

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.

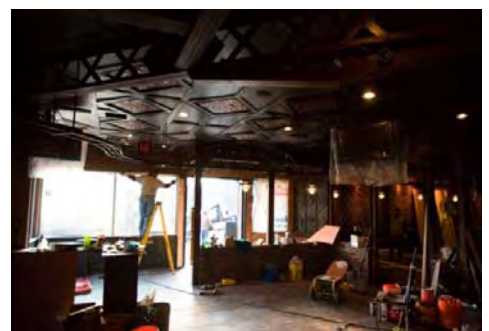
"I hope people (who eat here) will walk away motivated and inspired," Leeson said. The restaurant is expected to open in mid-April.



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.