



Closer Inspection

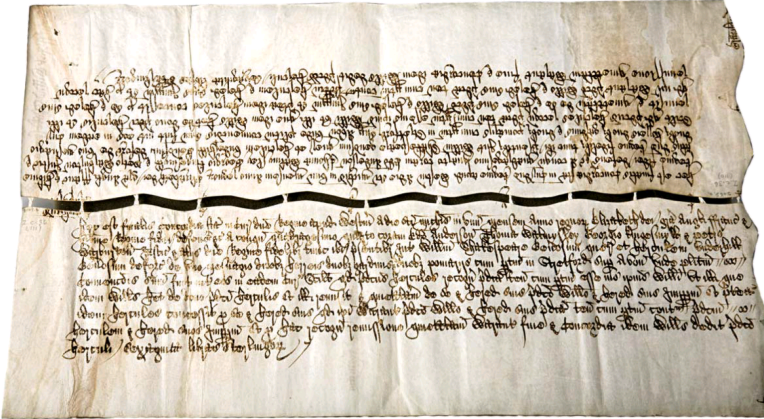
After the 1948 release of Laurence Olivier's "Hamlet," **play sets** of characters and backdrops were devised to be used with a Pollock's Toy Theatre, so children could stage their own play.



This 1577-83 **grimoire** (a collection of magical recipes or spells, Witmore says) was a rarity even in its day. "We've got Latin, we've got some Hebrew, there's English. That's a very small fraction of the literate public," he says.

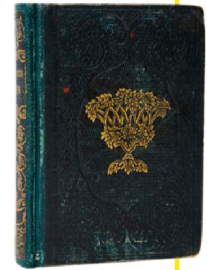


This 1879 **bracelet** is made of hair from Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth, brother of Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth.



"This is one of the most wonderful things we have in the library, because it has a close and immediate physical connection to this man," says Witmore of the final concord document for Shakespeare's purchase of his home in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1602. The **wavy cut** was a security measure: "If there's ever a dispute ... we put the two together, and then we know that they were once one piece of paper," Witmore says.

Walt Whitman's 1847 **pocket copy** of Shakespeare's poems is a tangible link between "the great lyric poet in the U.K. and the trailblazer of American verse in the lyric tradition," Witmore says.



This 1623 **first folio** of Shakespeare's works has its original 17th-century calfskin binding, with the coat of arms of former owner Ralph Sheldon pressed upon the cover.

Shakespearean treasures

At Folger, the lore's the thing

BY KRIS CORONADO

With thousands of Shakespearean items under his purview, Michael Witmore, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library (201 East Capitol St. SE, 202-544-4600, www.folger.edu), is not exaggerating when he says, "We are the Mount Everest for Shakespeare." Case in point: The institution owns 82 first folios of Shakespeare's complete works (there are 232 known surviving to date), making it the largest collection of

first folios in the world. Meisei University in Tokyo comes in second with ... 12.

Still, the Folger's vault isn't just packed with row upon row of centuries-old books; there are plenty of unexpected items — such as "a bundle of sticks that was collected on the property of Shakespeare's house," Witmore says. Here, he shares the bizarre and rare finds that come with the twists and turns of Shakespearean lore.



This 18th-century **tea caddy** is carved from a mulberry tree that had grown on Shakespeare's New Place. "When this tree fell, instead of turning it into firewood, they started carving objects out of it," Witmore says.

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