



INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Eatery & Grille

SALUTING AMERICA'S GREATNESS



Media Package

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

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Industrial Revolution Salutes America's Greatness

The theme carries over to the eatery's menu, utensils and interior decor

BY MARK TAYLOR, POST-TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT,

Valparaiso was a Potawatomi Indian village when the first industrial revolution occurred and was hosting a small Methodist college when the second one happened. But now a new restaurant by that name is trying to make up for lost time.

If you go

WHAT: Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

WHERE: 1084 Linwood Ave., in Valparaiso just off U.S. 30.

HOURS: Open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, from 11 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday, and from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday.

PRICE RANGE: \$-\$\$\$

TELEPHONE: 465-1801

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille is an impressive-looking brick facility featuring metal sculpture, I-beams and steel girders. It is a theme-based restaurant that its Schererville owner, Mike Leeson, hopes will become an upscale franchise.

Its theme is "Saluting America's Greatness," and that conceit pervades its menu, utensils and interior décor. Locating it in the heart of the nation's industrial corridor is inspired thinking. Its menu opens with the legend, "Nothing beats a great meal after a long day's work."

The entrance is worth a pause to admire the Sergio Furnari sculpture inspired by the iconic 1932 photograph of 11 ironworkers taking a lunch break on an I-beam high above New York City's Rockefeller Center. Inside, framed wall photos of welders and shipbuilders show Americans at work.

We appreciated the little touches, like one television running Charlie Chaplin's "Modern Times" while another played documentaries about the relentless optimism and boundless ingenuity and determination of American inventors and entrepreneurs, highlighting three-wheeled and amphibious cars and "Jetsons"-style jet packs from an era when it seemed anything was possible.

My wife appreciated the "I Love Lucy" episodes running in the ladies' room, while I enjoyed highlights of "The Three Stooges" looping in the men's room, demonstrating that men are from Mars and women from Venus.

A model train runs constantly overhead, above the bar and restaurant. Even the salt and pepper shakers are appealing. They resemble small, geometrically shaped stainless steel sculptures. But I can vouch that they do work. There is great attention to detail here, from the burnt sienna napkins, hammered silverware and earthen-colored plates.

And the food's pretty good, too.

From an appetizers menu that included onion widgeons, brickoven wings and iron tenders, we chose the stuffed portabella and Orville's crusted tuna, an inspired choice given that we ate there on the day of Valparaiso's Popcorn Festival,

an homage to popcorn king Orville Redenbacher. The ahi tuna crusted with barbecue popcorn spices and served medium rare with a green citrus sauce was a very tasty opener.

When our server brought the stuffed portabella, I thought someone had made a mistake. It looked like a small ice cream sundae -- a thing of beauty, but a dessert. We soon realized what we took for ice cream was a creamy herb borsini cheese and the syrup topping a balsamic reduction. It was a beautiful presentation and another fine appetizer.

For her entrée my wife ordered the shrimp diablo, which included a generous serving of pan-seared shrimp served in a citrus-infused tomato sauce. While the sauce was flavorful, it was not as piquant as my wife would have liked. But the shrimp tasted fresh and were perfectly cooked, not rubbery or mushy. The shrimp were accompanied by rice, spicy garlic and roasted red peppers in an adobo sauce.

I chose one of my favorite dishes from my youth. Mom's double-shift pot roast was reminiscent of something my own mother used to make. This humble cut of beef was slow-cooked for hours and so tender I could have traded my knife for an extra napkin. It was served with mashed potatoes but had been cooked with roasted root vegetables, including potatoes, carrots, celery and onions. I'm pretty tough on restaurants claiming their dishes are "just like Mom's."

They seldom are. But Industrial Revolution's pot roast came pretty close to replicating the one my mom prepared. The only difference is I didn't have

to dodge my four brothers' fast forks when I dug in for seconds. This was a really satisfying dish that took me back to enjoy nostalgia I could put in my belly.

For dessert we tried both the red, white and blue cheesecake and the oatmeal cake. While the cheesecake was appropriately velvety and pretty to look at, the raspberry and blueberry fillings comprising the red and blue were blandly indistinguishable. The oatmeal cake offered interesting texture and flavor, a cream-cheese frosting and filling that was tasty but not spectacular.

Though Industrial Revolution does not offer full bar service, it does feature a wide selection of domestic, micro brewed and international beers on tap or by the bottle in regular and tall sizes from \$2.50 to \$9. The wine list is respectable and reasonably priced, offering mostly American vintages and some good values. By-the-glass selections range from \$5 to \$8, and by-the-bottle choices cost between \$20 and \$53.

Prices at Industrial Revolution, which seats 180, are slightly lower than area fine-dining restaurants, with appetizers ranging from \$5 for the molten cheese dip to \$10 for our Orville's crusted tuna or calamari. Soups include the liberty chili for \$6, salads from \$5 to \$9 and sandwiches and burgers from \$5 to \$10. IR originals include Baja perch tacos at \$12, Mom's double-shift pot roast at \$14 and the steelworker rib eye for \$26. My wife's shrimp diablo or the grilled salmon are \$16 each.

Brick-oven pizza and pasta dishes range from \$8 to \$16, while desserts are \$6.

RESTAURANT SCENE: Valpo Eatery Celebrates Food, Industry

BY ELOISE MARIE VALADEZ

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille in Valparaiso combines interesting decor and flavorful recipes all in one location. The restaurant opened its doors in May 2010.

"Our slogan is saluting American greatness," said owner Mike Leeson, adding that creativity and innovation are celebrated at the restaurant.

Whether it's through videos and clips shown on the multitude of screens; photographs and art work displayed on the walls or through menu items, creativity is in the forefront.

"We also try to give people an educational experience as well as being in a unique environment," Leeson said.

Every week Leeson also features a special item on the menu called their "weekly salute," which honors a historic person.

He said the entire concept behind his eatery is to pay tribute to American ingenuity, heroes, and other people from the past and present.

During a recent Saturday afternoon visit to Industrial Revolution, we were immediately captured by all there was to see. We were seated in a spacious booth in front of a photograph depicting the restaurant's theme.

The photograph titled "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" features 11 ironworkers eating lunch on a beam during the construction of Rockefeller Center in New York. It was taken in 1932 and is quite dramatic as the men have no safety cables.

Leeson, who has worked in the steel industry since high school, also owns Synergy Steel Structures in Lansing. He said he was taken by the photograph as well as a sculpture of the men created by Sergio Furnari.

Furnari was also fascinated by the photo and set out to sculpt the 11 ironworkers in 1999. He was almost finished in 2001 when 9/11 happened.

So when he completed the sculpture he brought it to the Twin Towers site for display during the cleanup after the tragedy.

"He wanted to give the workers something to smile about," Leeson said.

The sculpture then went on tour around the country. Leeson said he sought out Furnari to talk with him about buying the piece. And the rest is history -- The original work now sits on top of Industrial Revolution.

Leeson, who designed and decorated the restaurant, calls his food "vintage comfort food."

There's nothing frozen, he said, adding "everything is custom-made and handcrafted."

Our lunch choices while there were the Reuben sandwich, which was the weekly special. Titled the John Hancock, the sandwich was flavorful and packed with corned beef. We also tried the Crooked Chicken Mac and Cheese.

The mac and cheese got a thumbs up for its thick slices of chicken and a flavorful mix of Parmesan and Swiss cheese as well as its blend of peas, bacon and white wine.

Among other selections on the menu are various brick-oven pizzas including The Revolution, with pepperoni, sausage, bacon, tomato sauce and cheese (\$8.50) and the Chicago meatball (\$9). Also starring are Baja Perch Tacos (\$16); Steelworker Ribeye (\$25); Mom's Double Shift Pot Roast (\$14) and Legendary Meatloaf (\$12), among many other items.

If you go

WHAT: Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

WHERE: 1084 Linwood Ave., Valparaiso

(actually right along U.S. 30)

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sun. through Thurs.

11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fri. and Sat.

FYI: (219) 465-1801



The photograph "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" hangs in Valparaiso's Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille.



The sculpture "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" sits atop Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille in Valparaiso.

NWI DINING @ DUSK INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

By: Mona Dickinson

Step into the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille and you'll feel like you've stepped into a moment frozen in time. Valparaiso's newest restaurant and pub opened just two months ago, saluting America's greatness.

Owner Mike Leeson, of Schererville, says he always wanted to open a restaurant. A self-proclaimed risk-taker who owns a steel fabrication business, in Lansing, IL, said he wanted to pay tribute to what made America great.

"I've always had it in the back of my mind that it would be really cool to have a restaurant themed on industry," said Leeson, and no detail was spared in transforming the former Brewski's on U.S. 30 into the new restaurant.

"We gutted everything down to the studs and started from square one," Leeson said. "I wanted it to look like the building was frozen in time, in 1932. Not focusing on the Depression, but instead focusing on bringing back the good times and saluting America's greatness."

The restaurant features laminated steel beams rusted through a chemical process and sealed with a clear coat, distressed woodwork, copper tin ceiling plates, 100 year-old cobble bricks (inside and outside), a G-scale model train on a track suspended above diners, and an outdoor dining area with granite cobblestones.

"It's all dedicated to the people who protect and build this country," Leeson said. "It's a place where we celebrate freedom, progress, innovation, invention, hard work, and the progress of the industrial revolution."

Leeson explained that the clinker bricks used inside and outside the building were actually rejects that were tossed out because they were over-fired. The cobble on the outdoor patio is about 200 years old.

The train makes it way around the restaurant every 15 minutes, complete with smoke, lights and sounds. Photographs throughout depict working class America.

Atop the building's west side, just above the entrance, 11 life-size ironworkers sit along the roof eating their lunch. If the scene looks familiar, the sculptures were created based on the famed 1932 photograph of ironworkers perched on a beam almost 800 feet up during the construction of the Rockefeller Center in New York City called "Lunch Atop a Skyscraper."

The photograph caught the imagination of Italian-born artist Sergio Furnari, who immigrated to the U.S. He was recreating the ironworkers as life-size sculptures at the time of the 911 attacks on the World Trade Center.

As Leeson explained, Furnari quickly completed the sculptures and brought them to Ground Zero, where they were displayed for six months as a tribute to those who built the Twin Towers and those who cleaned up the damage.

The artwork was then taken on a national tour by the sculptor, who then tried to find a good home for them. Leeson not only found the home the artist wanted, he commissioned additional sculptures for his restaurant, including a gentleman saluting guests as they enter; a carpenter working at one end of the bar; and another finishing the concrete on the walk near the entrance.

"The sculptures fit the concept perfectly," said Leeson, noting that the artist himself installed the ironworkers atop the restaurant prior to opening.

The location in Valparaiso worked for its size and because of the region's industrial base, Leeson said. He hopes to open additional Industrial Revolution themed restaurants in other cities built on industry, such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

"I think this kind of concept is more fitting in an industrial area," he said. "The whole concept is very special, and it is something a lot of people will have a good feeling about. Hopefully, it will be inspiring to those who dine here."



Guests will also be inspired by words of wisdom – motivational and inspirational quotes that are etched on the brickwork inside the building in an Old Railcar font. Among those quoted are Vince Lombardi, George W. Bush, Albert Einstein, Michael Jordan, Hubert Humphrey and many others.

"The quotes seemed to fit the vision of the place," Leeson said. "We searched and searched for the right quotes, then selected a spot for each one that seemed appropriate."

Most fitting are words from the Lee Greenwood song, "Proud to Be An American," which adorn the outside brickwork near the entrance. Just inside the door, the saluting sculpture sits beneath a wall with the insignias of the Armed Forces, the police and fire departments.

The menu, created by Head Chef Javier Fuentes, features American fare and traditional favorites like hamburgers and pizza, all with a gourmet twist. From its starters to its All-American red, white and blue cheesecake, there is something for everyone.

Mom's Doubleshift Pot Roast has been pretty popular so far, along with the Baja perch tacos, Leeson said. Specialty pizzas are cooked in a brick oven and the kitchen features an open concept design, where guests view the cooks at work.

A variety of appetizers include Molten Cheese Dip, Welded Nachos, Iron Tenders and Brick Oven Wings. House specialty soups include Liberty Chili, Loaded Baked Potato Soup and Vintage Onion Soup. Salad selections can be topped with your choice of chicken, steak or shrimp.

Sandwiches and burgers are served with garlic herbed potato wedges. Of note, on the sandwich menu are the Cajun-blackened Industrial Burger, topped with bleu cheese, red pepper, onion and pepper jack cheese, and the signature Smoked Bacon Burger – a bacon-stuffed burger basted in BBQ sauce, topped with white cheddar on a pretzel roll bun.

Seafood selections include Garlic Shrimp, Grilled Salmon, and the Chef's Creation. Fettucini, mostaccioli and stroganoff are the featured pastas.

Under "Sweet Endings" you'll find the Red, White and Blue cheesecake, home-style bread pudding, Oatmeal Cake, a chocolate crème brulee and All-American apple pie.

In addition, hand-mixed fruit flavored teas are a popular item, Leeson said. The eatery offers weekly specials.

A full service bar is available, complete with 16 beers on tap – most of which are craft beers from local breweries. Camp 4 Nut Brown Ale from the new Figure 8 Brewery in Valparaiso is one of the featured beers (The craft beer is also used in a signature steak sauce on the Valpo Strip Steak). Drafts are served in a "muscle mug."

Adding to the ambiance, TV's throughout the restaurant run loops of "Modern Marvels" and other historical shows related to the restaurant's theme. As an added twist, the men's room has episodes of "The Three Stooges", while the ladies' room offers "I Love Lucy."

Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays, and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekends.

BUILDING INDIANA NEWS
SWANKY OFFICE
2010
BEST EXTERIOR
Industrial Revolution
Eatery & Grille



BEST EXTERIOR

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

The design of the Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille in Valparaiso was so unique that owner Mike Leeson had to sooth the concerns of city planning officials about what might be done if the restaurant ever closed. Celebrating the industrial heritage of both Northwest Indiana and the nation overall, the restaurant's exterior features 100-year-old clinker brick and steel girders that have been given a rusted appearance through a process Leeson developed at his other company, Synergy Steel Structures. The outdoor patio is floored with 200-year-old reclaimed granite cobblestone and surrounded by a cast-iron railing. But the most striking features are the steel sculptures based on Charles Ebbets' iconic 1932 photo, "Lunch Atop a Skyscraper." The men in that shot were replicated in steel by sculptor Sergio Furnari, and the group of statues spent six months at Ground Zero in New York as a tribute to those who built the Twin Towers and cleaned up the damage. Those sculptures are now perched atop the restaurant and Leeson commissioned others for use both inside and outside the building.



THE INDUSTRIALIST

One Indiana eatery offers a new way to experience an old revolution.



Leave it to a modern-day steel magnate to take us back down memory lane, to a time when metallurgy, textiles and steam power forever changed the way we work, live and share ideas.

Entrepreneur Mike Leeson has a day job as the owner of Synergy Steel Structures. But when steel prices soared and construction slowed because of a stalled economy, he took on a new venture. Leeson opened a restaurant dedicated to honoring American ingenuity and spirit. Located in Valparaiso, Ind., the Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille memorializes a great period of America in design, theme, and hearty helpings of mouth-watering food.

Leeson opened the restaurant in 2010 with one goal in mind. "I wanted to create a patriotic restaurant that would touch people's hearts visually, giving them an experience they don't typically get. We serve hand-crafted foods, not like the chains," Leeson

says. "We've brought back a lot of vintage dishes with a twist and added some brand new things, too."

The portion sizes aren't for the faint of heart, but perhaps an industrious steel worker would've easily polished off a plate-sized bacon cheeseburger or a generous helping of Mom's Double Shift Pot Roast, which according to Leeson is one of their most famous dishes. "It's based on a recipe borrowed from my mother. It's amazing! There's really nothing like it. We ended up creating a bunch of dishes around that pot roast. We put it on pizza and in pasta; it's one of our signature dishes." For a true slice of Americana, he suggests finishing with some Red, White and Blue Cheesecake.

Leeson says the Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille was well-received from the start and has built a steady clientele. "We've only been open a year, and it has been challenging trying to work out the kinks, especial-

ly as an independent business," Leeson says, adding that they are ready to launch a new menu and are currently looking into opening a second location. Ideally, he says, the establishment will expand nationally.

"The goal was to build the most bold and exciting casual-theme restaurant ever," Leeson says. "I believe that has been accomplished. It has the characteristics to motivate and inspire people, through an emotional connection as well as the education they receive with each visit."

Reflecting Synergy Steel Structures goal of establishing a new architectural trend—emphasizing steel as part of a structure, rather than hiding it—Leeson created a quite a vision with the construction of his eatery. It is essentially a building frozen in the booming era of 19th-century steelwork, with a row of working men immortalized in sculpture along the roof, frozen in conversation with lunchboxes in hand and legs dangling over the edifice. The entire establishment is a tribute to these men from our past, reminding patrons of their hard-work, dedication and contribution to developing our great nation.

Leeson himself is a true representation of modern-day American ingenuity. Since starting his career with only a high school diploma, he says he's always been an entrepreneur. "My dad gave me the initial opportunity to get into the steel business. I took the opportunity and just ran with it." Before the age of 40, Leeson has created not one but several visionary business enterprises. ■

1084 Linwood Ave.
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Creating A NEW REVOLUTION

By Tamara Scully

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION WAS A PIVOTAL PERIOD IN UNITED STATES HISTORY,

as it was around most of the world, shaping the face of our country today. Cities boomed and factories produced massive amounts of goods, facilitated by the use of new machinery and made in the USA. Today the spirit of the era – one during which the average working man played a vital role – is celebrated at Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille, a new concept eatery that recently opened in Valparaiso, Ind.

When talking about the restaurant, it is difficult not to focus first on its bold architecture, mainly the eleven statues of individual construction workers perched upon a steel beam eating their lunches.

These guys compose a “key element” of the restaurant, according to general manager Matthew Westergren. They anchor the eatery, whose decor, both inside and out, is reminiscent of different Industrial Era factories and supports its overarching theme of honoring the working man for his role in



“Really, there isn’t anybody in America who doesn’t have an individual tie to the industrial base. We want to celebrate that.”

increasing the economic and cultural vitality of America.

Part of that long-ago era included the daily use of fresh food, grown in gardens and prepared from scratch, “put up” for the winter and lovingly packed into lunch pails, providing an eagerly anticipated break in an otherwise long day of labor.

It follows that from-scratch food, made fresh and on-site, anchors Industrial Revolution’s food preparation philosophy and contributes greatly to the restaurant’s own economic vitality.

ents and is prepared from scratch and on-site by a chef should not be obtainable solely in the realm of white tablecloth dining, which typically eliminates a large demographic – that of the average Joe – by being pricey and intimidating and by requiring a fancy dress code.

To this end, Westergren explains that the restaurant’s mission is “to take upscale food to the casual diner.” This goal is accomplished not only via homemade food with gourmet touches, but by providing person-

Disneyland for Diners

Industrial Revolution’s owner, Mike Leeson, asserts that the average working person built this nation and therefore deserves a casual, comfortable eatery with excellent service and food – and no snobbery. Everyman is a part of the Industrial Era’s legacy, and of this establishment as well.

He believes well-prepared food that uses the freshest available ingredi-

alized service in a casual atmosphere.

Westergren talks about bringing the "Disney philosophy" to food service. The restaurant is focused on having mass appeal, great value, home goodness, a welcoming atmosphere and exceptional service – similar to Walt Disney's vision for an Everyman's retreat.

Comfort with a Twist

The menu at Industrial Revolution presents common food with pronounceable names and down-home roots, or, as they say at I.R., "traditional American meals with a gourmet twist." One such dish is the pot roast, braised in root vegetables – once the mainstay of the working man's diet, but which now give the meal a fine dining feel. Similarly, the meatloaf includes such old-fashioned touches as bell peppers and tomatoes, but with the contemporary kick of Dijon mustard.

Westergren explains that the menu aims "to put a unique spin on things that are certainly out there," rather than re-invent the culinary wheel. The importance here is traditional foods created with an added flair that classifies them simultaneously as comfort foods and gourmet-quality dishes.

With a diversified menu of pizza, pasta, salads, sandwiches, burgers, fish, steak and more, along with a full bar, Industrial Revolution is ready to satisfy any sized appetite

or craving. From finger foods to freshly baked desserts, the menu was designed to deliver everything from scratch, just as they did in the pre-industrial food system era.

Flagship Sets Sail

The Valparaiso restaurant is not close to a year old, but it is called a flagship store because of hopes for several sites to follow. But Industrial Revolution is not and will not be a "chain" restaurant, says Westergren. Each location will be built in its "own unique footprint" with respect paid to the unique qualities of each home city.

More than the architecture will anchor these eateries. Much like the statues, which will be a signature item in every location, the building blocks of the Industrial Revolution menu will remain in place. What the menu won't be is cookie cutter: It will change quarterly and take full advantage of the seasonal harvest, which may vary across locations at different times of the year. There will never be prepared, processed or frozen foods used, says Westergren, who also emphasizes that a culinary professional will be involved in every restaurant.

That professional will make the dishes from scratch and to order. So while a diner can go into any Industrial Revolution and recognize the key architectural elements and the menu items, each

location will have its own spin, within the established, consistent parameters of the brand. It won't be an identical experience, but it will be one that can be labeled "the Industrial Revolution experience."

Using a trusted food distributor, who can provide the best ingredients no matter where the location, will be an important factor in making this business plan work. Stanz Food Service ably provides this necessary ingredient for the flagship restaurant and is capable of providing local service and dedication to any Industrial Revolution location through Tailor Made Distribution, a partnership of independent distributors.

All in all, it seems Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille is poised to start a new revolution in food service.

Tamara Scully is a northwestern New Jersey-based freelance writer, specializing in agriculture, sustainable farming and the food industry. Visit Ms. Scully at www.tamara-jeanscully.com.

Find it...

Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille

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Valparaiso, IN 46756

(219) 465-1801

www.industrialrevolutioneatery.com

Valparaiso Magazine Summer 2010



Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

1084 Linwood Avenue

Designer: Mike Leeson

Contractor: Bryan Sewin

The Valpo Chamber and City of Valparaiso recognized 10 local businesses for their commitment and investment in Valparaiso by awarding them with a 43rd Annual Community Improvement Award. A luncheon sponsored by Porter Health System was held July 7 to honor the recipients and their projects which improve our city.

These projects join the more than 200 properties that have been recognized since the awards program began. Community Improvement Awards are based on the visual impact of exterior appearance and are judged on the following criteria:

- Enhances the attractiveness of Valparaiso
- Compatible with the area and environment
- Shows creativity/innovation in both design and use of materials
- Enhances the quality of life and promotes pride in Valparaiso
- Makes a commitment to Valparaiso's future



SALUTING AMERICA'S WORKERS



Every time Mike Leeson visited a theme restaurant, he felt there was something missing. Then it hit him: No restaurant anywhere paid homage to working men and women.

Thus was born Industrial Revolution in Valparaiso, a prototype of what Leeson hopes will become a national chain of similar restaurants. The restaurant, which opened last May, seats 180 and has 55 employees.

"I've been in the steel business, and I've always had this nutty idea that I ought to go into the restaurant business," says Leeson. "I've been a kind of restaurant critic. There are a lot of themes out there, but nothing to celebrate industry. I think that's the backbone of our country."

Founder and sole-owner of the restaurant, Leeson has created a classic design that takes customers back to the 1930s. The goal is not to focus on the Great Depression, but instead to look at innovation and salute the country's industrial greatness.

The focal point of the restaurant's exterior is a steel sculpture of several ironworkers sitting on an I-beam. The sculpture, says Leeson, was on display for six months at Ground Zero in New York, but when it left there, he acquired it and made it part of his restaurant.

"I want to salute the people who've sacrificed to make this country great," says Leeson. Each week, the restaurant features someone from America's past who has made a major contribu-

tion to innovation or greatness. The honorees have ranged from inventor Thomas Edison to Todd Beamer, one of the heroes of Flight 93 that was hijacked on Sept. 11, 2001.

Also inside, there are 28 flat-screen televisions, but instead of sports, Leeson says each shows different versions of popular cable television shows "Modern Marvels" and "Biography." The background music, says Leeson, is from the Big Band era.

"There is a lot going on in the restaurant," says Leeson. "We have a fantastic chef who specializes in handcrafted food and drinks. I think people are surprised by the level of detail there is in his creations. The restaurant is designed to fill the void between casual and upscale dining."

Among the most popular items on the menu, says Leeson, is the Awesome Burger, Double Shift Pot Roast, and Baja Perch Tacos. The restaurant doesn't yet have a full liquor menu, but does serve beer and wine.

"The whole idea for this was to create a new theme restaurant. If it works in Valparaiso, I think it will work anywhere," says Leeson. ■

Industrial Revolution is at 1804 Linwood Ave., Valparaiso, just off U.S. 30 near Valparaiso University. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday to Thursday and from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. For more information, call (219) 465-1801 or visit the Web site www.industrialrevolutioneatery.com.

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille salutes the hard work that made this nation great

From the life-size statues of ironworkers adorning the roof to the model train circling the dining area, Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grill in Valparaiso has spared no expense to give diners an amazing and inspiring experience.

Industrial Revolution, which salutes the freedom, progress, innovation and hard work that made this nation great, has been a popular gathering place ever since opening on U.S. 30 in 2010.

The restaurant is designed to look like a building under construction in the early 1900s -- when industry was booming and innovations were providing Americans a better life.

Owner Mike Leeson said the idea for the restaurant came from his love of industry and this country.

"I always wanted to create a restaurant that paid tribute to those things," Leeson said.

The Industrial Revolution experience begins before one steps inside the restaurant. Perched atop the restaurant's roof are statues -- inspired by the famous 1932 photo "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" -- depicting ironworkers taking a lunch break while seated on a beam during construction of the Rockefeller Center in New York City.

The statues, created by artist Sergio Furnari, were displayed at the site of the former World Trade Center as a tribute to the workers involved in recovery efforts following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Inside the restaurant's doors, the dining area gets an authentic industrial-age look from 100-year-old brick, cast iron railing and flooring made from reclaimed wood. A model train travels along a track mounted near the ceiling.

Black and white photographs decorate the walls and the restaurant's televisions play biographies of famous leaders and stories of how America was built.

"The minute you walk in, it's like nothing else in this area," said restaurant General Manager Jennifer Brooks, adding they have drawn visitors from Boston to California.

Each week they salute one great American -- whether it be someone of national prominence like Henry Ford or Thomas Edison, or someone local like war hero Jim Butz or fire-fighting nozzle pioneer Clyde McMillan.

Leeson, who has been in the steel fabrication and distribution business for years, said his restaurant salutes the people who work hard each day -- many in difficult or dangerous occupations -- to create better lives for their families.

The food's even got a traditional American theme. They offer plenty of traditional American meals that you've grown up on, but with a gourmet twist -- like their Mom's Double Shift Pot Roast (made the way Leeson's mother made it every Sunday when Leeson was a kid), their popular perch tacos, their legendary meatloaf and their mac & cheese.

They're also known for their brick oven pizzas and



The Risktaker Burger, only at Industrial Revolution Eatery.

their burgers -- including the Risk-Taker Burger (which has four patties totaling two pounds, layered with American, pepper jack, cheddar and provolone cheese, as well as lettuce, onion strings, special sauce and a miniature American flag). And be sure to save room for their Red, White and Blue Cheesecake.

"Everything is homemade," Brooks said.

Leeson said Industrial Revolution expects the restaurant's casual new menu and the addition of a license to sell hard liquor to make the restaurant even more popular.

They offer discounts daily to police officers, firefighters, medics and military members. And they offer discounts to tradesmen who show their union card on Tuesdays.

The folks at Industrial Revolution hope their customers leave full -- and full of inspiration about this country's industrial roots.

"It's nice to have someone come in for the first time or 20th time and be blown away by the experience," Brooks said.

She said there's always an interesting decoration or inspiring quote to discover on the restaurant's walls, or another great American to learn about.

Leeson's goal is to take Industrial Revolution nationwide, with each location tailored to reflect the industry in that community.

Industrial Revolution is located at 1084 Linwood (at Linwood and U.S. 30) in Valparaiso. Call 219-465-1801 or visit www.industrialrevolutioneatery.com for more information.

Valparaiso's Industrial Revolution Eatery marks first birthday

Dining: An aura of greatness

by Larry A. Bretts

One man's palette-pleasing testimonial to America's Industrial greatness marks its first birthday with renewed vigor and a fresh, new menu.

The aesthetically and taste-satisfying emporium is the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grill on U.S. 30 at Linwood Avenue in Valparaiso, which has a theme of America's industrial greatness as its overlying genre. That concept of Made In ... (America) is carried forward to the food, where copious, tasty portions are hand-fashioned, Made in ... Valparaiso. "There is nothing prepared; everything is hand-crafted here," says Michael S. Leeson, proprietor.

Leeson is founding genius and sole-owner. No ownership groups, no partners.

The business's Web site notes:

"Imagine our building is frozen in time since construction in the early 1900's. The men at work are captured in freeze-frame, forever memorialized as monuments to the people who risk their lives to build and protect this great nation that we call America.

"At Industrial Revolution, we celebrate freedom, progress, innovation, hard work, and greatness. Enjoy dining in an environment built by American craftsman using only authentic building materials, many of which were reclaimed. The elements of design fuse together to create an ambiance we call Upscale Industrial.

"Step back to a time when food was made and hand-crafted with the finest of ingredients from our gardens of old. Here we revolutionized the corner stone of every kitchen across our nation to bring you a

of Valparaiso, who worked on the menu for almost past year. "We have a lot of good burgers, salads and seafood," Leeson said. "We wanted to get it right. The reception has been fantastic. Focus

groups helped us dial it all in."

The family oriented restaurant is about 5,000 square-feet in area and is located in a building that has housed a number of restaurants located off the Valparaiso University campus since the 1970s.

Leeson is also president of Synergy Steel Structures, of Lansing, Ill., an aspect that was utilized for the heavy utilization of structural steel inside and outside the building. He opines that it took 2,000 man-hours to fabricate the structural steel, "made the way it used to be made. And it fit like a glove when it was brought on-site."

Leeson suggests he is a businessman, a businessman faced with some challenges.

One is to stand up for America. "We want to motivate people. I don't know why we're not fighting to keep industry here. We're just giving things to

China (and India) on a silver plate."

Patriotism enters into this, too. "We got to stand up for our industries and our jobs. We became the world's super power because we have been able to produce almost everything domestically in the past. That's what makes us a super power."

Another challenge was that of revitalizing the long-vacant building.

"I saw the site and I was challenged. I like taking something that was an eyesore and making it beautiful."

The interior, the exterior, could be



The front entrance of the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grill features an intricate display of structural steel.

piece of America's finest culinary cuisine at work. We hope you enjoy your dining experience in our pursuit to preserve our heritage, learn about our industrial roots and ultimately leave inspired."

Coinciding with the one-year anniversary is the unveiling of a new menu. "The people wanted more variety. It has been in the works, actually, since we opened," according to Leeson. "We have added some great new stuffed burgers, sandwiches, salads, seafood, pizza and pastas."

He credits much to Chef Javier Fuentes,



A life-size sculpture based on the 1932 photograph, "Lunchtime on a Skyscraper," of ironworkers on a break during construction of Rockefeller Center in New York, graces the west side of Industrial Revolution's roof.

Dining: An aura

described as upscale industrial. "The entire build-out is steel, wood, brick. We have no drywall anywhere."

There is steel and brick. So much hand-crafted steel that it almost seems like an oversize Erector set, one that adults can walk through and under with ease.

There are also approximately 50 large black and white photos around the interior, all prepositioned by Leeson; all showing America's past industrial splendor and might – of ironworkers, steelworkers, boilermakers and shipbuilders.

And running on more than 150 feet of miniature track, a large-gauge electric train winds overhead around the dining area and through the brick walls into the kitchen.

Why the train? It is a symbol of power of industry. And it operates over diminutive bridges also hand-crafted and fabricated by Synergy.

The feedback has been very positive, Leeson says. "We're getting a lot of attention locally and out of state. People have wrote or e-mailed me stating it's the greatest place they have seen and happy that it's not in downtown Chicago, but right here in Valparaiso."

Also in Valparaiso is a life-size sculpture by Sergio Furnari, modeled after the iconic 1930s photograph, "Lunchtime on a Skyscraper," showing 11 ironworkers sitting on a beam 800 feet in the air during construction of Rockefeller Center in New York City.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Furnari brought the sculpture to Ground Zero as a tribute to the men who built the twin towers. When it left Ground Zero, Furnari then took it on a cross-country tour, seeking a permanent home.

And Leeson entered the picture. He had come across the sculptor in New York and began

discussions about purchasing the statue set. "After a while, he was comfortable enough to sell it to me."

"I picked the set up in New York and drove them back and he helped us install them."

That home is now 20 feet up, on the top of the Industrial Revolution, looking west over its parking lot.

One aspect of the weekly approach to business is the highlighting of an American hero, major or minor. Last month, it was pioneering cartoon genius Walt Disney. Then it was Marine Lance Cpl. Josh Birchfield, of Westfield, who was killed in Afghanistan on Feb. 19, 2010.

As with all the weekly heroes featured, some special dishes will be created by Fuentes. Some will be to honor the person, some will be favorites of the person, said Jennifer Cowsert, manager.

Cowsert came on board to help iron out the organizational structure.

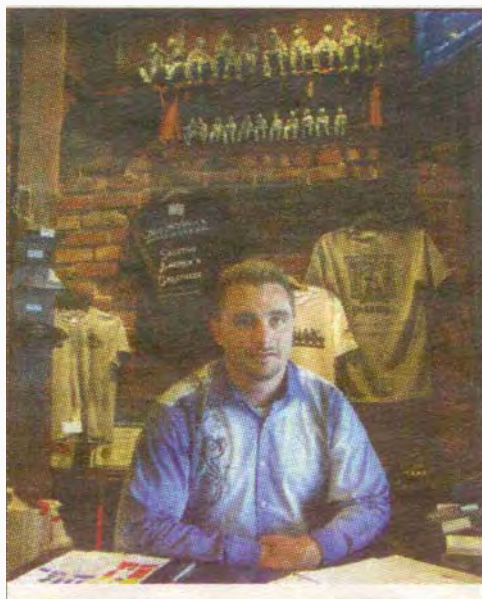
She brings 15 years of experience in food service. She was also in contact with Birchfield's relatives to determine some of the Marine's favorite dishes.

What's the future hold?

Leeson will have to wait. He wouldn't mind opening other similarly themed restaurants. And then, maybe, he would be open to offering Industrial Revolution Eatery franchises.

Hours of operation: Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. until 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. until 10 p.m.

For more information, call 219-465-1801 or visit www.industrialrevolutioneatery.com.



Michael Leeson looks over the interior of the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille in Valparaiso.

VALPARAISO: Family restaurant to feature stuffed burger

New Valpo eatery to honor industrial revolution

VALPARAISO | The first of what could be a chain of restaurants saluting the industrial revolution could be open as early as December at the former Brewski's on U.S. 30.

Mike Leeson, owner of Steel Sales and Services Inc. in Lansing and East Chicago, said the theme for the decor of the proposed Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille is for it to look like the building was frozen in time in 1932 but not focusing on the Depression. Instead, it will focus on "bringing back the good times and saluting America's greatness," he said.

"It's dedicated to the people who protect and build this country," Leeson said. "It will pay homage to a lot of things like innovation, invention and the progress of the industrial revolution. I've been a critic of restaurants for a long time, and I've wondered why nobody has elaborated on the steel work. It's a steel area, and I think people in the business would appreciate a different flair."

He said the highly detailed construction will have "ornate, old school steelwork" that will make the building look like a factory frozen in time while it was still under construction. The look includes sculptures of men astride steel girders "working" on the roof.

He said the sculptures were on display in New York

City at Ground Zero of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks for six months as a tribute to those who built the twin towers and who cleaned up the damage.

The artwork was taken on a national tour by the sculptor, who then tried to find a good home for them. Leeson not only found the home the artist wanted, he commissioned additional sculptures for his restaurant. Leeson said the completely redesigned interior will have a working O scale steam train suspended from the ceiling.

"We will build it with the old look and rust it so it will look 100 years old, although it is brand new. I think it will be very special, and it is something a lot of people will have a good feeling after they go into it. Hopefully, it will be inspiring."

Leeson said one of the food features of the restaurant will be stuffed burgers, which are still being developed. The project was presented to the city's Site Review Committee on Tuesday. City Planning Director Craig Phillips said the unique nature of the decor raised some concern over what will happen if the restaurant is forced to close.

"Because it is unique, if they ever have to close, what measures can they take to insure the building could be marketed for another use in the future," Phillips said.

The Times 3/9/2010



Lunchtime on top of a Skyscraper

Jon L. Hendricks

Italian-born artist Sergio Furnari installs his sculptures "Lunchtime on top of a Skyscraper" on Monday on top of the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille restaurant on U.S. 30 in Valparaiso.

The statues were previously placed at Ground Zero after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Sculptor recreates American icon -- again

Sergio Furnari

BY DANIEL P. TUCKER

Queens-based sculptor Sergio Furnari has stayed afloat during the recession by working on projects abroad.

However, Furnari got another chance to create an American icon on American soil when an Indiana restaurateur commissioned a remake of his sculpture of 11 life-size ironworkers eating lunch on a beam during the construction of Rockefeller Center. The sculpture is based on a 1932 photograph.

"Those 11 guys, they have a soul," said Furnari, 40. "When I saw the photo, I knew I could capture their soul and give them life."

The sculpture will be installed on top of a 1920s-themed restaurant in Valparaiso, Indiana called Industrial Revolution, which is set to open in February 2010. In September, the owner stumbled upon Furnari's web site, where he discovered that the artist's sculpture matched their design concept. The restaurant is meant to glorify American ingenuity and serve a helping of national pride alongside its burgers, pizza, and Cobb salads.

"The concept is a tribute to the people who build and protect our country. Our slogan is 'saluting America's greatness,'" said owner Mike Leeson, 36. "We want people to leave there knowing that America is still the land of the free and the home of the brave."

The restaurant will be outfitted with 30 flat-screen TVs that will periodically flash inspirational and motivational quotes. The soundtrack will be 1920s jazz and big band music. There will even be a miniature steam engine moving around the dining room on a track suspended two feet below the ceiling. The idea is to inspire pride in the patrons.

Furnari also sold the restaurateurs his original 11-man sculpture, which had been on top of his pick-up truck for the last seven years. In 2002, it was on display at the World Trade Center site for five months.

Furnari made less than he wanted to from the sale but was happy to have the business.

"Whatever I used to sell, I would say, for \$50,000 five years ago, now I got to be super-happy if I get \$25,000," he said.

He has always been proud of the men in his sculpture whom he described as everyday heroes. Some critics have told him that the sculpture will not have a lasting impact, but Furnari disagrees.

"How can American history fade away?" Furnari said. "Impossible. It will never, ever fade away."

The weekend before Thanksgiving, the owner of Industrial Revolution flew to New York to inspect and purchase the sculptures. He then drove them back to Indiana in a U-Haul truck.

Furnari and his team of five workers created the sculptures in an ironworking shop in Long Island City in October and November. They used wire mesh, newspaper, Quikrete® cement, and epoxy to create the bodies, heads, arms and legs. Then they dressed the sculptures in clothes from the Salvation Army, spray painted them, and sanded them to look like stainless steel. The final touches were put on in an



THE QUEENS COURIER

Photos by Daniel P. Tucker

Sculptor Sergio Furnari poses with a figure. This particular statue was modeled to look like Furnari.



THE QUEENS COURIER

Photos by Daniel P. Tucker

Sergio Furnari's sculptures are loaded into a U-Haul truck that the restaurateur will drive back to Indiana.

unused garage in Jersey City.

When the restaurateur arrived in Jersey City to inspect the sculptures, he was impressed.

"If you didn't know anything about Sergio or the Industrial Revolution, but you drive by a restaurant with those 11 guys up there, you're gonna go there," Leeson said.

Restaurant salutes America's greatness

Noteworthy art now a permanent fixture at soon-to-open eatery

VALPARAISO | With a nationally high unemployment rate and jobs increasingly being shipped overseas, Mike Leeson thinks it's time for a revolution.

The Schererville resident, owner of Synergy Steel Structures Inc., hopes his new restaurant, Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille, will remind people of what made America great.

"It's all about saluting America's greatness, a tribute to the people who build and protect this country," Leeson said. "As a country, we need to get back to a second industrial revolution. The industrial revolution built the middle class. Now, we're letting all the jobs go overseas."

Located at 1084 Linwood Ave. -- at U.S. 30 -- the restaurant is designed to look like a building under construction in the early 1900s. Statues of construction workers adorn the

roof and various places on the property.

Created by artist Sergio Furnari, 11 of the statues depict ironworkers taking a lunch break while seated on a beam during construction of the Rockefeller Center in New York City.

Furnari said he was inspired by the 1932 photo "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper."

"The first time I saw the photo, I fell in love with those workers," Furnari said.

The statues were temporarily displayed at the site of the former World Trade Center as a tribute to the workers involved in recovery efforts following Sept. 11.

In addition to the statues, the restaurant derives its authentic industrial-age look from 100- and 200-year-old brick and granite cobble, cast-iron railing, rust-colored steel beams, and a steam train that travels along a track

mounted near the ceiling.

The restaurant will feature televisions that will play excerpts from the show "Modern Marvels" and autobiographies of such great Americans as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford and Thomas Edison.

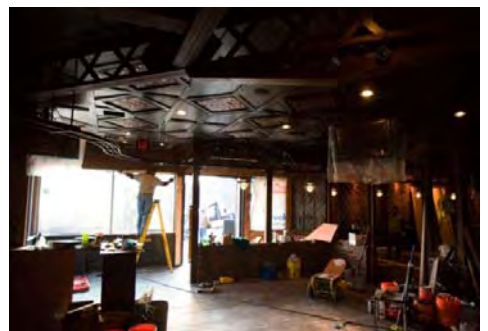
"I hope people (who eat here) will walk away motivated and inspired," Leeson said. The restaurant is expected to open in mid-April.



Construction workers carry in a seat to be installed at the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille in Valparaiso. The restaurant is expecting an April opening.



Artist Sergio Furnari, left, installs statues inspired by the 1932 photo "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" on top of the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille in Valparaiso. "(The restaurant's theme is) all about saluting America's greatness, a tribute to the people who build and protect this country," said owner Mike Leeson, of Schererville.



Workers prepare the interior of the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille in Valparaiso. Owner Mike Leeson gave the restaurant an industrial theme with metal beams running through building.

Dining gets 'Revolution'-ized

New restaurant looks to inspire customers with unique experience

Barbara Lanigan
Torch Staff Writer

Entrepreneur Mike Leeson's vision for saluting America's greatness will soon be realized with the opening of his new restaurant, Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille on the corner of U.S. 30 and Linwood Ave. in Valparaiso.

Leeson captured the essence of a bygone era with a tribute to working class Americans and military personnel, past and present. The anticipated opening will take place the fourth week of April, welcoming guests with music from the early 1900s and a building full of nostalgic design.

Approximately 26 television screens are placed throughout the eatery, including seven in the bar that will play sports or other programs chosen by customers. Dining

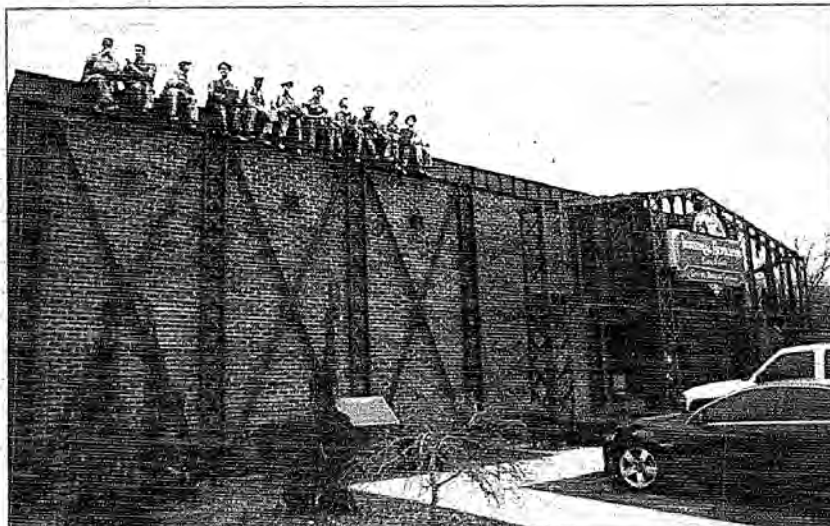
room screens will play varied biographies and educational material from the turn of the century - including episodes of "Modern Marvels." The women's bathroom has a screen playing episodes of "I Love Lucy," while the male bathroom screen boasts episodes of "The Three Stooges."

Chef Javier Fuentes has helped in the menu development focusing on homemade, classic and signature dishes including stuffed burgers, vintage pot roast, meatloaf, steaks, salads and a "rusty" signature BBQ sauce.

Guests will also be entertained by a steel fabricated train suspended from the ceiling. Customers can watch as their food is prepared through the open concept grille area of the kitchen, including a brick oven. Other features include the actual wrenches that were used in connecting the steel beams throughout the building, which are affixed to the bathroom doors as decorative handles.

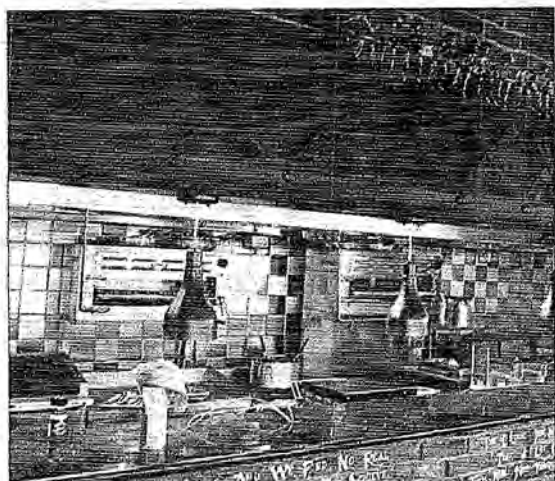
"Nothing came out of the box," Leeson said.

Everything has been custom-made, from the distressed wood tables and booths, and the reclaimed



Kyle Whitgrove / The Torch

The Industrial Revolution is a new restaurant off of Highway 30 in Valparaiso. Its exterior pays tribute to the working American class.



Kyle Whitgrove / The Torch

The dining area offers an innovative eating experience, combining elements of past and future.

hardwood floors to the copper tin on the ceilings.

The exposed steel beams have purposely been rusted and then clear coated to represent an aged, distinct look, which is a unique chemical process that Leeson's company, Synergy Steel Structures, Inc., created.

As the owner of a steel company, Leeson has had firsthand experience with the changes in the steel industry during the current economic downturn. Leeson said that he has seen a decline in business in the past year and a half, and that the outlook did not look good, prompting him to think of different concepts to use his steel product in more architectural ways.

"People use steel as a purpose, but there's other benefits to it; to me, they're aesthetic. You can make a lot of cool things out of steel," Leeson said.

Leeson said that people thought it was a bad economic time to make a leap into the unknown.

This is a concept that is going a little bit against the grain; never before have I seen an industrial element being pulled into a mid- or upscale range style of a restaurant.

Mike Leeson
Owner

"This is a concept that is going a little bit against the grain; never before have I seen an industrial element being pulled into a mid- or upscale range style of a restaurant," Leeson said.

Leeson said that the restaurant name may imply a direct comparison to the Industrial Revolution time period but wanted to clarify the broader meaning of revolutionizing restaurant concepts that have to do with industry. He feels that the middle class has been

dwindling in America, and unemployment is a reflection of some changes happening in the country.

"We cannot continue to be the superpower of the world if we're not producing our own goods and services; at some point if we're outsourcing everything, we're in trouble," Leeson said.

Hand-painted motivational quotes adorn the 100-year-old "misfit clinker" bricks on the walls that Leeson hopes will add to the inspirational experience.

"Ultimately, I just hope people are motivated and inspired with the concept and really like it and leave here with an experience they can't get at any other restaurant," Leeson said.

Junior Jessica Alvarez said she has seen the outside of the restaurant and likes how they've changed the appearance of the structure.

"I think it looks really, really nice," Alvarez said. "I'm excited about it opening."

Contact Barbara Lanigan at torch@valpo.edu.

The Times 7/7/2010

Valparaiso Community Improvement Awards

Jon L. Hendricks

Valparaiso — Mike Leeson, owner of the Industrial Revolution Eatery, accepts his Community Improvement Award for the new restaurant on U.S. 30 during an award ceremony at the Valparaiso University Harre Union Wednesday, July 7, 2010.



ART ADVENTURE | SAM DALKILIC-MIESTOWSKI



Art, history join food on eatery's menu

Several months ago, I was invited to attend a VIP opening at the Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille in Valparaiso, along with several Steeple Gallery patrons who are also steel enthusiasts. They included the president of a local machine shop, a structural engineer, and a collector of industrial art.

We were treated to samplings of many delicious entrees. My favorite was the name given to some of the industrial-themed dishes including molten cheese dip, architect salad, manufacturer mostaccioli, and the red, white and blue cheesecake.

I was thrilled that finally an individual with foresight opened up a restaurant that celebrated the heritage and importance of steel and incorporated every element of it from the floor to the cuisine to the salt and pepper shakers to the rooftop.

Mike Leeson, the owner and president of the restaurant, shares his original dream. I posed these questions to him. His answers are very enlightening.

What was the concept of the Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille? "The concept was to create a place upscale yet industrial, completely custom and hand-built with only steel, wood, and clinker brick materials. A place to tribute the people that have built and protected this country from past and present. A place that becomes an experience along with outstanding flavorful gourmet food.

"The concept of the exterior was to be a building that was 'frozen in time' just before completion of construction during the early 1900s with the working men frozen in place.

"The conceptual goal was to be a place that would inspire and motivate patrons instead of the typical feeling of indigestion they may feel at other places."

Why do you feel the concept is so important to the history of Northwest Indiana? "Industry has been our base since the early days of steel production and has played a large role in the building of our nation. Northwest Indiana is filled with hard working people that take risks everyday to move themselves or others forward."

How important do you feel is the artistic and aesthetic value of the Industrial Revolution E&G? "Very important! This is a labor of love for America that is expressed through all the details of our aesthetics as well as the artistic elements."

Can you name anything specific about the artwork you think the readers would appreciate? "We would need more time... but I will share some. The most recognizable are the 17 total life-sized working statues sculpted by world-renowned artisan Sergio Furnari. Aside from that, I feel there is artistic value in the steelwork, hand-carved woodwork, hand-painted quotes, and the miniature statues."

Describe the interior steel structures and who designed them. "The interior steel structures are part art and part steel fabricated the old way. It is very labor-intensive fabrication that we 'bloomed' out the rust over several weeks and then sealed. The steel was all fabricated by Synergy Steel Structures out of our East Chicago facility. I designed the interior along with my construction consultant, Bryan Siewin."

Who was the artist who hand painted all of the quotes in the restaurant? "A local Crown Point artist/muralist, Jason Reinheart, painted every letter to our specific font to complete

the hand painted quotes."

Can you share anything about the food with us? "We have outstanding Chefs or 'Engineers of Flavor' and have developed a great line of brick oven pizzas, pot roast, specialty sandwiches, seafoods, burgers, entrees, steaks, salads, appetizers and desserts."

Would you describe the reproductions of the miniature sculptures available that are for sale at the restaurant? "They are miniature replicas of the famous photograph 'Lunch Atop a Skyscraper' of iron workers eating lunch 800 feet from the ground. They are on sale through us while initial supplies last for half the price of any retail cost available in two sizes, including a steel hanging beam and artist-signed certificate of authenticity.

"The restaurant will be having our official grand opening in two to three weeks and will have the artist sculptor Sergio Furnari there to sign pictures and meet the industrial enthusiasts."

What is your favorite quote painted in the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille? "If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves," Thomas Edison."

Coming soon in Art Adventure: A feature on sculptor Sergio Furnari.

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A statue salutes military, police and fire emblems.



The life-sized sculpture "The Concrete Finisher" by Sergio Furnari, outside the Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille.



A partial view of the dining area, with vintage black and white poster reproductions of steel-themed photographs.



The entrance to the restrooms features carved wood, custom slate tiles.

"I've always had in the back of my mind that it would be really cool to have a restaurant themed on industry."

—MIKE LEESON, OWNER OF INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION EATERY AND GRILLE

BY AMY LVALLEY
Post-Tribune correspondent

Mike Leeson describes his new restaurant, Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille, as "a little bit different." The restaurant features laminated steel beams, rusted through a chemical process and sealed with a clear coat; distressed woodwork; copper tin ceiling plates;

100-year-old cobble bricks inside and out; a garden-scale model train on a track above diners; and an outdoor dining area with 200-year-old granite cobblestones.

And anyone driving by the eatery, at the intersection of U.S. 30 and Linwood Avenue, might just think 11 ironworkers were sitting on the roof eating lunch. More sculptures are located inside and outside of the restaurant.

The restaurant harkens back to the turn of the last century, and is meant to be homage to the workers and soldiers who built and protected this country, and continue to do so today.

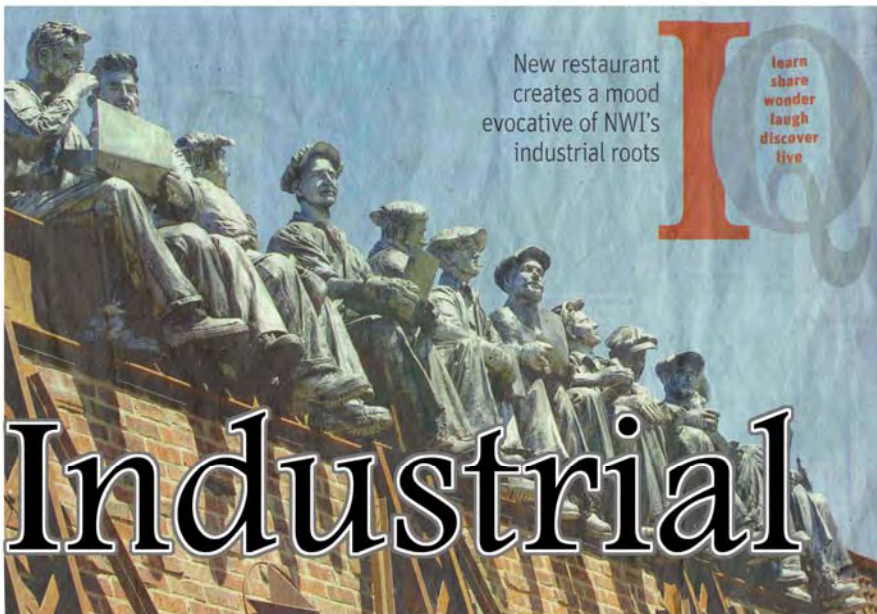
"I've always had in the back of my mind that it would be really cool to have a restaurant themed on industry," said Leeson, 35, who lives in Schererville and owns a steel fabrication business in Lansing, Ill.

The menu will feature American fare and traditional comfort foods, like meatloaf, hamburgers and pizza, with a gourmet twist. But what din-

ers will perhaps find most striking will be the sculptures of the workers. A 1932 photograph of 11 ironworkers perched on a beam almost 800 feet up during the construction of the Rockefeller Center in New York City, called "Lunch Atop a Skyscraper," caught the imagination of New York City artist Sergio Furnari.



Owner Mike Leeson is photographed by the photograph "Lunch Atop a Skyscraper."



Industrial Revolution



Details everywhere No detail was spared, from the reclaimed wood floors to the logo-bearing bar stools at the new restaurant.



Sit a spell Symbols depicting the branches of the military adorn a wall as a life-size sculpture of a worker salutes guests at the entrance of the Valparaiso restaurant.

If you go

Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille opens at 11 a.m. May 6. The restaurant, at 1084 Linwood Ave., Valparaiso, will be open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays, and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekends.

For more information, go to www.industrial-revolutioneatery.com, or call 465-1801.

TEST YOUR IQ

The workers are atop which skyscraper?

Living in the city at the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center, Furnari brought his sculpture to Ground Zero, and later took it on a countrywide tour.

Leeson found out about the artwork through miniature replicas, and contacted Furnari about purchasing it for the restaurant. The sculpture, actually 11 different pieces, is called "Lunchtime."

"It fit the concept perfectly," said Leeson, who also had Furnari, an Italian immigrant, make several more sculptures, including one in the entranceway and another by the bar.

Furnari said the photograph inspired him. "It was basically regular people working. That was the main inspiration, the soul of those people," he said. The sculptures are made of metal, cement and fiber-glass.

The 4,800-square-foot Valparaiso location worked for its size and because of the region's industrial base, Leeson said. He hopes to open additional Industrial Revolution restaurants in other cities built on industry, such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

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