



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.

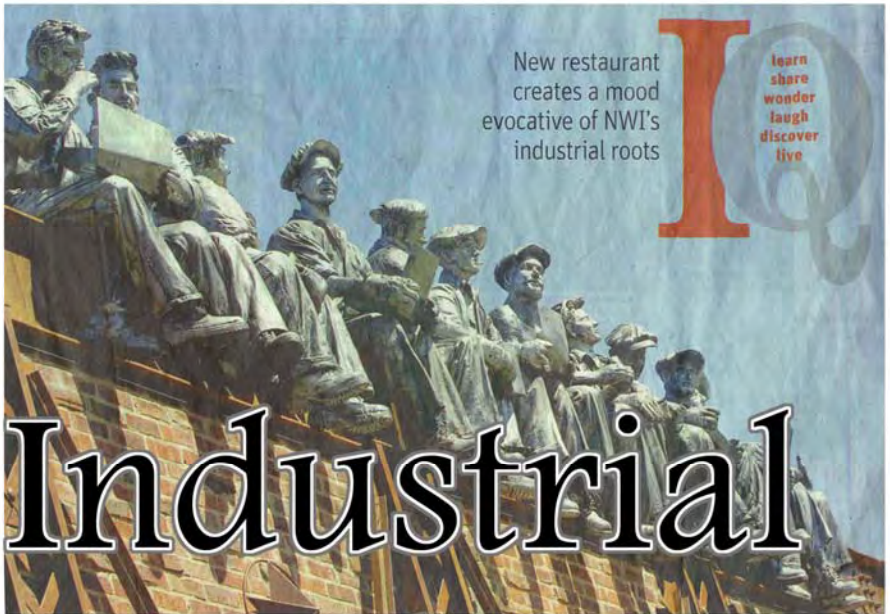
"I've always had in the back of my mind that it would be really cool to have a restaurant themed on industry," said Leeson, 36, who lives in Schererville and owns a steel fabrication business in Lansing, Ill.

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



New restaurant creates a mood evocative of NWI's industrial roots



Industrial Revolution



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



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.

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 fiberglass.

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.