



AAC Publications

Pikes Peak, Corinthian Column, New Routes

Colorado, Front Range

During the past few winters of climbing in the Bottomless Pit area on Pikes Peak's north side, I spotted a few crack systems on the Corinthian Column (ca 13,500') that looked interesting for potential summer rock routes. However, upon closer inspection I found they were full of dirt, moss, and loose rock, which would make free climbing them a challenging and unenjoyable affair.

In late 2014 (early winter conditions), Noah McKelvin, Jack Rodat, and I climbed one of these crack systems, which ascends the center of the Corinthian Column. We climbed with ice tools and crampons, treating it as a mixed route, in hopes of clearing out the cracks and finding a path to the top of the buttress. We called the four-pitch route Three Dragons (400', M7). It's possible that someone climbed the first pitch of this route earlier, but most locals were doubtful of a prior ascent.

In June 2015, I returned to the Three Dragons, rappelled in, and continued cleaning out the cracks in order to prepare the route for rock climbing. On June 30, after a prior attempt, JJ Calhoun and I redpointed all four pitches. The route begins on a hand crack, climbing through two roofs with good gear. From there a long pitch of ledgy climbing leads to the crux finger crack (5.11-), and then broken terrain takes you to the top (4 pitches, 5.11-).

During this summer outing on Three Dragons, I spotted another thin crack system to the right. I thought this might provide a viable finish for a hard pitch I'd explored earlier. I returned a few days later and cleaned it from top to bottom on rappel. On July 25, JJ Calhoun, Noah McKelvin, and I climbed Sunnyvale (400', 5.11). The first pitch is a short 5.9 and may have been climbed before. The crux second pitch (5.11) works up a featured arête and is protected by a thin crack. The third pitch climbs a 5.10 crack to a brilliantly exposed stance on the arête. More run-out 5.9 terrain gains the top. We left pitons in situ on the crux pitch, as it is hard to protect.

– Phil Wortmann

Images



The north side of Pikes Peak (a.k.a. the Bottomless Pit), with the Corinthian Column at center. Three Dragons (400', 5.11 or M7 in winter) begins in a prominent crack system through a low roof and continues up the blank-looking buttress above. Sunnyvale (400', 5.11) climbs a prominent arête and thin crack system to the right. Numerous other rock and ice/mixed routes ascend the Corinthian Column and adjacent gullies.



Noah McKelvin climbs the crux 5.11 pitch of Sunnyvale.



JD Merritt follows the pitch three finger crack (5.11-) on Three Dragons.

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