

Metropolitan Museum Plans Centennial Expansion



The New York Times (by John Soto)

Mrs. Richard M. Nixon greeting Mrs. John V. Lindsay at the Metropolitan Museum of Art last night. Others, from the left: Thomas P. F. Hoving, Arthur A. Houghton Jr., C. Douglas Dillon and Mrs. Joan Shipman Payson, owner of Mets.

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Plans for an expansion program that would provide more than a third again as much space for the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art have been completed.

They will be announced today by Thomas P. F. Hoving, director, and the museum's trustees, as part of the museum's centennial celebra-

tion, which includes a special exhibit on nineteenth-century America seen at a preview by Mrs. Richard M. Nixon yesterday.

The planning was spurred by gifts of the \$100-million Lehman collection of European painting, drawing and sculpture; the Rockefeller collection of primitive art; the acquisition of the 2,000-year-old Temple of Dendur from

the Egyptian Government, and long-standing pressures of display, storage and study needs

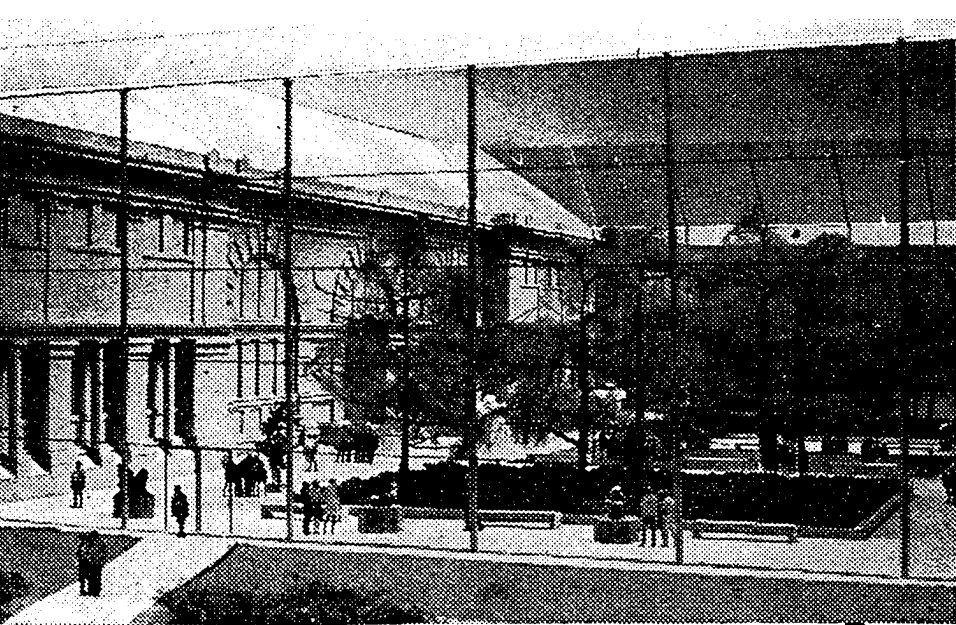
All told, 325,000 square feet are scheduled to be added to the present classical structure in Central Park at 82d Street. Eventual costs could run to more than \$50-million, although no specific figures have been given.

The proposed construction

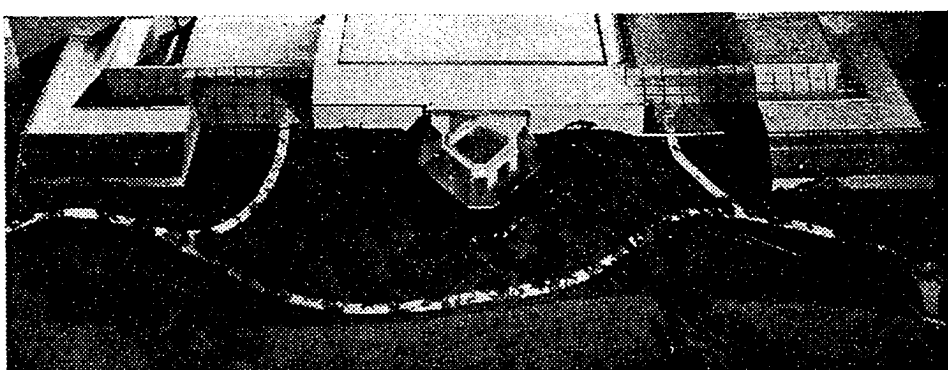
is the result of a master plan for the Metropolitan's reorganization and growth in terms of changing concepts for 20th-century urban museums. The study has taken two and a half years, and has been conducted by Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates of Hamden, Conn., the architects of the proposed

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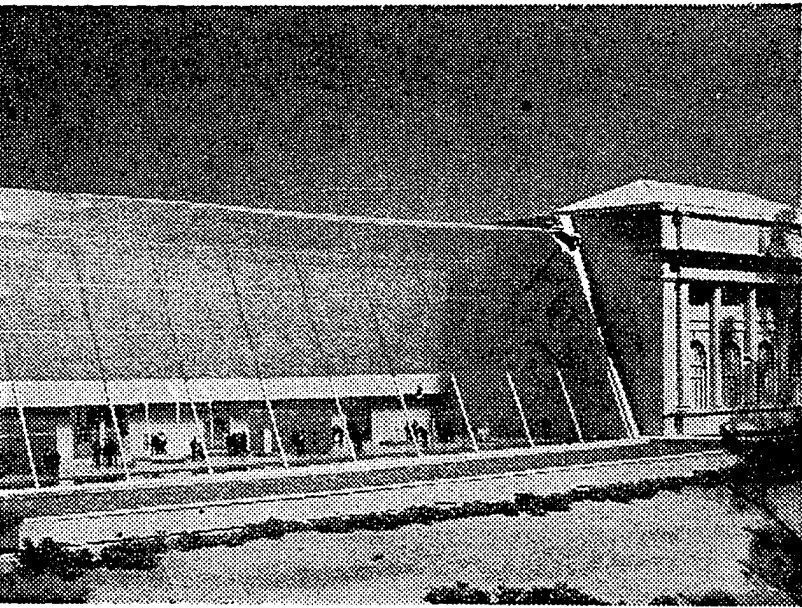
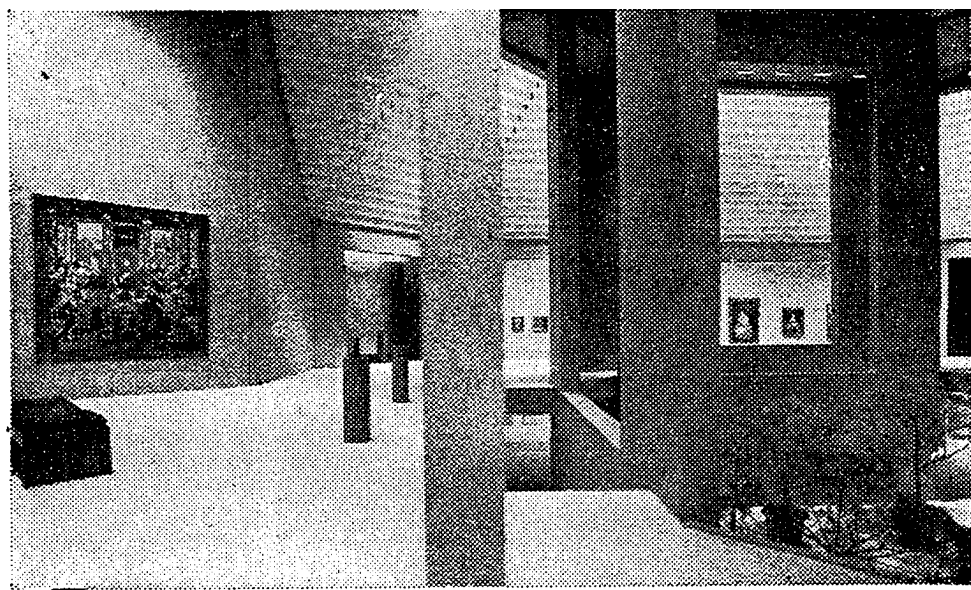
Metropolitan Museum, Marking Centennial, Plans to Add a Third More Space



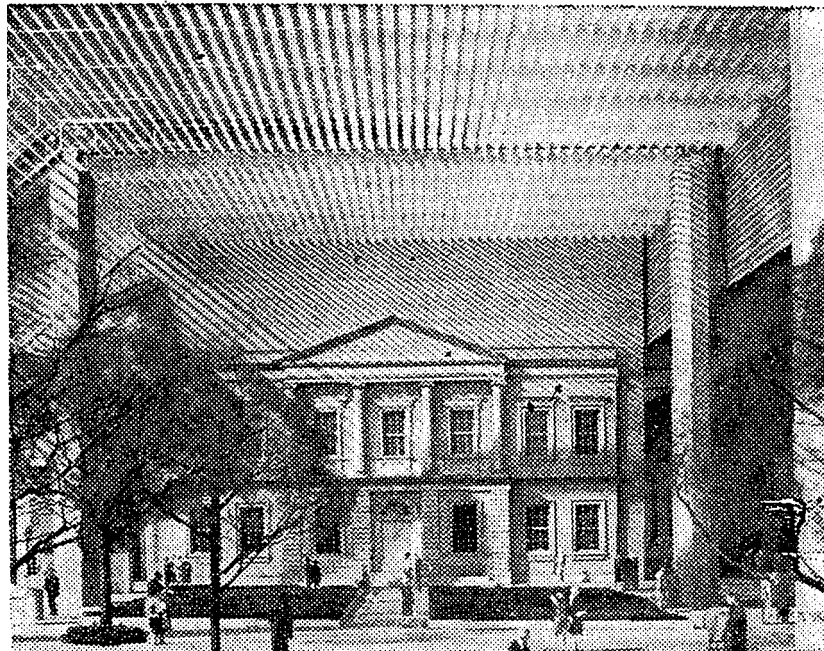
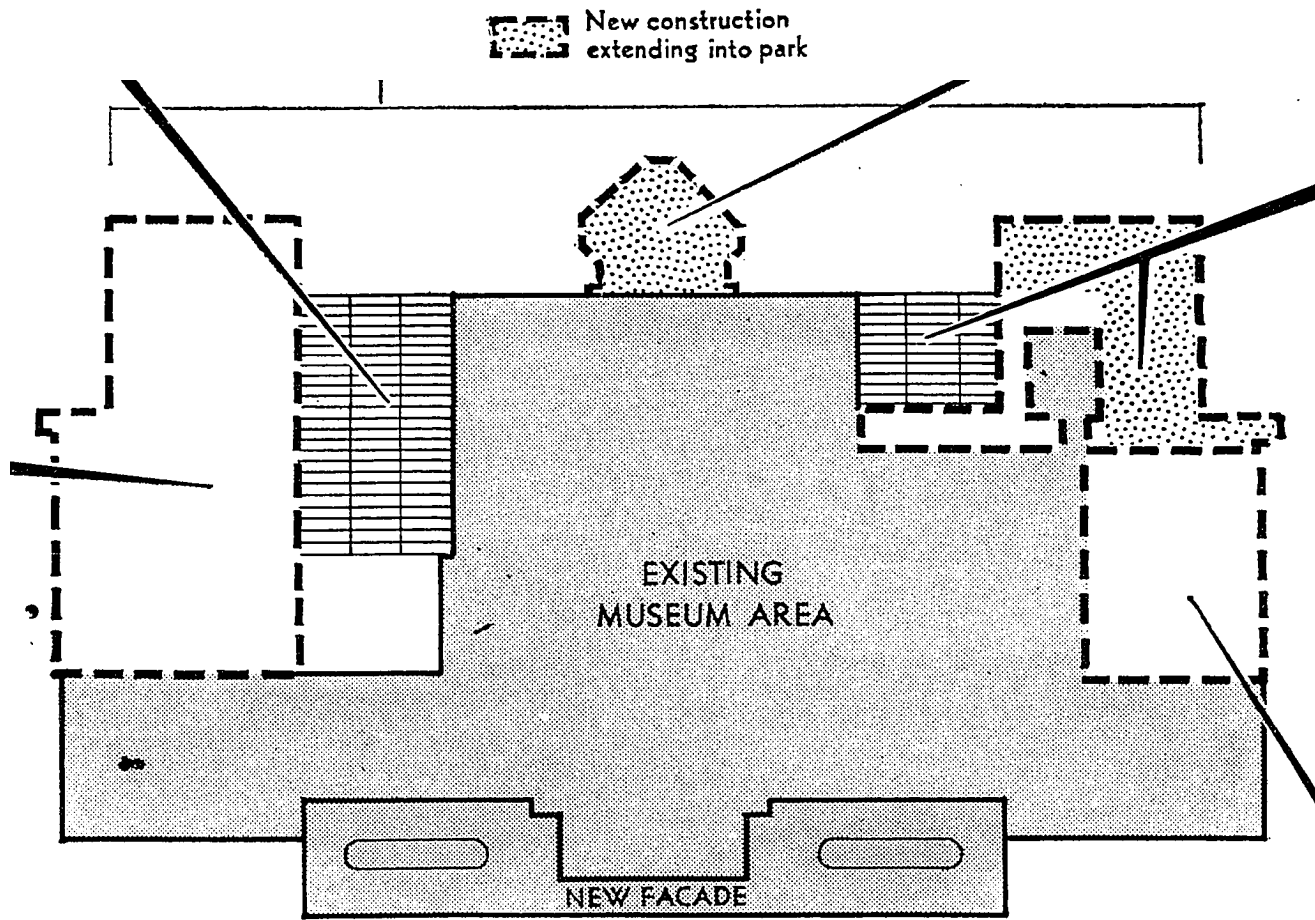
A view of one of the planned glass-enclosed courts that would also be an entrance from Central Park to the Metropolitan. The 1888 wing is at the rear.



Model of the museum's future Central Park facade, above, with the diamond-shaped Lehman pavillion and court areas. Right: Interior of the two-story Lehman structure.



The proposed construction for the south wing would house the primitive art collection, incorporating the Rockefeller gift and European and American art.



The all-weather garden court planned for the American wing extension at the northwest corner. The old U.S. Assay Office front will remain in place as a portal.

Gifts of Major Collections Spur the Expansion

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construction. The firm has already finished the redesign of the exterior stairs and Fifth Avenue frontage and the rehabilitation of the Great Hall.

The plans envision the completion of the museum's north and south wings and the addition of a pavilion in the center of the rear, or park, facade. These additions would be the equivalent of three moderate-size museums for moderate-size cities.

The central pavilion would house the Lehman collection, the north structure would accommodate the Temple of Dendur and American wing expansion, and the south structure would be for the primitive art collection, incorporating the Rockefeller gift, and 19th-century and 20th-century European and American art.

Most of the south construction and part of the north construction would be over existing parking lots.

Two glass-enclosed, greenhouse type courts would make new entrances at the rear, creating a park facade. All of the presently unfinished, exposed side and back portions of the museum would be completed.

Axis Is Emphasized

The emphasis of the plan is on a newly created central axis, leading from the remodeled Fifth Avenue entrance and restored Great Hall through to the proposed Lehman pavilion at the park side.

The main stairway to the second floor, part of the 1902 Richard Morris Hunt design would be removed and a large, skylit passage substituted. Escalators at either side would go to the second floor. This passage would lead through the original museum, totally remodeled in 1938, which was blocked by the construction of the Hunt stairs.

All construction would be done under the museum's 1876 charter agreement with the city, which gives it the right to expand within the limits of 80th and 85th Streets and the park's East Drive. Plans must be submitted by the Parks Commissioner to the City Art Commission.

According to August Heckscher, Commissioner of Parks, his department retains the authority to review whatever form that expansion takes, and to recommend or withhold plans from the Art Commission. The commission must pass on all city-owned buildings or buildings on city land. As a quasi-public institution partly supported by city funds and on city land, museum construction becomes city property.

Studied by Heckscher

Commissioner Heckscher is currently studying the proposals for the Lehman collection and the Temple of Dendur, within the framework of the master plan. He will then forward them to the Art Commission with his recommendation.

Though there is no construction timetable, the Lehman pavilion is scheduled to be built first, and the Temple of Dendur installation is expected to follow. Work will begin on the Lehman pavilion as soon as clearance from the Art Commission is obtained.

Robert Owen Lehman, son of Robert Lehman, who left his art collection to the museum, has

filed suit in Surrogate's Court to block the gift. When the suit was filed March 6, he said that under arrangements at that time 'my father's collection will be kept from the public for some time to come, wholly inconsistently with what he had intended.'

The cost of the Lehman pavilion, which has not been announced but is reported to be about \$8-million, has already been raised from private sources. Maintenance has been endowed in perpetuity by the Lehman Foundation.

Because city money would not be used for construction of the Lehman pavilion, the museum believes that only Art Commission approval is necessary. The city Corporation Counsel is studying this limited review.

City Gives \$95,000

City funds of \$95,000 have been contributed for the Temple of Dendur plans, and this has required review by the City Planning Commission, the Budget Director, the Finance Committee of the City Council, and the Board of Estimate, and all have approved.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission, which must pass on exterior changes for all designated landmarks, whether public or private funds are used, gave its consent to the remodeling along the museum's Fifth Avenue front, but it has no jurisdiction over interiors.

The proposed museum additions would provide 40,000 square feet for the Temple of Dendur, 80,000 square feet for the American wing, 60,000 square feet for the primitive art collection, 120,000 square feet for European and American art of the 19th and 20th centuries, and 25,000 square feet for the Lehman collection.

Diamond-Shaped Building

The architect's program included a mandate for the most skillful utilization of space and a carefully studied architecture to emphasize the most saving and sensitive use of park land. Glass and gardens for the park entrances instead of extensions of the heavy neoclassical masonry of the Fifth Avenue facade are a conscious effort to provide a sympathetic transition to the park.

The Lehman collection is to be housed in its own two-story, diamond-shaped pavilion at the center of the west, or park, facade. It would connect to the main building through the last remaining exterior section of the original 1882 Calvert Vaux and Jacob Wrey Mould museum. Inside, the original stair towers remain, with handsome Victorian wrought iron. But the Ruskinian Gothic of the outside would be replaced by the new construction.

The pavilion is designed with two levels of galleries encircling a central court. The lower story would recreate six of the major rooms as they have appeared in the Lehman mansion on West 54th Street, in accordance with Mr. Lehman's wishes that the collection be displayed in that form. The upper floor provides gallery space for the rest of the collection, including drawings.

The Temple of Dendur will be placed over the staff parking and loading dock at the north side of the building. An

earlier cash estimate ran close to \$2-million. It will be installed in a glass enclosure about 200 by 230 feet, for maximum light and visibility. Stippled glass on the south side and roof will give even illumination, and clear glass on the north side will afford views of the park. A backing mirror along the south side will reflect more light on delicate carvings and eliminate the shadow of the museum's north wall.

Nile Setting Suggested
The temple will stand on a platform, partly surrounded by a pool, to suggest its Nile setting. Under the platform will be employee parking for 96 cars and a receiving and service area.

The American wing, presently at the northwest corner of the museum complex, will be incorporated into a 168-foot-square extension that will complete the new north wing.

The south facade of the American wing is now formed by the Greek Revival front of the old United States Assay Office, moved from Wall Street when the building was demolished. A small, added structure housing the Van Rensselaer room that hooks around and hides it would be taken down. One of the two garden-court entrances from the park would be placed here, using the Assay Office front as a portal.

In an almost symmetrical plan, the new south wing for the primitive art and 19th- and 20th-century European and American collections would parallel the north wing. Covering part of the south parking lot, the primitive art gallery would measure about 205 by 235 feet, and the section for the 19th and 20th centuries would be about 165 by 170 feet. An average New York block-front is 200 feet.

There would be parking for 312 cars and 20 buses under this wing. The present parking lot accommodates 200 cars.

Like the north wing, this extension would also be connected to the main building by a glass-enclosed court, serving as the second park entrance. The portal would be the restored red brick wing designed by Theodore Weston in 1888.

Parkland to Be Kept

According to the museum's figures, the expansion is planned so that the amount of publicly accessible parkland will be almost the same before and after construction.

The statistics cited give 522,000 square feet of green area now, if paved service and access roads are subtracted from the total public park land between 79th and 85th Streets. The museum's planners arrive at a close figure of 522,440 square feet of public parkland after construction is completed. This is obtained by deducting three-quarters of the new building because it is to be over what are presently parking lots. The south, public parking lot was strongly disputed by conservationists when it was installed in 1957.

Land freed to the public when the present iron fence around the museum is removed, service roads returned to grass, and the glass-enclosed planted courts that serve as public park

entrances are used to complete the total.

The Osborne oval, a paved playground adjoining the museum to the north, will also be returned to grass and an enlarged play area created between 84th and 85th Streets. This is necessitated by a moat on the north side of the Temple of Dendur installation, which requires about a third of the playground.

Foes of park encroachment have already mounted a campaign against the museum's plans, and the first pickets appeared on Jan. 30.

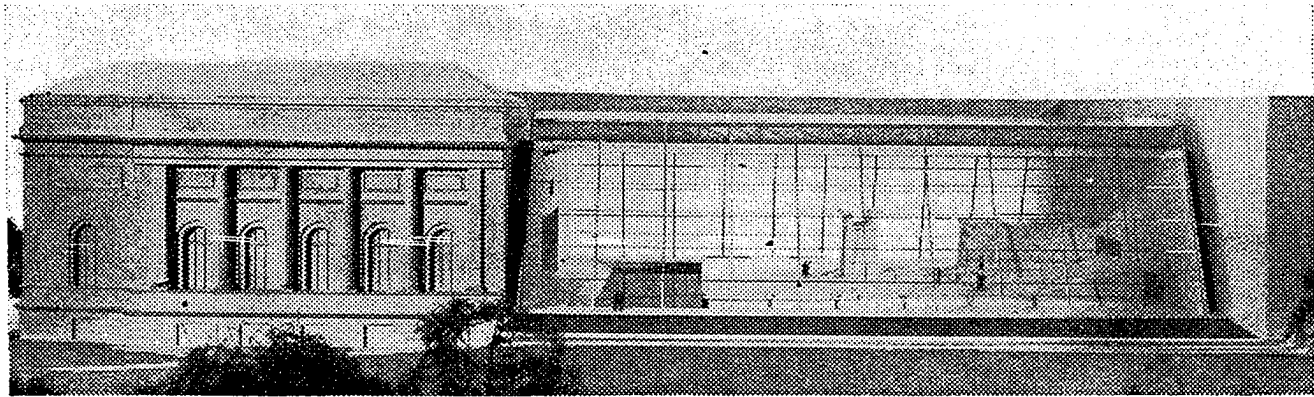
In spite of the decision to house all of its recent major acquisitions together in Central Park, rather than breaking them up into neighboring museums as some opponents of park construction have been urging, Mr. Hoving does not feel that the museum has adopted a policy of centralization of the Metropolitan's resources.

"I believe in decentralization," he said. "We will provide whatever the communities tell us they want, when they let us know."

"We have been probing beyond the white middle-class liberals who yell decentralization. Decentralization is mostly a coverup for the rabid park person who doesn't want us to build on our own property."

He added, "The community does not want a colonial power bringing things to it. People like coming to the great palace. It is part of the grand experience."

"We're slowing down, anyway. We're not collecting any more."



The Temple of Dendur would be installed in a glass enclosure on museum's north side. Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates designed the entire project.