In 1917, when Abraham Rudman began practicing law in Bangor, the local business community was vibrant and growing. The same is true today. And Rudman Winchell is proud to be a part of it.

With our vast legal resources and more than two dozen attorneys located in Bangor, we are true strategic partners with the businesses that we serve.

We look forward to many more years of helping our community and its businesses thrive.
Logging, transportation, entertainment— at the time of its incorporation in 1834, Bangor had it all. The Queen City of the East, as it was deemed by Bangor Daily Journal editor Charles Roberts, was booming, the forestry industry and the Penobscot River were alive with lumber and ships carrying cargo and passengers from Bangor to Boston. Just a mere 30 years later, rail travel would add even more options to the big city, making feasible travel that once was impossible by stagecoach.

In addition, the steamship Bangor brought passengers to the city, and the city’s first hotel, The Bangor House, found itself host to prominent guests by the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Douglass, Ulysses Grant, Oscar Wilde and Howard Taft.

Then it happened. The Great Fire of 1911 destroyed much of Bangor’s business district—beloved churches, two banks, the library, mansions, homes—nearly 400 buildings were reduced to rubble that late April day. But the city’s spirit rose from the ashes and just a year later the city was coming back to life. While the lumber heyday was over, the Queen City reigned and prospered.

Although it has experienced its share of struggles, today’s Bangor is vibrant and the city continues to thrive and grow. The Waterfront has been brought back to life; the mall area, although ever-evolving, has seen new development; outer Broadway, Union and Hammond streets are dotted with businesses new and old; the healthcare industry has brought new development and seen great expansions; and the city continues to thrive.

In the pages that follow, we’ve provided a brief glimpse of Bangor’s history, but we’d love to hear your stories of Bangor. What was your favorite Main Street store as a child? Did you have a great-grandfather who drove logs on the Penobscot River? Does your family have a story of the city that’s been passed down from generation to generation? Share them with us by emailing photos and recollections to athibodeau@bangordailynews.com, as we’d love to include them in a future publication.

Historic photos courtesy of Bangor Historical Society, Richard Shaw, Bangor Public Library, and BDN Files.
Main Street

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Bangor
38 Central Street

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163 Main Street

The Rock & Art Shop
Always the heart of the city, downtown Bangor began as a manufacturing mecca — home to sailmakers, tailors, shoemakers, book binders, tanneries, blacksmiths and more. No matter what Mother Nature threw its way, including the flood of 1902 (pictured on the bottom right of page 4), the Great Fire of 1911, or economic changes — the city always found a way to rise again. Today, Main Street is home to a variety of professional buildings, restaurants and local businesses, such as Specialty Sweets, which soon will open a location at 9 Main St. where “The Fashion” Wood & Ewer clothing store was located in the above 1895 photo.
The Great Fire of 1911 destroyed much of Bangor’s business district in about eight hours, including two banks, the library and more than 70,000 volumes, mansions, more than 250 homes — nearly 400 buildings were reduced to rubble and two lives were lost that late April day.

One historic building, which has housed Rudman Winchell since 1971, was under construction at the time of the fire. The Graham Building at 84 Harlow St., an impressive Arts and Crafts era edifice, was completed later that year. In keeping with the Rudman Winchell’s ardent devotion to local tradition and community history, the law firm refurbished the Graham Building inside and out in celebration of the building’s centennial anniversary in 2011.

And although many buildings suffered a different fate in the blaze, the city wouldn’t be stopped. Bangor began to immediately rebuild with businesses popping up in what were then known as shacks, but also some of today’s most historied and prominent downtown buildings were constructed.

Looking down Main Street, it’s hard to imagine the smoldering ruins that were removed to make way for modern structures, many of which stand as tall and proud today as they did in the early part of the 20th Century.
From 1884 to 1939 the Bon Ton ferries would carry passengers between Bangor and Brewer. There were three Bon Tons, and the smaller ships also filled in as tugboats for the large steamships when necessary. (pictured left)

Bangor was once the “Lumber Capital of the World.” This view from the Brewer waterfront in the late 1800s shows boards from areas north of Bangor that had been “floated” down the Penobscot River to the Queen City before being shipped around the world.
Once upon a Hospital:
Bangor’s health care evolution

The Bangor Osteopathic Hospital moved to its new quarters on Stillwater Avenue July 12, 1960.

St. Joseph Hospital circa 1955.

In September 1955, Eastern Maine General Hospital was a much smaller complex than today’s Eastern Maine Medical Center.
THIS 1958 PHOTO SHOWS THE NEW ISOLETTE INCUBATOR AT EASTERN MAINE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

THE EASTERN MAINE GENERAL HOSPITAL OPENED A NEW ANESTHESIA RECOVERY ROOM IN 1961.

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Schedules and tickets online at www.bangorhistoricalsociety.org

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LOG DRIVERS ON THE PENDSCOT RIVER.

A MAN GUARDING THE BANK SAFE AFTER THE 1911 FIRE IN DOWNTOWN BANGOR.

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Mall and outlying areas

It’s hard to imagine Bangor before Hogan Road and Stillwater Avenue became a bustle of mall traffic. Pictured here is the 1960 Ohio Street bridge construction over I-95, a 1977 aerial view of site work being done in preparation for the construction of Bangor Mall, which held its groundbreaking ceremony (top right) on Sept. 7, 1977. The old postcard shows Dow Air Force Base, which closed in 1968.

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