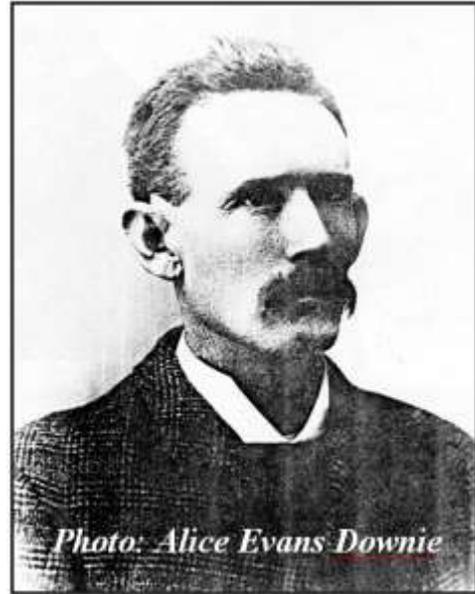


# Museum News: Henry J. Pakenham

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

One of the early ranching pioneers in Terrell County was Henry J. Pakenham. He came to Pecos County shortly after the railroad came through, hot on the heels of Charles Downie, who is considered the first sheep rancher in the Terrell County area. Sometime during the period from 1882 through 1886 or 1887, Pakenham took land on open range near a spring that forever became known as Pakenham Spring, on the old Herbert Brown Ranch. Pakenham was a cattleman and never dealt with sheep or goats. He only stayed in that area for a few years, then in 1903 began to buy up property farther to the west, eventually building a large ranch in northeastern Terrell County. Pakenham was a shrewd businessman and a very successful stockman.

Pakenham was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1856 to James and Catherine McCarthy Pakenham, Irish immigrants who moved to the United States in the late 1840s. Their first child, Mary, was born in Rapides Parish, Louisiana in 1850. In 1860 they were still living in Rapides Parish, but five more children were born into the family: Henry, who was born in 1856 and four girls, Annie, Kitty, Sallie and Octavia. By 1870 they had moved to New Orleans, but Mr. Pakenham and three of the girls were no longer listed on the census. Mary had married and left home and the younger girl, Kitty and Octavia, the baby, seem to have passed on, leaving only Mrs. Pakenham, Annie, Henry and Sallie. Their passing is not recorded but they are not mentioned in his life record again. In 1871 family chronicles say he moved west to Uvalde, Texas. Shortly afterward, he moved his mother and sisters to Uvalde, as well.



By 1880 he is listed as a stockman on the Uvalde County census, living with his mother and sisters next door to his eldest sister, Mary Pakenham Kennedy and her family. With his family safe in the care of his sister, he moved just west of Uvalde and became a founder of the community of Murlo, Texas, along with John Fenley, father of Terrell County's first sheriff, George Fenley. His mother and sisters spent the rest of their lives in Uvalde, his mother passing in 1894, his sister Annie marrying and passing in 1904 and his sister Sallie passing in 1937.

In the meantime his business venture in Murlo began to sour and he moved farther west to what is now Pakenham Spring in Pecos County (soon to become Terrell County) to run his cattle on the free, unfenced range. His history is a little cloudy from the 1880s until the purchase of his large ranch in Terrell County in 1903. Over the next seven years he made many purchases, acquiring tens of thousands of acres of land, and built his home place very near his neighbors, Doc and Effie Turk in northeastern Terrell County on Independence Creek. They had been friends in Uvalde and moved to Terrell County in 1909 to begin their ranching enterprise.

During these years Sallie Pakenham and her two nieces, Annie and Georgie Spencer, took their summer vacations at the Pakenham Ranch. Henry never married, but he had many visitors, particularly his nieces and nephews.

But, besides his relatives, the congenial Pakenham had a host of friends. Judge Roy Bean was such a good friend that Pakenham built a house for him on the ranch for his periodic judicial forays into Pecos County. But on the opposite end of the spectrum (depending on how you regard Bean) Pakenham was also friends with the outlaw Sam Bass. In the wide open spaces of the Trans Pecos, friends were not judged by their police record but by their loyalty, and Pakenham's friends were very loyal to him. As his biographer in the Terrell County history book said, he "was a mighty good fellow," and universally regarded with great affection.

In 1913 at the age of 57, Pakenham had a turn of bad health, developing a serious case of pneumonia. He did not recover and died at his ranch home on February 24, 1913. He left everything to Sallie, and she acquired the services of Joe Kerr to run her operations and see after the ranch. Joe and Henry had been close friends, almost since his

arrival in the county. A shrewd businesswoman in her own right, she continued to add to the ranch over her years of ownership, listening to her managers and following their advice.

When Sallie passed away in 1937, she left the ranch to her nieces, Annie and Georgie Spencer, and to Pakenham's favorite grandnephews, the four Korn brothers. Robert E. Korn took over reigns as the manager and ran the ranch for the next thirty years until he passed away in 1976. During that period the land was leased to various individuals. When Henry died in 1913, Cecil Arvin and Alex Mitchell purchased the livestock from Sallie and leased the ranch. Eventually, the land was leased to many ranchers, including J.C. and D.H. Cunningham; W.W. Moser and H.D. Mendel; Nip D. Blackstone, II; Tom Elrod; Bob Childress and Jeffery Sutton; and William A. Wroe, to mention the earliest.

Henry Pakenham has been gone for 105 years, yet his name will live on in the places named for him (Pakenham Spring) and for his ranch, which is still in operation under the name Pakenham Ranch Company, LTD. Its corporate offices are located in San Antonio, Texas, dealing in the Farm Land Leasing business. It is led by a Korn descendant, keeping the organization and the ranch within the same family for over 115 years.

Many Terrell County pioneers arrived here the same way, with a dream in their minds and barely a shirt on their backs. Through extremely hard work in an unforgiving, desert-filled, drought-stricken environment, they built their own kingdom and succeeded. Such was Henry J. Pakenham's dream, and he fulfilled it, doing what he loved best.