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Ask the Abbot

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Are there SNC ties with the family of William Minahan, the Green Bay resident who died on the Titanic?

Anna Dennuci '20

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July 2019

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

I notice there have been several buildings in the college's history commemorating the Minahan name. Are there SNC ties with the family of William Minahan, the Green Bay resident who died on the Titanic?

Anna Dennuci '20

Answer:

My dearest Anna,

What a splendid observation! I expect nothing less from a member of our brilliant community. Indeed, dear Anna, you have stumbled upon an interesting tidbit of St. Norbert College history. A string of rich relationships do link our De Pere haven to the unthinkable tragedy of 1912 – a catastrophe I remember all too well, despite my – how can I phrase it – mature age.

As you so astutely point out, William, a notable surgeon in the Green Bay area, perished on the Titanic on April 15, 1912, while traveling home with his sister and wife from a vacation abroad. Almost two weeks after the historic disaster, William's family received notice that his body had been recovered. This was remarkable news, in light of the fact that only 340 bodies of the nearly 1,500 individuals who perished on the vessel were recovered. William's mausoleum crypt can still be visited today at Green Bay's Woodland Cemetery.



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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It was in fact William’s own brother, Dr. John R. Minahan (also a prominent physician in Green Bay), who had deep ties to our college. Dr. Minahan was close friends with Father Thomas Fox, then director of athletics, and was also, I am honored to say, a good friend of mine. It was because of John Minahan’s kindhearted generosity that St. Norbert College was able to build the Dr. John R. Minahan Stadium in 1938. The stadium was joyously utilized by the college community for more than 70 years.

William and John’s nephew, Victor McCormick, had ties to St. Norbert, too. Continuing the family’s tradition of largesse, he donated a naming gift to what would later become the John R. Minahan Science Hall (the college’s science hub from 1967 to 2015). McCormick’s generosity of family feeling continued: He went on to pledge a naming gift toward Mary Minahan McCormick Hall, the Reid Street residence hall that students continue to call home to this day. McCormick named the building after his mother, sister to the Minahan brothers.

So, as you can see, my dear Anna, St. Norbert College’s connection to Dr. William E. Minahan’s last name is far from a coincidence – his family provided our beloved institution with great gifts, all of which are testament to the extraordinary surrounding community that has always supported this place of learning.

Responses to “Ask the Abbot” questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

100 Grant Street
De Pere, WI 54115
920-337-3181
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