

*Historical Notes on*  
**Peters Lake**  
*and Area*

*by*

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The history of the Peters Lake area, and the area presently within the boundaries of Monashee Provincial Park, is intimately linked with the development of its' western gateway - Sugar Lake. Although presently the Peters Lake area is evidently more readily accessible from the Arrow Lakes, due to logging road access, throughout the twentieth century it was primarily accessed from the west.

The first known visitors to the area were William 'Bill' Fraser (Plate I), and an unidentified companion, who walked across Canada sometime believed to be about 1900. The two men were crossing the Monashee Mountains, from the Arrow Lakes, as winter was approaching. With no trail to follow and uncertain of the country that lay ahead of them, they decided to prepare for winter and built a log cabin (1) near what is now known as Margie Lake. As spring approached, they continued on their way and upon arriving at Sugar Lake they paused to enjoy the spring weather, before continuing on to the west coast.

Bill Fraser was so attracted to Sugar Lake (Plate II) that, after visiting the west coast, he returned and settled on the northwest corner of the lake (2) near where the Shuswap River entered the original lake.

Following a forest fire in the Rainbow/Spectrum Lake - Peters Lake area, Bill Fraser was contracted by the B. C. Government to build a pack trail from Sugar Lake into the Peters Lake area (3). The main purpose of the trail was to provide access in the event of future forest fires; however, a secondary requirement was that the trail be routed to facilitate the development of several gold claims on the north side of the Rainbow/Spectrum Valley. The western portion of the trail from Sugar Lake was sited on the south side of Rainbow/Spectrum Creek, mainly through the giant cedar and white pine trees of the damp valley bottom which were undamaged by the forest fire. The eastern portion of the trail, after crossing the creek to the north side of the valley, climbed steeply up and along the drier slopes above Rainbow Lake, where it skirted the base of avalanche prone Slate Mountain (Plates III and IV), as it gained altitude heading for the pass into the Peters

1. *Bill Fraser and Andrew Hankey, personal communication: The cabin was later completely destroyed by forest fire fighters who camped adjacent to the cabin and used it as a ready source of dry firewood.*
2. *Canada Census, 1911: William Fraser (1873 - 1959) is listed as a Farmer, living with his wife and mother-in-law at Sugar Lake where he would have farmed on the large river flats at the northwest end of the lake prior to it being dammed and flooded in 1943. In latter years, he continued to live at Sugar Lake in the summers and wintered in a cabin he built at the creek-mouth at Okanagan Landing. He died in Vernon in 1959.*
3. *Andrew Hankey (1912 - 1994): my Uncle, personal communication: The original name of Rainbow Lake and Rainbow Creek was widely known and commonly used until sometime about 1960 when the name "Spectrum" gradually began to be used. The origin of the name change is unknown. However, the spectacular falls on the lower creek, inside the Monashee Park boundary, continue to be known as Rainbow Falls.*

## 2.

Lake basin. The choosing of the route and the building of this upper section of the trail was reportedly made much easier as the forest fire that triggered the building of the trail had burnt off the trees and brush in this area (4).

The crossing of Rainbow/Spectrum Creek, whether by foot or with pack horses, was always a challenging and time consuming operation due to the large, smooth boulders in the creek-bed combined with the deep, rushing waters of the creek. To overcome this major obstacle, eventually a wide, sturdy footbridge was constructed, to safely accommodate pack horses. Huge cedar trees growing near the creek bank were selected and fallen so as to span the creek and become the stringers supporting the new *Rainbow Bridge*. This volunteer project was the handy work of a team of public minded outdoorsmen, including Bill Fraser, Andrew Hankey, 'Wash' Ryan, Les Veil, and others.

### *Sugar Lake & Fraser Lodge*

In the early 1900's, Sugar Lake was a popular, pristine fishing lake and fashionable recreational area. A number of prominent Vernon area residents had established summer homes there so they could relax and escape the hot Okanagan summers.

Seeing a business opportunity, Bill Fraser established Fraser Lodge - a fishing / holiday resort on his property. He built a Lodge on a rise overlooking the lake. - it was an imposing 3-story, cedar log building with a shake roof, a full walk-out basement, a main floor with a wide, wrap-around veranda and second floor sleeping accommodations. In addition, lakeside cedar log cabins and boats were available for rent.

By 1925, Andrew Hankey had started work cutting poles at Sugar Lake for Bill Shunter, a cedar telephone pole contractor based at Lumby, B. C. In 1935, he married Peggy Peters (5) and they moved to Sugar Lake where he continued cutting poles while Peggy cooked for the men in Shunter's Camp. Shortly afterwards Peggy & Andrew joined Bill Fraser in operating Fraser Lodge. To expand the resort, Andrew built a number of additional log cabins for rental to guests while Peggy expanded the lawn and garden area to enhance the Lodge and provide campground facilities. In addition to providing boats and accommodation, Fraser Lodge was important for providing pack-horse services to carry supplies to the area Forest Service fire lookout stations. They also packed and guided groups of artists and outdoor enthusiasts wishing to sketch or otherwise experience the beauty of the alpine country and the majestic mountains of the Peters Lake area and other areas surrounding Sugar Lake.

The tranquil beauty and the idealic cottage lifestyle of Sugar Lake abruptly ended in 1942. Western Canadian Hydro Corporation built a storage dam at Brenda Falls, near the

4. *Andrew Hankey, personal communication: the mineral claims, which influenced the route of the trail on the north side of the valley, apparently were never developed.*
5. *Peggy Hankey (nee Peters) (1915 – 2008): my Aunt, the daughter of my Grandparents Richard (Dick) and Charlotte Peters, of Okanagan Landing, was a second cousin on Frank Peters.*

### 3.

outlet of Sugar Lake to double the generating capacity of their downstream power station at Shuswap Falls. Peers Dam raised the lake level by about 20 ft/7m and flooded summer homes and most of the useable recreational land in the area. Unfortunately, the lakeshore area destined to be flooded was not pre-cleared and, as a consequence, the lake was soon ringed by a band of water killed trees. For decades these dead trees slowly decayed and fell into the lake forming a 'raft' of floating logs that encircled the lake. The remaining still-standing trees, that were interspersed among the continuous 'raft' served to trap and anchor the floating logs in place preventing all lake access except at a few privately cleared and boomed-off access points, like Fraser Lodge. Additionally, once boaters did manage to get on the lake, they had to constantly be on the watch for the numerous floating and/or semi-submerged deadheads that drifted in the lake. Thus, the once beautiful and safe recreational lake became an unattractive and somewhat dangerous lake for boating.

Fortunately, Fraser Lodge had been built on a rise overlooking the original lake and just managed to escape flooding (Plates V and VI) while the lake-side cabins were moved back to higher ground and still exist today. A new trailhead for the Peters Lakes trail was established, above the new high-water mark, about 2 miles upstream.

For decades, the Lodge owners preformed a valuable service by regularly ferrying groups of hikers between the Lodge and the new trailhead, through an uncharted maze of water-killed trees in the former river delta above Sugar Lake.

Starting in the mid-1950's float planes began flying visitors and/or their camping supplies into Peters Lake. Usually, several trips were required for each group and, to minimize flying costs, it was customary for them to use Fraser Lodge as a base for their flights. However, before the planes could land on Sugar Lake it was often necessary for Fraser Lodge owner, Bob Cormack, to clear driftwood from an area of the lake to ensure that it was safe for the float planes to land. Although some visitors began being flown in with their packs, it remained necessary for all visitors to hike out. The high elevation of Peters Lake and the restrictive topography made it unsafe for float planes to fly-out passengers (Plate VII). Thus, when hikers returned to Sugar Lake they relied on the services of Mr. Cormack to ferry them back to Fraser Lodge (Plate VIII).

Eventually, a bridge was built spanning the upper Shuswap River, to open the area northeast of Sugar Lake for logging. A forest access road was built up the valley (6) almost to Rainbow/Spectrum Lake to access a stand of mature white pine and cedar.

6. *Fraser Lodge was established by Bill Fraser and latterly owned by the Bob McCormack family of Vernon. It was the starting point for hikers to Rainbow/Spectrum and Peters Lakes for over fifty years. Originally the owners took guests into the lakes by packhorse train but latterly they just ferried hikers across the lake between the Lodge and the trail head. It ceased to operate in the 1960's. With the advent of the forest access road across the Shuswap River and up the Rainbow/Spectrum Valley, the Lodge ceased to play a vital role in providing ferry service to both Rainbow/Spectrum and Peters Lakes*

This road had the secondary benefit of greatly shortening the hike and increasing public access to the Rainbow/Spectrum-Peters Lake area. In addition, the road had the benefit of providing easy road access to the hither-to almost unseen but spectacular Rainbow Falls (Plate VIII). Another consequence of the new road was 'the end of an era' in that Fraser Lodge ceased to play a vital role in providing access to both Rainbow/Spectrum and Peters Lakes.

### *Naming of Peters Lake*

James Frank Peters was a partner in *Wellfield Cotton Mill* in the famous cotton milling town of Rochdale, Lancashire, England. Tragically, his only sons – twin 19 year olds – were killed during the World War I *Battle of the Somme*, in October and November of 1918 (7). He was understandably devastated and with no heirs to take over the cotton milling business, he sold his interest and together with his wife Anne and only daughter Doris, he travelled the world pursuing outdoor activities, including fishing and big game hunting(8).

In 1924 Frank Peters visited Vernon and Okanagan Landing (8, 9) where his cousin William Peters and other family members (including William's adult children Kenneth, Jessie and Richard Peters) had settled. During a stay at Fraser Lodge, Bill Fraser reportedly told Frank about an unnamed lake "over the mountains" in the alpine area to the east of Sugar Lake (10). Evidently, Bill promised Frank that if he would come back again for a visit the following year they would take Frank into the lake and name it after him. Frank agreed. The following year, 1925, Frank returned and upon visiting the lake it was named *Peters Lake* in his honour.

Two smaller lakes in the area were named *Kate Lake* and *Margie Lake* (Plate IX) after Frank's nieces in England – Miss Kathleen Peters and Miss Margaret Peters (11).

### *The Fish Stocking of Peters Lake*

Originally, Peters Lake, which is located at about the 6234 ft/1900m elevation was void of fish. The creek which drains the Peters Lake basin cascades down approximately 3000 ft/900 m in a continuous succession of water falls and cataracts (Plates III and X) to Rainbow/Spectrum Lake (Plate XI) Thus, this section of creek was a natural barrier that made it impossible for fish to migrate upstream from Rainbow/Spectrum Lake and naturally stock Peters Lake. In order to rectify the situation, discussions were held with

7. *Penny Sault (nee Peters): my Sister, personal communications.*
8. *Saxon Peters (1914 – 1985): my Father, personal communication*
9. *Penny Sault (Peters): personal communication. Frank Peters (James Frank Peters, 1864-1927) visited the area in 1924, 1925 and 1926. However, his third trip to the Okanagan was very brief and it appears that it was likely cut short due to ill health as he died in January 1927 about one month after returning home to England. He was a first cousin of my Great Grandfather, William Peters.*
10. *Andrew Hankey: personal communication.*
11. *Peggy Hankey, personal communications.*

## 5.

personnel from the province's Summerland Trout Hatchery. Andrew Hankey volunteered to deliver the fish to Peters Lake by pack train if the hatchery would donate the fish. Although the trip, either with packhorses or on foot, routinely took two full days, Andrew undertook to make the trip in only one day in order to deliver the fish alive and thereby stock the lake.

Arrangements were made and on August 1, 1940 the Summerland Trout Hatchery delivered 8,000 fingerling Rainbow Trout to Fraser Lodge. The next morning, the strongest and best pack-horses were readied and packed by daybreak. The fish were transported in recycled 5 gallon coal oil containers lashed on both sides of the horses which in turn were then ferried, on a large motorized raft, across Sugar Lake to the trail-head.

During the trip, whenever possible, some of the warmer, stale water was drained from the fish tanks and replaced with fresh, cold water obtained from streams along the trail. These stops were vital not only for the fish, but also for the very hard-working pack-horses which needed both the rests and water. In the end, this epic trip was made in record time. Arriving at dusk, the fish were successfully delivered and released at the first point of contact - into the short stream that connects Big Peters and Little Peters Lakes. A sign, documenting the feat, was nailed on a tree stump to mark the occasion (Plate XII-A). As a reward for their efforts, the exhausted horses were rested and grazed for a couple of days before making the return trip to Fraser Lodge (12).

Today, the fish have thrived and multiplied for the enjoyment and food of Park visitors; however, their body size is restricted by the limited natural food available in this high elevation lake.

### *Hankey Mountain*

The mountain immediately east of Slate Mountain at the northern end of Peters Lake, is currently misidentified as *Cariboo Mountain* on some maps, but it was originally named *Hankey Mountain* (12) (Plate XIII). Although Andrew was a frequent visitor and led many packhorse trains into the Peters Lake area, it was in recognition of his epic one-day trip to release live fish in Peters Lake that *Hankey Mountain* was named in his honour.

The *Hankey Mountain* (elevation 6,900 ft/2,100 m) overlooks the spot where the Rainbow Trout were released into the creek on August 2, 1940 (12). Although it is entirely possible that the name *Hankey Mountain* may not have been officially recorded, like a great many other geographical features, the name was well known and in common usage for several decades before being given its second name. The renaming is believed

12. Andrew and Peggy Hankey: personal communication.

## 6.

to be relatively recent and presumably was the action of those not aware of the original name nor of its' significance.

As a permanent recognition of Andrew Hankey (Plate XIV-B) and his epic fish stocking trip, it would be fitting if this mountain could be officially re-renamed so that on future maps it can be identified by its' original name - *Hankey Mountain*.

### *Recent Map Name Changes*

Several geographical features in Monashee Park, besides *Hankey/Cariboo Mountain*, have also mysteriously undergone name changes in relatively recent times:

*Rainbow/Spectrum Lake and Creek*: Sometime around the late 1950's, this spectacularly beautiful and peaceful lake, and the creek which drains it, began to be referred to by the somewhat fancier sounding name of *Spectrum*. Although the two names mean virtually the same thing, the reason for the name change, the party responsible and the actual date of the change are unknown (13). However, because of the similarity of the names, it is hard to believe that those responsible for the renaming were not aware of their original names. Interestingly, the 'renamers' seem to have been unaware of the spectacular falls (Plate XV) on the lower creek as they did not suffer the same fate and have retained their original and more descriptive name, *Rainbow Falls*.

*Hankey/Cariboo Mountain*: It appears that the more recent map makers (14) were not only unaware of the existing name *Hankey Mountain*, but they were also unaware of the correct spelling of "Caribou" as it applies to the animal!

*North and South Caribou/Cariboo Passes*: The incorrect spelling of the mountain on present maps (14) has also been applied to both the *North Caribou Pass* (between Hankey and Slate Mountains) and the *South Caribou Pass* (at the south end of Peters Lake). These two passes were obviously named after the majestic Mountain Caribou which can be seen swimming across Peters Lake and using these passes as they migrate through the area. There is no connection with the B.C. area known as *The Cariboo*. Thus, it would be appropriate if this spelling error could also be corrected in future maps.

*Mount Fraser/Fosthall*: The highest mountain in the immediate Peters Lake area (elevation 8789 ft / 2679 m) was originally named *Mont Fraser* or *Mount Fraser* (16). In 1928, Mr. Bill Fraser, of Sugar Lake, named the mountain after himself. As one of the first known visitors to the area and who, over a century ago, spent a winter virtually in the shadow of the mountain, it would be reasonable to assume that it was a justifiable choice for a name!

13. Peggy and Andrew Hankey, personal communications.

14. An excellent, coloured topographical map of Monashee Provincial Park (updated January 2010) is available on-line at BC Parks website [www.bcparks.ca](http://www.bcparks.ca).

A homemade concrete tablet, poured on-site, was inscribed to commemorate the naming. The tablet which is located immediately to the south of the rocky summit (Plate XVI) reads:

*MONT FRASER*  
*AUG. 10, 1928*  
*W. FRASER*  
*F. LEHAY*

The accompanying photograph (Plate XVII), taken by the author in August 1958, documents the tablets existence and the original naming of the mountain in 1928 (15).

In the late 1950s or early 1960s, a 'new' name – *Mt. Fosthall* – began being used instead of *Mt. Fraser*. When enquiring about the new name, I was told that a government surveyor, by the name of Fosthall, had done some mapping in the area and that he had renamed the mountain for himself. I have not been able to verify the accuracy of this statement nor have I been able to determine the date of his reported mapping. However, it is almost certain that Mr. Fraser's naming of the mountain in 1928, which is herewith photographically documented, predates the actions of Mr. Fosthall!

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15. *It is assumed that Mr. Fraser, who had Eastern Canadian roots, used the French spelling 'Mont' on purpose in naming the mountain. However, may have intended to use the Anglicized term 'Mount' when naming Mt. Fraser after himself.*



*Acknowledgements*

I am deeply indebted to many people for the historical information contained in this report. It has been distilled from over fifty years of conversations with: Dorothy A. (Peggy) Hankey (nee Peters) and Andrew Hankey, my Aunt and Uncle, who participated in much of the early history of both Sugar and Peters Lakes; Mr. Bill Fraser, a family friend and true pioneer whom I fondly remember as a kindly old gentleman with a real affinity for the beauty and tranquility of the Sugar Lake area - he played an important role in its' history and the naming of a number its' topographical features; Saxon Peters, my father, who actually met Frank Peters on his three trips to the Okanagan and was able to relate information about him; plus other Vernon area residents, especially the outstanding Scout Leaders Stuart Fleming, Don Harwood and Ken Dobson who lead my first three trips into the area. I am deeply indebted to these Scouters for introducing me to the spectacular beauty of the area that we now know as Monashee Provincial Park. I have been privileged to visit the area to hike, fish, view wildlife and admire its' outstanding natural beauty on six occasions (1953, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 2010).

The excellent historic photographs provided by B. C. Archives website and the helpful volunteers at the Vernon Museum and Archives are recognized and greatly appreciated.

Special recognition is given to my sister Penny Sault (nee Peters) who has researched the Peters family genealogy and who has been able to provide relevant documentation on both Mr. Bill Fraser and Mr. Frank Peters.

*W. S. (Bill) Peters*

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**Plate I:** An undated portrait of area pioneer, William F. (Bill) Fraser (1873 – 1959). He walked across Canada circa 1900, with a companion (name unknown), and overwintered in a cabin they built at Margie Lake. He later settled at Sugar Lake, established Fraser Lodge, built the trail into Peters Lake and was responsible for the naming several area features, including Peters Lake.

Courtesy Vernon Museum and Archives, ID 16565



**Plate V:** Fraser Lodge, circa 1943, overlooking the Shuswap delta bottom lands and still living trees being flooded by the rising water.

Courtesy Vernon Museum and Archives, ID 15690



Plate XVII: A historic concrete tablet, poured onsite on the rocky slope, immediately to the south of the Mt. Fraser summit. It is inscribed:

*Mont Fraser Aug. 10, 1928 W. Fraser F. Leahy* and clearly establishes the mountain's original name as *Mont Fraser*. It is interesting to note the small sorrel plant and spider at this high elevation.

W. S. Peters, August 1958

