

## Developers Work to Save Mural

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### Future uncertain for painting at the heart of old Nevamar plant

By Ben Weathers, [Maryland Gazette](#) Wednesday, February 29, 2012

Stretching along the circular wall of the rotunda, its vibrant reds, oranges and yellows give life to the cold room that's remained mostly empty since the Nevamar plant shut its doors several years ago.

Back when Jay Winer's father and brothers built and ran the plant back in the 1940s and '50s, the rotunda was one of the main entrances to the building. A receptionist sat near the glass doors under a white staircase that climbed to the executive offices on the upper floor.

The 38-by-6½ foot mural depicts scenes of the Industrial Revolution. It lines the wall just under the ceiling at the heart of what was then Odenton's largest employer. A brawny man swings a hammer amid turning gears as women crank out sheets of fabric through various machines in a collage of images.

The mural was painted in 1948, just after the plant went through a large phase of growth and spurred development in what had long been a little railroad crossroads community.

"It's just a constant connection I have to it," Winer said, looking up toward the mural. "The artist clearly got a sense of what they were doing and the machinery."

When Bethesda-based developer Stonebridge Associates bought the property five years ago and began planning a massive redevelopment that would include tearing down the building, Winer knew he had to do something.

"The one thing I wanted to do is save it," he said.

Stonebridge is now in talks with a Virginia-based conservationist to do just that.

Work to take down the mural before the building is demolished will likely begin in late March, said Ellen Miller, one of the owners of Stonebridge. The removal will likely up to three weeks. No decisions have been made on what will happen to the mural after it is saved.

"It can be a fairly complex process — you've got a delicate canvass," said David Olin, whose Olin Conservation Inc. is in talks with Stonebridge to remove the mural.

Olin has completed nearly 55 mural removal projects across the region, including the famous Cyclorama of the Battle of Gettysburg.

"We need to consolidate and stabilize the paint using various materials we use in the field and then apply a protective facing to the front of the mural," Olin said. "If we didn't do that in the beginning, we would lose a large amount of paint."

After the mural is taken down, the building will be leveled to make space for a project called Academy Yards, Miller said. Demolition workers have been on 55-acre site for the past several months, clearing space for a 369-unit apartment complex. The complex will be the first phase of three phases, tentatively set to be completed in 2014.

Details of the later phases have yet to be set. But it likely will take several years and invest tens of millions of dollars in Odenton, Miller said. It is one of more than a half dozen projects currently under way in Odenton, including the long-anticipated Odenton Town Center.

The mural was painted in 1948 by French painter and sculptor Nathan Imenitoff. He stayed with a local family on Pauptent Road during the painting, according to information from the Odenton Heritage Society. Imenitoff died in 1965 at age 80.

The value of the mural is unknown.

"It's value is obvious in its history," Miller said.

Stonebridge has been in talks with the Odenton Heritage Society to find a local home for the mural, Miller said.

"We hope it ends up here (in Odenton)," Miller said.

Nevamar was a laminated plastic made by The National Plastics Products Co. Winer's family moved the company to Odenton from Baltimore in 1943, but the site has changed hands many times over the years. Winer's family sold the company in the early 1960s.

In 1990, the plant was bought by International Paper and then sold again in 2002 to Kohlberg & Co., a merchant bank with offices in New York and California. In 2008, Stonebridge purchased the facility.



*French artist Nathan Imenitoff signed his name to a book with the year it was painted.*

For Winer the demolition of the building is bittersweet. Born in 1947, Winer spent a large part of his childhood at the plant, watching employees work the company's phone boards and having lunch with some 1,000 employees in the cafeteria.

"On the other hand, it's neat to see it positioned to be important again (to Odenton)," he said.