Union Village Quest

Thetford, Vermont
Physical Difficulty: Moderate
Special Features: Natural
Walking Conditions: Trail
Duration: 0:20
Bring: Binoculars, Field Guide, Swimsuit

To get there: Travel north (from Norwich) or south (from East Thetford) on Route 5 to the village of Pompanoosuc. Turn west on Route 132 and take it to Academy Road. Fork right onto Academy and travel slowly through Union Village. Do not cross the covered bridge you’ll see on the right but bear left/stay straight: you’ll promptly reach the Union Village Dam gate. Park at one of the spaces on the left, right before the gate. Your quest begins here.

Clues:
Here you are in Union Village!
Named for the confluence of two rivers on a map you may see—
The east and west Ompompanoosuc—though branches they be.
A simple place full of nature’s glory,
It is here that we begin unfolding our story.
Park and then walk between gates of brick.
Yes, I’ll tell you that’s the first trick!

Grey and imposing (even when covered in white)
This looming mass up ahead is quite a prominent site.
Its installation was quite a feat: construction spanned from 1946-1950,
Because the Army Corps of Engineers knew flood protection was nifty!
It cost $4.1 million and can store up to 12.4 billion gallons of water.
Imagine the flood it would take to make that surface water tauter!

Before you go too far, bear left at the volleyball spot
Where you find glacial deposit found on Cape Cod a lot.
Now follow your ear—listening for something that runs all year.
It is the staff of life, and a cure to all strife.
They call it magi, l’eau, agua, wasser, pani and wet. There’s a stream and you’re getting close, never fear: It is cool and clear, so follow it uphill towards its source, my dear! North the “Drinking Gourd” will guide: ah but it is WEST that we shall stride.

Birds abound—if only they be found.
The sputter of Fisher the king: listen for rattle and ring. “Potato chips, potato chips” the Goldfinches do say At last you are off on your way.

Least resistance is best: mowed it is at first on this quest.
Pass picnic areas with purpose and with thrill
And enter into the wood past the last table and grill.

The trail opening is slim, but look carefully and you will glean
A parting of trees and a brown path between end of road and stream.
Trees of cherry, oak and basswood
A stone find of history is a clue for the good.
The original did plan the water to span.
Made of stones laid up dry a carriage home it would fly.

They be marginal and wood, oak and christmas the fern
Be Careful! Watch your step at each little turn.
Though perhaps a little shady and dark
Where we are headed is surely no lark.
Stay on the path as it runs along.
Now listen for song, for surely we will not be long
Be it vireo, robin, tanager or thrush, oh hush, hush, hush.
Here, flowers do abound—through all seasons can be found.

Ah, tis forest quiet and frail—for now you are certainly hot on the trail.
Though temperature be cool keep your eyes open for the jewel.
Voila! Eureka! This treasure of a sight brings such pleasure.

The pool is so cool. Now the box you must seek.
Do you see the three waterfalls, up by the creek?
Where the trail flattens out, before the falls, in a circle of trees
A bird house you will see: it faces the falls because they are so lovely—
Peer inside for your treasure and glee!
**Other things to do nearby:** Sweetland Farm, which you passed on Route 132 just before you turned right onto Academy Road on your way to the dam, is a thriving place that feeds people, animals, and soil. Call ahead to see about visiting. You might even want to join their CSA!

**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