

# CHARLES L. FREER, ART COLLECTOR, DIES

**His Paintings, Valued at Several Millions, Sold to Smithsonian Institution for \$1.**

**MILLION TO HOUSE GIFT**

**Donor of 1,200 Works of Whistler  
Alone a Victim of Apoplexy at  
Hotel Gotham at 65.**

Charles Lang Freer, of Detroit, art collector, died last night at his apartments in the Hotel Gotham of a stroke of apoplexy. He was in his sixty-sixth year and though he had been in poor health for several years he had shown signs of improvement until a few months ago when he came to this city.

Mr. Freer was born in Kingston, N. Y., was educated at the public schools of Ulster County and then moved to the West. He made a fortune in railroads and in manufacturing in Detroit. He retired from active business in 1900 and devoted himself to searching in all parts of the earth, but particularly the Far East, Near East, and Egypt, for objects of art which his own judgment and those of the experts who advised him were of the very highest quality. He once stated the prime motive for his artistic researches:

"My pleasure has been in discovery, not in possession."

It was in 1915 that he made the announcement that he had sold to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington his entire collection for the sum of one dollar. The conditions of the sale, which gave to the people of the United States possession of one of the greatest art collections ever gathered by a single individual, were that the treasures should remain in Mr. Freer's possession until his death when they should go to Washington.

At the same time he announced that he would build a magnificent art gallery, costing \$1,000,000, to house the collection, which contained more than 5,000 objects in all. Some idea of the range of the collection may be gathered when it is stated that it contained 1,200 specimens of Whistler's work, including paintings in oil, water color, pastel and engravings, and the famous Peacock Room, which the eccentric American genius decorated for Leyland, the English collector and ship owner; 100 paintings by other American artists, notably Sargent, Hassam and Thayer; more than 1,600 pieces of ancient glazed pottery gathered by Mr. Freer in the Far and Near East;

In this connection it should be noted that Mr. Freer was one of the first, if not the very first, American collector of recent years to believe that there were any very fine ancient paintings left in China. He said himself: "For years I went to Japan thinking that my only chance was to find them there. Then I went far into the interior of China and found many splendid examples of what I was after, some owned by private collectors, others in the hands of people who had no idea of their value."

This splendid collection, whose value runs up into the millions, just how far Mr. Freer could never be induced to say, was not given without some slight difficulty. When the owner first approached the Smithsonian authorities with the proposition it was found not to be entirely simple to arrange for a sale to the institution even for the nominal sum of \$1 and still permit Mr. Freer to retain the treasures until his death.

It was brought to the attention of President Roosevelt that a hitch had arisen somewhere, and he, with characteristic directness, at once arranged a meeting between Mr. Freer and the late Chief Justice Melville W. Fuller, then chief of the Board of Regents of the Institution, and the matter was speedily arranged.

One of the most remarkable objects collected by Mr. Freer during his worldwide search was an old Greek Bible he bought from an Arab dealer in antiques in Gizeh. It has given rise to the claim that we possess a sixth codex, and apparently the last of the great codices from which our knowledge of the life and teachings of Christ as incorporated in the Bible have come. It contains verses which were known to St. Jerome but which were missing from the five other codices.

Mr. Freer was a bachelor. His nearest surviving relative is his brother, Watson M. Freer, of Kingston, N. Y. His home in Detroit was at 33 Ferry Avenue. His clubs in this city were the Groller and the Players.

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