

PATRICK KENNEY HOUSE

The Patrick Kenney House located in Bexar County near Somerset, TX was built around 1877-78, after Patrick Henry Kenney purchased 46 ½ acres of land for \$186.00 from D.W. Heard on 22 December 1877.¹ The acreage was originally a part of the Clemente Bustillo grant, Survey #348.² This purchase added to the already extensive acreage Kenney had previously purchased located on from the Michael De Chaumes grant.

In the 1977 and 1999 surveys of the property conducted by the Alamo Area Council of Governments, the Kenney House was described as being a one-story limestone and stucco house with an east/west orientation. The windows were 6/6 and the house had a tin roof over shingles. The chimney was located on the north side. A porch was noted on the east side. Frame additions had been made to the house. Several outbuildings were also seen on the property. On a visit to the property in 2010 by several members of the Historic Farm & Ranch Committee of the San Antonio Conservation Society, an underground basement accessible from the west side of the property was observed. The house was being used primarily for extensive storage and a porch type structure on the west side was in a collapsed state.

Patrick Henry Kenney, born 1 February 1839 in Mayo County, Ireland, was the son of John Kenney and Catharine Brannon Kenney. He is reported to have immigrated to this country in 1849 with his parents and his siblings, although the family has not been located on the 1850 census. He became a naturalized citizen in 1856 and registered to vote in Bexar County on 15 July 1867. At the time of registration, Patrick Kenney indicated he had been in Bexar County for 11 years which indicates an arrival date of 1855 or 1856.³

On 14 May 1869, Patrick Kenney and Rosa Zink (Zensch) were married in San Antonio by Catholic priest, Vincent Barzynsk. Witnesses were: Jacob Halamuds and Jacob Deyes.⁴⁵

Rosa Zink was born on 18 August 1850 to Frank Zink and Francisca (Frances) Leopold. She indicated on the 1900 census she was born in Russia/Poland and that she had immigrated to Texas in 1856. Rosa and Patrick Kenney had 9 children: John Joseph, William Franklin, Catharine, Patrick Henry, Thomas, Alvena Rita, Annie, Margaret, and James (detailed later).

Bexar County tax records for 1874 indicated that Patrick Kenney paid taxes on 160 acres valued at \$520.00, 9 horses valued at \$140.00 and 102 cattle, valued at \$525.00. The property was on the M. Chaumes grant. By 1875 Kenney had doubled his property ownership to 320 acres valued at \$990. However, his livestock ownership had changed to 8 horses, 14 cattle and 25 goats/hogs. He continued to purchase land and in 1876 he owned 480 acres valued at \$1260.00 on the M. Chaumes grant. Seven years later in 1883, Patrick Kenney paid taxes on the same 480 acres on the Chaumes grant, but he also paid taxes on 41 acres on the Clemente Bustillo grant valued at \$2120.00, 3 buggies/wagons valued at \$75.00, 4 horses/mules valued at \$455.00 and 30 cattle valued at \$450.00. Land purchases continued and the 1890 tax records indicated Kenney not only owned 480 acres on the Chaumes grant valued at \$2000.00 but he also owned and paid taxes on 192 acres on the Bustillo grant which was valued at \$750.00. He owned 3 buggies/carriages valued at \$90.00, 9 horses, valued at \$225.00 and 40 cattle valued at \$200.00⁶

On 9 November 1876, Patrick Kenney filed his brand marks for his cattle: one brand to be placed on the left rib of each cow and another brand to be placed on the cow's ear. (See document on this website re: Brands).⁷

On 24 August 1883, Patrick Kenney sold to Bexar County, 2 acres of land from the Bustillo grant near Elm Creek for the purpose of establishing a school. The selling price was \$37.50.⁸ Over 40 years later in 1925, these same two acres of land were sold back to Patrick Kenney for \$100.00 by W.H. Koehler, President of the Somerset Independent School District.⁹

In 1891 St. Patrick's Church Catholic Church was erected in Bexar, Texas. The one-acre property was donated on 7 May 1891 by Patrick Kenney to Rev. J.C. Narez, Bishop of the Diocese of the Catholic Church for the church and the cemetery. Prior to this donation, Holy Mass had been held in the home of Patrick Kenney. With a group of Irish, German and Mexicans, Patrick Kenney assisted Father Domingo Vento in building St. Patrick's Church. The cemetery was established and has expanded over the years into the area where the original church building was located. Many of the members of the Kenney family are buried in this cemetery as well as over 300 other souls. Later when the railroad came through the area in 1907-1909, most of the people in Bexar moved to the newly formed town of Somerset. The church congregation split and St. Mary's Church was established in Somerset. In 1958, the Bishop of the Archdiocese decreed that the original St. Patrick's Church building be closed due to its deteriorated condition. The building was eventually demolished.^{10 11}

Bexar County census records for Patrick Kenney indicated he was a farmer as well as a landlord, a tradition carried on by his sons. In the 1900 Bexar County census, the sons William (age 27) and Thomas (21) were living in the Patrick Kenney household and their occupations were given as "farmer" and "farm laborer" respectively. On 27 April 1905, Patrick Kenney was commissioned as postmaster at Bexar, Texas.¹² (Bexar is pronounced BEX-R when referring to this community which is no longer in existence with exception of several cemeteries and a few small houses.)

On 4 October 1917, Patrick Kenney and his wife, Rosa entered into a lease agreement with Gulf Production Company to lease almost 1000 acres of land on the M. Chaumes, Jason Smith and Clemente Bustillo grants. The company was given the right to explore for oil, gas and minerals and agreed to pay the Kenney's \$306.00 monthly plus royalties on any products produced.¹³ This lease expired on 11 December 1923 and the property was returned to the Kenneys by F.L. Thomas, President of the Grayburg Oil Company who had assumed the lease in the interim.¹⁴

Rosa Zink Kenney died on 5 December 1923 at the age of 73. Seven years later on 1 August 1930, her husband, Patrick Kenney died at the age of 91. Both are buried in the Saint Patrick's Catholic Cemetery in Somerset, Texas.¹⁵

With the death of Patrick Kenney, the three youngest Kenney children, Margaret (Maggie) Kenney Caruthers, James A. Kenney and Annie Kenney each inherited 1/3 undivided interest in the Kenney property, totaling approximately 225.24 acres. The land included Tracts 4, 5, and 6 of the Chaumes grant and 4.50 acres of Survey #348 of the Clemente Bustillo grant. The partition and distribution of the property on July 31, 1933 indicated that the three Kenney

siblings along with Texas Caruthers, Maggie's husband, were living on the property. The Kenney siblings established a joint tenancy with a life estate, stipulating that with the death of each, their share of the property would pass to the remaining siblings.¹⁶

On 14 August 1935, Annie Kenney, James Kenney, Maggie Kenney Caruthers and her husband, Texas Caruthers, entered into a mining exploration and lease agreement with E.S. Orgain of Bastrop County, Texas. Exclusive mining rights were given for prospecting, operation, excavating and mining as well as the right to build, erect, construct and maintain all buildings, houses, barns, fences, storage places and sheds, as needed. Also, the right to construct shafts, make roadways and equip them for transportation of cars and vehicles was stated. All roadways passing through or crossing fences were to have gates or be provided with ordinary cattle guards and all tenant or camp houses were to be located on the north side of the railroad spur track. The deed record provides additional stipulations and refers to the lease as having the purpose of shipping and marketing lignite or coal from the tract.¹⁷

Mining for coal was certainly not an unfamiliar enterprise for the Kenney family. John Kenney, the father of Patrick Kenney, was familiar with the coal mines in Ireland. Shortly after his arrival in Texas, he recognized the peculiar clay formation in southern Bexar County. He also observed the mining operation already in operation by T.S. Harrison and proceeded to purchase adjacent and nearby lands. In later years John Kenney purchased the land where the first coal mine was operating. By 1882, he opened his own open-pit coal mine.

The original mine had an incline shaft and was first mined by mules and ox-carts. The second mine had an elevator shaft and utilized cable cars. The mines were about 40 feet deep with veins of coal 4-7 feet thick. An estimated 7000 tons of coal per acre were mined during the mine's operation. Coal was dug out with picks and shovels or by dynamiting using long fuses at the end of the day when all workers were out of the mine. Men who worked in the mine earned about 30 cents a ton. Mule drivers and other workers above ground were paid 30 cents an hour. Coal was loaded into the carts or cars each hold about a tone. Generally able-bodied men could load each or ten cars each day.

A worker's village developed and it became known as "La Colorado" or "La Mina de la Colorado" by the Hispanic workers. A post office opened in 1883. By 1894 the community of Bexar, Texas consisted of 30-45 small houses, a doctor's office, a theater, the post office, a cotton gin, Bustamante's dance hall, a cantina, three churches, and a general store which also served as a hardware store and a drug store. The store was owned by John Conoly and Dr. James Matthews having purchased the original 1 ½ acres from Patrick Kenney for \$130.00. About a mile from this store was a bakery and a waterhole where individuals from the area came to get water when needed. A large portion of the land where the community of Bexar developed was originally owned by the Kenney's. In some situations, Patrick Kenney leased the land and/or the buildings to the individuals operating the stores.

After the Artesian Belt Railroad bypassed the community of Bexar for the town of Somerset, most of the population moved to Somerset. The economy shifted to oil and gas production rather than coal. The general store closed, the churches followed the people and Bexar went into decline. By 1947, peanuts were being grown over the former coal mine.^{18 19 20 21}

The 1940 Bexar County census indicates that the three Kenney siblings (Maggie Kenney Caruthers, Annie Kenney and James A. Kenney) were living in the same household with one another. James and Annie were both single and Maggie was a widow. Over the next 37 years, the three Kenney's sold portions of the property with 75 acres of Tract 4 of the Michael D. Chaumes being sold to William Pyron Kenney, the son of their older brother, William Franklin Kenney on 28 August 1948.²² Texas Caruthers had died on 23 February 1940 so therefore he was not a party to this sale.

On 8 May 1970, the Kenney's sold 74.06 acres of property where the Patrick Kenney House is located to J.W. James and his wife, Mary Louise James. They later sold the property to the current owner.²³ The Patrick Kenney²⁴ house is located on 1.451 acres of the Chaumes grant, Survey #136 and the Clemente Bustillo grant, Survey #348.

FAMILY COMPOSITIONS:

John Joseph Kenney, born 1 February 1813 in Ireland – died 5 August 1900, Bexar County, TX.
Married: **Catherine Brennan**, born 12 September 1815 in Dublin, Ireland – died 28 February 1873.

Children of John Joseph and Catherine Brennan Kenney

1. **Patrick Henry Kenney** – born 1 February 1839, Mayo County, Ireland – died 1 August 1930, Bexar County, Texas
Married on 4 May 1869, Bexar County, TX to:
Rosa Zink (Zensch) born 18 August 1850, Poland – died 5 December 1923 in Bexar County, Texas.
2. **Michael Kenney**, born 1835, Ireland
(did not marry)
3. **Bridget Kenney**, born 8 June 1846, Ireland – died 8 August 1916.
Married: John McCoy, Sr.
4. **Mary Alma Kenney**, born 1850, Ireland
Married: Julius Mueller on 9 August 1922
5. **Ann Kenney**, born 1852, Ireland
6. **Thomas Kenney**, born 1854, Ireland
7. **John J. Kenney**, born in Atascosa County, Texas.
Married twice

Children of Patrick Henry Kenney and Rosa Zink (Zensch)

1. **John Joseph Kenney**, born 8 November 1870 – died 8 December 1916
Married: **Annie Louise Krause**-born 5 February 1875 – died 5 December 1939
Annie Louise Krause married Lorenzo Peroglio after the death of John Joseph Kenney
2. **William Franklin Kenney**, born 4 July 1872 – died 2 January 1959
Married on 27 November 1902 to **Jessie E. Pyron**, born 30 May 1882 – died 5 February 1963
3. **Catherine Kenney**, born 5 October 1875 – died 31 July 1915
Married: **W.H. Cloud** on 30 December 1903

4. **Patrick Henry Kenney**, born 18 November 1878 – died 11 November 1957
Married: **Theodora Grube**
5. **Thomas Albert Patrick Kenney**, born 11 January 1879 – died 11 September 1965.
(adopted nephew). Married: (1) **Anne Wanke** on 12 September 1904; (2) **Agnes Gertrude Gier** on 22 September 1919
6. **Alvena Rita Kenney**, born 17 March 1881 – died 3 June 1903 – probably did not marry
7. **Annie Rosie Kenney**, born 15 May 1884 – 2 October 1977 - probably did not marry
8. **Margaret Emma Kenney**, born 1 November 1885 – died 13 May 1986
Married: (1) **Texas Caruthers**, born 4 July 1882 – died 23 February 1940
(2) **Louis Earnest Wanke**, born 11 April 1890 – died 11 May 1956
9. **James Alfonso Kenney**, born 25 August 1889 – died 23 March 1967- probably did not marry.

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Pat Ezell, Vice-Chair
Historic Farm and Ranch Complexes Committee
San Antonio Conservation Society
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ENDNOTES:

¹ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk: 8:614, D.W. Heard to Patrick Kenney, December 1877, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

² Bustillo, Clemente, Original Grantee, Texas General Land Office, Abstract #92, Patent #666, Volume 2, 1 March 1856.

³ Alley, Jacobina and Janey E. Joyce, *Bexar County Texas Voter Registration, 1865-1867-1869*, San Antonio Genealogical and Historical Society, 2006, p.52.

⁴ Bexar Co., Texas, Marriage Book E:219, Patrick Kenney to Rosa Zensch, May 14, 1869, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

⁵ Vincent Barzynski was a Polish American Catholic priest. He was educated in Poland and left Poland for America in 1866. After several years in the Diocese of San Antonio, TX, he was appointed pastor of St. Stanislaus parish in Chicago in 1874. He became a dominant influence during the period of Polish immigration to America. Seroczynski, Felix Thomas, "Vincent Barzynski," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913, The Encyclopedia Press, Volume 16.

⁶ Bexar Co., Texas, Tax Assessment Rolls, 1837-1910, FamilySearch.org. Patrick Kenney, 1874-1876, 1883, and 1890.

⁷ Bexar Co., Texas, Brand Bk: F:331, Brand of Patrick Kenney, 1876, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

⁸ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk:34: 6-7, Patrick Kenney to Bexar County, 1883, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

⁹ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk:804:484-485, Somerset Independent School District to Patrick Kenney, 27 February 1925, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

¹⁰ St. Mary's Church website, St. Mary's Church, www.stmcstx.org/history.html.

¹¹ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk 93:204, Patrick Kenney to Rev. J.C. Narez, Bishop of the Diocese, 7 May 1891, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

¹² "Texas Postmasters and Postal Affairs, Special to the Light," *San Antonio Daily Light*, 27 April 1905.

¹³ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk:518:463-7, Lease between Patrick and Rosa Kenney to Gulf Prod. Co., 1917, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

¹⁴ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk: 527: 1923+, Release of Lease from Grayburg Oil Company to Patrick and Rosa Kenney, 1923, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

¹⁵ Personal visit by this writer in February 2010 to the St. Patrick's Catholic Cemetery. Photos taken of the Kenney tombstones.

¹⁶ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk: 1371:194-197, Maggie Kenney Caruthers, et. al. with each other, 31 July 1933, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas

¹⁷ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk:1601:308+, Lease Agreement, J.A. Kenney, et. al. to E.S. Orgain, 14 August 1935, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

¹⁸ De Vara, Art Martinez, "Bexar, Texas," *The Handbook of Texas Online*.

¹⁹ "Peanuts Pile Riches Over Mines," *The San Antonio Light*, 28 March 1947, Section D.

²⁰ Lytle Woman's Club, *Patchwork: Lytle Folks Facts and Fables, 1776-1978, 1882-1982*. Wolfe City, Texas: Hennington Publishing Company, 3rd printing, 2000, pgs. 86, 96-98.

²¹ "Real Estate Transfers," Patrick Kenney to John Conoly, *San Antonio Daily Light*, 28 September 1893.

²² Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk: 2903:536, Maggie Kenney Caruthers, James A., Kenney, Annie Kenney to Wm. Pyron Kennedy, 28 August 1948, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

²³ Bexar Co., Texas, Deed Bk:5621:771, Maggie Kenney Caruthers, James A. Kenney, Annie Kenney to J.W. James and Mary Louise James, 1970, Co. Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas.

²⁴ The spelling of the name "Kenney" has been also been found to be "Kinney." The spelling with the two "e" is used in this document because the majority of the legal documents use "Kenney and the surname is spelled Kenney on the family tombstones." The Kinney road was obviously named for the Kenney family but the highway department used the spelling with the "l" instead of the two "e's"