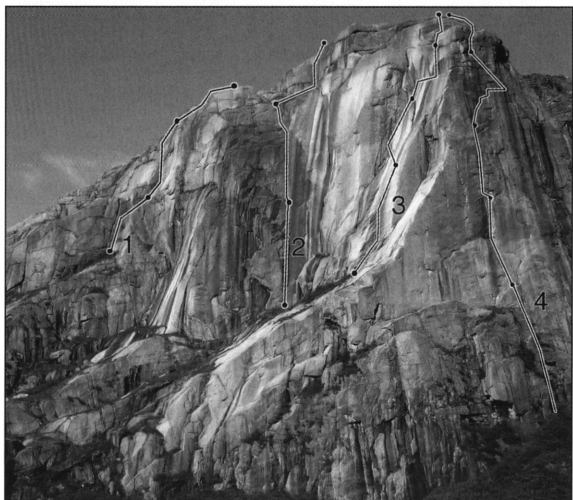


Seal Harvest, the latest route on Blow-Me-Down. *Eli Simon*



The new, and likely only, routes on St. Elias: (1) What's a Bunny? (2) Royal Oak. (3) Delmar's Nose Job. (4) Rose's Cantina. *Eli Simon*

*Newfoundland, exploration and new routes.* The relentless swells of the north Atlantic eased as Peter Fasoldt and I, inside the small fishing vessel *Royal Oak*, turned north into Cape La Hune Bay. The barren fjord runs for miles with granite walls on all sides. We readied ourselves and *Delmar*, our 14-foot aluminum canoe. We then arranged a pickup time, thanked our new friends, and watched them head off to fish and to return to their families in the village of Francois.

We base-camped in an area known locally as Dead Man's Cove, a hundred yards from the beach, near a beautiful stream. No sign of human life in any direction. We were hundreds of miles from the closest road. Our first route, Touch my Caribou, went 650' up an unclimbed, unnamed, sweeping 800' wall, a stone's throw from camp. It started with a 300' clean slab split by a single finger crack, but then deteriorated to kitty-litter run-out death-gardening. Near the top a thick wet fog socked us in, and we finished cold, wet, and scared. Day one, and we were already in over our heads.

Unbeknown to us, Hurricane Hanna had begun. After weathering out the storm for 28

hours, we saw across the bay the Tote: a beautiful granite dome with a 400' southeast face. We readied *Delmar* for her maiden voyage across the icy waters. The mile-long crossing started with good visibility and calm seas. As we reached the middle of the bay, the wind picked up from the south, bringing a steady swell, heavy fog, and light rain. Disoriented and without navigational tools, we paddled toward what we hoped was west and eventually camped on the desolate coastline. In foul weather the next morning we headed to the cliff's most defining feature, a right-leaning crack system splitting the cliff. Easy 5th-class terrain led to a few long pitches of fun 5.9 crack climbing. We summited in a downpour and named our route Boat 'n' Tote.

Bad weather continued, so we spent time as hunter-gatherers. We set a dozen rabbit snares, which we checked frequently enough to scare away all the rabbits. We attempted to catch

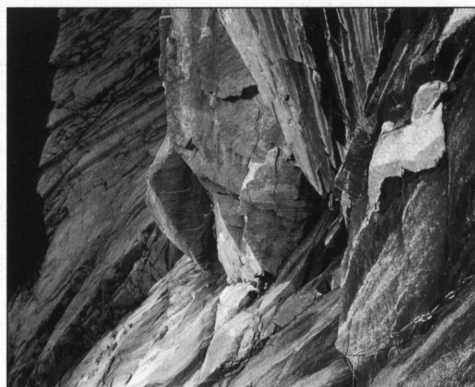
lobsters with a spear (Pete got a crab), and at low tide we gathered urchins and mussels for a maritime feast. In the fields we gathered berries for our pancakes.

After a week in Cape La Hune Bay, *Royal Oak* took us east to explore Ron Contre West Bay, where lies St. Albans, a 1,400' unclimbed sea cliff. As we approached, the rock looked like petrified dinosaur crap. But St. Elias, a 600' wall farther down the fjord, had superior rock and countless cracks systems. We again readied *Delmar* and our gear.

Under clear skies we racked up and headed toward the base. With potential lines everywhere, we spent the following days putting up new routes on great rock, and in the evenings we caught brook trout from the stream at our camp. *Delmar's Nose Job* (130m, 5.10 A0) was the first technical ascent of St. Elias. What's a Bunny? is a three-pitch off-width chimney on the northern flank. *Royal Oak* is a 400' wide-hands crack in a dihedral. *Rose's Cantina* (200m, III 5.10 A1) is the jewel of the cliff and follows wide crack systems through the middle of the tallest aspect, the southeast face. Until this point, all of the areas where we climbed had probably been unexplored by climbers.

*Royal Oak* then took us east to Devil's Bay, where lies Blow-Me-Down (Jabo to locals). We set up camp and fixed lines across 600' of slab that accesses the main part of the cliff. The next day we climbed the Central Pillar of Aestheticism (IV 5.10 A2, Butterfield-Cane-Terravecchia), the cliff's first route. After a day of rest we choose a line up the prominent right-arching roof system that runs the length of the cliff and essentially splits the cliff in half. At dawn on September 19, armed with three ropes, 28 bolts (we used six), six drill bits, a triple rack, a light aid rack, 15 runners, a double ledge, food, water, and our trusty foul weather gear, we started climbing. The first four pitches (5.10) followed discontinuous crack systems and corners linked by short sections of run-out slab. The top of the fourth pitch shares a two bolt anchor on Central Pillar of Aestheticism. This anchor and the 30' above are the only shared part of our route. We spent our first night protected by the 110m right-arching roof system above. On the first pitch the next day, Pete took a swinging leader fall and injured his ankle. I took over, leading to the roof's apex where I hammered through an improbable seam on a 12-hour lead. In a protected corner above, we set up for our second night on the wall. We woke surrounded by a thick fog; Pete wrapped his ankle and began the final block. The last 400' followed steep beautiful wide cracks with nice belay stances. Just after noon we arrived at the summit. With smiles the size of boomerangs we stood together 1,300' above the sea, tired and sore, but happy and proud. The Seal Harvest (V 5.10 A3). After an easy descent and a full rest day at camp, we saw *Royal Oak* steaming north into Devil's Bay. It was time to go home.

The remote beauty of this forgotten coast is remarkable. The people we met were so hospitable, helpful, and warm, brought us into their homes and taught us their history. Without their help we would have drowned in *Delmar* somewhere off the coast of Maine. And I thank The American Alpine Club and the Mountain Fellowship Fund for all their support.



Eli Simon on day two of The Seal Harvest. Peter Fasoldt