1764 – The Old Kings Highway Quest

Lebanon, New Hampshire
Physical Difficulty: Easy
Special Features: Natural
Walking Conditions: Trail
Duration: 1:30
Bring: Boots, Field Guide

To get there: *Take exit 19 off of Interstate 89. Turn west off of the exit ramp. At first light, turn left up Poverty Lane and go 0.9 mile. Parking spots are on left at memorial plaque.*
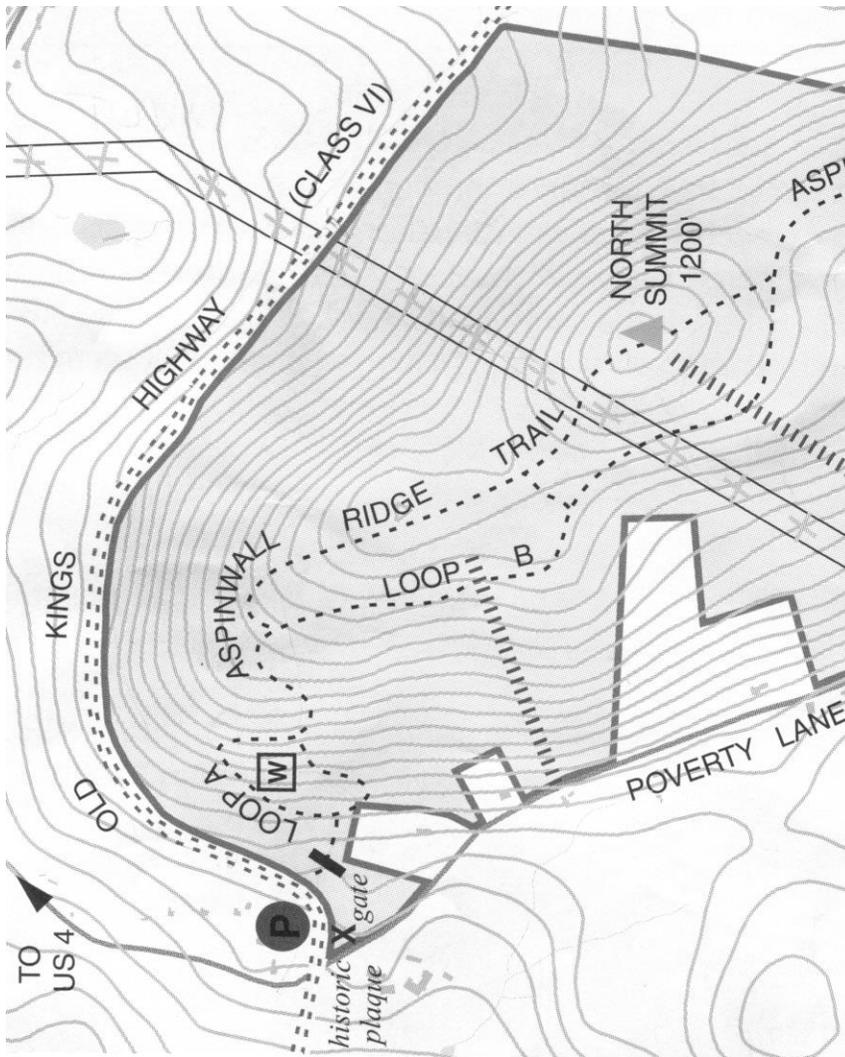
Overview:
This Quest introduces the Old Kings Highway, maintained by the City of Lebanon's Recreation and Parks Department. The Recreation and Parks Department's goal is to provide a variety of quality recreation programs and special events, and to effectively develop and maintain recreation facilities for the community's use and enjoyment, which together enhance the quality of life for all residents of the City of Lebanon.

Clues:
1. Begin at the rock with a weathered old plaque
And follow a road that will take you way back
To a time when the King of England
Aspired to rule over all this green land.

King George the 3rd once gave this road its name,
And some of Lebanon's earliest settlers to this place came.
Walk straight on ahead until you come to a trail.
Stay left on "Kings Highway" and you will not fail.

2. This road was planned to be nine rods wide.
How far would that be from side to side? (hint: one rod = 16.5 feet)
Most early road builders preferred the hilltops
As the ground was drier in well-drained spots.

3. Step on a large rock in the middle of the road.
Moving all of these rocks must have been a heavy load.
Stone walls line this road; they were moved by hand
To clear land for crops, hayfields or pastureland.

Walk on for a while and try to imagine this place
200 or more years ago, with a different pace
…Horse-drawn carriages rolling by with grace
An animal pound was once located at this place…

In 1767, 162 folks, most having come from CT, called Lebanon home.
By year 2000, to 12,568 that number had grown.
Carry on down this road; you don't have to go fast,
And under a fallen tree you may have to pass.

A committee of proprietors came here to this spot

And divided this land into 100-acre lots.
Families moved here from far and from near;
The Aspinwall family farmed here for 95 years.

4. Walk a ways up the road and look for the snag of a tree.
It's up on the right, and it is full of holes: how can that be?
A treat for the woodpeckers, when they dig in the wood
It is bugs they are looking for, would that taste good?

Along this very road was Lebanon's first school.
Built in 1768 out of logs, it must have been cool.
Walk past a big tree, broken in half with a thump
And then look out for a tree growing out of stump!

5. Yellow birch trees can take root without much bother
Ahead on our Quest, you will see more than one other.
Go on, more than 100 steps to a tree that curves out on the right.
Check out all of the holes; what a sight.

These were made by a sapsucker looking for sap.
And behind in the woods, another woodpecker's trap.
Keep journeying along and find a beech tree with bumpy bark.
Nectria disease causes this bumpiness; you may see more in this park.

6. Find a tree on its side with roots like a star.
You will know you have come far.
On the left, find a tree that looks like it's growing out of the air
With a rock stuck in its roots; how unfair.

The other yellow birch tree we promised you'd see?
What a crazy root system on this neat tree!
Further ahead on the right,
Some barbed wire is in sight.

In the late 19th century it was added for clout.
The wire either helped keep animals in or animals out.
Cross over a brook in the road that is fine
And pass a giant majestic white pine

7. Walk on into the sun and under some power lines.
A fine view of Mt. Ascutney waits up the hill for another time.*
Look at the stone walls on each side of this road:
Erosion has caused this road to go low.

8. This royal road is now only a trail;
Along this road, a car or wagon could no longer sail.
Walk under a tree that crosses this highway so good;
Cross another brook and notice stone walls going up in the woods.

Deacon James Perley Farnum and family beyond him
Had a farm on this road until 1921.
Walk on until you see stone walls getting taller:
Your treasure is close, but you don't need to holler.

STEP between two beautiful walls on your left,
Where people and animals walked through the years,
THEN look down low on your right;
We know that the box will come into sight.

Sign your name in the book and collect your stamp impression;
Hope you enjoyed your trip back in time to early Lebanon.

*Take a side trip up Loop A or B on the map for a view of Mt. Ascutney.

This Quest was created by Laura Dintino for the UVTA (Upper Valley Trails Alliance) Trails Day Celebration in 2007.

Did you know?
1764 was also the year that King George III decided that to the west of the Connecticut river would be New York (it included Vermont), and to the east would be New Hampshire. Source: lebanonnhhistory.org

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.

Have a suggestion, question, comment, or idea for us? We'd love to hear from you. Reach us at valleyquest@vitalcommunities.org or 802-291-9100.

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