

Costly Museum Cloister To Be Built by Rockefeller

***\$2,500,000 Gothic Building for Metropolitan
to Rise in Tryon Park—Donor Also Gives
Six Tapestries Worth \$1,100,000.***

By **THOMAS C. LINN.**

A \$2,500,000 structure housing the most important collection of Gothic architectural material in the Western Hemisphere will crown Manhattan's highest hill as a result of a gift by John D. Rockefeller Jr. to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This tile-roofed building of local stone, suggesting in form a medieval monastery of Southern France, will rise in Fort Tryon Park, the former C. K. G. Billings estate on Washington Heights, as the new home of the Cloisters, the medieval branch of the Metropolitan. It now occupies a small structure at 698 Fort Washington Avenue.

In addition to the building, which is to be ready in three years, Mr. Rockefeller has presented to the museum what it considers "the most important individual addition ever made to the Cloisters collection"—a unique set of six French fifteenth-century tapestries portraying "The Hunt of the Unicorn," for which Mr. Rockefeller is reported to have paid \$1,100,000.

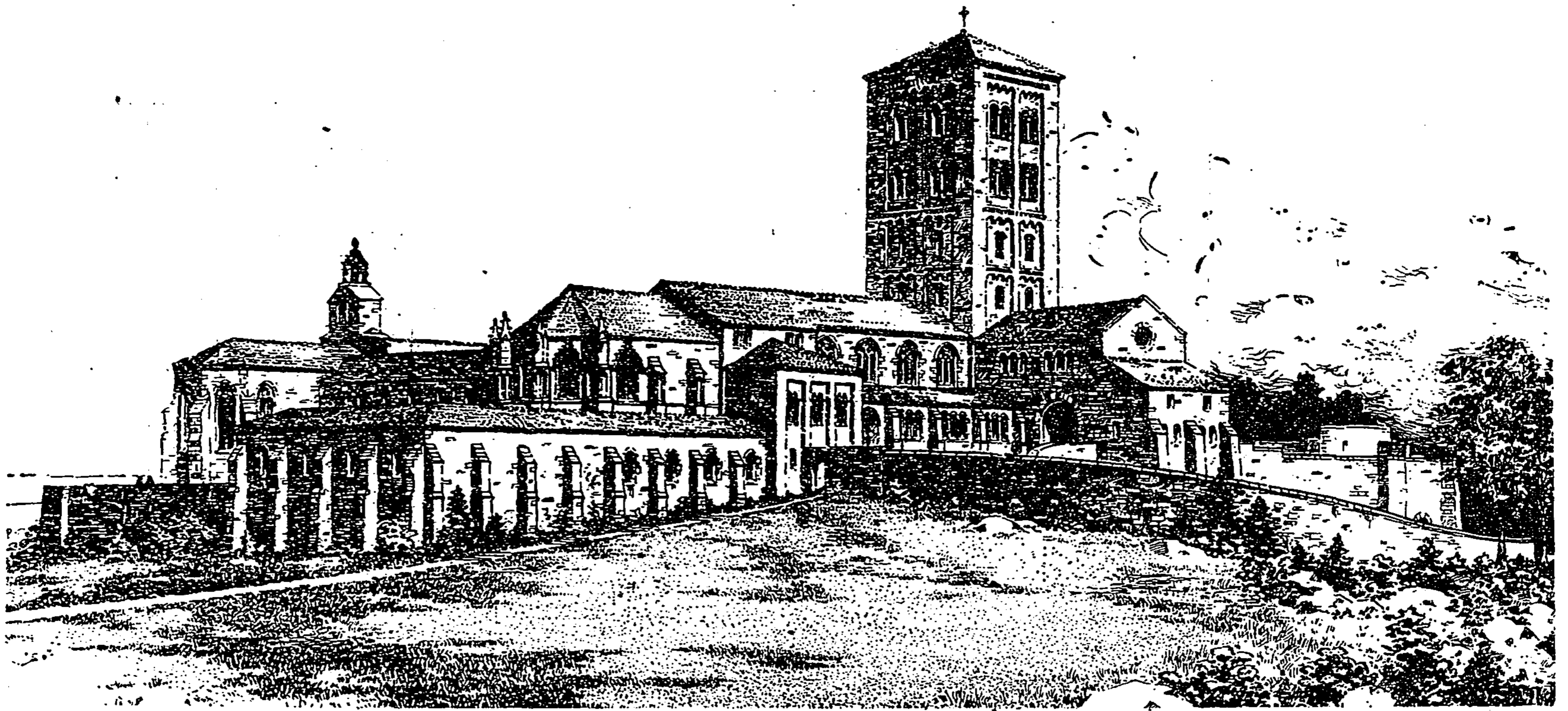
They have been in his New York residence since they came to this

country from the Château of Ver-teuil, the ancestral seat of the family of La Rochefoucauld, and, except in the exhibition of French Gothic tapestries held at the Metropolitan Museum in 1928, have not been displayed publicly in America. They are not to be exhibited by the museum until the opening of the new Cloisters building.

Announcement of the two gifts was made yesterday afternoon by George Blumenthal, president of the Metropolitan. In a prepared statement he said in part:

"Mr. Rockefeller and the museum have worked for more than four years on plans for a new building to take the place of the present Cloisters at 698 Fort Washington Avenue. The plans have been completed to the fullest satisfaction of Mr. Rockefeller and the museum, and Mr. Rockefeller has most generously given the funds for the entire cost of the construction, estimated at about \$2,500,000. In addition to this, Mr. Rockefeller has donated to the museum the site in

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Architect's drawing, by C. Collins, of the proposed new Cloisters Building to be erected in Fort Tryon Park, the former estate of C. K. G. Billings on Washington Heights, at a cost of \$2,500,000.

Photos by courtesy of the Museum of Art.



One of the series of six French fifteenth century tapestries, "The Hunt of the Unicorn," for which Mr. Rockefeller paid \$1,100,000, which he has now presented to the museum to be placed in a special room of the new Cloisters. The photograph shows the unicorn being brought to the lady of the castle.

MUSEUM WILL GET \$2,500,000 CLOISTER

By THOMAS C. LINN.

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Fort Tryon Park, covering about four acres.

"Greatest Examples" of Art.

Pointing out that the "priceless tapestries, together with the famous Unicorn Tapestries in the Cluny Museum [Paris] are among the greatest examples of this art dating from the fifteenth century," Mr. Blumenthal continued:

"The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the City of New York, and I may say without exaggeration all those interested in art and education in any part of the world owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Rockefeller for making possible the construction of the new Cloisters and for giving to the public the opportunity of seeing and studying these great tapestries. Work on the new Cloisters will begin at once and we hope that the construction may be completed in about three years."

Not only will the new building house the Gothic art in the present Cloisters building but also many other objects presented by Mr. Rockefeller and others from time to time for which there is no display space and which now are in storage.

Many of the architectural elements of the new structure actually have come from old monastic buildings in France, such as windows and doors and even whole walls.

"Where such material is lacking, as little new carving and ornamentation as possible will be created," Herbert E. Winlock, director of the museum, explained in a statement issued yesterday. "Original material—sculptures, frescoes, glass and tapestries—is to be the chief feature of the new Cloisters, set in a structure the design, material and texture of which are planned primarily as a background for the collections."

In accordance with the wish of Mr. Rockefeller and the trustees, work will begin at once on the new building in the expectation of completing it and installing the collections by Jan. 1, 1938. Charles Collins of the firm of Allen, Collins & Willis of Boston has drawn up the plans in collaboration with the staff of the museum. The firm of Marc Eidlitz & Son of this city will construct the building.

Memorial on Old Site.

When the Cloisters collection is moved to its new home, the present building and grounds will revert to George Grey Barnard, the sculptor, who has announced his intention of using this as a site for his Rainbow Arch, which he wishes to give the city as a war memorial.

It was through a gift of \$600,000 from Mr. Rockefeller that the Metropolitan acquired the Cloisters ten years ago. This most important collection of Romanesque and Gothic sculpture in America had been assembled by Mr. Barnard

and opened to the public in 1914, in a small building adjacent to his own residence.

"Many stories have been told about Mr. Barnard's collecting during the years he spent in France working on the groups of sculpture for the Harrisburg Capitol," Mr. Winlock recalled in his statement. "Some of his purchases came from barns and pigsties, for the building of which, in past generations, the ruins of churches and monasteries destroyed during the wars and religion and social revolution had frequently been regarded as convenient stone quarries."

Mr. Barnard offered for sale in 1922 the collection housed in the Cloisters. Not only did Mr. Rockefeller purchase the collection but he added an endowment fund for its maintenance, and when the building was opened in 1926 as a branch of the Metropolitan, Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller supplemented the collection with a gift of forty-two sculptures.

Offered Tract as Park.

In June, 1930, Mr. Rockefeller offered to give the city for use as a public park a fifty-six-acre tract of land on Washington Heights, including the Billings estate, which he had purchased in 1917, the total property having a value of \$7,000,000.

He reserved from the gift a four-acre site on which he proposed to erect at his own expense a new building for the Cloisters. He also offered to carry out at his own expense the landscape features of the proposed park. The total gift was estimated at that time to have a value of \$13,000,000.

The site of the new building is the highest point on Manhattan Island, commanding a view of the Palisades and Jersey hills, the lower bay and Long Island Sound. On a clear day the view extends as far as Storm King Mountain up the Hudson. The new building will be accessible both by bus and the Eighth Avenue subway.

Few collections of architectural sculpture from medieval cloisters are more comprehensive than this uptown branch of the Metropolitan, according to Mr. Winlock. The new structure will embody "large sections of the cloisters of St. Michael de Cuxa (twelfth century), of St. Guilhem-de-Desert (twelfth to early thirteenth century), of Bonnefont-en-Comminges (thirteenth-fourteenth century) and of Trie (second half of the fifteenth century)."

Local stone partly excavated from Fort Tryon Park and some even dug in subway construction will be supplemented with American limestone in the new structure. The roof will be of red tile.

Mr. Rockefeller has taken keen personal interest in the development of the plans during the last four years.

Building Is Described.

"The visitor will enter the building through its Romanesque part and pass to a Romanesque hall and chapel on the north side of the Cuxa Cloister," according to Mr. Winlock's description. "The almost contemporary St. Guilhem Cloister will be placed north of the Romanesque hall and will be treated in a manner suggested by the cloister of St. Trophime at Arles and of Montmajour.

"On the westerly side of the Cuxa

Cloister will be two Gothic rooms, from the second of which a stairway will descend to a chapel, which is to be modeled after the small thirteenth century chapel at Carcassonne and the Lady Chapel in the very interesting church at Monsempron, in Central France.

"The southerly side of the Cuxa Cloister will be bounded by a gallery in which will be hung the magnificent Unicorn tapestries. At a lower level are to be installed capitals from the Cloister of Bonnefont-en-Comminges, facing on a garden surrounded by retaining walls. To the east of this garden will be the Trie Cloister, facing on a court above which will rise a fifteenth century Gothic chapel. On the easterly side of the Cuxa Cloister will be installed the Spanish ceiling now in the Metropolitan Museum, in a room adjoining a lofty Gothic hall, the antique French windows for which came from the refectory of Sens [France]."

The tower of the building will be used for administrative offices.

"The erection of a permanent building for the present cloisters collection and for additions to it does not by any means signify that the museum intends to transfer to the new site the collections of medieval art which are now in the main building of the museum in Central Park," Mr. Winlock said.

The tapestries depicting the "Hunt of the Unicorn" are thought to have been woven in Touraine. Four are believed to date from about 1480. They portray allegorically the Incarnation, Christ being represented by the unicorn, the symbol of purity.

The unicorn plays the leading part in the drama of six scenes portrayed by the tapestries, "The Start of the Hunt," "The Unicorn at the Fountain," "The Unicorn Attempts to Escape," "Crossing the Charente River," "The Unicorn Defends Himself," "The Unicorn Is Wounded and Brought to the Lady of the Castle" and "The Unicorn in Captivity."

The tapestries were woven by order of Jean de la Rochefoucauld and his wife, Marguerite de Barbezieux. They are in a remarkable state of preservation, having been admirably tended during the centuries they hung on the walls of Ver-teuil Castle.