



Lyme Center Dances Quest

Lyme, New Hampshire

Physical Difficulty: Moderate

Special Features: Historical

Walking Conditions: Pavement

Duration: 0:45

Season: May-Oct

To get there: From the Lyme green, travel east toward Lyme Center (and the Dartmouth Skiway) on Dorchester Road. After 1.9 miles, turn left on Acorn Hill Road and follow it 0.4 miles to the fork. Park at the fork: your Quest begins there.

Overview:

This "oral history" Quest views Lyme Center through the eyes of Lyme's elders.

Clues:

As you walk down Acorn Hill, please pretend that there's snow,
Though it's a dark winter night there's somewhere special we'll go.
It's the 1940s—and no, you are not traveling by car—
But *walking* to the Academy, where the *dances* are.

You'll be gathered together in groups of two, perhaps three,
And carrying kerosene lanterns, which at night help you see.
And each house that you pass? Why, you know it by heart!
It belongs to the Reeds, the Cuttings, or to Charlotte LaMott.

At the bottom of the hill, that's Grandpa Cutting's place.
It's the building right across the street you now face.
Take a right turn, watching for traffic as you walk,
And of the buildings you pass I'll continue to talk.

On the right-hand side, why that's Charlotte's, for sure.
 And across from there, that's the old grocery store.
 Pearl Dimick's house is next door, beyond Charlotte's place.
 And looking across from there, Sanborn's Sawmill you face.

Now head up the driveway to the Lyme Center Academy.
 While now sometimes empty, it was the heart of the community.
 People gathered here on many a Saturday evening
 And had a great time 'til by lantern they'd be leaving.

Walk to the right (east) side of the building:

Back then, outside of the building you'd walk up some stairs
 And Fred Welch, the ticket-taker, he'd meet you right there.
 It would cost you 35 cents to get in to dance.
 You'd pay your money and take your chance.

Laura Degoosh says:

"My dad ran the dances at Academy hall.
 Everyone came—and we all had a ball.
 There was violin, piano, and banjo, too,
 And steamed hot dogs there in the corner for you."

Now walk to the back of the Academy, and look up to the second floor:

Roger Rich tells us:

"Music was usually served up by local talent—
 Charles Balch, Ken & Ray Uline, and Kenneth Dimick.
 Oftentimes Alberta Tupper called the dances,
 Sometimes 50 couples went 'round the room a-prancing."

Albert Pushee:

"Alberta Tupper, she would use a megaphone to call;
 That way you could hear clear across the dance hall."

Ken Elder:

"The Uncle to all the Cuttings out here, he played fiddle.
 And so did Kenneth Humiston and Charlie Canfield."

"I didn't go to the dances until I was sixteen.
 Emmerette Pushee, she taught me some things.
 She was much older—as old as my mother,
 But she would grab my hand and then teach me another."

Continue to walk counterclockwise around the building:

Ken Uline:

"One time the band was nearly all my relations—
myself, my brother, and brother-in-law; my sister calling changes.
And whole families would turn out for the show...
Sometimes with a jug of hard cider in tow!"

Mertie Balch:

"We'd dance to 'Soldier's Joy' and the 'Virginia Reel'.
Also 'Lady of the Lake' and the 'Wabash Cannonball'".

Charlotte LaMott tells us:

"Dora danced with Fred Welch; while Mertie would dance with me.
There weren't enough boys—so girls danced together, you see."

"There were police officers, too: Francis LaBounty, Harry Franklin.
Now Harry, he wouldn't let the young folks have so much fun!"

While Charlotte's father said, "dancing is a waste of good shoe leather",
The Lyme dances were a wonderful way for people to spend time
together.

Ken Elder:

"Back then, gasoline was rationed. And just where were you going to
go?"
Here in Lyme Center, on Saturday night, the Dance was the big show.

For the last part of your Quest, look on the porch on the west side of
the building by a flagpole holder for a box.
Hidden inside, you will find more from the people you've heard talk.
As you picture these faces and hear their stories, you can see
What it means to be a member of a living community.
After you've looked through the box, please sign in...
And please come to visit Lyme Center again.

This Quest was created by Steve Glazer, the Lyme Historians, and Lyme Community Elders in 2002.

Other things to do nearby: Check out nearby Holt's Ledge, a short hike with beautiful views, an intersection with the Appalachian Trail, and peregrine falcon nesting areas.

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 100+ 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.

