



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

Henry Exall

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Henry Exall was a Confederate veteran, one of the youngest soldiers to serve in General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. He got his start in Texas here in Tarrant County, in the Grapevine-Minter's Chapel area, and went on to become one of the best known Texans of his day. He was a millionaire before 1900, and died in Dallas in 1913, a known and respected leader in several fields. There is an almost limitless amount of data to be found dealing with Mr. Exall and his long, distinguished career.

When the 1880 census of Tarrant County was taken, Henry was living in Precinct 3 north of Big Bear Creek. He was working as a stockman. He was living with the family of William McCausland, a rancher. One of the family's next-door neighbors was Thomas D. Newton.



A biographical sketch appeared in the Memorial and Biographical History of Dallas County, Texas, published by the Lewis Publishing Company of Chicago in 1892: "*HENRY EXALL, of Dallas, was born at Richmond, Virginia, August 30, 1848. He is [the] son of Rev. George G. Exall, a Baptist minister well known in Virginia and the South, who moved from England when but a child. His paternal grandfather was an English astronomer and divine of considerable renown. His mother is Angy E. (Pierce) Exall, a daughter of Joseph Pierce, who was a ship-builder of Philadelphia, and the representative of a family long prominent in naval construction in this country. Both branches of his family have an ancient and honorable lineage that extends to a very early period in American and English history.*

"Mr. Exall's early education, interrupted when he was thirteen years of age by the Civil war, was acquired at his father's academy. Two years later his strong Southern sympathies made him a soldier in the cause. He was the boy of his brigade, but his brave and brilliant soldiership marked

him even then as the child of destined success. At the battle of Ream's Station his brigade commander presented him a sword in recognition of his gallant services.

"At the close of the war he studied law, but very soon abandoned it for the wider and more active field of commercial life. In 1867 he moved from Virginia to Kentucky, where he engaged in merchandising and the manufacture of woolen goods. In 1869 he was married to Miss Emma Warner, of Owensboro, Kentucky. Three children were born to them, all of whom died when quite young, and in 1875 his wife also died.

"In 1877 business affairs brought Mr. Exall on a visit to Texas, and, when he surveyed the great possibilities of the grand State, for whose industrial development he was to do so much, he determined to sever his ties of residence with old Kentucky and become a Texan. He has represented the State of Texas at conventions of cattle-men, banker's associations, commercial congresses, expositions and political conventions at many an various times.

"In 1884 he was one of the representatives of the State in the convention that nominated Mr. Cleveland for the Presidency, and the same year he was a delegate to the National Cattle-men's Convention which met at St. Louis. He was appointed vice-president for Texas of the Cotton Centennial held at New Orleans in 1885, and the same year was also appointed Colonel and Quartermaster-General of the Texas Volunteer Troops.

"In 1887 Mr. Exall was elected vice-president for Texas of the American Bankers' Association held at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and during that year he also assisted in the organization of the North Texas National Bank of Dallas, of which he is vice-president; was chairman of the State Democratic Committee during the stormy time that prohibition promised to split the Democratic party in twain; and in 1889 was president of the Texas State Fair and Dallas Exposition, one of the most successful institutions of its character in the country.

"In all those places he has reflected credit on himself and on his State, and whether in a State or National Convention his conspicuous superiority as a man of force, fearlessness and character, has made him a figure of attraction, and given him a place as the equal of the best of his fellows. In the discharge of his duties as a representative he displays the enthusiastic interest of a personal champion of a personal friend, and always, whether acting for himself or for others, his task commands his best ability. He is a faithful believer in the future of his State, and has told the story of her undeveloped greatness to the moneyed men of the East, and to the traveler from all sections, and has been the means of developing this greatness above and beyond any other.

"In that development his personal accumulations have approximated \$1,000,000, a purse that is touched with no sparing hand when the enterprises of his State need encouragement. It may be said with truth, that every dollar of all that fortune he has made for himself is represented by \$10 made for the people among whom he lives. Mr. Exall has just finished the construction of one of the most majestic and costly buildings in the South. During its construction he might have been seen on any day in light conversation with men who drove the nails, laid the brick, and attending to the details of the work.

“His mind is so comprehensive that even the smallest particulars do not escape his notice; this mental scope has made Mr. Exall a successful exponent of all the industrial enterprises that he has originated and promoted. In the city of Dallas, where he lives, everybody is his friend. Here, in 1887, he married his second wife, nee Miss May Dickson, a most attractive and accomplished lady, who makes their home a haven of rest from the many cares of his busy life. Mr. Exall’s public expressions are always the embodiment of earnest consideration for the betterment of all alike, and when they contain advice as to a line of action, every word is tinged with a heart’s sincerity.”

“Omission of the mention of the tenderness that characterizes the domestic relations of the subject of this sketch, and the filial regard shown his aged parents would render it incomplete. Incidents in illustration, without number, might be given by the writer, but it is sufficient to say that it has been, and still is, one of the chief pleasures to minister to the every want of the venerable couple who nurtured him in infancy, and inspired his youthful heart with high principles and aspirations, which have been realized by the force of his own efforts.”

“He is not known as the donor of any conspicuous gift in charity, but he is the quiet distributor of more alms to worthy subjects than the average man of twice his wealth. And while in his modesty he prefers to remain the sole repository of the secrets of his own benevolence, it is known to all that no man ever disclosed to him a worthy cause with a request for help that he did not receive a prompt and liberal response. He has been repeatedly urged by both press and people to allow himself to become a candidate for Governor, but has always declined to become a candidate.”

“As a Democratic Commissioner-at-large for the United States (appointed by President Harrison) to the World’s Columbian Exposition, he will bring to bear upon its organization and development rare business abilities, and, such as cannot fail to be of great value and assistance to his fellow commissioners, the people of the United States at large and to the people of Texas in particular.”

Henry’s military records in the National Archives are quite sparse. He enlisted in Dinwiddie, Virginia on July 1, 1864. He was shown absent on detached service at some time during the months of July and August, 1864. The only other documents of his service which have survived are two receipts for clothing, for the third and fourth quarters of 1864. Mr. Exall certainly saw his share of the fighting, taking part in many major battles. Before he had enlisted, his regiment marched into Gettysburg in July, 1863 with two hundred sixty-three effective men. Less than two years later at the surrender of General Lee’s Army in April, 1865 there were three officers and nineteen men left.

Mr. Exall served in the Texas Legislature in 1887. A biographical sketch appeared in Personnel of the Texas State Government..., compiled and published by L. E. Daniel in Austin, Texas in 1887: *“HENRY EXALL. The distinguished gentleman whose sketch is briefly given, Colonel Henry Exall, is a typical Texan in many respects. He illustrates the triumph of indomitable energy and push over apparent unsurmountable obstacles. Combined with that, Colonel Exall possesses in a remarkable degree that faculty of always looking upon and presenting the brightest side to every picture; and while others hesitate in doubt and fear of failure, he seems to have derived a peculiar incentive from opposition and impediments, and full of courage, pressed on to the accomplishment of the objects before him. Not only is this sound and healthy condition his own characteristic, but he imparts it to those about him; and many who would otherwise have surrendered to the seeming inevitable, have*

been animated to hope and effort, by his cheery and hopeful nature. He is not a man to whine over the want of opportunity, or to grieve over failure; he makes opportunity and gathers from disappointment renewed ardor.

“Henry Exall was born in Richmond, Virginia on the thirtieth of August, 1848. His father, the Rev. George G. Exall, was a distinguished diving and educator of the Old Dominion. He obtained the advantage of a thorough classical and literary training at a school presided over by his father near Richmond. He also studied law, but his nature was too active and versatile to be tied to the desk and office of a lawyer, and his life thus far, has been spent in various mercantile pursuits, stock-raising, etc. in which he has been both fortunate and successful. Henry Exall was yet a youth when the cloud of war enveloped the old and historic State of his nativity. He promptly volunteered as a private in Company I, Tenth Virginia Cavalry, commanded by Colonel J. Lucius Davis, and was engaged with his regiment in the battles around Richmond in 1863, 1864, and 1865.

“At a late Confederate re-union in Waco, he was called upon to make a speech. He made an extemporaneous address that delighted old comrades in arms. One of them, who had known Exall in his youth, writing an account of it in the Waco Examiner, said: “Henry Exall was one of the youngest soldiers of the army of Northern Virginia. He enlisted under Colonel Davis, and fought in several battles on Grant’s James River line. At Ream’s Station, he was conspicuous for his bravery, and as a scout, he won encomiums from the regimental and brigade commanders.”

“With such antecedents, it is natural to correctly conclude that he is a Democrat dyed in the wool. He is now filling the responsible position of chairman of the Democratic State Executive Committee, and to his splendid energy and executive power may be attributed the thorough organization that has made Texas the banner State of the Democratic party. He represented the capital district in the National Democratic Convention that nominated Cleveland and Hendricks, in 1884. He was chairman of the congressional convention that nominated Joe Sayers for Congress, in 1884.

“Colonel Exall has also been prominently identified with the cattle interests of the State of Texas, and is a large operator in stock of that kind. He was vice-president of the National Cotton Planters’ Association at the New Orleans Exposition in 1885.

“In 1869, Colonel Exall married Miss Emma Warner, of Owensborough, Kentucky, who died in that State in 1875. His mother and father are both living at an advanced age, in Paducah, Kentucky. Colonel Exall came to Texas to live in 1876; first located at Dallas, but finally settled permanently at Grapevine, in Tarrant county, and at once took an active part in private business and public affairs.

“He has, by energy and prudence, acquired a competency, and is still in full business activity; especially is he valuable as a citizen on account of his ready participation and aid in every enterprise that promises to rebound to the good of the State and the elevation of his kind. He is a very ardent and enthusiastic man in everything he undertakes, and imparts his buoyancy and hopefulness to all with whom he comes into contact. He thinks this is a most excellent world, and enjoys it rationally, and as a Christian gentleman ought to do. He is destined, if he lives, to be

identified with the development and history of Texas, and to leave the memory of a noble and disinterested life behind him.”

Family genealogists at Ancestry.com show that Mr. Exall’s second wife, May Dickson, was born in Collin County, Texas on August 14, 1859 and died September 28, 1936 in Dallas. She was the daughter of Joseph J. Dickson and his wife, Sarah S. Epperson. Joseph J. Dickson died on April 6, 1862 at the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee while serving in the Confederate Army.



Mrs. Henry Exall

An excellent shorter overall summary of Mr. Exall’s life is found in the Texas State Historical Association’s Handbook of Texas Online, in an article compiled by Joan Jenkins Perez. Exall’s second wife, May Dickson Exall, quite prominent in her own right, is also the subject of an article compiled by the same author in the same work. Exall is also mentioned in several other Handbook articles.

Exall’s death certificate says he died December 19, 1913 of acute dilation of the heart. He was buried in Oakland Cemetery in Dallas. A great many mentions of his death were made in the Dallas newspapers, complete with testimonials from prominent man over a wide area. One representative obituary, complete with an excellent photograph, appeared on the front page of The Dallas Morning News on Tuesday, December 30, 1913 [as an interesting aside, this entire issue contained only sixteen pages]: *“COL. HENRY EXALL CLAIMED BY DEATH. DISTINGUISHED TEXAS SUCCUMBS TO ILLNESS, FOLLOWING AN OPERATION. WAS NATIONAL FIGURE. Efforts for Better Farming and Service in Other Respects Had Gained Him Wide Distinction. Col. Henry Exall died yesterday morning at the family residence, 1916 Ross Avenue. He was president of the Texas Industrial Congress and of the National Corn Exposition, one of the foremost citizens of Dallas and Texas, for years a persistent worker for the development of the city, the State and the Southwest, and his unique and highly successful efforts in behalf of better farming had made him a figure of National prominence.*

“The end came after a serious illness of several weeks and was the result of a complication of causes following an operation about fifteen days ago. While those nearest to him had been anxious for his life for days, the city as a whole received the news of his death as an unlooked-for catastrophe.

“The funeral will be held this afternoon at 2 o’clock from the family residence, with burial in Oakland Cemetery. Dr. William M. Anderson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, will conduct the service.

“The pallbearers are: Active-Wendel Spence, J. B. Oldham, Edgar L. Flippen, Nathan Adams, Manning Shannon, J. G. Babcock, Will C. Hogg of Houston and W. C. Barrickman. Honorary-J. C. Duke, G. B. Dealey, C. Lombardi, Col. John N. Simpson, C. R. Buddy, Dr. J. B. Cranfill, Elmer T. Scott, Joe S. Kendall, Sam T. Morgan, Capt. W. H. Gaston, J. S. Cullman of Houston, Marian Sansom of Fort Worth, E. W. Kirkpatrick of McKinney and I. J. Kimberlin of Sherman.

“Ask Merchants to Close. Mayor Holland and the City Commissioners of Dallas yesterday expressed their great sorrow at the death of Col. Exall and requested all Dallas merchants to close their doors between 3 and 4 o’clock this afternoon and asked that all business, professional and laboring men of the city, as far as possible, cease their work for one hour, to do honor to the man and the citizen.

“The directors of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce will attend the funeral in a body.

“Col. Exall has been identified with practically every great civic enterprise that has been undertaken in Dallas since he came to the city from Lampasas in 1888. He has been known as a laborer for the good of his fellow-man throughout Texas and the South.

“Col. Exall was born in Richmond, Va., Aug. 31, 1848. He was the son of Rev. George G. Exall and Angeline (Pierce) Exall. His father was a Baptist clergyman and came from England to take up his labors as a minister and educator in America. Henry Exall received his early education at a seminary near his birthplace, conducted by his father. At the age of 13 he left school to enter the Confederate Army as a member of the Tenth Virginia Cavalry. He went to Kentucky and engaged in a manufacturing business. Here he married Miss Emma Warner, who died in 1875. Three children were born to this union, all of whom died early in life.

“Came to Texas in 1876. In 1876 he came to Texas and settled near Fort Worth, going into the cattle business. In 1881 he moved to Lampasas, where he was engaged in real estate and cattle business. In 1888 he came to Dallas and had since been among its foremost citizens.

“He was a delegate to the National cattlemen’s convention in St. Louis in the ‘80’s and was appointed vice-president for Texas of the Cotton Centennial held at New Orleans in 1885, and the same year he was appointed Colonel and Quartermaster General of the Texas volunteer troops. In 1887 he was elected vice-president for Texas of the American Bankers’ Association at Pittsburg, Pa., and in this year he assisted in organizing the North Texas National Bank of Dallas.

“He was interested in the breeding of fine race horses at Lomo Alto farm north of Dallas. During the Beaumont oil excitement, Col Exall was engaged in business there but later returned to Dallas and had lent his talents to the upbuilding of the city and the State in various ways.

“Attracts Capital Here. It was Col. Exall who first interested Adolphus Busch in Dallas when the St. Louis capitalist Belmont north of Dallas. He also interested the Drexel and Morgan interests in Dallas, through their ownership in the property now known as Highland Park. This property belonged to Col. Exall and the lake in that section is still known as Exall Lake.

“Co. Exall built and formerly owned the North Texas Bank Building. He was a prominent figure in developing the Thurber coal deposits. He was chairman of the State Democratic Executive Committee in 1884. In 1893 President Harrison appointed him one of the commissioners at large to the World’s Columbian Exposition at Chicago. He was delegate at large from Texas to the centennial anniversary of the inauguration of a President of the United States.

“Gave Service to Farmers. Probably the greatest work of Col. Exall’s life was his labor in the position of president of the Texas Industrial Congress, where he strove for the improvement of farm production and the betterment of human life.

“For many years he had given a careful scientific study to the subject of soil conservation, and, following his election as president of the Industrial Congress in 1910 at Houston, he inaugurated a vigorous campaign, emphasized by the offer of large cash prizes, \$10,000 in gold, for the stimulation of the farmers of Texas to the vital necessity of taking immediate and decisive action by maintaining the fertility of the soil by returning to it a fair proportion of the mineral elements that are taken away by a repetition of crops.

“Col. Exall is survived by his widow, who was Miss May Dickson; Henry Exall Jr. of Dallas, his son; two brothers, George P. Exall of Paducah, Ky., and Joe P. Exall of Nashville, Ark.; two sisters, Mrs. Nellie E. Bowles of Kevlin, Ky., and Mrs. Annie E. Elrod of Houston, Henry E. Elrod of Dallas, a nephew, and many other nieces and nephews in Texas and other States.

“Col. Exall was a member of the Sterling Price Camp, United Confederate Veterans of Dallas, of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, the Dallas Press Club, and other civic organizations.” The rest of this lengthy tribute is made up of statements from a wide variety of government and civic leaders, local, state, and national.

