



AAC Publications

Mt. Pisgah (Lake Willoughby), Maidenhead

Vermont

In January 2020, Bayard Russell and I put in three days of work to establish and send Maidenhead (165m, 5 pitches, M8 (M6+ R) NEI5+) above Lake Willoughby. This adventurous new route explores a less-traveled section of a famous and popular wall to create a completely independent new route, something that can be hard to find in the Northeast.

Our first day on the line was a rather cold and gray. The wall held some recent snow, and we climbed slowly over dark rock, unearthing useful features. The pace of ground-up new-routing in winter is something we're both familiar with, but for me, having a drill in tow induced a different headspace. The possibility of better protection on seasonally ephemeral smears is new to me and requires a lot more consideration than my normal go/no-go mental wrestling. In fact, I drilled the first bolt of my 25-year climbing career on this route—I'd had a good run.

Maidenhead starts at the base of Five Musketeers (Mailhot-Morin-Mayo-Pellet-Peloquin, 2001) and slashes to the right for its first two pitches, connecting off-balance climbing on ramps with creative trad gear and two bolts. Excepting a few ice climbing sequences, it's mostly dry tooling for the first two pitches (70m). The second pitch brings an early, heady crux, at M6+ R and marked our high point on day one.

On our second attempt, arriving at the anchors above pitch two, the stage was set for the crescendo of the climb. Pitch three served up a slabby traverse leading right to a steep headwall, where the climbing follows flat edges to gain entrance to hanging ice (M8 NEI5+). I deployed Bayard, who craftily navigated and sussed out the business. With the hardware in place, on the third day, January 24, he moved with cat-like acrobatic savvy for the send. Spectacular climbing and position make this the prize pitch.

We continued up pitch four, the Adirondack Pitch, which is no gimme, with finicky gear and thin ice over slabs and overlaps. The final stretch to the top embodies what those familiar with Lake Willoughby might call its essence: brilliant columns of blue pouring forth from welcoming cedar trees. It's an oasis above the vertical, similar to many of the top-outs at the Lake—grounding, yet endlessly memorable.

The route was satisfying and in many ways unlikely—including the fact that two fathers of young kiddos could find three days in a month to work on a new project with conditions and families permitting. I'd like to thank my wife, Majka Burhardt, and my two kids, Kaz and Irenna, for their support. Bayard has Anne Skidmore Russell, his wife, to thank, not only for the "normal" reasons but also for the borderline ridiculousness of our timing relative to the due date of their second child, Whit, who arrived just a week later on January 31!

– Peter Doucette

Images



The line of Maidenhead (165m, M8 NEI5+) at Lake Willoughby. Peter Doucette and Bayard Russell spent three days equipping and climbing this difficult new line in January 2020.



Bayard Russell clearing the way on the opening traverse pitches of Maidenhead (165m, M8 NEI5+) at Lake Willoughby. Russell and Peter Doucette spent three days climbing this new route in early 2020.



Bayard Russell gains the hanging ice curtain on the crux pitch of Maidenhead (165m, M8 NEI5+), a new five-pitch mixed route at Lake Willoughby, Vermont.



Bayard Russell gains the hanging ice curtain on the crux pitch of Maidenhead (165m, M8 NEI5+), a new five-pitch mixed route at Lake Willoughby, Vermont.

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