



Buongiorno v. Faversham

Janice Carapellucci

FAVERSHAM SUED BY VOLUNTEER ARTIST

Signor Buongiorno Would Like
the Price of a Portrait "Or-
dered by Your Valet."

STUDIED ACTOR ON A PASS

Then Filled in the Details from a Pho-
tograph, Faversham Says—Threat-
ened to Throw Out the Result.

William Faversham, idol of the dramat-
ic profession, is the defendant in a suit
brought by an Italian painter, who wants
several hundred dollars for a large por-
trait which Mr. Faversham says he never
ordered. The suit is known as Donatus
Buongiorno vs. William Faversham for
work, labor, services, and materials. It
came up in the First District Municipal
Court on Thursday, and the case will be
tried before a jury about April 1.

"I had almost forgotten all about that
portrait," said Mr. Faversham last night
at the Academy of Music, where he is now
playing. "However, I had a rude awak-
ening one day about two weeks ago when
I was at the Montauk Theatre, Brook-
lyn. It was a matinée, and when I came
out of the stage door, with people stand-
ing around to have a look, up stepped a
man before them all and presented me
with a summons and the complaint of
this artist, whose name I can't remem-
ber.

"The facts in the matter are these:
Two years ago, while I was playing 'The
Squaw Man' at Wallack's, I had an Ital-
ian dresser. One night he told me he had
an Italian friend who painted beautifully
and asked if I wouldn't let his friend
paint my portrait, as it would be a great
help to him. I said I had no time for sit-
tings.

Was

Buongiorno trying to
extort \$500 out of Faversham
on a flimsy claim that the painting
had been commissioned? Or was the
actor trying to use his fame to
wiggle out of a legitimate
deal?

"After that the artist got a pass and
watched me from in front.

"Then my dresser asked me for a pho-
tograph for his friend, as the friend was
trying to sketch me. To be good-natur-
ed I gave him an autographed photograph.
I believe the artist got a pass and saw
me a second time from the front. One
evening I found him in my dressing
room when I came off, and spoke a few
words to him.

"The next thing I knew my dresser
said his friend had painted a portrait, and
asked if I thought Liebler & Co. would
buy it. I didn't think they would. Then
he asked if I would buy it. I said no.
Next he asked me if I wouldn't look at it,
and I said I would, for I thought the poor
fellow might be badly off. I asked where
he lived, but my dresser said they would
bring it for me to see.

"When I got home that night we found
the picture in the hall. When we saw it
my wife and I were about ready to faint.
It was more than life size, and very badly
done, meaning to represent me as Jim
Carson. Stuck in the frame was a bill
for \$500 and a letter saying it had been
ordered by my valet! I got hold of my
dresser and told him that if the picture
were not taken away in the morning I
would throw it out on the sidewalk with
the ash barrels. In the morning they
came with a team and took it away.

"That was the last I heard of the mat-
ter until the present suit, in which the
artist puts a somewhat smaller price on
his work, but wants the money with in-
terest."

Mr. Faversham's attorneys are Kiernan,
Nicholas & Moore. Mr. Kiernan said last
night that his firm had entered a denial
of all the charges, but that the plaintiff
had asked for trial by jury.

The New York Times

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Originally published March 21, 1908

Two months later, a judge decided in the artist's favor!

Buongiorno, D.—W. Faversham, costs, \$29.

Buongiorno won a judgment of \$29 plus an undisclosed amount for costs.

(What was \$29 worth in 1908? \$500–\$1000 in today's dollars, according to several sources.)

**BUSINESS
TROUBLES**

Judgments.

The following judgments were filed yesterday, the first name being that of the debtor:

Annan, J.—City of N. Y., \$215.
Ackerman, M.—E. Cohen, \$20.
Breiner, N.—M. Frank, \$23.
Brooks, E. F.—J. G. Brooks, costs, \$49.
Brown, B. F., Jr.—S. A. Seamon, \$111.
Brazil, A. J.—Huron Cigar Co., \$33.
Bear, S.—S. Radden, \$33.
Butler, G. M.—F. M. Strauss, \$216.
Buslowitz, B.—Liquid Carbonic Co., \$145.
Buongiorno, D.—W. Faversham, costs, \$29.
Blum, F.—City of N. Y., \$397.
Brayton, H. R.—Same, \$113.
Block, L.—Same, \$207.
Brown, Mary J. L.—Same, \$307.
Booker, W.—Same, \$116.
Bergstein, C.—Parkway Garage Co., \$201.
Barrett, J.—H. Schumann, \$73.
Bahan, G.—C. A. Christman, \$144.
Berry C.—Postal Telegraph Cable Co., \$59.
Berger, H. and A.—H. Eiserstadt, \$107.

BUSINESS TROUBLES
New York Times (1857-Current file); May 27, 1908; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2000);
pg. 12
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The New York Times

Who was this actor who dissed my ancestor?

William Faversham

William Faversham was an enormously popular, successful, handsome theater actor—one of the first for whom the phrase “matinee idol” was coined. In his obituary, *The Herald Tribune* observed that “He played about seventy leading or starring roles, and it was said he produced more plays than any other actor-manager in the United States with the exception of George M. Cohan.”

William Alfred Faversham, 1868–1940

Birth: February 12, 1868 in England

Death: April 7, 1940

Occupation: Actor, Producer

Faversham, William (1868–1940), actor, director, and producer. Born and trained in London, he made his New York debut as Dick in *Pen and Ink* (1887), which was a quick failure, so he found himself stranded in America. But Faversham’s boyish, curly-haired good looks and his patent dramatic abilities caught Daniel Frohman’s attention, and he quickly won acceptance in Frohman’s productions and later playing opposite Mrs. Fiske. In 1893 he signed with Charles Frohman and for the next eight years assumed a variety of parts for him, including Algernon in the first American production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Romeo to Maude Adams’s Juliet, as well as leading roles in *Under the Red Robe*, *The Conquerors*, *Phroso*, and *Lord and Lady Algy*. Subsequent performances of note included the dissolute yet noble Don Caesar de Bazan in *A Royal Rival* (1901), the exiled Englishman Capt. James Wynngate in *The Squaw Man* (1905), the title role in the tragedy *Herod* (1909), and the demigod who becomes a human prince in *The Faun* (1911), producing and staging the last two. Two high points in his career followed when he staged *Julius Caesar* (1912) and *Othello* (1914), playing Marc Antony and Iago. Walter Prichard Eaton wrote of the latter, “Where his ‘Othello’ differs from tradition is chiefly in Mr. Faversham’s own interpretation of Iago, and the consequent hue that gives to the entire play. It is a novel, refreshing, stimulating impersonation, and it gives the drama a new vitality, a new holding power. . . . The keynote of his Iago is humor.” Faversham scored another hit when he played the Bishop of Chelsea in Shaw’s *Getting Married* (1916), which he produced and directed. Thereafter, his career faltered, and much of it was spent in revivals of earlier successes. His final Broadway appearances were as the exiled King George in *Her Friend, the King* (1929)

One of the last of the legendary actor-managers, William Faversham became a major name on Broadway in the original production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1895. Faversham was much admired in such potboilers as *Brother Officers* (1900), which he revived twice that same year and the next, and he produced, directed, and starred in the original production of *The Squaw Man* (1906). Productions of both *Julius Caesar* (1914) and *Othello* (1917) followed and he became a motion picture star in 1915 courtesy of the burgeoning Metro company. At one point, Faversham’s popularity at Metro was second only to that of Francis X. Bushman, the leading matinee idol of the era. Quite elderly by then, Faversham later appeared in bit roles in talkies, including portraying the Duke of Wellington in the Technicolor production of *Becky Sharp* and, of all things, playing the heroine’s father in the low-budget singing cowboy oater *The Singing Buckaroo* (1937). Faversham’s Broadway swan song had come in a 1931 repertory presentation of *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. He was married to stage actresses Edith Campbell and Julia Opps and was the father of actor Philip Faversham.

~ Hans J. Wollstein, *All Movie Guide*

Source: <http://www.answers.com/topic/william-faversham>



Period publicity photographs of Faversham

William Faversham Dies at 72

Matinee Idol of the '90s Was Fifty Years on Stage—Best Known in 'Squaw Man.'

Funeral services will be held at the White Funeral Home, Bay Shore, L. I., at 2 P. M. tomorrow for William Faversham, noted actor, who was called the greatest matinee idol of his time.

He was 72 years old when he died early yesterday of a coronary thrombosis at the home of a friend, Mrs. Mildred Chambers, in Bay Shore, whence he was moved a week ago from the Percy Williams Home in East Islip, where he retired as a guest in 1937. Interment will be in the Huntington (L. I.) Cemetery, where his second wife, the former Julie Opp, his leading lady, whom he married in 1902, is buried.

She died in 1921, and in 1925 he married Miss Edith Campbell, who survives, as do two sons of his second marriage, Philip and William Faversham Jr. Mr. Faversham's first marriage, to Mrs. Marian Merwin, a widow, ended in divorce.

In fifty years of the stage and films, from 1885 to 1935, Mr. Faversham was hailed as one of America's most versatile actors and at the start of the century was referred to as the "hero of a thousand matinees." But of all of his many roles his best known was that of Jim Carston in "The Squaw Man," with which he toured the United States during 1905-1907.

Favored Shakespearean Roles.

His repertory ranged from the dramatic heights of Hamlet through the farce of Lord Algernon Chetland in "Lord and Lady Algy," and he was one of the many actors playing Jester Lester in "Tobacco Road," touring with that production in 1934, his last legitimate role. He had been Iago in "Othello," Romeo to the Juliet of Maude Adams, Marc Antony and the Soothsayer in "Julius Caesar," and Antonio in "The Merchant of Venice," Shakespearean roles were his favorites.

Mr. Faversham was not a native American, but came to this country late in 1886 from England, where he was born in London on February 12, 1858, the youngest of eleven boys. He went to the Chigwell

Grammar School and Hillmartin College and for a while served in the Yeomanry Cavalry Regiment of Warwickshire. His first stage appearance was in November, 1885, as Suggden in "Retained for the Defense," in England.

Played With Mrs. Fiske.

On January 17, 1887, he was first seen in this country as Dick in the short-lived "Pen and Ink" at the Union Square Theater, New York. For the rest of the year it was touch and go with starvation, but he managed to keep going by odd jobs and two stage appearances. In 1888 he appeared in "The Wife" and for two seasons played with the late Mrs. Minnie Maddern Fiske, scoring his first real hit as Valentine Day in "Featherbrain" while with her company.

Among the many other plays in which he had roles were "The Hawk," "The Old Country," "Freedom," "The Silver Fox" and "A Lesson in Love." After an appearance here late in 1929 he went to Australia and after his return played here at the Royale with the Chicago Civic Shakespeare Society in November, 1931.

His Career in Films.

His motion picture career included "Lady By Choice," "The Secret of the Chateau" and a minor role with Miriam Hopkins in 1935 in "Becky Sharp." His famous part in "The Squaw Man" was played in the films by Dustin Farnum. Mr. Faversham had also toured in vaudeville.

He twice filed voluntary petitions in bankruptcy, in 1927 and 1935, and he had made and lost several fortunes. During his days of good fortune he imported American trotting horses into England and bred them on a farm in Surrey and for years he was considered an outstanding breeder, exhibitor and judge of English bull terriers, which he bred on an estate he owned at Mattituck, L. I.

He became an American citizen in 1926.

WALLACK'S

MRS. THEO. MOSS, Proprietor and Manager.
CHARLES BURNHAM, Acting Manager.

1852-53 ANNUAL SEASON 1903-6

WEEK BEGINNING NEW YEAR'S DAY MATINEE, MONDAY, JAN. 1, 1906.
Matinees Wednesday, Saturday and Holidays. 9

WILLIAM FAVERSHAM

(By Arrangement with Charles Frohman)

THE SQUAW MAN

(Lieber & Co., Managers)

A New Four-Act Comedy Drama,

By EDWIN MILTON ROYLE

Cast of Characters.

HENRY WYNNEGATE, Earl of Kerhill.....	CAMPBELL GOLLAN
DIANA, his wife, Countess of Kerhill.....	SELENE JOHNSON
LADY ELIZABETH WYNNEGATE, his mother.....	SELINA PETER ROYLE
LADY MABEL WYNNEGATE, his sister.....	KATHERINE FISHER
CAPT. JAMES WYNNEGATE, afterwards "Jim Carston," his cousin.....	WILLIAM FAVERSHAM
REV. BELACHAZAR CHISWICK, his private secretary.....	FREDERICK FORREST
BATES, his butler.....	C. A. CARLTON
MALCOLM PETRIE, his solicitor.....	HUGO TOLAND
SIR JOHN APLEGATE, Diana's cousin.....	CECIL WARD
THE RT. REV., THE BISHOP OF EXETER.....	WILLIAM EVILLE
SIR CHARLES MAJORIBANKS, Diana's father.....	MORTIMER MARTINI
MRS. CHICHESTER CHICHESTER JONES, an American lady.....	JULIA STRAKOSCH
BIG BILL, foreman.....	GEO. FAWCET
SHORTY.....	EMMETT SHACKLEFORD
ANDY.....	BERTRAM A. MARBURGH
CROUCHY.....	MITCHELL LEWIS
BACO WHITE, horse wrangler and interpreter.....	HIMSELF
TABYWANA, Peace Chief of the Utes.....	THEODORE ROBERTS
NAT-U-RITCH, his daughter.....	MABEL MORRISON
LITTLE HAL, her son.....	EVELYN WRIGHT
CASH HAWKINS, rustler and bad man.....	W. S. HART
NICK, the barkeeper.....	FREDERICK WATSON
McSORLEY, engineer Overland Limited.....	CHARLES MORTIMER
PARKER, conductor Overland Limited.....	WELLS EDWARD KNIBLOE
PORTER OVERLAND LIMITED.....	G. A. WRIGHT
PETE.....	W. H. SADLER
PARSON.....	CHESTER WHITE
PUNK, a Chinaman.....	JOSEPH JUDGE
MRS. HIRAM DOOLITTLE, from Dover Farms, Mass.....	LILLIAN WRIGHT
MR. HIRAM DOOLITTLE, her husband.....	WILLIAM BOYD
BUD HARDY, sheriff of Coyote County.....	WILLIAM FREDERIC
CLARK, his deputy.....	WM. HAINES

Officers of Leicester Yeomanry, "Cash" Hawkins' Cowboys and Sheriff Hardy's Posse, etc.

Synopsis.

ACT I.—Maudsley Towers, English country house of the Earl of Kerhill. (Two years are supposed to elapse between Acts I and II.)
ACT II.—The Long Horn Saloon, Maverick, Wyo. Cow-town and water-tank station on the Union Pacific Railroad; a shipping point for cattle. Green River was the excuse for Carston's Ranch, and even Green River is in low spirits. Through the long day the alkali plains have cracked under a withering sun. The scrub-oak and the sage brush, nature's imitation of asbestos, are still radiating heat. Across the river to the west, even the sage-brush and scrub-oak have given up in despair, and the red lands stretch lifeless to the foot-hills of the snow-capped Uinta peaks. (Six years are supposed to elapse between Acts II and III.)
ACT III.—"Jim Carston's" ranch at Green River, Utah. (There will only be five minutes intermission between Acts III and IV.)
ACT IV.—Same as Act III.

Staged by EDWIN MILTON ROYLE and WILLIAM FAVERSHAM.

Mr. Theodore Roberts, as Tabywana, the Indian Chief, speaks entirely in the Ute language, in which he has been instructed by Baco White, full-blooded Ute Indian, who is an official interpreter for the government, and who plays the part of interpreter in the play.

Obituary of William Faversham, *The Sun*, April 8, 1940

Playbill for the show which Buongiorno saw Faversham perform in—*The Squaw Man* at "Wallack's." This was the starring vehicle that turned Faversham into a matinee idol.

Lousy at Managing Money

Faversham had an enormously successful career, but he also filed "voluntary petitions in bankruptcy" twice—in 1927 and in 1935—and he died penniless in a home for indigent actors. His obituary in *The Herald Tribune*¹ reported, "As an actor-manager he made and lost several fortunes."

The full-figure press photograph on the next page (left), from *The Squaw Man*, may be the image Faversham gave to our artist the night Buongiorno came to his dressing room. Or it may have been one of the two head shots on the right.

The wife mentioned in the *New York Times* news story about refusing delivery of the painting was Julie Opp, Faversham's second wife and a famous actress. They met while performing in a show together and created a scandal by divorcing their spouses and marrying

¹ *The Herald Tribune*, April 7, 1940.

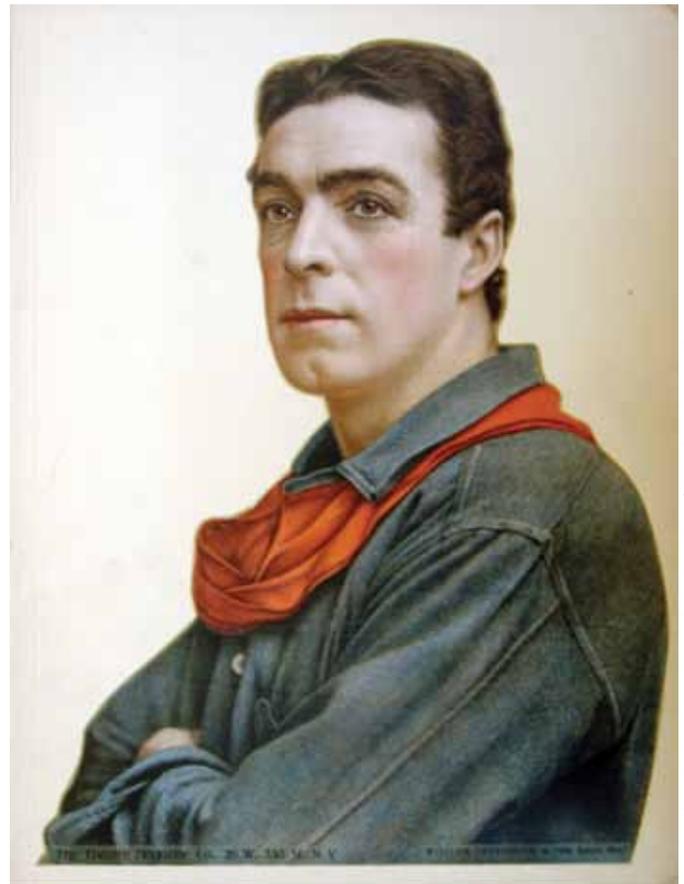


Publicity photograph for *The Squaw Man*, 1905, William Faversham on left, Adrian Morrison on right.

each other in 1902. After their marriage, they became a theater “power couple” with intertwined careers and the attendant publicity.

Julie Opp Faversham was also a writer and, she gave frequent interviews and wrote stories that were published in popular magazines to publicize their careers.

I was excited to find photographs of their home from a period women’s magazine (next page), but, alas, there are no life-size oil paintings of Faversham in any of the rooms shown.



Publicity photographs for *The Squaw Man*, 1905, William Faversham on left, Adrian Morrison on right.





William Favershams and Julie Opp Favershams in plays in the early 1900s

Life Imitating Art

As an actor-manager (one of the first), Favershams produced plays to star both himself and his wife.

The first play they staged after the lawsuit incident with Buongiorno was *The World and His Wife* which opened in November 1908. It was about the consequences of gossip ruining reputations and marriages. Another play they produced that year had a character who was a painter. I wonder if they got those ideas from their encounter with Buongiorno.

Photographs of the two on stage (above) provide an idea of how Buongiorno's life-size, full-body portrait of Favershams might have looked, having been based on impressions of Favershams "from in front" of the theater during a show.

What Is the End of the Story?

Did Favershams learn nothing from his work? Too bad he didn't take to heart the title of this play he did in 1892, sixteen years before the painting lawsuit. See *Playbill* cover on next page.

H. C. Miner's Fifth Avenue Theatre

H. C. MINER, SOLE PROPRIETOR AND MANAGER.

JOHN W. HAMILTON, BUSINESS MANAGER.

E. D. MINER, ASS'T BUSINESS MANAGER.

Commencing Monday Evening, August 8th, 1892.
MATINEE SATURDAY AT 2 P.M.

PROGRAMME.

THIRD SEASON OF

CHARLES FROHMAN'S COMEDIANS

PRESENTING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NEW YORK

*A LIGHT AND REFRESHING ENTERTAINMENT,
CUT UP INTO THREE ACTS,
AND ENTITLED*

SETTLED OUT OF COURT

Based upon M. ALEXANDRE HISSON'S Parisian Success, "Pont Biquet,"
which has been adapted, re-arranged and tampered with
by WILLIAM GILLETTE.

THIS ENGAGEMENT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF HOYT & THOMAS.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MARK HARRIMAN, a phrenological enthusiast.....JOSEPH HOLLAND
LAWRENCE TAFT, who is to marry Alice, if nothing occurs to prevent it,
WILLIAM FAVERSHAM
JOSEPH PLUNKETT, Esq., Recorder of the Court of Sessions...M. A. KENNEDY
MICHAEL VEEHORN, who came to the Fair.....T. C. VALENTINE
CHARLES AUGUSTINE DAGLATERRE, an aquatic wonder...CHAS. A. ABBE
MR. SPENCER, Clerk of the Court of Sessions.....JOSEPH HUMPHREYS
SEDGWICK, a waiter from the Stamby Arms.....CHAS. T. GREENE
LUCRETIA PLUNKETT, Joseph Plunkett's third wife,
GEORGIE DREW BARRYMORE
MATILDA HARRIMAN, Mark Harriman's wife, as well as Joseph Plunkett's elder daughter.....EVELYN CAMPBELL
ALICE PLUNKETT, Joseph Plunkett's younger daughter.....AGNES MILLER
MRS. CHATFIELD, } Two ladies who are very much in- } ..MARGARET CRAVEN
MRS. DUTELLE... } terested in court proceedings. {IDA CURRY
KATHERINE O'DONOVAN, a housemaid, who cannot be intimidated,
MINNIE TITTELL

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts scrapbook collections

Postscript

Though the *New York Times* story says Faversham rejected the painting initially, I suspect he would have taken possession of it after he was ordered to "pay" for it in the judgment. Presumably, he destroyed it, but being a theatrical man, he might have kept it to show to friends.

During the 1927 financial crisis, Faversham sold assets, including oil paintings, at an auction in New York. The Frick Library in New York has the catalog for the sale. It lists no portraits of Faversham and no life-size portraits of anyone else.

Alas, the painting is probably long gone, but it may turn up at an auction or yard sale. From other portraits he painted, I know Buongiorno was capable of creating a recognizable likeness. *Memorize what Faversham looked like, and keep your eyes open when in thrift shops!*

Sources:
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