



## AAC Publications

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### **North Howser Tower: Armageddon, First Free Ascent**

Canada, British Columbia, Purcell Mountains, Bugaboos

**In August 1999, Jonny Copp and Mike Pennings climbed a new line on the 3,200' west face of North Howser Tower.** They called their route Armageddon (VI 5.11+ A2) and free climbed most of it.

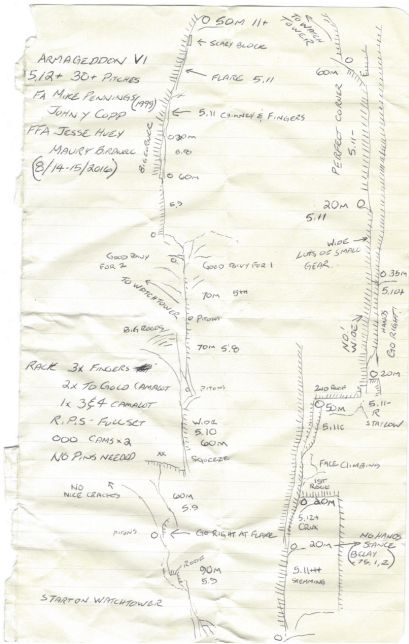
"Arghh," Copp wrote in AAJ 2000, "a pecker and a blade; damn, we have to aid climb ten feet of the thousands that we've freed. No problem though. Our goal is to go up, so we do." [Editor's note: Armageddon begins with All Along the Watchtower (Robinson-Walseth, 1981) and shares some pitches with Warrior (Burton-Sutton, 1973).]

In spite of having only this brief stretch of aid climbing, the route did not see a free ascent until 2016, when Jesse Huey and Maury Birdwell climbed it at 5.12+. In a blog post for Arc'teryx, Huey described arriving at what appeared to be the crux right-facing corner system: "The worst part was not knowing what [they] hadn't free climbed.... Was it that section? Or was it that one up there? It was all a question mark, so I paid attention to the only holds that mattered, the ones right in front of me."

After some sustained 5.12 to a no-hands rest, Huey fell on the technical crux pitch of the route. He aided the pitch, fixed the rope to the midway stance, and then he and Birdwell bivvied on a ledge below. In the morning, after both climbers rehearsed the moves on top-rope, Huey freed the pitch on his second lead attempt of the day and Birdwell followed it clean. "The questions then arose...." Huey wrote. "I have climbed enough hard corners to know that this pitch was for sure 5.12+, but [also] that Mike Pennings has a real tendency to sandbag me.... Oh god, we both thought, what if the 'A2' section is still above us?" No worries: Huey and Birdwell onsighted the final 1,000 feet of climbing, all under 5.12.

– Chris Kalman, with information from Jesse Huey, Maury Birdwell, and Arc'teryx.com

# Images



Topo for free climb of Armageddon, North Howser Tower.



Jesse Huey on 5.11+ ground, headed toward the crux (5.12+) corner of Armageddon on the west face of North Howser Tower.

## Article Details

Author	Chris Kalman
Publication	AAJ
Volume	59
Issue	91
Page	165
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions