



Central House Hotel - Richland County History Room Photo.

## Central Boarding House - 339 West Seminary Street.

There are a number of buildings in Richland Center that are still intact that connect to the early pioneer days. Before the Civil War, Richland Center was an isolated settlement on the edge of the wilderness with most of the buildings being of wood-framed construction with wood cladding. That style of structure for commercial buildings rapidly disappeared in the first building boom experienced in the 1880s and 1890s after the creation of the railroad in 1876. During those years the downtown business district made a transition to mainly two-story brick buildings rather than the earlier wood structures. There were more businesses with abundant capital to “modernize.” One such building representative of those early days is the Central Boarding House located at 339 West Seminary Street adjacent to The Depot which serves as the area Visitor’s Center.

There were a number of hotels in the early days, in fact, the second building erected in the town was built by Ira Haseltine, the founder of Richland Center, in 1852 and was known as the American House. As with most commercial buildings, the hotel changed ownership many times and eventually was destroyed by fire in February of 1877. The first internationally known celebrities to visit the city were the famous suffragists Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. There is documentation they stayed at the American House during their 1856 visit here.

The Central House was originally located on the South Side of Court Street between Park and Church Streets. It was between Dr. Mitchell’s home and the Edwards Building before it was moved near the railroad depot to make room for the Pier Auto Company which was built in its place. In earlier days in Richland Center it was not uncommon to move buildings rather than raze them; house moving was a thriving business during this time.



The Pier Auto Company - "Home of the Mitchell."

In 1987 the Central Boarding House was purchased by a Richland County woman. At the time, it was run-down and in need of repair and inhabited by men without much money and nowhere else to go.

She bought the boarding house with restoration in mind since she collected antiques and had a longtime interest in historic preservation. The decision was made to repair the building and

bring it up to code. The 13 rooms were reduced to 11 to make for more room and an additional exit. Doors and windows were repaired and painting was done. Much of the work was done by the boarding house residents.

In April of 2014 the boarding house was closed due to a number of reasons including insurance costs and the building became Central Boarding House Antiques in May of 2014. It remains one of the better preserved pioneer structures still standing in Richland Center.



Another pioneer building that remains is the original Pease Store which is the building on the left with the two story porch. (The Richland County Bank now occupies the site of the Cabinet Shop on the right). The Pease Building was moved north and placed directly behind where the City Auditorium is located. It now functions as a multi-unit rental.



The Pease Store as it appeared in 1909. At this point, most of the pioneer wood buildings in the downtown area of Richland Center had been replaced by much larger brick buildings many of which are still in place. The 10 block central business district of the city was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as the result of an intensive architectural and historical survey undertaken in 1987.