



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of Natural History*

### **“The Secret in the Cellar”**

“The Secret in the Cellar: A Written in Bone Forensic Mystery from Colonial America” is a Webcomic based on an authentic forensic case of a recently discovered 17th-century body. Skillfully rendered scenes tell a compelling visual story, which unravels a mystery of historical and scientific importance. The Webcomic, produced by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History and Booz Allen Hamilton, is an educational tool for teens and is a complement to the “Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th-Century Chesapeake” exhibition on view Feb. 7, 2009, through Feb. 6, 2011.

“The Secret in the Cellar” follows a storyline to uncover details from the life of a nameless teen caught in the conditions of servitude in colonial America. Through a careful study of the forensic evidence, the colonial teen’s life, his physical health, the indelible marks of heavy and repetitive physical labor and the physical trauma suffered around the time of death offer clues to the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death.

Visual storytelling and a strong plot motivate the user to complete a number of challenging scientific activities along the way. Forensic and archaeological activities blend photographic images of artifacts and skeletal material from the actual case. Each one leads users through the analytical process of interpreting evidence to solve the case.



<http://anthropology.si.edu/writteninbone/comic>

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