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Ask the Abbot

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I heard the whole college used to be run out of one notebook and a cigar box. Is that true?

John Gallagher '63

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September 2014

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

I heard the whole college used to be run out of one notebook and a cigar box. Is that true?

John Gallagher '63

Answer:

Dear John,

As I read your inquiry, I couldn't help but chuckle. In founding our beloved St. Norbert College and managing its day-to-day operations, I was able to record all income and expense figures in the personal book of accounts that I kept. Six inches wide by 16 inches long to be exact, this volume was commonly referred to as my Little Brown Book.

Be it known that any more formal accounting system would simply have boggled my mind. But all the same, I recorded every expense faithfully, beginning with my first entry on Sept. 26, 1898. Initially, bills were settled in cash. Be assured that I kept most careful watch over one particular cigar box, the box in which I safeguarded the finances of both priory and college.

Although today's accountants might find my manner of finance management somewhat alarming, it was a process through which I was able to build the foundation of St. Norbert College quite successfully. In fact, I took much pleasure in operating business through this personal, and perhaps somewhat idiosyncratic, system.



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.

[Submit Your Question](#)

My Little Brown Book and cigar box served their purpose quite well for the times. But I am certainly happy to assure you and other followers of this column that college business is now soundly run through modern-day systems; systems for which I have the most high regard, although, regrettably, still only a little understanding.

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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