

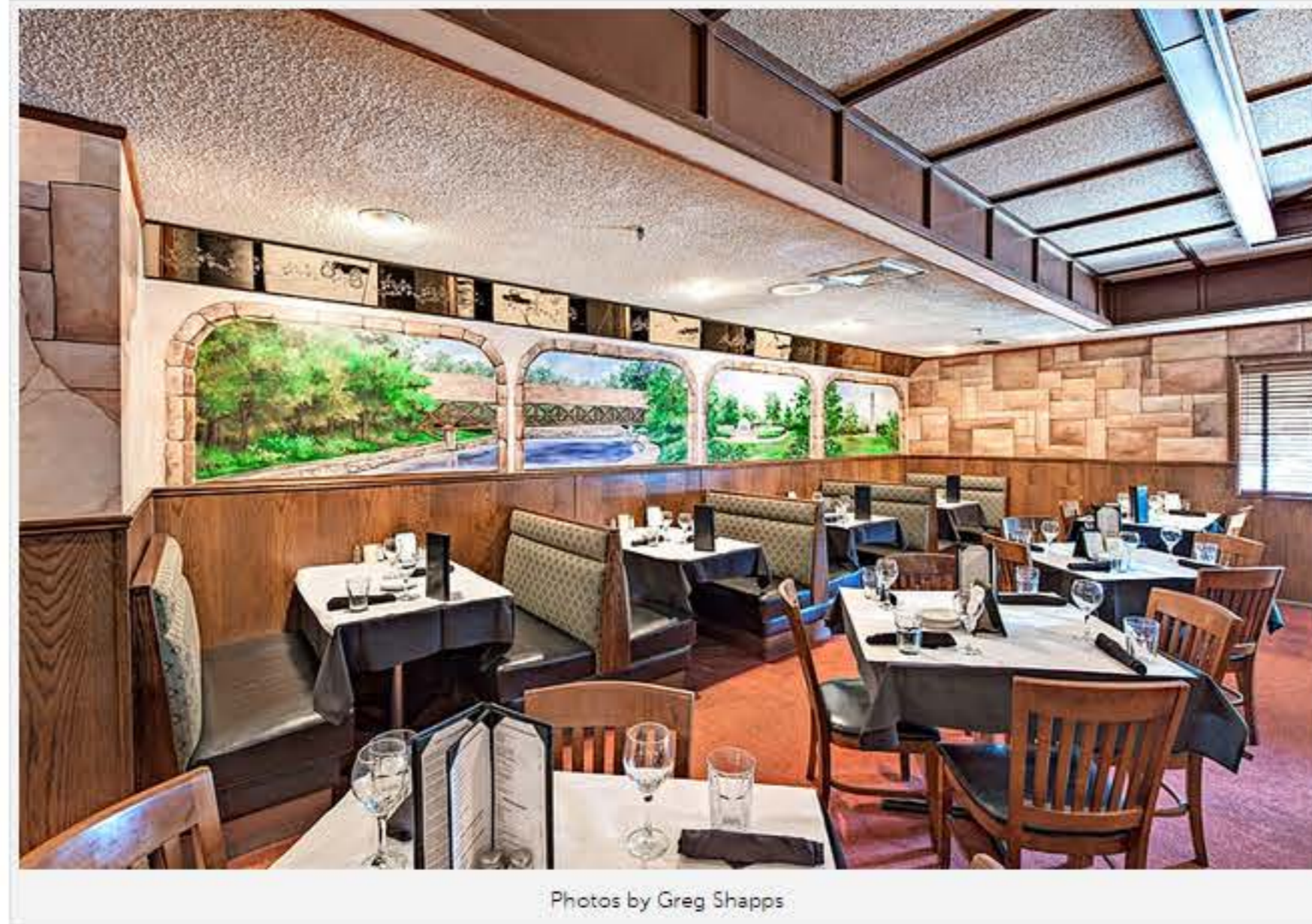


Naperville Magazine > Sections > Table for Two > Walker's Charhouse—Revisionist History

WALKER'S CHARHOUSE—REVISIONIST HISTORY

By [Mark Loehrke](#)

Appears in the [August 2014](#) issue.



Photos by Greg Shapps

Strip malls—or shopping plazas as their developers prefer to market them—are as much a staple of the suburban landscape as retention ponds and cul-de-sacs. Just like their residential counterparts, these commercial subdivisions vary in age, composition and size. But like neighborhoods, they too tend to take on a certain character over the years.



Naperville Plaza, for example, at the nexus of Gartner Road and Washington Street, exudes a vibe that is distinctly old school. Sure, the Trader Joe's is a busy and trendy recent addition to the scene, but this is a commercial collective that otherwise boasts some serious historic bona fides such as Casey's Foods and Oswald's Pharmacy. This is an encampment of enterprise that practically echoes with the

phrase "I remember when..." Included among this firmament is the unassuming Walker's Charhouse, at just under 20 years in business, an old veteran of a culinary battlefield where many fellow restaurateurs are lucky to last half that long.

TWEAKING TRADITION

Yet while the murals depicting idyllic scenes of our fair city lining the walls of the compact dining room remain, and the back bar continues to be a draw for longtime neighbors thirsting for local scuttlebutt as much as a well-poured cocktail, Walker's has subtly reinvented itself over the past several months under the guidance of a new chef and management team. Although "new" doesn't carry the sheen in this particular retail corridor that it might elsewhere, so far the revamped steak-and-chop purveyor seems to be striking just the right balance between freshening up the operation and keeping the regular customers satisfied.



In fact, save for a tableside greeting from new owner Bryan Werschulz, one would be hard-pressed to notice any major change in the overall experience. But the enthusiasm in the 27-year-old Naperville native's visits with his customers is palpable. He clearly relishes the opportunity to carry on a classic Naperville name, while simultaneously attempting to enliven the place with a few new flourishes to

keep things moving forward for the next couple of decades.

OLD AND NEW

In terms of the present menu, those changes are fairly unobtrusive as well, with the venerable shrimp cocktail still standing out among the tempting appetizers and a main slate that continues to be dominated by a variety of classic steak cuts, from New York strip to tender filet. Here and there, however, one can find new wrinkles, such as the delectable bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin medallions in a pomegranate reduction, an entrée that thoroughly justified the notion of passing on all of those great steaks. Elsewhere, the ribs boast a tangy new sauce from Chef Ryan Gramit, and a trio of fresh seafood entrees, including almond-crusted whitefish, present additional options for the main meal. Of course, every good steakhouse knows well to throw a bone to the non-carnivorous in the house, and my companion's vegetable-stocked pasta primavera made a strong case for forgoing the fauna altogether, even at a place known for its way with a cow.



By the time the question of dessert presented itself on our visit, we were full enough to pass, until we spotted a pair of mini options including a manageable peanut butter mousse accompanied by a sinfully rich chocolate sauce and a just-right key lime tart. Diminutive desserts like these may have seemed out of place in a more typical steakhouse, where ridiculous portions are often the presumed

standard, but then again, Walker's has always been more of a hybrid, a neighborhood restaurant amid a few steakhouse trappings. Now, with its new team and new attitude, it's becoming another kind of hybrid—a forward-thinking place with an old soul and, at its best, a canny mix of yesterday and today.

[Walker's Charhouse](#)

8 W. Gartner
630.637.9688

SHARE THIS PAGE:

[Like](#) 89
 [Tweet](#) 2
 [Share](#) 4
 [Pin it](#)

Sign up for our e-newsletter

Subscribe to our magazine

Request a media kit

