



## AAC Publications

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### **Nenana Mountain, Southeast Buttress, Brown Pants**

Alaska, Hayes Range

**Toward the end of a long summer of perpetually attempting to align busy schedules, weather, and transportation, on August 8, Jonathan Koenig, Tristan O'Donoghue, and I flew with Temsco Helicopters to what's known as the Hotel Glacier, south of Nenana Mountain (7,881'), near the western tip of the Hayes Range.** The north side of this valley is home to some impressive walls, and the climbing mentioned here is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of new route potential.

On our first morning of climbing, we began up a nice corner on Nenana's south face; Jed Brown and Kevin Wright had cragged on this line 16 years prior but were rained off. Glacial recession had graciously provided an additional 10m of climbing beneath where Jed started up the rock. Before long we were on pitch four, far above the previous high point. Lured by perfect hands above the belay, Jonathan started up a 50m splitter, which slowly got wider until he whipped off a strenuous section of number 4s. Lacking large cams to push higher, we bailed.

After a day of rain, we attempted the route again in a light mist. The third pitch (5.11) had gone without a hitch on our first attempt, but this time, casting off with two pieces of gear in a thin crack, I committed to smears on wet rock and ejected from the corner, pulling both pieces. I landed on the rope without a scratch. Jonathan, on the other hand, took the brunt of my fall on his chest. Again, we bailed. Pursuing redemption, we established Consolation Crack (5.10b), a stellar two-pitch hand crack on the southwest aspect of Nenana that we had spied while scouting.

The next day brought more rain but also brought our friends Tait Chandler, Andy Sterns, and Grant Wilson into the valley; they had come to repeat the only previously established route on the peak, the South Buttress (1,500', IV 5.8; see AAJ 2005), a plumb line up the center of the south face, just to the west of the route we had been attempting.

Waking the next morning to perfect weather, we started our third attempt. We managed to find high-quality variations to the third and fourth pitches that had stifled us previously, and after that, easier terrain allowed quick passage upward. We simul-climbed and soloed the last 400' to the top of a pinnacle we labeled the southeast buttress to complete Brown Pants (1,100', IV 5.11a). We did not continue to the summit of Nenana as it would have required multiple rappels and a loose 4th-class scramble.

We spent our final morning sunbathing and watching our friends complete the South Buttress on their second attempt before the helicopter came to pick us up that afternoon. Our trip was partially funded by an AAC Mountaineering Fellowship Grant.

— Ethan Berkeland

## Images



Stellar views from Hotel Glacier in the talus below the south face of Nenana Mountain in Alaska's Hayes Range.



Ethan Berkeland midway up the first pitch of Brown Pants (1,100', IV 5.11a), on the south face of Nenana Mountain in Alaska's Hayes Range.



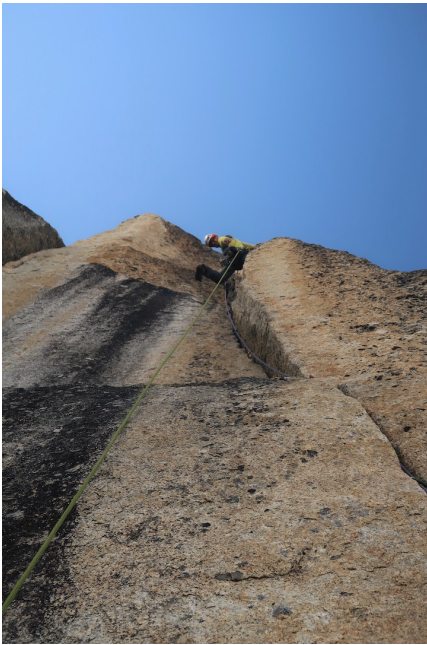
A portion of Nenana Mountain's south face, showing the line of Brown Pants (1,100', IV 5.11a) on the southeast buttress.



Jonathan Koenig starting up a nice splitter crack on the second pitch of Brown Pants (1,100', IV 5.11a), on the south face of Nenana Mountain.



Taking in the expansive southern aspect of Nenana Mountain in Alaska's Hayes Range. The southeast buttress, taken by Brown Pants (2020), is visible at far right. The South Buttress (Brown-Wright) climbs the central buttress below the main summit.



Splitter cracks and quality golden granite on the fourth pitch of Brown Pants (1,100', IV 5.11a), on the south face of Nenana Mountain.

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