



Old City Falls Quest

Strafford, Vermont

To get there: Take Interstate 89 to the Sharon, Vermont exit, #2. Go right (or left if coming from the north) on Rte. 132, seven miles over the mountain until you come to a T in S. Strafford. Go left toward Strafford (approx. 2 miles). Go right past the common, (as if headed toward Tunbridge) ½ mile, until you reach Old City Falls road on your right (opposite some old abandoned tennis courts). Head up to the top of the hill and just past the bridge at the top on your left is the road to Old City Falls Nature Preserve. It is guarded by a gate during the off season. You may drive in and park or stay outside the gate and walk in. Your Quest begins at the state sign on your right.

A bit of history before you start:

Off Old City Falls, a sign will say,
Come visit awhile, enjoy your stay.
A place to picnic; a place to park
A trail to follow before the dark.

History tells us this is the lot
Lt. Frederick Smith came to start a "City" spot.
A Whig and patriot, he believed in the cause
Protected the settlers, helped make the laws.

A sawmill he built, a house and strong walls,
A fort of safety for those near the Falls.
In 1780 he left to spread word
That the French, the Indians and Tories were abroad.

'Twas a fearsome time and Fred could not linger,
There were bears and wolves and a Troy bit off his finger!
Their treasures were hidden – a pine stump served well:
Warming pan, brass kettle, pewter platter – few can tell.

With a band of 8 men and a ration of rum
He traveled to Thetford, Norwich & Tunbridge town.
Taught all to prepare with a fort and a gun
For Indians had camped 7 miles for him.

His brave wife Sarah and Waitstill their babe,
Hid behind the falls in a sheltered cave
The mother was frightened; the baby unwell.
She feared that his breathing their place would foretell.

Then a familial signal was heard very near,
O'er the deafening falls came a noise so clear.
When he finally returned Sarah could hear,
Her husband's whistle told her "nothing to fear."

When all dangers were gone and everyone safe,
The settlers moved downhill near the turnpike space,
Strafford was booming at a very fast pace.
And "City Falls" became "Old" – a historic base.

Years passed by and in the 1920's
Jesse Melendy built a camp for many.
Metompkin he called it, an Indian name,
For forty years and more it brought him fame.

Teepees and cabins, stables and more
Brought him campers and hikers and horses galore.
Passumpsic, Aloha, Wyoda for a few,
Quinnibeck, Wynonoa, Kenjocketee, too.

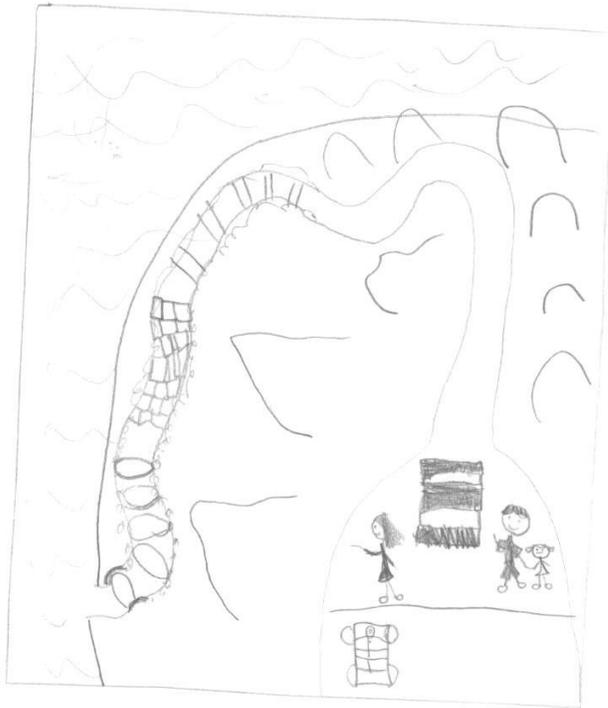
Lochearn, Neshobe, Hanoum, maybe more.
So now we know what went before—
Let's forge ahead – see what's in store.
The falls you'll see in 1000 feet or more.

Clues:

Past the "Nature Preserve" sign please observe
A wide open space that has a kind of curve.
Imagine this space without any trees
A view of the mountains is what used to be.

Picnic now or picnic later,
You choose and don't be a stranger.
This natural playground is fun to explore

Precious flora and fauna, don't disturb ...just adore.



Many hands worked here
Too many to name.
Please don't let their work be in vain.
Leave this place better than when you came.

The trail begins by the picnic shelter,
Head slowly down – not helter skelter.
See a twin-limbed hemlock, pass sapling bent,
You're not too far from a steep descent.

Bear left down the path there are risks as you go,
Four sets of steep stairs toward the distance below.
Nine logs, stone steps and a bottom rock row,
Lovely old roots – 'tis best to go slow.

Whoa there! What do you see?
At the horseshoe turn hang on to a tree!
Stop for a moment and look down,
Hear thundering clear water; proceed toward the sound.

Follow trail bottom to 3 lovely pools,
Swim, wade, or dip until you feel cool.
View waterfall wonders, a slippery slide,

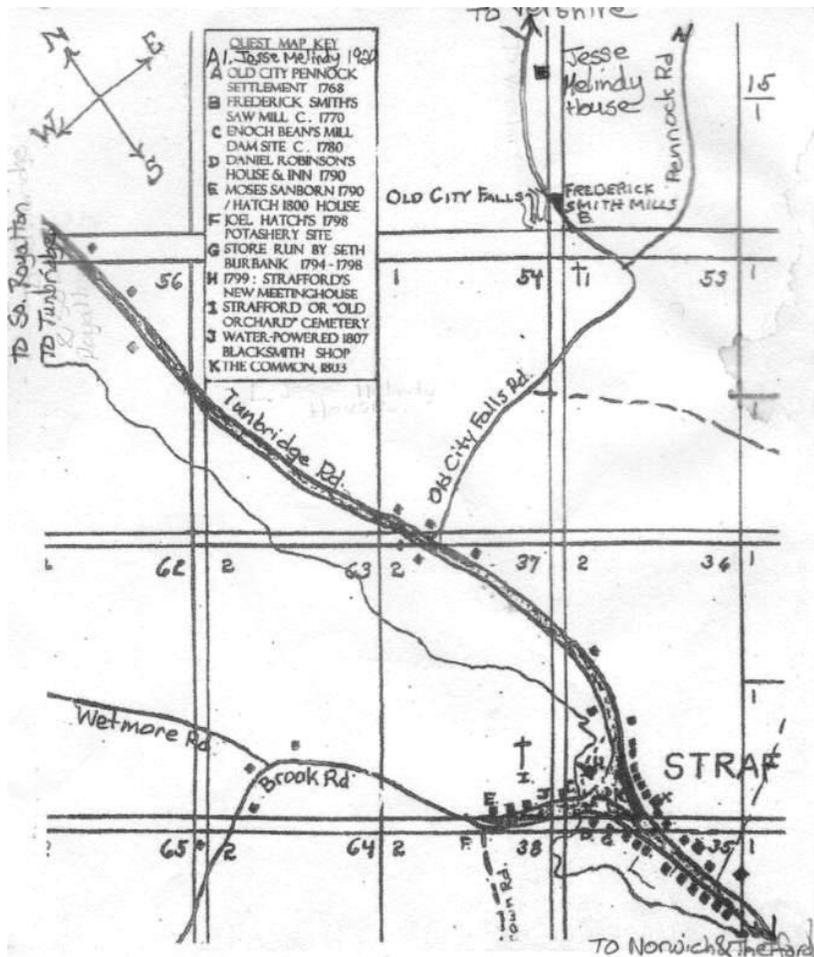
Climb around on the rocks or sit for awhile.

Here you can muse and write a cool ballad...
Build a rock cairn; watch a water spider.
Others have come here to leave their signs,
Of stones laid up in fancy designs.

Inner peace strengthened, we'd love to stay
But it's time to be up and on our way.
Retrace your steps backwards – it won't take long.
You'll soon be back where you belong.

Once you're back at the top, look around for your Valley Quest box!
If you're at the shelter, look across the clearing, and advance like a fox.
Search until you find a fire ring, a tree with 8 trunks at its rear—
It's betwixt these growths your treasure will appear.

This tree is resilient, it's true: notice the fence lain decades back,
Placed too near a tree it never would crack.
But peer inside, at about waist height,
Nestled by the fence therein: Your box! What a sight!



Did you know?

If you go past the “End of Trail” sign, you can enter the pool that looks up at the two waterfalls above. It’s a tricky climb, so please proceed with caution! This waterfall is the site where two different types of rock collide, with the outside rock serving as caprock.

Source: northeastwaterfalls.com

Please be a good steward of the land: leave it better than you found it and pack out any trash you find.



Valley Quest is a collection of treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional nonprofit working to engage citizens, organizations, and communities in creating solutions to our region’s challenges. Learn more at vitalcommunities.org