



SandHill Marketing photo collection. (Mehaffey Saloon on the left third building-1909).

Mehaffey Saloon – 131 West Court Street – circa 1886.



Albert Hartz erected the Mehaffey Saloon building between 1886 and 1892. The three-bay, two story building is ornamented mainly by the brick patterns created by the contrast of the red and cream brick used on the façade. Mainly constructed of cream brick the Hartz-Mehaffey building's structural parts are outlined by red brick. Red brick segmented arched windows with white keystones, a red brick frieze and corbeled red brick extending across the cornice at the top of the building, and along the top of the storefront, accent this Italianate influenced vernacular commercial building. The storefront has been completely altered in a contemporary manner. Purchased in 1892 by George Mehaffey to house his "upper class" saloon, this building has been used by

King's Brother's Clothing Store, the Blue Bird Café and by the Smith's Men's Store among other tenants.

George and Maria Peoples Mehaffey came to Richland County in 1876 from Chicago where he had witnessed the Great Chicago Fire in 1871 and settled in the town of Bloom where they engaged in farming and stock raising. Twelve years later they located in Richland Center where he was connected to businesses the rest of his life. Their home was on the lot now occupied by the Brewer Library on North Central Avenue. He died on June 10, 1928, at the age of 78. Mrs. Mehaffey passed away on May 27, 1927, at the age of 81.

It was then one of the more elite saloons in Richland Center as opposed to those along the Pine River. In 1905, “Mehaffey’s Place dealt in” ... foreign and domestic wines, liquors, cigars...elegant apartments, second to none in the Northwest...recently refitted.” However, the business directories failed to list Mehaffey’s Saloon in 1895, 1905, 1907 and 1909. Many of these years were wet years in Richland Center, but shifting licensing policies may have forced him to close or frustrated advertising in state directories.



Margaret Scott, in her “History of Richland Center” quotes an old timer saying the saloon was: “Something of a Fifth Avenue institution; only the elite were permitted to quench their thirst at the bar and of course enjoy the game of chance that operated in the room at the rear. During the county fair, a professional was installed to test the skill of the locals ... If a customer overindulged in drinking, he was thrown out.” Mehaffey continued to own the building until 1908. After 1908, with the withdrawal of liquor licenses, saloons were no longer a viable enterprise. King’s Brother’s Clothing Store occupied the building by 1912. They were known as an exclusive men’s store and remained at that location until 1927. In 1927, its ownership passed to Edward Parks. After 1931, the building was occupied by the Blue Bird Restaurant.

Richland County History Room photos.



An incident that illustrates the conflict between the “dry” and “wet” proponents in the city of Richland Center appeared to have resulted out of the constant work of the temperance forces. Margaret Scott describes the occurrence: “On a Sunday in January, 1901, a noted gospel temperance lecturer preached at the Methodist Church both morning and evening and at 3:30 p.m. to men at the Christian Church. On the evening of January 22, 1901, just as Reverend James Irish was going up the stairs in the parsonage to go to bed, an explosion which stunned both him and Mrs. Irish occurred. Two sticks of dynamite had been placed under the steps near the walls supporting the steeple of the Methodist Church. The four memorial windows on the south of the church were shattered. Windows in nearby homes were broken. Damage to the church was estimated at \$250.00. Emotions and excitement were high.”



Mehaffey House at 325 North Central Avenue - now the location of the Brewer Library and the Richland County History Room.