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WBAY Building History

WBAY-TV

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The Brown County Courthouse

When it was dedicated in 1911 an Eastern newspaper described the Brown County Courthouse as "the grandest courthouse in the West". It was designed by Charles E. Bell of Minneapolis, a famous architect who also designed the state capitols of South Dakota and Montana.

When the Courthouse was originally built in 1908 86 years ago, it cost \$319,000. In 1992 the project to restore and refurbish it cost \$10,000,000.

The distinct copper covered dome, bell and clock tower contains the original Seth Thomas clock which continues to keep perfect time today.

As you enter the courthouse using the Jefferson Street entrance the first things you'll notice are the murals and the circular area called the rotunda. The first two murals you'll see are intended to remind us of our histories past. On the left is a painting of the landing of Jean Nicolet in 1634. Notice the ornate robe he put on to meet the Indians and the pistols in each hand. On the right is a painting of Fort Howard based on an old photograph taken in 1851.

Look up into the dome and notice how the decorations increase as the building goes up. From the third floor you can look over the balcony and see the terrazzo floor with the large circled star of inlaid tiles.

The sculpture on the courthouse lawn, The Spirit of the Northwest, was created in 1931 by artist Sidney Bedore. The monument depicts Nicholas Perrot, Father Claude Allouez and a member of the Outagamie nation.

WBAY Television

WBAY traces its history back to 1925 when Father James Wagner was experimenting with crystal radio sets at St. Norbert College. He applied for a permit and started a campus radio station with the call letters of WHBY which they say stood for Where Happy Boys Yodel.

When television came along the Norbertine Fathers applied for a license and got the go ahead to build the second television station in Wisconsin, the first being WTMJ in Milwaukee.

This building was then Central Catholic High School, also owned by the Norbertine Fathers. A gymnasium on the third floor was converted into a studio and offices. The station went on the air for the first time March 17, 1953, over 40 years ago. It has been in this building all that time.

The station is now owned by Nationwide Insurance and carries programming from the ABC Television Network.

(Station Tour)



WBAY

GREEN BAY • FOX CITIES • NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

abc

COVERAGE YOU CAN COUNT ON

15 - stations
1941



71 stations
48 markets
23% of US

Meyer opened
in 1930

The WBAY Building at 115 South Jefferson Street in downtown Green Bay.

What is now known as the WBAY Building started in 1924 as a Knights of Columbus health center. From the bottom up, it featured an Olympic-size swimming pool, a restaurant, a gymnasium, and-- at the time-- the largest auditorium in the city. On the second floor you would find a billiard parlor, and meeting rooms. The third floor featured a community kitchen, a lodge room, which became a small gym and four handball courts.

In the 1940's, the Norbertine Fathers-- the same order of priests that began St. Norbert College in De Pere-- took over the building. Back in 1925, Father James Wagner enjoyed experimenting with crystal radio sets at St. Norbert College. He applied for a permit and started a campus radio station, WHBY. It was said the call letters stood for "Where Happy Boys Yodel." When the Norbertines took over the WBAY Building, they began operating WHBY radio from the third floor. Even today we still receive mail addressed to WHBY-- even though the television station has never used those call letters.

When television came along in the 1950's, the Norbertine Fathers applied for a license. They were approved to build the first television station in Northeast Wisconsin, and only the second TV station in the state (the first being in Milwaukee). - WTMJ 1947

WBAY-TV went on the air March 17th, 1953. WBAY TV & Radio operated from the third floor. The television studio occupied the lodge room.

The school was moved out of the building and became Premontre High School (now Notre Dame Academy).

In 1954, an addition was built on the back of the building for new studios and production facilities. That expansion includes our news sets and StormCenter 2. For four decades, the studios included a fully-functional kitchen set.

In 1991, the Bay Bowl bowling alley and diner that operated in the lower level of the WBAY Building was replaced with a new computerized newsroom, which more than tripled the size of the News Department's workspace. This doubled the number of editing rooms to allow the news, sports, and weather departments to share the same space and work more closely together (until the construction of the immense StormCenter 2).

And through the floorboards of one basement storage room, you can still see where the Olympic-size swimming pool once was.

1262 Longtail Beach Road
Suamico, WI 54173
July 20, 2015

General Manager
WBAY TV
115 S. Jefferson Street
Green Bay, WI 54301

RE: Your Building

A few months ago I was asked to write a story for the Notre Dame Academy Alum News, about my years attending the old Central Catholic High School, which was in the building your TV station now occupies. Also, your building was featured recently in a story in the Green Bay Press Gazette.

I thought that you might like to read my story and how it relates to the WBAY TV building. I enclosed my story for your enjoyment. I have great memories of my years at CCHS.

Sincerely,


John (Jack) Wigman

Central Catholic High School Memories

By Jack Wigman '48 CCHS



Central Catholic High School – 1944. The school was not located in a building like Green Bay East or Green Bay West. Instead, it was located in downtown Green Bay at 115 South Jefferson Street and currently occupied by WBAY-TV. The building was built by the Knights of Columbus for their organization. It had four floors, an auditorium on the first floor, and a small gym on the fourth floor. Bishop Rhode, our local bishop at the time, wanted a Catholic high school for young men because St. Joseph Academy was the Catholic high school for young women in Green Bay at the time. Bishop Rhode suggested the Norbertine Fathers begin a Catholic high school, which they

started on September 8, 1941. In the 1944-45 year, there were 500 students enrolled at Central Catholic High School.

So, what was the new school like? It had a very academic curriculum – four years of English, mathematics, science, social studies; four foreign languages – Latin, French, Spanish and German; four years of religion; business education, band, chorus, and ROTC (Reserved Officers Training Corp). ROTC was available to any student in their second year of high school, who was physically fit and was over 14 years of age.

Most of the classes were held on the fourth floor. The business education classes were on the third floor facing Jefferson Street. On the fourth floor facing Jefferson Street, was the library, and on the fourth floor on the east side of the building was a very small gym. At the beginning of the 1945-46 school year, a small Chapel was opened for the students. The Chapel was located on the North Mezzanine which was on the northwest corner of the building.

The hallways on the fourth floor were extremely narrow with student lockers on one side of the hallway. Thus, everyone had to go to their right when class was over to move on to the next class. Traffic was one way. If you went to your left, you would probably end up in detention. If you wanted to play a prank on someone, you pushed him past the door of the class he was entering so he would have to go around the entire building, and most likely be late for class, which would also result in a detention.

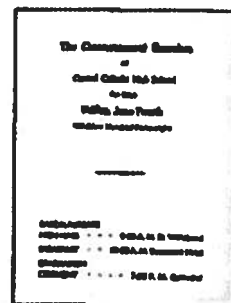
It was the only high school that had a bar in the basement. That is because there was a bowling alley located in the basement. That bowling alley was also our hot lunch room. At lunch time, students would rush down the stairs with their bag lunch or order a bowl of John Proski's chili. The other option for lunch were downtown places like Al's Hamburger, Holzer's Drug Store, or Woolworth's to name a few.

Central had a sports program, but did not have the amenities of other high schools. There was freshmen, junior and varsity football and the teams would practice at different parks and play their home games at either J.C. Minahan Stadium in De Pere or at City Stadium. There was also basketball offered at all three levels as well. However, Central did not have a gym in which to play the home games, since a government agency had taken over the entire first floor of the auditorium because of the war. In the fall of 1946, the school was able to reclaim the auditorium.



1947

Football Program



1948 Commencement Program



1944-45 Handbook



1947 Play Program



1947

Football Program

The basketball teams practiced and played their home games at the old Vocation School on South Broadway, which is now the administrative offices for the Green Bay Public School District. The spring sport was boxing. A ring was set up in the small gym for practice and all the matches were at our opponent's gym. There were also intramural golf and tennis teams and a rifle team.

The drama program was under the direction of Rev. Guy E. Guyon. The plays were held at the Orpheum Theater until the school reclaimed the auditorium. Usually, one or two plays were held each year.

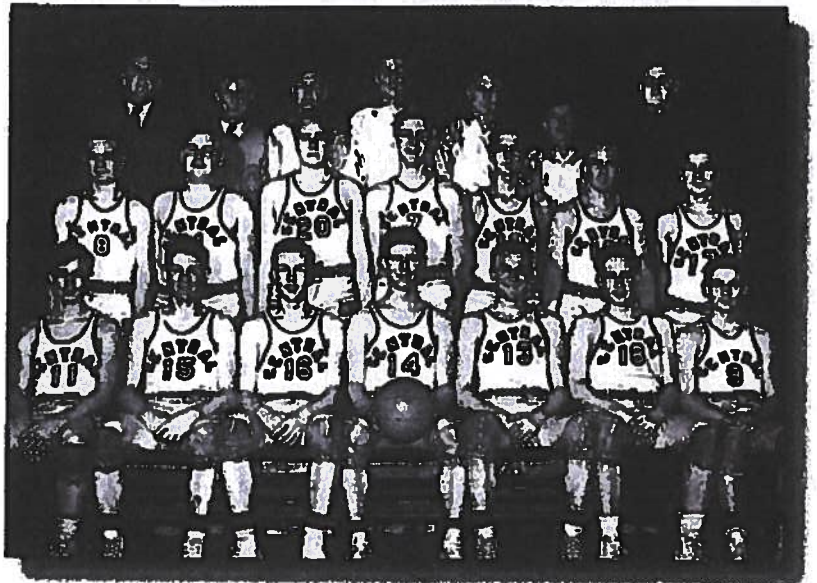
The high school had a Student Council and a student newspaper, "The Beam", which was published once a month. Student dances were held in the Crystal Ballroom of the Hotel Northland or at the Riverside Ballroom on Main Street.

The first principal of the high school was Rev. Sylvester Killeen. Before the start of the 1947-48 school year, he was named Abbot of the Norbertine order. Rev. Richard Mulroy was then named the new principal. Most of the faculty were priests, although as time went on, lay teachers were added to the staff. Norbert Ecker was in charge of the music department which had a band and a choir. There was one female on the staff other than the secretaries and she was the librarian. The priest lived in a home on South Jefferson Street in back of St. Willebrord's Church.

On the first Friday of each month, there was a Mass for the entire student body held at St. Willebrord's church. The entire student body would march over by classes and somehow a few boys hid behind the bushes by the public library which was adjacent to our school, and never made it to Mass.

When you were a freshman, you had to buy a CCHS beanie cap and wear it proudly. Everyone in the school knew who was a freshman!

Great memories of a wonderful part of our lives. And yes, there was tuition, a whopping \$5.00 per month for a sum of \$45 per year. I am sure the students at Notre Dame Academy today would like those good old days!



Central Catholic High School Basketball Team 1947



IN HISTORY

The photo was taken in the fall of 1964. (L-R) Dave Mocco, '65 PHS, David LePage, '66 PHS and Greg Aubenger.

David LePage is now living in Vancouver, BC, Canada and is still running an average of twenty miles a week.

He is a principal with Accelerating Social Impact CCC, Ltd. (ASI), one of Canada's first incorporated social purpose hybrid corporations.