Charles Bulfinch retired to Maine to stay with his brother-in-law Charles Vaughn, and his sister Susan after twelve and a half years as Architect of the Capitol in Washington D.C. The Bulfinches had summered in Hallowell, Maine since Charles Vaughn moved there. There is evidence that they had a presence there as early as 1806 when Bulfinch designed the cupola for Old South Church. In 1828, he was asked to furnish Maine with a capitol building, and his designs were quickly adopted in February of 1829. The cornerstone was laid on July 4th of the same year and it was completed in 1831. The building would later be remodeled in 1909-10 retaining only the Bulfinch designed façade, but not preserving the original dome. In its first incarnation his design was meant to resemble the Massachusetts State House.

The story of Maine's autonomy of statehood dramatizes the State House's construction. Maine, fought over by the French, English and allied natives throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, became a part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (c.1642). An attempt at secession from Massachusetts in 1807, due to geographical separation, failed in the Massachusetts assembly. The War of 1812 incited a push for separation again, and this time it would be successful. During the war, Maine was left vulnerable to attack, since pro-British merchants in Massachusetts who opposed the embargo on British trade refused to aid the northern territory. Maine became a state in 1820, formally named as the 23rd State of the United States in the Missouri Compromise.

Until 1832, the Capitol was in Portland, at which point it was moved to Augusta, a more central location. The State House was built with Hallowell granite, and was designed, typical of Bulfinch's style, to have a central structure with columns and cupola and a north and south wing extending on either side. In 1909-10, major remodeling obscured the original Bulfinch design, establishing the state house as it can be seen today. The whole building was enlarged and a dome replaced the cupola. The only design feature that remains of the Bulfinch State House is the façade.