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ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS



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Bringing Forth a Guidebook

Adirondack Rock II

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"Guidebooks, as some of you know, mean a lot to me. They serve as a key that opens doors: to places, to the pathways, to the possibilities. But they only open doors. Once inside, the experience is all ours."

- Don Mellor, *Adirondack Rock*
(First edition)

If you live within the "blue line" of this six million acre paradise, and you happen to be a climber, you're a very fortunate individual. There is a lifetime's worth of adventures to be had and no one knows that better than the rock climbing guidebook authors Jeremy Haas and Jim Lawyer. The second edition of their book, *Adirondack Rock II*, will hit bookshelves this fall and I for one am very excited since I happen to live within this lake bejeweled, pastorally mountain-scaped paradise that happens to be riddled with some of the best rock in the Northeast. Yup, I am spoiled...and very much like to, as the tourists sometimes refer to it, "cliff climb."

Lawyer and Haas are pretty stoked, too. They have good reason to be. They worked hard on their new two-volume edition and it shines on every page, route description, cliff topo, guest essay, illustration, and GPS coordinate provided. Lawyer and Haas left no stone unturned in their efforts to bring forth a very user-friendly, Adirondack worthy, rock climbing guidebook. In the forward Tad Welch draws our attention to their labor of love. Welch writes:

"It will be surprising if you cannot find your way to a particular cliff or route--the reason being that it is very likely that Jim and Jeremy have already been there and very likely climbed the route. Now think about it. Spread over millions of acres are 330 crags, the majority of which with little more than cairns



Jeremy Haas - Potash. Climb: Caja Bonita - 5.11a

or a faint footpath leading to them. All told, those cliffs host 3,100+ routes and a total of more than 4,000 pitches. (That's over 66 miles of climbing, in case you are wondering.)

The first edition of ADK Rock (2008) tallied more than 1900 climbs. In the intervening six years many rock walls previously unknown to climbers have appeared and more than 1200 new routes and variations have been added to the park total."

It is an incredible time commitment to compile such vast amounts of information and present it in written and illustrated form in two guidebook editions in a way that comes as close as possible to meeting every user's needs. Knowing this can leave you wide eyed at how Lawyer and Haas have also managed to author a combined 374 first ascents.

While many of the 374 new routes Lawyer and Haas established were intentional, a few of their routes weren't. In attempt to properly document a route with an unclear route description, Jeremy and Jim would climb it to ascertain the correct path up the cliff and in the process got lost and created a new route.

On a few occasions, I helped Lawyer and Haas with the guidebook. My favorite part of helping them always involved anything that had to do with actual rock climbing. Since the best way to document a route is to climb it, we ended up doing a fair bit of climbing together. One of the more memorable routes we tried to document together was in Avalanche Pass.

Avalanche Pass is perhaps one of the most iconic areas in the Northeast. If you have never been there imagine this; a beautiful alpine lake with 300' cliffs on either side of it. During my and my wife's first summer in the Adirondacks, we went there every Sunday to explore, swim, and of course, climb. It was our version of going to church--peaceful, quiet, pine scented, just plain awe inspiring. During that summer, we would often gaze across the lake to the precipitous cliffs on Mount Colden, particularly the ones that dove dramatically into Avalanche Lake. We would often wonder out loud what it would be like to try to climb them.

These particular cliffs, we later learned, had been climbed just once in the summer of 1985, by local rock stars Bill Dodd and Don Mellor who, in order to access this wall, packed in a bright yellow inflatable raft (on loan from The Mountaineer) to ferry across Avalanche Lake.

Once across the lake, they anchored their inflatable raft to the rock and then climbed a 300-foot plumb line up

the center of the imposing face. As they neared the top of their route, the wind picked up, and whitecaps formed on the lake below. To their dismay they saw their little yellow raft get destroyed when it hit the rocks. They were able to figure out a descent back to solid ground that involved a lot of heinous Adirondack bushwhacking. Dodd swam across the frigid lake to get the remains of their boat. They named their route "The Poseidon Adventure."

In 2006, 21 years later, on a perfect Adirondack fall day, Lawyer and I set out to document The Poseidon Adventure for the first edition of Adirondack Rock. We were accompanied by Tom Yandon, Joe Szot, and Drew Haas. Drew, author of *The Adirondack Slide Guide*, was asked by Jim and his older brother to photograph the area's cliffs for the new guidebook. Yandon and Szot just wanted to climb. The four mile hike to the cliffs went quickly, with Szot and Yandon holding court, as usual, by just being themselves--super friendly, bubbling with enthusiasm, and brutally honest, who banter about anything as old friends do.

Since borrowing a boat from The Mountaineer was no longer an option, our tentative, "well thought out" plan involved putting our 40+ pounds of climbing gear in dry bags and swimming across the lake. I think that half the reason Szot and Yandon came along was just to see us try to do this. Once we reached Avalanche Lake, we quickly figured out that swimming was not a viable option. A "No go," as we say in the Adirondacks. The air and water temperatures were just too cold. We decided to try to traverse in from the left to the start of their climb. Lawyer took the first pitch--a sparsely protected, 100 foot long traverse, not more than few feet off of the water--that took us to the start of the Poseidon Adventure. I then led the next poorly protected 100' pitch. It took me over an hour to do so; I had a hard time figuring out where to go with so much loose rock and dirt and so little gear. I was an astronaut with no mission control to tell me which way to go. I was lost, so I made an anchor, clipped in, and belayed Lawyer up to figure out what to do next.

Lawyer figured out a bold, unprotected passage that helped us get to the final pitch of the Poseidon Adventure. The final pitch was the crux of the climb--a hand/finger crack heavily marinated in a fine blend of very wet moss, slimy mud, and loose rock. In order to safely climb the pitch, I had to use a tool to dig out the mud, then stuff my hands, feet, and rock gear into the slimy, dirty space. Naturally, I audibly complained about this, to which I then heard Szot prod me on, yelling from across the lake: "Awww boy, she'll go, that's right!" punctuated by his distinctive hearty laugh that reverberated off the canyon walls. That was all I needed to get me to the top of the climb.



Jim Lawyer - Upper Beer Wall, Keene Valley. Climb: Flying & Drinking and Drinking & Driving 5.10a



Sarah Councill - Poke-O-Mooshine. Climb: Freedom Flight 5.10b

So, despite our best effort to find and document “The Poseidon Adventure,” we failed. However, I finally satiated my curiosity about this wall and in the process we did do a new route. We named it “Life Aquatic.” It is/was not a good route, though it was a great adventure, on an impressive wall, in one my favorite spots on this planet with some good friends. Laywer later sent Mellor an email regarding our efforts.

Mellor promptly shot back the following email:

The Mellor/Dodd route is steep, airy, and classic, thought by Peter Croft to “make Astroman seem like a pile of yak dung.” The Loher/Lawyer choice was clearly a pitiful attempt to walk in the footsteps of earlier masters, but finding themselves woefully inadequate, they skulked rightward and, deservedly, encountered the loose rock and moss that so typically accompanies such cowardice. (Climbing in the Adirondacks is still available in fine bookshops and outfitters.)

-Yours Reinhold

This route was just one of their 374 first ascents. It took us all day. Not every first ascent takes all day. They only take all day when I am involved. There is more, much more, to making a guidebook than just climbing, especially when you self-publish. These days many of the beautiful guidebooks out there are made by a team of people--the writer writes copy, hands it off to the publishing team, who then edits, adds graphics/pictures, essentially creating the final product. Lawyer and Haas have done all of this work on their own; graphics, layout, even the distribution. They even had to build a storage unit to hold the 7,000 copies of their book. All of this, plus their field work.

Over the years, I have come to appreciate the rock climbing guidebook as essential a piece of equipment to an enjoyable climbing experience as a rope or carabineer is to mitigating a safe passage up a vertical section of rock. A good guidebook serves as a launching pad for many fine adventures. It not only provides a blueprint for a successful climbing experience, helping its intrepid reader to seek out the cliffs, but also provides its user with important information about the history, quality of a particular climb, how safe the climb is, and the difficulty. Jim and Jeremy’s guidebook does all of these things perfectly. The Adirondacks is a special place, with some of the finest rock climbing found on the planet. Lawyer and Haas’ new guidebook certainly captures this fact and is a worthy tool to be used in planning your own Adirondack climbing adventures.

New innovations in Adirondack Rock II

1. Two lighter books rather than one heavy one.
2. The book is in full color with color-coded margins. The coded page margins match the park map.
3. Crag planning tables for each area as well as at the beginning of each chapter.
4. At a glance tables--helps the reader figure out if the climb is protected by fixed gear (solid blue dot) or if the fixed gear needs to be supplemented with trad gear (hollow blue dot).
5. Cliffs by category appendix--top rope areas, all sport areas, crags near water, canoe approach crags, kid friendly cliffs, etc.
6. The covers on each book are quite unique--beautifully rendered illustrations by Jim Lawyer’s nephew, Colin o’ Connor. They are of a Flexbind construction that will allow the book to stay open. The covers also have flaps that can be used to mark pages.

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