Plans though for a covered walkway over Ontario Street and into the casino though have been put on hold following concerns raised by the National Parks Service that the bridge stood in contrast to the historic nature of the building.

By JAMES W. WADE III

CLEVELAND – The Department Store that brought so much joy doing the Christmas known as Higbees now being renovated into the new Horse Casino in downtown Cleveland.

Construction is rapid as people were working hard as the media toured the main floor of the new Casino. Almost 600 workers in two shifts are working to transform the first four floors of the Higbee into the new Horseshoe Casino.

"Exhilarating, it's great, it's an unbelievable experience to see where we are today and where we came from less than seven, eight months ago," said Jeff Cohen, a Rock Gaming principal overseeing construction.

"We've got milestones set and we're hitting our milestones and we expect that this will be open ready for business at the end of March," he said.

March 26, 2012 is the date Ohio's Casino Control Commission has slated for the $350 million, phase I casino to open.

Workers are transforming the first four floors of the Higbee. The lower level will be used as a

400-seat buffet restaurant. The street level will feature some of the 2,011 slot machines, 63 table games and a bar. The third floor will house the rest of the slots, table games and a three-outlet food court. The fourth floor will host the 25-table World Series of Poker room.

To look at the site with it's bare floors, walls and seemingly miles of cable and wires still to be installed, it's hard to imagine the finished product. But they say they are on pace without much room for error.

"It's a day-by-day thing. We can't afford much slippage," said Nate Forbes. another Rock Gaming principal overseeing design and architecture. "We've procured the schedule out for deliveries of all kinds of materials and all kinds of finishes so we're hoping that our supply line all the way down the chain meets all of their dates because we will put the resources behind meeting our date."

Work also continues across Ontario Street from the casino on the new 1,200 space valet and self-parking structure. Work will continue through the winter on the five level parking deck. Portions of it will be available at the casino opening with the rest to open later next spring.

Plans though for a covered walkway over Ontario Street and into the casino though have been put on hold following concerns raised by the National Parks Service that the bridge stood in contrast to the historic nature of the building.

For now, Rock Ohio said the beat goes on. "In downtown urban areas, people are used to that," said Forbes. "They're walking the streets everyday, they're using public transportation, they're parking on surface lots, they're parking in decks today. So I think it's going to be more of what they're familiar with at the stadium and Progressive Field and the Quicken Loans Arena, so we don't have too many concerns about that."