



The Bangor Elevator

A Proud Past, Period of Decline and Promising Future

The Bangor Elevator is now owned by a partnership called Bangor Restoration, LLC. The building has gone from private ownership to the City of Bangor Downtown Development Authority in 2002. Once in the DDA hands, the options were to demolish the eyesore or to attract a private party to restore the building. The building is now under restoration. Progress of the restoration may be viewed at http://www.bangormihistory.com/new%20elevator/new_page_1.htm.

A Proud History



The Bangor Elevator was built in 1873 by Horace Sebring and Mitchell Hogmire. It is located on the east side of the railroad tracks and the north side of Monroe Street. There have been numerous owners in its 130 year history. The building sat on railroad property until only recently and it is difficult to do a property tax search to determine it's exact legacy.

A business pamphlet distributed by the Bangor Reflector in 1878 stated it had a capacity of 32,000 bushel of grain. Some of the rain bins on the second floor were removed at some point in time and the present capacity is about 20,000 bushel.

The elevator has not been positioned all of these years in the same spot, however. In the summer of 1926, the railroad requested that the building be moved to the east at least 15 feet. The Church Brothers, who also owned the Ford Garage in town, were proprietors of the elevator at the time. One account that a single man and a team of horses accomplished the task of raising the building and moving it to a new foundation fifteen feet to the east and nine feet to the north. This undertaking was done by setting the building on rollers and pulling the structure just inches at a time with a team of horses positioned at different points along the east side of the elevator.



At one time there was a small stockyard located at the north end of the building. It is also believed that a ramp led to the basement from the rear elevator. This allowed for a horse to be led down and tied to a walking wheel. When the horse walked, the wheel turned an axle that ran up to the first

floor. Three pulleys and belts were activated which operated the elevators carrying grain to the bins on the second floor. Evidence of this operation can still be seen on the first floor of the building today.

A fire in 1920 engulfed the entire section of wood framed stores between the elevator and Diamond Alley. The flames and heat were so intense that the windows on the opposite side of Monroe Street were cracked and contents in the window cases were charred. The fire department pumped a steady stream of water on the elevator to keep it from burning. The heat bubbled the paint on the east side and it was feared the building would be lost. Obviously, the structure came through the disaster with only the need for a paint job.

A Period of Decline

Today the elevator still stands as a proud, but somewhat aged reminder to Bangor's past. The old copula towering over the roof is and always has been a trademark to the downtown business district. If the building were restored, it would be the crowning jewel of the community. If it is torn down, the personality of the main street of Bangor will be changed forever.

The former owner operated a business out of the building. The business owned the building but not the land underneath the building. That made it difficult for the owner to secure financing to improve the building. In the 1980's and 1990's the building saw almost no reinvestment.

In 2001 and 2002, The Bangor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) sought to see it restored. However, the DDA ended up buying the building and the land underneath the building. It then began asking if the community wanted the building torn down or renovated.

A Promising Future

Many in the community did not want to see it demolished. Finally, in late 2003, the DDA worked with the partners of Bangor Restoration, LLC and sold the property for much less than market value as a way to assure its restoration, thus, keeping an important historical landmark alive in the community.

Bangor Restoration seeks to develop a multi-use commercial building that may house Bangor historical artifacts, a retail business, an eatery, as well as have a working mill. The old elevator storage bins, turntable and chutes are still intact and working. Refurbishing these would make the elevator a 'working demonstration' of an important historical period in American life.

The future of the depot is indeed bright.

CREDITS

Photos taken by Bob Emmert

Restoration Drawing: Phil Bonine is a residential designer in Kalamazoo and gets credit for drawing up these plans.