

# FRICK DROPS PLAN FOR ITS NEW WING

## Garden and Terrace to Be Created on Vacant Site

By **GLENN FOWLER**

The Frick Collection has abandoned its plan for eventual construction of a wing to the east of its museum site at Fifth Avenue and 70th Street, and instead will create a permanent garden and terrace on the space earmarked for the wing.

The change in the Frick Collection's plan, which bears on a running controversy over disposition of property adjoining the museum, was revealed yesterday at a public hearing of the Landmarks Preservation Commission at City Hall.

Later in the day, the commission's activities were significantly broadened in scope, when the City Council approved unanimously a bill that amends the Landmarks Preservation Law.

The bill, which is certain to be signed by the Mayor, extends the commission's authority to designate interior as well as exterior spaces as landmarks. Heretofore it had no jurisdiction over interior spaces that might be worthy of landmark designation — the con-

course of Grand Central Terminal, for example, or the Greeting Widener house. Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

### Restriction Lifted

The bill also makes it possible for the commission to hold public hearings at any time on the designation of landmarks. Until now it had been restricted to a six-month period once every three years, with the current period ending on Dec. 31.

The New York Board of Realtors, on behalf of property owners, opposed the lifting of the restriction, on the ground that the landmarks law, as written, was extending protection to too many buildings and thus "preventing development."

The Frick Collection disclosed its new scheme for the permanent open space on the 70th Street side of its museum as it was completing demolition of the Widener house, which stood between the landmark Frick structure and two empty lots.

Last year, the Frick trustees acquired the Widener mansion originally one of a row of distinguished town houses extending to Madison Avenue. They won permission last summer to tear it down after a spirited controversy in which community planners and architectural historians accused the Frick Collection of bad faith.

The Frick building itself, designed by Carrère & Hastings and completed in 1914 as the home of the industrialist Henry Clay Frick, was given landmark designation only last spring. The commission's action at that time gave it the right to pre-

vent any change in the adjoining, for example, or the Greeting Widener house.

At the time, the Frick trustees applied to the Buildings Department for an "alteration" permit for the Widener house, stating that the alteration consisted of tearing down and replacing it with an extension of the wall bordering the two vacant lots to the east.

Harmon H. Goldstone, the commission's chairman, denounced the "alteration" plan and succeeded in having it blocked. But last July the commission was persuaded by the Frick trustees that the formal garden and terrace proposed by them would justify tearing down the Widener house.

### 'Interim Measure'

Commission approval was for a temporary garden, to be replaced "10 to 20 years hence" by the new museum wing. The commission made clear that its assent was for "an interim measure" that would assure a gracious view of the Frick mansion from the street, enhanced by a reinstallation of the mansion's original gates.

The now-abandoned wing was to have contained no new exhibition space for the museum, regarded as the home of one of the world's best small art collections, but would have permitted enlarging the auditorium and adding seminar rooms, laboratories and offices.

Everett Fahy, the Frick's executive director, who assumed his post last Aug. 1, said that architect's renderings of the permanent garden would be given to the commission next month.