

# West Pediment

The model of the west pediment sculpture depicts the contest between *Athena*, goddess of wisdom, and her uncle *Poseidon*, god of the seas, to see who would become the patron god of Attica and its capital city. Both *Athena* and *Poseidon* would give a gift, the patron god would be chosen. *Poseidon* struck his trident, a three-pronged spear, on the rock of the Acropolis and created a hole from which poured salt water. This water symbolized his gift; a good navy for protection of the city, and prosperous trade through their port system. *Athena* struck the rock with her spear and an olive tree sprang up. The tree was an excellent gift: olives and olive oil were used for cooking; the oil was a prime fuel for lamps, a beauty liquid for body and hair, and was used in making soap and medicines. *Athena's* gift was considered better and the city was named Athens in her honor.



**A ILISSOS** - (Not shown). Personification of an Athenian river god. Theory has it that this pediment is flanked by personifications of River Gods because the rivers themselves marked the boundaries of the contested land.

**B KEKROPS** - Legendary founder and first mythical king of Athens. Descendent of *Erichthonius*. Father of *Pandrosos*, *Herse*, *Aglauros*, and *Erysichthon*. Half-man, half-serpent in form suggestive of his close ties with *Gaea*, his mother. Although he appears human in the pediment figure, he is resting on a serpent's tail. He is said to have presided over the represented contest

**C PANDROSOS** - The oldest of *Kekrops's* three daughters. *Athena* entrusted the basket containing the infant *Erechthonius* to her with orders for her to never look inside. She was the only of the three to heed these orders and live. Sister of *Herse* and *Aglauros*. Together they are the personifications of Dew .

**D HERSE** - The daughter of *Kekrops* who bore *Cephalus* and *Ceryx* for *Hermes*. Also a victim of insanity and suicide after disobeying *Athena's* orders regarding the basket containing *Erechthonius*.

**E ERYSIKTHON** - Son of *Kekrops*. Brother of *Pandrosos*, *Herse*, and *Aglauros*.

**F AGLAUROS** - Daughter of *Kekrops*. Sister of *Herse* and *Pandrosos*. She went insane and committed suicide by leaping from the Acropolis after looking into the basket containing *Erechthonius*.

**G ERECHTHONIUS / ERECHTHEUS** - The second legendary king of Athens. He is represented by the snake on *Athena's* shield and was probably, like *Kekrops*, half-man and half-snake. He was *Athena's* foster son and charioteer. A mysterious partner in the cult of *Athena*, some say he was her son from a failed amorous attempt by *Hephaestos*.

**H HERMES** - Messenger to the gods. Represented here raising his *caduceus* (winged staff with twining snakes).

**I ATHENA** - Goddess of wisdom, warfare, and the useful arts. Athens was named after her after she won the contest represented here by giving Athens the olive tree. The tree was judged an excellent gift. Olives and oil were used for cooking; the oil was a prime fuel for lamps, used in cosmetics for the body and hair, and also used in making soaps and medicines.

**J POSEIDON** - God of the sea, horses, and earthquakes. In the contest for Athens he struck the rock of the Acropolis with his trident creating a spring from which poured salt water. This was a symbol of his gift: a good navy for protection and prosperous trade through the port system.

**K IRIS** - Goddess of the rainbow and a messenger for the Gods, particularly *Hera*.

**L AMPHITRITE** - Wife of *Poseidon*, also his charioteer. The most celebrated of *Nereus's* fifty daughters. Although the chariot is not represented here, her pose and dress combined with the horses makes it easy to imagine.

**M KALAIS** - Son of *Oreithyia* and *Boreas* (the North Wind).

**N OREITHYIA** - Daughter of *Erechtheus*.

**O ZETES** - Son of *Oreithyia*.

**P MELICERTES** - Son of *Ino*, became a sea god., thereafter known as *Palimon*.

**Q INO** - Nurse to *Dionysus*. After being driven mad by *Hera*, her husband killed one of her two sons. She, also mad and pursued by her husband, blindly ran clutching *Melicertes*, her remaining son., jumped off a cliff with him and into the sea. In pity, she and her son were transformed into deities. She reappears in the myths of *Odysseus* as the sea goddess, *Leokothea*.

**R THALASSA** - A personification of the sea, and an ocean nymph.

**S CEPHISSOS (KEPHISSOS)** - (Not shown). Personification of an Athenian river god.

**T CALLIRHOE** - (Not shown). A water nymph who guarded *Athena's* spring. The name of a fountain on the south bank of the river *Ilissos*.

