloister.



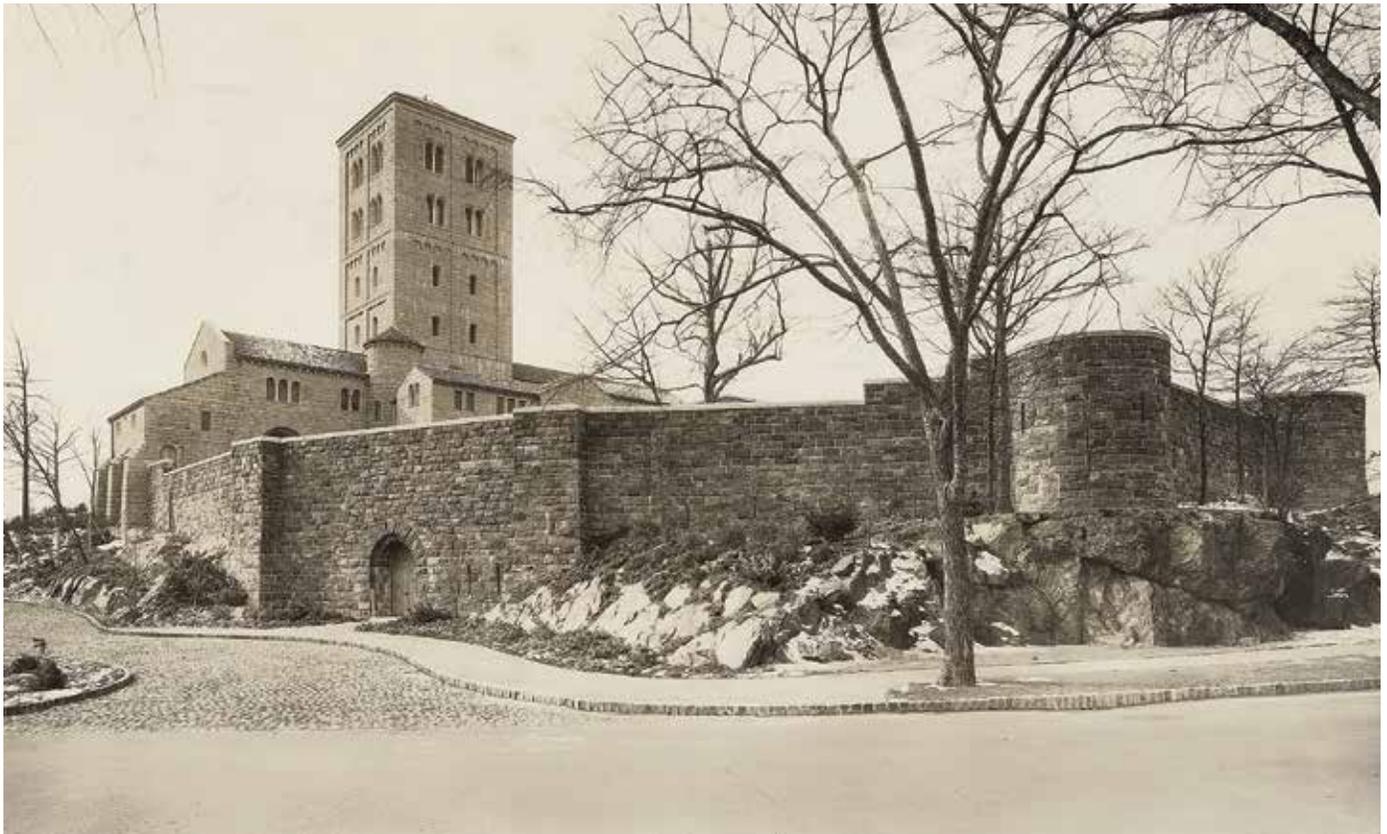
97. The Lower and Upper Drive walls and the main building, May 1, 1936

Work on the Ramparts and the drives was initially supervised by Olmsted. But Marc Eidlitz & Son were also receiving instructions from Collens. Uncertain who was in charge, they asked Rockefeller for clarification. In September 1933 Rockefeller informed Eidlitz that Collens was to supervise all construction except for the drive walls. Olmsted constructed the drive walls from the same stone he used for all the revetments, retaining walls, and other masonry features in the park: the Manhattan schist excavated from the huge cut that allowed road access up into the park from Riverside Drive (fig. 92). Olmsted thought this stone's rustic quality ideal for the park, but Collens did not like it for the Ramparts because it could not be cleanly dressed "in the French manner." He discovered an abundant and much more suitable source in the repository of stone excavated for the Eighth Avenue Subway at Dyckman Street, which he thought had a more pleasing color and took a better finish than the schist from the cut (fig. 93). The stone in the drive walls is laid patchwork fashion in the irregular courses Olmsted preferred. Early photographs of the east side of the Ramparts show similar masonry work that had been completed under Olmsted's supervision. When Collens took over he had this work redone in even ashlar courses of varying height, as he wished the Ramparts ashlar to provide a visual transition from the rustic masonry of the park to the paler and more finely dressed New London Millstone granite of the building proper (fig. 94).

The park and the Ramparts were completed by the end of 1934. By March 1935 Rockefeller had conveyed sufficient stock to the Museum to cover the initial construction expenses of

The Cloisters proper and authorized the Museum to commence construction at will. Work progressed apace with no significant delays (figs. 95–97). When the issue of the chapel of Chauvirey-le-Châtel threatened to create one, Rockefeller abandoned the scheme altogether. The old Cloisters closed on December 10, 1936; according to Museum records 464,057 visitors had passed through its doors since 1926. The contractors turned the new Cloisters over to the Museum on schedule in October 1937 (fig. 98), giving Rorimer just over six months to install the collections in time for the opening on May 10, 1938. In his review titled "Pax in Urbe" in the May 21 issue of the *New Yorker*, Lewis Mumford declared The Cloisters "one of the most thoughtfully studied and ably executed monuments we have seen in a long time." With the thunderclouds of war gathering over Europe, he suggested that Rockefeller had given New York not just a museum but a place of respite "to help us face more cheerfully the Dark Ages." Greatly relieved to have this time found favor in Mumford's eyes, Collens wrote to Rockefeller, "We may not have made any mistake in trying to put the Cloisters back in their original setting."<sup>55</sup>

Robert Gumbel was certainly justified when he told a dealer in 1925 there was "not one chance in a thousand" that Rockefeller would be interested in buying the Barnard Cloisters. After all, Rockefeller had already bought a Gothic collection from Barnard that proved to be little more than a loss leader. And it was no secret that he found Barnard's mercurial nature both exasperating and confounding. Gumbel may not have understood, however, that although Rockefeller found Barnard trying on personal terms, he had



98. The completed building, January 4, 1938. The Ramparts and drive walls were conceived somewhat separately from the museum proper and would have served as a fortresslike feature atop the second highest point in the park, from which commanding views of the Hudson and Palisades could have been enjoyed even if Rockefeller had not built The Cloisters.

considerable respect for him as a man of substantial artistic talent and vision. Barnard's concept of an island of "small chapels towers gothic doors in stone" for the public enrichment had, in fact, resonated with Rockefeller. That he bought Barnard's "one hundred Gothic objects" at the same time he was acquiring the Washington Heights properties cannot have been a coincidence. The offer of the Barnard Cloisters collection gave the concept new substance. And once the interest of the Metropolitan was established Rockefeller knew he had not only a site far more desirable than a parcel abutting Barnard's property but also a reliable partner to ensure the integrity of the project. His letter pledging the funds to purchase the Cloisters made clear that if desirable and if acceptable to the Museum he would relocate the Barnard collection in Fort Tryon Park, so that probability loomed even before title passed to the Museum. And for the next decade Rockefeller worked methodically to transmute probability into reality. He first instructed Olmsted to develop a plan for the park, and only when he had an agreement from the City to accept it did he commission Olmsted to execute his plan. Only after the City formally accepted the park did he instruct Collens and Breck to develop a solution to the "museum problem." With the darkened skies of

the Depression he became chary of commencing construction, tentatively authorizing only the Ramparts and drives. Documents in the Rockefeller Family Archives make it chillingly apparent that until Rockefeller conveyed funds for construction in early 1935, The Cloisters project could have been derailed at any one of these junctures. Rockefeller's contribution went far beyond "largely financial."

Seventy-five years later a New York City without The Cloisters seems inconceivable. Much, of course, has changed. Fort Tryon Park has filled in with verdant maturity. The Cloisters has been significantly enhanced by major improvements to the infrastructure, galleries have been refurbished, programs and activities have been expanded, and the collections have been greatly enriched with masterpieces both minor and magisterial.<sup>56</sup> What has not changed are The Cloisters' most universally appealing assets: the seemingly remote setting with its sweeping views of the Hudson River and the untrammelled grandeur of the Palisades, the aura of quietude and serenity that pervades the building and gardens, the chaste simplicity of the intimate spaces, and the honest materials that so fortuitously set off the superb works of art—all of which create "the peace, the calm, the loveliness" that Rockefeller extolled on opening day.

## NOTES

1. Cited from the copy Rockefeller read; in the text printed in September 1938 this remark was edited out.
2. *New York Times*, May 11, 1938.
3. Raymond B. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 39.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
6. A dressing room in the Aesthetic style from the house was given to the Museum of the City of New York, which in 2009 gave it to the Metropolitan. It will be installed in the American Wing.
7. Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York, Rockefeller Family Archives (RFA), ser. 2H, box 48, folder 354.
8. RFA, ser. 2I, box 136, folder 1350.
9. Harold Dickson, "The Origin of 'The Cloisters,'" *Art Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1965), pp. 254–55.
10. On the Bonnefont Cloister, constructed of elements recently shown to have come from the Franciscan monastery of Tarbes and other monuments nearby, see Céline Brugeat, "The French Franciscan Cloister in New York," *Now at the Met*, September 27, 2012 ([www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/now-at-the-met/features/2012/french-franciscan-cloister](http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/now-at-the-met/features/2012/french-franciscan-cloister)).
11. Barnard correspondence and records, archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
12. Dickson, "Origin," p. 269.
13. RFA, ser. 2E, box 32, folder 328.
14. With the dispersal of the Bryan collection over a number of years, culminating with the auction at Sotheby's, New York, on January 12, 1995, a unique document of New York social history and of the history of collecting in America was lost. (The Museum acquired from the Bryan sale a birth tray [*desco da parto*] with *The Triumph of Fame* that was painted in Florence in about 1449 by Giovanni di ser Giovanni Guidi, called Scheggia, to commemorate the birth of Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent.) For a broader view of the subject, see the articles by Elizabeth Bradford Smith: "Early American Collectors of Medieval Art: Romantics or Pragmatists?" *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 54 (1997), pp. 207–14, especially pp. 208–9, and "An American in Medieval Paris: The Impact of Europe on Early American Collectors of Medieval Art," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 18 (2004), pp. 323–44, especially pp. 335–36.
15. "Gothic Art Shown at Metropolitan," *New York Times*, July 8, 1908.
16. The Duccio panels, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman* (now in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid) and *The Raising of Lazarus* (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth), were from the reverse side of the Maestà he painted in 1308–11 for the cathedral of Siena. The *Crucifixion and Lamentation* by the Master of the Codex of Saint George, who is known to have worked in Florence from 1325 to 1350, were probably painted in Avignon in 1340–45. They came to the Museum through John D. Rockefeller Jr. by bequest in 1960 and are part of The Cloisters collection.
17. RFA, ser. 2I, box 133, folder 1324.
18. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*, pp. 334–35.
19. For the quotes in the last three paragraphs: RFA, ser. 2E, box 32, folder 323.
20. *Ibid.*, folder 329.
21. Unless otherwise noted, all documents cited in this section are found in RFA, ser. 2I, box 136, folders 1350–53.
22. For all quotes in this section: RFA, ser. 2E, box 28, folder 295.
23. Destitute after her husband's death in 1931, Gellatly's widow demanded repayment from Rockefeller. Failing there, she then sued the Museum, unsuccessfully.
24. MMA Archives, Office of the Secretary Records, Rockefeller, John D., Jr., Cloisters (Old Site), Building Collection and Fund 1925–.
25. For the most complete descriptions of Barnard's Cloisters, see Joseph Breck, "The Cloisters," *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* 20, no. 7 (July 1925), pp. 166–77, and *The Cloisters, A Brief Guide* (New York: MMA, 1931).
26. For the quotes in this paragraph: MMA Archives, Old Site Administration, 1925–29.
27. Fort Washington was located in what is now Bennett Park, between 183rd and 185th Streets and between Pinehurst and Fort Washington Avenues. Rockefeller had earlier declined to buy this land from the Bennett estate because apartment buildings already partially blocked the view of the river.
28. *New York Times*, January 7, 1917.
29. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*, p. 324.
30. RFA, ser. 2L, box 41, folder 359.
31. *The New York Supplement, Volume 89: August 8–September 26, 1921* (Saint Paul: West, 1921), p. 646. See also "Rockefeller Tax Reduction Case Sets Precedent in Realty Values," *New York Times*, July 23, 1922. The case was first reported in the *Times* on July 9 and August 7, 1921, and another story ran on June 15, 1930.
32. *The Palisades Interst Park, 1900–1929: A History of Its Origin and Development* (New York, 1929), p. 8. One quarry north of Fort Lee, New Jersey, was blasting away rock at the rate of 12,000 cubic yards daily.
33. For the quotes in this paragraph: RFA, ser. 2L, box 42, folder 372.
34. RFA, ser. 2E, box 31, folder 316. The cost of The Cloisters was given as \$5,425,880.32, making the total cost of the Washington Heights project \$11,683,660.90.
35. RFA, ser. 2L, box 44, folder 393.
36. *Ibid.*, box 40, folder 344.
37. *Ibid.*, box 43, folder 381.
38. See Raymond H. Torrey, "Fort Tryon Park," *Scenic and Historic America* 4, no. 3 (May 1936).
39. RFA, ser. 2L, box 43, folder 386.
40. *Ibid.*, ser. 2E, box 29, folder 302.
41. MMA Archives, Branch Museum, The Cloisters, New Site, correspondence 1927–1950–34.
42. For the quotes in this paragraph, see *ibid.*
43. *New Yorker*, October 13, 1934, p. 59; June 20, 1931, p. 30; June 1, 1935, p. 73.
44. MMA Archives, Branch Museum, The Cloisters, New Site, correspondence 1927–1950–34.
45. RFA, ser. 2E, box 30, folders 31, 318.
46. *Ibid.*, folders 18, 318.
47. *Ibid.*, folder 318 (quoted from Collens's eleven-page report to Rockefeller on his trip).
48. For all except the last quote in this section: RFA, ser. 2I, box 132, folder 1305. For the last quote: *ibid.*, ser. 2E, box 29, folder 297.
49. *Ibid.*, folder 302.
50. *Ibid.*, folder 296.
51. Unless otherwise noted, quotes in the preceding four paragraphs are from *ibid.*, box 31, folder 318.
52. For the above correspondence: *ibid.*, folder 319.
53. For the quotes in this section: *ibid.*, folder 318.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, folder 319.
56. Outstanding objects in the collections housed at The Cloisters are highlighted in the 75th anniversary edition of the guidebook: *The Cloisters: Medieval Art and Architecture*, by Peter Barnet and Nancy Wu (New York: MMA, 2012).

## SOURCES OF QUOTES IN CAPTIONS

Fig. 2: Rockefeller Family Archives (RFA), ser. 2E, box 29, folder 302; figs. 33–36: MMA Archives, Old Site, administration 1925–29; figs. 51–52: RFA, ser. 2L, box 42, folder 372; figs. 58–59: MMA Archives, Branch Museum, The Cloisters, New Site, correspondence 1927–1934, 1927, 1930–34; figs. 61–63, 66: RFA, ser. 2E, box 30, folders 18, 318; fig. 72: RFA, ser. 2I, box 132, folder 1305; figs. 79–80: RFA, ser. 2E, box 30, folder 318; figs. 83–84: RFA, ser. 2E, box 29, folder 296; fig. 89: RFA, ser. 2E, box 30, folder 314; fig. 94: RFA, ser. 2L, box 42, folder 372.





