

# PANORAMA OF JERUSALEM AND THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

Professor  
Elimar Ulrich  
Bruno Piglhein  
(1848–1894)



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During the nineteenth century, in the days before the invention of motion pictures, panoramas (or cycloramas) became a popular form of entertainment. Housed in circular buildings (rotundas), these consisted of huge paintings of dramatic scenes. The viewer stood in the center of the rotunda, with the picture all around him, filling his vision with a breathtaking, all-encompassing spectacle. The paintings were seamless and lifelike, and guides provided appropriate commentary, pointing out specific details of the events depicted.

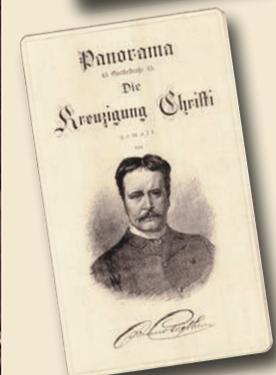
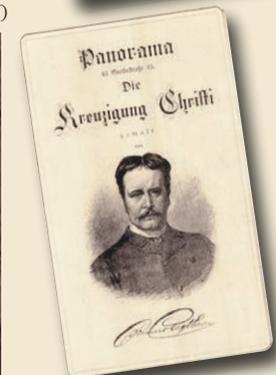
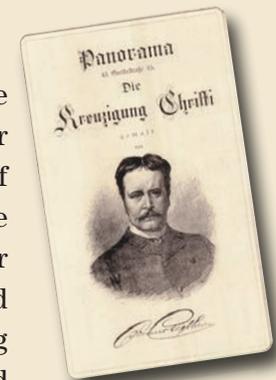
Most of the early panoramas were city scenes or particularly impressive landscapes, while famous battles – such as Waterloo and Gettysburg – were ideal subjects. *The Panorama of Jerusalem and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ* was something different, however, and was to make a great impact. It was the brainchild of two Germans, Joseph Halder and Franz Joseph Hotop, who in 1885 commissioned an artist to undertake the monumental work of art.

Their choice to mastermind this enterprise was Bruno Piglhein, who had already built a reputation with a number of religious paintings. A pastelist, sculptor, painter of portraits, landscapes and animals, he had studied in Weimar, Dresden and Munich. He was to be an influential figure in the Munich art world, becoming a professor and honorable associate of the Munich Academy. In 1892 he was also to become president of the influential society of artists known as the

(continued on page 17)



Above: Some of the creators of the panorama. Left to right, they are Block, Heine, Krieger, Piglhein and his wife, Halder and Hotop. Behind them is the section of the panorama to the left of Golgotha (page 21), not yet in its completed state but demonstrating the impressive scale of the picture.



Munich Secession, the first of a series of radical art movements leading the way towards Modernism.

In the spring of 1885, Pügel set out for the Holy Land accompanied by Karl Hubert Frosch, a 39-year-old specialist in architectural painting, and Joseph Krieger (1848–1914), a landscape artist. They sketched and photographed the scenery, taking particular note of the colors and vegetation, little changed in some two thousand years, and planned out the essential topography they would depict. Their picture would focus on the hill of Golgotha, with Jerusalem in the background, together with more distant features (which are labeled in the Panorama). This was to be as accurate and realistic as possible, and they did not neglect to sketch the local people, who yet dressed as they would have done in the time of the New Testament. Their researches were aided by endorsements from the Archbishop of Munich and the Papal nuncio, which ensured the cooperation of the local authorities.

Back in Munich, they began work in August, aided by two more artists, Joseph Block (a 22-year-old student of Pügel who would later be a founding member of the Munich Secession group) and Adalbert Heine. Around the inside of the Panorama, 390 feet in circumference, platforms ran on rails, enabling the artists to reach the top of the canvas, which rose to almost 50 feet. To maintain level and perspective, modern technology enabled unprecedented accuracy – they used a projector to display the master sketch they had worked up from their photographs and drawings on to the canvas. The sky alone was a massive area to cover, consuming some thousand pounds of white and seventy of ultramarine, mixed and blended to many shades. Then came the real work: Frosch concentrating on the architecture of the city, Krieger the bleak and barren landscape, while Pügel, overseeing the whole, painted the intimate details, each accurate to the reference portraits and sketches they had made in Palestine.

The Panorama, housed in its rotunda on Goethestrasse, opened to the public on 30 May 1886 and was a tremendous success, the critics noting with approval the sensitive lighting, which set the mood for such a somber scene. As art, it was a triumph; as a spectacle, a sensation; even Biblical scholars could admire the accuracy of detail, based as it was on the latest research, for which the artists had engaged Munich's Professor Vincent M. Sattler.

For three years the Panorama was on display in Munich. In April 1889 it was removed to Berlin until the end of 1891, when it was taken to a rotunda in Prater Park, Vienna. There it met an untimely end, destroyed by fire on the night of April 26/27, 1892. A number of copies were made and exhibited in London, the United States, Canada, Germany, Switzerland and Australia. None could quite capture the quality of the original and the unique drama it provided; however, the pages in this book present a striking and authentic impression of what must have been a sensational experience.



*Above: Pügel interrupts his work to talk to Halder (left). The section of the canvas he is working on is on page 25. Below: One of the painting frames, which ran on a circular track. Pügel is on the far right.*



*Publisher's Note: The text on the following pages was included as part of the original information associated with the panorama. The names given to some of the individuals at the scene of the crucifixion are not found in Scripture and are based on other historical sources or tradition.*



THE HISTORIC PEAK OF MIZPAH  
ON WHICH SAMUEL ERECTED THE  
MONUMENTAL STONE "EBENEZER"

SHEPHERDS' INN

Since the panorama was originally a cyclorama, embracing 360 degrees of view, there is no conventional beginning or end to this picture. The tree to the left of this panel is a hardy pistacia tree, and behind is a clump of olive trees. Page 30 of this panorama repeats these details, to complete the circuit of the cyclorama image.

The view is towards the south-east. On the distant skyline, central to this panel, is the hill of Mizpah, on which sits the town of the same name, some four miles from Jerusalem. Mizpah is Hebrew for 'watchtower', and one can see a great

distance from here – indeed to the shores of the Mediterranean. It was here that Samuel erected a memorial to his great victory over the Philistines nearby: 'And then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' (1 Samuel 7:12) Here also Saul was announced by Samuel as King of Israel.

In the foreground to the right is a shepherds' inn. Sheep farming was a mainstay of the ancient economy, and Jesus used sheep and the shepherd (*left*) allegorically in many of his parables.



EMMAUS

THE ROAD TO  
DAMASCUS

A DEEP WELL

SHEPHERDS' INN

To the left, in the middle distance, is the village of Emmaus, mentioned in *Luke 24*. Some four miles to the west of Jerusalem on the road to Joppa, this was the place where the risen Jesus appeared to two of His disciples. They did not recognize Him until they dined together.

In the center ground is a pool of water, the remnant of a winter torrent that would have flooded this rugged-sided watercourse. Around it, all is dry and arid as the sun beats down.

In the foreground to the right is a deep well. A woman is emerging with a full pitcher of water, while two others stand above her, their journey to the well interrupted by the drama taking place before them.

*Right: Jesus appears to two of His followers on the road to Emmaus. They discussed the dramatic events of the past days and invited Jesus to dine with them. Only then, as He broke bread, did they realize who this was.*

