

Delia Bacon Biography

Delia Bacon

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Biography

Delia Bacon (2 February 1811-2 September 1859), a leading proponent of the Baconian theory, was born in Tallmadge, Ohio. After a year in Catharine Beecher's Hartford school, Bacon taught school in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Long Island. In 1831, her first book, *Tales of the Puritans* (New Haven: A. H. Maltby), was published anonymously. She successfully conducted classes in history and literature in New Haven, Cambridge, and Boston, and she lectured to appreciative audiences in New York and Brooklyn. An unhappy love affair with a Yale Divinity School student, Alexander MacWhorter, whetted her desire to achieve fame. Her ardent study of Shakespeare led her to propose the iconoclastic theory that the *Plays* were written by a coterie of wits, with Francis Bacon the chief composer. Encouraged by Emerson, Thomas Carlyle, and Hawthorne, she pursued her study of Shakespeare in London and Stratford. Her conclusions were published as *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* (London: Groombridge & Sons, and Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1857). The immediate critical reaction was negative, but the Baconian theory later won some converts. Although her brother, the Reverend Leonard Bacon, pastor of the First Church in New Haven, did not believe in her theory, he came to his sister's aid on many occasions. Miss Bacon suffered a mental collapse in Stratford in June 1856 and died in Hartford three years later.