



ICONOGRAPHIES

of the

Virginia Thomas Memorial Windows

The Mary Evelyn Blagg-Huey Library
Texas Woman's University
Denton, Texas



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Virginia Thomas

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1893-1980

Class of 1918

The Texas Woman's University

From her birth in the Texas Panhandle in Crosby County to her death in San Angelo, Virginia Thomas lived a life enriched by her love of beauty. She entered the College of Industrial Arts as a home economics major in 1914 and was soon joined on the campus by her younger sister, Mary. After college, Virginia applied her talents to the designing of clothing and of home interiors. It is especially fitting that Mary Thomas Marshall has given to their *alma mater* the stained-glass windows for the dome of the University Library as a memorial for her sister, Virginia Thomas.

THE TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

The Virginia Thomas Memorial Windows

The Mary Evelyn Blagg-Huey Library

In 1986, the Texas Woman's University dedicated and opened its new University Library; and it was fortunate for the University that one of its alumnae, Mrs. Mary Thomas Marshall, generously gave funds which made it possible to embellish the structure with nine stained-glass windows in the dome of the building. These are in loving memory of her sister, Virginia Thomas, also an alumna of the University.

The stained-glass windows around the central dome of the library include representations of Classical goddesses and muses and of flowers native both to Texas and to Greece and Italy which gave birth to the mythology of the goddesses and muses. The motifs were selected because of their appropriateness to the Classical style of the building; their associations with the history and interests of the Texas Woman's University; and their symbolism of TWU's dedication to the enhancement of learning (the *philosophy* of the ancient Greeks), the advancement and recognition of women, and the preservation and diffusion of Texas' wildflowers.



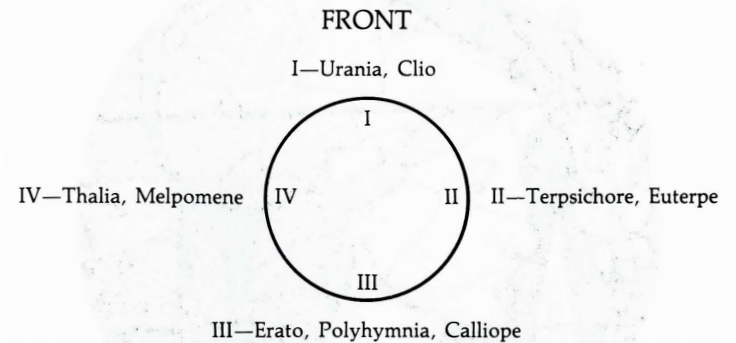
~ Rose Medallion Window ~

The central medallion, at the apex of the dome, contains a red rose theme. This emblem of the Texas Woman's University has long carried much happy and positive symbolism in literature, the arts, and religion; and its representation in both bud and full-blown flower reflect the role of her college years in a young woman's life. Its color, the American Beauty red, is—combined with white—the University's emblematic color. It seems worthy of note here that, also in 1986, the Congress of the United States adopted the rose as the official flower of our Nation.

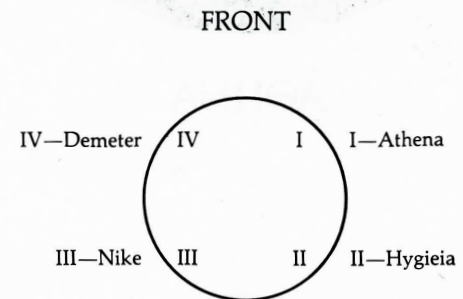
Locations of the Virginia Thomas Memorial Windows

The windows are identified and numbered in clockwise order, beginning from an alignment with the front entrance of the Library. The descriptions which follow are ordered according to the numbers set out below.

The Second Floor: The Windows of the Muses



The Third Floor: The Windows of the Goddesses





ΑΘΗΝΑ

I—The Athena Window

Athena was the virgin goddess of learning and wisdom, patroness of the arts and of war. She was known to the Romans as *Minerva*. The daughter of Zeus, king of the gods, she was not born but burst forth from his forehead, fully grown, with a great shout. Considered therefore the pure dawn sprung from the sky's forehead, she became also a symbol of the beginning of the day. She appeared clad in armour, a sign that her virtue was unassailable. She became the Guardian of Athens, a post she won in a competition for which she created the olive tree—the most useful of the submissions for the contest; and so the city-state was named in her honor. The Parthenon atop the Acropolis is the temple erected for her.

In the Athena Window she is depicted with the symbols of her roles in the ancient mythology: the spear and helmet, with its long plume, for her unassailability and her martial concerns; the cock (on her helmet), for the dawn; the owl, for knowledge and wisdom; and the olive branch, for her contribution to earth and humanity as well as for her city of Athens.



ΥΓΙΕΙΑ

II—The Hygieia Window

It is especially fitting that a representation of the goddess of health and healing, Hygieia, should be depicted in TWU's Library. Hygieia was the daughter of Aesculapius, god of medicine, and was considered by the ancients to provide good health or ensure recovery from illness and injury.

Hygieia is pictured with the caduceus and the lamp, traditional symbols of the healing arts. The caduceus was the ancient emblem of the physician moving from house to house carrying power (represented by the rod), wisdom (the serpents), and expeditious activity (wings). The lamp has long been associated with the care of the sick and, in modern times, came to be a symbol of the nursing profession because of the tradition that Florence Nightingale carried such a lamp during her night rounds among the ill and wounded in the Crimean War (1853-56).

Hygieia has had significant associations with the University, therefore; and the campus infirmary has borne her name from its establishment.



NIKH

III—The Nike Window

Nike, called *Victoria* by the Romans, was the winged goddess of victory; and her importance to the ancient Greeks is attested by the temple in her honor on the Acropolis. Statues of her include the famous Nike of Samothrace, the headless, armless representation found among ruins at Samothrace and now standing in the Louvre, Paris. A reproduction also stands on the front portico of the original building of the Texas Woman's University. The first TWU Winged Victory, a reduced-size replica, was presented as their Senior Class Gift by the graduates of 1919, the students who had celebrated the victory of World War I on the campus. As the years took their toll and the 1919 gift had to be replaced, a new exact-copy reproduction was obtained directly from the Louvre and mounted in 1982.

The Nike Window includes a picture of the Nike of Samothrace, along with the head portrait originally on the west pediment of the Parthenon. She is pictured with the laurel wreath and palm branch, her original and our continuing symbols of victory in contests of all sorts as well as in martial combat and of the peace which follows victory.



ΔΗΜΗΤΡΑ

IV—The Demeter Window

Demeter, called *Ceres* by the Romans, was the goddess of the harvest. The patroness of agriculture, she supported fertility and marriage and was considered the Mother goddess, responsible for all growing plants. Wheat and corn were her emblems, denoting her care for the ripening and harvesting of food grains (the word *cereal* is from her Roman name and patronage).

Her daughter, Persephone, was loved by Hades, the god of the nether worlds; and he kidnapped and spirited her away to his realm. Demeter so grieved that all vegetation died and the earth was in perpetual winter. Finally, upon the intervention of other gods, Hades agreed to allow her return. But she had eaten three seeds of the pomegranate which grew in the underworld, and so he claimed the right to have her with him for three months each year. The four seasons reflected Demeter's response as she garlanded the earth upon Persephone's return (spring), rejoiced in her presence (summer), grieved in anticipation of her leaving (autumn), and mourned her absence (winter).

Demeter is depicted in the Library window as a motherly woman, and the multicolored stars surrounding her head symbolize her control over the seasons. To her right is a pomegranate with the fateful three seeds. In her hands, she holds the sheaf of wheat and stalk of corn which indicate her responsibility for and power over fertility and the harvest.

~ The Windows of the Muses ~

The lower tier of the Virginia Thomas windows, the half-round ones at the second floor, provide representations of the nine Muses and of ancient landscapes which include wildflowers common (perhaps in variation) to Texas and to Greece. The top border of each window includes Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian capitals for columns from ancient times. The rosettes in the corners illustrate four examples of Greek pottery: In window 1, Krater; 2, Hydria; 3, Oinochoe; 4, Amphora.

The Muses, the legendary daughters of the king of the gods, Zeus, and the Titaness who guarded memory, Mnemosyne, presided over song/poetry and the liberal arts as well as over memory. Their dedication to knowledge—its expansion and its preservation—makes them fitting subjects for this Library and explains the derivation of *museum* from their title.



ΟΥΡΑΝΙΑ

ΚΛΕΙΩ

I—The Urania and Clio Window

The figures of the first window are Urania, muse of astronomy and Clio, muse of history.

Urania, who was second only to Calliope among the muses, was responsible for the movement of the heavenly bodies; and the stars were a symbol of this "heavenly one." She is pictured with the globe at her feet and holds the staff which was her compass for indicating the course of the stars. Over her shoulders are the stars of the constellation Ursa Major (popularly known as the Big Dipper) and the fiery ball and streaming tail of Halley's Comet. The latter, which travels in its orbit to Earth-view every seventy-five years, returned in 1986, the year of the Library's dedication and opening.

Clio, whose responsibility was to celebrate and make famous the feats of history, holds the tablet and stylus with which she recorded great deeds.

In the background between Clio and Urania stands the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens.

The flowers in this panel are the brown-eyed Susan and the winecup, and the corner pieces at the base of the window illustrate the krater vase.



ΤΕΡΨΙΚΟΡΗ

ΕΥΤΕΡΠΗ

II—The Terpsichore and Euterpe Window

The second of the Muses' windows features two performers, Terpsichore and Euterpe.

Terpsichore, muse of dance, was patroness also for choral drama and song. She is pictured engaging in the dancing in which she was known to delight, for her name meant *delighting in dance*; and it is used in this sense today.

Euterpe was the muse of lyric poetry and song and of music generally. As pictured—wearing her traditional crown of flowers, she seems to join Terpsichore in the dance for which she is piping. The double flute she plays is an important symbol of Euterpe's, for she was credited with its invention.

The ruins in the background are of the temple of Zeus in Athens.

The flowers are the tansy aster and the eryngo thistle, and the amphora jug is pictured in the corners.



ΕΡΑΤΩ ΠΟΛΥΜΝΙΑ ΚΑΛΛΙΟΠΗ

III—The Erato, Polyhymnia, and Calliope Window

The third window contains three of the nine Muses: Erato; Polyhymnia; and Calliope, who was chief among the Muses.

Erato, muse of lyric poetry—and especially of love songs, plays at her lyre; for the harp was her principal symbol. The rose, symbol of love, was her special flower.

Polyhymnia, muse of sacred song and poetry, stands between her sisters and holds the scroll which was her emblem.

Calliope, especially given care over epic poetry and song and over the keeping of the epic, is pictured upon her traditional chair and holds the book which is her symbol.

Behind these three is the ruined shrine of Diana.

The flowers are the primrose and the bluebonnet, and the corner piece contains the oinochoe wine jug.



ΘΑΛΙΑ

ΜΕΛΠΟΜΕΝΗ

IV—The Thalia and Melpomene Window

The fourth window honors muses of the drama, Thalia and Melpomene; and it reflects the epic nature of Greek dramatic performances, in which the actors wore over-sized masks to indicate their characters because the arenas in which they performed were so very huge.

Thalia, whose name means *to bloom*, was the muse of comedy and pastoral poetry. She is pictured with her comic mask and wears a garland of the ivy which also was her symbol.

Melpomene, whose name means *the songstress*, was muse of tragedy. She carries the tragic mask, and the somberness of her demeanor and blackness of her hair reflect the sadness and disaster over which she presided to bring forth the greatest of the Greek dramatic theater.

The background picture, again of the Acropolis, depicts the Temple of Poseidon at Sohio.

The flowers are the prairie pink and the Indian blanket, also known as the Indian paintbrush and the firewheel, respectively. The water jug in each corner rosette is a hydria.



John Kebrle, Jr.

Creation of the Windows

The artist and creator of the Library's stained-glass windows was John Kebrle, Jr. Born in Dallas in 1927, he is son and grandson of stained-glass artists. He learned his art and his craft through studies at Dallas Art Institute; Famous Artists School of Westport, Connecticut; and Southern Methodist University and through apprenticeships to George Brozius and John Kebrle, Sr. He has headed the Kebrle Stained Glass Studio since 1958 and has served the Stained Glass Association of America as a board member (1965-1984) and president (1980-1982). He has juried numerous stained-glass competitions throughout the country and presently serves as committee chairman for SGAA at the Corning Museum of Glass at Corning, New York. His dedication to his work is reflected in his tour of Greece to study the remnant evidences there of the Classical mythology which provides the theme for the Library windows.

Acknowledgements

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Committee

Especial thanks are in order to the members of the Library Program Committee who determined the general theme and the specific personnae for the windows and, along with the subcommittee, advised the artist in the preparation of the windows.

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