

Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

1 HORSESHOE CANYON 16	11 COWELL REGION 242
Introduction 16	Introduction 242
The Westside 26	Hudson Mountain 250
Northwest Crags 44	The Garden 258
The North Forty 52	The Hood 262
Northeast Crags 78	The Sex Boulder 264
The Eastside 86	Invasion 268
2 LINCOLN LAKE 110	Land of the Little People 276
Introduction 110	Fern Gulley 278
North Side 114	The Campground Wall 280
Box Canyon 121	Fountain Red 281
South Side 122	The Tombstone
Water Sports Area 124	12 SAM'S THRONE REGION
Mad Max 125	Introduction 286
3 SHEPHERD SPRINGS 130	Sam's Throne 294
4 FERN 142	Valley of the Blind 360
Fern North 144	Deliverance 376
Fern Proper 148	Cave Creek Area 384
Oriental Wall 159	13 RICHLAND CREEK
5 MULBERRY VALLEY 160	WILDERNESS 416
Spys Rock 162	Introduction 416
Herrod's Creek 164	Stack Rock 422
6 MCCRACKEN 168	Black Ops 450
7 MT. MAGAZINE 174	Prohibition 452
Introduction 174	Mercenary Wall 462
Mt. Magazine Proper 178	14 CALICO ROCK 466
East Scenic Overlook 193	(WHITE RIVER REGION)
8 DARDANELLE ROCK 194	15 BATESVILLE 472
9 HAW CREEK 206	Introduction 472
Introduction 206	Jamestown Crag 474
Valinor - Haw Creek West 210	Never Never Land 490
La Playa- Haw Creek East 214	16 INDEX
10 BIG PINEY REGION 222	Aphabetical 492
	Grade 500

TICK LISTS

- Eat More Chicken...Heads 49
- Soul-ed Out 107
- The Blacklist 313
- Wilford Grand Slam 337

ESSAYS

- 24 Hours of Horseshoe Hell 50
- The Dream Job 76

- Hillbillies and Crag Crusades 90
- Sacred Dance 158
- Adventure, Youth and... 180
- Just Passing Through 188
- Killing the Spirit of Gravity 314
- Sam's Daze 330
- Blind in Both Eyes 357
- In Defense of Secret Crags 430
- That Batesville Guy 482

Shepherd Springs | Chapter 3

Introduction

Nestled in some of the most beautiful hardwoods in this region of Arkansas, Shepherd Springs sits only a few hundred yards off the shores of Lake Fort Smith. This small valley, situated in Northwest Arkansas, is partially managed by Lake Fort Smith State Park as well as the Ozark National Forest. Thankfully, the crag itself falls just on the national-forest side (most Arkansas state parks do not allow climbing). The park is a great place to swim after a long day at the crag, and the campgrounds are very nice, though they certainly aren't cheap.

Shepherd Springs is a great locals' area. By that I mean the climbing is by no means exceptional, but it is certainly worth visiting if you're part of the Fayetteville or Fort Smith climbing communities, or if you happen to be passing through on I-49 (formerly I-540). *Stump Route* (5.12d), a varied classic, is the one exception to the rule. Compared to other local areas, Shepherd's routes are generally longer and of higher quality than both Lincoln Lake and Fern. Oddly, it does not see near the traffic of either. Generally speaking, the rock here is vertical, technical, and of good quality; however, it can be a bit dirty in places. The route selection is a good mixture of sport and trad, though most visitors ignore the trad lines altogether, despite there being some nice cracks. Expect to be schooled by the stiff (or "sandbagged," as Lynn Hill put it) grades and techy style on your first visit.

Conditions

Fall, winter, and spring are all prime time to visit Shepherd Springs. Like most areas in Arkansas, Shepherd Springs can be miserable in summer. The poison ivy generally takes over the trails by May, and the cliff gets sun until midafternoon. Shepherd also has an unexplainable tendency to be damp, more so than most crags in the state—avoid high-humidity days.

History

In May 1998, local fisherman David Bailey stumbled upon the 55-foot-tall gray sandstone cliffs today known as Shepherd Springs. Luckily for the climbing community, the fisherman's brother happened to be an avid rock rat—longtime Fayetteville climber John Bailey.

Knowing that his brother and his running mates spent their weekends chasing new stone, David shared the news with John. John and local strongman Roger Rains made a quick reconnaissance. Roger recalls of their first trip, "We were really surprised to find something that good so close to town." By no means was Shepherd a turnkey crag, though: Jokes Roger, "We could see the potential behind the 100 years of poison ivy." Despite the cliff's unhygienic aspect, the two men immediately went to work establishing one of Arkansas' most classic wide cracks, aptly named *The Fisherman*.

By 2000, Roger and John along with Karen Bockel, Paxton Roberts, Kerry Allen, Rich McDade, Warren Hulsey and a few others had picked the plums, and development temporarily ceased. Roger was the most prolific in both quantity and quality throughout this period, snagging nearly half the FAs as well the majority of the classics—both sport and trad. In 2005 and 2006, Roger and John came back through for a second wave of activity and filled in many of the remaining lines. A few routes have gone in since, most notably a crimpy mid-5.13 project that will, upon completion, certainly clock in as Shepherd's hardest.

BEST OF SHEPHERD SPRINGS			
Shepherd's Arête 5.10c	★★★	p132	<input type="checkbox"/>
The American 5.10c	★★★	p136	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violated 5.10d	★★★	p138	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biscuits and Jam 5.11a	★★★	p133	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday the 13th 5.11b	★★★	p140	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hoka Hey 5.11d	★★★	p138	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flary Disappointed 5.11d	★★★	p136	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stump Route 5.12d	★★★★	p132	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heartbreaker 5.13a	★★★	p134	<input type="checkbox"/>

Introduction

Travel Beta

Shepherd Springs is situated almost directly between Fayetteville and Fort Smith, just north of the small town of Mountainburg. There are multiple ways to reach the cliffs, but the most common is to come from Interstate 49 (formerly I-540).

Driving Directions:

From I-49: Use exit 34 (for Chester and Hwy 282). Head west on 282 for 0.8 miles to the intersection with Hwy 71. Go left (north) on Hwy 71 for 4.2 miles and turn right onto Shepherd Springs Road. Follow this road, which eventually turns to gravel, for 0.8 miles to a small pulloff on the right side of the road. The approach trail begins across the road just before the pulloff and should be marked with a trail cairn. No 4WD or high ground clearance is needed.



ESTIMATED DRIVE TIMES
 From Fayetteville via I-49: 40 min
 From Ft. Smith via I-49: 40 min
 Mountainburg via Hwy 71: 15 min

Where to Stay

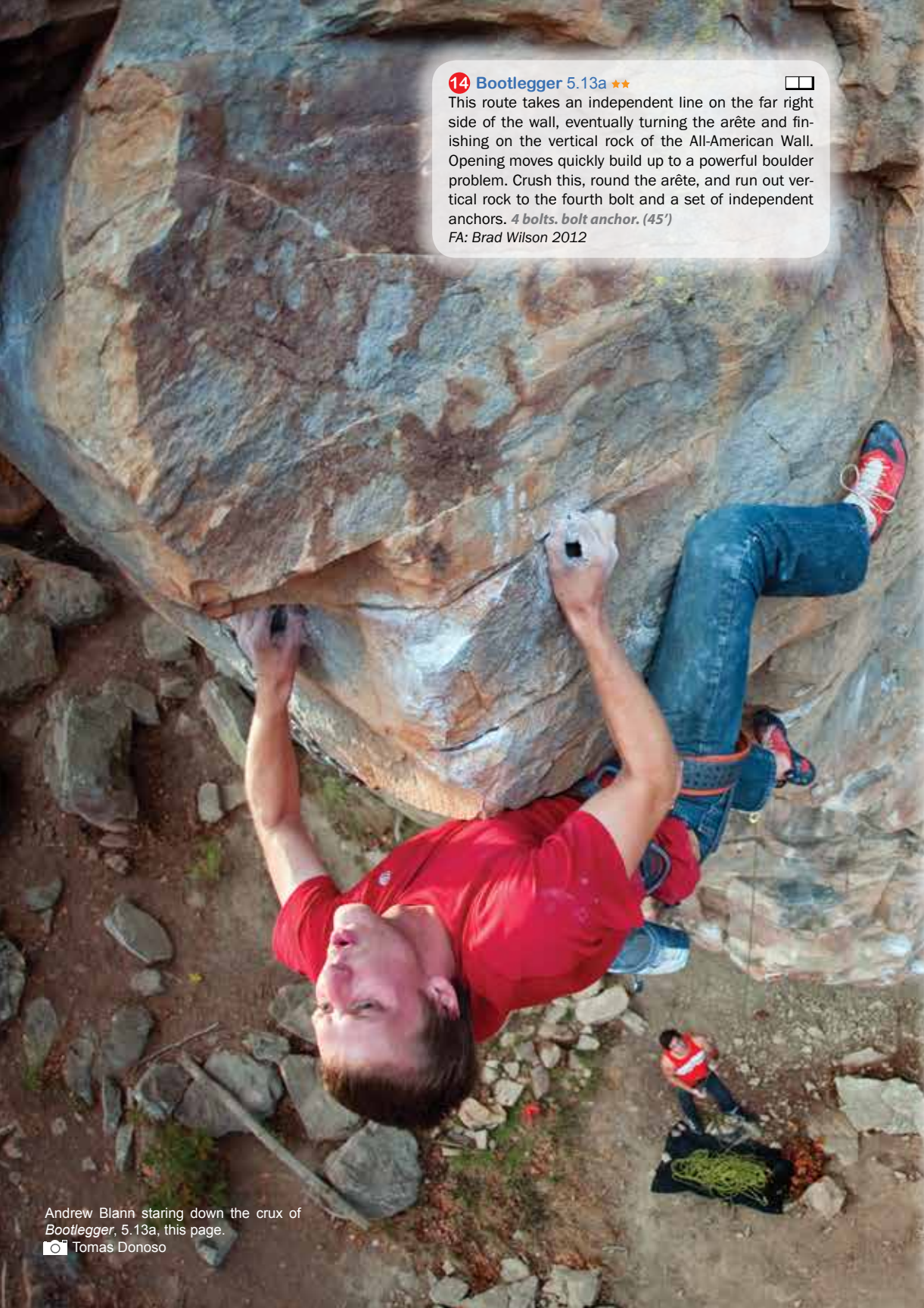
Camping:

The nearest camping is located in Lake Fort Smith State Park about one mile before the crag. The campground offers water, electricity, showers, and sewer hookups, but unfortunately the sites start at a pricey \$17 a night.

Restaurants, Groceries, and Gear

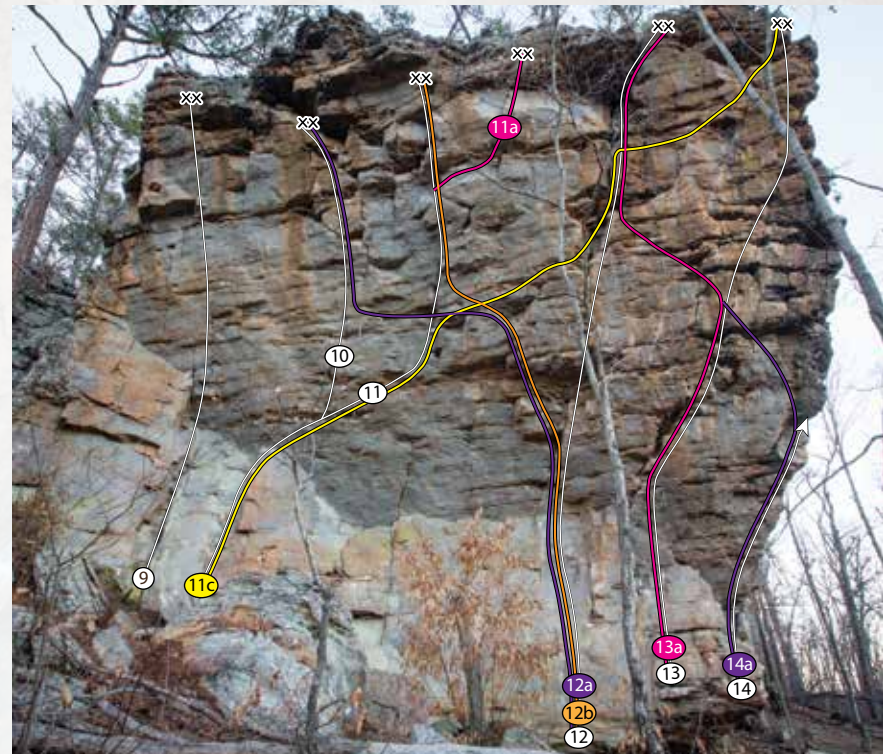
Less than 10 miles from the rock, the small town of Mountainburg provides a handful of basic restaurants and grocery stores, but if you want anything exotic or just more options, drive to Fayetteville or Fort Smith, each of which requires 40 minutes of travel. The nearest climbing shop is Pack Rat in Fayetteville.





14 Bootlegger 5.13a ★★

This route takes an independent line on the far right side of the wall, eventually turning the arête and finishing on the vertical rock of the All-American Wall. Opening moves quickly build up to a powerful boulder problem. Crush this, round the arête, and run out vertical rock to the fourth bolt and a set of independent anchors. **4 bolts. bolt anchor. (45')**
 FA: Brad Wilson 2012



Prohibition Wall Linkups and Variations

11a Absolutely Not 5.13a ★★

If you crushed the sixth-bolt crux of *Absolut*, then you should absolutely not finish straight up. Traverse a move right instead for an awesome V6 showdown just below a separate set of chains. Though commonly thought of as a variation, this was actually the first sport route on the wall. **7 bolts. bolt anchor. (65')** FA: Jason Cook 02/11

11b Crosstown Lite 5.12b ★★

Start *Crosstown Connection* but avoid the finishing boulder problem by finishing on *Prohibition*. **7 bolts. bolt anchor. (70')**
 FA: Brad Wilson 07/11

11c Crosstown Connection 5.12d ★★

This pumpfest takes an excellent angling line from the start of *Absolut* to *100 Proof's* anchors,

avoiding the crux on every route it crosses but adding a completely independent redpoint crux of its own at the last bolt. **8 bolts. bolt anchor. (75')** FA: Joe Larsen 06/11

12a Malt Whiskey 5.13b ★★

If you thought *Single Malt* was a sandbag, try adding a 5.12d/13a start! Climb *Whiskey Rebellion* to its junction with *Absolut* and continue traversing a horizontal crack left into *Single Malt*. Skip the fourth bolt on *Single Malt* unless you want to deal with heinous rope drag. **8 bolts. bolt anchor. (70')**
 FA: Jason Cook 02/12

12b Whiskey Rebellion 5.12d ★★

Many locals consider this to be the best route on the wall. Start on *Prohibition*, but bust left when the bolt line splits and join *Absolut*. Nonstop V3 and V4 boulder problems. **8 bolts. bolt anchor. (65')**
 FA: Jason Cook 07/11

12c Whiskey Rebellion Not 5.13b ★★

Finish *Whiskey Rebellion* on *Absolutely Not*. **8 bolts. bolt anchor. (70')**
 FA: Jason Cook

12d Pro Connection 5.12b ★★

Tack the *Crosstown Connection* finish on to *Prohibition*. **8 bolts. bolt anchor. (70')** FA: Jason Cook 07/11

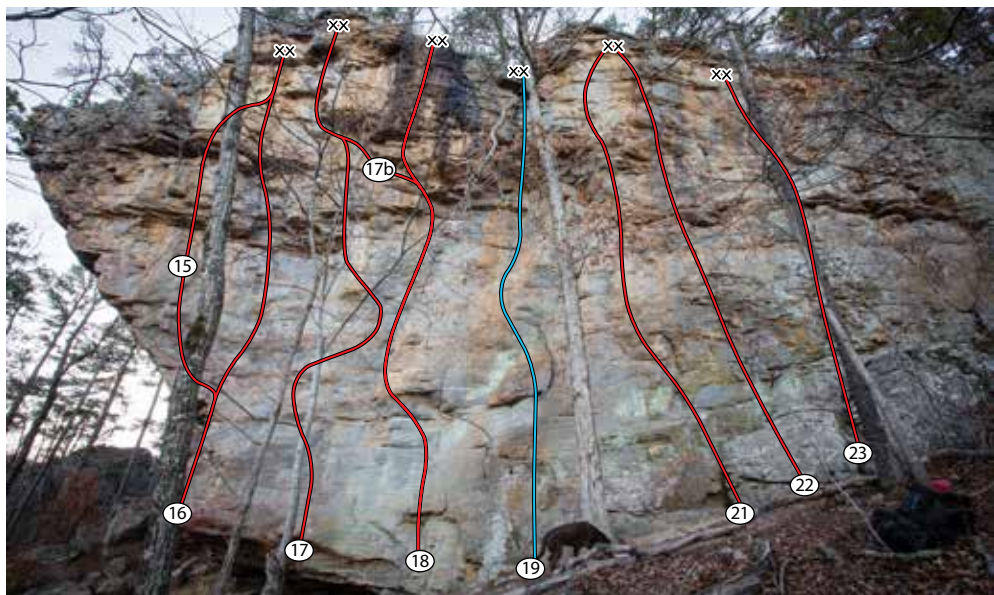
13a Everclear 5.12c ★★

This version links up the two proudest lines on the wall. Start on *100 Proof*, but go left after you stick the second crux. Finish on *Prohibition*. The first ascentist forced one extra hard move before joining *Prohibition* (5.12d), but most people avoid it by traversing a bit lower. **7 bolts. bolt anchor. (70')**
 FA: Joe Larsen 2013

14a Moonshiner 5.13a ★★

Stick the crux on *Bootlegger* and venture left all the way into *Prohibition*. **8 bolts. bolt anchor. (75')**
 FA: Jason Cook 2013

Andrew Blann staring down the crux of *Bootlegger*, 5.13a, this page.



14b Boot Slam 5.12a ★★
Clip the first two bolts of the *Bootlegger* and pull around the arête to join *Grand Slam*. **5 bolts. bolt anchor.** (60') FA: Brad Wilson 05/11

All-American Wall

'MERICA! The supporting cast to the raddest cliff in Arkansas will make you proud to be an American. This collection of awesome, bulging face climbs could stand alone anywhere as a world-class 5.11 wall. The 5.9 and 5.10s on the right aren't too shabby, either. The routes on the left stay dry in a light rain, and the whole wall sees sun until about noon.

15 Grand Slam 5.11c ★★★
See opposite.

16 Biscuits and Gravy 5.11a ★★★★★
The breakfast of a true patriot.

Campus the hanging start to access the starting ledge and take the right of the two bolt lines, fending off a low face crux and a salty tiered roof system. A little choss in the roof will keep you on your toes. Stays dry in a light rain. **6 bolts. bolt anchor.** (55') FA: Brad Wilson 02/11

17 Moose Knuckle 5.12a ★★
This varied route features the hardest face climbing on the wall—unfortunately, it wanders a

fair bit to do so. Nonetheless, the movement comprising the first half is superb, and the finish is out-of-this-world good. Pull the hanging start and head up and left before traversing back right just above the second bolt. Clip the third bolt and step down and shake on *Cole Cole World*'s jugs, then bust a big reach back up and left and move up to another rest under the roof. Pull over and power through an amazing section of underclings in a second overhang to a juggy finish. Stays dry in a light rain. **7 bolts. bolt anchor.** (60') FA: Jason Cook 03/11

17a Moose World 5.12a ★
Traverse right at the first roof on *Moose Knuckle* and finish on *Cole Cole World*. Skip *MK*'s fifth bolt. **7 bolts. bolt anchor.** (60') FA: Jason Cook 05/11

17b The Knuckler 5.11b ★★★★★
The best 5.11 on a wall saturated with badass 5.11s. Start *Cole Cole World*, but at the roof hand-traverse the horizontal crack left—skipping the fifth bolt on *Cole Cole World*—joining *Moose Knuckle* at its fifth bolt, just in time to enjoy its brilliant undercling section. Stays dry in a light rain. This is the only line on the All-American Wall that's fully equipped with fixed chains. **7 fixed draws. bolt anchor.** (65') FA: Brad Wilson 05/11

18 Cole Cole World 5.11a ★★★★★
Another brilliant 5.11 rock climb. Cruise an easy flake up to the roof, followed by a killer black headwall. This is the last route on the wall to dry out after a rain. **7 bolts. bolt anchor.** (55') FA: Kerry Allen 04/11

19 Stars and Stripes 5.9+ PG ★★
Face-climb up to a detached triangular block and then traverse a horizontal crack left a few moves to access a slight scoop below the roof. Pro up a horizontal (#3 or #4 *Camalot*) and launch into the awesome, albeit short, tiered roof crack. The gear is good, but strenuous in places. The lower face protects well with small cams in horizontals. **7 bolts. bolt anchor.** (55') FA: Cole Fennel 03/11

20 Project
Notice a random bolt left of *Chili Dog*? That bolt used to protect a weird 5.11a traverse that linked up *Cole Cole World* with *CD*. All but one of the bolts have been removed. With the addition of a couple new bolts, one could conceivably start on *CD* and finish at the *Stars and Stripes* anchors. **1 bolt.**

15 Grand Slam 5.11c ★★★
A superb and continuous pitch of climbing. Start as for *Biscuits...*, but after clipping the first bolt, reach up and left into separate bolt line that heads straight up and eventually turns a couple of roofs. Move back right at the last bolt to join *Biscuits...* and share its anchors. **5 bolts. bolt anchor.** (55') FA: Jason Cook 05/11

21 Chili Dog 5.10c ★★★
Journey up to a one-move crux at the bulge and into a swath of absolutely perfect white sandstone. Share anchors with *American Greenback*. **5 bolts. bolt anchor.** (50') FA: Jason Cook 02/11

22 American Greenback 5.10a ★★★
Surmount a low ledge and follow jugs and chickenheads up brilliant-orange stone. Originally led on gear. **5 bolts. bolt anchor.** (50') FA: Chad Watkins 02/11; Equipper: Andrew Childs

23 Sierra Nevada 5.9 ★★
Navigate easy terrain up to a right-angling ramp system. Finish straight up past the final two bolts in a vertical orange-and-gray headwall. **5 bolts. bolt anchor.** (50') FA: Jon Sisemore, Kerry Allen 04/11



Andrew Tower swinging for the fences. *Grand Slam* 5.11c, this page. Cole Fennel