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Ask the Abbot

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How was it possible that all of St. Norbert College was once housed under one roof, in Main Hall?

Andrea Liebelt '10

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April 2015

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

How was it possible that all of St. Norbert College was once housed under one roof, in Main Hall?

Andrea Liebelt '10

Answer:

My dearest Andrea,

Such a notion is certainly extraordinary to contemplate at this remove, given the expanse of the community that has become our present-day college. But I can assure you that, in the early years, it was indeed so.

In my mind's eye, I can still conjure the accommodations of our earliest years. Allow me to take you on a tour of the imagination.

Let us begin at the lower level of our beautiful Main Hall building, as it was occupied in its earliest years. This floor housed the kitchen, as well as the dining area and the gymnasium. While the amenities of our barely furnished kitchen of the day would not be considered, ahem, "state-of-the-art" by today's standards, at the time, our valuable staff of domestics worked diligently to ensure that the sizable range upon which they cooked was able to produce prodigious quantities of exquisite dishes and comforting cuisine.

The first floor was where our earliest students conducted their



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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academic pursuits. In addition to spacious classrooms, a study hall, music rooms and a library were found there.

The second floor served as living quarters. Our students shared dormitory accommodations, with bedsteads lining the walls and a row of washbasins running down the middle of their lofty gallery. Five private rooms additionally situated on this story served as living quarters for lay teachers and the rector. Beautiful molding adorned the ceilings, pointed up by the sunshine pouring in from the numerous windows.

Upon a visit to the third floor, one would have been welcomed by a large auditorium. Locker rooms were also located on this level.

As I hope I have demonstrated, we were not quite the one-room school of rural America but, within our close quarters, we were happy to partake in a similar fellowship!

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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