

# Revelations, Alaska Expedition 2014

Location: Revelations Range, Alaska, USA

Dates: April 15<sup>th</sup>-April 25<sup>th</sup> 2014

Aim: First Ascents of the W face of the Titanic and the N face of Jezebel

Author: Graham Zimmerman

Year: 2014

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## Introduction



The Revelations range is situated at the Southwestern edge of the Alaska Range, approximately 130 miles South and West from Denali. The peaks in the area tend to be steep and granitic punctuated by monolithic walls and steep ridges, they tend to be between 8,500 and 10,000 feet in height.

The goal of this expedition was to make the first ascents of the 4,000' West face of The Titanic (9,216') and the 3,200' North face of Jezebel (9,170'). These two peaks lie in a glacier system that has been referred to as the North-East Fork of the Big River Glacier. The expedition took place between the 15th and 25th of April 2014. It was intended to be longer but it was unfortunately cut short due to injury. The trip was though a success seeing in that the team completed the first ascent of the West face of the Titanic in a 22.5 hour push from basecamp.

## Expedition Members



*Graham Zimmerman*

- Age: 28
- Nationality: New Zealand/American,
- Occupation: Geophysical Surveyor
- Bio:

Graham has been pushing hard in the realm of cutting edge alpinism since 2008 and is absolutely in love with the process. He is focused on expedition climbing which has taken him to Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Alaska, Argentina, Chile and remote British Columbia.

-Climbing Experience:

-FA 'The Mastodon', NE Buttress of Laurens Peak, Lacuna Glacier, Alaska, May 2012 (V, M7, AI4, A1, Cornices 4,700')

-FA 'Vitalogy', SW Buttress of Mt Bradley, Ruth Gorge, Alaska, April 2010 (V, WI5, M6+, 5.9, AI1 4,600') -FA 'Central North Buttress', Kyzyl-Muz (5100m), Pamir Alai, Kyrgyzstan, July 2008 (V, 5.10, AI3, 5,600')

-Ascents of 5.12, M9, WI6+ and A3+

-Finalist for the 2014 Piolet d'Or

-2010 CMC New Zealand Alpinist of the Year



*Clint Helander*

- Age: 29
- Nationality: USA
- Occupation: Surveyor
- Bio:

Clint has been exploring remote parts of the Alaska Range for half a decade. In the Revelations range in particular he has been very active and is considered the 'godfather' of the range.

-Climbing Experience:

-FA Mt. Mausolus (9,170') via 'The Mausoleum' (V WI5+ 4500') on the W. Face. Revelation Mountains, Alaska.

-FA Apocalypse Peak (9,345') via West Face (V WI5 4400'). Revelation Mountains, Alaska.

-72 hour round-trip ascent of the Moonflower Buttress (Bibler/Klewin) to summit. Mount Hunter, Alaska

## Adventurous Activities

The goal of this trip was to access the Northeast fork of the Big River Glacier via ski plane and from a base camp attempt the first ascents of the West Face of The Titanic (9,300') and The North Face of Jezebel (9,650'). After a few days of waiting for good weather Zimmerman and Helander landed on the NE fork and established basecamp. Two more days of unstable weather followed in which they scoped lines on these two faces. It was determined that due to snow conditions and serac exposure, the North Face of Jezebel was an unsafe option while the West Face of The Titanic remained a question mark due to the complexity of the face.

On the 21st of April at 4am they set out for the West Face of the Titanic to see if they could find safe passage to the summit. A 3 kilometer approach put them at the base of the entry snow slope. They climbed this unroped for 1,700' before hitting the headwall of the face where they roped up.

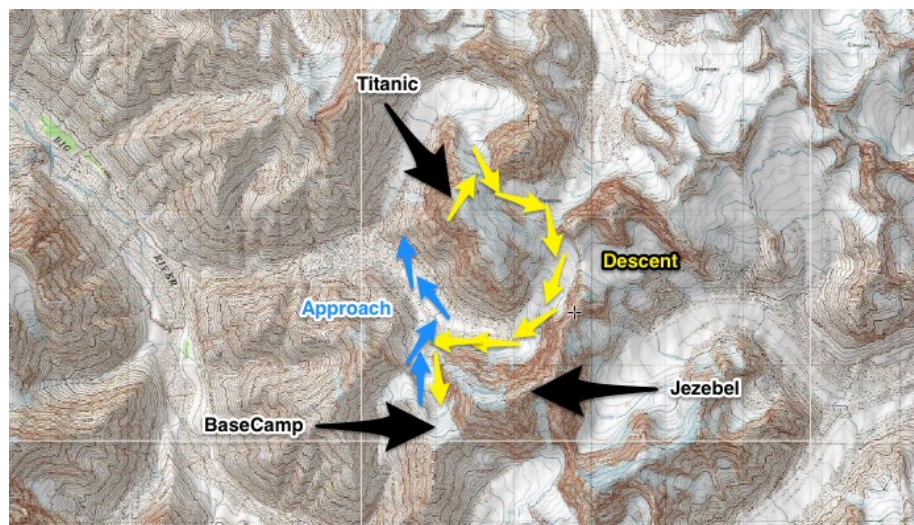
They climbed 2,200' of technical ground with multiple cruxes of both M6 and 5.8 ending on a spur that placed them 100' below the summit. They reached the top 16.5 hours after leaving base camp. The climbing was a mixed bag with some fantastic pitches while others were very loose. All in all, the climbing was sustained and very enjoyable.

The descent involved traversing the summit ridge to the North and then descending the East Face, they believe it was in a similar area to where the original Becky Route ascended but this remains unconfirmed. From the glacial cirque below the East face they were able to cross a pass to the South and navigate back to basecamp arriving back in basecamp at 1:30am on the 22nd after 22.5 hours on the move.

After two days of rest they headed out to investigate another cirque to the South of basecamp, the weather was stormy and they headed back to basecamp. While skiing back, Graham took a 40' unroped crevasses fall. Clint was able to drop a rope and extract him and Graham was able to hobble back to basecamp under his own power.

At this point they decided that due to Graham's knee being very sore that it was time to depart and they called the pilots who were able to pick them up later that day.

Back in Seattle it was determined that Graham had ruptured his ACL in his right knee. After surgery and month of intensive physical therapy he is happy to report that recovery is going very well and he will be taking part in the 2015 alpine climbing season stronger than ever.



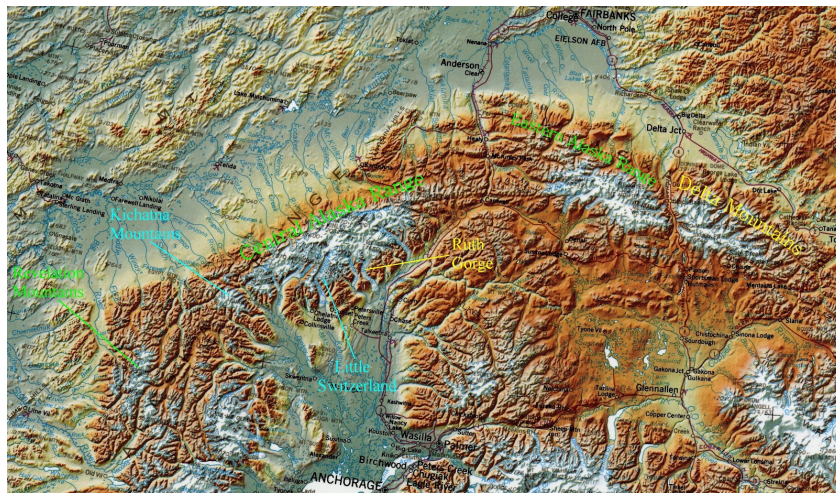
## Administration and Logistics

### *Destination Area*

The Revelations range is situated at the Southwestern edge of the Alaska Range, approximately 130 miles South and West from Denali. The peaks in the area tend to be steep and granitic punctuated by monolithic walls and steep ridges, they tend to be between 8,500 and 9,500 feet in height.

The Lat Long for Mt Hesperus, the highest peak in the Revelations is, 61°48'14"N 154°08'41"W.

The Big River glacier lies in the North and Eastern section of the Revelations. It is an area that remains relatively untrodden.



This map shows the location of the Revelations in reference to other parts of the Alaska Range.

### *Research materials and Information Sources*

Extensive research was completed through both the American Alpine Journal and local sources. Clint has been on the forefront of climbing in the Revelations for the past half decade and is considered to be the 'man to ask' on about the area. His inclusion on the team made research much more straightforward.

### *Training*

In order to prepare for the expedition the team members adhered to a rigorous training regime which involved aggressive circuit and cardiovascular training as well as time in climbing gyms. Training in the form of climbing itself was also undertaken by the team. This included ascents in Australia, Canada, Northwestern USA, Alaska and New Zealand.

### *Permission and Permits*

No permissions are needed for this area as it is outside of Denali National Park.

### *Fund-Raising and Finances*

In order to fund this expedition a number of grants applications were submitted. Support was received from the Mount Everest Foundation and the American Alpine Club

Below is provided a budget from the trip (in USD\$):

Airfare to Anchorage	Alaska Air (x2)	\$1000
Transport from Anchorage to Talkeetna:	Talkeetna Shuttle	\$650
Airfare from Talkeetna to Base Camp:	Talkeetna Air Taxis	\$2000
Food/Fuel:	Fred Meyer	\$450
Equipment/incidentals:	AMH	\$700
Insurance	NZAC/AAC	\$200
	Total	\$5000

Note that significant extra costs were added to this trip due to the injury. Even though a rescue was not needed the flight changes ect added significantly to the budget. Above is what a team repeating this trip should expect to spend, traveling from Seattle

#### *Insurance*

The team carries insurance through the New Zealand and American Alpine Clubs as well as private policies for medical insurance.

#### *Travel Transport and Freighting*

All equipment was carried with the team members on their plane flights.

#### *Food and Accommodation*

Anchorage: Accommodation at the Arctic Fox Hostel just outside of downtown. Supplies for the Expedition were purchased at Fred Meyers (Grocery and general supplies) and Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking (climbing specific supplies)

Talkeetna: Talkeetna Air Taxis has a bunk house. In town there are a number of restaurants.

#### *Communications*

The team carried a Iridium Sat phone for forecasts and in case of emergency.

#### *Risks and hazards*

While the inherent risks of alpine climbing will not be discussed here a few specific notes will be made. The glaciers in the Revelations are relatively low when compared to the rest of the Alaska Range. They in turn melt out faster.

The Revelations is a remote part of the range and teams going into this area must be prepared to self rescue and have adequate equipment and supplies in the eventuality that extraction is delayed due to weather.

#### *Medical Arrangements*

Graham Zimmerman is a USA Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician. On the expedition an extensive medical kit was carried designed to deal with both trauma and sickness. The team had a satellite phone in case it was determined that an injury or sickness requires evacuation or medical

consultation was needed. All team members were experienced with rigging and high angle rescue, skills necessary for evacuation from technical terrain.

#### *Environmental and Social Impact Assessment*

The Revelations lie in an uninhabited and rarely visited part of the Alaska Range. By practicing 'Leave No Trace' ethics the team was able to ensure that they left the area nearly as pristine as they found it.

#### Diary/log

April 18th - Flight into the NW fork, base camp established.

April 19th/20th - Poor weather and reconnaissance of the North Face of Jezebel and the West face of the Titanic.

April 21st/22nd - First Ascent of the West Face of the Titanic (V, M6, 5.8, 4,000), departing at 4am and arriving back at base camp at 1:30am the following evening.

April 23rd/24th - Rest in basecamp

April 25th - Reconnaissance over the pass South of basecamp, and crevasse fall on return trip. Later in the day the team was able to catch a plane flight back to civilization from where Graham was able to get medical attention.

#### Conclusions

Overall the 'Revelations Expedition 2014' was a success having made a major first ascents on a remote and technical mountain face. Fitness preparation and training were key to this success alongside a wealth of experience climbing in the Alaska range.

It was unfortunate that Graham sustained the knee injury he did as the success of the trip would have otherwise been able to continue in the form of further exploration and further first ascents.

There remains massive potential for exploration and new routes in the Revelations range. The team would highly recommend it to anyone else looking for beautiful and remote mountains in which to climb. Please feel free to get in touch with Graham Zimmerman with further questions.

In final conclusion the team would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation and the New Zealand Alpine Club for their generous support. Without it the trip would not have been possible.