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Michigan's
Mushroom
Madness



The Sebring House Hotel register was found upstairs in a local tavern around 1949. When the Bangor Historical Society developed a local museum in 2012, the register was donated and placed in a display cabinet for all to see. The hotel was located at the site of the first retail business in Bangor.

When that business failed several times, it was sold to J.D. Kingston, who transformed the building into a hotel. It was eventually sold to Horace Sebring in 1869. Sebring turned the hotel into a thriving establishment, and his reputation for running a well-kept inn became widely known throughout the region. Passengers on stagecoaches and trains would stop at the hotel for a short rest and the opportunity to eat at the popular Sebring House Hotel. When Sebring died in 1878, the business was managed by his son, John, who also used the office of the hotel to run his private banking service. The hotel was a landmark for more than 50 years until it was razed in 1923.

The register states that J.E. Watson was the hotel's manager from March 17, 1875, to October 31, 1875, although when he actually started is unclear. Watson was known to write notes in the margins, such as times to wake guests. When entertainment companies came to town, including the Little Dutch Band, Coronet Band, Peak Family Bell Ringers, Robinsons



A photograph of the original Sebring House Hotel. (All photos courtesy of the Bangor Historical Society.)

Swiss Ringers, and New York Comedy Company, he sketched cute little drawings to promote them. The notes in the margins grew fewer, and fancy scroll writing became more prominent over time. The register reveals that, on November 1, 1875, owner Horace Sebring became the manager.

The register itself measures 12 inches by 18 1/4 inches and is 2 1/2 inches thick. When the book was first presented to the Bangor Historical Society, it was in disrepair. The cover was torn and tattered, and its pages were falling out. The Bangor Historical Society decided to have the register rebound in order to preserve its contents.

The people who signed the book were from near and far. Although most were from Southern Michigan, many were from out of state as well. The most common out-of-state city was Chicago, but other guests



Notes and drawings done by J.E. Watson.

hailed from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Denver, and many places in between.

The register covers a time period from March 17, 1875, to June 29, 1876. There were probably at least 20 volumes at one time. *The Bangor Advance*, the local newspaper, stated in an article on March 23, 1883, that there were 115 guests registered at the hotel the previous week. In that particular register, it's not uncommon to find 20 to 30 guest signatures in a single day.

The Bangor Area Historical Society has permanent exhibits, including a timeline from 1837 to 1954, items from Bangor Public Schools classrooms and sports teams, and a military exhibit. For details on where to view the Sebring House Hotel register and many more artifacts related to Bangor, call (269) 427-0611 or visit bangormihistory.com.

A look inside the Sebring House Hotel register.

