



A souvenir shard from a visit to Shakespeare's house

In the spring of 1786, Thomas Jefferson, then serving as American minister to France, and John Adams, American minister to Great Britain, took a sightseeing tour of England, visiting notable towns, houses, and gardens.

On April 6, they visited Stratford-upon-Avon, birthplace of William Shakespeare, where Jefferson recorded giving a tip to a servant who showed them the house where the Bard was born. John Adams recorded in his diary of the visit to the house: "They showed us an old wooden chair in the chimney corner where he sat. We cut off a chip according to the custom."

Jefferson's souvenir from Shakespeare's birthplace has recently returned to Monticello. John Lamb of Cleveland, Ohio, a descendant of Jefferson's granddaughter Virginia Randolph Trist, has loaned the small wood splinter, approximately 2 ¼ inches long and ¼ inch wide, to the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. It will go on view this spring in Jefferson's bedroom.

A note in Jefferson's handwriting, preserved with the splinter, suggests that he was not the average gullible tourist. It says: "A chip cut from an armed chair in the chimney corner in Shakespeare's house at Stratford on Avon said to be the identical chair in which he usually sat. If true like the relics of the saints it must miraculously reproduce itself."

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