



## AAC Publications

---

### **Mt. Russell, Northwest Face, Land of Milk and Honey**

California, Eastern Sierra

**In October, Jon Griffin, Tad McCrea, and I climbed a likely new route in mixed conditions on the northwest face of Mt. Russell (14,086') that we named Land of Milk and Honey (1,000', IV 5.8+ M3 R 65°). We spied the line while scoping another objective and returned with our ice and mixed kit a few days later, hiking over the Russell-Carillon col to camp at Tulainyo Lake. From there, it was a casual 30-minute hike around the toe of the north ridge to the base of the face.**

[Editor's Note: Mt. Russell's original northwest face route (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, Czock-Czock-Luck, 1935) begins on the left (east) side of the face and trends toward the middle to climb directly to the ridge between the two summits. It's possible that it shares some terrain with the 2018 route.]

The route begins with moderate but run-out snowy slabs and crack systems for three pitches, with amazing moss and turf sticks, to reach the remains of an old hanging glacier a third of the way up the face. (This glacial remnant is the reason for such well-developed patches of moss in the corners and cracks below as it slowly seeps throughout the summer season.) We climbed one 60m pitch of 65° ice up the glacier, traversing left near its top to a belay. After another 25m of ice angling up and left, the terrain steepened and we entered a mixed corner leading to the upper face. We climbed a long pitch of stellar 5.8 cracks to the shoulder that butts up to the west face.

By this time, darkness had fallen and the bitter cold wind had picked up significantly. We opted to take 4th-class ledges toward the east summit rather than tackle the overhanging headwall that leads directly to Russell's true summit. By the time we reached the slightly lower east peak, we were all shivering.

None of us had ever been on Russell's classic upper east ridge (our descent route) so it was a bit challenging to find our way in the dark with the terrain draped in snow. We took our time, occasionally dropping onto the south side to recharge and get reprieve from the biting wind. After a few hours, we reached the Russell-Carillon col and descended back to our camp at Tulainyo Lake, arriving around 2:30 a.m.

The route is of good quality and something rare for the Sierra Nevada, but with warming temperatures the hanging ice won't last forever.

– Whitney Clark

## Images



Jon Griffin and Whitney Clark approaching the northwest face of Mt. Russell (14,086').



Jon Griffin starting up pitch one of Land of Milk and Honey (1,000', IV 5.8+ M3 R 65°) on the northwest face of Mt. Russell (14,086').



Whitney Clark traversing to the belay above the hanging snowfield during the first ascent of Land of Milk and Honey (1,000', IV 5.8+ M3 R 65°) on the northwest face of Mt. Russell (14,086').



The northwest face of Mt. Russell (14,086') showing the line of Land of Milk and Honey (1,000', IV 5.8+ M3 R 65°). The only previously known route up this face (Czock-Czock-Luck, 1935) began on the left side and followed third- and fourth-class rock to reach the ridge between the east and west peaks.



Jon Griffin jamming steeper rock on the upper portion of Land of Milk and Honey (1,000', IV 5.8+ M3 R 65°) on the northwest face of Mt. Russell (14,086').

## Article Details

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Author         | Whitney Clark          |
| Publication    | AAJ                    |
| Volume         | 61                     |
| Issue          | 93                     |
| Page           | 0                      |
| Copyright Date | 2019                   |
| Article Type   | Climbs and expeditions |