

# THE INNOVATOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHARLES RIVER MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY

Where Innovative Minds Meet

Volume II Number 6

Summer, 1997



## Cronin's Landing - Phoenix Rising from the Ashes

It's been 112 years since Jeremiah Cronin ran a small advertisement in the Watertown *Enterprise* to promote his **Japan Tea Store** by offering "Complete line of elegant lamps will be given away with very small orders." It was to be the first of the many hundreds of ads which Jeremiah and the future Grover Cronin's were to run in national, as well local, publications extolling the company's merchandise.

Jeremiah Cronin, the son of Irish immigrants, established his first business The Japan Tea Store in a small clapboard building in what would now be considered downtown Watertown. An innovative entrepreneur he had a penchant for 'come-

on-in and buy' promotions, offering a variety of gifts with orders of 'by-the-pound' Indian and China tea. It wasn't unusual of him to give a pair of ice skates with an order of 2 lbs. of tea.

In 1893 Jeremiah moved his store to Moody Street in Waltham and renamed it the **Hub Tea Co.** Soon after the move his only son, Grover, joined him in running the day-to-day operations of the store. Grover, with his canny ability to run the tea shop soon expanded the business into a dry goods emporium, where as their ads stated, they sold just about everything.

When Jeremiah Cronin died in 1912 Grover took over the busi-

ness and by 1925 the store was incorporated and dramatically modernized. Grover got rid of all his little specialty shops that occupied the block by tearing down the partitions between the shops thus creating one huge block-length store. With its truly beautiful *art deco* limestone facade the now named **Grover Cronin** was to become for the next sixty years "Cronins in Waltham" to out-of-towners and a more respectful Cronins to the locals.

In 1946 Grover Cronin introduced what was to become synonymous with the store's name, the Easter and Christmas Parades. The Easter Parade came first and attracted

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## Cronin's Landing... continued from page 1

thousands of spectators as did the Christmas Parade. The Easier and Christmas traditions lasted for 25 years. **Karen LeBlanc**, Executive Director of Charles River Museum of Industry, says she remembers only too well the parades. "There was always so much excitement days before the Parades; I couldn't wait for the floats to come by. They were great! Rain, snow or freezing rain didn't deter my determination to stay until the last float had disappeared from eyesight. Maybe Waltham is ready for more such parades."

**Grover Cronin's** was a fine organization to work for - and indeed at its zenith the company had 600+ people on its payroll. Grover established pension and insurance plans for his employees - at company expense. As an extremely considerate employer, interested in the well-being of his staff he encouraged a strong sense of spirituality at all levels of the Cronin family.

**Helen Cronin** took over the family business in 1953 when Grover died. As a very active president for the company she instigated many new ideas: putting an escalator in the store; installing air conditioning; modernizing the building yet again by constructing a two-story addition in the rear of the original building.

And in 1969, when Helen stepped down as president **Paul**, her middle son, took over as president until his death in 1979 at which time his brother, **Robert** guided Cronin's and began yet another modernization program which included new carpeting and a general interior facelift.

In 1988, sadly, due to the multi-super shopping malls the Grand Old Dowager of Waltham closed her doors forever. Four generations of Cronins had given the City of Waltham a splendid shopping experience.

**Roy MacDowell, Jr.**, bought the vacant building in October, 1995. Stripped of everything except her limestone art deco facade Grover Cronin's is about to become like the mythical bird, the Phoenix.\* Spending \$35-million, MacDowell's beautiful riverside development will be one of luxury rental residences, 280+ apartments and retail spaces will be where the once proud Grover Cronin's stood. The complex will include: indoor parking, a fitness center; a riverfront park and walkway and many other state-of-the-art amenities. The first occupants are due in December of 1997. We'll keep you informed.

\*The Phoenix was a mythical bird who lived for five hundred years in the Arabian Desert, after which it burned itself to ashes on a funeral pyre, it then emerged from the ashes with renewed youth to live again for another five hundred years.

# Spotlight on the Super Savadians

## Volunteers at the Charles River Museum of Industry

Albert and Sophie Savadian are truly remarkable volunteers! Their faces are familiar at the Charles River Museum of Industry's many events, whether it's Albert helping set up the Food & Wine Festival tables, or Sophie making sure there are plenty of cookies and sodas for the Teacher's Recognition Day.

"**The man with the golden hands**," someone once said of Albert, and aptly so, for he is one of those individuals who can fix anything, with the most minimal amount of material to work with; a leaky pipe, a squeaky player piano, a broken table and for the editor of the Innovator (and the Museum) a full-size working camera darkroom, are just a few of the projects Albert has completed. A flood in the basement of the Museum after heavy rains usually finds Albert with mop and bucket.

And then there's Sophie...

Truth be known, Sophie, Albert's wife of 42 years, is one of the great Armenian cooks of the world and often surprises the Museum staff with epicurean delights such as stuffed grape leaves or baklava. Knowledgeable in the field of antiques, Sophie, (who was born in Lawrence, MA, lived in New York for many years and then came back to New England in 1978), has been volunteering at the Museum for the past 3 years, and brings to the Museum a sense of history that not only embraces her great knowledge of Flow Blue china but also America's Industrial Revolution. Besides filling in for Museum staff on vacation or when simply shorthanded, Sophie is always around for special events, where her organizational skills are very evident. Maitlings, answering the phone, taking people on tours are just a few of the tasks she handles. For relaxation Sophie enjoys arts and crafts and making jewelry, as well as cooking!

It was in 1954 that she met and married Albert (an Armenian born in Russia), the year he came to America after living in Iran from the age of 3. Albert has had many careers from a master jeweler to a machinist; he is also a skilled toymaker and from scraps (and we mean scraps) of wood, i.e. toys for his 3 grandchildren. Sophie and Albert have 2 children, daughter Alexis and Albert, Jr., both of whom live locally.

"The Charles River Museum of Industry is so very lucky to have volunteers such as Albert and Sophie, I'm not too sure what a museum like ours would do without such people. They define the very meaning of 'generosity of spirit' and I hope they will be a part of our museum family for many years to come," said **Karen LeBlanc**, Executive Director of CRM. "We are very grateful for **all** of our volunteer staff," she added.

The Charles River Museum of Industry thanks Albert and Sophie for their gift of time and innumerable skills to the Museum.

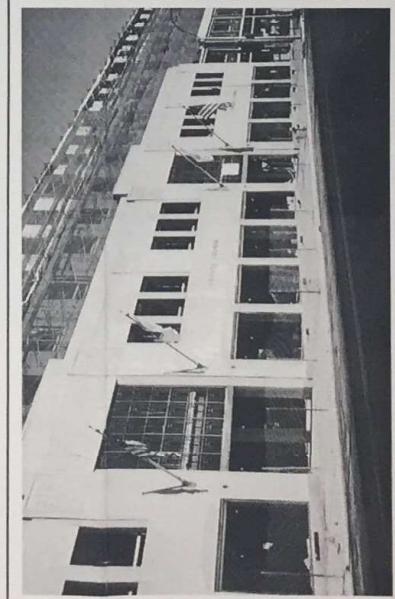
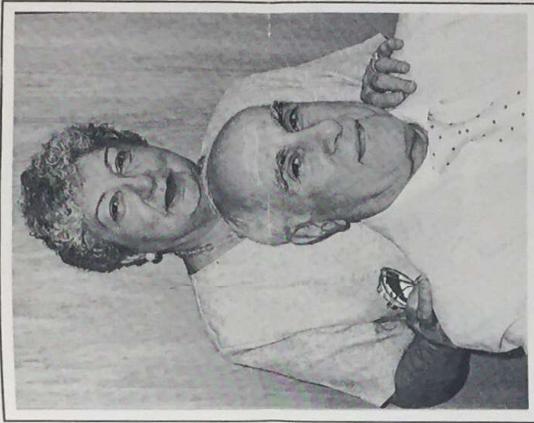
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## THE CHARLES RIVER MUSEUM of INDUSTRY

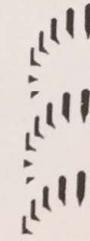
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Construction at Cronin's Landing, July 1997.

A tip of the ol' fedora to Roy MacDowell, the developer of Cronin's Landing, for keeping the Grover Cronin's art deco facade of the nineteen-twenties while constructing state-of-the-art luxury rental residences.



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The INNOVATOR is a publication of the Charles River Museum of Industry. We invite your comments: 154 Moody Street, Waltham, MA 02454, 617-893-5410, Fax: 617-891-4536.

## Letters to the editor

*Homeschool enjoys Museum tour*  
On behalf of my family and our home-school group, thank you for an excellent and enjoyable tour. Most of students and all of the parents expressed their enthusiasm to me. You saw all those "hands-up" (including parents).

Thanks again to both Karen and Pat for a highly enjoyable and informative tour. A special thanks for speaking to my son, Trevor in the gift section and for the information about the N.E.M.E.S. meeting which we hope to attend when time permits.

Sincerely,  
*Donna Sibley*

*Thanks for the great tour*  
Thank you for the great tour. I liked all the hands-on stuff.  
Sincerely,  
*Trevor*  
P.S. Thank you for telling me about the NEMES meeting.

*Editor's Note:*  
N.E.M.E.S., the New England Model Engineering Society meets at CRMI on the first Thursday of the month from 7 to 9:30 p.m. The meetings usually begin with a Show and Tell where members bring in their projects, followed by a short break before the main talk of the evening. Please call 308-473-8621 for more information.

A perfect gift, anytime!  
**MEMBERSHIP IN THE**  
**Charles River Museum**  
**of Industry**

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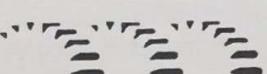
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## We're looking for a few good people - Waltham Watch Company people that is!

The Charles River Museum of Industry is seeking Waltham Watch Co. employees - and those interested in Waltham Watches. We would very much like to have an afternoon get-together at the Museum where the folks who worked at Waltham Watch Company can join us and talk about the ol' days and the importance of the Waltham Watch Company. We haven't set a date yet but are considering mid to late fall. If interested please call 893-5410.

## CRMI WISH LIST

The Charles River Museum of Industry is seeking donations for the refurbishing of a silk weave of the Boston Manufacturing Company. This beautiful and unique silk weave of 1890 needs major cleaning and restoration work. The cost is approximately \$400. Please send contributions to: Charles River Museum of Industry, 154 Moody Street, Waltham, MA 02154. We do thank you for your kind contribution.



**Charles River Museum of Industry**

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