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# RHODE ISLAND YEARBOOK



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*The Pembroke Campus*

## The Pembrokers

BY JAMES CALOGERO

**A**T 2 o'clock in the afternoon of October 1, 1891, two young ladies nervously walked into the office of Elisha Benjamin Andrews, president of Brown University, and with a few pen strokes wrote academic history.

The two women — Nettie Serena Goodale of Pawtucket and Elisabeth Robina Peckham of Bristol — signed their names on that fall day 77 years ago as the first female students in the long history of Brown University.

As it turned out, their signatures opened the floodgates for the collegiate education of women in Rhode Island.

The first class for women at Brown was held on that October day in an upper room of the University Grammar School, where Rockefeller Library now stands. Prof. Asa C. Crowell presided over a recitation in French. President Andrews sat in a corner during that

first class pretending to read a book but in reality watching with deep interest what was then a daring experiment.

Four other young women shortly joined the pioneer twosome in that upstairs room. They studied there until late afternoon when it became too dark to see. Since there were no lights in the school a compassionate Dr. Andrews moved the late recitations into his own office.

It was from that simple beginning that Pembroke College in Brown University grew into one of the most highly respected women's colleges in the country. That beginning, though, was a long time coming.

As early as 1796 a Brown senior ascended to the podium on commencement day to deliver "A Dissertation in Favor of Female Education." As far as Brown was concerned, he was speaking 95 years before his time. Other daring seniors came along with such dis-



sertations as "The Rank of the Fair Sex in the Scale of Being," also too early.

An alumni committee tried unsuccessfully as early as 1869 to influence the university into accepting women with this resolution presented at an alumni meeting: "In these days it may not be premature to inquire, whether a college which justly prides itself in the possession of an eminently liberal charter, should not open its doors to the admission of women so that students of both sexes might within its halls share together all its advantages of education."

In August of 1881 poet John Greenleaf Whittier, a Brown trustee, sent a letter to Richard Atwater in which he wrote: "I hope the time is not far distant when Brown University will be open to women. The traditions of the noble old institution are all in favor of broad liberality and equality of rights and privileges. The state of my health and the increasing weight of years may prevent me from taking an active part in the matter, but it would be a great satisfaction to give my voice in behalf of a measure which I feel certain would redound to the honor and materially promote the prosperity of the college. Brown University cannot afford to hesitate much longer in a matter like this, of simple justice. No one who has felt the pulse of public opinion can doubt that the time has come when a liberal, educational policy, irrespective of sex, is not only a duty, but a necessity."

Five years later, in 1886, Brown President Ezekiel G. Robinson outlined some reasons in his annual report for not admitting women to Brown:

"... the buildings are not so constructed as to furnish requisite accommodations for young women, and cannot without great expense be so changed as to fit them for use by both sexes." He noted, too, the objection of some members of the community "... some 'out of prejudice' and other because of what was termed 'the danger from the daily association of the two sexes at the inflammable age.'"

And so the discussion about admitting women to Brown University went on and on...

At one meeting of the Brown Corporation, a leading lawyer rose to his feet and suggested that the State of Rhode Island presumably could call for forfeiture of the Brown charter if women were admitted. He argued the charter specifically called for the education of "youth" and he cited the Century Dictionary as his authority that the word "youth" applied to men only.

Other trustees brought out quotations from English, Scotch and Irish poets and even the Bible — "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" — in efforts to knock down the lawyer's arguments.

Finally, in 1891, women were admitted to Brown

University, but the road ahead was still far from smooth. The first classes were held at the University Grammar School. Later classes were held in the Normal School on Benefit Street. Still later a building at 235 Benefit Street was used as headquarters for the women students.

Even the sign put over the door of the women's building was to bring one protest after another. The first sign read "WOMEN'S COLLEGE OF BROWN UNIVERSITY." Immediately there was a protest that legally there was no women's college of Brown University. Down came that sign and up went one that read: "WOMEN'S COLLEGE IN ADJUNCT WITH BROWN UNIVERSITY." Again there were protests and a new sign went up reading: "WOMEN'S COLLEGE IN CONNECTION WITH BROWN UNIVERSITY." In 1896 the name was changed still again, this time to "WOMEN'S COLLEGE IN BROWN UNIVERSITY."

The curriculum was another serious matter of consideration for the women of the late nineteenth century. They were admitted only to a handful of the university's regular courses and segregated for the rest of their instructions.

It was considered, for example, that reading Horace was a little too racy for mixed classes. Hence, segregation in Latin. Similar considerations dictated a separate and, perhaps, an unequal approach to biology.

It was not until after World War II that all Brown classes were open to all women.

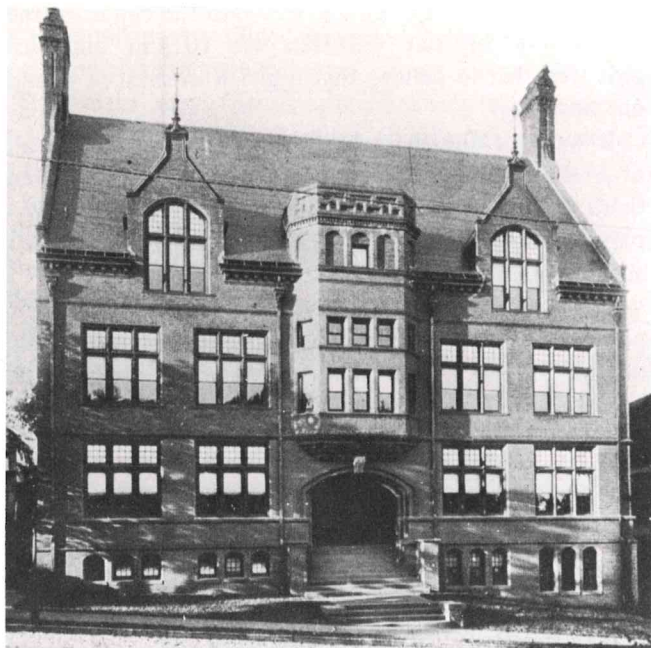
At any rate, despite the early struggle for sexual equality in education, by 1895 — four years after the first women were accepted — fully 100 young ladies were in the building on Benefit Street, and it was crowded.

A new building for the women was planned and a drive launched to raise the necessary funds. Dr. Andrews called on Miss Sarah E. Doyle to head the fund drive as the long-time head of the Girls' Department in the Providence High School and a major force in the interest of higher education for women in Rhode Island.

Miss Doyle initially put together a committee of 18 women, later expanded the group, and within a comparatively short time obtained enough financial support for the construction of a red brick building at 172 Meeting Street. The generosity of the Rhode Island Society for the Collegiate Education of Women was important in making the building possible.

The structure was dedicated in November, 1897, and officially named Pembroke Hall, after Pembroke College at Cambridge University, England, which had been founded in the 14th century by a woman, Maria de





*Pembroke Hall, 1897.*

Saint Paulo, widow of the Earl of Pembroke. It was the alma mater of Roger Williams, who founded the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations after fleeing from the religious intolerance of early Massachusetts.

Pembroke Hall was a multi-purpose building for the women's division. In it were classrooms, lunchroom, gymnasium, offices and a library, but the name of the school was to continue as The Women's College in Brown University for 31 years after the dedication of Pembroke Hall.

Incidentally, Pembroke Hall still stands as the administrative center for Pembroke College.

First dean was Louis F. Snow, who served from 1892 until 1900 not only as dean but also as co-ordinator of all administrative departments, collector of tuition and other fees, paymaster for instructors teaching the young ladies, recorder, admission officer, financial aid officer, advisor on course programs and as development officer.

Some five years after Mr. Snow began his service as dean of the women's division, he was provided with a secretary. But with or without a secretary, Dean Snow delegated to his wife the embarrassing task of handling the personal problems of the girl students.

Mrs. Snow also was given the responsibility of dealing with students guilty of "irregularities in conduct." These "irregularities," it turns out, included cutting chapel or classes and the disturbing fact that several boarding students did not always pay their bills on time.

The Rhode Island Society quietly paid the bills of more than one delinquent student.

The Women's College got its first woman dean in 1900, Miss Anne Crosby Emery, who had been the first dean of women at the University of Wisconsin. With her arrival, the Horatio N. Slater homestead on Benefit Street was opened as a dormitory. In it was an apartment for the dean.

In 1900 there were 152 students in the Women's College. At the end of her career as dean in 1905 there were 203 women students. It was during her tenure that the Student Government Association was formed to "regulate matters pertaining to the social life of the students and certain academic matters involving conduct."

President William H. P. Faunce reported in November, 1903, that "there was no coddling whatever of the women."

Miss Emery was a popular dean, taking part in dormitory bull sessions with all the enthusiasm of the most impressionable student.

Miss Grace E. Hawk, author of the book "Pembroke College in Brown University," published in 1967 by Brown University Press quotes an alumna as saying the dormitory discussions included everything from "the destiny of the human race" to "feminine demonstrations of affection."

Miss Emery resigned as dean in 1905 to marry a Brown professor.

Her successor, Miss Lida Shaw King, was to serve from 1905 until 1922, a period in which the number of students doubled and new constructions included Sayles Gymnasium and two dormitories, Miller and Metcalf.

Somewhat public relations conscious, Dean King suggested it might benefit the Women's College if its rather ponderous name were changed. But the name change she suggested strongly in that year of 1911 wasn't to come for 17 years yet.

The women, remember, were attending classes at this time in Pembroke Hall while the men of Brown had their classes on the Brown campus, known familiarly as the Hill.

Dean King, however, made a notable exception in 1911: She permitted two freshmen, Janet and Lucy Bourn, to enter an all-male chemistry class. Miss Hawk reports that the reason given for the exception was that since the two girls were sisters one could protect the other. One knows not in the year 1968 from what evil the girls might have needed protection. The record shows that all turned out well. Lucy Bourn became a doctor and Janet Bourn a bacteriologist.

Miss King, was instrumental in the dissolution of all sororities on the campus on grounds that they created rivalry and distrust and that girls who were left out



might have antagonistic feelings toward the college.

To this day there are no sororities at Pembroke.

Through the first 25 years of its existence the Women's College remained a separate institution within the university. The women had identical but separate courses, examinations and degrees. The women also had their own faculty drawn from that of Brown and certainly separate facilities. The Arnold Biological Laboratory, which opened in 1915, had separate rooms and separate entrances for women.

Tuition and charges also were a matter of separate concern. When the men were paying tuition cost of \$175 in 1917, the women paid \$150. In 1928-29, the men paid \$400; the women \$350.

Dean King was so completely devoted to Pembroke that in 1909 she turned down without regrets an offer to become dean of Barnard College at three times the salary she was paid at Pembroke.

Dean King resigned in 1922 after an illness that was to keep her hospitalized until her death in 1932. Dean Emery, who had become Mrs. Allinson, returned to the college for a semester until Dean King's successor, Dr. Margaret Shove Morriss, could leave her post as associate professor of history and admissions committee chairman at Mount Holyoke College.

Under Dean Morriss, the college was renamed, the student body grew to 900, classes became co-educational, a new dormitory, Andrews Hall, was built and Alumnae Hall went up to provide a place for undergraduate and alumnae activities.

Typical of Dean Morriss was her insistence that there be no formal installation of office for her — and there wasn't.

The Women's College student handbook for 1922-23

ruled that "no college girl go . . . into the center of the city without her hat." Curfew was 10 p.m. and nice girls were led to believe that a girl who smoked would do "anything."

It was not until March, 1929, that one room in all of Pembroke College was reserved for smoking, and there was no small embarrassment when a tabloid newspaper came out with the headline: "Pembroke Encourages Women's Smoking."

On October 10, 1928, the Brown University Corporation finally settled a dispute that had been brewing, off and on, for more than 30 years. It changed the name of the Women's College in Brown University to Pembroke College in Brown University, by this time a truly coordinate college.

Pembroke was an easy choice for a name, although there had been strong suggestions that the name of the college be "Andrews." Still others felt the name should be "Metcalf College" and "Rockefeller College."

By the late thirties, more and more girls were taking courses with men on the Hill, joint Brown-Pembroke football rallies were being held, men were being admitted to the Pembroke cafeteria and a few years later Pembroke's were working side-by-side with the men as disc jockeys, commentators, script writers and producers on the campus radio station WBRU, in stage productions and other undergraduate activities.

Pembroke's 50th anniversary came in 1941 when nearly all the world was involved in war. As the anniversary date neared, Brown President Henry M. Wriston declared, "We will celebrate Pembroke's Fiftieth Anniversary if there are five wars going on." And so they did.

The 50th anniversary of Pembroke Hall in 1947 also was the 600th anniversary of Pembroke College, Cam-





bridge. President Wriston, speaking to alumnae gathered for the anniversary, said: "Sooner or later women will be elected to the Corporation of Brown University."

Two years later, Mrs. Leslie E. Swain was elected by the Corporation as the first alumna term trustee. In 1965 the practice was begun of placing the names of women on the ballot to be voted on by both the alumni and alumnae, and subsequently to be elected alumnae trustees by the Corporation.

Miss Morriss celebrated her 25th anniversary as dean of Pembroke in 1948 and the following year took her first extended leave since 1929 to travel in Europe. It was during this leave and while Nancy Duke Lewis was serving as acting dean that Dean Morriss announced her decision to retire.

Miss Lewis was installed as Pembroke's fifth dean on September 19, 1950, in the presence of more delegates from leading colleges than ever before were present on the Pembroke campus. Miss Ruth Hussey of the Class of 1933, who went from Pembroke to stage and movie fame, returned with several other prominent alumnae for the impressive installation ceremony.

Less than eleven years later Miss Lewis was dead of cancer but her memory will live forever.

Miss Lewis devoted considerable effort encouraging her students to pursue scholarship beyond the bachelor's degree. It was because of Miss Lewis that so many young ladies went on into the professions and into teaching at the college level.

In a report to the Corporation, President Barnaby C. Keeney, with tongue in cheek, said in 1957 of Miss Lewis: "The dean of Pembroke has an irritating habit of stating on every possible occasion that Pembrokers are superior to Brown men."

The records, as a matter of fact, bore out her assertions. To this day, the women of Pembroke consistently average higher academically than their male counterparts at Brown and students in practically every other school in the country.

Miss Lewis, while dean, had a consuming desire to have a chair for a woman professor established at Brown.

In 1968, Brown University officially announced the establishment of the Nancy Duke Lewis Professorship to be held exclusively by a woman professor — a permanent symbol of Miss Lewis' serious concern for the education of women.

The sixth dean of Pembroke College — installed on November 15, 1961 — is Miss Rosemary Pierrel who, after earning two degrees at Boston University, became the first woman doctoral candidate to work and teach under psychologist Walter S. Hunter at Brown.



*Miss Rosemary Pierrel, Dean of Pembroke College.*

She received her Ph.D. from Brown in 1953, remaining as a member of the university faculty until 1955. The next seven years at Barnard were devoted to teaching and research.

As dean, Miss Pierrel has been particularly concerned with curricular innovation and was co-developer of the present flexible academic design adopted in 1963.

She takes special pride in the increasing number of young women who complete both the bachelor's and masters degrees within four years as well as the high percentage of Pembrokers who continue on to graduate study.

In addition to serving as academic dean in the university and Dean of Pembroke College Miss Pierrel continues to teach a course in psychology, train graduate students and remain active in research.

By the mid-sixties the construction of four new residence halls — Champlin, Emery, Morriss and Woolley — were completed, making it possible for some 90 per cent of the Pembroke students to live on the campus.

More than 1,000 girls from practically every state in the union and several foreign countries now attend Pembroke College in Brown University.

Brown University President Ray L. Heffner, speaking at Pembroke's 75th anniversary in 1966, said, "Next to a distinguished faculty, Pembroke College is Brown University's proudest possession."

Not a dissenting voice was heard.