



AAC Publications

Big Rock Candy Mountain, Bulleit Train

Colorado, South Platte

Big Rock Candy Mountain is the largest formation in Colorado's South Platte, rising over 1,000' above the South Platte River. Early climbers were drawn to the lower-angle slabs of its west face, and in 1979 Pete Gallagher and Pete Williams made the first ascent of Fields of Dreams Growing Wild (5.11+ R). While this wasn't the first ascent of the formation, it remains a bold test piece even today. In CLIMB!, written by Jeff Achey, Dudley Chelton, and Bob Godfrey, it's described that the pair were collecting a "sinful" amount of bolts, "far more than needed for a good-style ascent on any known dome." Climbers today will find this is far from the truth with the upper pitches moderately graded and sparsely bolted.

It wasn't until the early '90s that a climb was established up the steep north face. This side of the formation isn't as tall, only 600-800', but the rock is considerably more vertical and is characterized by cracks and dihedrals. In 1991, Glenn Schuler and Kevin McLaughlin topped out their route Shock Treatment (700', 5.12+) named for a lightning encounter that happened when they first started working the route. This was the last major route established on the formation until the summer of 2020.

I discovered the line while looking through Jason Haas' guidebook to the area. The lonely description of "Big Aid Route A2" and a beautiful 200' technicolor dihedral rising above the first pitch drew my attention. I drove out there on a solo mission to search the wall for possibilities. Once back into service I immediately texted my friend Nick Schlichtman that we had found our next project! Nick and I established the route ground-up, bolting from stances and hooks, taking roughly 8 days over the past 3 years.

The lower cracks took a lot of gardening but yielded promising climbing. Once we reached the upper slabs the stone needed little to no cleaning. It was amazing to just get to climb after all that scrubbing, and each pitch was very unique. The climbing changes character each pitch and requires the leader to be well versed in all techniques. One pitch you are heel hooking right off the anchor and then the next you are dancing up super technical slab!

The final pitch was a tag-team effort. Nick started up, climbing with a lightweight drill and after about 60' the climbing became drastically harder. I have quite a bit more experience with hooking, so I took the reins and finished establishing the pitch. Nick made quick work of the slab and sent the proposed 12b/c crux pitch third go.

Bulleit Train (700', 8 pitches, 5.12) is named in honor of the fuel source needed to climb the route. Previous evidence of aid climbing attempts were found up to pitch three, but little history could be found. After eight pitches, the route joins pitch nine of Rotten Teeth (12 pitches, 5.10) and climbs three and half more pitches to the summit of Big Rock Candy Mountain. We both feel honored to have added a big climb in Colorado.

— Wade Morris

Images



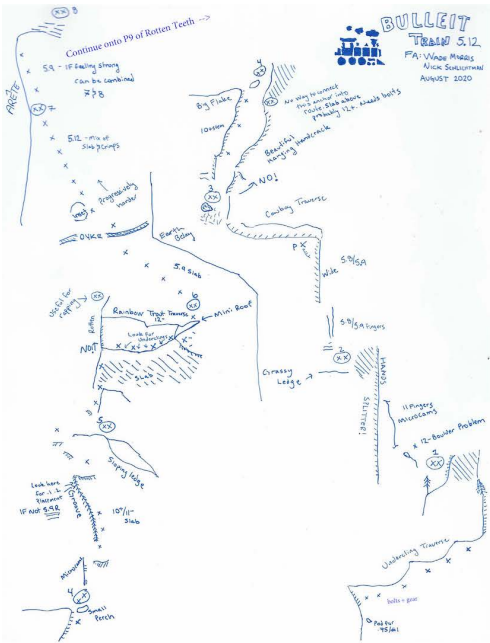
Wade Morris on the steep underclings of the first pitch of Bulleit Train (700', 8 pitches, 5.12) on Big Rock Candy Mountain in Colorado's South Platte.



Nick Schlichtman climbing the Earthy Corner—pitch four of Bulleit Train (700', 8 pitches, 5.12) on Big Rock Candy Mountain in Colorado's South Platte. The pitch was named for the large amount of gardening required to establish it.



Nick Schlichtman leading pitch eight of Bulleit Train (700', 8 pitches, 5.12) on Big Rock Candy Mountain in Colorado's South Platte.



Topo for Bulleit Train (700', 8 pitches, 5.12) on Big Rock Candy Mountain in Colorado's South Platte. Wade Morris and Nick Schlichtman established this route ground-up over three years, completing it in the summer of 2020.



The north and west faces of Big Rock Candy Mountain in Colorado's South Platte, as seen from Tick Dome, showing the line of Bulleit Train (700', 8 pitches, 5.12) in red. The blue line is the remaining pitches of Rotten Teeth (5.10), which Bulleit Train links into to continue to the summit.

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