

# Saint Aidans of Pokeist

SITE #090501

GC1TTXO

Written & Researched by Kathy Paulos

## SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Spences Bridge, V0K 2L0

Geocache Location: N 50°31.186'  
W 121°17.051'

Accuracy: 5 meters

Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page

UTM: East 0621634;  
North 5597829 10U

Geocache altitude: 274 m./898 ft.

Overall difficulty: 1.5

Terrain difficulty: 1.5  
(1=easiest; 5=hardest)

Date Established: c 1881

Ownership: Cook's Ferry Indian Band

- Access:
- Highway
  - Year-round
  - Vehicle accessible
  - *Detailed access information on next page.*



**P**okeist means “White Stone” in the Nlaka’pamux language.

The historic Village of Pokeist lies 12 km north of Spences Bridge, along the east bank of the Thompson River, reverently settled beneath the ‘White Stone’. Prior to the small pox epidemic of 1852, the population of Pokeist, together with a small community just across the river, numbered approximately 800 people.

Pokeist’s ‘White Stone’ was a sacred place to these First Nations people. Native healers climbed to the rock where they would fast and pray. It was also used by young men coming of age and seeking a vision. Some of the elders remember when there was a rope attached to the pinnacle making it slightly easier to ascend and descend from the top.

Beneath the stoic white pinnacle,

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*Saint Aidans is visible below the cliffs across the river.*

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nestled honorably amongst the sage brush, sits the tiny Anglican Church of Saint Aidans.

The earliest mention of the church is found in the memoirs of Bishop Sillitoe (1899). He recalls that on a visit to Toketic (described in the memoirs as “Nine Miles above Cooks Ferry”) an agreement was made between himself and “Teetleneetsah” concerning the building of a church. At this meeting provisions were also made for a bell and a flag. The church is believed to have been built on or about 1881, however no exact records have been located. The original bell, donated by Bishop Sillitoe, has since been removed for safe keeping.

The B.C. Mining Journal, dated January 1900, provides an account of an 1899 Christmas Eve tragedy. The Anglican Church at Pokeist had scheduled a regular Christmas Eve midnight service. While en route to the service several locals were lost in a river crossing mishap.

“While attempting to cross the Thompson River at the 89 Mile Post, east of Spences Bridge last Sunday night between the hours of nine and ten o’clock, Indians Billy Pascoe, Long George and his wife, Jimmie George and his wife and two half-breed boys twelve and fifteen years of age, sons of Peter Audap, were drowned, from the upsetting of a canoe.” The Mining Journal account continues, “... up to Thursday night the body of Jimmie George’s wife only had been found, although a number of Indians with grappling irons were dragging the river. Indians Long George and Jimmie are brothers of Mrs. Audap, thus with this sad accident Mrs. Audap loses two brothers and two sons.”

Saint Aidans remained in use for many years to come for the community of Pokeist and neighboring families. The church was last painted in the 1950s when a group of around twenty people arrived to help. Clifford Yamelst came on horseback from Spences Bridge; arriving late he found no paint brushes left. Clifford was really keen on helping. Undaunted by the lack of paint brushes he simply cut a handful of hair from his horse’s tail and began painting. The evidence of this painting technique is still visible on the church’s frame today.

The church continued to be used until the late 1990s for baptisms and today, burials continue to take place at the nearby graveyard.

#### Detailed access information:

- The church is on land owned by Cook’s Ferry Indian Band and is not accessible.
- Viewing pullout is located 17 km north of Spences Bridge on Hwy #1.
- ‘Hidden’ drive access to pullout is on the north-bound lanes just north of cement barrier.
- Please use caution when entering and exiting driveway.

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#### BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

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Williams, C.E.H., & McGeachie, P. (1991). *Archdeacon on Horseback*. Merritt, BC: Sonotek Publishing Ltd.