

1973

Articles about the Augusta House Hotel

Augusta House Hotel

Kennebec Journal

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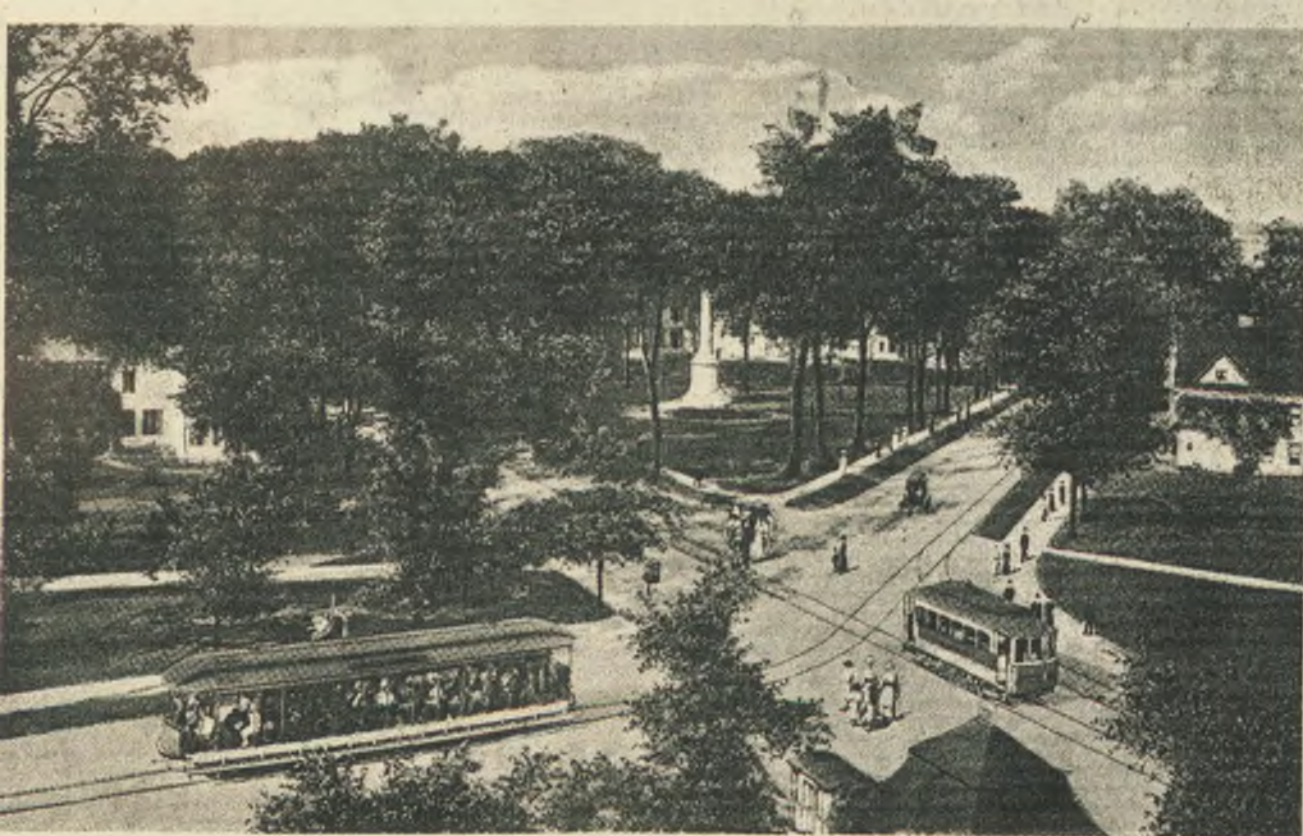
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AUGUSTA HOUSE





Old Augusta

This scene from a 1917 postcard shows the intersection of State and Grove Streets, and Western Avenue. The trolley at left is on Western Avenue; the one at right on State Street, while a horse-drawn vehicle is approaching on Grove Street. The rooftop in the foreground is probably the street car waiting room that once stood beside the Augusta House.





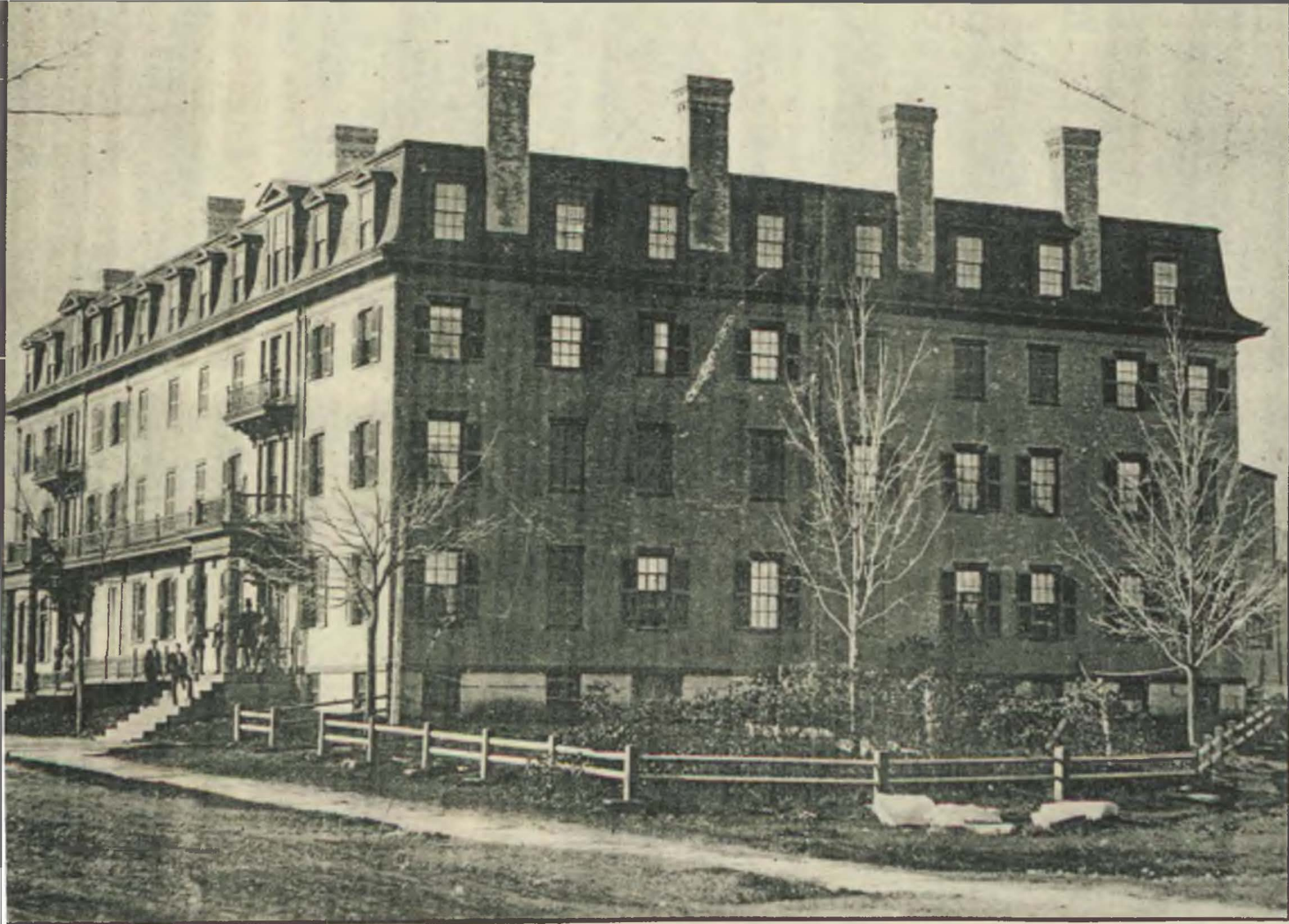
AUGUSTA HOUSE
AUGUSTA ME.

POST CARD

THIS SIDE FOR THE ADDRESS

PLACE
STAMP HERE

—
DOMESTIC
ONE CENT
FOREIGN
TWO CENTS



Early photo of Augusta House with two entrances show a handful of men, presumably state legislators, posing on one stair, while two women watch from far.

Sat. Feb 3, 1973

Augusta House: Easing pain, fretting over future

While many scurry, others are concerned over future

By DAN SIMPSON

KJ staff writer

While dozens of individuals and agencies are scurrying around finding places for homeless people living at the Augusta House, others are starting to voice concern over long-range effects of closing the 141-year-old hotel.

The immediate situation for those at the hotel does not appear to be too bad. Mrs. Mary Dionne, manager of the after care unit at the Health and Welfare Department's local office, said Friday there apparently are enough rooms available to house the 15 of the 63 guests that have no place to go.

The other persons either work at the hotel or have made their own arrangements.

Mrs. Dionne added, however the department would still like to hear from persons who have rooms or apartments to rent. Even Monday would not be too late, she added.

"I'm still fearful we may not have found everybody who needs help," she explained.

Although some guests are former Augusta State Hospital patients, Mrs. Dionne said she did not expect any would have to be returned there. The agency talked with guests Thursday and Friday and took calls Friday morning from people willing to rent rooms or apartments.

Now they are matching the former Augusta House guests with the available space.

"We wouldn't move anyone into a place they couldn't afford," Mrs. Dionne said. "Most are living on very small incomes—\$150 a month apartments are out of the question."

Augusta has had a limited number of rooms and apartments available because of the continued discharge of patients from the Augusta State Hospital and Togus Veterans Administration Center.

To both the state and city health and welfare departments, and to other social agencies, the Augusta House has long been a haven for persons who are temporarily without housing. Now that it is no longer available, the agencies have no place to house homeless people.

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Checking out

Miss Roselle Somerville, who has lived at the Augusta House for the last several years, bids a sad farewell to Frank Toothaker, desk clerk for 25 years, as she checked out Friday night. (KJ Photo by Potter)

Receivers start fund for hapless

By MARY PLUMER

KJ staff writer

A fund of \$300 has been created to help Augusta House residents secure housing in an attempt to ease the bind of the Monday shutdown.

Robert G. Fuller Jr., a receiver with Bruce R. Livingston in the closing of the historic hostel, said his law firm of Doyle & Fuller, and Livingston's employers, the law firm of Lipman & Gingras, and Mrs. Mary Acheson, who holds two of the five mortgages on the operating firm, had each donated \$100 to assist the residents.

Fuller said this move was in partial response to some of the feeling of Augusta House residents that "Fuller and Livingston are a bunch of black hats."

Responding to comments made by Augusta House residents who complained in a KJ story Thursday about the short notice given them that all facilities would be shut off Monday, Fuller said "no one is more distressed than Mr. Livingston and myself about the fact that there are 30 or 40 people in Augusta House who apparently have no place to go."

Fuller said early Friday morning that he had been on the phone to city hall, the Maine Housing Authority, the Dept of Civil Defense "and to just about everyone else I can think of in city and state government and so far have not had one concrete response."

Fuller said some had said they would look around to see if something could be done.

"We're not standing idly by, wringing our hands at the plight of these people. We're concerned about these people. They have human needs and we're concerned about them."

Old hotel helped many out of jams

(Continued from Page One)

"I just wish there were a hotel for the elderly in the area," Mrs. Dionne said. "The Augusta House has been a very convenient resource in the community—we are going to miss it."

"It was centrally located, which was good for the elderly. If you couldn't find another place you could always put the person in the Augusta House."

Some stayed. One woman we put there temporarily last fall stayed and has been quite content. This is a sorely needed resource in the community . . ."

Michael Sayer, an attorney and housing specialist for the Community Action Program, was also concerned with long range effects of the hotel's closing.

Working in conjunction with the Pine Tree Legal Assistance organization, he said his immediate concern is to "insure people are not abandoned . . . and pushed out into the street or forced into substandard places that pass as housing."

Sayer said it has been his experience in working with both agencies to refer people to the Augusta House when no apartment or houses were available.

"We know of many people who stayed there in emergency situations," he commented.

He mentioned specifically one client in Litchfield who was being evicted. Both the man evicting him and town officials tried to convince the person to go to the Augusta House, where the town would pay his rent until he could find a place of his own.

"This has happened often enough for a pattern to have clearly developed," Sayer said. "The Augusta House is clearly the only place suggested as such a place (a home for emergency situations). Towns often look to it as a solution, at least temporarily."

He added there is no other solution because there is no public housing in southern Kennebec County. It is particularly difficult in the area to find emergency housing for families.

"There is no other place in southern Kennebec County that I know of," Sayer said. "I know of no alternative."

Some dispossessed families have stayed at the Augusta House for weeks at a time until housing elsewhere opened up. Abraham Lacasse, director of the city health and welfare department, called the old hotel his "ace in the hole."

Lacasse said an average of

eight to 10 cases a month were referred to the Augusta House, sometimes as many as three or four in one week. Most of these cases are individuals, but some are families.

"It is the only place we had, really," he commented. "It is going to be awfully hard (to place) the next person who comes in."

Asked where the next person or family would be placed, he said he would cross that bridge when he came to it "but I don't know where it will be."

The city had an arrangement with the Augusta House that allowed it to pay the hotel on a weekly basis for persons who would be staying a week or more. This is considerably cheaper than paying daily rates.

The Augusta House is the only place that can accommodate a family. More important perhaps, Lacasse said, the hotel was always there when it was needed.

"It's going to make it very hard here," the director said. "In the past years we have used the Augusta House quite often."

Roy Mullins, executive director of the area Community Action Program, said the demise of the Augusta House leaves no place of crisis housing for persons evicted or otherwise without living space.

Although the CAP agency does not provide money for persons needing housing, it is often the agency that refers these needy people to health and welfare officials.

Mullins also noted the state "does have some responsibility, and some blame really" for the hotel. He noted when it shut down its facility for elderly men in Jefferson two years ago — it was sold to a Massachusetts firm — many of the men moved to Augusta and to the Augusta House.

At one time the Jefferson facility had 288 persons. Mullins estimated about 30 moved to Augusta.

Lacasse said he did not know if any of the elderly men who moved here are still living at the hotel.

Fuller added, however, that they could not keep operating the hotel indefinitely "at a substantial loss."

The local attorney said "Mr. Livingston and I have less than \$200 in the receiver's checking account. We have substantial fuel oil bills, power bills etc., to pay with no prospects of income coming in."

Fuller said "anyone in state government or at the city level or, indeed, from anyplace who wants to come forward and assume our weekly operating deficit of some several hundred dollars, I'd be pleased to hear from them."

He said "we simply can't pay the fuel bills and light bills and that's that. It would be unfair to the creditors to carry us any longer." Additionally, he said, added time would only "hold up false hopes to people in the building that something could be done."

Fuller said the fuel bill is running in excess of \$100 a day "and we're not taking in that amount of money."

Sumner Lipman of Lipman & Gingras, took issue with the Thursday KJ story that indicated the Augusta House was cold. Lipman said the heat had not been turned off and the same amount is being used as before.

Fuller said he was in the Augusta House lobby Friday and it was "comfortable." He said there are no thermostats in the place "you turn one valve and the whole place gets heated up."

Spending Friday chasing down alternatives for the Augusta House homeless, Fuller met in the afternoon with one of Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis' aides in an attempt to come up with a temporary shelter at the armory or at Augusta State Hospital. The Hill Mansion was also investigated as a possibility, he said, but is not heated beyond the first floor.

Late Friday, Fuller reported he had received word from Willys Johnson of the governor's office, that the Oblate Retreat House had agreed to provide

temporary facilities to those with absolutely no place to turn.

The Rev. Real Bourque said this help could not extend beyond next Friday because of the nature of the continuing programs at the Retreat House. He said it would be impossible to keep anyone there beyond a "very temporary" situation.

Fuller said the current Augusta House crisis is "a community problem and I would like to see a community response to it." He urged area residents with extra rooms in their homes to assist, at least temporarily.

"If anyone has any bright ideas, now is the time to come forward", Fuller said.

In the meantime, he said, any Augusta House residents needing financial help to secure a rent should contact him at his office on Western avenue.

No elderly ladies out in snowbank

By DAN SIMPSON
KJ staff writer

The Augusta House will continue operating at its present level until at least after a meeting of its creditors sometime in February, the two attorneys named as receivers said Tuesday.

"We plan to continue running the hotel as a hotel . . . as long as feasible," said attorney Robert G. Fuller of the firm, Doyle

& Fuller. "We don't anticipate closing it down."

The other receiver, Bruce R. Livingston, an attorney with Lipman & Gingras firm, added there "won't be any elderly ladies in the snowbanks of Augusta," a reference to the number of elderly persons living in the old hotel.

The bar and eating facilities at the Augusta House have been closed since Friday, when it went into receivership. These

will remain closed, at least for the time being, but the hotel will continue to rent rooms and service them. This means essentially providing heat, lights, and other utilities to the hotel's permanent residents, transients and legislators.

The beauty salon and barber shop which rent space will also be open.

The receivers said they have enough problems with supervising tenants' rooms without be-

ing bothered with overseeing the restaurant.

There is no definite decision concerning the bar, but if it is reopened it will be a leased operation to "someone responsible who will exercise some degree of control over the patronage," Fuller said.

The receivership was initiated by Sumner Lipman, acting for his client Mary Acheson, one

of the principal creditors of the Capitol City Hotel Inc. The corporation is the operating company, leasing it from Acheson Hotel Inc., the corporation owning the land and building.

Lipman said the Capitol City Hotel Corp. consented to the receivership. "Everybody agreed it was in the best interest of the hotel," he commented.

The receivers act essentially as agents for creditors. They are not responsible for debts incurred before they took over. A receivership is not usually a long-term vehicle but is used to wind up the affairs of a company for creditors.

Presently Livingston and Fuller are determining who the creditors are and how much each is owed. They will also hire someone to take an inventory of Capitol City Hotel Inc. assets, which are principally the furnishings of the building.

Sometime in February the creditors will meet and decide what to do with the operating

company, perhaps sell it or liquidate it. Any proceeds would go to the creditors.

The future of the building itself will be up to mortgage holders of Acheson Hotels Inc. Mrs. Acheson, one of five mortgage holders, has started foreclosure proceedings which come due in June. Once other mortgage holders are provided for, she has the option of selling the hotel, tearing it down or keeping it going.

Livingston said the creditors he has talked with want to see the hotel kept as a going business.

The receivers said it appears their income from rents will cover the reduced operating expenses with the closing of the bar and dining room.

Both, however, said the fuel bill was very high. Because of the hotel's age there are no thermostats to control individual rooms, and a plan to keep guests in one section of the hotel and shut off heat to other sections is apparently not feasible because of the plumbing structure.

Augusta House hobbles along under traumatic conditions

By STAN EAMES
KJ News Editor

The Augusta House, hobbling along on an extremely shaky financial base for more than a year, has undergone trauma that would have cut down a lesser institution in half the time.

It has been home for countless legislators, power brokers, lobbyists, entertainers, and

thousands of tourists and wanderers.

It has been a stately mansion, a political and social landmark, a hangout and, finally, an old-fashioned hotel that wasn't able to adjust to modernity.

The 141-year-old hostelry is, said Ira D. Turner of Portland, "one of the last old-fashioned hotels that thinks of guests as family." Turner, executive vice president of the Maine Hotel and Motel Assn., spoke of the Augusta House as though it were dead—something that has not been determined yet.

But so did everyone else who

talked about the six-story hotel. Mrs. Hector Pelletier, who managed the dining room there, said it was "like home. I hated to see it like it is. I hope something can be done to . . . keep it going," she said.

The hotel went into receivership last Friday, and receivers Robert Fuller and Bruce Livingston said earlier this week it will stay open, but that the kitchen and dining room and the bar will remain closed.

Despite that, a number of legislators said they will return to the institution and keep returning until it is put out of

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Jan 25, 1973

Augusta House hobbles

(Continued from Page One)

business or they're not re-elected.

Sen. J. Hollis Wyman, R-Milbridge, one of the most powerful men in the State Senate, maintains a room there, has for the last 18 years.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," he said. "It was always satisfactory to me — the food, the location, the rooms. I can walk to the State House from there; I don't need a car."

Sen. Armand Fortier, D-Rumford, stayed at the 175-room hotel until this session of legislature. "I hated to change," he said. "The personnel were nice and the location ideal, but service depreciated considerably."

And Rep. John B. Cottrell Jr., D-Portland, said that "events" during the pre-legislative conference in December dampened the enthusiasm of many legislators who might have stayed there.

"The loud music . . . the dancing all night . . . the people in the lobby . . . It's pretty sad. It would be so nice if there were a real nice, complete hotel there," Cottrell, a six-term legislator, said.

City Council Chairman David N. Elvin, W-8, said the hotel had "severe" problems from January to October, 1972. "There were 136 complaints to the police in that time," he said. "and there were more later on."

He said that "the same crowd" that forced closure of the Gas Pump and Lee's — two night spots — helped bring on the hotel's problems.

Elvin said he feels "very bad about losing the Augusta House. We estimate we'll need 400 additional beds when the Civic Center really gets going." He vowed the city would do what it could to help the hotel "as long as what we do doesn't hurt the broad base of taxpayers."

Rep. Cottrell said that should the landmark go out of business after the February meeting with creditors, "it might be a good idea for the state to pick it up. I know it's valuable property. Maybe," he suggested, "some of the state agencies located around the city could be consolidated under one roof."

Cottrell said he noticed in 1967 that legislators began to move away from the old hotel, and offered another seriocomic suggestion: "Maybe the state could renovate it into a dormitory for legislators."

Legislators have used the hotel as an outside base almost ever since it opened its doors Dec. 31, 1831.

One source recalled the sixth-floor suite maintained by then-Senate President Robert N. Haskell, a Bangor Republican.

"If you were called there some night, you went pronto, and you generally were in trouble," he said. Haskell, some politicians observed, ran the Senate more effectively and

frequently from that suite than from the Senate rostrum.

Another seasoned observer of legislative antics said that should the hotel close, it would be a "strong blow struck" for a \$1.5 million parking garage in the State House area — a proposal Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis excluded from his budget message.

"A lot of influential legislators stay at the Augusta House so they won't have to fight to find a parking space at the State House," he said. "If the hotel goes under, there just might be a move to introduce that garage plan to the legislature."

Mrs. Pelletier, employed at the hotel for nearly two decades, said she feels "pretty bad." She noted there were "a lot of regulars, and I just loved the permanent guests."

She remembered fondly some of the legislative dances and "nice social events" there. George Jessel and Bette Davis were among the national personalities she remembers seeing as guests.

Turner said he expected the 70 employees would be absorbed easily by other hotels or motels in the city, and the permanent guests would be able to find lodging elsewhere.

"It's a question of not modernizing," the motel-hotel executive said. "One thing that has hurt these pleasant, old-fashioned hotels is the state Health and Welfare Department, which really takes after them hard," he charged. "I understand Health and Welfare really landed on the Augusta House."

Owner Richard Schenk said last week he had "suffered" through 17 inspections in three

months, three by just one team from H&W.

The financial disaster facing the hotel is just the latest in a series that have hit the Acheson hotels in Maine. Some years ago, the Dewitt in Lewiston and the Elmwood in Waterville closed, and the Belgrade Hotel also owned by Acheson, burned down.

Drowned in red ink

Augusta House to shut doors Monday

By STAN EAMES
KJ News Editor



Receiver

Bruce Livingston, a receiver for the Augusta House, tacks a notice near the desk to inform occupants the hotel will be closed. (KJ Photo by Roach)

The historic Augusta House, wading through a river of red ink for well over a year, will close its doors for good Monday.

Receivers Robert G. Fuller Jr. and Bruce R. Livingston said in a terse four-paragraph statement Wednesday the 141-year-old hotel "will be closed and all services and utilities will be discontinued."

The two lawyers said the move "will no doubt be a hardship to many, but it is unavoidable since the hotel cannot be run at a substantial loss."

Fuller, associated with Doyle & Fuller, said the famous old hostelry was losing "several hundred dollars a week. The source of income was just room rental," he said.

"We thought of raising it, we even drew up a schedule of new rental rates," explained Livingston, "but it wasn't practical because many of the guests are old people with fixed low income."

Rooms in the hotel cost from \$17.50 to \$80 weekly, Livingston said. "We examined several alternatives," Fuller said. "They just weren't feasible."

Livingston, associated with Lipman & Gingras, said Jan. 24 that "there won't be any elderly ladies in the snowbanks of Augusta." He said Wednesday he regrets that statement, but, "I didn't know then the conditions under which we had to operate."

The hotel will close at 5 p.m. Monday, and the receivers said in their notice to the 66 permanent guests that all guests "should immediately seek accommodation elsewhere."

Fuller said the alternatives were to operate the restaurant or open the bar. "If we operated the restaurant, we'd have to meet a payroll and we had the problem of state Health and Welfare Department rulings."

One source said Wednesday that had the restaurant not been closed Jan. 19 when the hotel went into receivership, H&W would have slammed the door shut because the restaurant did not meet its specifications.

Fuller said had the bar been re-opened, he and Fuller would have had to continue operating the restaurant because the license specified that three meals be served daily. If the receivers applied for a new license — one for just a bar in a lodging house — it would have cost \$400, he said.

(Continued On Page 2—Col. 2)

...trying to keep it open," Fuller said, "but our primary duty is to the creditors." He claimed in an aside, that he is a descendant of Reuel Williams, the man who was instrumental in building the structure in 1831 to house the legislature.

He said there had been "no solid offers" to buy the 175-room, six-story building. "We have had some inquiries," Fuller commented. He explained once again that the Capital City Hotel Co. Inc., the operating firm, is the one which is going under. Capital City leased the building and grounds from Acheson Hotels.

Mrs. Mary Acheson of Hallowell holds two of the five mortgages on the operating firm and her title to the hotel will be due in June, Fuller said.

Fuller said he and Livingston "will work to the extent that it's possible with the city and Health and Welfare to place

women living there who are public charges."

He continued: "We would have liked to keep the hotel going. It is, after all an institution, but no offers were forthcoming and we had to consider our responsibility to the courts."

One observer said that the closure may have been, in part, a move to force anyone interested in the hotel into the open. "It'll be boarded up, no utilities, no heat — it could go to ruin quickly with nobody taking over relatively soon," he said.

He continued: "Maybe the city or the state will find it cheaper in the long run to subsidize the difference between the cost of operating the hotel and the actual income."

David N. Elvin, City Council Chairman, said, though, that the city will make "no move to bail the hotel out of this jam. There's nothing we can do," the Ward 8 councilman said.

He did lament over the closure. "I do hate to see those beds go out of commission," he said, referring to the room capacity needed when the Civic Center draws a large crowd.

...the scene in the hotel lobby was pitiful. Old men wandered forlornly, not sure of their next move.

"We had no intimation of this at all," one woman said. "We were all hoping, hanging on."

Another person said that a comment earlier in the week that the hotel was dying of old age was wrong. "It's dying of termites — the long-haired kind."

One woman said she had met Livingston in the lobby of the hotel Wednesday morning. "I had no idea of what was going to happen," she said. "He certainly didn't commit himself to anything positive."

And she remarked that the closure was "like seeing a strong man die. It (the hotel) could have been saved," she added.

The Augusta House was the scene of political wheeling and dealing almost from its birth because it was the base of lobbyists and legislators. It was a political and social landmark in Maine and, it is said, more business was conducted in its rooms than in the State House.

Valued at \$181,000 in 1968, the old hostelry is bounded by the Memorial Circle, and State, Grove and Hichborn streets.

Mortgage foreclosure brings no change in Augusta House status

The foreclosure date for the Augusta House was Sunday, but the future of the city's oldest hotel remains in limbo.

On the foreclosure the property reverted to Mrs. Mary Acheson, a mortgage holder, according to her attorney Sumner Lipman.

Lipman added, however, the property is still subject to another mortgage holder and certain liens, mostly taxes.

Lipman will be meeting with Mrs. Acheson Wednesday to discuss the hotel's future.

The attorney added he has not heard from the mysterious "buyer" recently. Lipman said he was asked not to reveal the purchaser's name.

Sale of the Augusta House to the mystery party was announced March 16 by Ralph

Ferris Jr., the attorney for the former owner Richard Schenk.

Neither the buyer nor the sale price were revealed at that time or since. The sale was made to a Portland attorney, Roger A. Putnam, who was acting as a trustee for the party. Putnam's name is the only one listed at the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds.

Putnam was not available for comment Monday.

In other developments concerning the hotel, attorney Jeffrey Smith of Gardiner said Monday he has filed a petition of bankruptcy with a federal bankruptcy court in Maine on behalf of three former employees.

The petition asked the court to declare the Capital City Hotel Co., Inc., bankrupt. The

company is a separate entity from the building and land; it owns only the furniture and other such assets.

Smith said these assets have been appraised at \$18,000.

If the court accepts the petition, it means bankruptcy procedures will follow federal rather than state guidelines. This could be important for the employees, because under federal procedures they are paid first after the attorneys once the assets are sold. Under state procedures they are farther down on the list of creditors.

Smith said he will eventually represent all 15 or 16 former employees. Most are owed less than the maximum of \$600 they can get from the bankruptcy, but a few are owed \$1,000 or more.

CLIFFORD L. SWAN CO., INC., Auctioneers, Portland, Maine

TRUSTEE'S SALE AT AUCTION

By Order of the U.S. District Court, Hon. Richard E. Poulos, Esq.,
Bankruptcy Court Judge. Case #73-26K Capital City Hotel, Inc.

AUGUSTA HOUSE • AUGUSTA, ME.

Furnishings of 200 Bedrooms — Lobby

Cocktail Bar - Lounge — Kitchen — Dining Room

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, NOV. 9th & 10th at 10:00 a.m.

OPEN EACH DAY AT 8:00 A.M. FOR INSPECTION.

Friday will sell kitchen, dining room, cocktail lounge, lobby, office and part of bedrooms. Saturday sell bedrooms. You will be able to buy piece by piece as well as many bedrooms by room. This is one of Maine's largest hotels — antiques and modern.

BEDROOMS — Mahogany spool beds & matching chests, dressers, stand, desks, chairs also maple sets with innerspring mattresses and box springs, also odd beds, chest, bureaus, desks, chairs (all types), either wall to wall carpet or room size rugs in every room, floor & table lamps. Lots of bedding including sheets, pillow cases, pillows, blankets, etc. **COCKTAIL LOUNGE** — Recently newly furnished, 18 ft. bar & back bar, bar stools, bar stools, cocktail tables with cushioned arm chairs, leather lounges, lot of glasses, etc. **KITCHEN** — tinders sink, bar stools, cocktail tables with cushioned arm chairs, leather lounges, lot of glasses, etc. **LOBBY** — Lounge chairs and sofas, desks, odd chairs, two upright and grand pianos. **KITCHEN** — Scotsman ice maker, Hobart dishwasher, chefs range, grills, broiler, deep fat fryers, steam table, steam cooker, Toastmaster oven, bakers oven, Hobart table & floor model mixers, S. S. sinks, Bunn-o-matic coffee maker, Toastmaster bun warmer, 4-slice toasters, work tables, walk-in box parts, compressors, etc. Lots of pots, pans, cutlery, china, glass, etc. **DINING ROOM** — 150 Winchendon dining arm chairs with v. seats & back (same as new) also 150 other chairs, round & square Formica top tables, serving tables, etc. **MISCELLANEOUS** — UM-MAC triple washer, Unimatic dryer (looks new), fire extinguishers, TV sets, etc. **OFFICE** — two sales, steel & wood desks, storage cabinet, show case & counters, Speed-O-Print photo copier, etc.

JAMES B. GOODMAN, ESQ., TRUSTEE — GREGORY A. TSELIKIS, ESQ., ATTY.

'Extreme emergencies'

Evicted hotel residents seek homes

The Augusta House lobby was freezing cold Thursday, residents wore outdoor clothing and pathetic expressions. It was just a few hours after they had been told they were to be evicted on Monday.

There were elderly persons who had lived there for years and not so elderly who had lived there only a few months. They had similar problems, no place to go, no relatives, very little money and no transportation.

A handful of young people known as the Maine Housing Coalition were there to see if there was anything they could do to help. Gerry Smith, their spokesman, said they were

trying to legally stop the eviction or at least postpone it.

John Westcott and Joyce Saldivan, social workers for the Dept. of Health and Welfare, were trying to determine how many hotel residents were dependent on the department and what problems they were facing.

The Maine Housing Authority people were hot on the phone to see what they could do. They were limited in their efforts, however. A freeze on federal funds has severely limited their activities.

Robert Lenna, a spokesman for the Authority, said they would have people at the

Augusta House Friday to interview tenants interested in relocation at market rates. "We have no funds to subsidize," Lenna said, "but we can allocate up to five emergency placements in case of 'extreme emergency'."

As far as the Augusta House tenants were concerned all had "extreme emergencies."

A little old lady who had lived there for years had locked herself in her room and refused to budge. She talked to only one Augusta House employee and was finally convinced to talk briefly with Westcott, the social worker. "I don't want your

help," she told him firmly and went back to her solitude.

Another elderly lady who had lived at the Augusta House for years, weary from a sleepless night of worry, said she had been out pounding the pavements all morning and hadn't found anything. She said she heard people pacing the floors all night.

Elwin Small, currently unemployed, said, "I put my last \$15 down on a room at the Lawrence House this morning.

He said he had applied for unemployment and has no income.

Frank Toothaker, a deskman

at the Augusta House for 25 years, obviously sad, said, "I'm going up to Strong, store my stuff and rest, then I'll see."

Miss Mardel J. Witt, who had lived at the Augusta House about four weeks, sat clothed in outdoor coat, hat and muffler stroking the house cat, had only this to say, "I feel this building has a spirit that wants to live on." She too didn't know where to go.

Frank Bridges, who is receiving help from the Dept. of Welfare, was bitter about the eviction. "I have no idea what

(Continued On Page 2—Col. 2)

Solons won't try to save Augusta House

By ERNIE STALLWORTH
KJ staff writer

Private business interests will have to save the Augusta House, if it is to be saved at all.

Legislative leaders of both parties agreed Thursday that there wouldn't be any attempts to revive the old hotel at this session.

In fact, there was considerable sentiment for tearing the building down and constructing a modern hotel complex on the grounds.

"We're going to have a party and draw straws to see who'll go burn it down," Senate President Kenneth P. MacLeod said

with a smile when asked what legislators might do.

More seriously, MacLeod, a Brewer Republican, suggested that a modern five-story hotel with underground parking would be filled constantly if it were built on the Augusta House site.

"There's a lot of nostalgia around here," Sen. Joseph P. Brennan, D.-Portland, said. "but we have no responsibility for the hotel."

Brennan, the Senate minority leader, said a number of legislators would like to live within walking distance of the State House and a modern facility would also help with some of the parking problems.

Senate Majority Leader

Richard W. Berry, R.-Cape Elizabeth, said some state boards such as the Maine Industrial Building Authority might help with loans for a new building, but the legislature won't help directly.

"I don't think the legislature should become engaged in private business," House Speaker Richard D. Hewes, R.-Cape Elizabeth, said. "I would be opposed. This is not to say we might not be interested in the land at a later date. We are definitely not interested in its operation."

Augusta Mayor Stanley E. Sproul said he had been hopeful one of the several potential buyers might step forward before the hotel closed, but that now seems unlikely.

"I've heard nothing about anyone picking it up," Sproul said. "It's going to be an inconvenience for the people living there. I'm sure the people in city government will help relocate people or do anything they can."

Sproul, who is also a Republican House member, said he thought a new hotel would be a fine business for someone.

"I'd like to see it, (a new facility), happen," Sproul said. "I'm disappointed at the closing. It was serving a purpose for some of our senior citizens and some legislators."

David N. Elvin, city council chairman, said Wednesday he

(Continued On Page 2—Col. 3)



Snow bank?

Miss Mardel J. Witt sat in the ice cold Augusta House lobby Thursday, fully clothed for outdoor weather, holding the house cat, watching forlornly as frantic residents scurried around trying to figure out what to do about eviction day on Monday. (KJ Photo by Potter)

Evicted residents Solon's won't

(Continued from Page One)
I'm going to do, scream bloody murder I think. How can this lawyer say he wouldn't evict us and then do this. He's not much of a person. After he made that statement everyone felt safe."

Harold Brook who lives on a small pension, said, "I'm going to Bond Brook road with friends if I don't land in the hospital this afternoon."

Frank A. Folsom, another long time resident, said, "I paid my rent a month in advance, how can they evict us in four days."

Pat Faucher of the Augusta Post Office, was there to see what would be done about residents' mail when the hotel closes. "We can hold it at the post office for a while," he said.

A frightened cat running around the lobby was causing some concern. Mrs. Hazel Drago, whose husband formerly managed the Augusta House, said, "I don't know what they're going to do about the cat. I hope some one will take it."

Mrs. Drago was there trying to help the residents with their problems.

The biggest problem seemed to be that a lot of elderly people, unable to cope with the situation were about to be evicted from what they considered their home.

Mrs. Dorothy Pelletier, dining room hostess for 20 years, summed the situation up very well. "I'm just sorry about the whole thing," her eyes filled with tears, she said, "I could just cry."

(Continued from Page One)
didn't think the city would bail out the hotel, and social workers from the state health and wel-

fare department began working Thursday to relocate tenants.

Mrs. Peter Dionne, a department representative, said she is concerned for the 60 of the 66 permanent residents who are recipients of state assistance.

"There's no such thing as 60 vacant rooms to let in this area," Mrs. Dionne said. "It's a shame they (the receivers) had to do this. I don't think they know just how tight the housing situation is."

Mrs. Dionne said Augusta State Hospital and health and welfare aid recipients live at the Augusta House. State health and welfare workers will meet Friday to discuss the situation, she said.

The hotel will close its doors Monday.

Ex-tenants
all housed

Augusta House closes

By **ERNIE STALLWORTH**
KJ staff writer

All of the Augusta House's 66 residents have found temporary housing, and most of them moved out of the facility over the weekend.

"This will ease the burden on their part, the immediacy and the pressure," James H. Murphy of the Southern Kennebec Valley Community Action Program said Sunday. "We'll still be working this week to find them places in Augusta."

Utilities are scheduled to be shut off at 5 p.m. Monday, bringing the 141-year-old history of the hotel to a close.

The residents, who have been scrambling to find shelter since Wednesday when the hotel's receivers announced the closing, are not yet quartered properly, but they will be housed this week.

"There are apartments available in the area, like Gardiner, but many of the people don't have transportation," Murphy said. "They've been living in Augusta a long time, and most of them want to stay. We're still trying to find places, and I hope we'll be successful."

Residents are staying with relatives, friends and in lodging provided by some religious organizations. Calls are still coming in, though, and more permanent housing may be found by the end of the week, Murphy said.

— KJ Photo by Roach

Aerial photo shows the Augusta House which will close today





Padlocked

Receivers Bruce Livingston and Robert G. Fuller snap the padlock on the front door of the Augusta House at mid-after-

noon Monday, officially closing the city landmark after 141 years of operation. (KJ Photo by Roach)

Augusta House closed, padlocked

By STAN EAMES
KJ News Editor

A Maine landmark died Monday night of a lack of money and too many mortgages.

The Augusta House, once-renowned center of Maine political and social activity, closed for good at 5 p.m. after receivers struggled for 15 days to find a way to keep the old hotel going.

Robert G. Fuller, one of the two men appointed to oversee the death throes, said Monday the hotel has been stripped of anything of value. "All the liquor is gone, and all the valuable equipment and furnishings are gone, stored under lock and key elsewhere," he said.

Fuller added that the hotel will be guarded at night. We'll have a night watchman there. It won't be an empty shell open for the vultures to pick at," he declared.

Augusta Police said they would keep no special watch on the 141-year-old hotel. The fire department said it hoped the hotel would not be a target for arsonists.

"We haven't had too much of a problem with things like that," said Battalion Chief George Bean. "Of course there's a chance that fire may occur there now that the automatic sprinkler system is disconnected and it could create a major problem if fire should start there, but we're not expecting that," he added.

Fuller said the place had been "officially closed" at mid-afternoon. "I'm just handing out the last paychecks to the few people who are left," he said.

He said he hopes the security will deter vandals, tramps and that ilk.

Fuller also said that three or four persons have telephoned him expressing interest in buying the Augusta House. "But when they hear about the number of mortgages on it, they back off," he added.

Mrs. Mary Dionne, manager of the after care unit at the Health and Welfare Department's local office, said the response to the plea for rooms has been surprising.

"The problem is," she said, "that the 10 or 15 people we would help are very independent, they want to live in Augusta and they have a limited income.

One person is staying temporarily at St. Paul's Retreat

(Continued On Page 2—Col. 4)

The Augusta House will be torn down

One of the city's oldest landmarks, the Augusta House, will be torn down to make way for a new bank.

The long-awaited announcement came Monday from Casco-Northern Corp., which bought the hotel site in October. The bank cited major structural defects, making renovation "economically unsound," as the reason for demolishing the building.

A bank spokesman said possibilities of restoring the building were thoroughly investigated, but that "expert opinion had convinced the holding that this would not be feasible."

"Further, there had been

substantial deterioration during the period from February 1973, when the hotel closed, to October," the spokesman added.

In place of the hotel will be a Casco-Northern National Bank, the first Casco branch in this county.

The final chapter in the hotel's history began Monday with engineers taking test borings of the soil in preparation for the new structure.

The spokesman said preliminary engineering studies of the site are still in process and as yet no details about the new bank are available.

Construction is not

scheduled to begin until late this year.

"However," the spokesman added, "because the building in its present condition poses a considerable hazard to the community in terms of fire and vandalism . . . Casco has announced its decision to begin demolition immediately."

The demolition is being carried out by Callahan Bros. Inc., general contractors from Mechanics Falls.

After salvageable material is removed, the company will start razing the building. The work is expected to be finished by mid-April.

(Continued on Page 2 Col. 3)

Augusta House

(Continued from Page 1)

For decades the hotel was the unofficial meeting (and watering) place for legislators. The hotel was built, in fact, to accommodate the influx of guests caused by the transfer of the state Capitol to Augusta in 1831.

The hotel was enlarged early in this century when some legislators threatened to move the Capitol back to Portland because of lack of accommodations here.

John M. Daigle, president of the bank's holding company, said he hopes to provide the city with a structure worthy of the site's prior history and significance. He hopes the new bank will become "the landmark of the future."

The tearing down of the Augusta House comes just shortly after the hotel's 143rd birthday. It opened its doors for the first time Dec. 31, 1831.

— By Dan Simpson

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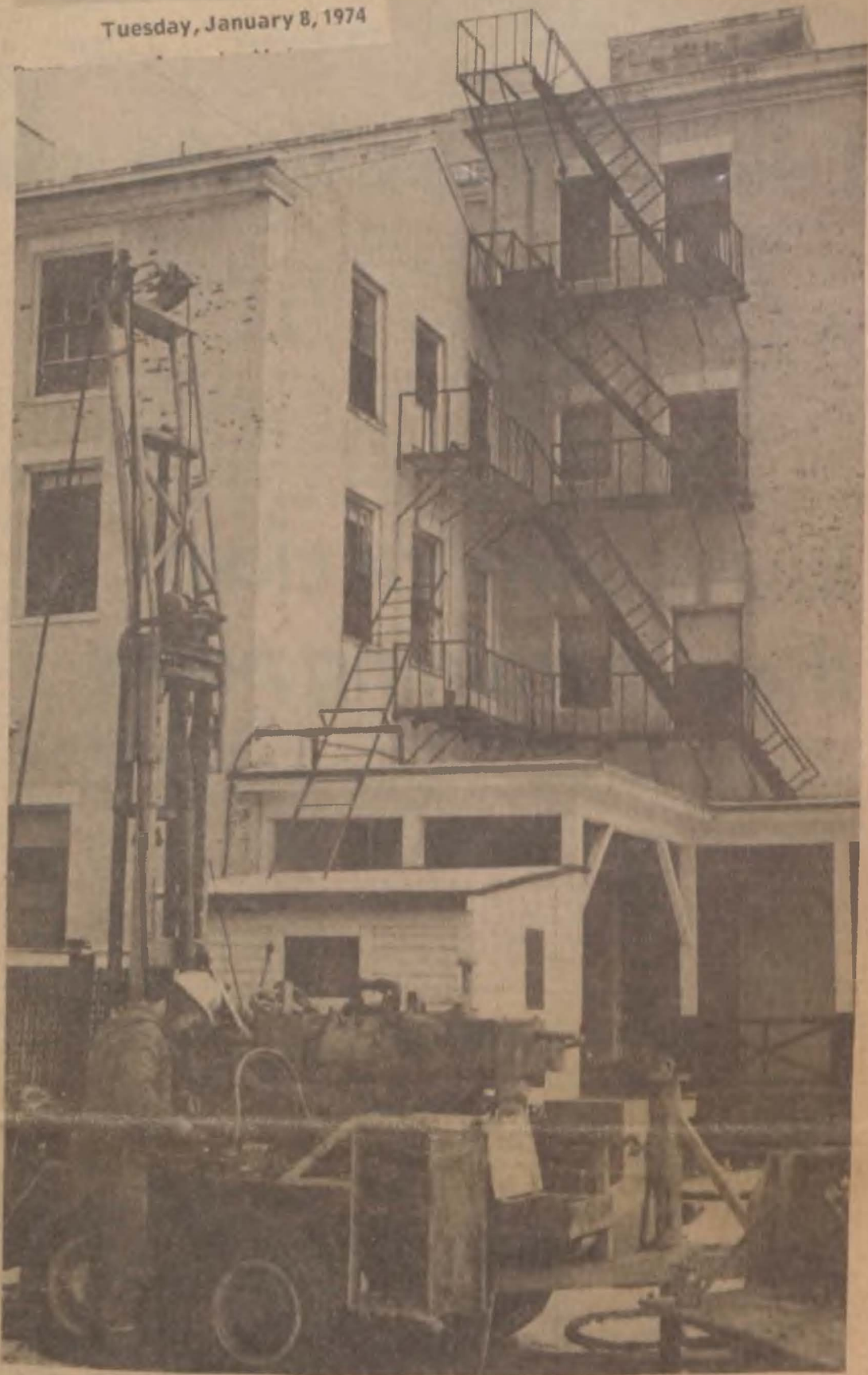
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The Augusta House

FAMILY RATES
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— CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING —

Tuesday, January 8, 1974



Beginning of the end...

An employee of Maine Test Boring Inc. of Brewer readies his machine as samples of the ground at the Augusta House site were taken Monday. Razing of the hotel will begin later this week. (KJ Photo by Stratton)



—KJ Photo by Allan B. Roach

"Goodbye old neighbor" says Rotary Cleaners' sign as demolition of the Augusta House nears completion

Augusta House is sold to mystery man

By DAN SIMPSON
KJ staff writer

The Augusta House was purchased Friday by an unknown party for an undisclosed price for an unknown purpose.

Ralph Farris Jr., attorney for owner Richard Schenk, said the sale took place unexpectedly. He had been negotiating with this particular party, but had not expected the transaction to be

completed for another two or three weeks.

The sale was made to Portland attorney Richard A. Putnam, acting as a trustee for the mystery party.

The certificate at the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds listed only Putnam's name.

Putnam cited "attorney-client relationships" as the reason for not disclosing any facts.

He refused to speculate when the purchaser, the price and the purpose would be revealed.

Farris said there were no realtors involved. He said the purchase involved only himself, his client, and the trustee, who was working for the mysterious party through a Portland bank. Putnam declined to say if a bank was involved.

While not revealing the price, Farris commented the

new owner has taken over all mortgages, taxes and attachments that had caused the old hotel to close a month and a half ago.

These encumbrances total about \$256,000 and will probably be settled for around \$225,000, Farris thought.

The purchase is for the building and land only. The furnishings are still in the hands of the receivers of the Capital City Hotel firm. The receivers would have to move or sell the furnishings if the hotel is to be razed.

Sumner Lipman, attorney for the Acheson family which holds the second and third mortgages on the Augusta House, said he could not have sold the hotel until June.

"All we want is to be paid off," he added. He was not aware of the sale when called Friday.

The hotel went into receivership Jan. 19 at the request of Lipman, acting in behalf of his clients. Receivers tried to keep the doors open until it could be sold, but the financial burden of keeping the massive 141-year-old structure operating led them to close the hotel two weeks later.

The "hush-hush" atmosphere surrounding the sale does little to halt speculation over the hotel's future.

Various suggestions have been that the state purchase the property, that the hotel be torn down, that it be restored, that the land be used for a parking garage, or that a new hotel be constructed on the site.

Augusta House is dropped into ditch, load at a time

By DAN SIMPSON
KJ staff writer

The remains of the Augusta House are finding a useful, final resting place — the base for a parking lot behind the State Street News. But the city is not very happy about it.

Robert Foss, owner of that store and Mr. Paperback, arranged with the contractor tearing down the old hotel to have the material dumped in the 50 to 60-foot gully behind the small market-book store.

Foss said the contractor, Callahan Bros. of Mechanic Falls, will cover the fill with gravel. The resulting parking lot will be for store customers and tenants in the apartment above the store.

Both City Engineer Oliver Coulling and city Building Inspector Archie Bickford objected to the material being used as fill.

While the primarily wooden material does not present a fire hazard, Bickford said the

fill will continually settle as the wood decays.

The City Council passed an ordinance at its January meeting prohibiting the remains of buildings from being dumped anywhere in the city except at the Hatch Hill disposal area. The ordinance, although passed as an emergency measure, does not go into effect until Feb. 20 — 30 days after the meeting.

Foss argues that the material will not settle as much as the city claims because it is being packed down.

"It will settle slowly, because it is covered," he said. "There will be a couple loads of gravel put on each year to keep it up."

He expects to have a parking lot 75 by 100 feet in size on what was essentially useless land.

The parking lot "will be a big help," Foss said. "You know what parking is like on State street."



A cherrypicker bucket deposits debris as Augusta House demolition begins Tuesday

—KJ Photo by Roland Veilleux

Augusta House

(Continued from Page One)

"The creditors have been understanding, including the mortgage holder, but a lot of complaints came from tenants in the hotel," Ferris said.

These complaints led to 17 inspections by state and local governmental agencies in the last three months, three alone from one state Department of Health and Welfare team, Schenk said.

For 10 days, the hotel has been operating with no telephone service and "that can't be done" Ferris said.

He commented that "outside pressures have been exerted" but in such a way that no kind of coercion could be proved.

The Augusta House was put up for sale last June for \$275,000, but there were apparently no serious nibbles after the Bradford offer which was withdrawn.

The 175-room, six-story building, constructed in 1831 as a four-story hotel, was valued on city tax rolls in 1968 at \$180,990 and the parking lot for an additional \$3,860. It is bounded by the Memorial Circle, and State, Grove and Hichborn streets.

Its history is linked with the legislature. Reuel Williams built the hotel and it opened a day before the 1832-34 legislative session. The top two stories were added in 1910 when Augusta was made the permanent seat of state government.

It is often said that more legislation was written, approved or killed in the lobby of this hostelry than in the State House or Senate.

Richard Nixon held a reception in the hotel in 1951 as part of his vice presidential campaign, and movie stars Dorothy Lamour and Fay Emerson are two of the more well-known guests who have stayed there.

The scene at the hotel Friday was peculiar.

An ancient adding machine belonging to one of the staff members sat forlornly in a chair beside a row of personal belongings — a policeman standing guard nearby.

Confused elderly women wandered through the lobby, dressed to kill with no place to go and no one paying them any attention.

Acheson, a Hallowell painter who was tapped by Lipman to stand in for Mrs. Acheson, his mother, during the day, found himself answering question after question with a sorrowful "I wish I could help you, but. . ."

The lobby scene was one of mournful bustling.

A legislator Thursday who was leaving for home for the weekend had obviously heard rumors of trouble for the hotel. "It's been a wonderful place for me, to me," said Rep. John B. Cottrell, D.-Portland. "I hope everything works out," he told Schenk.



— KJ Photo by Veilleux

The Augusta House as it looked in 1965

Augusta House plunges into receivership

By STAN EAMES
KJ News Editor

The Augusta House, one of the landmarks of Maine social and political history, plunged into receivership Friday night. Quite simply, it ran out of money.

And the future is most uncertain for the 141-year-old hotel.

Owner Richard L. Schenk was not available for comment. His private telephone at the hotel had been disconnected. His lawyer gave no indication as to the owner's plans, either.

Receivers Robert Fuller and Bruce Livingston said they had no knowledge of what is planned for the future of the institution.

The tenants who are there now — including some 40 elderly women who have made the hotel their home for decades — will not have to leave, the receivers said, adding that that will be up to whomever purchases the landmark.

First word of the action filtered through Friday afternoon when the hostelry's bar, kitchen, dining room and pool room were ordered closed. The tenants were not officially told what was happening.

Robert Acheson, son of mortgage holder Mrs. Mary L. Acheson, was in the lobby, directing traffic and trying to answer questions he said he "really didn't know the answers to."

A policeman was on guard in the lobby, too, to prevent, in the words of attorney Sumner Lipman, "anything from going out of the hotel that belonged to the hotel."

Supreme Court Justice Donald W. Webber, acting as a Superior Court justice, granted the request for temporary receivership against the Capitol City Hotel Co. Inc., one of two firms involved in the operation and ownership of the historic hotel.

Fuller and Livingston, the temporary receivers, work for the law firm of Lipman & Gingras, which acted for Mrs. Acheson, who lives in Hallowell.

Lipman said Friday night the receivers "have no intention of evicting the tenants. For now, things will just go along under the receivers until we can get this straightened out."

The options open to the receivers are threefold: Let the Augusta House run in a limited fashion (with the bar, kitchen and dining facilities closed); sell it and hope that the buyer continues its operation; or close it.

"Our main concern, and Mrs. Acheson's, is the creditors," Lipman said, moments after receiving the order from Justice Webber. "The Capitol City Hotel Co. Inc. is insolvent."

Schenk said earlier this week the hotel grossed a half-million dollars last year, "the best year since I've been here," he remarked. There are about 150 guests and 70 employees — many of both categories elderly. He began there as a cook in 1940.

Schenk has remarked that he has been unable to get financing from either Augusta or Lewiston banks. His attorney, Ralph Farris Jr. acknowledged that Schenk Friday was "sick over the whole thing."

"It is with deepest regret, due to circumstances beyond his control that Mr. Schenk will be unable to continue with the operation of the Augusta House," Farris said.

He added that "a lot of little things added up to big things" and forced the issue. Farris said a Massachusetts company which owns the Bradford Hotel in Boston had expressed interest last summer in purchasing the hotel, but it was later withdrawn.

(Continued On Page 2—Col. 4)



Closed

Jan 19, 1973

The Augusta House went into receivership Friday, and the bar, kitchen, dining room and pool room were closed. This is the chained-off entrance to the bar off the lobby. (KJ Photo by Roach)



—KJ Photo by Roach

Lamps surrounded by would-be buyers at the Augusta House

Augusta House goes by bits and pieces

By BETTY POTTER
KJ staff writer

The Augusta House lobby teemed with activity once again Friday, but the setting was pathetic. A well-worn rug was littered with debris and swarms of people stood by just waiting to get a bargain. It was the first day of an auction and everything must be sold by today. It marked the end of an era. "There won't be a toothpick left by the time the big ball hits this building on Wednesday," one of the men working for the auction people said.

The magnificent old Augusta House which once catered to state legislators, visiting dignitaries and the elite of Augusta, closed Feb. 5. It had served the capital city 141 years. The Casco-Northern banking firm now owns the site.

The old dining room was stacked Friday with furniture, linens and a huge pile of wastebaskets. Paint chips hung from the ceiling and only one of the original chandeliers remained in place. Bare bulbs provided the lighting.

Everything in that room has been sold, including the rug (10 cents a yard).

All the kitchen equipment went on the first day: A big bread mixer for \$175, a small mixer for \$25, the ranges went for \$25 apiece and so on.

The chandeliers ranged in price. Two sold for \$60 apiece, one sold for \$100 and the rest went for \$37.50. Captain's chairs sold for \$38 and mate's chairs for \$37.

(Continued on Page 2—Col. 6)



Nearly gone

The crane in the background is mostly hidden, so it looks as though the elderly Augusta House has grown antennae. Not so. The old structure is nearly torn

down and the crane is hooking onto the sign atop the hostelry. All that's left is the outside two walls and they will go probably today. (KJ Photo by Roach)

Augusta House — part of the convention scene

By KARLENE K. HALE
Staff Writer

AUGUSTA — Future governors, powerful senators, presidential hopefuls and small-town delegates — as manager of the old Augusta House, Richard Schenk met them all, laying on service and courtesies, food and drink.

"Generally speaking, convention delegates were good people, easy to please," said Schenk, 67, who started at the Augusta House as a bellboy in 1940, then ran the place from 1957 to 1971. It was torn down in 1974.

"They all had fun," he said of the hundreds of conventioners who passed

through the lobby and the hospitality rooms over the years. "There was never any fighting, or vandalism, or trouble. Just a lot of people staying up late and having a lot of fun."

Back then, before the Augusta Civic Center was built, conventions were held at the Augusta State Armory, then spilled into the city's schools and other public buildings for smaller meetings.

Activity centered around the Augusta House in the evenings.

"We had a full-time staff of 125, and 125 part-time staff that we could call on," Schenk said. "If you had adequate staff, there were no problems."

"We used to provide courtesy cars

to the armory," Schenk said.

"I remember one time giving Sen. Margaret Chase Smith and a group a ride. They were speculating on what John Kennedy must have had to give Lyndon Johnson to be vice president. Johnson was a man who didn't take second place to anyone, they said," Schenk recalled.

"A very, very lovely person," is the way Schenk describes former Sen. Smith, a Republican. "And she has a tremendous memory," he added.

For years, Schenk said, Republican and

See: AUGUSTA
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Augusta House — part of the convention scene

► FROM PAGE ONE

Democratic conventions alike were held either in Bangor or Portland. Augusta was never considered.

In the late 1950s, he recalled, former Augusta legislator Russell Brown was chairman of the Republican Convention Committee. He was instrumental in getting conventions to come here, Schenk said.

"Conventions are a great help to a city and to the economy," he said. "We had information from the National Chamber of Commerce that a delegate would spend three times the price of their room and meals while they were at a convention."

There was "tremendous" support for Augusta as a convention site, Schenk said, from city officials, the school department and everyone else who would be affected.

"They were willing to provide extra police and fire protection, anything," Schenk said. "Of course, when Sen. Hubert Humphrey came and spoke, that broke the budget, in terms of police protection."

Months before the conventions rolled into town, the committees would book rooms — at least 125 at the 200-room Augusta House.

Some rooms were set aside for special functions, particularly hospitality suites for gubernatorial and congressional candidates.

In 1952, when there were three candidates running for governor in the Republican primary — Neil Bishop, Burton Cross and Leroy Hussey — it was Schenk's job to make sure there was no favoritism.

"The hotel had to make sure the hospitality rooms were equal in size and in access," said Schenk, a

registered Republican.

"Anyone in the hotel business was not to partisan," he said. "I think I registered as a Republican so I could vote once for someone in a primary."

When a convention was not in town, the hotel was the hub of activity when the Legislature was in session.

"Years ago, the old Augusta House was the place for all the lobbyists and the legislators," Schenk said. "A lot of legislation was passed in the lobby."

Certain lobbyists and powerful legislators almost always could be found in the same spots, he said.

"They had their little chairs and their little places where they did business," Schenk said.

"Louis Jalbert. He would take time to read and understand the state budget. That's how he knew as much as he did, I don't think he had a room, but he was in the hotel a lot, talking, visiting with the lobbyists," Schenk said of the late representative from Lewiston.

The Augusta House also served as the governor's mansion for awhile.

When Gov. Clinton Clauson died in office, Senate President John Reed became governor. Reed told the Clauson family they could stay at the Blaine House as long as they wanted, Schenk said.

"Reed set up his executive suite at the Augusta House. He had his aides conducting the business of state right there at the hotel."

When asked if he would like to be back at the old place during this weekend's Republican Convention, Schenk declined.

"That's for a younger person," he said.



The Augusta House in an undated photo. Opened in 1831, the landmark hotel was razed in the 1970s to make room for a bank. (KJ file photo)

'Lost Augusta'

Group hopes to spark interest in landmarks

By DEBBIE SLINE
KJ staff writer

The Kennebec Historical Society will launch a search tonight for "Lost Augusta" in an effort to spark renewed interest in local landmarks.

Society President Anthony Douin said the group hopes through this meeting to promote public interest in the preservation of Augusta's historical buildings.

"The challenge is: Can we in Augusta save as well as we can destroy?" Douin said Tuesday.

Douin said historic preservation has been difficult in Augusta, because the city lacks zoning or preservation ordinances. He noted that several old landmarks have been razed recently, including the former Dirigo Building on Western Avenue and the Milliken house on Melville Street.

"I think the failure is because we're really operating in a vacuum," Douin said. "There are no procedures or methods to go about saving these buildings."

Douin claims Augusta is the only major Maine city which doesn't have a preservation ordinance or active local landmarks group. He noted Bangor has such an ordinance, while in Portland, historic buildings often are saved by Greater Portland Landmarks Inc.

"Augusta has none of these things," Douin said. "This meeting is like testing the wind to see if there is any interest."

"Augusta, although it has lost a lot, still has a lot of nice buildings left."

He mentioned, for example, that the old Bond Brook Feed Store on the Bond Brook Road is believed to date back to the late 18th Century, possibly 1789. The store now serves as headquarters for a local club known as the NSKK.

Other buildings he said should be saved include the Nash

School (1900) and the Bond House, circa 1805. That house, located on State Street, was the first brick house built in the city.

The society believes an inventory must be made of all such landmarks and Douin suggested that Mayor David N. Elvin could create a committee to survey historic buildings in Augusta.

Eventually, Douin hopes, a historic preservation ordinance will be possible. He admits, though, that such a measure may be difficult to establish in Augusta.

"It's tricky, because when you talk about a historic preservation ordinance, you're actually talking about zoning, which has never done well in Augusta."

Several unsuccessful attempts were made in the 1960s to control development through a comprehensive zoning ordinance. The only zoning in Augusta today is that affecting development within the state capitol complex, which is regulated by an individual planning commission.

The possibility of creating an effective historic preservation ordinance will be discussed tonight by Earle Shettleworth Jr., director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and Dr. Debra Thompson of the Bangor Historic Preservation Commission. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. session at the Hill House conference room, State Street.

Besides focusing public interest on Augusta's landmarks, Douin said the meeting is designed to make the society a more active organization. The 40-member society has been handicapped in the past by a lack of funds and headquarters, but Douin hopes those problems will be eliminated soon.

He said the society, which now stores its artifacts in the Hill House attic, will consider whether to establish a headquarters in a building on Oak Street. The group also hopes this spring to acquire funds by selling some items from its collection which are unrelated to Augusta's history.



Kennebec Journal / FILES

Early photo of Augusta House with two entrances show a handful of men, presumably state legislators, posing on one stair, while two women watch from afar.

REMEMBERING THE

AUGUSTA HOUSE

By CAY GALLANT
KJ Contributor

FEB. 11, 1974, IS A DATE IN THE HISTORY of Augusta that brought sadness to its residents.

It was the day the grand old lady of hotels, the Augusta House, went down to dust, never to rise again.

After the dust had settled and the last of debris was carted away, a stillness crept over the city that evening. Passengers in cars looked with disbelief at the vacant lot. The chill of the February night didn't seem to bother the people standing and mourning what once stood as a sentinel to the city of Augusta. The 143-year-old Augusta House had gone.

The small loyal group began to disperse. Upon leaving, an elderly gentleman sighed: "A lot of memories, a lot of memories, but at least I got a picture post card of the way she looked."

A colorful post card of the 1960s depicts the Augusta House as a graceful Federal-design building of six floors. Its entrance displayed three columns on each side of the steps. These pillars supported a large cornice circling a top balcony where the American flag was on display. The proud brass rails that adorned the central steps gave a prestigious welcome.

Maine granite formed the building's base, and off-white bricks reached the top to a frieze, frosting-like design, topping the entire structure.

The sign atop the roof could be seen from many directions with the lettering of the "Augusta House." Two large elm trees guarded the front.

The back of the post card reads: "The Augusta House located in Maine's Capital City, finest dining room in Maine, recommended by Duncan Hines, An Acheson Hotel."

The front door of the Augusta House was never locked, welcoming guests in the fashion of old New England.

LOOKING BACK OVER THE YEARS, THE Augusta House changed quite a bit. When it was first built in 1831, there were only three floors and six huge chimneys to accommodate the bedroom stoves and fireplaces. There were two entrances on the front of the hotel, with ornate balconies above each entrance. From one of those balconies President Teddy Roosevelt made a dramatic speech in 1902.

When the railroad came to Augusta in 1851, guests were brought to the Augusta House via an elegant buckboard with a proud team of horses.

When guests entered the hotel, an order was given to a lackey who would take wood for heat to their rooms, along with candles for light and soapstones to warm the beds. Later gaslight took the place of candles and still later electricity.

When electric cars (trolleys) entered Augusta, an elegant waiting room was erected beside the Augusta House. It was advertised that electric cars came by the Augusta House every 15 minutes.

The maids wore freshly starched uniforms with white caps while waiting on tables. Spotless high-collared uniforms were worn by the busboys. Guests, near the

turn of the century, were escorted to a table of balanced beauty, sparkling crystal glasses, polished silverware, and linen.

The menu would consist of several courses. One example from that earlier day included oyster on the half shell or quartered melon, Fish timbale with cream sauce, spring lamb or filet mignon, mashed potatoes, cauliflower, apricot salad, Choice of biscuit, yeast bread, or brown bread, and ice cream or lady cake for dessert.

IN 1831, THE AUGUSTA HOUSE WAS actually built as a home for legislators, two years after the cornerstone of the State House was laid. It became a part of the political arena. Prior to 1831, the Maine Legislature had always met in Portland.

The first manager of the Augusta House was Thomas Stevens of Gardiner, who invited 160 guests to a gala dinner party to celebrate the city's new hotel. The first editor of the Kennebec Journal, Luther Severance, was among the invited.

The hotel was open only for the legislative season.

It was said that more legislation was discussed in heated arguments in the rooms of the Augusta House than on the floor of the State House. Temperance and slavery were great topics of the times.

Years rolled on without change at the Augusta House until the Civil War began. It was then the lawns of the Capitol became camping grounds for the Maine regiments. In order to accommodate relatives of soldiers, the Augusta House was enlarged and opened all year long.

Fifty-four years later a political bloc was almost successful in having Portland restored as the seat of government. One of the reasons cited was the lack of proper housing for the increasing number of legislators.

Augusta banker Charles Hitchborn proposed the enlargement of the Augusta House again, and a bill making Augusta the permanent capital eventually passed in 1911.

The Augusta House endeared itself to the community through the years with social gatherings, dances, wedding receptions, and luncheons for the Kiwanis and Rotary clubs. The hotel became a hub for small and large conventions.

In 1932 the late Conrad Kennison the first radio station in the capital at the Augusta House. The studio was located in the rear of the hotel.

In 1939, the Augusta House was renovated to "cope with modern times," and a cocktail lounge was added. James Acheson, who owned many hotels, known as the Acheson Chain, leased the Augusta House in 1941. Through his administration, the hotel flourished and became the place to go and gather for tourists, servicemen, and local residents.

After Acheson's death in 1963, Richard Schenk became owner and manager, carrying on the traditions of the Augusta House until its demise in 1974.

"Luncheon At The Augusta House" became a noontime habit over a local radio station. Lakewood stars and celebrities staying at the hotel were interviewed prior to lunch. Personalities of the community would air their interests on many of the programs.

The late Ruth Henderson, women's editor of the Kennebec Journal, resided at the Augusta House and termed herself a permanent guest. There also were other retirees who made their home at the hotel.

Writing of the Augusta House, Ruth Henderson told of the famous people who had registered in the past; of Hannibal Hamlin, Holman Day when he filmed *Rider Of The King Log*, Ben Ames Williams, Gen. John J. Pershing, and many of the greats of history.



WHEN AUGUSTA CELEBRATED ITS 100th year in 1897, many people returned for "old home week" and stayed at the Augusta House. Ladies in elaborate gowns escorted by men in formal dress met in the lobby for the festivities.

A small portion of one of the speeches they would hear that day was this: "Augusta, may it never lose the impress of its founders; material developments and material possessions do not constitute a great city. It is in the heart of man to see the dignity of this city is not diminished by greed, and self-interest. May it be entrusted in the future to generations who will take care of our beloved beautiful Augusta."

The family-style year round hotels have slowly disappeared from our modern day.

The giants of Maine, such as the Poland Spring Hotel, the old Somerset, The Belgrade Hotel, and the Augusta House and others leave us with a memory and a post card to remind us they did exist.

Postcard shows Augusta House on rotary. The back says it was "old home week" and stayed at the Augusta House. Ladies in elaborate gowns escorted by men in formal dress met in the lobby for the festivities.



Line drawing of Augusta House, reproduced from an 1856 menu

Augusta House

Reprint, July 30, 1947

More Laws Made In Augusta House Than Capitol, History Indicates

More laws have been made and more men have been elevated to high office in Maine from the smoke-filled rooms of the Augusta House than in any other Maine building — including the State House.

Many years ago a prominent Maine politician, who should know, made this remark, half in fun and half in earnest. He was probably more than 50 per cent correct, however.

The Augusta House was built in 1831 to house the legislators who were members of the first Legislature to meet in Augusta in the winter of 1832.

The Augusta House has weathered 116 years of Legislatures and the conventions which follow them. "Whenever two people get together they plan a convention in Augusta" is very true since a capital city seems to be a magnet for every association, club and organization in the state.

During the summer of 1831, however, the citizens of Augusta had only one thought — how they would accommodate the legislators.

Boarding houses were provided, hotels were enlarged and renovated, and the Augusta House was built by an enterprising group who incorporated a firm for that purpose.

Reuel Williams was president of the company and Thomas Stevens of Gardiner, formerly of Massachusetts, was the manager of the completed hotel which opened for business December 29, 1831.

By 1864 the need for more accommodations had become evident. Throngs of people had gathered here during the war, filling hotels to overflowing.

Some of the more enterprising Augustans decided to build a new hotel which should be "kept as a first class house." Since funds were not readily available the city agreed to subscribe for two-fifths of the amount required which was not to exceed \$60,000.

The plan included the erection of a house on the Hartford lot at the junction of Green, Grove, Water and Gage Streets, looking down on Water Street. Investigation showed that the expense would exceed the sum which could be provided, however.

Major Harrison Baker, who owned the Augusta House, was persuaded to sell it, however, for \$16,000.

The building was remodeled, enlarged and refurnished and was reopened for business January 1, 1865, with Major Baker as the manager.

Then 110 feet long across the front of

State Street and 100 feet deep, the building was painted a drab free-stone color, with Brown stone trimmings. There were 120 rooms "with the appointments and conveniences of modern first-class hotels."

The expense of the building and furnishings was about \$65,000. Originally it had cost \$26,000 to build the hotel in 1831.

When the building was rebuilt in 1865, the association was greatly in debt and it mortgaged the property to Joseph H. Williams and George W. Stanley for \$23,000. The mortgage fell due in 1868 and the association sold the right to redeem to a company of men for about \$1,000.

In 1910, the Augusta House was again enlarged during a controversy to move the capital of the state to Portland. One of the chief arguments raised in favor of the move by Portland was the inadequacy of hotel accommodations in Augusta.

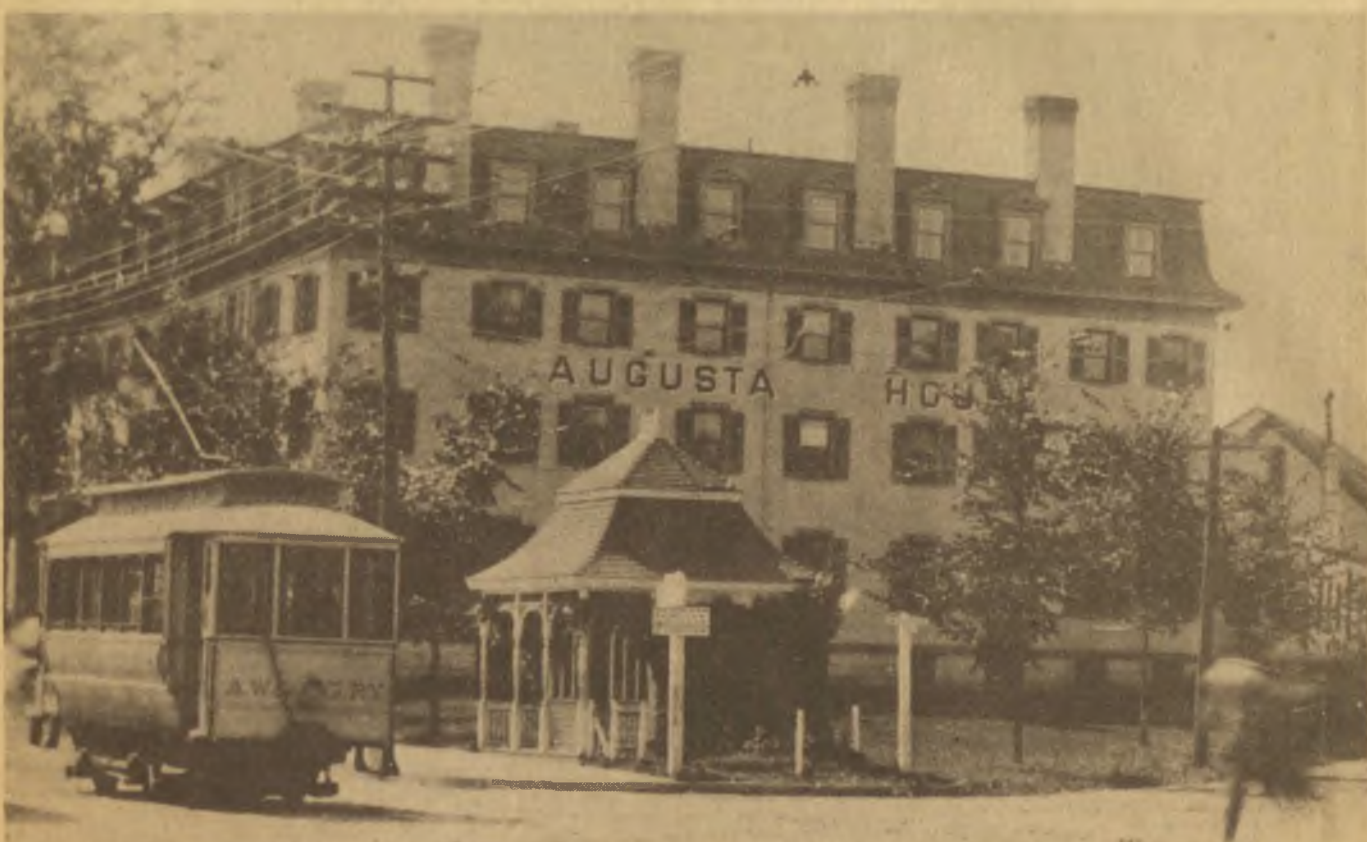
Again a prominent Augusta man came to the rescue and provided money to enlarge the Augusta House. This was a deciding factor in the defeat of the proposed removal of the state capital to Portland.



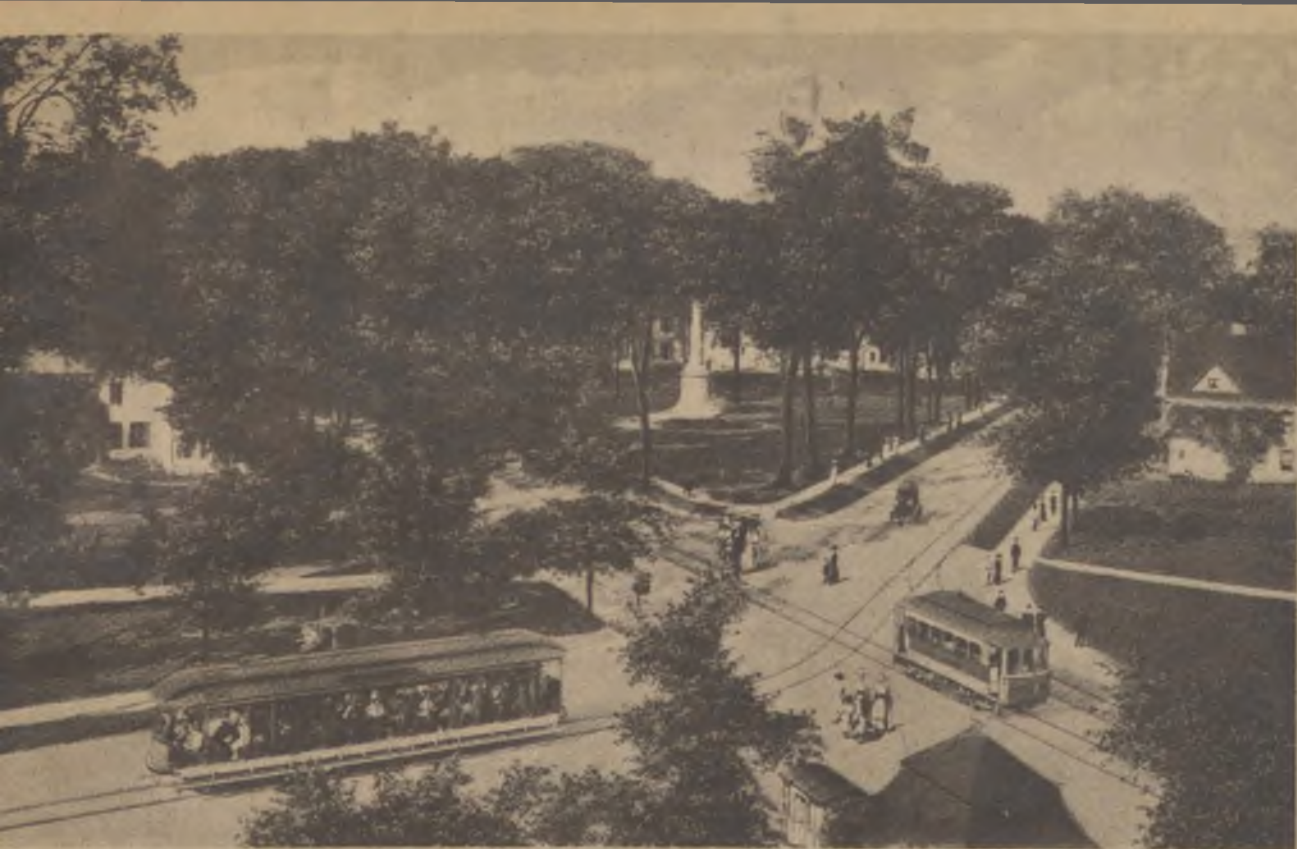
It was 1934 . . . Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Corkum, in partnership with their daughter Beatrice, opened the Accessory Shop, aptly named for featuring hats, scarves, handbags, and accessories. Success brought expansion — to include dresses, coats, lingerie, and sportswear — and then, like Topsy, we just "kept on growing!" The shop moved to its larger, present location on Water Street in Gardiner in 1946, allowing us to branch out into all fashion lines. Eight years later the Accessory Shop was sold to Edward R. Wehrwein, Bea's husband.

In November 1961 Ed and Bea opened Town 'n Country Fashions, one of the original Augusta Plaza tenants. This popular shop was completely renovated in 1973, the same year that Greg Wehrwein, Ed and Bea's son, joined as Administrative Assistant.

Yes, we've enjoyed our 41 years of serving Kennebec County with quality fashion reasonably priced, and we congratulate the Kennebec Journal on its celebration of 150 years of service! Ours has been a rewarding and most pleasant association; with that friendship as a basis, the future looks even better than "the good old days!"



Augusta House and waiting station



Old Augusta

This scene from a 1917 postcard shows the intersection of State and Grove Streets, and Western Avenue. The trolley at left is on Western Avenue; the one at right on State Street, while a horse-drawn vehicle is approaching on Grove Street. The rooftop in the foreground is probably the street car waiting room that once stood beside the Augusta House.





Oldtime photo of Augusta House, looking south from Grove St. and Western Avenue

Some magic moments relived

By RUTH HENDERSON

Now that it is about to be razed out of existence and everyone says "Isn't it too bad?" let us recall some of the "good old days" of the 142-year-old Augusta House, just about the last of the old time Maine "Home away from Home" abodes.

The Augusta House has afforded folks from all walks of life shelter and food, hotel living as to the individual's liking.

Many people have made the hotel their permanent home; some have stayed there regularly in the course of business, others have just stopped over night. And there have been many who returned on their anniversaries, because they honeymooned at the Augusta House.

One dear old couple, we recall, said they were there on their honeymoon and their eyes were shining as they lived over those days and compared how it looked a good 50 years back and how it looked on their return visit.

Fifty years back there was no center front entrance, but rather two entrances, with steps leading down to the sidewalk. Over each entrance on the front side of the house, facing State Street, were balconies of ornate design. And the elm trees were tall and spindly.

It was from the roof of one of those front door entrances that Theodore Roosevelt held forth in speechmaking in 1902. It was 73 years ago that the advocate of "carrying a big stick and speaking softly" stopped off, on one of his many trips through to Bar Harbor to speech-make.

The Augusta House supplied the meeting and eating needs for countless organizations over the years. Pouring over old account books stored in a basement closet we saw the names of many organizations which met there many years. There also, of course, were wedding receptions, birthday parties, State Department gatherings, and so on.

Many recall how the Augusta House played an important part in their early lives.

For instance: Philip Arthur Emerson, who lives in Pittston with his wife, remembers when he as a lad worked in the Augusta House as a bellhop. The schools in the country closed in the winter. Mr. E. said his duties at the hotel included winding the clocks, hopping bells and driving the buckboard to the railroad station to deliver the home returning guests and to welcome new arrivals. That was 60 or more years ago.

The tips the legislators gave him and the wages the boy earned at the hotel paid for his clothing. He walked during the school years to Gardiner High School to further his education.

When the lights went out finally early last February, the neighbors missed the signs of life and bemoaned that fact "it is all so dark and so cold looking."

When the Augusta House closed its doors, few were left around to watch the proceedings. It was a drastic move indeed, when the old telephone switchboard, a relic in itself, was removed from behind the desk and carted away.

Some of the folks were guessing as to what year the PBX was installed behind the desk in the lobby. Several came up with the year 1920, although it could not be verified through the telephone men who unhitched the switchboard, hoisted it over the big counter and hauled it away.

And speaking of the telephone switchboard we find our thoughts going toward the "hello" girls who operated the service over a period of many years. They got to know the frequent guests, specially the members of the Legislature. The girls behind the switchboard were always on the job, knew how to quickly get in touch with folks for incoming calls.

There were Molly, Mable, Hazel, two of them, Stella and many others. They always regarded the "perms" as members of the "family," and might let us in on some of the lobby doings, what lady of the Legislature was looking especially lovely that day in a striking ensemble; what Solon's wife was bringing their grandchildren to Augusta to visit at the State House and see Grandpa in action.

Where else but in a family type hotel where one had lived for many years and recognized anything unusual about the ordinary trend of events, would one come down to the lobby a Sunday mid-forenoon between the breakfast and the luncheon hour and see, surrounded by a bevy of smiling waitresses, Georgie Jessel, the famous dealer in rancor?

He was in extra good humor that morning, though, as

he ad libbed without restraint. He was quite taken by shy and pretty little Ann and he plied Ann and her mother, Ivy, with questions.

When he learned they had recently returned from England and that their favorite place there was the very place he liked very much, he declared Ann was to be his next wife and they were to go there on their honeymoon!

Jessel had stopped over at the Augusta House en route to Lewiston, where he was to give a program for the Jewish relief that evening. As he left the dining room, he gave little blushing-pink Ann a kiss and renewed his promise she was to be No. 2 Mrs. G. J.

Faye Emerson. Ah, there is a lovely person and we so did want to get an interview with her before she left for City Hall, where she and Gary Merrill were giving a program that evening. Time after time we sent up word to the 19 suite which had been redecorated in honor of her coming, we had been given to understand earlier.

And time after time she sent back word putting us off. Finally, as the last straw, she alighted from the elevator and sailed through the lobby like the Queen Mary under full steam with nary a look in our direction as we tagged along after her as far as the door.

Something we learned later might have had something to do with why the lovely Faye kept putting us off. Skitch Henderson is a former husband of Miss Emerson and his about-to-be new wife or maybe already Mrs. Skitch Henderson was named Ruth!

Remember those days Peyton Place producers were looking around in Maine for the location of that movie?

Wayne Buxton, then associated with the DED, had tipped us off that Jerry Wald, the famous Hollywood producer, was coming to town in the course of sizing up potential locations for the movie and he was to be having breakfast on a Sunday morning at no less a place than the Augusta House.

With Wayne and Wald would also be another tycoon in the movie world having to do with the coming production. So that morning we met Jerry Wald and his party. We learned they had looked over several locations, even including our home town, Fairfield. Strangely enough, Jerry, a small and surprisingly young man, but keen of eye and quick of smile, talked about his family and their

interests. Of course Camden and environs were finally chosen for the "shooting" of that now gargantuan production. Much like Mr. Feeney's turnip. "It grew and grew" and is still growing in the TV world.

The women who sojourned at the Augusta House while their husbands were making laws on The Hill were friendly with us "perms" and included us in many of their doings while in town. The friendships also extended to their homes and many of us were invited to visit with them.

Of course there were women also serving in the Legislature and we got to know, appreciate and respect them for the roles they were carving out. Mrs. Jane Kilroy, still very much on deck, was always and still is a breeze to meet up with. She has piled up a remarkable career through the years.

Mrs. Marguerite Smith, owner and operator of Smith Farms, can make the best apple pie. To that we can attest because she used to bring them to Augusta during her term in the Legislature. She and three other, or was it four other women, shared one of the No. 11 suites. In the southeast corner of the big living room there was a big round table, covered over, when not in use, with cheese cloth.

Once the cloth was removed there was the table, all set up ready to use. Sometimes when they were broiling a specially succulent steak the aroma would seep out around the door frame and waft along the hall. "MM-mm. The gals are having steak tonight."

Some contrast to an episode of several years before about which we were told. One of the "perms" was cooking some string beans, garden fresh, gift from a friend. The management phoned up and informed her the smell was seeping out into the hall and she needs must desist! How times did change down through the years.

One of the most colorful events, by far, was the Kennebec Valley Shrine Club annual ladies night and potentate's reception, smorgasbord and dance. It was usually held the first Saturday night in February. And how we "perms" loved it!

We would plan to get down to the lobby in ample time to find a good "front row" seat so we could watch the folks when they came in and later see the pretty gowns

of all the gals. There were corsages for all the women and also there were Margaret Smith shopping bags, temptingly displayed in the lobby, which were awarded to the women with the lucky tickets. Very often the men dispensing the corsages would decorate us "perms," much to our delight and their evident enjoyment.

The steamship round of western steer beef vied in popularity with the Maine seafood newburg, Swedish meatballs, deep dish chicken pie, baked red kidney beans and many other goodies on the long tables at the kitchen entrance of the dining room. Dress was semi-formal but the men were instructed to wear their fez.

The gigantic fez that hung over the front entrance of the Augusta House during the Shriners' big doings was a three-footer in height and about two and a half feet across the bottom. It was made by Harry B. Jackson, co-chairman with Charles A. Crockett, for many years general chairman.

In 1971, 460 Shriners and their ladies attended that gala occasion at the Augusta House.

But to go further back in history tells us the Augusta House played a major role in all big events down through the years, including the wars from the Civil War down.

Staff writers, taking a stab at the Augusta House in its declining years, said legend has it that more legislation was passed in the rooms of the Augusta House than in the legislative chambers. Many of the women who came to Augusta with their lawmaking husbands lived at the Augusta House during that time and they enjoyed their temporary home in many ways.

During one session of the Legislature, we recall, the women — who called themselves the Lobby Club — gathered in the room of a member and there spent the time doing needlework and other handwork. We were invited by times, to join them for the hot doughnut and coffee hour.

In early March 1965 one night 16 women living at the hotel, enjoyed a bus ride with State Rep. Reta Baker of East Winthrop, as chauffeur. "A good time was had by all."

The dean of the Augusta House Lobby Club, so called, might well have been Mrs. Harold R. Bragdon of Perham because Mr. Bragdon, even as far back as 1967, held the House long-term record. It was his 10th term and the Bragdons, with one exception, had lived at the hotel during the sessions. Now he is serving his 13th term.

Remember chic little Mrs. Elmont S. Tyndale of York County, whose husband served in the Legislature and also as lobbyist for the Maine Truck Owners Assn.?

She must have made hundreds of sandwiches during the Truck Owners' open house in No. 311. Dido is the name of the big white poodle Alice Tyndale used to take out for exercise. They made an attractive picture as they raced through the lobby, Dido in the lead and Alice following. Dido was a great favorite with all the folks in the lobby and enjoyed their attention after her exercise period.

Without a doubt the last organization to meet in dinner session at the Augusta House before the padlock was attached to the front door was the Augusta Business and Professional Women's Club the Thursday evening before that fateful Feb. 5.

It cannot be said of the Augusta House, that it, like the Chicago Sherman House "went out like a champion."

A funny thing happened Jan. 15 forenoon. A crew was hurling strips of deer blue carpeting and yards and yards of rug backing material out of an upper story window on the Augusta House main house south side. People were buying the items hardly before some of the mounds settled on the snow bank.

Now to get a souvenir of the Augusta House! Fine. So we bought quite a sizeable length of the pretty blue carpeting, which we recall when much of it was laid not too far back in the better priced rooms. So now we have a relic of the old hotel, but it would not fit in with the arrangement of our present living quarters and so it is beneath a factory-made braided rug. Anybody for a nice sizeable piece of blue carpeting?

"Computer may run hotel of the future" was the heading over a Dec. 27 story of the recent National Hotel and Motel Exposition. Gone then will be the days of old-time hotel family living; the joys, the woes, the sadness and yes, by times, the madness of being a member of a big family of heterogeneous origin.

Even while this story is being read the hundreds of windows of the old Augusta House may have been broken in, to make safer the mission for the wrecker's iron ball.



1902: President Theodore Roosevelt speaks from Augusta House porch roof.

Grand hotels for our out-of-state friends

Recently, friends from out of state visited with us and they had fun trying to pronounce some of the Maine lakes as printed on a map. Of Maine's 20 largest lakes, Mooselookmeguntic, Pemadumcook and Ambajetus were tongue twisters. In looking up some of the hard to pronounce lakes, I found a bit of history that I would like to share with today's readers.

Just before the turn of the century, Maine took great pride in advertising to the city folks from Boston and New York, and other cities in the Midwest, "how great the fishing, the hunting and fresh air" were away from the coal-producing cities out of state. The fine lakes stocked with sturgeon, bass and salmon enticed the fishermen.

In those days, trains would connect with wilderness hotels which outdid themselves in conveniences, such as electric lights, pure spring water and fresh air to cure hay fever. Young people of Maine enjoyed the big tips which came their way for being helpful as dining room workers or a porter of some sort. Families would often stay the whole summer and return to the big city with the beginning of the school fall term.

Many of these old hotels of days gone by have been taken down or destroyed by fire. Today, cars rather than trains bring tourists to the state.

Rangeley, at one time, had its Mooselookmeguntic House which served the fisherman or the hunter of fall. At the turn of the century, large hotels were gracing the northern woods and mountains. The Moosehead Lake area was a popular spot for the summer visitor and sporting types.

In those early summers, the steamship companies were taking passengers to picturesque islands. I never knew there was once a hotel on Peaks Island named the Coronado . . . at that time in history it was a place of luxury. It too has left with the sands of time. Later, other regions of Maine became "the" popular place of the moment. The Poland Spring House enchanted its visitors with the cold, fresh sparkling waters of natural springs which were said to have healing powers. This was a beautiful hotel which died in fire in 1975.

Another regal hotel for summer residents was the venerable Belgrade, overlooking part of a chain of lakes that took on an international note of acclaim. It too became ash-



Days gone by
Cay Gallant

es.

The Hotel Maranacook located in Winthrop was once a busy place for the tourist trade, as were several of the hotels which became so popular beyond the turn of the century on the shores of Cobbosseecontee.

The large hotels of long ago have given way to convenience with the modern motels, bed and breakfast accommodations and campgrounds for today's recreational vehicles.

I remember, when growing up, there were little cabins along the highway in which each was individually furnished with essentials, that were basic to a person's sleeping needs. While most of these dated structures have for the most part disappeared, we can still appreciate the traveling accommodations of that time, as seen through old picture postcards and the precious memories of grandparents or travels later on our own.

The grand hotels and inns from out of the past strove to please their guests with the best of service, and the kind of comfort they would expect within the confines of their own state. Many visitors who came to Maine would often stay in our local area before boarding the train for their summer sojourn. In Hallowell, the Worster House was a popular stopover. The Augusta House proved to be another favorite place to stay before the tourist ventured to the lake area. A driving park was enjoyed by many visitors to the capital city. And visiting Maine's Capitol building was a great delight for those who stayed at the Augusta House.

Recently, I came across a thank you letter to my great Aunt Bessie when friends had visited her in Augusta. With the letter, Aunt Bessie had placed the picture of the Augusta House and the riding park they had enjoyed.

Memories of another time, a special vacation so long ago.

Cay Gallant, who grew up in Augusta and is a graduate of Emerson College, was the first woman radio program director in the Central Maine area.



The Augusta House.

Just before the turn of the century, Maine took great pride in advertising to the city folks from Boston and New York, and other cities in the Midwest, "how great the fishing, the hunting and fresh air" were away from the coal-producing cities out of state. The fine lakes stocked with sturgeon, bass and salmon enticed the fishermen.

A look into the past



AUGUSTA HOUSE
AUGUSTA, ME

IRON MINE HILL FILLING STATION, : : GARDINER, MAINE

Gulf, Texaco, Tydol and Cities Service Gas A. L. McCausland, Prop. Pennsylvania Oils



Rooms with Modern Conveniences Electric Lights Camps and Camping Grounds

Augusta's once-famous hotel known as the Augusta House, top, was located on State Street near the west side rotary. A large building that now houses Preti, Flaherty law offices, along with several other offices sits on that piece of land.

The Iron Mine Hill Filling Station on Brunswick Avenue in Gardiner was a popular spot in the 1940's to grab a soft drink and hang out, according to James Dorso of Gardiner, who provided these postcards.

Regular Dinners, : : Candy, Cigars
Tobacco — Phone 850

Luther's Ice Cream, Soda and Greenery
Public Pay Station