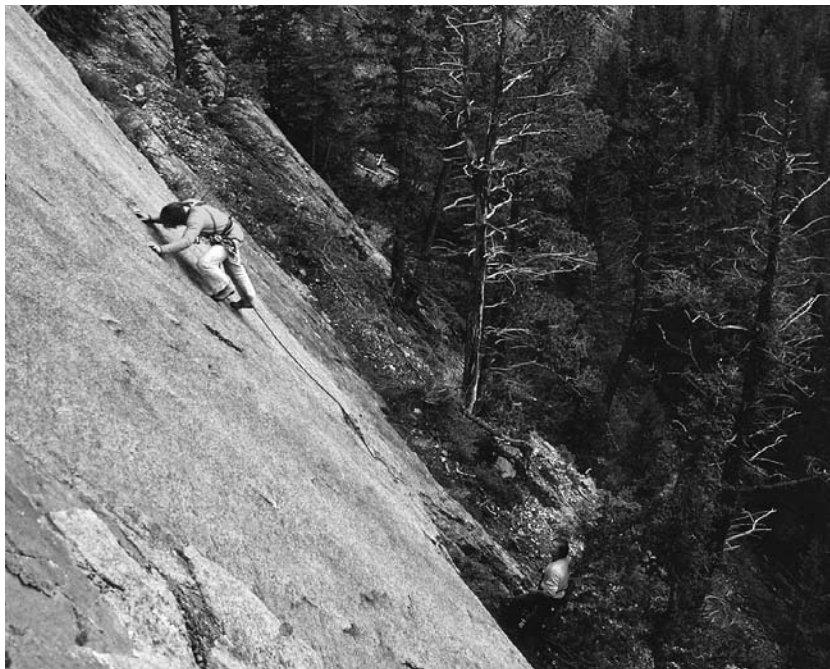


# HEART CREEK

Heart Creek crosses the Trans-Canada Highway just east of the Lac des Arcs interchange and drains a narrow valley between Heart Mountain and Mount McGillivray. The valley has long been popular with hikers and in recent years has become a major sport climbing venue. These are described in the book *Sport Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* by John Martin and Jon Jones. Not included, however, are the traditional climbing areas of Lower Heart Crag and Heart Slab. In the early years of Bow Valley rock development, Heart Slab was one of the premier venues and for high quality slab climbing it is still a top-notch destination. Bruce Keller's early on-sight lead of the run-out crux on Rough Mix was one of the more impressive and memorable pitches of the '70s. The information below is intended to complement that given in the sport climbing guidebook that contains a detailed map of the valley. Some of the bolts have aluminum hangers with small holes that will not accept all carabiners.

## Parking

Many people park alongside the Trans-Canada Highway near the Heart Creek crossing. Otherwise use the Heart Creek trail starting at the parking area located in the southwest quadrant of the Lac des Arcs interchange. The trail parallels the highway for about 700 m and then continues up the creek.



# LOWER HEART CRAG

This is a large cliff on the right (west) side of the valley just around the corner from Jupiter Rock, a popular sport climbing cliff. A sport climbing area called Blackheart is located on the lower left side of Lower Heart Crag (see map in Sport Climbs guidebook) and is not described here. Lower Heart Crag is a big rambling cliff about 200 m high with an extremely steep, bowl-shaped central wall. The few established routes were done in ground-up style and currently require pitons. The rock quality is variable and at the south end covered with lichen. However, there are some excellent individual pitches on some of the routes.

## Descent

Currently, there are no established rappel routes. For Stairway To Heaven, Styx and Fred, descend to the left. This involves scrambling up to the ridge above the south end of the cliff and following an intermittent trail down to a side valley that leads back to the Heart Creek trail. For routes that end on the north end of the crag (Grovel and Overly Hung) descend treed slopes to the north.

## Stairway To Heaven 95 m, 5.10a

C. Perry & E. Jones, 1998

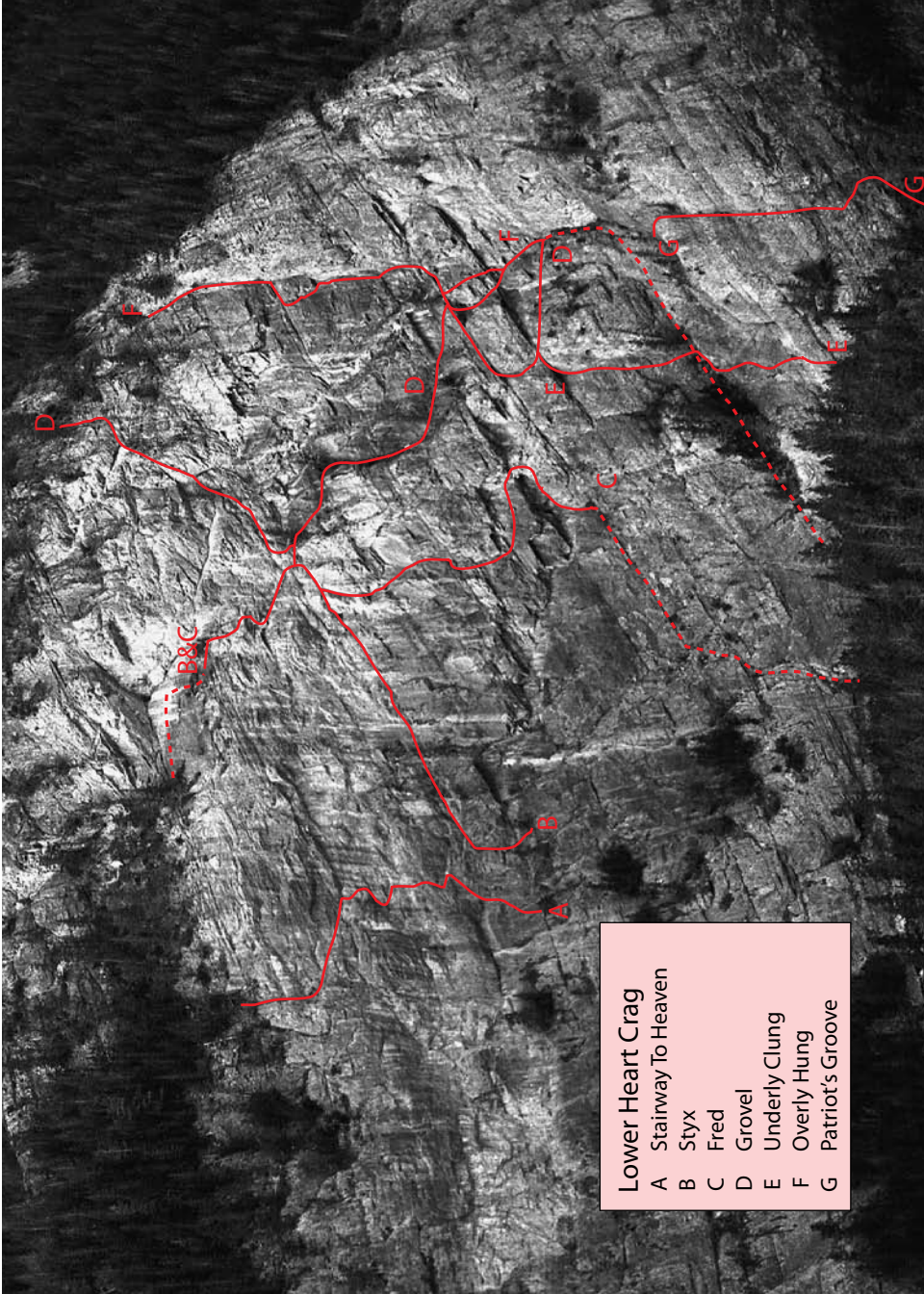
This relatively recent route climbs a faint weakness near the left side of the steep central wall. The main pitch was cleaned and bolted on rappel but the first and third pitches were climbed on-sight and are loose and not well protected. As it stands, the climb needs some additional work and a direct, sport-climbing finish would be worthwhile.

**Start** The climb begins at the top of easy slabs on the left where a lower band of overhangs peters out. The approach is fourth class but quite exposed in one section. Leave the creek bed at the extreme left side of the lower slabs, where the trees begin, and scramble up to a ledge with large trees that angles up to the right. From the extreme right-hand end of the ledge, past a vegetated, left-facing corner, drop down and climb easily up and right (exposed) to small scree ledges. Angle up left to where the lower band of overhangs peters out and then move across left to small trees and a shallow groove directly below a prominent white streak.

- 1) 35 m, 5.6 Climb the groove and move up and right to a corner/ramp that slants right up the wall above. At the top of the ramp, move left and up on easy ground to a fixed piton belay where the wall steepens.
- 2) 20 m, 5.10a Move up to a bolt on the wall above and make some thin moves left to a corner/ramp that slants up right. Follow this up and right to where it ends, then make a long reach up and left over a bulge to gain an amazing hold. Crank up on this (5.10a) and step up to a small ledge. Continue up and left to a fixed belay at a horizontal break.
- 3) 40 m, 5.7 Follow the break easily leftward to a right-facing corner that, after an awkward move to start, leads up to trees.

## Styx\* 120 m, 5.9

C. Perry, G. Powter & J. Sterner, 1979



### Lower Heart Crag

- A Stainway To Heaven
- B Styx
- C Fred
- D Grovel
- E Underly Clung
- F Overly Hung
- G Patriot's Groove

Styx follows a rising traverse line across the steep central bowl. It has some good climbing and is well situated but could benefit from extensive cleaning and retrofitting.

**Start** It begins at the top of easy slabs on the left where the lower overhangs peter out, about 10 m right of the start of Stairway To Heaven. Approach as for that route.

- 1) 40 m, 5.7 Bypass an overhang on the left and climb up to a prominent fault that slants up rightward across the face. Follow the fault on dusty, lichen-covered rock to a bolt belay in a scoop.
- 2) 45 m, 5.8 Follow the fault to a tree ledge below a steep wall (junction with Grovel).
- 3) 35 m, 5.9 Traverse left onto a slab and climb this to a short groove on the left side of an overhang (fixed piton). Swing up right onto a ledge and then make a difficult move over a bulge onto easier rock above. Continue to a belay on a slab.
- 4) Scramble off to the left to gain the south ridge.

### Fred 115 m, 5.9

J. Blench & J. Lauchlan, July 1980

Fred climbs directly through large roofs to join Styx near the end of the traverse. The climbing is good except for a dangerously loose pillar near the start. Approach from the left via slabs, and belay in a scoop below a large roof.

- 1) 40 m, 5.9 Traverse up right across a steep slab to a loose pillar that leads to a break in the roof. Gain the slabs above the roof, traverse left and climb a small groove that goes up through the next band of overhangs. Belay on small ledges.
- 2) 40 m, 5.9 Climb a groove line that leads up and slightly left to join pitch 2 of Styx. Continue along the fault to a big tree ledge below a steep wall (junction with Grovel).
- 3) 35 m, 5.9 Traverse left onto a slab and climb this to a short groove on the left side of an overhang (fixed piton). Swing up right onto a ledge and then make a difficult move over a bulge onto easier rock above. Continue to a belay on a slab.
- 4) Scramble off to the left to gain the south ridge.

### Grovel 175 m, 5.6

N. Helliwell & C. Perry, 1978

Follow easy treed ledges from the streambed up right to a belay below large overhangs and the prominent, upper corner.

- 1) 45 m Traverse left across a slab past an old bolt to a break in the lower roofs. Climb a groove to a higher roof, then traverse up right to a large tree.
- 2-3) 60 m Follow broken ground up left to a tree ledge below a steep wall.
- 4) 45 m Gain a ledge that slants up across the wall to the right. Follow this to a groove and corner system, exiting right to easy ground.
- 5) 25 m Scramble to the top.

### Overly Hung\*\* 105 m, 5.9 or 5.10a

M. Whalen & W. Faryna, August 1978

Overly Hung follows the prominent left-facing corner in the upper section of the face at the north end. It is currently the best route on the cliff, the rock in the upper corner being particularly good. Start as for Grovel, about 5 m below the roofs.

- 1) 30 m, 5.10a Climb the corner to the roof and make a few difficult moves up and to the left to gain a scoop above the overhangs. Climb the wall above to a tree belay.
- 1 alt.) 30 m, 5.9 Traverse a short distance left under the roof and climb an easier break to the tree belay.
- 2) 30 m, 5.9 Drop down and traverse right for 5 m to a short overhanging crack. A few awkward moves lead to a ledge on the right at the base of the upper corner. Climb the slabby left wall past a bolt to a bolt belay in the corner just below a small roof.
- 2 alt.) 30 m, 5.10 Step up and traverse right across an overhanging wall to gain the ledge above the crack.
- 3) 45 m, 5.8 Climb up past the roof on the left, following a crack in a corner to an obvious traverse line. Traverse right into the main corner and follow it to the top.

### Underly Clung 80 m, 5.10b

G. Fletcher & T. Jones, August 1999

Underly Clung climbs a slabby pitch below the easy break leading up and right from the creekbed to the start of Grovel and Overly Hung. It then climbs a slanting, left-facing corner to a fixed belay on the easy first pitch of Grovel. The first pitch has fixed protection and can be climbed as a sport route, but the second pitch requires small/medium gear.

**Start** The climb begins about 30 m right of the lower end of the easy break, beyond a clump of trees, and immediately right of a prominent, rounded scree pile. There is an obvious break in the rotten, diagonal overhangs above and a bolt visible on the wall a few metres to the right.

- 1) 40 m, 5.9 Move up a small ramp from the right and clip the bolt, climb over the bulge, and go up past a fixed piton and a bolt to a small tree on a diagonal break. Climb the slab past four bolts, moving right after the second bolt, and go up to a large tree on the easy approach ramp for Overly Hung.
- 2) 40 m, 5.10b Climb the left-facing corner behind the tree, staying on the slab until higher up when the corner is rejoined below a bolt. Continue up the corner past the bolt, above which difficult moves lead to an exit right onto a ledge and single bolt belay (part way up pitch 1 of Grovel).

Descent is made by reversing the first pitch of Grovel (5.3) to a tree at the start of that route, below the roofs of Overly Hung.

## North Wing

Located at the north end of Lower Heart Crag is a smaller, triangular buttress separated from the main face by the easy approach gully of Grovel and Overly Hung. The North Wing has suspect rock but like Lower Heart Crag, could possibly become a pleasant cliff with cleaning and bolting. The four established climbs are obscure and rarely climbed today. They all share the same start.

### Descent

Climb down left to the gully below Overly Hung and continue down on ledges and slabs to the creek.

### Patriot's Groove 60 m, 5.7

J. Martin, C. Perry & M. Talbot, April 1980

On the left side of the buttress is an obvious open groove that begins about 18 m above the ground and joins the sloping left edge of the buttress at about half height. Start below and slightly to the right of the groove at a break in the lower overhangs just right of an overhanging prow. The initial section is a little loose, but higher up the rock improves.

- 1) 40 m, 5.7 Climb a broken face to a steep section and then traverse up right on a ramp a short distance until it is possible to make a few moves up to easy ground. Move left and up to a bulge at the base of the groove. Climb the bulge and the groove above to a small stance in a scoop.
- 2) 20 m, 5.6 Continue up the groove and where it splits follow the right branch a short distance to easy ground.

### Heartbeat 60 m, 5.8

J. Martin & L. Howard, June 1986

This is a nice face climb on the wall left of Patriot's Groove.

- 1) 30 m, 5.6 Start as for Patriot's Groove and after about 12 m traverse left to a big ledge with trees.
- 2) 30 m, 5.8 Starting behind the rightmost tree, work right up a slanting break to a thin flake crack. Climb this to a sloping ramp. Move up and right on the ramp and then climb up past a bolt to the top.

### Heartland 80 m, 5.8

W. Lee & J. Martin, June 1983

Initially, the route takes the same line as Patriot's Groove, but soon swings right in a slanting traverse to an exit up the wall. Care is required on account of loose rock in a few sections.

- 1) 30 m, 5.6 Climb the first 12 m of Patriot's Groove to an easy-angled area where that route moves left. Slant up to the right on a ramp until it is possible to move right past a rounded edge. Step down to a good ledge with a bolt.
- 2) 25 m, 5.8 Located just above eye level is a faint fault line, masked by a small discontinuous roof, that slants up to the right. Move up to the fault line and follow it rightward, staying below the little roof and passing a small inside corner and pillar, to an obvious horizontal slot about 6-7 m past the pillar. Make an awkward step onto the wall above, avoiding a small loose block, then work up left a few moves. Step up right and climb straight up to a big tree on a ledge.
- 3) 25 m, 5.6 Climb a short slanting corner to easier ground and continue up to a big ledge with trees.

### Heart of the Patriot 90 m, 5.7

J. Martin & R. MacLachlan, August 1981

This route climbs the first pitch of Heartland and then traverses farther right and lower to an exit groove.

- 1) 30 m, 5.6 Climb the first 12 m of Patriot's Groove to an easy-angled area where that route moves left. Slant up to the right on a ramp until it is possible to move right past a rounded edge. Step down to a good ledge with a bolt. (Pitch 1 of Heartland.)
- 2) 35 m, 5.7 Traverse right past a short corner and onto a steep wall. Work right and slightly up to sloping ledges below a bulge, then go right to a faint groove that splits the bulge. Climb the groove, then go past two small trees and continue up a short wall to a good tree.
- 3) 25 m, 5.6 Climb the groove directly above to easy ground. Continue up left to a good tree.

# HEART SLAB

Heart Slab is a pleasant and sunny climbing area on the lower west slopes of Heart Mountain. The slabs are formed by exposed bedding planes of limestone tilted at about 55 degrees. A prominent feature, near the centre, is a smooth, roughly circular slab that starts at a treed ledge about 20 m above the ground and is bounded at the top and left by a long curving overlap. The rock in this area is exceptionally good and gives a number of outstanding one pitch slab climbs, second only to those on Burstall Slabs (see Sport Climbs guidebook). Small pitons, wired nuts and cams are useful, except on the smooth central slab where the protection is mainly from fixed pitons and bolts. Many of the climbs are very run-out by modern standards and extreme caution is necessary. Some of the fixed pitons cannot be relied upon and in the future may be replaced by bolts.

The cliff is described in three sections, Heart Slab Left, the Central Slab and Heart Slab Right. There is a small sport climbing area at the right end, reached first by the approach trail, that is used primarily for teaching purposes.

## Approach

Continue up the valley past Lower Heart Crag until a cliff band is reached where the creek emerges from a small canyon (Waterfall Wall—see Sport Climbs guidebook). Heart Slab is then visible high up on the hillside to the left (east). Cross the creek and locate a trail that starts about 25 m downstream from the cliff band. Follow the trail up through woods to a ridge, turn left along the ridge and climb the hillside to the south end of the slabs.

## Descent

Descent is normally by rappel, either from trees or from one of two anchors at the top of the central slab. Alternatively, it is possible (but tedious) to walk off to the south after ascending through trees.

## Heart Slab Left

This is the longest part of the slab and to date has only a few routes.

Mix-Up 115 m, 5.8

J. McIsaac & D. McNeil, 1979

Start on the slab left of the obvious gully (North Gully).

- 1) 10 m, 5.6 Climb a short pitch to two trees on a ledge.
- 2) 50 m, 5.8 After making a couple of tricky moves above the trees, work up and right to reach a ledge. The steep top part of the slab is crossed diagonally.
- 3) 10 m, 5.0 Move the belay right to a large ledge.
- 4) 45 m, 5.7 Climb moderate rock to the left to a layback flake. From the top of the flake move up and right to a short steep crack that leads to trees.

North Slab 125 m, 5.8

U. Kallen & R. Mitchell, 1978  
L. Howard & J. Martin, 1981

This climb combines the best features of two routes with a common start that were climbed on separate occasions. Start below North Gully.

- 1) 50 m, 5.7 Climb the slab to the base of the gully, then move left into a shallow right-facing corner that trends left. Follow this to a ledge (junction with Mix-Up).
- 2) 40 m, 5.5 Climb the bulge above on the left, then step right and climb an unprotected, pockmarked slab to a tree. An easier alternative is to climb the corner on the left.
- 3) 35 m, 5.8 Traverse right to the exit of Mix-Up to finish the climb.

### Trident 45 m, 5.9

J. Martin & R. MacLachlan, August 1981

The start of this route, on a small tree ledge, is gained by scrambling up and left from the ledge below the central slab. It would be possible to also reach the route from the rightmost part of Mix-Up. Once at the base of the route, climb up and then trend right to a bulge. Pull over the bulge, then work left and up past the end of a second bulge to a small ledge below three short solution cracks. The cracks provide an entertaining finish up a steep slab.

Alternatively, Slanting Slab (5.7) or Arch Slab (5.7) can be used as more technical approaches. Several of the climbs reach a ledge at the top of the slab on the right, but only Rough Mix continues over the overlap to the top of the cliff. Rappel anchors are in place at the ledge and at the top of Skid Row and a descent can conveniently be made from either point.

### Slanting Slab 50 m, 5.7

J. Martin & L. Howard, August 1981

This climb provides an alternative route to the large treed ledge at the base of the central slab. Start on the slabs to the right of the preceding routes and climb up to a roof near its lowest point, then slant up to the right until it is possible to step over an overlap (loose rock) onto a small ledge leading to trees.

### Arch Slab 30 m, 5.7

J. Jenkins & C. Perry, 1979

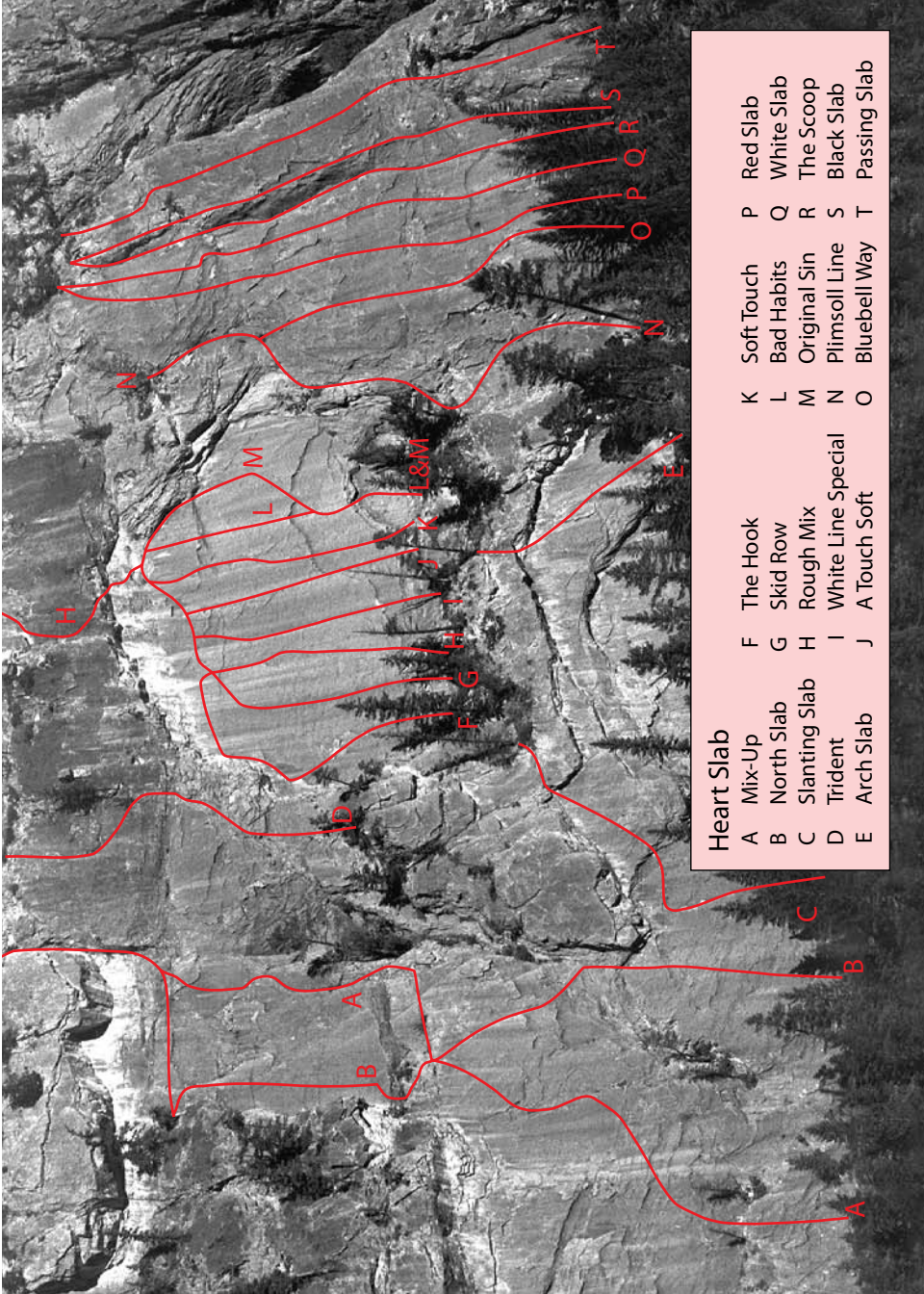
Arch Slab is another alternative route to the ledge below the Central Slab. Starting left of a left-facing corner, slant left up a well-textured slab to the high point of an arching roof. Pull over the overlap and continue to the trees.

### The Hook 45 m, 5.10a

C. Dale & J. Martin, July 1980

The Hook climbs the corner on the left side of the Central Slab. Slant left up slabs to gain





### Heart Slab

- |   |               |   |              |   |                |   |              |
|---|---------------|---|--------------|---|----------------|---|--------------|
| A | Mix-Up        | F | The Hook     | K | Soft Touch     | P | Red Slab     |
| B | North Slab    | G | Skid Row     | L | Bad Habits     | Q | White Slab   |
| C | Slanting Slab | H | Rough Mix    | M | Original Sin   | R | The Scoop    |
| D | Trident       | I | White Line   | N | Plimssoll Line | S | Black Slab   |
| E | Arch Slab     | J | A Touch Soft | O | Bluebell Way   | T | Passing Slab |

the corner above the loose lower section. Climb the easily protected corner until it becomes necessary to traverse right. Move right and slightly up across the slab, which is difficult and unprotected, to a point about 1 m above double bolts. A piquant moment now occurs in descending to these bolts.

### Skid Row\* 30 m, 5.10b

J. Martin & L. Howard, June 1982

Skid Row tours the steepest part of the slab and is well protected at its crux section. Climb the bottom overlap just left of the faint ripple that marks the line of Rough Mix, continue past a small flake, and then work up and slightly left to a tiny scoop (bolt). Climb up and then right past two more bolts to a double bolt belay.

### Rough Mix\*\* 70 m, 5.9

B. Keller, M. Sawyer & C. Perry, 1978

The first pitch of this climb, which starts at a faint, right-slanting ripple, is a classic friction test-piece. The crux is unprotected and occurs just before the first bolt, some 20 m off the ledge. The moves over the overlap on the second pitch are also interesting.

- 1) 45 m, 5.9 Step over an overlap to gain the base of the ripple and follow it until it begins to fade out, not far from the first bolt. Move left and then up to the bolt. Continue up to a second bolt (doubled) and then make a rising traverse past a fixed piton in a small corner to the ledge at the top of the slab.
- 2) 25 m, 5.8 Traverse horizontally left, and then move up and back right slightly to reach the start of a thin crack that slants up left through the overlap (piton). Climb the crack past a second piton and make a strenuous pull up to gain the easy slabs above. Move up left into a corner and either belay at a tree on the left arete or traverse up right to a larger tree.

### White Line Special 45 m, 5.9

C. Dale, L. Howard & J. Martin, July 1980

This sustained and poorly protected route follows a pale streak to the right of Rough Mix. Follow the streak to a bolt, then continue up to the top traverse of Rough Mix (no protection), finishing as for that route.

### A Touch Soft 40 m, 5.9

J. Martin, L. Howard, C. Perry, M. White, J. Jones & W. Rennie, 1978-1986

The line described here is a combination of three climbs done on separate occasions. Climb up left of a small right-facing corner and make thin, run-out moves to a bolt. Continue up a line of small holds to the fixed piton near the top of pitch 1 of Rough Mix. Climb up and right to the belay ledge.

### Soft Touch\*\* 40 m, 5.8

C. Perry & M. White, July 1978

J. Martin & L. Howard, June 1980

Soft Touch, the most popular climb at Heart Slab, starts below a faint groove just left of a broken,

right-facing corner. As described, it comprises the original start Soft Touch and the original finish of A Touch Soft. Small cams and wired nuts are useful lower down.

Climb the groove to an overlap (fixed piton), move right slightly and then make some awkward moves up to a bolt. Make a couple of thin moves up, step right to flakes and then continue straight up past a dubious fixed piton (soon to be replaced by a bolt) to the belay ledge.

### **Bad Habits 40 m, 5.8**

J. Jones, 1986

This climb is essentially a direct finish to Original Sin. Start as for that route, but instead of traversing right, make a long run out straight up a nice slab to a little overlap with a fixed piton. Move up and then trend left to the belay ledge.

### **Original Sin\* 40 m, 5.8**

J. Martin, C. Dale & L. Howard, June 1980

This pleasant climb is the best protected of any in the central area. Start just left of some small trees and climb up to a break in the first overlap. Move up left over this and continue to a second overlap (piton). Diagonal up right to a bolt and then climb straight up to the base of a left-facing corner (piton). Move over an overlap and climb a slab, left of the corner, to the top ledge.

## Heart Slab Right

This is an elegant section of slab with a few good routes. Several climbs have been done on the broken slabs and corners to the south (now bolted sport climbs used for teaching purposes).

### Plimsoll Line 65 m, 5.6

N. Helliwell & M. Talbot, 1978

- 1) 45 m, 5.0 Starting directly below the right end of the large ledge, follow a faint, right-trending ramp to its top, and then move up and left on slabs to the ledge. Continue right and up on easy rock to a second ledge with a small tree.
- 2) 20 m, 5.6 Move up and right to a scoop, then climb this trending up and left to a big tree. Watch for loose rock at a bulge near the top.

### Bluebell Way 45 m, 5.6

First ascent unknown

This climb, which starts at a small left-facing corner, often sporting bluebells, provides a more direct approach to the exit of Plimsoll Line. Climb the corner to a ledge, move left and climb an obvious right-facing flake. Above, climb slabs straight up to a piton belay (regular angle) at a small spruce tree on the second pitch of Plimsoll Line.

### Red Slab 75 m, 5.8

D. Reid & A. Sole, 1978

Red Slab starts directly below a small (50 mm) fir tree about 15 m above the ground.

- 1) 50 m, 5.6 Climb an obvious flake system and then continue over slabs to the fir tree. The line above is not compelling; climb more or less straight up the centre of the slab to a piton belay below a bulge.
- 2) 25 m, 5.8 Climb over the bulge and continue up a slab, trending right near the top to a tree.

### White Slab 75 m, 5.9

J. Martin & L. Howard, May 1983

This eliminate line stays midway between Red Slab and The Scoop. Start at an almost blank slab (the crux) immediately right of a peculiar detached flake about 8 m above the ground.

- 1) 45 m, 5.9 Climb the smooth slab and continue up easier rock to a belay ledge (bolt) just left of The Scoop.
- 2) 30 m, 5.8 Continue up the slab to a bulge. Step left and move up over the bulge, then climb straight up to a tree.

### The Scoop\* 65 m, 5.7

C. Perry & S. Climpson, 1978

The Scoop climbs a clean, left-facing corner that begins part way up the cliff. It is an enjoyable route with moderately good protection.

- 1) 30 m, 5.6 Climb up to a faint solution runnel and follow this up to the main corner. Continue up the corner to a bolt belay.
- 2) 35 m, 5.7 Climb the corner, which bulges near the top, and continue up past a ledge to a big tree.

### **Black Slab 70 m, 5.7**

J. Martin & L. Howard, June 1983

This climb follows the edge of the slab overlooking The Scoop and just right of that route. Start at an easy groove.

- 1) 50 m, 5.7 Climb about 7 m up the groove, step left on to a slab and continue up past a little overlap to gain the rounded edge overlooking The Scoop. Climb the edge, staying left near the top to avoid loose rock, to a belay ledge with a dead tree.
- 2) 20 m, 5.5 Continue up the edge to the top.

### **Passing Slab 70 m, 5.7**

J. Martin & L. Howard, June 1980

The line of this route can be varied considerably and the crux section, near the bottom, can be avoided by staying to the right.

- 1) 20 m, 5.5 Begin just right of the start of Black Slab and climb a short slab to ledges. Alternatively, scramble up to the ledges from the left or right.
- 2) 50 m, 5.7 Climb up past an overlap located slightly to the left, and then follow the centre of the slab to tree ledges.

# HEART MOUNTAIN

The west side of Heart Mountain has a number of interesting cliff bands, the more accessible of which have been developed as good sport climbing areas. The following route begins high on the mountain and climbs two pitches directly to the summit. Additional pitches could be climbed lower down, possibly making an interesting integral type of climb.

St. Pierres' Summit 95 m, 5.7

S. DeMaio, A. St. Pierre & D. St. Pierre, November 1995

Hike up the summit trail to where it climbs a small step. Follow a faint trail up and right below the step for about 20 minutes to the southwest shoulder of Heart Mountain.

- 1) 40 m, 5.6 Climb a right-facing corner and continue over a steep bulge to a large pine tree.
- 2) 45 m, 5.7 Climb a left-facing corner to its end, then step right onto the face and go up to a ledge. From the left end of the ledge, make a "character-building" step onto a steep wall and pull up over the top. This sequence has 230 degrees of Bow Valley exposure as you are now on the Heart Summit prow. Scramble up to a belay ledge.