

Step back in time, pardner, into Mail Pouch Saloon

By EMILY GORDON, Sentinel Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, March 14, 2016 8:29 am

HASKINS - Small villages love their small watering holes.

And Jamie Wietrzykowski's new Wild West-inspired restaurant is making a big impression in Haskins.

His Mail Pouch Saloon on West Main Street is "a real saloon's saloon," Wietrzykowski said, from spittoons decorating the bar to wanted posters on the walls.

"We're the coolest, hippest bar in one of the smallest places in Ohio, but big cities will be jealous not to have us," he said.

Wietrzykowski, who lives in Perrysburg and owns 4

Guys On a Roof, used to visit Haskins to patronize the building's former restaurant of the same name.

"I saw a lot of missed potential here from the layout to the staffing to the food. It was a hodgepodge mess," he said. "As a business owner, when you see something has a lot of potential and they miss the mark, you want to pick up the pieces and do it the right way."

Armed with visions of a saloon "done right," Wietrzykowski fixed the place up from flooring to ceiling.

"The locals loved the old Mail Pouch Saloon. We've heard nothing but great stories about it and, like with any business, if something ain't broke, don't fix it," he said. "I knew if I built it the right way, people would come."

Sticking to a vintage cowboy theme, the restaurant's reclaimed barn wood and metal accents give it an old-time, country-western feel while boasting modern amenities such as flat screen televisions, a projector to screen big events like the Super Bowl, free Wi-Fi and a Touch Tunes Jukebox.

Historical photographs of the building and Haskins were incorporated into the bar top, mixed with newspaper articles and photographs of legends like robber Pretty Boy Floyd, who is said to have hidden out in Haskins for a short time, and Mail Pouch tobacco ephemera.

These snapshots of local history celebrate Haskins' past and encourage present residents to share their stories.



mail pouch saloon

Jamie Wietrzykowski (left) and Larry Bertok of Mail Pouch Saloon in Haskins.

The building itself was once a watch store, grocery store, post office, car dealership and possibly a brothel, Wietrzykowski said.

"There's lots of history and character to this place," said Larry Bertok, Wietrzykowski's business partner. "You'll notice a new detail every time you come in. It'll take a few visits to see everything."

The new restaurant opened its saloon doors in February to a huge crowd, Wietrzykowski said.

"Boy, was that a day. It was full occupancy almost every night that week. Standing room barely," he said. "The village of Haskins greeted us with wide open arms. It's supported us every day."

Out-of-towners, some from other states, have hoofed it to the saloon after hearing about it from friends on seeing the establishment's Facebook page.

"People will travel if there's something new and different to see. They will come. And the food keeps bringing them back," he said.

The quality of the saloon's food is of utmost concern, Bertok said.

"You can't have food without drink. You can get a Bud Light anywhere, but not with this quality of food," he said. "Our burgers are a quality of meat people are not going to get anywhere else. We will reject ribs if they're not good enough for this place."

The saloon buys local, even down to their brioche buns, so they know exactly what they're serving, he said.

"Everything is hand picked, hand crafted. The only things frozen are standard appetizers," Bertok said. "Our desserts are homemade. That's why our food is the best damn food in Haskins."

From "dirty water dogs" to "kickin' fried chicken chunks," the saloon has something for everyone, even a kid's menu, gluten free buns and vegetarian burgers.

Its bar boasts 22 handles and signature drinks.

Mixed drinks are served in plastic cowboy boots and shots in shot glasses that look like shotgun shells, which patrons get to keep.

"It's an experience we're offering," Wietrzykowski said. "We knew people will spend money on good food, but will still be price conscious. We found a happy medium."

In addition to offering delicious food and drink, Wietrzykowski hopes the saloon fills a social need in the village.

"The kids' arcade gives parents a chance to relax and hang out while their kids play a bit in a safe place," he said. "We have plans to add an ice cream shop and pizza oven. These are staples in every community for socialization."

With a successful month of business under his belt, Wietrzykowski is confident the restaurant will be a fixture for years to come, attracting new residents and business development.

"I refer to this town as the lost gem of Mayberry. It's a little hidden gem where you can leave your bikes out in the yard, you don't have to lock your doors," he said. "It's a great place to be."