

Mississippi Rising

continued ▲ from Front

Mississippi Rising, was a busy dance hall. In the 50s, it sported a full service bar and restaurant and was, according to one of its original bartender's whom Van Horton met recently, "One of the hottest spots in Portland."

A former owner of a manufacturing company, Van Horton says his aim is to "create a unique space" for dances and

fund raising, and plans to make the ballroom available as a music venue.

The space currently rents for a modest \$50 an hour.

"I just want to create enough revenue to survive. I'm kind of a left over hippie from the 60s that never got involved with some of the things others got involved with," Van Horton said.

The revival of this once forgotten historic district has paved the way for three new restaurants.

Mississippi Pizza opened in the spring of last year to neighborhood acclaim and was quickly followed by Molly and Dan Sadowsky's, Purple Parlor, a husband and wife team that

completely transformed an aging Victorian into a dynamo café, featuring such tasty delights as toasted grain pancakes for breakfast and black-eyed peas and greens for lunch. The couple was initially drawn by the neighborhood's diversity, and has since found a niche for their eclectic brand of quality vegetarian faire.

Adding to Portland's coffee craze and lust for woody warm spaces, the Fresh Pot Coffee Shop recently opened its doors at the site of the former Rexall Drug Store. The space had been vacant for close to 20 years.

Co-owners David Colombo and Matthew Vinci decided to restore the original

look of the old pharmacy. But now art adorns the walls, and customers are given a daily dose of sweet, almost chewy espresso, and prescriptions now mean fresh baked coffee cakes and crunchy almond croissants.

These restaurants join a growing list of establishments that have found a happy home on this once decrepit avenue. The Rebuilding Center, located at the South end of the street, has prospered in recent years. The nonprofit is focused on keeping used building materials out of the landfills and available to local costumers at affordable rates.

Many of the changes taking place have

come about with help from the Mississippi Historic District Target Area Project. The organization, created with the support of city funds, works with property owners to recruit new businesses to the area.

Project Coordinator, Janet Bauer cites "this funding and a supportive community" as instrumental in the region's rebound, as well as "the increased attractiveness of inner city neighborhoods."

Mississippi Avenue is sure to make tracks in years to come. From flat on its back, to back on its feet. The color, the face, the energy of Mississippi, is changing.

The Portland Observer

Tradition of Excellence

WEST COAST

BLACK PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

AWARDS OF MERIT

- ◆ *General Excellence Award – 1st Place*
- ◆ *Best News Story – 1st Place*
- ◆ *Best Special Issue – 1st Place*
- ◆ *Best Black History – 1st Place*
- ◆ *Best Entertainment – 2nd Place*
- ◆ *Best Sports – 3rd Place*

The Portland Observer

**For the highest Standard of
Journalism and Publishing**

2000-2001