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From the Editor

Gerry Boyle  
Colby College

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Over some 20 years as a reporter, I witnessed many of the landmark
changes that were part of central Maine’s inexorable fall from economic
grace.
Labor strife that portended the end of a New England mill-town’s
economic way of life. The closing of the area’s last textile mill. The
predicted but still unthinkable shutdown of the Kimberly-Clark paper mill in
Winslow. The death throes of Hathaway Shirt Co., which, despite several
jumps starts applied to its ailing heart, expired nonetheless.

Now I think—and hope—I may have witnessed a sign of what’s next
for Waterville.

Recently I strolled through the empty Hathaway mill with Paul
Boghossian ’76, a developer from Rhode Island. Boghossian, motivated in no small part by a desire
to do something for Waterville and Colby, has a tentative plan to convert the riverfront mill into a
complex of studios, galleries, shops and apartments. The plan, which still is in a formative stage,
would be the linchpin in a strategy to bring new life to the city.

Boghossian led the way through the vast factory I’d last seen filled with shirtmakers at sewing
machines. He exuded tempered enthusiasm, raving about the building and its Kennebec view but
still mulling the numbers needed to make real his vision of a new creative community—and
economy—for Waterville.

But Boghossian isn’t alone. A strong team of economic developers and community leaders—
including President Bro Adams, Waterville City Administrator Mike Roy ’74 and other Colbians—is
working to re-vitalize the Waterville area (see “Reinventing Waterville,” Page 10). Spec buildings,
downtown festivals, investment in the Kennebec waterfront: it all points to an economic and creative
renewal. Or so we all hope, up here on Mayflower Hill.

Of course, Colby has a vested interest in the health of its community. A vital community enriches
the experience of Colby students, faculty, staff and alumni. The College is tied to Waterville and
central Maine just as it’s connected to the larger global community to which it contributes hundreds
of alumni every spring. Colby also has what Adams refers to as a moral and historical obligation to
its hometown.

It was in 1930 that Waterville was threatened by another potential economic blow. Colby had
outgrown its downtown campus, and land for a new campus had been offered—in Augusta. Aghast,
local leaders rallied and offered to acquire a site in Waterville. “The citizens of Waterville and friends
of Colby are ready to do their part,” wrote Percy Shepherd Merrill, Class of 1894, in The Colby
Alumnus. Three campus plans were considered and one was selected. The community supplied the
land on Mayflower Hill, Colby stayed in Waterville (earning congratulations from President Herbert
Hoover), and nearly 75 years later the partnership continues. If the latest developments are any
indication, the relationship between Colby and the community could soon benefit everyone involved.

Gerry Boyle ’78, P ’06
Managing Editor

CONTRIBUTORS

Frank Bures
(“Join the Crowd,” P. 18)
is a writer in
Madison, Wis.
His work has appeared in
Salon.com, Wired, Tin House and Mother Jones and was recently selected for The Best American
Travel Writing 2004. This is his third story for Colby.

Mackenzie Dawson Parks ’99
(“Cybernews,”
P. 40) is a
freelance writer and editor for
the New York Post. She also has written for Parenting, Psychology Today, Los Angeles Confidential
and For The Bride magazines. She lives on Manhattan’s Upper West Side.

Douglas Rooks ’76 (“Nothing But the Truth,”
P. 22) is a
journalist and freelance writer. He is
the former editor of Maine Times
and editorial-page editor of the
Kennebec Journal in Augusta. He now works for the
Maine Legislature.

To contact Colby:
Managing Editor, Colby
4181 Mayflower Hill
Waterville, ME 04901-8841
e-mail to: mag@colby.edu
207-872-3226
visit us on the Internet: www.colby.edu/colby.mag
To contact the Alumni Office:
207-872-3190