

The Rockingham Hotel

From Wikipedia

The Rockingham Hotel is a historic hotel building in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was originally built in 1785 as a residence by Woodbury Langdon, prominent merchant and politician. Thomas Coburn converted it into a hotel which opened November 1, 1833. Frank Jones, who was, among other things, mayor of Portsmouth, a US Representative, and a brewer, bought it in 1870. After a fire in 1884, Jones rebuilt it extensively. The only significant part saved from Langdon's mansion was the dining room, which is now the Library Restaurant.

The building incorporates lions, Jones's personal symbol, terra cotta sculptures of the Four Seasons of Man, and busts of Jones and Langdon. It was a hotel until 1973 and is now condominiums. The building has been host to presidents George Washington, Franklin Pierce, James K. Polk, Theodore Roosevelt, Chester A. Arthur, William H. Taft and John F. Kennedy.

It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.



Below is an excerpt from a blog entry at westernprogeny.com titled, *Building Profile*, about some of the jobs I had over the years.

When I was in my early twenties, I worked at the historic Rockingham Hotel in downtown Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I worked there 3 times, about 6 months each time, usually from about September to February, I'm not sure why it worked out that way, or why I kept going back. It was a minimum wage job, but we got free room and board, and sometimes tips. "We" being me and the other young people who worked there;

maintenance workers, waiters, waitresses, bell captains, cooks, housekeepers, desk clerks, etc.

The first year I worked there I kept telling my co-workers, “It gets colder than this in Florida, where’s all that cold weather and snow I’ve been hearing about all my life?” It was an unusually mild Fall, and I’m sure they got tired of hearing me talk about it. Every morning I’d come down to the employee dining area, and say, “It gets colder than this...”

Then on Christmas Eve, for the first time that year, it snowed... all day. By 6 PM Interstate 95 was closed because of the snow, and by 10 PM the hotel was full of stranded people; we set up cots in the halls, and people were sleeping all over the place.

By midnight the hotel was finally quiet, it had almost quit snowing, and I went outside for the first time that day. The Rockingham Hotel was built in the 1800’s, and other historic buildings up and down State Street are even older. Imagine my surprise when I went outside; there were no streets, no sidewalks, no landscaping, no cars. Everything was buried under 3 feet of snow, a beautiful, solid white blanket of untrammelled snow covered everything. It was magical; there was no wind, everything glowed under a waxing moon, there were candles in frosted windows, and except for my crunching footsteps it was silent. I walked around enthralled until I got so cold, I had to return to the hotel.

The next morning the temperature was 3, I don’t remember if it was 3 above or 3 below. When I went down to the employee dining area everyone paused, and looked at me; waiting. I looked around, gave it a beat, then said, “Hell, it gets colder than this in Florida.” Several of my

co-workers threw portions of their breakfast at me, I was bobbing and weaving as toast and bacon flew past my head, one of the waitresses chased me out the back door, then locked it, and wouldn't let me back in.

I loved that place, it's now the very upscale Rockingham Condominiums, and I hope to go back someday.

Forty-seven years later in 2019, my wife Michelle and I flew from Phoenix to Boston, rented a car then for over a week we drove around the 6 New England states. While spending the night in Portsmouth we walked a few blocks to the Rockingham Condominiums, and I showed Michelle the back door to the kitchen, the employee entrance I went in and out of hundreds of times. While we were standing in the alley talking a young man in a white cookers hat who was taking a smoke break introduced himself as the chef Rolfie, and after I told him I used to work there he took us in the back door for a tour of the kitchen area. Then, Michelle and I went around to the front entrance to the Library Restaurant, went in, looked around, and talked with another employee.

The Rockingham will always have a place in my heart, and I hope to go there again someday.



Back door to the Rockingham.