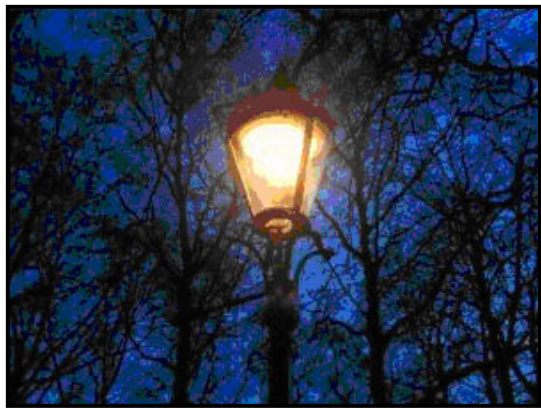


# Bangor Gas Works

Bangor Gas Works (once called the Bangor Gas Light Company) was located on Main Street (now the site of Shaw's Supermarket and the lower portion of Second Street Park). Bangor Gas Works ran from 1852 and closed in 1963. Bangor Gas Works extracted gas from coal and supplied gas to the city for electricity. They had sheds that could hold 3000 tons of coal. The thick tar (a toxic by product of gas production) was stored in large underground tanks. Unfortunately, for decades, much of the coal tar was deposited into the Penobscot River through a sewage outlet that began at the gas plant. In 1978, the City of Bangor purchased the 4-acre parcel of abandoned Gas Works land. The City discovered an underground tank containing 45,000 gallons of coal tar as well as other underground contamination. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection Agency oversaw the "clean up" which included filling the underground tank with clay, demolishing the buildings and paving over the site to create a parking lot. It was deemed that these steps would prevent the coal tar from spreading off site. The Bangor Gas Works waste water containing coal and oil tar that was discharged into the Penobscot River dumped 11 acres of coal tar sediment on the bottom of the river at Dunnett's Cove.



## *Did you know...*

In 1885,  
electric lighting  
replaced gas lamps  
throughout Bangor  
General Hospital  
(now Eastern Maine  
Medical Center).

In the 1950s and 60s, local residents reported fumes backing up through the sewers and tar sheens on the river. At low tide in warm weather the tar would move to the surface and be transported downstream by the river currents. In 2002, the City of Bangor sued the Citizens Communications which was the successor to a series of corporations that owned and operated Bangor Gas Works. The litigating battle began with suits extending to third and fourth parties. Citizens claimed they are only partly responsible, since there were many other potential sources along the waterfront, including two tar distribution facilities at Dunnett's Cove, one of which was operated by the city. In 2008, a federal judge ruled that Citizens had to pay the City of Bangor \$7 million toward the cleanup. In 2009, the City began the extensive removal of the deposits of coal tar from the Penobscot River.