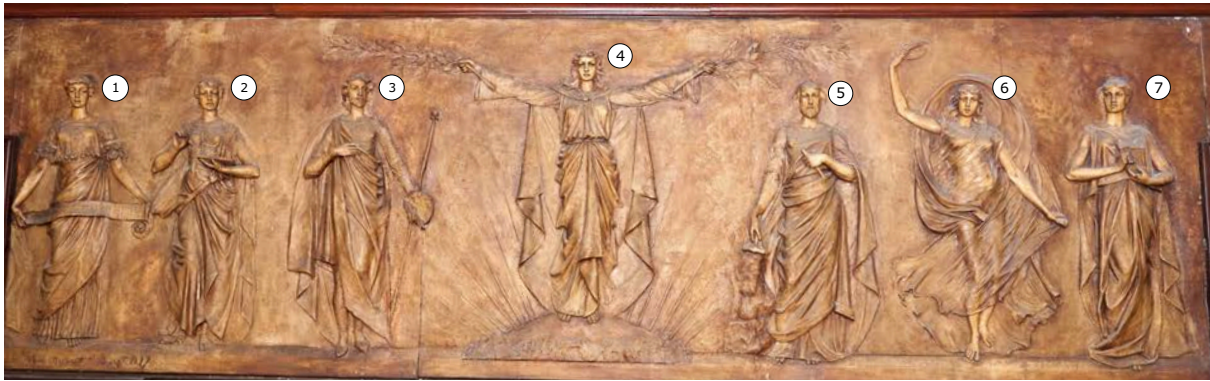
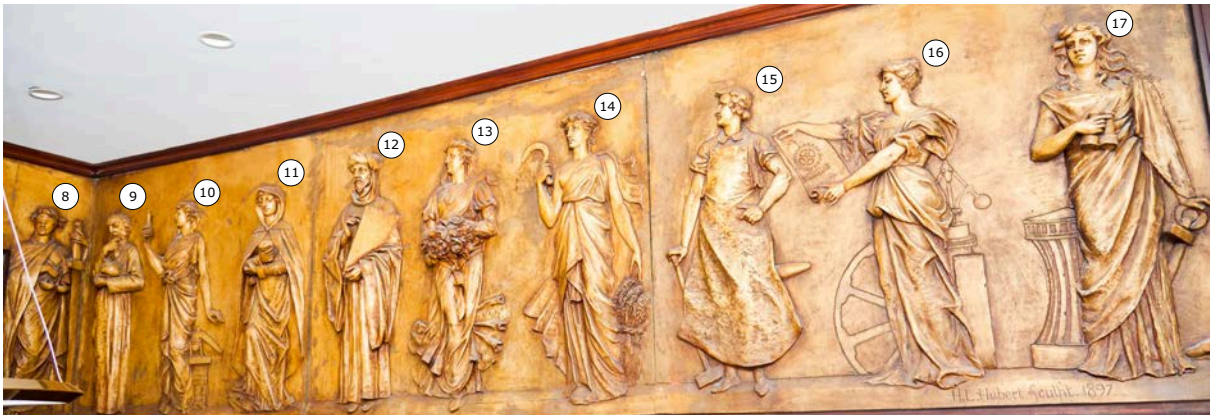


Guide to the Pembroke Library Frieze

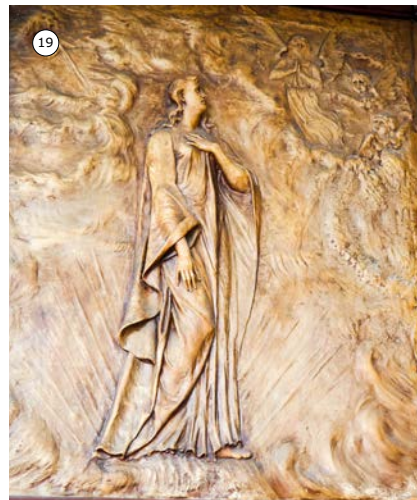
West Wall Frieze



North Wall Frieze



East Wall Friezes



- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Poetry | 11. Charity* |
| 2. Literature | 12. Record keeping* |
| 3. Painting | 13. Commerce* |
| 4. Genius | 14. Agriculture |
| 5. Sculpture | 15. Metalworking/Smithy* |
| 6. Music | 16. Engineering |
| 7. Architecture | 17. Naturalism/Biology* |
| 8. Law | 18. Navigation |
| 9. Philosophy | 19. Religion |
| 10. Chemistry/Pharmacy* | |

**There is a list naming all branches of knowledge represented on the friezes, but no complete key matching the branches to the sculptures. An asterisk denotes a match that has been identified but not verified.*

East Wall Friezes



South Wall Friezes



- 20. Motherhood
- 21. Medicine
- 22. Comedy
- 23. Tragedy
- 24. Geology*

- 25. Astronomy
- 26. Alchemy/Electrical work*
- 27. History*
- 28. Military*
- 29. Nursing/midwifery*

Right door: note that the library was the special gift of Amelia S. Knight (see p. 3)

Left door: official charter of Brown University (see p. 4)

Who Was Amelia S. Knight?



Born in 1848, Amelia S. Knight's early life was marked by tragedy. Orphaned by the age of 16, she lost her youngest brother, Henry Clifford Knight (Brown class of 1875) in 1879, when he was 25 and she was 30. That year, she endowed a scholarship to Brown in his name. (1)

Knight was financially independent, supported by funds from her late parents. By her late thirties, Knight was prominent in nearly every women's organization in Rhode Island. She served as president of the Rhode Island Women's Club in the early 1890s, stepping down from the post to serve as president of the Federation of Women's Clubs of Rhode Island in 1895. She also served as the state regent for the Daughters of the American Revolution from 1893 to 1895 and as vice president for the National Society, a position for which she was later awarded honorary state regent status. (2) In an era where women's education was still difficult to access for most, these women's clubs served as spaces for middle- and upper-class women to educate themselves by bringing in speakers from universities and public office. This drive for better education soon brought them to the movement for the establishment of women's colleges across the United States. The Rhode Island Women's Club, which had been founded in 1876, featured many of the same actors who would help found the Women's College at Brown, including Sarah Doyle.

Most importantly for the Women's College (renamed Pembroke College in 1927), Knight served as the treasurer to the Society for the Collegiate Education of Rhode Island Women from its founding through the mid-1910s and on the advisory council for Pembroke College until her death in 1929. (3) In this capacity, she managed sums in the tens of thousands for the construction of Pembroke Hall and subsequent buildings on the Pembroke campus. Notably, she reached into her own coffers to privately fund the Pembroke College library, now Pembroke Hall 202.

Knight hired Hippolyte L. Hubert, a Providence-born artist who had trained in Paris and at the Royal Academy Art School London and worked for seven years as an assistant to the noted British medallist and sculptor Joseph Edgar Boehm. (4)

-
1. "Providence Journal," *Providence Journal*, Jun. 27, 1879, 2; "Brown University," *Fall River Daily Evening News*, Jun. 18, 1880, 3.
 2. "Mrs. C. W. Lippitt Named," *Boston Globe*, Feb. 17, 1905, 14.
 3. "Advisory Council," *Brun Mael*, 1929, <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:647258/>.
 4. "What Brown University Is Doing for Women," *The Review* (Salt Lake City, UT), Dec. 11, 1897, 7.

Hubert worked for eight months on modeling the stucco-and-plaster frieze that came to surround the Pembroke Library, finishing the design in an old ivory tint. (5) Hubert created the frieze, but it was Knight who shaped the design, suggesting which figures ought to be depicted and where they should go. So important to her was the final design that when Pembroke Hall was officially given to Brown University, she included a clause that no change be made to the décor of the library without her consent during her lifetime. (6)

The design Knight chose epitomized the hopes and the limits of women's education in the 1890s. Figures including Genius, Religion, Tragedy, Comedy, Navigation, Poetry, Literature, Sculpture, Navigation, Agriculture, Medicine, and many other branches of knowledge lined its four walls, highlighting the value of education and the many places it could take students. Over the hearth, the symbolic center of the home-away-from-home that Pembroke College would be to its students, Knight placed the ultimate purpose that all graduates were expected to one day serve: the rearing of children.

A woman's education at Pembroke would make her equal to the inquiries her sons might set before her, suggested the *Providence Journal*, continuing, "This panel is the beginning and end of the series, the idea being conveyed that the greatest mission of any education is to fit the woman for her duties in the home." If she failed at that, the *Journal* warned, her education would come "short of the highest" mission. This tension would remain at the heart of education at Pembroke for decades to come, as women faced dress codes and parietal rules that male students did not, were subjected to tests monitoring their posture and their weight, and took courses in home economics alongside the ennobled subjects represented on the other walls of the Library.

As Pembroke College expanded, the library was moved upstairs to Pembroke 305, where the collection remained until the merger between Pembroke and the men's college in 1971. Today the room houses Gender and Sexuality Studies classes, including the Pembroke Seminar, and true to Knight's wishes, the friezes on the wall remain unchanged.

Knight herself never married or had children, and she remained active in women's groups until the very end of her life. She died in 1929 at the age of 80, and is buried in Swan Point Cemetery.



Special thanks to 2025-26 Nancy L. Buc '65, LLD'94 hon. Postdoctoral Fellow Eliana Chavkin for instigating this project and researching the history of the friezes.

5. "What Brown University Is Doing for Women"; "Pembroke Hall," *Providence Journal*, Nov. 23, 1897.
6. Minutes, Sept. 29, 1897, MS-1ZW-R1 – R.I.S.C.E.W. 1896 Ledger Book 21591, Vol. 3, John Hay University Archives, Brown University.
7. "For Brown Women," *Providence Journal*, Sept. 12, 1897, 18.
8. "Deaths," *The Evening Bulletin* (Providence, RI), June 12, 1929, 9; Swan Point Cemetery Burial Rolls, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI.