



December 2021

In Living Color: Newly discovered film shows the Colby of 80 years ago

Laura Meader

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine>



Part of the [Photography Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meader, Laura (2021) "In Living Color: Newly discovered film shows the Colby of 80 years ago," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 107 : Iss. 2 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol107/iss2/24>

This Exclusively Online is brought to you for free and open access by the Colby College Archives at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Magazine by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

In Living Color

CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY | 5 MIN. READ

Newly discovered film shows the Colby of 80 years ago



SHARE    

By Laura Meader

January 13, 2020

In 1935 Frederick Kinch began making home movies using Kodak's newly introduced 8 mm camera. He filmed his children, a few hunting trips, and his alma mater—Colby. The film he spliced together from two trips to Waterville has recently surfaced, providing rare moving images of both downtown and Mayflower Hill campuses.

Kinch's color film brings to life construction on Mayflower Hill, resumed after a lull during the Great Depression; football games in Woodman Stadium on the old campus; and Colby's marching band led by its first majorette, Thelma Proctor Matheson '43.

While photographs of this era abound, Colbiana Coordinator Jim Merrick '75 was thrilled to receive the film, donated in June by Kinch's family. "I don't think we have anything taken by ... alumni returning to the College and shooting some film and holding on to it for eighty years," he said. "Suddenly, it appeared."

Equally surprising was learning that Matheson was living a mile from campus. "I was in a lot of parades," said 97-year-old Matheson, chuckling repeatedly while watching the film. Then 18, she led the all-male band, pumping her baton confidently. "I was just a member of the band, no different from anyone else," she said, downplaying her prominence dressed in a stylish white satiny dress made by her mother.

13:55

Silent 1939 film by Frederick Klinch '25 brings to life construction on Mayflower Hill, football games in Woodman Stadium on the old campus; and Colby's marching band led by its first majorette, Thelma Proctor Matheson '43.

Kinch, a 1925 Colby graduate, filmed Matheson and the band parading down College Avenue in 1940 on what Merrick believes was Colby Night, a downtown-campus event that included dinner at the Elmwood Hotel and a pep rally before a home football game. Kinch also filmed construction on the new campus.

Lorimer Chapel and Miller Library were complete, but other projects were underway. In the footage, the planned locations of academic buildings are marked by hand-painted signs, including Physics Laboratory and Natural Science. "It actually shows moving footage of them excavating Johnson Pond," Merrick said,

“and working on construction at one of the quad dormitories.”

Traveling from his home in Worcester, Mass., Kinch, a dentist, was also in Waterville the previous November. At that time he filmed Roberts Hall and Miller Library enveloped in scaffolding with only the framework of Miller tower in place, and a small flag showing at the top of the structure. Merrick thinks the flag is from the topping-off ceremony, which occurred Nov. 10, 1939.



Left: Thelma Proctor Matheson '43 leading a parade in downtown Waterville, Maine. Right: The historic footage was found in a dusty box among other home movies by Frederick Klinch '25.

The next day, Colby football played (and defeated) Bates in the downtown stadium, and Kinch was there with his camera, capturing, in color, the afternoon sun illuminating the cardinal red of Bates' uniforms. From the stands, the film shows the teams moving up and down the field while cheerleaders rally the crowd from the sidelines. Colby's mascot, a real mule named Aristotle, makes a cameo

appearance.

Supplementing these silent, moving images are Matheson's memories, some faint, some vivid. A violinist as a child, she learned how to be a majorette by watching older girls while at a music camp. She came to Colby itching to prove what she could do.

"It was [Instructor in Music] Ermanno Comparetti who was in charge of the band ... he was agreeable to have me," Matheson recalled. But Dean of Women Ninetta Runnals wouldn't allow it until Matheson was a sophomore "because I was a girl and they hadn't had anything like that before. She was being very cautious."

Matheson's recollections and Kinch's film are an archivist's dream come true. "I think there's a lot about that early campus that is unfamiliar to us and would have been very familiar to them," said Merrick, savoring this trip back in time one frame, one story at a time.

RELATED



New Book Puts Elijah Parish Lovejoy's Work in Historical Context

Ken Ellingwood's *First to Fall* tells a renewed, vivid account of America's first martyr to freedom of the press



Community Celebrates as Final Beam Placed on Paul J. Schupf Art Center

Construction continues apace at the arts center, which will ensure access to superior arts programming for the entire community



Colby Cares About Kids: Touching Lives for 20 Years

Award-winning mentorship program cultivates transformative bond for mentors and mentees alike

Sign up to read the latest each week.

SUBSCRIBE

Highlights

Fenway Health's Jane Powers '86 to Lead Colby College Board of Trustees

Community Celebrates as Final Beam Placed on Paul J. Schupf Art Center

Colby

