



# Bottom Moose 1977 first descent featured different lines through drops

As they stood on the antique iron-truss bridge that spanned the Moose River at Fowlersville, Carl Lundgren, Jim Muhlhahn, Tom Clemow and Joe Maskasky had the right to feel a little like latter-day Christopher Columbuses.

After all, back in the spring of 1977—the edge of the known Moose River whitewater world ended precipitously just downstream of the bridge.

And one glimpse of the ominous horizon line stretching across the river was enough to lend credence to the 15<sup>th</sup> century belief that if adventurers dared ap-

proach the limit of the known world—they risked simply falling over the edge.

Undeterred, the four explorers forged ahead, spending six hours scouting every rapid, probing pools, evaluating possible lines, setting careful safety, portaging two drops and running the rest of the river before abandoning their journey a mile shy of the take-out.

Two weeks later, the men returned to finish the job. And by Sunday evening, they had paddled or sneaked every drop, executed a pair of serious rescues and taken nearly 300 photographs.



*Not the old line through Agers...back in the day boaters penciled in on the right.*

scriptions of the rapids and his recommended routes through the drops help illustrate how far boating has come on the Bottom Moose in the 27 years since its first descent.

Fowlersville Falls—the Bottom Moose's opening drop—is a case in point. In his article, Lundgren emphatically states that the 40-foot slide can *only* be run on the extreme right—"essentially scraping on wet rocks."

And indeed, the far right line remained the route of choice for over 10 years until the Kern brothers discovered the route down the

far-left tongue that is now utilized by the majority of Bottom Moose paddlers.

Funnel—the second of the Bottom Moose's major drops—was named during the first descent and the line pioneered by the initial explorers remains unchanged. But not so for Knifedge—the next major drop downstream where the river enters a brief bordered by a nearly vertical 200-foot wall on the left.

Lundgren reported that "routes through here are not obvious and vary with water level" as they do today. Typically, boaters would boof the flat rock in the middle of the top drop and finish down the left sluice.

That line is still utilized today at flows over 4' but dries up at lower levels forcing boaters to run to the right of the middle rock and then cut back left or go for the high far-right boof.

Those conditions weren't as prevalent before 1986 because the gap in the left hand wall now commonly used as a sneak did not exist forcing more water down the main channel. The gap was created with dynamite by local firemen in an effort to dewater the main drop to facilitate recovery of a body of a drowned kayaker who came out of his boat while attempting to punch the big hole on the top right. His body snagged on an underwater ledge just downstream of the hole and remained in the river for nearly a month.

Boaters with rock-climbing skills have noted the cliffs while drifting down the pool approaching Knifedge—and it should be noted that Lundgren and Muhlhan took time from their first exploratory trips to scale the wall. But after 45 minutes searching for an attractive route back down the rock face—the two were forced to hike up and around to return to the river.

Around the corner from Knifedge the explorers encountered Upper Lyonsdale Falls—now commonly referred to as Doubledrop. "This is a delightful rapid," Lundgren reported. "We've run it many ways but water level is critical and scouting will obviously be necessary." And so it is today.

But the first descent team also ran—with varying success—Lower Lyonsdale Falls: the drop at the por-

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