

Lesson Plan: Did George Washington Sleep Here?

Virginia is full of caves rich with history. From well-known caves, such as Grand and Luray Caverns, to those only accessible by permit, many contain signatures from our long history. Our caves were visited—and signed—by such luminaries as George Washington, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson. Many hold the signatures of Civil War soldiers from both the Union and the Confederacy. Some of these were made on the same day by opposing soldiers!

Below is a list of caves you might visit during Virginia Cave Week:

- [Skyline Caverns](#)
- [Shenandoah Caverns](#)
- [Endless Caverns](#)
- [Luray Caverns](#)
- [Grand Caverns](#)
- [Caverns at Natural Bridge](#)
- [Dixie Caverns](#)
- [Natural Tunnel](#)
- [Gap Cave](#)

Ask your guide to show you any signature walls found there.

Use the links below to discover the history of the signature.

SOLDIER DATABASES

<http://go.fold3.com/results.php?category=union&links=0&xid=1390&gclid=CNONtsSQ5rwCFY-VfgodzHYAsA>

<http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>

BATTLES RESEARCH SITES

Civil War Traveler

<http://www.civilwartraveler.com/EAST/VA/>

American Battlefield Protection Program (National Park Service) Battle Summaries by State

<http://www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/battles/bystate.htm>

Georgia's Blue and Gray Trail Presents America's Civil War (Civil War Battles in Virginia)

<http://blueandgraytrail.com/battles/Virginia>

INFORMATION GATHERING

Name(s) _____

Cave _____

City or county _____

Date recorded _____

Date signature was made _____

Additional information

Union or Confederate

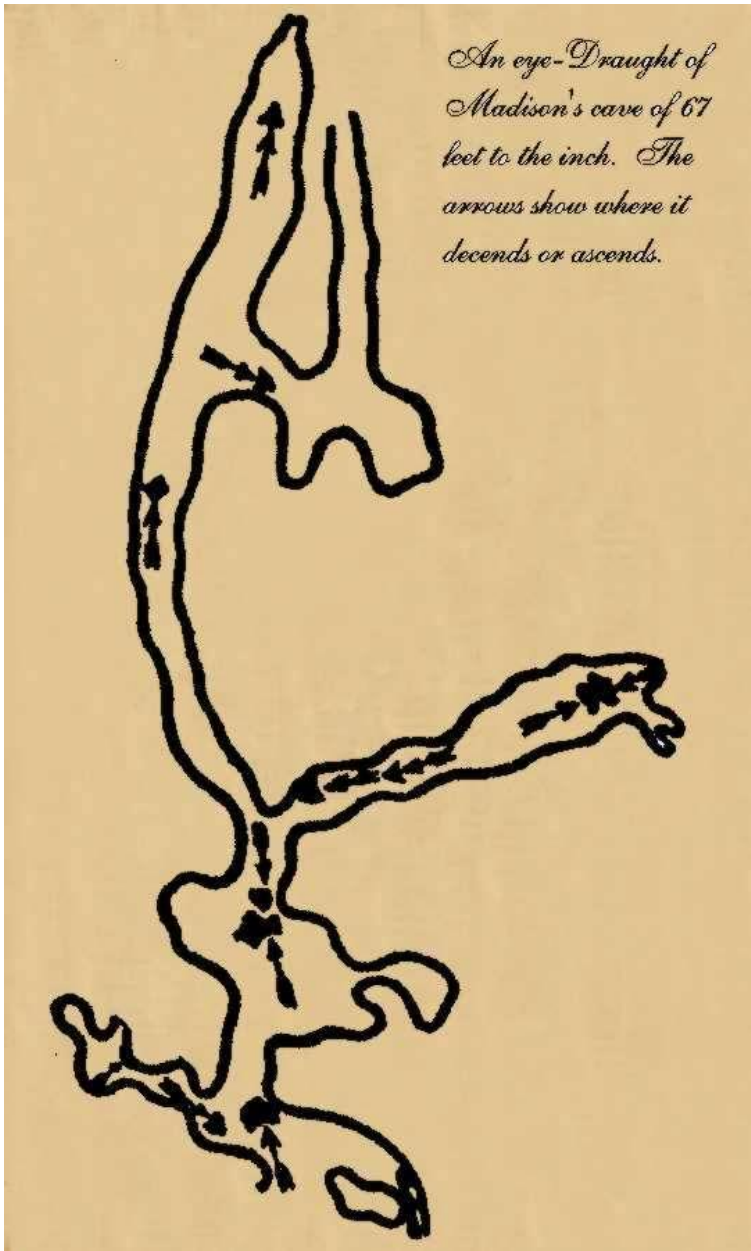
Rank _____

Unit _____

Describe any other cave art

Other signatures nearby

Use some of the links above to research the signatures you found. What became of your soldier?



CLASS EXTENSIONS

Teachers can have students research several signatures. Follow links to battles fought around the date the signature was made. Determine what was going on in that region at that time. Several caves, such as Grand Caverns, have signatures from opposing soldiers made just a day or so apart!

Create a story for your soldier. Why might he have taken refuge in the cave?

What might he have found there?

How might he have felt being in a cave during a war?

This is the first known Virginia cave map of Madison Saltpetre Cave by Thomas Jefferson.

(Lesson Plan developed by the Virginia Cave Board, April 2014)