

Tour Facilitator: Renée O'Neil (RO)

Interviewee: Tom Girard (TG), Paul Gagne (PG), Brian Phinney (BP)

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Transcriber/Videographer: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

RO: My name is Renée O'Neil. I'm going to take you through this architectural plan. This is a copy of the original architectural plans that were originally done on linen by noted architect John Calvin Stevens. You'll notice it says "New Biddeford City building" because the original city building that was built in 1860 burned in 1895 on New Year's Day. As a result, the main floor, which is what you see here as the ground floor, most of the structure was able to be salvaged. What we'll see today in our walking tour is how much has changed in terms of the use of the space. The footprint of the building has remained pretty much the same. It's just what we've done internally to adjust it to make it functional for the different ages and time periods that have used the facility. Also today, you'll get to meet Paul Gagne who spent a lot of time with the building. He can go over a lot of the work that was done in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Then we also have Brian Phinney with us today who can give us a more current look at what the spaces are used for and what the future may hold for some of the areas.

TG: My name is Tom Girard. I'm a volunteer with the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. Today is Friday, February 2nd, 2024 and we will be doing a tour of the City Hall. Joining me today are...

RO: My name is Renée O'Neil. I did a lot of work with the City Theater and its renovations. It spilled over later into the City Hall. I've been involved with the works of repair, restoration. I think it started probably in the late 1990s. Today I also have Paul Gagne here with me. We did a lot of work together and he has a lot of history to share.

PG: My name is Paul Gagne. I spent 30 years in this building. I venture to guess that I know every little nook and cranny you can think of including above and below the ceilings. I was

heavily involved in the restoration of the City Clerk's Office and all three floors. We did some renovations when we set up the computer systems. I've been retired 22 years, but I still have a pretty good idea of what goes on in this building. On my left is Brian Phinney.

BP: I'm Brian Phinney. I'm currently the City's Chief Operating Officer. I've been with the City since 2003. I've been involved with the most recent renovations in City Hall.

RO: I'd like to start our tour today with what we call, at this moment in time, the City Clerk's Office. Back in the day, in 1895, with the drawings that John Calvin Stevens created, this whole area was used for a totally different purpose. What's really interesting is that we are now almost close to, architecturally, peeling back the layers as to what was here originally. But for many years, this space has been used for different purposes: as a bank and now it's a place where people can easily enter the City Hall to do their business with the City Clerk.

I'd like to start off with this area that we are standing in right now. Looking at the details here, we actually had a Reading Room down here. We had a Registration Board. We had a bank. We had a Treasurer's Office. Then, towards the back where we are looking right now, behind those walls there were actually jail cells. Further back was the police station.

What was interesting is that the entrances to the building were also different. Now, some of them are closed off, in what is now a window. Where you are looking right now, was an entrance. But it didn't come into the building exactly that same way. But that was one of the entrances to the building.

Paul, tell us a little bit about your time here and what this space was used for, right where we are standing right now. What was here?

PG: When I came, this was still the York County Savings Bank. Eventually the bank either closed or got bought out by another bank. Then they wanted to centralize collections. Upstairs you had the City Clerk's Office. You had the Collector's Office. The money was scattered all over the place. They wanted to streamline the operation. We started remodeling this area here, running cables. By that time, we had a computer system running in City Hall. They wanted to computerize all of the transactions. So, we started running wiring and so forth. Eventually we

would get everyone online down here and you can see the Tax Collector's Office and Registration and everything was all streamlined in one area. All of the money was controlled in one area.

RO: Brian, you have some things to share with us about the future. But, before that, there was a big transition that happened in this space. I think in May of 2005 I believe, there was a water tank on the second floor

PG: Third floor

RO: Third floor, that leaked for three days. It was Memorial Weekend and the water cascaded down through the floors. It ruined the Mayor's Office and all the way down to here. The ceilings at the time, when you look up, this is the height of the original ceilings. During the 70s, they had put drop ceilings almost everywhere in the building. That had all come apart. It crashed to the ground. We had the opportunity to basically peel back the layers that I talked about earlier. When we did that, we found a lot of really wonderful things that we wanted to bring back, which were the coffered ceilings. But they had to be re-created. Mike Labbe was a carpenter that worked with me on this project. He re-created all of the copper ceilings. The lights that you see here came from the library in Freeport. We wanted to capture the feeling. They were created about the time period that this was built.

It's also important to remember that this is not the original building. The original building was built in 1860 but where we are standing is the footprint. They ended up keeping most of what was here. What is very important to note is that, fortunately we are going to talk about the safes and the vaults, but there was a vault that held City records. Fortunately the records did not get damaged in the fire. Most of the fire damage was water damage but when the fire started, it took a long time for the fire department to know where it was coming from. They found a trash can in a bathroom on the first floor. They quickly extinguished it, but meanwhile the flames had already started traveling between the walls and the floor. By the time they recognized it, the fire was out of control. We thought for a little while there were records that were completely damaged. We will talk about this a little bit later. We found records later on in a different area that were salvaged from the original 1860 building, which was really good news.

What I'd like to do at this point is talk a bit about the future or even the present use of this space. So, Brian can you share that with us?

BP: Sure. This is currently the City Clerk's Office. There are challenges with this building. Obviously, the original footprint in terms of how it was laid out, was never intended to be City Hall per se. We are dealing with a layout that we had to work with. For instance, there is a column right in the middle of the City Clerk's Office. It's not decorative, it's structural. Those are the kind of things that we have to work around. We did add in the period of COVID, as you can see the glassed area in front of the Clerk's Office. There are still some remnants from the original construction. The first door on the left that you can see in the background, is actually the old vault. The City Clerk's Office still uses that to store vital records. It's fireproof, so that is helpful. Through the second door on the right, is the lower section containing all of the materials that the City Clerks use like license plates and registration forms and so forth are stored in that area. It's also fireproof.

This particular area has been worked on a couple of times. As Renée mentioned, there was a water leak that damaged a considerable amount of this. We repainted and put in new ceiling tiles. There were also a number of leaks in the floor area. The original heating system for this building was steam. The steam pipes were underneath the floor. They went to this back wall here near the street where there were radiators. When the new system was put in place, the old pipes were abandoned but we had to find ways to run all of the new ductwork to get the heating system in the building. You can see there is a drop ceiling on the other side of that beam. Most of the areas within City Hall, for instance, the hallways, the ceilings are 11 or 12 feet tall. We unfortunately had to use that area to run cables for computer systems as well as the heating and ventilation systems because there is no other way in an old building of this nature. That's a little bit of history in this room.

RO: The first picture you are seeing is the plaster ceiling that got wet from the damage from the water heater leak. That's all the lathe and wire work from above that came crashing down into the City Clerk's Office where we are standing right now.

The next picture references the underground piping for the return for the steam heating that Brian was talking about. You can see how rusted out that piece was and when we were doing the work for the water damage that's when it was discovered soon after that the piping was damaged and we would not have heat in the building. So, we had to quickly turn around and come up with another plan.

The next picture, as we took the ceiling down, we recognized that there's a clock with a marble face that was buried. We did restore it. We did get it running but I can see today it is not running but this is when we first discovered it. Also, the paint that's there is what we used as a guide for the historical paint.

The next picture shows the outline of the safe that was referenced. It's likely not the original safe that was in the building but that was a safe that was put in when the bank went into this section of the building.

The last picture is a marquis that was outside of the entrance of the City Clerk's Office that had to be taken down for safety reasons. It was there when it was a bank and removed probably in the late 90's, like 1998-1999.

RO: We are outside right now looking at the City Hall building from a pedestrian's point of view. These were originally designed, some of those as store fronts. The first one, right now we use it as a rehearsal space for City Theater. There's a little door to the right that has a staircase that goes right upstairs to City Theater.

In the past, I'm really not sure what this building was but at one time it was Uniformity. What else do you think it might have been?

PG: Langevin's Clothing Store. There was the Children's Shoppe. Curtis's Music Store.

RO: Was it newspaper and magazines?

PG: Yeah. Curtis's Newspaper was over there. There was the Children's Shoppe. At the City Theater entrance there used to be a barber shop in there along with the entrance to the City Theater itself. Then you had Warren's Furniture. This part here is all tied in with City Theater.

RO: They did some work on the restoration probably back in the late 1980s. They did some more work. Looks like they still need some (laughter). It never stops.

This used to be Langevin's Clothing Store.

BP: Currently this section is the Code's Office. It goes all the way through and comes up against the Theater. In the alcove between the two buildings is an entrance way where they can exit on the back side of the City Hall.

RO: There was a time when my husband opened a computer store here for a chance to bring some technology to the downtown (laughter). But then the Codes Office came in and it made it very convenient for people to come in so they wouldn't have to go through the whole building. Then the Heart of Biddeford is next and I can't remember.

PG: That was Curtis that was right there.

RO: Then there was Ken Cote who had a photography studio, I think. Midtown Music was there too. PG: There was also a little restaurant there. They had some ice cream, bagels and so forth.

RO: Yes. At one time. You are right. That was probably in the mid 1980s.

PG: I don't remember the name. They had some good bagels. I used to cheat down from work (laughter)

RO: Tom, where was Murphy's Music Store? Do we know which one it was?

PG: It was in this area.

TG: I'm not sure which one of these. I recall we would go in, and you could take a 45, go in the back of the store and listen to it. They had listening booths. You see that in old movies sometimes. It was a neat store.

PG: I think it was located right in that section right there.

RO: Well, thank you

RO: This storefront used to be the Children's Shoppe where a lot of people remember coming here to buy presents for people who had their babies, clothes for their kids or school uniforms. Paul, I think there was a special customer that used to come here.

PG: Yeah. President George H.W. Bush. He and his wife would come down here to buy clothes for their grandchildren. They had the Secret Service running around, checking everything out. They used to make visits here very often.

RO: Brian, what is here now?

BP: This is currently the Finance Office. It runs all the way back again, to the alcove.

As part of the City Hall renovation that is underway right now we are replacing all of the windows in City Hall. These particular windows on the outside are proving to be a little bit of a challenge because they actually have curved glass. We found only one company, that is located in Pennsylvania, that's actually making those for us as part of the renovation.

RO: According to the plans that John Calvin Stevens created, this was one of the main entrances to the City Hall. There was a door here and you see that there is wood up above that is very ornately carved with some plaster. Above that is a little balcony. You will see the stained glass windows that are on top of that.

PG: When I first got hired back in 1973, this used to be the Police Station down here. The Chief's Office was on the main floor. The Detective's Office was on the second floor. There is a stairwell inside. I believe the stairwell is still there. They would come down here, lock them up in the back room. They would walk up the back stairs and enter the Chief's Office. They took over Central Theater and moved the whole Police Department to the old Central Theater. I don't remember what year that was but it was probably 1973, late 70s or early 80s when they moved them all.

BP: As I mentioned earlier, the windows of City Hall are all going to be replaced as part of the current renovation. If the public wants to stop by, this is actually a test window that was installed to show us what the new windows are going to look like. You can compare that to the

windows up above. These are historical, the molding and frame size is what they are intending to match up.

RO: As Brian talked about earlier when we were unable to utilize the existing steam heating system, there was a huge furnace that was located back here in a boiler room down below that has since been abated. We had to bring in natural gas in order to heat the building. The ginormous furnace is now replaced by this is where the natural gas comes into. Then the furnaces are all hung boilers that we may be able to see a little bit later. The footprint was so tiny compared to the size of the boiler. The boiler room was probably the size of a giant truck. It was just huge.

We are now at the back entrance of City Hall. What is interesting is that this was not always an entrance. This was a solid wall. Below were the windows for some of the jail. If you come down this way, this area down below is where the entrance was for the boiler room. Also, there was a door where they would let the prisoners out to get some fresh air. Later on, this catwalk was added. They added that tower you can see for offices for City Theater. Some of the original holes are where the windows were from the original building that was built in 1860. Again, they built up above it.

Swiping in to get in is quite different. Paul, do you remember having all the keys?

PG: Yeah. It took me half an hour to get into the building. If it was an emergency, you couldn't get into the building.

RO: We used to call Paul "Sneider" because he had all of the keys. That was a character that was the superintendent of an apartment building. [Note: Dwayne Sneider was a character in the sitcom "One Day at a Time" which ran from 1975-1984]

PG: If something happened at night, it was "call Paul. He's got the keys" (laughter)

RO: Now we are in what most people would say is the back entrance to City Hall. If you are staff, this is probably the way that you enter to come in. At one time, there was no door there. You basically would be standing right now in what was considered the municipal courtroom. They had a City Marshall. They had judges' chambers. As Paul talked about with the Police

Department, there was a stairwell that came up the backside of the room that is beyond that door. It would be a place where if they were bringing the prisoners upstairs to the court, to the dock room, that's the way that they would come in. Also, in this area they had a Board of Aldermen. That's where they would meet. The School Department was slated for this area but I think they ended up moving it. They had a Common Council. Later you will see there was the Mayor and the City Clerk's Office was here as well as the Tax Collector and the Assessor.

Paul, what was here when you were here?

PG: The Accounting Department was in here where they controlled the payroll, taxes and so forth. People would come in here to pay their bills. From that point on this was all one room at one time. Across the hall, if you look back on your left, this used to be the Police Department used that office for a short time then it became the computer room back in 1973. The computer room stayed there until almost 2000, when I moved upstairs.

RO: Brian, what do they use these spaces for today?

BP: Again, we are trying to use every square inch of the building. Just because of the layout, we use it as functionally as possible. Just as you come in on the left-hand side, is an extension of the HR Office [Note: Human Resources]. We have our GA [General Assistance] Office here with the GA Coordinator. This whole section right now is used for general assistance, where they do interviews and also process the general assistance applications.

RO: The general assistance used to be on the ground floor back with Vickie Edgerly. Did she work up here?

PG: I'll show you, around the corner.

RO: That would be great. Thank you.

Walking through the hallway, for many years people kind of just walked right through these because they were covered with years and years of dirt, and they were not really functional.

They would say, "What is this? What's going on here?" At one time, right below us were the jail cells. We are not really sure if they provided any illumination down below but you can actually

lift this piece out and they have since electrified to create some light. It's kind of like a night light. It's not really clear if these were electrified or if they just provided light to the cells below, like a skylight.

PG: You are now standing in the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center Hall of Fame wall which started about 4-5 years ago. It is run by the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. They ask for people who have served the city voluntarily in many, many different ways. With the permission of the City Hall, we were able to display the recipients. Every year, we pick five or six recipients based on how many people are nominated. We put them up on the wall. We recycle these. Every year we take out the oldest ones who won the awards and put up the new five or six nominees that we get every year. This will be coming up. We will be starting our sixth year, coming up in May I believe. We have the celebration here in City Hall along with the mayor serving as emcee. It's been very prosperous. It's surprising what we find for volunteers in the city. We don't realize how much time that these certain people volunteer. It's been a good challenge. It's a lot of fun and it's very interesting to find out who was really volunteering very well in the city.

BP: We are currently in the reception area for the City Manager's Office. As we talked about the history of the building and living with the space, here is one of the vaults that was found. It was part of the renovation construction when the bank was here. It is still used. We currently use this as a storage area for materials. As you can see, the original vault is still right here. It is still in great working shape. They don't make them like they used to.

RO: There was another vault behind this one. Because these were the areas for the Tax Assessor's Office originally and the Tax Collector. I guess that's where they put all of our tax money. It all went right into these vaults.

You never know what you are going to find as you open doors. We are heading into the Mayor's Office and here's what we have greeting us. It's a very old cash register. Today, most people basically see an iPad as a cash register. This is what cash registers looked like back in the day. It appears that it came from Nichols and Company, which was a department store across the street. It's where Woven Design is right now, next to what was Day's Jewelry. This gives you an

idea of old school mechanics. It looks like there may have been some wiring. They were able to electrify it. But no one was going to easily be taking this out of the building. They didn't have to worry about that.

As part of this area, this is all boarded up right now. There was something very special here, just a couple of weeks ago. I think that some really wonderful work is happening. Brian, can you share what's happening? These were windows, right?

BP: Yeah. These were actually stained-glass windows. They are being removed and replicated as part of the new renovation that is occurring.

RO: The windows that were here are sister windows to the ones on the landing at City Theater that we uncovered. Those were in pretty good shape because they had been covered up for so many years. It sort of protected them. These needed a lot more work. At one time, this area had the City Clerk's Office here. Just beyond the wall on the other side, the public could come up to a desk. It was kind of like a counter where you could get your marriage license or fishing license. That was all done here on the main floor.

We are now in a very important office. This is the Mayor's Office. The Mayor's Office has always been the Mayor's Office. Looking at the floor plans, looking at what was here before, it has always been the Mayor's Office. But it has gone through a lot of changes. What we see here is, it was brought back as close to the original layout as we possibly could go. We were able to do that. Unfortunately, because of the water damage that was done, this office was affected.

As Paul talked about earlier, back in the 70s, they put in drop in ceilings everywhere throughout the building. This had a drop-in ceiling. Even prior to that, I think it was originally plaster. But what they used to do back in the old days, the plaster would fail, so they would put in a tin ceiling on top of it to help preserve instead of having to do the plaster ceiling. So, I believe there was a tin ceiling here and also where the City Clerk's Office was. Because of the water damage, that all was pulled down and destroyed.

What we did is, we went back as close to the original as possible. That's where we brought in Mike Labbe once again to help us out. He put in and replicated all of the wainscoting that you see here. As Brian described earlier, the curved windows. The building curves, so to make all of the cuts and to get everything to curve along was very, very difficult and Mike did a great job. The other part of this is the transoms up above. Those were hidden with the drop ceiling. We were able to take the drop ceilings out which really lightened up this space. In my opinion, it makes it more grand.

When we were looking at the original colors, I had Tony Castro. He is the same person who did the work for the paint and plaster at City Theater. He analyzed the paint colors. This is the original color. It looks a lot like what you see at City Theater. Then he said, "Renée, I think there are stencils." So, I got up on scaffolding. We had a light and we were scraping away and we found the wreaths. He replicated them. They were very, very subtle. The only thing I will say is I think the blue bow probably was not original. But we weren't sure how it was connected. So, Tony based on what he knew for the time period made that artistic decision to put the bow. There's a little controversy behind that because I think the idea is that it's a bow or a ribbon for a mayor's office. I think it shouldn't matter but it was a little controversial when we first put that together.

The other side of this too is looking at the view that the mayor has outside, looking at Main Street, the community and the Lincoln Mill. To stand here and think about the fact that all of the mayors that came before our mayor today, had this view. A lot of these buildings have not changed over the years.

BP: This is also the only room currently in City Hall that shows the windows with the transoms. All of the other ones have been covered up with drop ceilings. From the outside of the building, you can still see them. They will be replaced as part of the renovation. From inside the building, this is the only room that shows the full height of the ceilings that are in all of the offices but are covered up with those drop ceilings.

Another interesting thing for this particular area is that when we had the water leak up above, this room was damaged. A lot had to be replaced as part of that work. We had to go through

health and safety inspection work before you could start. One of the things we ran into was that all of the plaster had a bunch of fibers in it. There was real concern that it was all asbestos and once we started the work, we would deal with a big renovation of asbestos containing material. What it turned out was this was original plaster, and it was horsehair plaster. They actually take plaster, mix horsehair with it so that it would bind it together more. That was put over the lathe work that was on the wall. It's an interesting tidbit for City Hall. If you poke most of the walls that haven't been renovated, it is still lathe with horsehair plaster over them.

RO: This lighting fixture matches the ones that are down in the City Clerk's Office, again from the correct period. These are electric. We did have gas electric features throughout this building. We were one of the first electrified municipalities.

These sconces are absolutely original except obviously the light bulbs. These were seen throughout the building. We found them in various places. So, we had these two refurbished to go back to the original patina, which is really quite pretty.

This wall, I'm not sure if this is plaster. There was one of the walls that we had to take down and replace with sheetrock because there was so much water damage associated with it. But Brian is absolutely correct. One of the challenges with plaster is, it's hard to hang things with it. Back in the day, there may have been molding that they would put up. Then they would hang wires from the molding and hang up a painting or photograph on that. I did see examples of that in some of the areas in the past, but we did not see examples of that in this room.

The photograph that you see is where we had to peel back all of the plaster that was on the wall. It was right down to the brick due to the water damage that occurred. There was insulation. There were all kinds of things that got wet and would have caused issues with mold. You can see today, that is how it was restored with the transom up above.

If you ever have a chance to come up to the second floor and attend one of the Council meetings or community meetings, you'll see all these pictures of former mayors. At one time, the pictures of each mayor were probably around 8" by 10". They were glass framed. They basically lined all the walls, all around the hallway. It got to a point where they were wondering what they were going to do with all of these. Then, they had some renovations and all of these

pictures got taken down and put into storage. The photos of the mayors, of course, continued. We have to give credit to a group of people that worked really hard to find a way to honor all of the mayor's pictures but do it in an opportunity to condense and save space. I think this is a really great way to provide that tribute so that we can go back and look at all of the people who served our community. Some served for one term, and some served for many, many, many terms. It's really interesting to see the changes over the decades.

Now we are in the Council Chambers. This was called at one time, they used the word Aldermen as a reference to the Council. Structurally, it hasn't changed very much. What I can say is that there was a renovation that was done with wallpaper, carpeting and the addition of chairs. The addition of chairs was really a very welcomed one because what we have right here is a bench. For many years, the years that I remember, there were benches like this. We all said that it was the Council's way of having you not stay at the meeting too long. It would move people along. They were heavily painted. There were probably ten coats of paint on the benches. Many of the benches left the building in a more recent attempt to do a renovation vs a restoration. What they did is strip off all of the paint and brought the wood back to its original. It's nice that they kept this little token of what it was like here before.

There may have been some type of light fixture or chandelier that hung from that center section with decorative grillwork. It's very similar to one that was at City Theater. Above this is an attic space that has some of the duct and vent work. These light fixtures, I'm not sure of the age of them. I can't remember if it's something new made to look old. I don't have enough information about those. I know that now, where the light fixture is in the middle, is the supply for the air conditioning. At one time it probably had a fresh air exchange. That's what they used to do in these old buildings. The windows, I'm really happy to hear that those are being changed. Sometimes, people would try to open the windows and the existing ones would come down like a guillotine. I think somebody actually got injured because of it. So, we are very happy to hear that work is being done. This is where all of the important decisions have been made for many, many, many years and years to come.

Paul, I'd like you to step in for a moment. Do you have any memories of the Council, like for technology? Give us an idea of what things were like when you first brought technology or microphones or that kind of thing.

PG: (laughter) There wasn't any when I first started here. I believe it was under Mayor Grattelo. He decided he wanted to get involved with technology. They wanted to show the meetings on TV and so forth. We had a bet going that we weren't able to get the sound system in time for the meeting. I said, "Well, I'm going to beat you to it." He said, "OK." The meeting was at 6:30. At 5 o'clock, I had all of the power set up and communication was running. So, I won my bet with Mayor Grattelo.

It's grown a lot since then. You can see the screens on the wall. It was a challenge, and we re-did the whole room. It's not what it used to be, believe me. It's come a long way. In fact, I think it's the same drapes. They were there many years ago if I'm not mistaken. (laughter)

RO: You're right and this carpet has held up too, remarkably well. I think this was done probably in the 90s.

PG: Yeah. Early 90s.

RO: Brian, what's been added? A lot of that came about because of COVID I assume and technology for people to be able to be at the meetings from home? I know that we have some larger screens now. There used to be another one over there.

BP: Public access has been broadcasting Council meetings for just over 20 years. During COVID, there was a switch to include ZOOM, so people could view those remotely and the meetings could be held remotely. That has continued. Just this past fall concluded an upgrade of the audio-visual system in here that allows not only people that are home on ZOOM but also livestream into the website and public access to watch a number of meetings that are held here in the chambers.

RO: We just got off the elevator. We are now on the third floor. As I got off the elevator, I looked around and said, "Some things just don't change." Some of the things that were here when I used to do a lot of the work in the building have remained. But it makes sense because

not a lot of people use this space. The good news is that behind this door is where they had records. Paul, they were all paper records, right?

PG: Paper records. A lot of stuff came from the City Clerk's Office, the Tax Office. You have to keep them for so many years.

RO: Before they got rid of them

PG: Excise tax and stuff like that. It's all stored up here.

RO: I'm going to guess when we open the door, that doesn't exist anymore.

PG: It's all gone.

RO: It's all gone now.

PG: [Note: door opens]. You're right. Things don't change. (laughter)

RO: It looks like things don't change. There are some items that have not been gone through yet. Again, people have to keep them for so many years. I have to say that this is one of my favorite rooms in the building. It is a time capsule. There are pieces in here that have not been touched. The floor is really rickety. I think it is a testament to having a little bit of history preserved.

What we spoke about earlier about records being preserved, what ended up happening is that at some point in time, a lot of the ledgers and some of the books that were thought to be lost really were preserved. They were in another room. They were in a room that was up in a stairwell. It was a storage area. That storage area needed to be cleaned out because that was going to be the home of the new boiler room because they were all hung boilers. We had to take the bundles. So many of these volumes of books had to be stored somewhere. They were temporarily stored at the Saco Museum and the Dyer Library. They took really good care of them until they were able to be returned to the city. There were ledgers that we found from the 1860s. They had thought at one time that they had been destroyed. Fortunately, they made it through. Likely it was because they were in the vaults that were downstairs at the time

and were not damaged. We still have them today. Obviously there needs to be a little work to get them organized. But at least we know where they are and they are being preserved.

RO: Now we are on the third floor and this is the City Engineers' Office. This is where all of the blueprints are stored. This has always been the City Engineer's space. What also used to be here is they actually had an area for a band space for the Painchaud Band. It was like a Military Room that they would refer to it as. It was actually used for rehearsal space. I think they even had in the drawings a small, little tiny stage. It was well used for many years. The drop ceilings, I am going to guess above this, the ceilings would go much higher. There was a skylight if we were to remove this. There was a section of the skylight. I think they even had a little kitchen up here that was in the drawing.

BP: The Engineering Office has gone through some changes to try to keep up with the times from what we saw in what we call the Archive. There are a number of records that are in paper form. Engineering, over the past several years has made a considerable effort to digitize most of the plans that they have. Now, almost everything is online and electronically filed although we still retain the original copies. We now have electronic copies of all of the historical files that were in the Engineering Office, which has helped considerably and obviously preserved them.

BP: We are now on the roof of City Hall. You can see the clock tower behind us. Most citizens don't get a chance to see the view from up here. You can see most of the mills. You can see a portion of the bay and over to the police station.

RO: So this a good vantage point to see the damage that's been done over the years with the weather and everything else. And the goal is to hopefully bring this back to its original splendor and in the original it was red paint and the frieze work was a brick red color. You can see it even peeking through.

RO: When the clock tower was first built, it was all done by weights. It was mechanical. Then, later on, I think it was in the 60s, they moved to electronic motors to move the hands of the clock and activate the bell. Interestingly, the bell was made by a company whose original founder was the apprentice to Paul Revere. So, it does have some significance. I'm going to have Brian tell us a little bit about...I'm just so overwhelmed right now because I have not seen

the most recent restoration work that was done on this clock. I remember it. You could barely tell it was green. It was really beat up. Just to see it shine and look pretty much when it was installed. So, please share the work that has been done.

BP: Yes. This is a great renovation that occurred. You can see some additions. Now we have mechanical engines here. The system itself is all original. It was removed, renovated, restored and replaced back in here. It really is just a great testament to some of these old buildings. For a scale, if you are outside and you see the clock faces, you can see the clock faces here. This is just a few feet below where those clock faces are from the outside.

RO: What you saw was the electrified version of the workings. Back when it was weighted and then mechanically, these giant shafts held the weights. They would have to be someone to come in and operate that. It was a lot of work. I had people talk to me in the community and tell me, "My uncle or my grandfather was the one that used to go up and do all of that." What is quite spectacular is this pendulum. I have not seen it ever work. Paul was saying the same thing. The mechanism was up above but not the pendulum, so coming up here and seeing this is fabulous.

RO: This is the stairwell that leads to the rooftop that we were just at and the clock tower. In the hallway, the nice thing about these little hallways that are not used very often, not a lot happens. So, we have these little treasures from the past. I'm not sure that this is original, but it's definitely very early. I would say probably the 1920s. It has a little bit of a deco feel to this design. This is a rag rolling technique which became popular again in the 90s. Back at the turn of the century, in the early 1900s, it was a way instead of wallpaper to decorate these areas. Also, you'll see you have this wood appear. The rails, obviously they are not to code and are not safe. People were a lot shorter back then. Today, we have these just to make it safe for people to pass through. We have daylight coming in. We see this beautiful long, tall window and what's the plan for windows like this?

BP: These windows are also part of the renovation project. They will be replaced to be historically accurate.

RO: One of the things to remember is we talked about water damage. Not all water damage came from the water heater. Because the clock tower had been left in such great disrepair for many years, water was getting into the brickwork. The pointing of the brick was failing so there was a lot of water that came through from different storms. We pretty much lost the ceiling at one time. It has since been shored up and repaired. There was work done on the tower, not cosmetic, but just to hold things in place until a better opportunity would come and that is coming. That is very exciting. Brian can you just share real quick what the plans are for the clock tower and the restoration?

BP: Yes. As part of this renovation, we mentioned earlier that all of the windows will be replaced. We are also putting sprinklers in the entire building so the building will be protected from fire. Also, the clock tower will be renovated as part of that. It's been a long time coming. It will be great to have that done.