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Date: Interview recorded in 2006 about events surrounding the Eastern Corporation's Mill in Brewer Maine before it closed in 2004.

Description: Interview with Joe Shorette about his thoughts on the changes that occurred when the ownership of the mill changed.

Interview with Joe Shorette about the changes that occurred when the ownership of the Eastern Corporation's Mill in Brewer changed, 1989.

Amy Stevens: So did you see any changes occurring through you know the difference in ownership.

Joe Shorette: When EB Eddie sold it?

AS: Yes.

JS: Oh big time. Yes, everybody talked about it. When EB Eddie owned it, we didn't have any free trade agreement with Canada and they pretty much left us to our own devices. I mean that was their way of getting you know paper into the US market by owning a US mill and we, you know if we needed anything we'd go to EB Eddie and they would give us money for capital improvements and things like that and they were, they treated us pretty well. I mean they took good care of us and Eastern corner of the market at that particular mill is they had a warehouse. They had their own brands of paper back then. They had the certificate bond, and manifest bond, Atlantic bond and those were all owned by Eastern Corporations. Those were their own private bonds and they had warehouses and they would stock certain sizes and colors of their own bonds so anybody could call Eastern up and say I want a hundred pounds of this and 50 pounds of that and two cases of this and

they could go through the warehouse. They actually had people, that's what their job was. They went through the warehouse and picked out all these orders out of the warehouse.

JS: And somebody could call up and say I want two or three tons of a particular paper and the mill was small enough that they could do that. They could make a change, you know run two or three tons of paper off a machine you know to keep that customer happy and that was their corner of the market. But then when they passed the free trade agreement with Canada, EB Eddie decided they didn't need it anymore and they sold it to Joe Torres who had the mill in Lincoln and he brought in management team and they decided that they wanted to do things differently.

They wanted to, you know run with the big dogs, sort of speak. They wanted to run, they wanted to be like Georgia Pacific and Boise Cascade, the big companies and they got away from that, excuse me, they got away from that corner of the market and they tried to break into all these different markets. They couldn't do it.

AS: Like what types of markets?

JS: Oh they came up with all these brain storms that they wanted to make a card stock, and that didn't kind of work out. Then they wanted to do, they were working on different papers and stuff like that; I can't even think of the names of some of them now. Some kind of opaque paper and different kinds of paper and they did come up with, they did come up with one that they were pretty happy with, I guess it was the printing companies liked it because it took ink well or something like that but they got away from that corner of the market.

AS: The like certificate?

JS: Yes, they did away with the certificates. They did away with all those bonds. They did away with certificate, Atlantic. They did away with all that and they tried to go into these other markets and then when they realized that you know, they couldn't you know they weren't going to break into these markets, it was too late. Once they lost that corner of the market, it was gone; couldn't get back to it. And there was a struggle after that, things went down hill from there. You know, it was just every year it got worse and worse. The you know, couldn't get the, they just couldn't get the orders that they used to have. The coater department they helped keep it going. I mean they made a lot of coated products and that helped keep, that helped keep things going for awhile but for the most part it was doomed.

AS: So do you think if they had stuck with the bond grade of paper

JS: I think if they kept going the way they were going they would have been fine. Yes, and whose to say how long but I mean they were doing fine. I mean everything, if something's not broke, don't fix it. You know and they were, not every year was a profitable year but some years we even had profit sharing. I mean they actually had it, you know ran in the black a few years. When I was there, in the early 70s and 80s, they actually had you know profit sharing. But that all stopped, you know once EB Eddie sold it and once they tried to change you know the operations and you know did away with the warehousing; did away with all these different types of paper, and we are going to start doing it this way and that way. I think that was the beginning of the end right there. It was too old a mill. I mean the infrastructure was too old. The machines were too old, you know and the mill was just way too small to compete. You know you had to be on a competitive level with big companies like Georgia Pacific and [Chemical] Clark and all these big companies.

AS: Right.

JS: I think in my opinion that if they just left things well enough alone they would probably still be running right now but that's just in my opinion.