

Safe Harbor

Note: This guide is pillaged from scans of the Rock & Ice guide published in issue #51, by Eric Hörst. I retyped the text as best I could and copied the imagery, even though both are probably out of date. Some annotations from the scans are included, in grey italic.

An undoubtedly better resource appears to be on the horizon from Eric Hörst, so grab it when it becomes available.

Overview

Although its home to 20 percent of the nation's population, including many thousands of climbers, the Megalopolis of the East Coast has less than its fair share of climbing. If you live here, you know it's not uncommon to drive from four to eight hours--each way--just for a weekend of climbing. Fortunately, a series of crags along the Susquehanna River, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, has recently been developed, offering a welcome alternative to the marathon roadtrips to New Hampshire, the Gunks, or the New River Gorge. Although these new crags are not the world-class caliber of the aforementioned areas, they have become Pennsylvania's premier climbing area due to their accessibility and the number of well-bolted routes. That's right, a new sport area is open on the East Coast!

Located at the intersection of the Susquehanna river and Conestoga Creek, Safe Harbor appears to have been a hub of Native American activity for the last 15,000 years. The legacy of these ancient times lies in the mass burial sites that have been uncovered and in the numerous rock carvings that border parts of the river. In 1710, the first white settlers arrived from Germany, coexisting peacefully with the Susquehannock people for over 50 years. Then, in 1763, the last of the Conestoga tribe were massacred at their village near Safe Harbor by the Paxton Boys from Harrisburg.

Over the next 100 years, canals and railroads were installed along the rivers. The cliffs on the eastern side of the Susquehanna River posed a significant obstacle to the tracks, but the rock eventually succumbed to massive amounts of dynamite. Today, the cliffs vary greatly from solid natural formations to chossy manmade faces.

The twentieth century has brought dramatic changes to the Susquehanna River Valley in the form of three hydroelectric dams (and resulting lakes) and two nuclear power plants (including the infamous Three Mile Island). While the lakes have been developed into a recreational paradise of excellent fishing, boating and waterskiing, they flooded much of the rocky Indian stomping grounds and ancient petroglyphs. Overlooking these lakes are the Safe Harbor climbs that quite possibly received their first ascents by Indians.

The pioneering climbers of Safe Harbor were Tony and Hugh Herr, and Don Gallagher. During the '70s the crags originally offered only a handful of routes with poor to non-existent protection that was likely to rattle out when a train passed next to the cliff. At that time there were only a few local climbers and, since

the Gunks were the rage in those days, Safe Harbor was all but forgotten. Hardly an ascent was made during the '80s.

In the summer of 1990, "Mr. Think Tank," Hugh Herr, and I were working out at a gym in Lancaster when we stumbled upon the idea of "scoping out the old crags south of the Safe Harbor Dam for potential training routes." And, as they say, "the rest is history!"

In the next year or so, we bolted a dozen Fine routes, bringing our vision to fruition. Or so we thought. Then, in the fall of 1991, the Safe Harbor scene was energized with the arrival of Bob Perna from West Chester. Perna understood the thirst for new rock common to Megalopolis climbers and was impressed by the area's potential. Development re-started immediately and when the dust settled at the end of the balmy winter, nearly 60 routes existed, a testament to the dedication of climbers like Dixie Marich, Carl Gugasian, Denny Parini, Mike McGill and Lisa Hörst.

In January, Grant Horner and I discovered a new 140-foot cliff north of the dam – a major find that now features Pennsylvania's longest sport climb. Cemetery Wail (named for the pre-Civil War cemetery atop the cliff) sported 30 routes by Spring's end. More routes are sure to come!

Climbing at Safe Harbor is extremely user-friendly – you can drive to the base of nearly 50% of the climbs. At worst, the approach is a ten-minute walk. The orange-and-black cliffs rise between 30 and 140 feet from level ground and average jug under 85 feet in height. The angle of the rock tends to be a little less than 90°. However, there is handful of 60° slabs as well as some overhanging faces. Correspondingly, the grades at SH accommodate just about anyone with everything from shell 5.7s to steep, pumpy 12s and 13s.

Since sport climbing is the theme at Safe Harbor, all the routes are protected with 3/8-inch bolts and stainless steel Metolius hangers. Routes under 85 feet have been equipped with cold-shut anchors. For lowering. Just be sure your rope is at least 165 feet long!

The SH scene is mellow. The main focus here is to climb a lot of routes and have fun. The locals are generally friendly, and more than willing to give information or share their rope. With the exception of a few dweebs who steal gear off routes, the area has yet to have any "crises."

A comprehensive guide to all Susquehanna River Crags should be out by next spring. Any information or comments can be sent to me at 205-A Bender Mill Road, Lancaster, PA 17603.

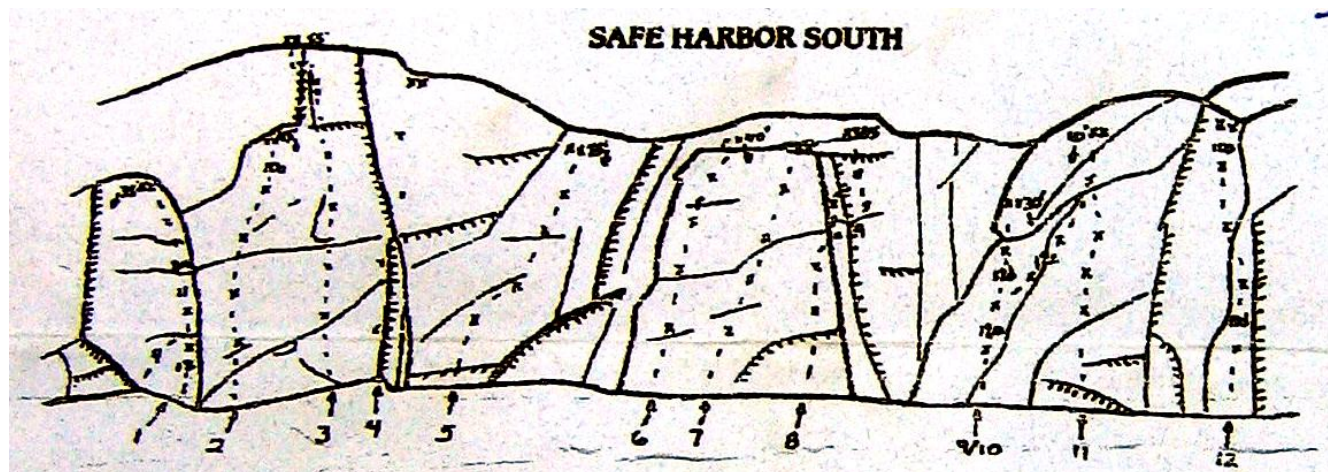
Access

The western border of Lancaster County is a recreational paradise for everything from hiking and horseback riding to fishing, boating, waterskiing and rock climbing. Much of the land is owned by either Pennsylvania Power and Light or the County Parks and specifically designated as "an area set aside for all forms of recreational use."

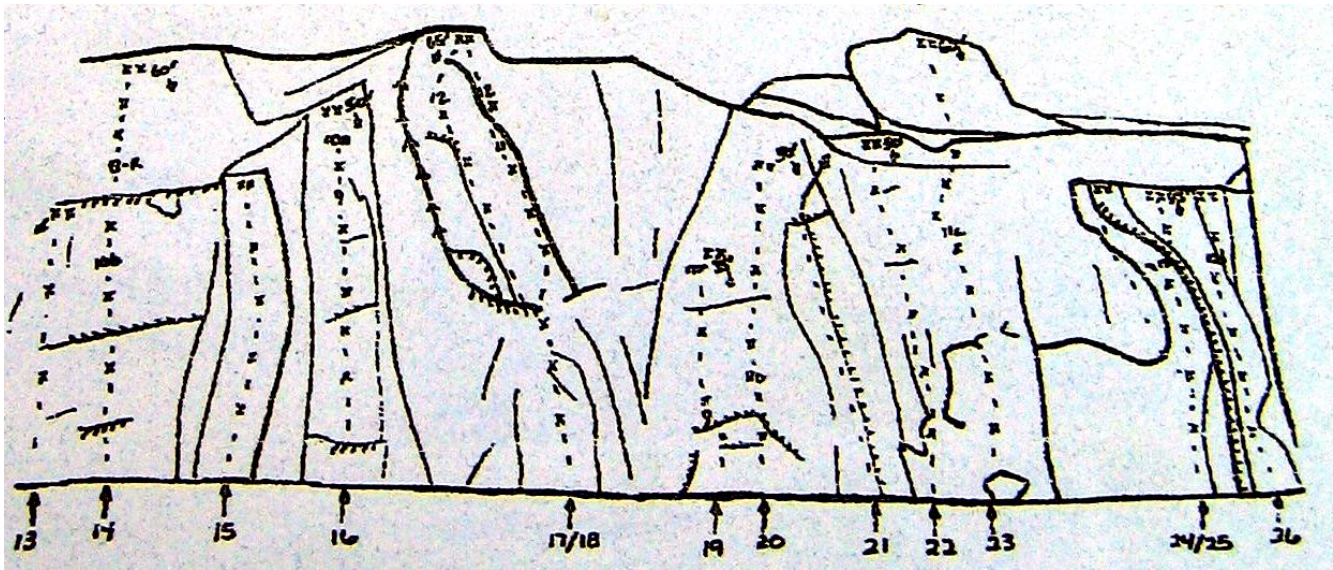
There has been no difficulty in accessing the Safe Harbor cliffs; however, this is not an excuse to become careless in our use of the area. Be especially friendly to the people who live near the cliffs, and remain [...]

Safe Harbor South

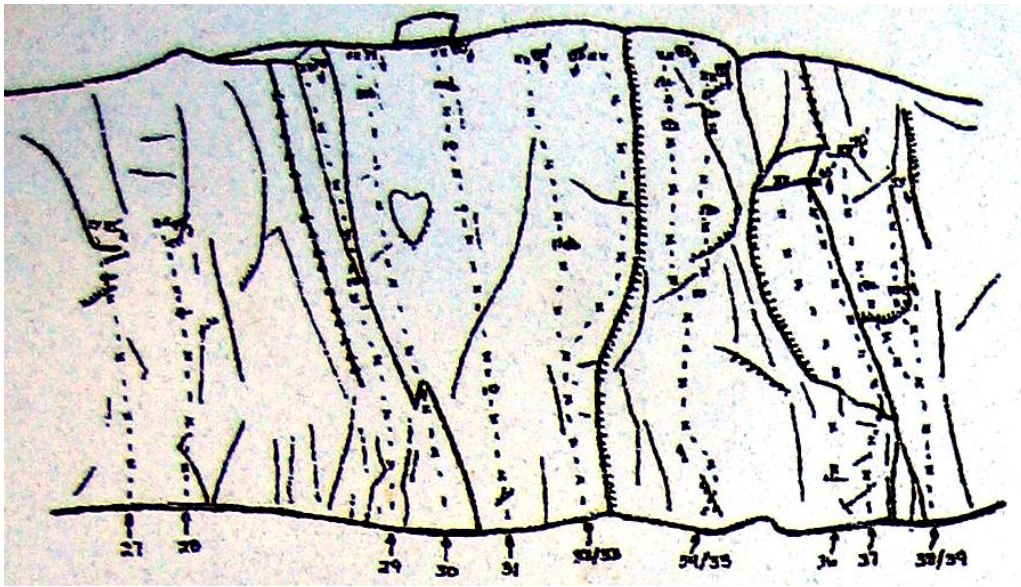
Numbered routes start just beyond parking area, increasing as you walk south (downstream). If you choose, you can drive to the base of all routes up to #59.



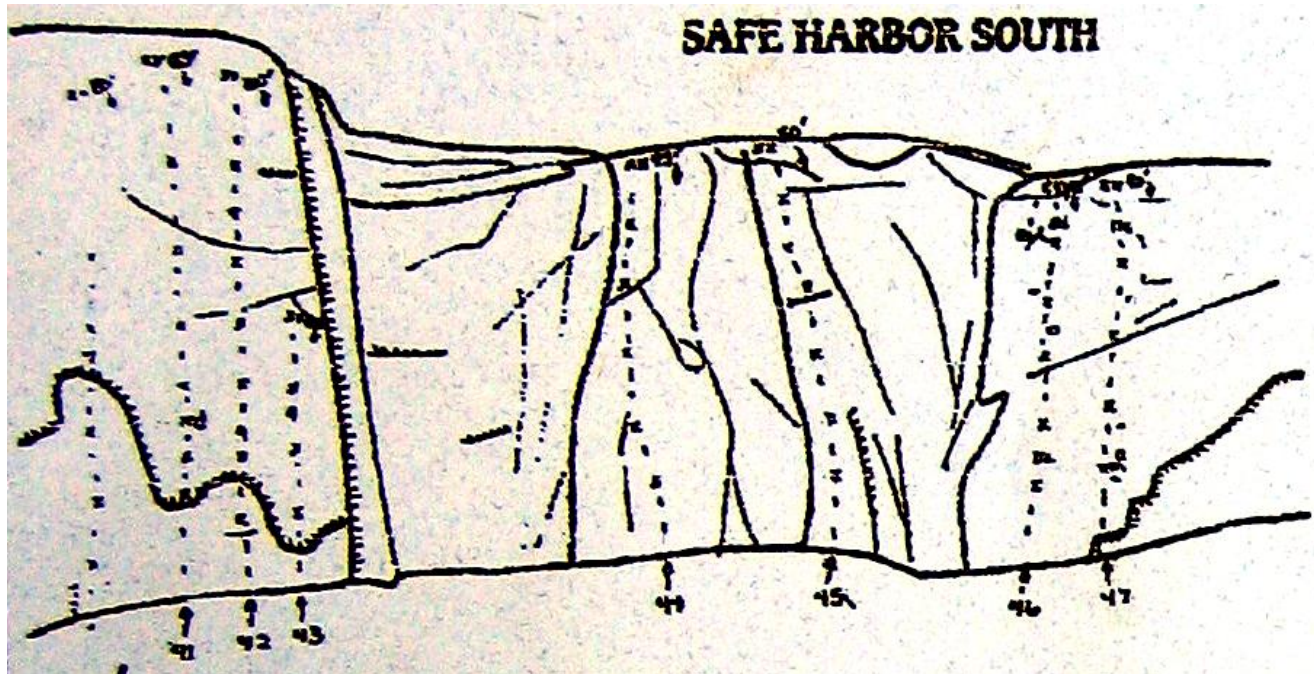
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|---|-----------|------|
| 1. Body Drama | 5.12b | ** |
| Difficult boulder problem start, then tricky arête moves. An easier start (9) can be done to the left, which makes the route 11b. | | |
| 2. Mental as anything | 5.10a | *** |
| Good intro to 5.10 face climbing | | |
| 3. Hydroman | 5.11a/b | **** |
| SH's first clip-up. Rare Pennsylvania pockets! | | |
| 4. Crossroads | 5.10d | * |
| 5. There Goes the Hood | 5.7 | * |
| 6. Le Eaglet | 5.7 | ** |
| Good first lead | | |
| 7. Adopted Son | 5.9 | * |
| 8. Parabolic Corner | 5.9/11c | ** |
| Move around the corner low and it's 5.9; higher up makes it 5.11 | | |
| 9. Flex All | 5.12d/13a | * |
| Hard moves crescendo to a ridiculous lunge above the second bolt | | |
| 10. Train in Vain | 5.12c/d | ** |
| Pumpy, technical and fun! Unfortunately, it's sometimes wet... | | |
| 11. Project | 5.12? | |
| 12. The Sighting | 5.10d | ** |
| Keep a watch for Bald Eagles that soar nearby! | | |



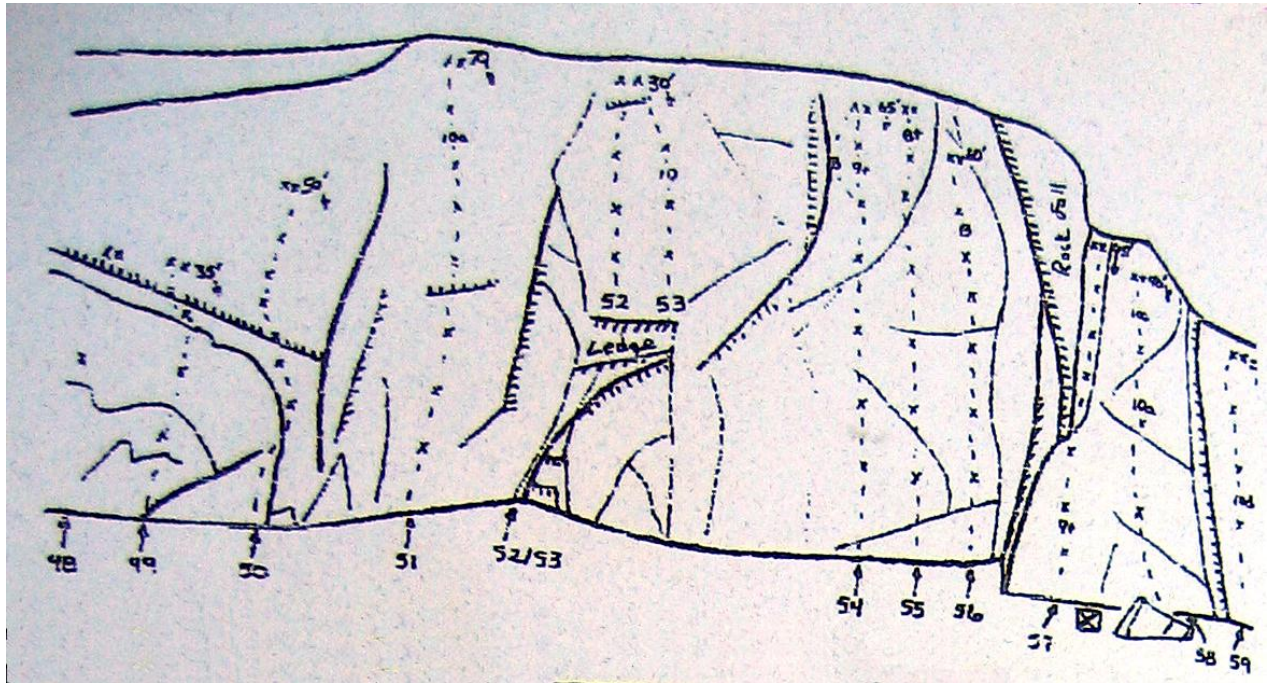
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| 13. Econoline | 5.7 | |
| 14. Demon in my Semen | 5.10b | ** |
| As of this writing, the 5.8 finish is R-rated | | |
| 15. When Doves Cry | 5.8+ | * |
| 16. Black is Power | 5.10a/b | ** |
| 17. Bat Crack | 5.12a/b | ** |
| A few fingerjams on a slightly overhanging headwall | | |
| 18. Crips & Bloods | 5.12a/b | ** |
| Short but steep arête | | |
| 19. Tonga | 5.9 | * |
| 20. Wild Palms | 5.11b | ** |
| 21. T-Bag | 5.8R | |
| SH's only real crack... with traditional protection, of course | | |
| 22. 19's in the House | 5.10a | ** |
| Popular – but what's the name mean? | | |
| 23. The Righteous and the Wicked | 5.11b/c | *** |
| Classic low-angle face climbing | | |
| 24. The Final Cut (Project) | 5.11? | |
| 25. Rockin' Peacock | 5.10b | * |
| A reachy roof crux | | |
| 26. Both Ends Burning | 5.10d | ** |
| Better than it first appears | | |



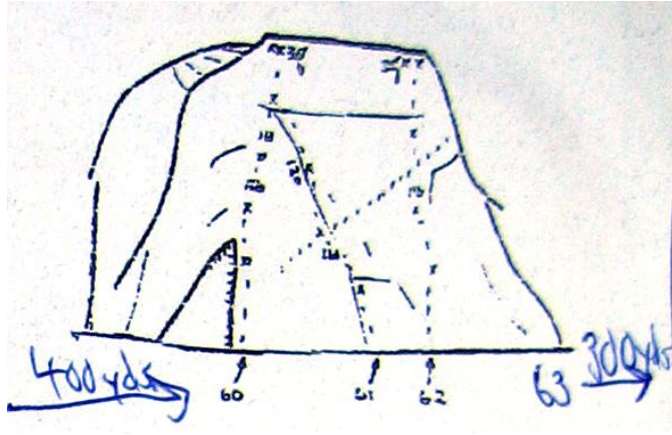
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| 27. AF in PA | 5.9+ | * | |
| Like some American Fork routes, the rock ain't pretty, but the moves are fun! | | | |
| 28. Avant Garden | 5.9- | * | |
| Vertical + big holds = Good Warm-up | | | |
| 29. Lycra Perversion | 5.10c/d | ** | |
| Above-average exposure | | | |
| 30. Heart's Horizon | 5.10b | ** | |
| 31. Urban Daydreams | 5.11b | *** | |
| Long and sustained with the crux at the bitter end | | | |
| 32. Static Cling | 5.11b/c | *** | |
| A side-pull workout | | | |
| 33. Autumn Arch | 5.10b | **** | |
| Mega-classic corner with great stemming. Beware: A 165-foot rope is required to lower off this, and adjacent, routes! | | | |
| 34. Doppelganger | 5.12c | *** | |
| "We are spirits in the material world..." | | | |
| 35. Exposé | 5.12a | **** | |
| The crux is unlocking the very thin moves above the seventh bolt. Then get ready for a surprisingly exciting finish! | | | |
| 36. Visionaire (Project) | 5.13+ | *** | |
| Destined to become the area testpiece. Powerful, overhanging face climbing. | | | |
| 37. Wonderama | 5.12b | **** | |
| This overhanging arête would be a classic at any crag! A "light" 12b if you're strong and fast. | | | |
| 38. Locomotion | 5.10a | *** | |
| Same start (first 3 bolts) as #39 | | | |
| 39. Chillin' & Maxin' | 5.10b/c | *** | |



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| 40. Pro Bono | 5.7 | ** | |
| Requires a 165-foot rope | | | |
| 41. Super Slab | 5.10d | **** | |
| Super fun! Can be made easier if you move left and palm the arête. Requires a 165-foot rope. | | | |
| 42. Slab Monster | 5.9+ | *** | |
| Two distinct cruxes, and a bit sporting. Requires a 165-foot rope. | | | |
| 43. Your Mother | 5.9- | ** | |
| 44. Too Cold Two Stroke | 5.10b | ** | |
| 45. Witness | 5.10b | ** | |
| 46. Machismo | 5.11c/d | *** | |
| A macho flash! For the full effect, climb straight up from the last bolt to the cold-shuts. | | | |
| 47. Virtual Reality | 5.13a | ** | |
| Only two ridiculous moves... then lots of 5.11 | | | |



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| 48. Under the Bridge (project) | 5.11? | |
| 49. Horizontal Play Thing | 5.11b/c | ** |
| The Foops of Safe Harbor! | | |
| 50. The Hanging Garden | 5.10a/b | * |
| Not pretty, but some good roof moves. Be ready for lots of rope drag above the roof. | | |
| 51. Tenuous Odyssey | 5.10a | *** |
| Another slab route, but quite good. | | |
| 52. Sugar High | 5.11d/12a | * |
| Short, but sweet! Starts on the same ledge as #53 | | |
| 53. Clever Retort | 5.10b | ** |
| Great rock – too bad this route isn't longer... | | |
| 54. SH Direct | 5.9+ | *** |
| Increasingly difficult, unless you move left to the arête at the top | | |
| 55. Public Service | 5.8+ | *** |
| A good leg warm-up and stretch | | |
| 56. Two Pines | 5.8 | *** |
| Not three! | | |
| 57. Under Fire | 5.9+ | * |
| Boulder problem start, then way easier | | |
| 58. Electric Co. | 5.10b | ** |
| "Give me, give me shock treatment..." | | |
| a. 5.8+ | | |
| b. 5.10b | | |
| c. 5.9+/5.10a | | |
| 59. Lost Boys | 5.10d | ** |
| A '70s solo route! | | |
| a. 5.9 | | |



Wall of Denial

Located about 400 yards downstream from route#59

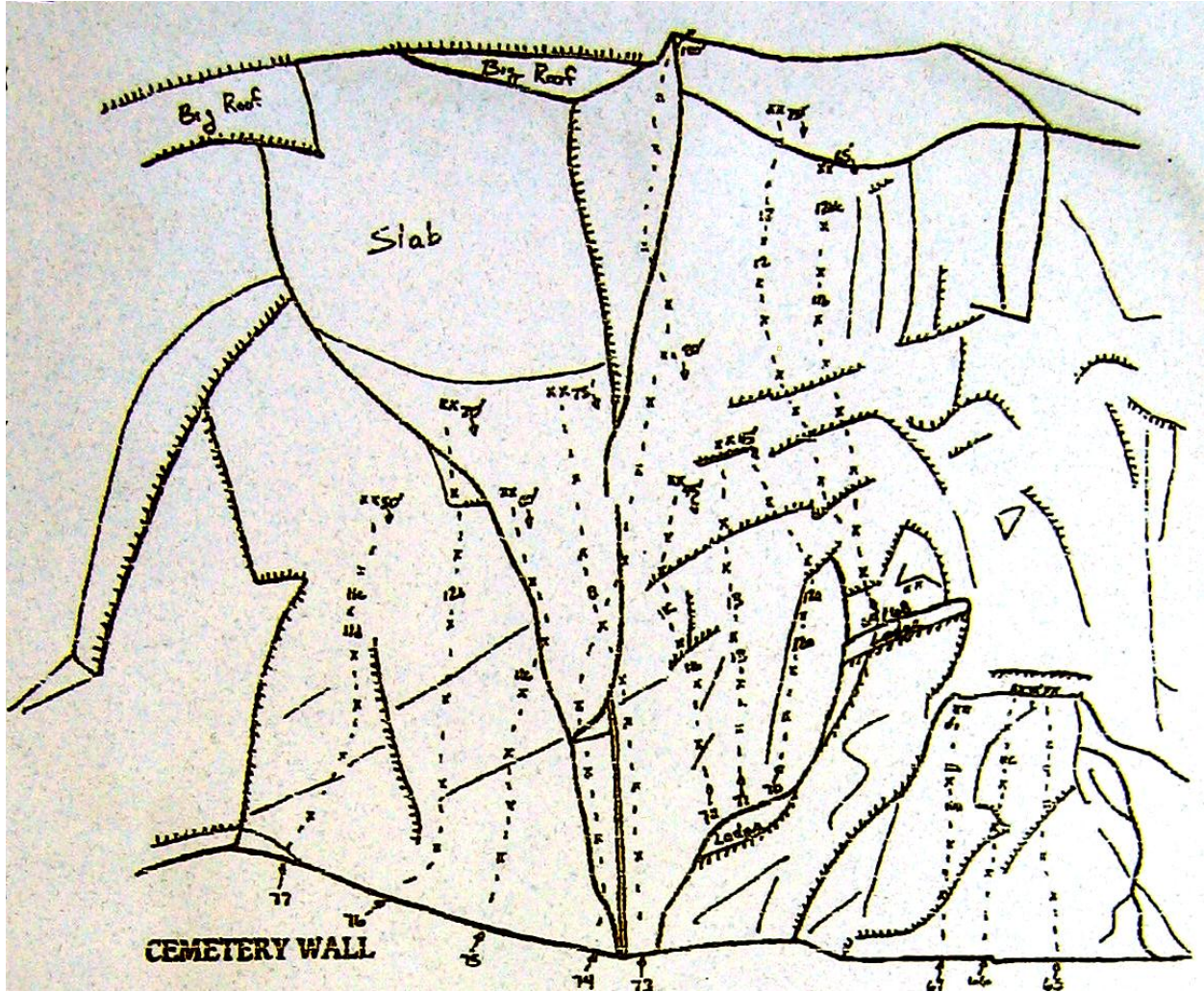
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| 60. Copperhead Road | 5.12b | ** |
| Keep a look out for some company at the top... | | |
| 61. Blood Sugar Magic | 5.12a | *** |
| A PowerBar might help out! | | |
| 62. Bomb-Free Harbor | 5.11b | *** |
| Put up on December 7 th , of course | | |
| 63. Key West | 5.8 | * |

(not shown) This lone route lies about 300 yards downstream from #62
more like 100 yards with webbing at halfway point up route

Safe Harbor North – Cemetery Wall

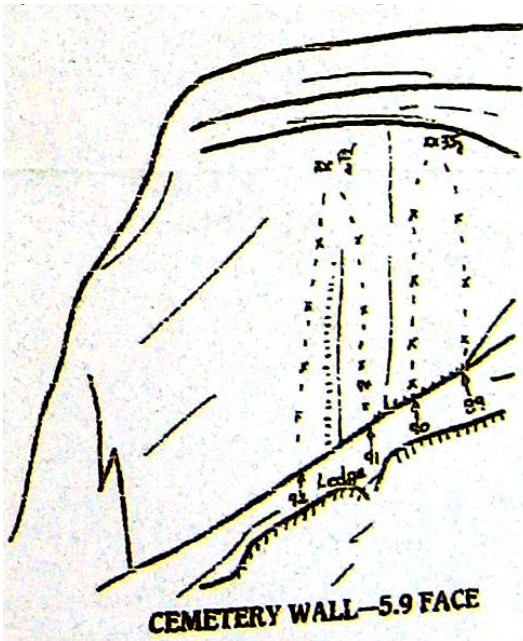
Route numbers increase as you walk upstream from the approach trail.

Cemetery Wall offers some of the only shaded climbs at SH, so if it's really hot, check out routes #75 - #79. Also, this crag tends to dry much faster than those South of the dam.



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| 64. Cornerstone | 5.10a | ** |
| (not shown) At the downstream end of Cemetery Wall | | |
| 65. Beat Crazy | 5.9 | * |
| 66. Tonus Bonus | 5.11c | ** |
| Pumpy crux through bulge | | |
| 67. Damnation 1992 | 5.10b | ** |
| 68. Monk Gets Ripped | 5.12b/c | *** |
| Exposed and steep, with a reachy crux | | |
| 69. Dry Bones Dance | 5.12c/d | *** |
| Action-packed climbing – three hangs and a difficult headwall | | |

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| 70. Pity You | 5.12a/b | ** |
| Steep and strenuous | | |
| 71. Power At Play (project) | 5.13+ | |
| The 35 feet of overhanging dynos continues to reject a redpoint | | |
| 72. Buzz Clip | 5.11c | *** |
| You'll get it! | | |
| 73. Shoots and Ladders | 5.8 | ** |
| Excellent warm-up | | |
| 74. The Nose | 5.11a | *** |
| The 140 feet of climbing make this Pennsylvania's longest sport route. | | |
| 75. Afro Sheen | 5.11c | *** |
| Very technical and very slippery | | |
| 76. Leap of Faith | 5.12a/b | **** |
| A one finger pocket crux... | | |
| 77. Ruby Red Slippers | 5.11d | *** |
| ...might help | | |
| 78. Rant & Rave | 5.10c/11a | *** |
| The grade can vary greatly depending on which side of the arête you're on. Choose the overhanging right side for a good 5.11a pump. | | |
| 79. Pause for Thought | 5.10a | ** |
| 80. Drug Avirgin | 5.9 | ** |
| Only Rick Thompson could come up with such a twisted route name! | | |
| 81. Power Surge | 5.12c | **** |
| Thin face leads to a powerful roof/bulge sequence | | |
| 82. Project | 5.12+ | |
| 83. Pain Lies on the Riverside | 5.11b | *** |
| Take pleasure in the pain | | |
| 84. Fast Twitch Poetry | 5.10d | ** |
| High and wild! | | |
| 85. Raptor | 5.10b/c | ** |
| This route can be connected with route #84 to create a 120 foot sport climb. The belay ledge for route #83 can be approached by moving right at Raptor's fifth bolt. | | |
| 86. It's a Fine Line... | 5.9+ | ** |
| Still a bit loose on the upper headwall. (same with #83 through #88) | | |
| 87. Charming Snakes | 5.10c | ** |
| 88. Mindwalk | 5.10a | ** |
| Take your mind out for a walk... | | |
| 89. Primal Scream | 5.10a | * |
| 90. 100 th Monkey | 5.9 | * |
| 91. Fun Hogs | 5.9+ | ** |
| 92. My Wife the Slavedriver | 5.9 | * |



CEMETERY WALL—5.9 FACE

