4-H Quest
Johnstown Flood - Cambria County

4-H
4-H is a youth development education program of Penn State Cooperative Extension. It is a non-formal education program for youth between the ages of 8 and 19. Visit us at: http://extension.psu.edu/4-h

Johnstown
This city is part of Cambria County and almost 10 miles downstream of the Johnstown Flood National Memorial to commemorate the disasters that occurred in Johnstown. The Memorial includes a visitor center overlooking the empty bed of the lake that flooded Johnstown when the dam broke in 1889. For more information visit http://nps.gov/Johnstown

Directions
Johnstown is located in Cambria County about 70 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. The Johnstown Flood National Memorial can be found just northeast of Johnstown along route 219. Maps are included here to provide assistance during the quest. But if you find you’re still having trouble, there’s no rule against asking the locals for help with clues.

How to Quest
The Quest begins at the Johnstown Flood National Memorial and continues to several sites near the city, so you will need a car for the drive. At least two hours will be needed to complete the quest, it is best if you leave several hours open to fully enjoy the sites and stops.

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Welcome to Johnstown Flood National Memorial Park.
Feel free to visit the visitor center and take a walk along the few trails provided. If it’s the right time of day you could enjoy a picnic before you drive back into Johnstown later on in the quest. Please, be respectful and have a good time.

While Friendship and joy are birds of a feather, it’s sorrow and strife that sometimes brings us together
In 1889 on May thirty-first
A natural disaster, of its time, the worst
Around 3pm the South Fork Dam shattered
And left the town and countryside ruined and tattered.
Lives were lost and the town destroyed in one single day
As the flood waters ravaged the area on the last day of May
This is a quest to see into the past
The remnants of history, once actors in a cast
To start your journey you must go to the source
Of the flood, 40 feet high and rolling half a mile wide, with Niagara’s force

Clue 1
The visitor center is a good place to start
Find maps and facts that will lead you through the park
Study the area where the disaster began
Where stood the country club, lake, and the dam
Where once was a lake, two miles long and 60 ft deep
Too much water for a poorly tended dam to keep
It was owned by the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club

Clue 2
Now follow the path of destruction along the river into Johnstown
There near Washington and Walnut St a flood museum can be found
There stories and accounts of the flood can be discovered
Exhibits on the club, and into members are covered
This town had true grit, and those who survived
Worked slowly to make sure their home was revived
Though living in tents where their homes had once stood
Clara Barton and Red Cross to help did all that they could
By July 1st stores opened on the Main St for business
By 5 years to imagine the destruction one would be hard pressed
So have fun and explore but don’t take too long
There are several more stops so look and move on.
Clue 3
But this flood in 1889 was not the first nor was it the last
In 1862 it broke but the water was low so people let out a relieved sigh
In 1936 the waters were once again too high
And again in 1977 a flood to make people cry
But there was a structure that helped to save lives it carried them to high land where they could keep dry
It is known as the Johnstown Incline

Famous in the Guinness Book of Records it’s the world’s steepest vehicular
Construction began in 1890 of a railway on Yoder Hill
An escape it became in 1936 March first
It carried 4000 residents out of danger, the worst
And again in 1977 July 20th it saved lives
Carrying people up to safety on high
So take a trip up and check out the view
But remember you’ve still got a stop left or two
So hurry back down to finish the quest
The last stop we all make, that’s all that is left

Clue 4
The flood produced many victims: a total of 2209 died and buried together
47 burial sections, more than 235 acres measured
One of the largest cemeteries in PA
A memorial to the victims remains to this day
For 777 unidentified victims they rest in the “Unknown Plot”
A grave and a monument for each a 6500 dollar cost

Treasure Box
The end of the quest is now quite near
Following the clues you’ve made it here.
Close to the memorial of the victims of that fateful day
Here you will find the box to end this play.

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