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## **Kenon and Paschal Families**

During 1871, the Kenon and Paschal families lived on the Forestburg-Decatur road, about three miles south of Forestburg, in the southeastern part of Montague County. Mrs. Paschal was a widow, and had five children, namely; Bill, Ben, John, Mary and Dollie; and she and her children were living with Mr. and Mrs. Kenon at the time. Mr. Kenon, accompanied by his oldest daughter, about fourteen years of age, had gone to Arkansas in an ox-wagon. Mrs. Kenon, and her remaining three children were at home at the time. About the first of April, all had gone to bed excepting perhaps Mrs. Kenon, when one of the blood-thirsty warriors from the government reservation in Oklahoma stuck his head in the door of the little frontier log cabin. True to her womanly instinct, Mrs. Paschal screamed, and when she did, the Indians made a run on the house. In a short time, Mrs. Paschal was struck with a bludgeon, and perhaps wounded in other ways. Ben Paschal, her oldest son, and aged about twelve, leaped through the window, only to be speared by a savage. But Ben recovered from his wound. When Will Paschal ran out into the yard, he was badly butchered and killed almost instantly. John Paschal, six or seven years of age, was struck across the bowels with a heavy bludgeon, and died two or three days later. Little Mary Paschal, about three or four years of age, was also injured, but recovered. Dollie, the Paschal baby, was left unharmed.

But what happened to Mrs. Kenon and her children? Mrs. Kenon was shot through the body, scalped, and died from the effects of her wounds about eleven days later. Mrs. Kenon's daughter, about twelve years of age, was slain almost instantly, and a boy, the same age, who was a twin to this girl, escaped unharmed. Mrs. Kenon's infant baby was snatched from her arms, slammed against the window facing, and then thrown out in the yard, where it lay unconscious until the succeeding day.

The next morning one of the Roberts boys discovered what had transpired, and took the wounded to his house. Mrs. Kenon lingered about eleven days, and was conscious most of the time. Five people were killed, and three others seriously wounded.

It has been reported that Mr. Kenon, who was almost blind, did not receive the news of this horrible tragedy until he had almost reached his home. Mrs. Kenon prayed almost daily, for her husband to arrive before she passed away. When he reached Montague County, however, Mrs. Kenon was already buried.

Ref.: Thrilling Indian Raids into Cooke and Montague Counties, by Levi Perryman; and History of Montague County, by Mrs. W. R. Potter. Also interviewed: W. A. (Bud) Morris, and one or two others who lived in that section at the time.

The above story is from the book, *The West Texas Frontier*, by Joseph Carroll McConnell.

The following second story is from the book, *Indian Depredations In Texas*, by J. W. Wilbarger:

The story of this sad tragedy is given as related by A. J. Sowell, author of "Texas Rangers." Mr. Sowell, who was in the ranging service at the time, arrived at the scene of the bloody tragedy soon after it occurred, and ought to be prepared to give a true version of all the particulars.

"While in camp on Big Sandy, news was brought to us of a fearful massacre of women and children on a small creek about thirty miles north of our camp, near the line of Montague and Wise counties. We lost no time in getting off, with eighteen men, well mounted and armed, to the scene of the slaughter, and by rapid riding arrived at the place before night, which was at Keenon's ranch; but we soon discovered that it would be impossible for us to follow the trail, as it had been snowing since the Indians were there. As we rode up we saw seven new made graves on the north side of the cabin, under some trees. The settlers from down the country had buried the dead. There were only two ranches west of there-Colonel Bean's and O. T. Brown's. Bean was absent at the time. His ranch was about two miles from Keenon's. The Keenon house consisted of only one room, about twelve by fourteen feet, made out of logs. There was a small field south of the cabin, at the foot of the hill near the creek. On the northwest side, about two hundred yards from the house, was a small lake of water, at the foot of some hills; on the east was a crib of corn. Keenon himself was not at home when the Indians made the attack on his ranch and massacred the helpless inmates. We dismounted, entered the yard, walked to the door and looked in. It was a horrible sight. The door was torn from its hinges, and lay in the yard covered with blood. Blood on the door steps, blood everywhere, met our sight. The inside of the cabin was like a butcher pen. Quilts and pillows were scattered about over the floor, stiff with clotted blood. The dress which Mrs. Keenon wore was hanging across the girder which extended room one wall to the other. It had been hung there by some party who buried the victims. The dead were as follows: Mrs. Keenon and two of her children; the widow Paschal, who was living with the Keenon family and her three children. We obtained the particulars of the attack from one of the Keenon children, a boy about eight years old, who made his escape on that fearful night. He said it was about ten o'clock at night; the ground was covered with snow, and it was very cold. The inmates had all gone to bed except Mrs. Keenon, who was sitting by the fire smoking. On the north side of the cabin was a small window with a shutter which fastened on the inside with a wooden pin entering a hole in one of the logs. The door was in the south side. Everything was still and quiet on that cold winter night. The children were all asleep, probably dreaming sweet dreams, which seldom visit the couch except of innocent childhood; when suddenly crash came the end of a rail through the frail shutter, bursting it wide open, and the hideous painted face of an Indian looked in and began to crawl through into the cabin. One brave or resolute woman, armed with an ax or hatchet, could have held them at bay; but poor Mrs. Keenon was timid, and instantly sank on her knees and began to pray and beg for her life. As fast as one Indian got through another followed, until nine hideous wretches stood inside. By this time the balance of the inmates were aroused. The children began screaming and the work of death commenced. Pen cannot describe the scene. The cold and lonely night, far out in the western wilds; the painted faces of the Indians lit up by the wood fire; the frantic and heartrending cries of the women and children; the sickening blows of the tomahawks, etc., make one shudder to think of it. Who can blame a Texas ranger for placing his six shooter to the head of a wounded savage and

pulling the trigger, as they often do in battle when they are victors. It was during the confusion that the little boy made his escape through the window by which the Indians had entered. He received a severe cut in the hip with a knife as he went through, but succeeded in getting clear of the house, and was able to run off and hide himself until the Indians left. Crouched in some bushes near the corn crib, and bleeding profusely, he waited and listened until all was still. The work was done; the fiends had reveled in blood. This boy displayed a presence of mind that was truly astonishing for one of his tender years before he made his escape from the house. He noticed the number of Indians that entered, and when they came out to take their departure, counting them to see if they were all leaving. The Indians had left their horses at the lake and came to the house on foot, and as the ground was covered with snow he could plainly see each form standing out in bold relief against the white background. He left his place of concealment and watched them until they mounted their horses and disappeared over the snow clad hills towards the west, and being satisfied that they would not return came back to the house and entered. What a sight for a boy of his age to behold. His mother lay near the hearth with three arrows in her breast, tomahawked and scalped. Some of the children were killed in bed, others lay on the floor in pools of blood; one of his sisters was crouched in a corner with her throat cut. There was at least a quart of blood in that corner when we were there. The widow Paschal was lying on the door shutter in the yard. She had three broken arrows in her breast. She had broken them off in attempting to pull them out; she was also scalped. The youngest child, about eighteen months old, was taken by the legs and its head dashed against the wall of the house and then thrown out through the window on the frozen ground by fifteen or twenty warriors. He was overtaken within a half mile of his house and dismounted in order to sell his life as dearly as possible. He took cover behind a tree and carefully fired the seven or eight shots he had; the gunfire could be heard from his house. J. H. returned there, grabbed his little brother and proceeded to help his father. When they found him, he was already dead, partially stripped, full of arrows but not scalped. A posse followed the Indian trail and within a half of mile the water. Mrs. Paschal drank the water and immediately expired. On looking around in the house while we were there I saw the old lady's pipe lying on the hearth, about half smoked out, where she had dropped it on that fatal night. We also saw a bent arrow spike in one of the logs, just above the bed. It had been shot at some of the children on the bed and missed. The shaft had been removed. The next evening after the massacre a settler passed the house and was hailed by the boy, who soon told his tale of woe.

The man took a hasty view of the victims and then galloped off to give the alarm. The next day the dead were buried and the news carried to the ranger camp, and when we arrived the ranch was deserted, the children having been taken away and cared for until their father arrived, who was off somewhere with a wagon and had one of his children with him, which circumstance saved its life, no doubt. As we could accomplish nothing, the trail being covered with a fresh fall of snow, after about an hour's stay we mounted and set out for camp, vowing vengeance if he should ever meet the red man face to face. Some time after our first visit to the Keenon place a small party of us returned after a load of corn. Keenon had returned and was preparing to move away from the frontier. Our captain hearing of it had purchased his corn crop, which amounted to about three hundred bushels. I was detailed on this trip as one of the guards and saw the little girl who was thrown out of the

window and so nearly killed by the Indians. She was very lively and when we asked her where the Indians hit her she would tuck down her head so we could see the back of it, which still looked discolored and bruised. The boy looked pale and thin, his wound was not yet healed.

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