

MOUNTS PAUL AND PETER

By K. Favrholt
Museum Curator/Archivist

Mounts Paul and Peter are symbols of Kamloops and, in a way, our major natural landmarks. They have long been such from native times, when the Indians created a legend about the origin of these hills, to the present day images which are still being created. In oral legend, art, photography and writing, the mountains have been a perennial subject.

The earliest visualization of Mounts Paul and Peter is a watercolour sketch by fur trader Alexander Caulfield Anderson, painted in June 1849. At that time Kamloops was an empty landscape, except for the scattered homes of native people, the fort of the Hudson's Bay Company (at that time on the North Shore site). The watercolour is faint and tentative, but focuses on Mounts Paul and Peter and the junction of the rivers.

Another view of the H.B.C. fort, and a fine painting stored in the Provincial Archives in Victoria, is supposedly by trader John Tod and dates from about 1860. It shows the sunrise behind Peter and Paul.

The artist's record then gives way to the photographer's. The most famous early photographic view of Kamloops is by Benjamin Baltzly when he visited Kamloops in 1871. The photograph shows the river junction and Mounts Paul and Peter very prominently. A comparison of this picture with the peaks today reveals little change in over a century.

Many photographers, amateur and professional, since that time have been captivated by the changing shadows and colours of Mounts Peter and Paul.

Writers have also depicted the scene, although the early fur traders, in particular, were preoccupied with their fur returns, not the scenery.

Commander Richard Mayne of the Royal Navy, in his book "Four Years in British Columbia", wrote of his visit and reconnaissance of the Kamloops area. "The mountain of which Mr. McLean and [the H.B.C. trader at the time] guided us was one of two standing side by side opposite the fort and about a mile from it. Its companion had been named Roches des Femmes from the fact that in summer many Indian women were to be seen scattered about its sides gathering berries and moss. From its summit, a height of some 1,500 feet, we had a very fine view ...". Mayne and his party descended the mountain which they christened Mount St. Paul in honour of the old chief.

Baltzly, the photographer, also kept a journal in conjunction with the photographs he undertook for the C.P.R. survey. Behind the Indian Reserve, he commented "Mount St. Paul rises majestically".

In a book called "The Western Avernus", author Morley Roberts describes his trip to Kamloops about 1885 and the "steep, barren and treeless mountain which had the peculiarity to me of always looking as if it was partly in shade and partly in light, owing to differences in colours of the mass. In fact, it gave me somewhat the same impression in that respect as St. Paul's in London, when one sees the clean and discoloured portions of the stones in contrast".

Robert Service, in his 1947 book "Ploughman of the Moon", described Kamloops during his brief stay here as a bank clerk in 1904. He took up riding and wrote "At four o'clock we were on our horses riding over the rolling ridges, or into spectral gulches that rose to ghostlier mountains. It was like the scenery of Mexico, weirdly desolate and aridly morose".

Heritage Day is Monday, February 17 and from now until February 23 and exhibit of local heritage sites and significant buildings will be shown as well paintings of Mounts Paul and Peter recently made by the Kamloops Chapter of the Federation of Canadian Artists, portray today this piece of our natural heritage and will be on exhibit . Also to be seen are several earlier paintings of Mounts Paul and Peter and photographic panoramas on permanent display in the Museum that are testimony to the significance of these landmarks which form part of our natural heritage.