

Eagle-Tribune

Exchanging gifts

October 24, 2010

Cardinal Sean O'Malley was in Haverhill recently to celebrate the completion of the Hayes at Railroad Square. Built by the nonprofit Planning Office of Urban Affairs, an affiliate of the Boston Archdiocese, the Hayes, on Granite Street, offers 57 units of affordable and mixed-income rental housing and ground-floor retail space.

Following O'Malley's talk, Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini got up to speak, saying, "How do you follow a Cardinal? Gingerly, I guess."

After Fiorentini spoke, he presented the Cardinal with the keys to the city. When it was announced that the Cardinal had a gift for Fiorentini, state Sen. Steven Baddour, who was seated close by, quipped, "It's not the keys to the Vatican, mayor."

The gifts that Cardinal O'Malley distributed were 5-inch by 7-inch wood blocks cut from surplus beams that had been part of the original building's construction. The wood is Southern Yellow Pine and has 150 rings, making the tree approximately 150 years old at the time the building was constructed in 1911. A transparent Plexiglas plate with an image of the renovated building was fastened to the front of the block, so that the wood grain shows through under the image of the building.