



Revisiting Frankenstein's South Face

Compiled by Nick Aiello-Popeo

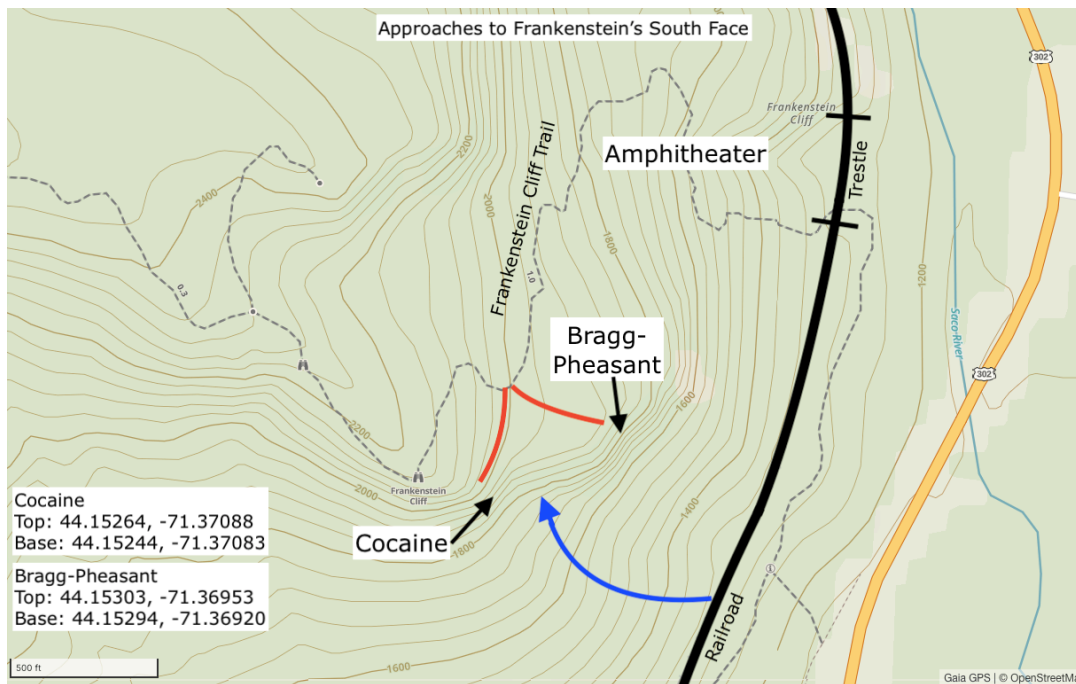
Frankenstein Cliff's South Face is a wonderland of dangling daggers, icy cracks, and imposing roofs. Over the past two decades, many of these features have been pieced together into exciting, modern mixed climbs. But the latest edition of *An Ice Climbers Guide to Northern New England* describes only a fraction of the South Face's offerings, and most of the listed routes were first climbed while the Soviets' Soyuz space station still orbited the Earth.

The South Face is a billboard of sickness. It towers over every climber as they don their boots in the Frankenstein parking lot. On brutally-cold January days, the wall is often sunny and calm. Routes range from WI4 to WI6, and from moderate mixed climbing to M8. Many of the routes are between 150 and 230 feet tall. Bolts are used where necessary, but you'll need to place your own rock- and ice protection on every route. There is plenty of room left for your own exploratory climbing, but existing rock routes should be left as rock climbs.

Approach:

Most people approach the South Face from the train tracks. About ¼ mile south of the trestle bridge, head uphill where the forest is less choked with underbrush. As you gain elevation, avoid getting suckered too far right – a short cliff band will block your way.

It is also possible to approach the South Face from above. This is useful if deep snow makes the uphill approach unappealing. Join the Frankenstein Cliff Trail above Pegasus and Chia. Follow the trail south (left) for ¼ mile until the trail turns sharply to the northwest (44.15330, -



71.37066). Leave the trail and follow the 2,000-foot contour line south for a hundred yards. This will lead you to the cliff's edge near Cocaine (44.15264, -71.37088). From the same location on the Frankenstein Cliff Trail, it is also possible to follow a bearing of 110-degrees to reach

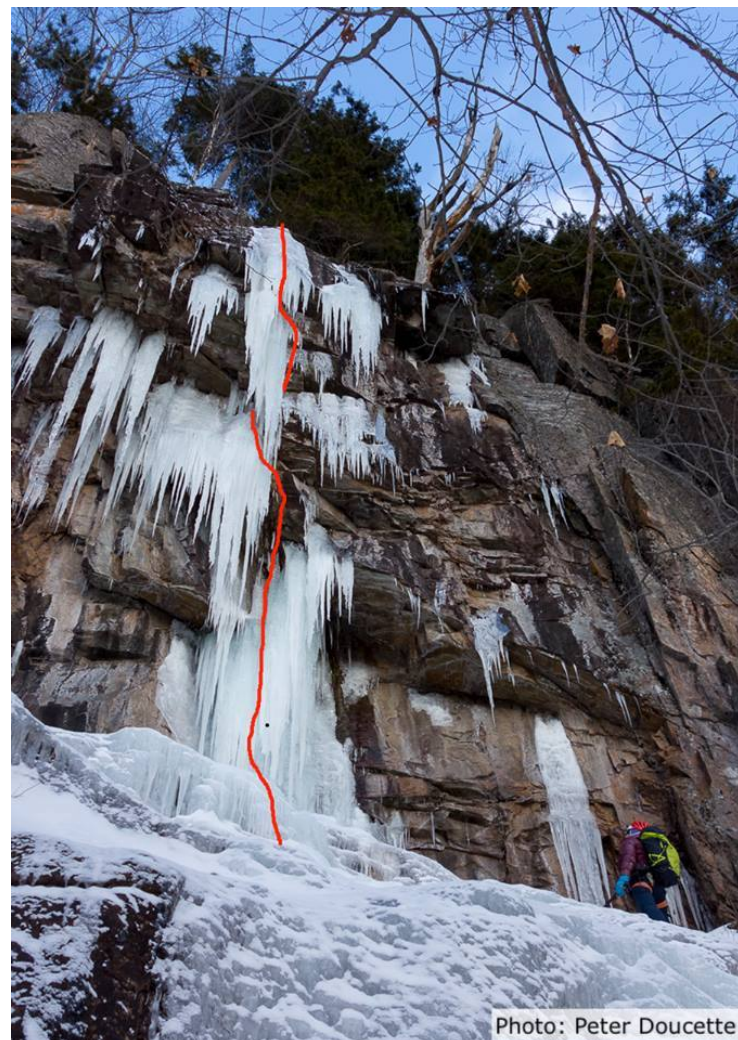
the cliff edge near the top of the Bragg-Pheasant.

In either case, pick one of the many trees and rappel with two ropes.

Climbing:

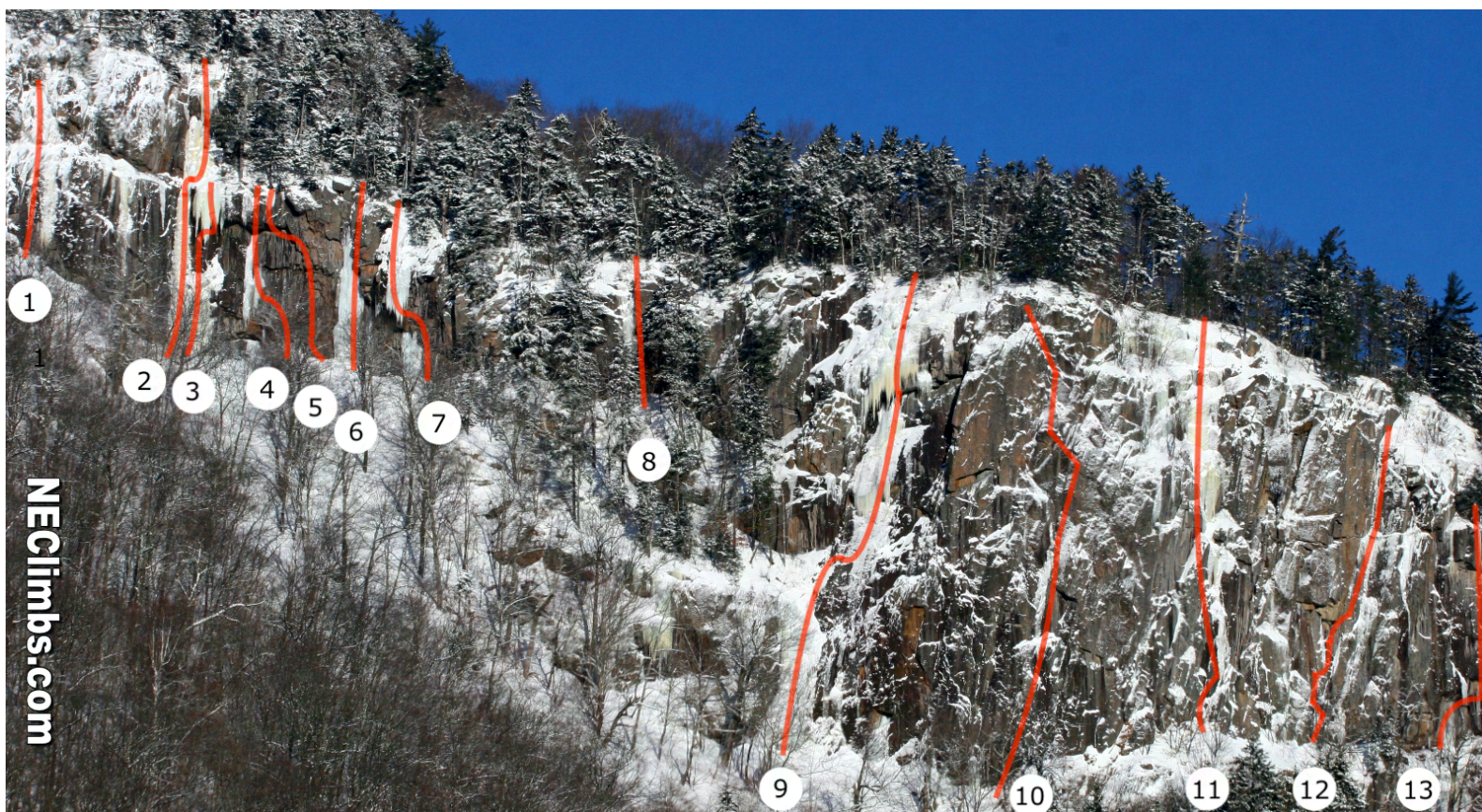
Some routes on the South Face require lots of ice to be worthwhile, but that doesn't mean you should only visit this cliff during exceptionally-good conditions. Some of the mixed lines, such as Nose Bleed, are harder – but still doable – when the ice is thin. Other routes, like Dirty Deeds, can be climbed without any ice (Dirty Deeds is rated M5+ when dry, WI4 M5 when an icicle forms at half-height). Many of the mixed routes may require reconnoitering before attempting a redpoint.

Ice routes like Cocaine, Fang, Bragg-Pheasant, etc, will need plenty of screws (including stubbies) and a light rock rack. Mixed routes will need a full rock rack to 3 inches. Bring cord and a knife to replace material found around trees. Do your part to avoid extraneous fixed anchors by making long rappels or walking off the top. The South Face is an awesome spot for trad mixed climbing, and its adventurous nature has prepared many for alpine routes in the big mountains.



Odin's Tears, WI6

Photo: Peter Doucette



- 1: Silver Heels** – WI4. Two pitches of thin ice. *Mark Richey and Alain Comeau, 1977-78*
- 2: Cocaine** – WI4+. Two awesome pitches. *Peter Cole and Jay Wilson, 1978*
- 3: Nose Bleed** – M6 WI5. A wild roof leads to a monster dagger. *Kevin Mahoney & client, 2000s*
- 4: Strippers** – M8 WI4+. Roofs to daggers to roofs... *Josh Hurst and Bayard Russell, 2010*
- 5: Last Call** – M6+ WI6. 30 meters of desperate. *Peter Doucette and Travis Weil, 2016*
- 6: The Wrath of the Valkyrie** – M5 WI4+. Ice to mixed. *Jim Ewing and Evan Sanborn, 2000*
- 7: Odin's Tears** – WI6. Pumpy and technical icicles. *Peter Doucette and Majka Burhardt, 2015*
- 8: Sword in the Stone** – WI4+. Least visited 4 at Frankenstein? *Jeff Butterfield and Chris Noonan, 1978*
- 9: The Fang** – WI4+. Three exposed pitches. *Peter Cole and Alain Comeau, 1977-78*
- 10: Way of the Peaceful Warrior** – M6. An improbable line up a tall wall. *Jim Ewing and partners, 2003*
- 11: Bragg-Pheasant** – WI5. Rare, icy corners. *John Bragg and Jeff Pheasant, 1974*
- 12: Dirty Deeds** – M5+. Scrappy and thin mixed. *Nick Aiello-Popeo, Ryan Driscoll, Ray Rice, others, 2021*
- 13: Pole Dance** – WI5. An alcove to a thin icicle. *Kevin Mahoney, Matt McCormick, Bayard Russell, 2010*

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