

Historic Hotels!

XXXIII: Bangor's *Bangor House*

Although its finest days have long since passed, the Bangor House remains an imposing presence at the corner of Main and Union streets in downtown Bangor. Built between 1833 and 1835, the building is perhaps the only remaining business district structure from its early days. It escaped the Great Fire of 1911, which decimated downtown Bangor and destroyed East Side neighborhoods. It also escaped the Urban Renewal movement that overtook the business district in the 1960s.

Modeled after the Tremont House in Boston and designed by Charles Bryant, the Bangor House was one of the nation's great palace hotels for more than 100 years. In fact, it has stood longer than the Tremont and its cousins that once dotted the country; the Tremont was demolished in 1895. Guests at Bangor House included Presidents Teddy Roosevelt, Ulysses S. Grant, Howard Taft, Arthur McKinley and Benjamin Harrison. Also, entertainers and sports figures Jack Benny, John Phillip Sousa, Gene Autry, Rudy Vallee, Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, Duke Ellington, Ben Ames Williams, Tommy Dorsey and Ted Williams have all spent nights at the house during their visits to the Queen City.

To put Bangor in position to stake a claim to becoming the unofficial capital of New England, 42 businessmen joined forces to develop a palace hotel. The Bangor House Proprietary, established Feb. 26, 1833, consisted of such notables in Bangor history as Thomas A. Hill, George Pickering, Waldo T. Peirce, Richard Treat, Henry Call and Rufus Dwinel. Although construction didn't end until 1835, the hotel opened on Christmas evening in 1834 under the management of Martin S. Wood of Providence, R.I. When it opened, the building looked much different from its appearance today. It had 3 ½ stories, with 112 feet of frontage

on Main Street and 92-foot wings. The first floor had a spacious reception hall, a bar, gentlemen's parlor, ladies' drawing room, ladies' dining room, a smoking room, a reading room and a 50-foot-by-27-foot dining room. The second floor featured a large ballroom that could seat 200 for dining. The hotel cost its proprietors \$125,000 to build and furnish—no small investment for the time.

