

St. Norbert College

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### Was Van Dyke Gym the first gymnasium at St. Norbert College?

Jena Paul '14

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## March 2012

### Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

Was Van Dyke Gym the first gymnasium at St. Norbert College?

Thank you,  
Jena Paul '14

### Answer:

My dearest Jena,

Please accept my gratitude for your inquiry, which affords me the opportunity to share some little-known history of the college.

The first gymnasium used by St. Norbert students was the former Kidney Boat Factory. This building was acquired from boat builder Daniel Kidney in the very early years of the college and was moved intact from the riverfront to a site along what used to be Second Street, which ran through campus just east of the newly opened Michels Commons. The wooden structure, heated by a wood-burning stove, was used as a gymnasium until 1905, when it was destroyed by fire. A second gymnasium built on the same site met the same end, burning to the ground in 1911.

A third gymnasium was constructed on the north side of Millar Street, north of Sensenbrenner Hall. This wood building with brick veneer was later removed for salvage.

The gym about which you inquired was actually the fourth at



### Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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St. Norbert, dedicated The Gymnasium in 1930. Ten years later this building was renamed Van Dyke Gymnasium by unanimous vote of the faculty in tribute to the Rev. Ignatius Francis Van Dyke, O.Praem., who had died the year prior. Van Dyke was the college's very first student, whom I taught myself. He also was a sports enthusiast recognized as St. Norbert's first athletic director.

The college's fifth and current gymnasium, Schuldes Sports Center, was dedicated in 1979. It is named for donors Malcom and Rose Schuldes.

*Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.*

## St. Norbert College

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