



AAC Publications

Pikes Peak, New Mixed Climbs

Colorado, Rocky Mountains

There are few places anywhere in the world where you can approach multi-pitch alpine ice and mixed climbs with just 20 minutes' walking. For better or worse, the Pikes Peak toll road delivers just that. Most of the classic rock and ice routes on the mountain were climbed by the legendary Colorado Springs hard men in the '70s and '80s. However, modern mixed climbing on the mountain has rejuvenated the game.

In October 2012, I climbed two new mixed routes and one new variation with Erik Wellborn. Early in the month, while approaching Total Abandon, Erik spotted a promising-looking pitch of ice on the right side of the Corinthian Column, left of Total Abandon. We fired the four-pitch line the next weekend, climbing to the top of the buttress, and called the route Toga Party (420', 5.8 WI3 M5). The following weekend we added a three-pitch variation to Blind Assumption, on the left side of the Corinthian Column, starting on that line and then tackling a steep roof and corner system. We called the variation Blind Luck (400', WI3 M7+).

At the top of the Corinthian Column, on the right side, is a horizontal roof that arcs out to the right for 30' or so. For years I've looked up at it with fear, but after a closer look we saw that a nice hand crack traversed the entire length of the roof, and we decided to give it a go. After climbing the first ice pitch of Toga Party, we found sustained and engaging dry tooling up corners (M5/6). Micro-edges beneath the roof were just big enough for front-points, forcing us to look straight down 400' while skating for footing. As I belayed Erik to the top of the last pitch, I felt we'd really done something important, finding big adventure close to home, which seems rare these days. We named it Ol' #6 (450', 5.10+ WI3 M6+) from a great line in *Blazing Saddles*.

In the spring of 2013, on a wall below the Corinthian Column, Doug Shepherd and I found a new, thin ice line that we called Lost and Found (270', WI5 M6), due to the fact that we were actually trying to climb the route Wet and Wild. A perfect melt-freeze scenario created three great pitches of thin ice pasted into corners and cracks. We found many sections to be very committing, on questionable gear, but not scary enough to bail. Most of the ice was thin enough that the second was forced to do a lot of dry tooling.

That autumn, Matt McKinley and I explored a dark chimney in Pikes Peak's southeast cirque, finding an interesting and likely unclimbed route. The route started with a steep pitch of thin ice (WI5). We then followed icy crack systems (5.8 M6) to the top of the buttress for three more pitches. We called the climb Southern Circus (400', 5.8 WI5 M6).

Images



Doug Shepherd comes up a thin ice runnel on Lost and Found.



Erik Wellborn following the third pitch of Ol' #6 on the Corinthian Column, Pikes Peak.

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