

Only final touches left at Kennebec County Registry of Deeds in Augusta

Kennebec County acquired the county department's new home at 77 Winthrop St. at the end of March and recently completed the move.

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The new site of the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds at 77 Winthrop St. in Augusta on Monday. *Staff photo by Andy Molloy*

AUGUSTA — The formal sign isn't in place yet, but nearly everything else is at the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds.

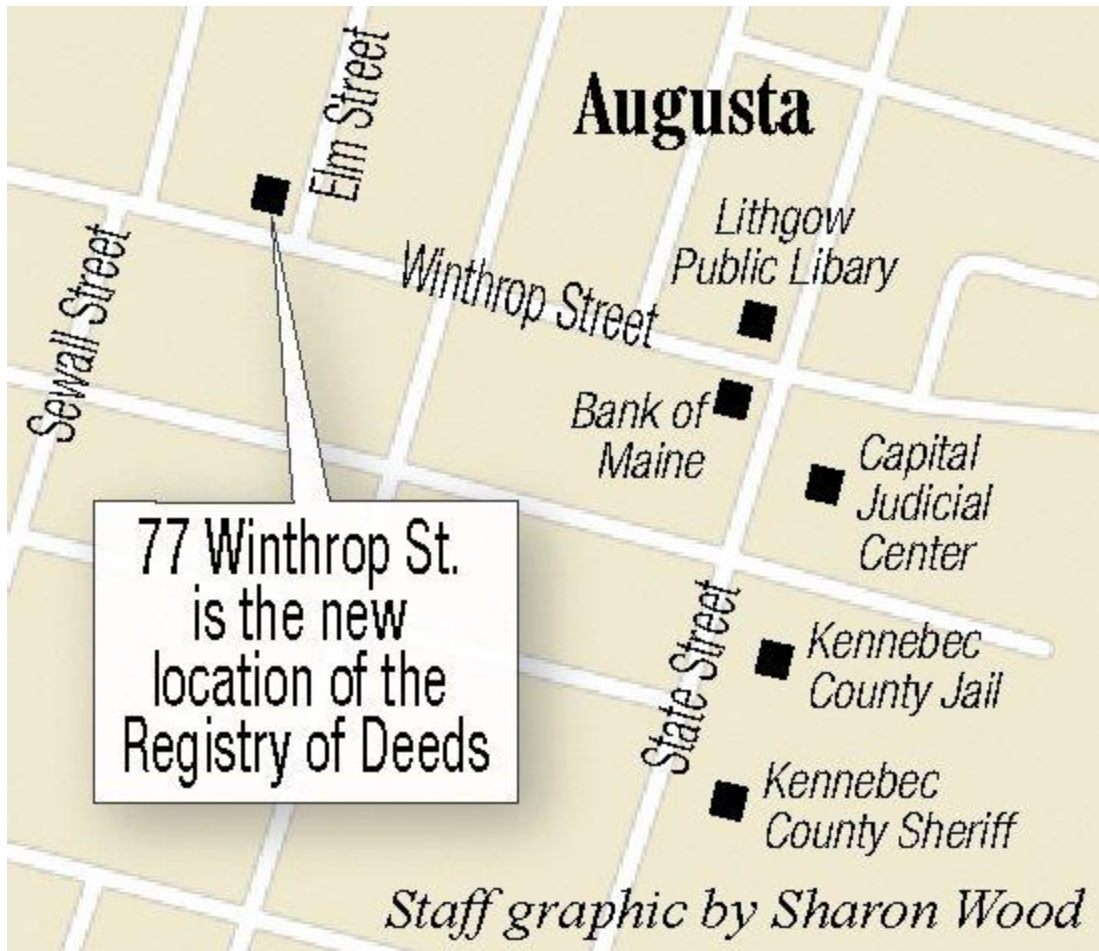
The county department, where land records like deeds and maps are recorded and kept, [moved to 77 Winthrop St.](#) recently after two decades in rented space at One Weston Court, just across from the county offices at 125 State St.



Kennebec County Administrator Robert Devlin at the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds in Augusta on Monday. *Staff photo by Andy Molloy*



Walter Stanley, right, of Connecticut, and Gardiner attorney Bruce Williams research deeds Monday at the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds, which recently relocated to 77 Winthrop St. in Augusta. *Staff photo by Andy Molloy*



“This is something I dreamed of for 15 years,” Kennebec County Register of Deeds Beverly Bustin-Hatheway said Monday.

The new space, in the former Pierce Atwood law office, doubles the space the registry had in One Weston Court and allows all staff offices to be located together at one end of the building. In its former home, Bustin-Hatheway said her office was separated from those of her staff.

“There’s still some organizing to do,” Kennebec County Administrator Robert Devlin said, but the bulk of the work was completed last month.

The biggest changes to the building have been relocating the entrance from the front of the building to the north side with direct access from the parking lot, the removal of one wall to accommodate storage and cutting a window in a wall to improve sight lines into the new reception area.

Devlin said a more formal sign is in the works.

Jim Saucier, the county’s maintenance manager, was adding trim around the window Monday.

“The work crew had a couple of smart guys on it,” Saucier said.

The county enlisted help from the Maine Department of Corrections, which provided a work detail from the Charleston Correctional Facility, and the Kennebec County jail, which provided a couple of trusties for the move. In addition, the contents of the staff's offices and deed books and the shelves on which the books are stored had to be moved. Some of the shelves had to be taken apart to be moved and reassembled in the new office.

The work detail devised a system to move and reshelve the numbered deed books to streamline the move, Saucier said.

The new building has dedicated areas for research, secure storage for the historic deed books that date back to 1799 when Kennebec County split off from Lincoln County, and a room for storing county commission documents.

“This is where we keep the road books,” Devlin said. Historically, when towns wished to vacate roads, they had to come to the county commission to do it. The books are the records of the disposition of those roads. The only real snag in the moving plan, Devlin said, came when the crew who were scheduled to connect the new deed building to the main server room at the county building via fiber optics was available to do the work earlier than scheduled. “We had to coordinate with Central Maine Power, FairPoint Communications and the city of Augusta,” he said. “We were servicing people within hours.”

The ball started rolling on the move earlier this year when both Devlin and Bustin-Hatheway spotted a real estate ad for 77 Winthrop St. in the Kennebec Journal. County officials had been working with state officials to acquire the former Augusta District Court building, which has been vacant since the court's operations moved to the new Capital Judicial Center, but the deal fell through.

The sale price was \$575,000, and the county was able to pay cash, thanks to the capital improvement funds that had been set aside and identified for use for the new building. The move represents a savings to taxpayers, because the county no longer has to pay \$70,000 annually in rent.

After briefly leasing its space back from the county, Pierce Atwood has since relocated to 157 Capitol St.

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