

# Shakespearean Authorship Trust



**Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St Alban**

**Dates:** 1561 – 1626

## **Background:**

- Educated privately and then at Cambridge University.
- Entered Gray's Inn in 1579 as a student-lawyer, becoming a barrister, Bencher and Treasurer of Gray's Inn.
- Spent three years with the French Court (1576-9), followed later by a year touring France, Italy and Spain, and possibly Germany and Denmark (1581-2), and made at least one visit to Scotland (1584).
- Leader of a literary society and scrivenery that included poets such as Ben Jonson, John Lyly, John Florio, John Davies of Hereford, Sir John Davies and George Herbert.
- Member of the Essex-Southampton-Sidney-Pembroke circle.
- Member of the Elizabethan intelligence network.
- Involved with writing and producing masques for the Inns of Court.
- Wrote plays for the stage and speeches for court pageants.
- Wrote in numerous different styles and successfully imitated other people's styles.

## **Famous for:**

- Extraordinary public service as an MP and a legal adviser to the Crown, and later in life as a privy counsellor, Solicitor General, Attorney General and ultimately Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and Lord Chancellor.
- A renowned philosopher, prolific writer, dedicated to developing the arts and sciences, and whose passion was for the poetic 'waters of Parnassus'.
- Celebrated by Ben Jonson as the 'mark and acme' of the English language, who had 'filled up all numbers' and was 'one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages'.

## **The Case:**

- Bacon's life experience, attitudes, interests, philosophy, wit, vocabulary and learning matches that to be found in the Shakespeare works.
- Bacon relished poetry and the theatre as a branch of learning, a source of delight and a means of educating people to virtue.
- Bacon was described by friends as a 'concealed poet' and 'the precious gem of concealed literature'.
- Two Inns of Court lawyer-poets, Joseph Hall and John Marston, in an exchange of Satires published between 1597-1598, identify Francis Bacon as the author of the Shakespeare poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.
- Bacon referred to by his contemporaries as 'Apollo' and 'Leader of the Muses', 'the golden stream of eloquence' who renovated Philosophy 'in the socks of Comedy' and 'the buskin of Tragedy'.

- Bacon likened to Pallas Athena, the 'Spear-shaker'.
- There are Bacon signatures hidden in the printed Shakespeare works.
- Bacon's friend, Tobie Matthew, wrote that Bacon was known to the world under another name.
- Bacon even considered publishing his philosophical works under a pseudonym.
- Bacon was a Christian kabbalist who believed in the kabbalistic maxim that some things are to be revealed whilst others are to be concealed. The underlying structure of most of the Shakespeare plays is kabbalistic.
- Bacon's life not only spans the whole Shakespeare period but fits with the choice and production of the Shakespeare plays.
- In the Shakespeare play *Henry VIII*, the four lords who relieve Wolsey of the Great Seal are the same four in title who relieved Bacon of the Great Seal. Historically, Wolsey was relieved of the Great Seal by only two lords.
- The Shakespeare Memorial at Stratford-upon-Avon describes two Shakespeares, like the Gemini: the Latin lines at the top of the inscription describe Shakespeare in words that uniquely fit Francis Bacon - as a great statesman, judge, philosopher and scholar-poet; whilst the last two lines in abbreviated Latin note the age and date of death of the actor Shakspeare.

## History of the Baconian Shakespeare Authorship Theory

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The first to openly infer in writing that Francis Bacon was the author Shakespeare were the Inns of Court lawyer-poets Joseph Hall and John Marston who, in an exchange of Satires published between 1597 and 1598, refer to the author of the Shakespeare poem, ***Venus and Adonis***, as 'Labeo', a jurist, who is also to be identified by the motto ***Mediocria firma***. The motto was the specific heraldic motto of Francis and Anthony Bacon at that time, but, of the two, only Francis Bacon was a jurist.

In 1626, the year of Francis Bacon's death, his private chaplain and executor William Rawley published ***Manes Verulamianum***, a collection of 32 eulogies by contemporary writers, most of them scholars and Fellows of the Universities, and members of the Inns of Court, including a bishop, two royal chaplains and a Regius professor of divinity, which refer to Bacon as an Apollo, the Daystar of the Muses and leader of the poets, being himself a concealed poet, the greatest of his age, who had renovated all philosophy by means of comedy and tragedy. The eulogies contain unique descriptions and symbolic analogies referring to Bacon that are only used elsewhere for Shakespeare, either carved on the Stratford Monument or printed in the Shakespeare Folio, all inferring by this means that Bacon was the author Shakespeare. This is supported and complemented by the description of the author Shakespeare carved on the Shakespeare Monument erected c.1620-2 in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, which likens Shakespeare to the statesman and judge Nestor, the orator and philosopher Socrates, and the scholar-poet Virgil – a description that fits Francis Bacon and no other.

Many years previous to this Bacon himself had written in a letter that he was a concealed poet, whilst his literary friend Tobie Matthew had pointed out, also in a letter, that Bacon was known to the world under another name. Later, Ben Jonson, in his ***Discoveries*** published in 1641, eulogised Bacon in the identical and unique way he had praised the author Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Folio, as "he that hath filled up all numbers..., etc..." In 1679 Thomas Tenison (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury), who published some of Bacon's unpublished writings in a collection called ***Baconiana or Certaine Genuine Remains of Sir Francis Bacon***, etc., referred to Bacon as having written under names other than his own.

Almost a century later, in 1769, a book entitled ***The Life and Adventures of Common Sense: an Historical Allegory*** was published anonymously, which claimed that a character called

'Wisdom', clearly identifiable as Francis Bacon, had made acquaintance with a person belonging to the playhouse and commenced play-writing under the name 'Shakespeare'.

The earliest completely explicit suggestion that Francis Bacon was the author Shakespeare was made in 1781 by the Rev. James Wilmot, Rector of Barton-on-the-Heath, a little village a few miles north of Stratford-upon-Avon. An avid researcher of Shakespeare, he failed to discover any significant evidence that the actor Shakspere was the author of the Shakespeare works. Because he noticed the astounding similarities of diction, phrase, thought, opinion, and even error, between the works of Bacon and those of Shakespeare, he came to the conclusion that the real author must have been Francis Bacon. Wilmot's unpublished research was communicated to the Ipswich Philosophical Society by James Corton Cowell on 7th February 1805. It was later deposited with the University of London library where it was discovered in 1932 by Professor Allardyce Nicholl.

In 1848 an article entitled 'The Ancient Lethe' by Colonel Joseph C. Hart, questioning the right of the Stratfordian actor William Shakspere to the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, was published by Harper and Brothers of New York in ***The Romance of Yachting: Voyage the First***. This was followed eight years later, in January 1856, by an article in ***Putnam's Monthly*** entitled 'William Shakespeare and his plays'. The article, which opened up research into the possibility that Francis Bacon was the true author Shakespeare, was written by an American school teacher and historian, Delia Salter Bacon, whilst she was staying at St Albans during a visit to England. In September of that same year, in England, a letter written by William Henry Smith to Lord Ellesmere was published as a pamphlet entitled ***Was Lord Bacon the author of Shakespeare's plays?***

In the following year, 1857, both Delia Bacon and William Smith published books about the authorship of the Shakespeare plays. Delia Bacon's book, ***The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded***, expounded her thesis that a group of authors including Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh and Edmund Spenser were jointly responsible for the Shakespeare plays, the underlying philosophy of which was Bacon's. Smith's book, ***Bacon and Shakespeare: An Inquiry Touching Players, Playhouses and Play-Writers in the Days of Elizabeth***, proposed Francis Bacon as the sole author of the plays.

In 1883 Constance Mary Pott published ***The Promus of Formularies and Elegancies of Francis Bacon***, a list of proverbs and other material that Bacon had gathered together as a private wastebok from the early 1590s, from which she concluded that Sir Francis Bacon was most likely the author Shakespeare. This led to her publishing in 1884, ***Did Francis Bacon write "Shakespeare"?*** and in 1891, ***Francis Bacon and His Secret Society***.

In December 1885 Constance Pott organised the first meeting of [The Francis Bacon Society](#) – a society that still exists and is probably the oldest still-active literary society in England. Besides books and pamphlets, the FBS publishes a journal called ***Baconiana***. Its library, [The Francis Bacon Society Library](#), is now mostly housed at Senate House Library, the main library of the University of London, together with the [Pott Collection](#) and the [Durning-Lawrence Library](#) that was bequeathed by the well-known Baconian, Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence.

In 1937 [The Francis Bacon Foundation](#) was established in Los Angeles by Walter and Louise Arensberg, to promote research into the life and works of Francis Bacon, including the Shakespeare-Bacon authorship debate. Since 1995 the Foundation's 13,000-volume library has had a permanent home in [The Huntington Library](#) in San Marino, California.

In 1980 [The Francis Bacon Research Trust](#) was established in the UK as a complement to the FBS and to focus research particularly on the wisdom and philosophy that lie behind the works of Bacon and Shakespeare, and the design and purpose of Bacon's Great Instauration in which the Shakespeare works are deemed to play an important part.

[www.shakespeareanauthorshiptrust.org.uk](http://www.shakespeareanauthorshiptrust.org.uk)