



## AAC Publications

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### Washington Pass, High Horse, Unbridled Enthusiasm

Washington, North Cascades

**When traveling uphill from the east on State Route 20 toward Washington Pass, several distinct granite panels are seen to the southeast after passing the Silver Star massif.** They are regularly spaced along a 2/3-mile stretch of road, their bases approximately half a mile away and 1,500' above. Black Horse Rock and the regularly summited Petit Cheval are on the northeast margin of this area, while the tallest cluster of panels, which we dubbed High Horse (7,280'), lies at the southwest extent, before reaching the highway hairpin. This cluster—though in view of the popular Liberty Bell—had no recorded climbs, perhaps because of the unappealing approach slopes or nearby high-quality routes.

This summer, a strained ring-finger pulley facilitated my previously eschewed exploration of this area. On August 16, Steph Williams and I approached up sparsely vegetated slopes from the hairpin, traversing to the toe of the lowest panel. Our general plan was climb the edge of these panels, which probably contained the cleanest yet only periodically steep stone, and reconnoiter weaknesses on the broad, stacked faces to the left. Steph led the first panel by way of mostly low-fifth moves. Traversing the few meters of scree and dirt that separated us from the next panel, we arrived at a shield-splitting crack.

A little more than two rope lengths led past pleasant cracks ranging in width from tight fingers to fists. Upon reaching the top of the second panel, we could hardly rein in our excitement: A vertical-walled hallway less than 2m wide and 35m deep divided the big upslope panel. This otherwise hidden hall is composed of the finest grained stone found in the Washington Pass area, abiotic-clean and graced with four vertical cracks. We dubbed it the Hall of Cracks. We chose the hand-size option, and nearly 200m of well-protected and fun climbing up corners and the left margin of the panel concluded our ascent: Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+).

After unleashing a stampede of loose talus down a gully on the backside, we opted to scramble and rappel to a point just above the toe of tallest panel. From here a rolling traverse toward the hairpin intersected our stashed packs and ascent track.

– Seth Keena

## Images



The formation above State Route 20, near Washington Pass, that Seth Keena and Steph Williams dubbed High Horse (7,280') after making the first ascent of Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+), shown in red. This photo was taken after an early season snowfall.



Seth Keena topping out the first rock panel on his and Steph Williams' new route, Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+). The Liberty Bell group is in the background.



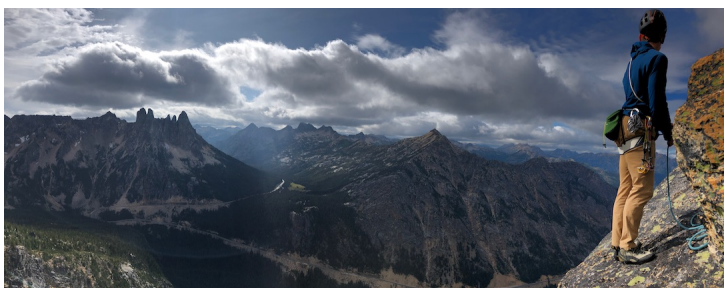
Steph Williams heads up the second rock panel on Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+). This new route lies on a cluster of panels just northeast of the Liberty Bell group that Williams and Seth Keena named High Horse.



Splitter finger cracks led through bulges before topping out the second panel on Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+) near Washington Pass.



In the Hall of Cracks—fine-grained Golden Horn batholith granite split to perfection between the middle and highest panels of High Horse—during the first ascent of Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+).



Seth Keena high on the left margin of the third panel of Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+) near Washington Pass. The Liberty Bell group is on the left, and Hinkhouse Peak is on the right, with the well-known hairpin turn of State Route 20 below.



High Horse in profile. Unbridled Enthusiasm (550m, IV 5.10+) generally climbs along the visible left skyline. The Hall of Cracks is the vertical black shadow on the left between the middle and highest panel. The first ascensionists descended partway down the gully right of the summit, then over the treed knob on the photo's right margin.



Steph Williams climbing excellent rock out of the Hall of Cracks, a parallel hallway between the second and third panels of High Horse, featuring several distinct and clean splitters. This feature is all but hidden from a distance.



Seth Keena climbing out of the Hall of Cracks with the two lower panels of High Horse below.

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