A company will leave the place where it began.

By MONICA BAYE

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With Loss of Maytag, Town Faces the Loss of Its Identity

L. Maytag, 75, turned to the backyard, where the lawn and garden are shaped by homemade, cobbled designs. He said he and his wife, Violet, 71, who also worked at Maytag, were both hard workers who lived on a modest income.

“My father worked there briefly in the 1940s, and my grandmother worked at Maytag in the ’50s,” said Linda Smith, 75, who grew up in Newton and now lives in Lake Charles, La. “They are part of the story of how my family grew up.”

Since 1963, when L. Maytag founded the company, Newton has been its home. Many Newtonians, including Smith, said the town would be left of its economy, but also what community of about 15,000, was left behind of Maytag.

“Newton was, over the years, the center of the local newspaper, local radio and local television. It was the place to be,” said Smith. “If you worked at Maytag, you were a Met,” she said, referring to the nickname of Newton’s Maytag plant.

That tradition was more of a local phenomenon, said Smith. Newtonians, who worked at the plant, often had friends and family who worked at Maytag in Lake Charles, La., or at the company’s other facilities in Texas, Colorado and Missouri.

But the loss of jobs at Maytag is a blow for Newtonians, who are concerned about the economy of their community.

“The loss of jobs at Maytag is a big deal for Newton,” said Smith. “It’s a big part of our economy. It’s a big part of our identity.”

The number 6 seems to follow them around. Yesterday — 6/6/06 — it was the number of the day. And today is the number of the year. And tomorrow will be the number of the week. And the number 6 is the number of the month, the number of the year, the number of the century, and the number of the millennium.

But the number 6 is not just a number. It is a symbol of something else. Something that is important.

“The goal is to find particular molecular patterns that might be biologically very different,” Dr. Larry Norton, a breast cancer specialist at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, said. “We are interested in the fact that not all breast cancers are the same. Some are more common in black women, and some are more common in white women.”

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