

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Secondary Structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Secondary Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS / Bungalow

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Wood shingle

roof: Asphalt

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The William A. Farnum boathouse is located at 52 Actor's Colony Road in the village of North Haven in the Town of Southampton, Suffolk County. Located near the eastern end of Long Island, 90 miles east of New York City, North Haven is a 2.7 square mile peninsula surrounded by the waters of Shelter Island Sound and Noyac Bay. To the south, North Haven is connected by bridge to Sag Harbor Village, a deep-water port that shipped potatoes and other crops from local farmlands to cities along the eastern seaboard. Actor's Colony Road extends from South Ferry Road on the northeastern side of North Haven. Long parcels extend from Actor's Colony Road to the sea; some retain buildings from the early days of the colony, but most have been replaced by later development.

The parcel at 52 Actor's Colony Road, which is located at nearly the northernmost end of the road, includes several buildings historically associated with the Farnum estate: the boathouse, barn, caretaker's house, chicken house, doll's house, and beach cottage. A driveway runs along the southern edge of the property. The landscape is dotted by trees closer to the road and is marked by an open lawn and small pond close to the sea. When the former estate was subdivided during the twentieth century, the Farnum house and garage were demolished and several buildings were moved to the current property. Only the boathouse, chicken house, and barn remain in their historic locations; the estate as a whole no longer retains its integrity. A curving dirt road lined by trees extends from the primary driveway to the boathouse, which is located on the water, slightly downhill from the rest of the property. A few trees are located near the boathouse; a non-historic dock extends from the bulkhead into the sea. The nomination boundary was drawn to include only the boathouse, the most significant surviving estate building and the one most closely associated with William Farnum, a prominent, early twentieth century stage and film actor. The actual boundary was drawn based on the natural contour of the landscape and other distinctive physical features of the site. (See item 10).

Narrative Description

Built ca. 1915, the Farnum Boathouse is a two-story, three-bay by four-bay, gambrel roofed frame building covered in wood shingles and resting on a concrete foundation. The building is lit by a combination of original and replacement six-over-six sash windows. A wide, rectangular brick chimney, which is slightly stepped in at the top, projects through the north side of the roof. The boathouse is built into the sloping hillside that leads down to the water. The land is slightly higher on the southern side of the building, and a fence runs along the built-up land.

Two exterior staircases, one leading down the slope to the lower floor and one leading up to the second floor, provide access to the building on the west elevation. Both staircases have simple balustrades. One side of the lower stair has a square post capped by a ball, while the other railing ends in a rectangular post which helps support the upper landing. A simple, four-panel door with angled boards in the panels leads to the first floor (lower level). The upper stair has square posts with chamfered corners which are capped by balls. The stair runs to a small landing on the second story, which bows out slightly, in an allusion to the prow of a ship; the landing is supported by four sets of angled posts which attach to the building below. On the second floor, the 15-pane exterior door and accompanying screen door are flanked by paired sets of original six-over-six

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windows. An original attic access door, which has four glass panes, two wooden panels, and an original knob, is located in the gable.

The southern elevation is lit by four historic six-over-six windows on the first floor. A plain cornice band runs under the roofline; simple cornice returns, which correspond to wooden posts at the corners, extend around to the east and west elevations. A large shed roofed dormer filled with a bank of six original windows extends from the roofline; the east and west elevations of the dormer feature cornice returns. The northern elevation is lit by four six-over-six sash windows on the first floor and two shed-roofed dormers with paired windows on the second floor. The cornice band and returns under the roofline and cornice returns on the dormers are repeated on this elevation.

The east elevation features a large garage bay flanked by two window openings, each of which is simply boarded and has narrow shutters, on the first floor. The garage door is contemporary. A cantilevered balcony supported by four small and two large angled posts extends across the second floor. The balcony has a simple railing with square balusters and square posts capped by balls. A central 15-pane exterior door and interior screen door are flanked by paired contemporary six-over-six windows within historic surrounds. A six-over-six window lights the gable.

On the interior, the boathouse is divided into a lower floor for boat storage and an upper floor for Farnum's "trophy room." The lower floor is effectively one open space with a concrete floor. The building was originally constructed with no central beams to provide greater storage space and ease of movement; heavy steel tie rods helped to provide greater stability to the building. During the 1990s, central wooden supports and angled beams have been added to reinforce the structure.

The second floor is divided into a bathroom, closet, and a great room, or "trophy room." Historic four-horizontal-panel doors, simple trim, and wood flooring have been retained throughout. The bathroom and closet are located in the western corners of the floor, creating a foyer space within the larger great room. The bathroom retains an original patterned tile floor, built-ins, and a long, low, bathtub. The closet includes a bench and series of built-in cabinets. Within the great room, the roof truss framing is left exposed. A brick fireplace with an oversized wooden mantelpiece is centrally located on the north wall; two large teardrop brackets and three, smaller curved brackets support the mantelpiece. While the large, original cast iron woodstove which originally heated this space is no longer in place, it is stored on the lower floor. The fireplace is flanked by built-in cabinets, which originally housed Farnum's sailing trophies. Mounted fish, including a large swordfish, tarpon, and tuna, caught by Farnum on fishing trips across the country and near his Sag Harbor home have remained in the space since his ownership.

To serve its primary function of boat storage, the boathouse was constructed on the beach, approximately 12 feet from mean high water. This allowed boats to be floated onto a wooden cradle at high tide, tied into position, and then hauled out of the water and into the boathouse through its large front door on a set of steel train rails. Given the boathouse's proximity to the bay, it continually was battered by waves, wind and flooding during hurricanes and storms. The boathouse was designed to provide as little barrier as possible to the unstoppable storm-driven waves. During a storm, the front and rear doors of the boathouse would be opened, allowing the seawater to pass right through its lower floor, allowing the waves to move through the interior without taking down the supporting beams. In addition, the boathouse was designed to allow seawater to completely encircle the outer perimeter of the building, again, to reduce the shock that oncoming waves would

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impart to the building supporting structure. In particular, the mighty hurricane of 1938 that took many lives on Long Island, flooded and damaged the boathouse, but luckily no major structural damage incurred. Around 1970, to protect the boathouse from future hurricanes, a 90-foot long and 6 foot tall wooden bulkhead seawall was constructed between the boathouse and the beach. However, decades of storms had taken their toll, and the boathouse was starting to lean southward by a few degrees. To halt this progression, a set of structural diagonal beams were installed on the boathouse lower floor. While hurricanes today continue to drive waves up and over the bulkhead, the boathouse's exposure to major storms has been reduced, and the leaning motion has been stopped.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Performing Arts

Period of Significance

ca. 1915 - 1931

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

William A. Farnum

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the William A. Farnum boathouse extends from its construction by Farnum ca. 1915 through 1931, when his wife, Olive Ann divorced him and became the owner of the property. After that time, William Farnum was no longer associated with the estate.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The William Farnum Boathouse is significant under Criterion B in the area of performing arts as the only intact building strongly associated with William Farnum (1876-1953), a prominent early twentieth century stage and film actor, at the height of his career. Born in Boston to a family of actors, Farnum began acting on the stage at the age of 14. He first gained critical and commercial success in 1900 as the title character in *Ben Hur* and continued to primarily perform on the stage through the early 1910s. After his 1914 performance in *The Spoilers*, which is known for Farnum's classic reel-long fight with Tom Santschi, Farnum became a prominent silent film star. He established a home in Los Angeles and starred in dozens of silent films between 1914 and 1924, primarily in the popular action and western genres. At the height of his career, Farnum earned \$10,000 a week and was among the industry's highest-paid actors. When he wasn't filming, Farnum maintained an active lifestyle; popular media frequently described his sailing and fishing trips as well as his activities in Los Angeles and on his Long Island estate. Farnum's success waned, along with that of silent films, during the late 1920s. Unlike many other silent movie stars, however, he was able to successfully transition into sound films; Farnum had roles in over 20 films from 1930 through his death in 1953.

In 1906, William Farnum married Olive Ann White, who owned land on Actor's Colony Road in Sag Harbor. Over time, they expanded the property, which they used as a home and small gentleman's farm. Historically, the property included several acres with a house, caretakers house, barn, garage, boathouse, and several small outbuildings. The two major centers of activity at Farnum's summer home were the small, active farm and stable and the boathouse; both were frequently described or pictured in articles and puff pieces about Farnum's life. The boathouse, perched on the edge of the property by Shelter Island Sound, featured a lower level for boat storage and an upstairs lounge and trophy room. Farnum hosted summer and Christmas parties at the boathouse, the walls of which were covered in large, mounted fish he had caught and trophies he had earned in various competitions. He kept his prized *Olive Ann*, an open racing catboat, at the boathouse in addition to other boats. While he did not enjoy hunting, unlike other promoters of the "strenuous life" popularized by Theodore Roosevelt, Farnum's fishing trips and his Sag Harbor boathouse were closely tied to his professional, masculine image. Farnum and Olive divorced in 1931, and she sold the Sag Harbor estate in 1933.

The William Farnum boathouse is the building most closely associated with his time at his Sag Harbor estate, his public image cultivated by Fox Studios, and his personal interest in boating, fishing, and entertaining friends by the water. No other extant or intact buildings exist which he was associated with at the height of his career. While many buildings remain from Farnum's ownership, the estate as a whole lacks integrity due to losses of buildings, moved buildings and alterations over time. During his lifetime, Farnum also owned a series of houses in Los Angeles. His most substantial estate, located on La Brea Terrace, has long since been lost. Two other houses, which he owned later in his career, have been identified: 1523 North McCadden Place (purchased 1930) and 207 North Norton Avenue (purchased 1939); the former is no longer extant, and the latter is a modest home associated with Farnum's later years. Farnum's boathouse in Sag Harbor, however, retains a high degree of integrity and appears to be the only extant, intact building which he was strongly associated with at the height of his career.

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Early History of North Haven and Sag Harbor (1665 to 1895)

The history of North Haven dates back to 1640, when colonists from Lynn, Massachusetts, seeking a new place to settle, sailed to nearby Southampton, NY, and founded the first town on eastern Long Island. In 1665, Southampton Town purchased North Haven from the Manhasset Indians. Originally called Hog Neck, North Haven was rich in fish, shellfish and wild game. The land was allotted to citizens of Southampton in 1680. Forty-seven lots and meadows were assigned and seven roads were laid out. The land supported farming, livestock, orchards, windmills and salt works. Settlers harvested fish and buried the remains in the soil to fertilize their crops.

The Battle of Long Island, fought on August 27, 1776, was the first major battle occurring following the signing of the Declaration of Independence. British forces took control of Long Island and maintained a commanding presence for the duration of the war. British troops set up a garrison and naval blockade to prevent the Port of Sag Harbor from sending and receiving supplies for the American army. Many residents who were not loyal to the Crown fled to Connecticut, while those who stayed behind endured extreme suffering. British soldiers occupied and pillaged farms, homes and shops. North Haven's only notable event during the war was Meigs' Raid. On May 23, 1777, American raiders under the direction of Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs rowed 13 whaleboats from Guilford, Connecticut, into Southold Town on northern Long Island. They carried their boats across the narrow land, relaunched near present-day Greenport, and rowed to North Haven, where they hid their boats in the woods. Meigs launched a surprise attack on the British garrison in Sag Harbor, killing six British soldiers and taking 90 prisoners back to Connecticut. General George Washington himself commended Meigs and his men for their efforts.

North Haven evolved from a purely agricultural area due to its close proximity to the village of Sag Harbor; North Haven is only separated from Sag Harbor by a thin, 75-yard channel. Sag Harbor village was incorporated in 1730. With a natural deep-water harbor and its proximity to the rich farmlands of Sagaponack to the south, Sag Harbor thrived as a port for sailing vessels trading local potatoes, corn, wheat, rye, turnips as well as merchandise from New York and cities along the eastern United States. In the 1700s, Sag Harbor had more commercial ships than New York City and during the 1800s was one of the largest whaling ports. On July 31, 1789, the Second Session of Congress chose Sag Harbor as the first official port of entry into the United States over New York City. Approved by President George Washington, Sag Harbor thrived with a cosmopolitan mix of people and cultures from all over the world.

Sag Harbor reached its heyday between 1820 and 1850 due to the thriving whaling industry. More than 60 whaling ships called Sag Harbor home as they braved wind and sea in search of sperm, right and bowhead whales. The streets bustled with merchants and sailors from all over the world speaking different languages and bringing different cultures to the area. Taverns and inns dotted the streets and overflowed with captains and crews telling stories of their adventures at sea. The whaling industry began to fade in the early 1850s, and the discovery of petroleum in Titusville, Pennsylvania in 1859 sealed its fate. The last whaler in Sag Harbor, *Myra*, sailed away in 1871. To replace the whaling industry, Sag Harbor residents turned to industry. Some of the exports coming out of Sag Harbor during its industrial period include brass, hats, watches, sugar, cotton, flour and pottery.

With the arrival of train service in 1870, New York City residents could travel to Sag Harbor in 5 hours to escape the uncomfortable city summer heat. Wealthy merchants, bankers, and factory owners, such as the Sayres, Howells, Paynes, Fahys, Corwins, Cooks and Barclays, built classic summer estates on North

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Haven. Joseph Fahys, a silverware tycoon, built an elegant summer home on North Haven and a large watchcase factory in downtown Sag Harbor. The Fahys's Watchcase factory was a huge business for the village and grew to employ hundreds of residents. To shorten his trip from home to work, Fahys financed and built a wooden bridge connecting North Haven to Sag Harbor in 1890. Farmers paid a 16-cent toll to haul their crops by horse and carriage over the bridge from their farms to Sag Harbor shops. The bridge provided easy access for North Haven farmers, shopkeeps, factory workers and merchants to reach Sag Harbor and its train to NYC, and set the stage for North Haven's growth as a residential community helping to fuel Sag Harbor's commerce.

Creation of the “Actor’s Colony” at North Haven (1895)

In 1855, Captain Lewis Jagger Corwin, a 37-year-old retired ship captain, acquired farm property on the northeast corner of North Haven, near the ferry to Shelter Island. There he raised 7 children while working as farmer, carpenter and draftsman. By the late 1890s, writers, artists, actors, and other notable persons looking for inspiration for their work began to take notice of eastern Long Island's bucolic landscapes, farms and beaches. In 1895, Captain Corwin opened a road and divided his farm property into 17 building lots. Corwin had learned that a group of actors, theater personalities, and literary scholars were looking for a place along the waterfront to build summer cottages where they could vacation with their theater friends and business associates. Corwin's land was exactly what they had in mind, and the Actor's Colony community was founded.

From 1895 to 1920, a variety of notable actors, writers, poets, producers and personalities purchased property on Captain Corwin's farm. Accordingly, he named the street Actor's Colony Road. Notables bought up lots and began building summer cottages, where they could relax from their busy professional lives in New York City and socialize with friends. Notables who purchased land on Actor's Colony Road during this time included:¹

- Actor Joseph Weaver from the Richard K. Mansfield Stock Company and wife, Blanche Ingersoll Weaver, (purchased in 1895).
- Poet Richard Henry Stoddard, novelist, wife, Elizabeth Drew Barstow, and son, playwright Lorimer Stoddard, (purchased in 1898)
- Stage actor William Henry Crane, who played at New York City's Star Theater, and wife, Ella, (purchased in 1898).
- Eben Y. Backus, manager of Empire Theater, and actress wife, Lillian Thurgate, (purchased in 1900).
- Stage actor Edgar Smith Halstead of the New York Theater company and actress wife, Olive Ann White, (purchased part of Joseph Weaver's property in 1901).
- Actor William Courtleigh, leading man with Natt Goodwin, (purchased 1900-1901).
- Joseph Humphreys, manager of Charles Frohman Theater, (purchased in 1901).
- Actor Robert Edson, the leading man at the Bijou Theater, (purchased in 1902).
- Frank Case, owner of the Algonquin Hotel in New York, (purchased in 1920).

¹ Dorothy and Joseph Zaykowski, *The Early History of North Haven* (Ronkonkoma, NY: Ocean Printing, 2006), chapt. 22. William Farnum's eventual estate was the result of the merger of the three properties owned by Edgar Smith Halstead, William Henry Crane, and Lorimer Stoddard

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Edgar Smith Halstead and Olive Ann White (1890 to 1905)

A theater actor, Edgar Halstead played stage roles in the late 1800s. In 1891 and 1892, he toured with Patti Rosa's company throughout California and the east coast, in productions including *The Imp*, *Margery Daw*, *Dolly Varden*, and *Miss Dixie*.² By the late 1890s, Edgar was described as an actor of well-recognized ability and was touring the country with the New York Theater company. He played *The Girl From Paris* (1898) in New York City, London, San Francisco and New Orleans; *Who Killed Cock Robin* (1899) at the Amphion Theater in Brooklyn and *The King's Carnival* in 1901 in New York and Boston.

Olive Ann White was born in Deep River, Michigan to parents Sarah and Thomas White. Olive Ann was an accomplished, pretty and versatile actress known as a leading woman playing in prominent Irish-themed stage productions. Olive Ann's early stage career included *A Devil's Webb* (1893) in Wisconsin, which the *Waukesha Daily Freeman* described as "a ridiculous hodge-podge of absurdities."³ From 1897 to 1899, Olive Ann played roles in New York City and toured with the theater company operated by Andrew Mack, a popular singing comedian specializing in Irish productions.⁴ By 1900, Olive Ann became the leading actress in famous Irish singer and actor Chauncey Olcott's theater company, where she often played the role of the Irish sweetheart.⁵ In this role, Olive Ann was popularized as being the one for whom Olcott wrote and sang the popular song *Wild Irish Rose*. Olive Ann played in a variety of productions during these years, including *Rush City* (1896), *Myles Aroon* (1896), *An Irish Gentleman* (1897), and *A Romance of Athlone* (1899), *An African King* (1901), *The Mormon Wife* (1901), and *Jim Bludso* (1902). Many of these productions were in New York City, but she also toured major cities around the country.⁶

During this time, theater was the main form of public entertainment, as movies, television and radio did not yet exist. Then, as now, newspapers across major cities and dedicated magazines (e.g. *Photoplay*) detailed the releases of new productions, cheered & panned performances, and pried into the private lives of performers. The theater community consisted of a small, tight-knit group of actors, producers, directors and stage company owners who worked and socialized together, and marriages and divorces within the theater community were common. The New York City theater community was no different. On December 5, 1899, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* listed Edgar Halstead, Olive White, and William H. Crane all simultaneously performing in theater productions in New York City theaters. William H. Crane was leading *A Rich Man's Son* at the Montauk Theater in New York City; Olive White was playing *A Romance of Athlone* with Chauncey Olcott at the Bijou Theater, and Edgar Halstead was in *Who Killed Cock Robin* at the Amphion Theater.

Edgar Halstead and Olive Ann White presumably met through this social network of the New York City theater community. Edgar, age 36, married Olive Ann, age 24, on May 12, 1897 in New York City.⁷ In 1901, Edgar and Olive Ann purchased property on Actor's Colony Road from Joseph and Blanche Weaver, who had split their property. It is likely that Edgar and Olive Ann were introduced to the Actor's Colony as guests of one of

² *Sacramento Daily Union* (Sacramento, CA), February 8, 1891.

³ *Waukesha Daily Freeman* (Waukesha, WI), July 6, 1893, page 1.

⁴ *The Indianapolis Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), Feb. 18, 1900, page 14.

⁵ Dustin Farnum (William Farnum's brother) also worked in Chauncey Olcott's company at the same time as Olive Ann.

This is likely how William and Olive Ann originally met.

⁶ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), Dec. 5, 1899, page 5

⁷ Edgar Halstead and Olive White marriage certificate.

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their existing theater friends who had already built a summer cottage there. For instance, William Henry Crane, who was performing in New York City plays at the same time as the couple, owned property next to the land that Edgar and Olive Ann purchased. Halstead hired a Manhattan architect to design a summer house on the property. Contractor D.K. Grant built the house and an adjacent stable in summer and fall of 1901. Once complete, Edgar and Olive Ann moved in and were well-known Sag Harbor residents for five years, from 1901 to 1905. This house became William and Olive's home when they married in 1906.

William's Farnum's Early Life and Theater Beginnings (1876 to 1899)

William Farnum was born into a family of performers on July 4, 1876 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was the son of Adela Le Gros, a singer who appeared in dramatic and operatic productions, and Greenleaf Dustin Farnum, actor/manager of a touring thespian repertory company that traveled throughout New England and eastern Canada. As children of stage performers, their three sons (Dustin, William and Marshall) and two daughters (Agnes and Mabel) had their share of traveling with their parents, often for one or two night performances.

When the children were young, the Farnums moved to Bucksport, Maine. Dustin, William and Marshall, attended Eastern Maine Conference Seminary school. Developing an early interest in the family trade, the three boys staged performances, charging admission fees for local residents to sit in their grandfather's barn. Their plays were full of physical action, with sword-fighting, gun-fighting, acrobatics, practical jokes and pranks – qualities for which William and Dustin later became known in professional careers.

When William was 14-years old, his father presented all three boys in a remake of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* under his repertoire company at the old Boston Academy. This was William's acting debut, playing the role of Lucius in *Julius Caesar*. William Farnum later described this production, saying "Dad wouldn't think of letting a poor actor play in any of his companies, and drilled me morning, noon, and night. Day after day I worked twenty hours out of the twenty-four to perfect a part. Finally, I became 'so-so', to quote my father's words, and he gave me bigger and better parts."⁸ An article in the *Bangor Commercial* described the Farnums as "...the most remarkable theatrical family in the United States. Every one of its five children is engaged with some prominent stage personage, and all have enjoyed a professional training such as practically no modern young people with aspirants for the stage can get."⁹

William's brothers, Dustin and Marshall, also pursued careers in the family business as adults. Dustin Farnum (b. 1874), William's older brother, made his professional stage debut in 1897, at age 23, with the Ethel Tucker Repertoire Company. Dustin went on to become a very well-known western stage and movie actor; his most famous role was in Owen Wister's play *The Virginian*, which ran from 1904 to 1907 at the Manhattan Theater. He also played with his brother William in the successful play *The Littlest Rebel* in 1911 and as the lead in the very popular western film *The Squaw Man* in 1913. Marshall Farnum (b. 1880), William's younger brother, was a lesser-known director who produced 6 silent films between 1914 and 1917; he died at age 37.

Shortly after his stage debut at age 14, William gained valuable acting experience by accompanying his father's repertoire company on a long road tour. William later remembered:

⁸ William Farnum, "Booming the Cheer Market," *Photoplay Magazine*, September 1917.

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At about this time the company went on a long road tour, in Shakespearean plays. During these few years, I doubled and many trebled in every character the immortal William [Shakespeare] ever wrote. They were the hardest years of my life. They taught me, although I wasn't old enough to realize it then, the untold value of a training in the classical drama for young actors. It is to those years of hard knocks and work that I attribute whatever success I have gained since. Finally, my father, who was growing old, disbanded his company. The germ of the stage, however, was still in my blood, and I played with various companies for nearly six years, always companies of classical repertoire.¹⁰

At approximately 16 years old, William joined the theatrical company of Robert Dowling, where he watched and worked for two years, touring eastern cities. When the lead actor fell ill, William was given two-hour's notice to take his place in the lead of *Damon and Pythias*. William demonstrated a genius in his ability to memorize lines in very little time. The following evening, William played Marc Anthony in *Julius Caesar*. Three nights later, he played Abastor in *Ingamor*. That William could memorize the lines of three different shows was a tour de force for any actor, let alone one in his teens. The New York theatrical community took note of these performances and began referring to William as an up-and-coming actor. In New York City on August 26, 1895, William Farnum, age 20, married actress Mabel Robinson (né Eaton) age 23, of Chicago. But the marriage did not last, and they divorced sometime prior to 1906. Mabel was the first of three wives that William would have during his lifetime.

William's Farnum's Rise to Theater Prominence (1900 to 1905)

William Farnum's first major success was playing the leading role in *Ben-Hur* on Broadway in 1900 at the age of 24. While touring with a theater company in New Orleans, producers Klaw & Erlanger discovered William at the Grand Opera House stock company. They asked William to replace the original actor, Edward Morgan, in this extravagant *Ben-Hur* stage version, which featured a live chariot race on-stage using an elaborate system of rotating turntables to allow the horses to gallop, along with a moving backdrop that changed scenery as the horses ran. William's performance was highly acclaimed. Newspapers described him as handsome, tall, athletic, and well-educated in both arts and literature. This success firmly established Farnum as a major stage star. When *Ben-Hur* ended on Broadway, William reprised the part in a touring version of the play which ran for five years. He continued to work on Broadway and in other theatrical venues, having a string of successful performances in other plays, including *A Midsummer's Night Dream* in 1903.

Buoyed by his success in *Ben-Hur*, combined with his knowledge in his father's repertoire company during his teenage years, William founded the *William Farnum Stock Company* which played in Buffalo and Cleveland in 1904. The company produced and conducted plays in those two cities from 1904 through 1908.

In its heyday in 1904 and 1905, William Farnum's Stock Company was producing over 20 plays per year in Buffalo, New York at the Park Theater. His company was described by local newspapers as a leading dramatic company playing in the region. In 1905, the *Buffalo Commercial* commented that "The William Farnum Stock Company is conceded to be one of the best stock companies in the country at the present time. It is far above the average and a glance at its personnel will be sufficient to convince even the casual playgoer

⁹ Ralph Pettie, *The Farnum Brothers of Bucksport* (Blue Hill, ME: Peninsula Press, 2000), 10.

¹⁰ William Farnum, "Booming the Cheer Market," *Photoplay Magazine*, September 1917.

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of this fact.”¹¹ In another article *Buffalo Commercial* offered additional praise: “Mr. Farnum is well known in Buffalo, where he is an immense favorite, and he is surrounded by artists of the greatest talents.”¹²

In February 1905, the William Farnum Stock Company played the grand opening of Buffalo’s new Park Theater owned by the Shea Amusement Company. Farnum’s company played a new show there each week. On his arrival in Buffalo, just prior to the grand opening of the new theater, William said:

We have had a wonderfully successful season on Cleveland, but of course, we are glad to be in Buffalo, where we will rest until the opening of the new house. We have been looking forward with much pleasure to the opening in the Park Theater, and from what I have already seen of the preparations, we are going to have one of the handsomest houses in the country.¹³

The theater, which was designed to seat 2,500, was the largest in Buffalo and an excellent place for the Company’s home stage. To keep local audiences coming back, Farnum offered a new show every week.¹⁴ The opening show at the Park Theater, staged in March 1905, was *As You Like It*, starring William in the leading role, Percy Haswell as leading woman, and “Olive Ann White, a beautiful woman, will be opposed to Miss Haswell...”¹⁵ Olive Ann had previously worked with Dustin Farnum in Chauncey Olcott’s company, and it was likely Dustin who introduced his brother William Farnum to Olive Ann. In April 1905, William played the lead character D’Artagnan and Olive Ann was Lady De Winter in *The Three Musketeers*. “The part of Lady De Winter and the agent of Richelieu will be played by the beautiful Olive White who has already many admirers in this city.”¹⁶ In May, they played *Brother Officers*; William was in a leading role and Olive Ann was named as one of the favorites of the company. In June, the company performed *Because She Loved Him So*, again with William in the lead and Olive Ann in a supporting role.

In 1905, in partnership with playwright-actor James A. Herne, William Farnum’s Stock Company produced a play called *Sag Harbor*, a salty comedy drama, complete with realistically staged scenery of the interior and exterior of a shipyard on Long Island. In earlier productions by James Herne, the models for the scenes were painted from photographs of quaint localities in Sag Harbor. One scene showed the interior of a curious little boat-house where United States government life-boats are built.¹⁷ In Farnum’s production, the props included the hulk of an old boat in the background, the wooden shavings on the ground, and the paints, lumber, etc. scattered about in attractive confusion.¹⁸ The play opened in Park Theater in Buffalo on June 5, 1905. William played the lead role, Captain Marble, and Olive Ann White played the role of Jane Cauldwell. The press praised Olive’s performance, saying she and two fellow actresses “were seen to the best advantage.”¹⁹ The William Farnum Stock Company also purchased and operated its own theater in New York City where he played for 30 weeks, and gave a run of 20 classical dramas in that time.²⁰

Of his stock company, William Farnum later recalled:

¹¹ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), February 18, 1905, 9.

¹² *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), February 25, 1905, 10.

¹³ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), February 20, 1905, 11.

¹⁴ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), February 18, 1905, 9.

¹⁵ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), February 18, 1905, 9.

¹⁶ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), April 22, 1905, 4.

¹⁷ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), August 26, 1899, 5

¹⁸ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), June 6, 1905, 12.

¹⁹ *The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), June 8, 1905, 6.

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Then the classical drama was not dead. In Buffalo, alone we had a season of thirty weeks, giving twenty different classical dramas, and the 'Standing Room Only' sign was almost always on display. I wish I could say the same thing about our other productions, but, sadly, I cannot. When I was receiving my training in father's company I thought I had to work hard. I changed my mind when I started my own company. I was 'up' in all the parts and ready to fill in case of need. Really, with producing, studying, directing, and looking after the financial end of the business. I celebrated every week if I found that I had as much as forty hours' rest.²¹

Up through this time, Olive Ann was married to actor Edgar Smith Halstead of the New York Theater. However, Olive and William's joint performance in the *Sag Harbor* play was apparently the spark that brought the two together. Shortly thereafter, Halstead and Olive Ann's relationship begin to falter. In July 1905, the *Sag Harbor Express* reported that Olive Ann rented her own house in North Haven. In August 1905, Halstead ran an advertisement in the *Sag Harbor Express* saying he would not be responsible for any debts that his wife Olive Ann incurred from that date forward. Soon after, Olive Ann and Edgar Halstead were divorced. As part of the settlement, Olive Ann was awarded their house and property at Actor's Colony Road.

William Farnum as Movie Star (1906 to 1952)

On December 2, 1906 Olive Ann White married William Farnum at Olive's house on Actor's Colony Road.²² After they married, Farnum continued to work on Broadway and in other theatrical venues. He was involved in a string of successful performances in plays, including the Broadway adaptation of Lew Wallace's *Prince of India* (1906), *The White Sister* (1909), *The Littlest Rebel* (1911), co-starring his brother Dustin, and *Arizona* (1913), with Dustin and stage beauty Elsie Ferguson. Olive Ann continued acting, but less frequently. She had roles in a handful of silent films between 1916 and 1920, including *An International Marriage* (1916), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1917), and *The Orphan* (1920). Notably, she also appeared in the 1916 production of *David Garrick*, with Dustin Farnum, her brother-in-law, acting in the title role.

After his successes on Broadway, Farnum took his good looks, manly persona and acting flair to the silent screen. Motion pictures were more lucrative than stage plays, and film was the new innovation of the day, with the potential to transport audiences to much more realistic, immersive settings than the stage. Dustin Farnum made the switch from stage to screen in 1913 in Hollywood in *The Squaw Man*. Inspired by his brother's success, William followed Dustin to Hollywood. In 1913, William signed a contract with the Selig company to act in a new western silent-film movie called *The Spoilers*. Over six feet tall and weighing over 200 pounds, with curly hair and blue-gray eyes, William was perfect for the 'He-Man' roles in which he would perform.²³ At Hollywood's prestigious Lambs Club, screenwriter Rex Beach told William that he was the basis for his character of Roy Glenister in *The Spoilers*.

William played the leading role of a tough, good-looking cowboy in *The Spoilers*, a smash hit which quickly led to Farnum's movie stardom. In the epic final scene, Farnum and Tom Santschi staged what has been

²⁰ *The Pioneer* (Bemidji, Minnesota), July 27, 1920.

²¹ William Farnum, "Booming the Cheer Market," *Photoplay Magazine*, September 1917.

²² *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, December 9, 1906.

²³ George A. Katchmer, *A Biographical Dictionary of Silent Film Western Actors and Actresses* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 113.

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described as the classic movie fight of all time.²⁴ The fight was unrehearsed and absolutely real, lasted a full reel (approximately 10 minutes), and looked as genuine as a filmed fight can possibly look. William suffered a broken nose, two bent ribs, and a crushed sinus during filming, adding to the realism. Film historians argue that *The Spoilers* continues to stand out for the stark realism of the fight scene between Farnum and Tom Santschi.²⁵ In 1930, William and Stantschi coached Gary Cooper and William Boyd in the fight scene for the 1930 remake of *The Spoilers* as well as John Wayne in the 1942 remake of same. Of his role in *The Spoilers*, William said:

I accepted it more as a lark than anything else. I just thought that it would be a little change from my regular routine, and that it would require no study and little work. I made a bad mistake! It was work and study, and every bit as hard as playing on the legitimate stage. Any actor that goes into the movies to have a good time" is going to be terribly fooled. In many respects, it takes a bigger and better man to put across some emotional stuff before the camera than it does on the stage. Remember, too, that you haven't got your lines to help you out - your actions are what count.²⁶

Known as physical, virile and strong outdoorsmen, both William and brother Dustin were best known for their rugged roles in western and action movies and helped shape the genre. William's portrayal in *The Spoilers* and Dustin's roles in two other notable westerns of the day (*The Virginian* and *The Squaw Man*) played a major role in elevating western action movies to the height of Hollywood success. Audiences seeking to escape the woes of World War I, thronged to movie houses around the country to see cowboy stars tame the romantic west. These early silent films were the genesis of the multi-billion-dollar western action movie industry. Gary Cooper, William Boyd (Hop-A-Long Cassidy), Noah Beery, Randolph Scott, and John Wayne were all directly influenced by William Farnum's rough, physical acting persona.

From 1914 to 1924, William Farnum threw himself into the motion picture industry and became one of the biggest sensations in Hollywood. George A. Katchmer, in his book *A Biographical Dictionary of Silent Film Western Actors and Actresses*, described Farnum as being "one of the earliest and biggest screen idols".²⁷ In 1915, William signed a lucrative contract with the Fox Film Corporation and worked nearly exclusively with Fox for the next eight years, playing beside stars such as Hedda Hopper and Lillian Russell. Following his success in *The Spoilers*, audiences adored Farnum's roles promoting his strong, manly and active outdoor persona. The press described Farnum as a seasoned Shakespearean stage actor who could handle drama or outdoor adventure equally well.

One of the largest movie producers of the time, Fox operated film-making studios in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and Hollywood, California. At the height of his career, Farnum commuted by train across the country between Fox's east and west coast studios several times, making up to 7 films in a single year. To accommodate this lifestyle, Farnum needed homes where he could relax between films. In addition to his and Olive's home at Actor's Colony, Farnum purchased a large home in Hollywood and an apartment in New York City.

In 1915, the Ithaca Journal reported that:

²⁴ Hollywood Walk-of-Fame, "William Farnum, inducted Feb. 8, 1960." Available at <<http://www.walkoffame.com/william-farnum>>.

²⁵ Katchmer, *Biographical Dictionary*, 113; Hollywood Walk-of-Fame.

²⁶ William Farnum, "Booming the Cheer Market," *Photoplay Magazine*, September 1917.

²⁷ Katchmer, *Biographical Dictionary*, 113.

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"It is said that William Fox, the noted producer, has had the face of William Farnum insured for \$100,000. Hence Farnum has been called 'the man with the \$100,000 face'. After seeing Farnum in the title role of Henry Bernstein's modernized drama *Samson*, one can hardly blame Mr. Fox for protecting himself against losing the services of such a sterling performer. As *Maurice Brachard*, the banker, in *Samson*, Farnum is at his best and that means excellent. His acting is gripping. Olive White playing the opposite lead, is a wonderful emotional actress."²⁸

In her autobiography, *From Under My Hat*, movie actress Hedda Hopper described her first acting experience in the Battle of Hearts (1916) with William Farnum:

"For me it was starting at the top. Farnum was William Fox's brightest, highest-paid star. His salary then was six thousand dollars a week; I got one hundred. Later Bill made so much money he paid for the land at Sunset and Western Avenue where the first Fox Studio was built. Farnum had more money than Fox but, being an actor and not a financier, he never bothered to figure the difference between income and outgo. So he spent as fast as he made.

Bill bought race horses and at one time owned three boats; the largest had a crew of eight men. How appalled I was when his first wife told me that when they returned from their first trip to Europe, Bill was presented with a feed bill of twelve thousand dollars—for his horses alone. I had visions of fluttering my eyelashes, languishing in a scented boudoir, and indulging in passionate love scenes with the handsome hero in my screen debut. But no! Battle of Hearts wasn't a picture; it was an obstacle course.

Playing a fisherman's daughter, I wore a faded blue skirt or a pair of Pa's pants, a man's turtle-neck sweater, hip boots, and a stocking cap. The whole outfit was gussied up with oilskins and sou'wester to match. In my first scene I drove a yoke of oxen along the beach at Catalina Island and gathered driftwood for our cookstove. We waited on Catalina Island for our principal prop, an ancient three-masted schooner bought in San Francisco, which was being sailed down the coast by two men. We had prepared for scenes on the ship at Catalina; then it was to be taken to Santa Cruz Island and wrecked there. But a terrific storm blew up and our schooner never made port. Parts of the vessel were found; the men, never.

The fishermen Bill engaged for the film thought this an ill omen. We, being actors, never believed those sea-story superstitions and went right ahead. We moved from Catalina to Santa Cruz. That crossing from Santa Barbara is rougher than the English Channel, and our ship was overloaded. On anchoring, we transferred from our large ship to rowboats in order to land on rocks. The first boatload, with Farnum, two male members of the cast, two movie cameras, and a couple of guns, didn't make it. The boat capsized and they went down into eighty feet of water. It's a wonder they ever got out alive, for they were wearing lumber jackets and heavy boots.

The second boat was more successful. Our director's wife, Mrs. Oscar Apfel, a few authentic fishermen, and I were in that one. Mrs. Apfel and I climbed a long hill to the camp and made for the cook tent. Someone remembered to bring a bottle of whisky along; we uncorked it, and when the wet and maddened star and his dripping friends hove in sight, we let 'em have it right from the bottle...

Since our three-master was lost, we had to build a wreck; but before we could tow it to the location selected, it wrecked itself on other rocks. Bill gave up then, and we started shooting with half the deck under water.²⁹

²⁸ *The Ithaca Journal* (Ithaca, NY), June 19, 1915, 6.

²⁹ Hedda Hopper, *From Under My Hat* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1997), chapter 6.

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By 1917, Farnum had become "Fox Studios' leading male star."³⁰ As a result, Farnum could make more demands from Fox, in particular, convincing the company to budget more dollars for making Farnum's films than the other actors in Fox's cast. Further, in order to spend more time on the east coast, Farnum requested making more films at the Fort Lee, New Jersey, studios. Frank Lloyd, who had been directing the Farnum pictures, also came east with the star and the rest of the Farnum company. By 1919, Farnum was one of Fox Studio's biggest money-makers and became one of the highest-paid actors in Hollywood, earning \$10,000 per week.³¹ In *Classics of the Silent Screen*, movie historian Joe Franklin described Farnum at his height:

The name 'Farnum' on a theatre marquee in the early days of the movies always meant a top picture and top business. Even before Doug Fairbanks and Bill Hart had established themselves, the Farnum brothers, William, via *The Spoilers*, and Dustin in *The Squaw Man*, both in 1914, found themselves in the front rank of the then newly-emerging star system. Bill was probably the better screen actor of the two, and could tackle anything from Zane Grey to Dickens... [William's] big, almost beefy, build made him seem more at home outdoors than in, so it's not surprising that so many of his early films were westerns... Bill showed few traces of stage technique in his screen portrayals. He had a wonderful face, strong and determined, yet genial and kindly, with a big smile, and eyes that crinkled into a sort of smile...³²

Between 1914 and 1924, Farnum starred in 52 silent films, many westerns, including an impressive array of big-budget features spanning several genres, including: Western or Action films such as *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1918), *Man of Sorrow* (1916), *Rainbow Trail* (1918), *The Man Hunter* (1919) and *Lone Star Ranger* (1919); Literature Classics including *A Tale of Two Cities* (1917) and *Les Miserables* (1917); War and Sea-Adventures like *A Soldier's Oath* (1915) and *Scuttlers* (1920); Current Dramas such as *The Heart of a Lion* (1917) and *The Bondman* (1915) and Historical Dramas like *If I Were King* (1920). A list of Farnum's known roles is provided in the appendix. Of all his movies, William's personal favorite was *Les Miserables*, where he played Jean Valjean, described as "a superb piece of character work, on the highest histrionic level, etching a Valjean who lives forever after in memory."³³ During the early 1920s, between movies, Farnum occasionally returned to the Broadway stage, where his performances continued to be well received.

As owner of Fox studios, William Fox's strategy to drive film sales was to actively publicize the unique personas of his leading actors. Farnum's strong, manly, active sportsman and outdoorsy lifestyle was the perfect vehicle to promote his western, action and dramatic films to audiences. Building on the popular trope of "the strenuous outdoor life" espoused by Teddy Roosevelt, many newspaper and photo-journal articles publicized Farnum's masculine exploits, both on- and off-screen.

On-screen he was known for often throwing himself into physical harm's way to capture the perfect scene. Besides the famous fight scene in *The Spoilers*, articles describe Farnum's brave roles in other movies, such as fighting with a 7-foot long rattlesnake, as an expert swordsman engaging in a duel, and barely escaping a burning building.³⁴ He performed these roles himself, without stunt-doubles, thrilling audiences with his

³⁰ Aubrey Solomon, *The Fox Film Corporation, 1915-1935, A History and Filmography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 25.

³¹ "William Farnum and Ben Hur," General Lew Wallace Study and Museum, Available at <<http://www.ben-hur.com/william-farnum-ben-hur/>>.

³² Joe Franklin, *Classics of the Silent Screen* (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1959), 162.

³³ *Pioneer* (Minnesota), July 27, 1920, 4.

³⁴ *The Sheboygan Press* (Sheboygan, WI), March 28, 1924, page 15; *Greenville South Carolina News*, June 23, 1919.

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exploits. An example of such publicity is the 1915 *Corsicana Daily Sun*'s description of Farnum's eight-week training regimen to prepare for his upcoming movie, *The Plunderer*:

"In freezing weather, Farnum rose at 5:30 am at his country place at Sag Harbor, Long Island, and under the stern eye of a trainer, jogged ten miles over the frozen roads while his mentor rode in ease in an automobile. Then came a swift dip in the icy waters of the harbor from the dock on his estate; followed by a brisk rub down and breakfast. After a brief rest, Mr. Farnum spent most of the morning in his gymnasium, sparring and dallying with the medicine ball. In the afternoon, came another jog over the roads and then a very light dinner and bed. So, when you see that battle on the screen in *The Plunderer* – and it is one of the most heart-quicken, breath-catching fist-fights ever filmed – don't forget as you see the actor smashing and slashing his foes, that not unnaturally, it was some job to find actors willing to face the Farnum fists."³⁵

Off-screen, Farnum led the same active persona as in his movies. He was promoted as an avid outdoorsman, physical and fun-loving. He actively engaged in horseback riding, sport-fishing, big game hunting, yachting, sailboat racing, tennis, golf, exercising, jogging and duck hunting. While not exercising, Farnum actively enjoyed his time-off from movies as a hands-on farmer, planting and harvesting his own crops, tilling soil, raising cows, pigs and chickens, all surrounded by pet dogs. Photoplay magazine, 1917 describes Farnum as a "potato patriot of Long Island" doing his part to support the World War I effort to grow and distribute eggs, ham, milk and even oysters from his own farm in Sag Harbor.³⁶ In addition, the *Akron Evening Times* reported:

"Farnum is a farmer to keep physically fit. William Farnum the great actor that he is and a man whose friends demand much of his time, never forgets that the body must be exercised as well as the brain. And the exercise in which he delights most is farming. Even while he was making scenes for the stupendous William Fox special production, *If I Were King*, ... Farnum found both mental and physical enjoyment digging in his garden at Sag Harbor, Long Island. In this big garden early in the morning or during the late evening, he often got behind the plow preparing the ground for his potato patch which he knew would help him give the high cost of a solar plexis blow next winter. He worked until he was dripping with perspiration. A cool bath followed, and if it were morning, he felt he could work through the day in comfort. So keen is Mr. Farnum about his farm that it is said to be one of the finest of its kind on all Long Island."³⁷

In 1921, the *Quad-City Times* of Davenport described Farnum's love of the outdoors:

William Farnum loves everything that is out-of-doors, and he manifests this in everything he does. Here is one reason there is so much of the real man, the big-hearted fellow, loving and loved, in all of his screen creations. His big bare arm and his unsheathed sword never fail to swing in the way of right. As soon as he finished making *The Scuttlers* on the west coast, William Farnum unpacked his fishing rods, and boarding his boat, sailed out beyond Catalina Island; and as he traveled the tuna fish in those waters dived deep and hid, for no tuna within reach has ever been known to escape this fisherman.... When at his beautiful home in the East, at Sag Harbor, Long Island, Farnum fishes just the same. Here, too, he keeps his boats and when he isn't in one of these he's practicing truck farming on his fine estate.³⁸

In 1918, apparently overtaken by Farnum's public notoriety, one of the largest tobacco companies in the country was about to place on the market a special brand of cigars. It was proposed to call the brand the

³⁵ *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, Texas), August 23, 1915, 6.

³⁶ John Ten Eyck, "The Crimson Corpuscle of the Celluloid," *Photoplay* (1917), 2.

³⁷ *Akron Evening Times* (Akron, Ohio), Nov. 25, 1920, 14.

³⁸ *Quad-City Times* (Davenport, IA), May 22, 1921, 17.

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"William Farnum cigar – the strongest in the world".³⁹ Mr. Farnum politely declined. Overall, through these pieces, Farnum was portrayed as a down-to-earth and good-natured man who could be a strong and potent fighter when needed. No doubt this messaging resonated with Americans reeling from the horrors of World War I and looking for strong symbols of American heroes.

Farnum was injured in 1924 while filming *The Man Who Fights Alone*, his first Paramount Pictures film. Apparently, his injury was more serious than first reported; Farnum fell very ill and needed to recuperate at his summer home in Sag Harbor. His strong character, fortitude and his desire to return to work helped him recover but also pushed him back into work too soon. In 1925, Farnum signed onto the Broadway show *The Buccaneer*. After five weeks of performances, he became too weak to continue the show and re-entered a hospital in New York; he remained there in a coma for nine weeks. Once he awakened, doctors strictly ordered him not to work. Farnum returned home to rest for 18 months, staying in both his Sag Harbor and Hollywood homes with his wife Olive Ann Farnum, re-emerging from his convalescence, appeared in a few smaller, less stressful roles while he continued to regain his strength, such as *Tropical Nights* (1928). But for the most part, William did almost no acting for the six years following his injury, between 1924 and 1930.

During Farnum's absence, the movie industry was changing dramatically. By 1930, silent films had been replaced by sound, or talkie, films. While talkies thrilled audiences, they meant a huge transition for silent screen actors. Many silent stars were not able switch to sound films because their voices did not fit their personas and because talkies required much less dramatic facial expressions. Silent actors' dramatic expressions were viewed as over-exaggerated and old-fashioned.

After his six years of convalescence, the 56-year-old Farnum was no longer the super star of the 1910s and 1920s. He found few roles as a leading man, yet he was also a fighter. In 1930, he successfully made the transition from silent to talking movies largely by virtue of his depth of experience. Farnum had considerable acting talent instilled from his years of live theater and could remember long complex scripts, a skill silent stars had never needed to cultivate. Farnum also had a rich baritone voice that appealed to audiences; in fact, his booming voice, which he had been trained to project in auditoriums, occasionally became a liability with microphones nearby. Finally, Farnum deftly switched to playing a character actor in supporting roles, often in westerns, but he was also able to transition to many other genres, from crime stories to romance to science fiction. Farnum continued his acting career in talking films, playing in 82 movies, mainly in supporting roles, from 1930 to 1952, one year before his death.

William Farnum in North Haven (1906 to 1933)

After she and her husband, Edgar Halstead, divorced, Olive Ann was awarded ownership of their house and property in Sag Harbor. She brought William Farnum to Sag Harbor in 1906. Despite its association with her previous marriage, the couple enjoyed the property and planned to make it their own. On December 2, 1906, Olive Ann White married William Farnum at Olive's house on Actor's Colony Road.⁴⁰ Movie notables as Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks attended the wedding ceremony; William's brother Marshall was best man. On November 12, 1908, Olive Ann gave birth to the couple's only child, Sara Adele Farnum (1908-1985).

³⁹ *The Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), March 25, 1918, 6.

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Situated in a small, rural neighborhood, the Actor's Colony home provided Olive Ann and William the perfect place to get away from the hustle and bustle of New York City yet still be close enough to reach Broadway by train or car within a few hours. Further, the property was an ideal match for William's outdoor interests. Its four acres of fields sweeping down to the saltwater beach allowed William to feed his passion for yachting, sailing, swimming, tennis and getting his hands dirty farming. From 1906 to 1929, throughout the height of his stardom as an actor, Sag Harbor was Olive Ann and William's main home whenever they were on the east coast. William also owned an apartment in the Algonquin Hotel in New York City to reside in during filming, but he returned to his home on Actor's Colony Road to relax and recharge.

Fox Films took full advantage of using Farnum's home to further publicize the actor as the tough, active outdoorsman he portrayed in his films. Candid photo shoots and magazine articles about William showed him actively and happily engaged in sailing in his yachts, tending his tennis court, feeding his pigs, and pushing a horse-drawn plow in the fields at his Actor's Colony home. These candid images of William working the farm at home reinforced his outdoorsman persona for his adoring audiences.

William and Olive Ann renamed their property *May Crow* and significantly upgraded the existing house, built by Edgar Halstead and Olive Ann, with open porches facing the waterfront and surrounded by elegant flower gardens. Farnum also began expanding the property into a gentleman's farm. In late 1906, he purchased the five acres immediately to the north from actor William Henry Crane. Photographs from 1907 show the Farnums' house, an adjacent barn, chicken house, beach cabana, and elevated water tank. Continuing to expand, in 1915, Farnum purchased a five-and-a-half-acre parcel from Lorimer Stoddard immediately to the north of the Crane lot. Combined, these three properties were merged to form the 14-acre Farnum estate (spanning the current addresses of 46, 52, 56 and 60 Actor's Colony Road).

Flush with cash from his movie success, Farnum began reshaping his expanded property. By 1918, he removed the original barn and made many new additions to his property, which local newspapers were now calling the estate of a movie star.⁴¹ Improvements included:

- Expanding the main house (originally built by Edgar Halstead and Olive Ann) with glass porches and extensive flower gardens.
- Removing the small existing barn and building a large barn and garage with stables for horses and cows⁴²
- Building a two-story boathouse [nominated building] to house his fleet of boats on the 1st floor and a trophy room on 2nd floor to entertain guests.
- Building a wooden dock into the bay.
- Converting William Henry Crane's original house into a caretaker's cottage house.⁴³
- Building a small doll-house and tea-room for daughter Adele.
- Moving the original chicken house bought from Lorimar Stoddard in 1915 onto his property.
- Building a variety of outbuildings for pigs, chickens and other livestock.
- Building a tennis court.
- Planting extensive food crops on the property, including potatoes, corn and cabbage.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, December 9, 1906.

⁴¹ "Ninth Episode," *Photo-Play Journal*, January 1919.

⁴² "Farnum's Love for Animals Aids Art," *Fairmount, Indiana News*, June 10, 1920.

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To accommodate his busy filming schedule, William, Olive and Adele split their time between Fox's east coast and west coast studios. While on the west coast, they would stay in their mansion in La Brea Terrace in Hollywood (no longer extant). While on the east coast, Olive and Adele would typically stay in Sag Harbor. While filming at Fox's Fort Lee studio, William would stay in his NYC apartment and then rejoin his family at Actor's Colony for weekends, vacation, summers, and any other times between film shoots.

In 1917, in order to spend more time with his family in Sag Harbor, William asked Fox Studios to schedule him for more films at their Fort Lee, New Jersey, studios. Given Farnum's importance to the studio, Fox agreed and moved Farnum's director and production team to the east coast. Farnum starred in two movies, *The Bondman* (1916) and *The Heart of a Lion* (1917), which had some scenes filmed on and around his home in North Haven. For *The Bondman*, Fox constructed a movie set on a North Haven beach next to the Shelter Island ferry, just down the road from Farnum's Actor's Colony home at Tindall's Grove, the northeast corner of North Haven. William Farnum, of course, played the lead, and many residents were used as extras.⁴⁵ The movie set was a working replica of a fishing village, built with Thomas Edwards of North Haven assisting the scenic carpenter Paul Lampe of Garden City, with a number of small cottages and a bridge over a stream running into a salt water pond that connects with the South Ferry. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that: "Among other scenes to be taken in the area, will be the sinking of a boat off Montauk Point, and the rescue of the crew. In this scene, Captain Jim Edwards, Mr. Farnum's sailing master, and a typical seaman... will take a prominent part. Another feature of picture will be the leap of a man from a flying machine sixty feet above water level. Many Sag Harbor 'natives' are to take sub-parts in the picture play."⁴⁶ Captain "Jim" Edwards was caretaker for Farnum's home on Actors Colony, overseeing the home while Farnum was away on business.⁴⁷

William and Olive quickly became respected members of the Sag Harbor village community. The Farnums attended their movie showings at the local Sag Harbor cinema. They also donated a flagpole to the local St. Andrew's church, donated to the purchase a fire truck, provided flowers to local civic clubs, and participated in parades. William Farnum was also very active in supporting the armed forces during World War I.⁴⁸ In addition to growing food on his farm in Sag Harbor, he solicited funds for the Red Cross and sold Liberty Bonds. He was honored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) for inspiring the sale of bonds in excess of \$37,000,000; in 1940, he was presented the VFW Citizenship Award. Further, William spent about half of the nearly two-and-a-half years of his medically required convalescence (between 1924 and 1927) at Actor's Colony.

The Farnums and other residents of the Actor's Colony were a close-knit community and enjoyed entertaining guests from near and far. Especially friendly relations developed between William Farnum and Frank Case, who lived up the street on Actor's Colony Road. Frank Case owned the Algonquin Hotel in New York City, where William owned an apartment. Newspaper articles frequently mentioned the Farnums and Cases inviting notable guests to visit their homes at Actor's Colony. Guests included Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Ethel Barrymore, William Elliott, and Hedda Hopper.

⁴³ Farnum converted Crane's house into a cottage for a caretaker to live in while managing his estate. This house remains on the property today, though it has been moved from its original location, modified and expanded.

⁴⁴ John Ten Eyck, "The Crimson Corpuscle," 2.

⁴⁵ *Sag Harbor Express* (Sag Harbor, NY), March 11, 1982, 7.

⁴⁶ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), June 6, 1915, 15.

⁴⁷ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb, IL), April 17, 1918, 2.

⁴⁸ *The Film Daily*, January 14, 1919.

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William Farnum as Sailor and Seaman

Farnum was a passionate sailor and active member of the Sag Harbor Yacht Club from 1917 to 1926. When a reporter asked him if he liked making pictures, Farnum replied "You bet I do. I like the outdoor scenes best. I'm an enthusiast on everything that takes men out in the open. The best times I have are when I am sailing my catboat, the *Olive Ann*, down at Sag Harbor – by the way, I won five cups with her last season..."⁴⁹

The Sag Harbor Yacht Club lists Farnum as winning several races in *Olive Ann*, including one on July 29, 1911, when the actor piloted *Olive Ann* to victory in the Class C - Open Catboat race with time of 3:34:40 hours.⁵⁰ On August 15, 1910, Farnum in *Olive Ann* defeated rival sailor Dr. Nepier of Brooklyn in Sag Harbor Yacht Club's regatta. Farnum later recalled "My catboat *Olive Ann* won me four silver cups last summer [in 1910]," declared Mr. Farnum, who waxes enthusiastically when the subject of racing is mentioned.

"The club gives a race every other Saturday. We have a 15-mile triangular course which gives the sailor a chance to encounter all kinds of currents and winds. There are generally about 30 vessels entered in the races. They come from the neighboring yacht clubs of Shelter Island, Southold, and Point Port, as well as from our Sag Harbor club. The last race I won was a match race between my catboat and that of Dr. A. Nepier, who is the crack yachtsman of these parts."⁵¹

While living at Sag Harbor, Farnum owned several boats in addition to his beloved racing catboat *Olive Ann*. These included the *Avis*, 65' motor racer; *Nimpoy*, 40' auxiliary sloop; *Sachem*, motor yacht; *Mascot*, 112' motor yacht; *La Mascotte III*, 125' cruising motor yacht; *Mogul*, a sailing cruiser; a speedy cruiser, which Farnum offered to convert into U-boat chaser for the US Navy during World War I, and a 12 hp motor launch.

In the Sag Harbor Yacht Club's first open regatta of 1909, Farnum raced *Mogul* to victory, taking first place in the jib and mainsail class, sailing in a twenty-knot breeze.⁵²

Farnum stored the *Olive Ann* and several other boats inside the boathouse, launching her for the summer racing season and hauling her back into the boathouse for winter storage. Located several feet from the beach, the boathouse had steel train-track rails from which boats could be hauled on cradles up from the water, through a large garage door, and into the boathouse. From there, boats would be rolled to either side of the building. This way, several boats of significant size could be safely stored during the winter. To make this possible, the boathouse was specially constructed without any central-support beams that would interfere with the hauling process. No beams were located within the inside working spaces, forming a single large room. To support the load of the upstairs trophy room, the boathouse has a series of heavy steel rods that run from side-to-side. These rods act as tension cables, pulling inwards on the walls while also pulling upwards to support the second floor.

Farnum enjoyed fishing in Sag Harbor. In 1910, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* quoted Farnum:

⁴⁹ *Argus Leader* (Sioux Fall, SD), July 10, 1915.

⁵⁰ "Fair Wind for Boats in Sag Harbor Races," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 30, 1911.

⁵¹ *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), October 5, 1910, 13.

⁵² *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), July 25, 1909, 46

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The fishing is great out there too [in Sag Harbor]. I remember one morning last summer. DeWolf Hopper, Edward Peple, Vincent Serrano and I went out to fish for bluefish. There had been a storm for about three days and as luck would have it, we ran into a great school of mackerel. They are very seldom caught there for more than a few days at a time. The storms drive all the fish out to sea, but we ran into this school and in an hour and a half must have caught 300 pound of fish. Hopper and Peple, the author of my sketch, were delighted.⁵³

In 1918, the *DeKalb Daily Chronicle* reported:

Mr. Farnum goes in for boating more than any of his neighbors and is a walking encyclopedia of nautical lore. He knows the time of the tides of the waters about his home, so that no time is lost on his fishing trips. He can tell the lights and beacons along the shore by their first names. Among the old salts of the village he is hailed as a charter member of the Jib-boom club, a famous sailing organization of those parts. When bluefish are running he plans little trips for the famous finny game, while not seeking the gigantic swordfish. It is Mr. Farnum's ambition to harpoon the biggest fish ever caught along the coast.⁵⁴

Farnum also raised oysters on the waterfront at Actors Colony. Per the *Daily Chronicle*,

While Mr. Farnum was in California, for 18 months Captain "Jim" Edwards, the caretaker of his summer home at Sag Harbor, Long Island, leased about five acres of choice oyster grounds, almost directly opposite the Farnum estate, in a portion of Sag Harbor Bay. Here the captain planted seedling oysters carefully selected from the choicest Lynnhaven stock, with sprinklings of Blue Points. The result is a bed of the finest young oysters in the land, raised in the purest of open ocean water. Mr. Farnum is especially fond of oysters and is proud of his skill in opening the bivalves. Every day it is a labor of enjoyment to have Captain Edwards "tong up" a mess of oysters, which the screen star opens for the dinner table. It is needless to remark that the produce of the Farnum private oyster bed occupies a prominent place on the Farnum dinner menu.⁵⁵

Farnum was an avid deep-sea fisherman. Several feature-length articles describe his adventures traveling to locations in Florida and Catalina Island off California. As trophies of his catch, Farnum had several large fish mounted on boards and shipped back to be hung on the walls of his boathouse at Actors Colony. In particular, the next three articles describe Farnum catching three large fish and displaying them at his boathouse. These fish are still hanging on walls of boathouse today. The *Miami News* of 1919 reported;

It is Mr. Farnum's intention to devote several days to a fishing trip and tackle the gamy tarpon and sailfish that infest these southern waters with the hope that he will catch the largest one ever brought to gaff. Mr. Farnum holds the record for big fish caught off the Santa Catalina Island in the Pacific, and he has mounted in his home at Sag Harbor, N.Y., a 350-pound Marlin sword fish, which he fought for several hours before it finally succumbed to his strength.⁵⁶

An article, "Farnum Gets Over a Ton of Tuna," in *American Angler* magazine in 1919, describes the outdoorsman as catching 2,761 pounds of tuna (fifty-one fish) using traditional rod & reel within 15 days. His largest catch of that expedition was one 'blue button' tuna weighing 118 pounds. Farnum had the largest fish

⁵³ *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), October 5, 1910, 13.

⁵⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb, IL), April 20, 1918, 5.

⁵⁵ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb, IL), April 17, 1918, 2.

⁵⁶ "Day in Miami Seeing Surrounding Country," *The Miami News* (Miami, FL), January 7, 1919, 1.

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"mounted on a board and sent to his Sag Harbor home, to grace his trophy room in company with his marlin swordfish and his other big fish from Florida waters."⁵⁷

Another *American Angler* article, "Farnum Irons a Tarpon," chronicles his success in harpooning a 185-pound, six-foot tarpon fish. The article reported "When the members of the Miami Anglers Club heard of Mr. Farnum's catch, they immediately elected him member of their exclusive organization and set up his record in their club rooms. As a remembrance of his historical fishing trip, Farnum had all the tarpon and other fish mounted and now they grace his wonderful trophy room at his Sag Harbor, Long Island home."⁵⁸

Farnum occasionally hunted game. A 1913 article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* described Farnum's plans to spend several weeks in Alaska hunting big game, "...he is one of the most expert all-around sportsmen in America and his home in Sag Harbor contains many trophies of the chase. He is the possessor of not only many hunting trophies, but has more than a store of prizes won by him in his invincible little yacht [*Olive Ann*]."⁵⁹

William Farnum's Boathouse at Actor's Colony

Of all the buildings that Farnum constructed at his home at Actor's Colony, his boathouse best embodied his image as an avid sportsman and yachtsman, both on- and off-screen. The two-story boathouse, immediately adjacent to the beach, stored Farnum's boats on the first floor and was Farnum's trophy and entertaining room on the second floor. Farnum appears to have used the boathouse as a quiet retreat on his own property, and popular media accounts describing his exploits as a sailor, fisherman, and hunter occasionally referenced the building specifically.

Farnum called the second floor of the boathouse his trophy room and transformed it into a cozy, but masculine space devoted to his accomplishments separate from his acting career. He built glass cases on both sides of the large fireplace to exhibit silver cups won from racing the *Olive Ann* and other boats. He also had mounted trophies on the walls from his fishing and hunting exploits, including the above-mentioned 350-pound marlin swordfish, 118-pound tuna, six-foot long tarpon, assorted other fish, and a moose and deer from his hunting adventures. The boathouse trophy room was frequently referred to in movie magazines and newspapers, publicizing Farnum's image as a red-blooded outdoorsman which aligned well with his film roles.⁶⁰ In 1920, the Los Angeles Times described Farnum's boathouse as

...another famous den. It is on the top floor of his boathouse. There is a big fireplace, on either side of which are glass cases containing silver cups of all sizes won in boat races, while around the walls are mounted and hung specimens of rare fish that he has caught, with trophies of the hunt too, though he doesn't care so much for hunting. He has a humane little prejudice against the sports necessary cruelties, which prejudice he says grows with the years.⁶¹

Farnum also enjoyed entertaining guests in the boathouse. A large open room with a then-state-of-the art 1917 Victrola crank music player, large billiards table, a fireplace upstairs plus large stove downstairs for heat,

⁵⁷ A. L. Selig, "Farnum Gets Over a Ton of Tuna," *The American Angler* 4 (1919), 306.

⁵⁸ A. L. Selig, "Farnum Irons a Tarpon," *The American Angler* Volume 4 (1919), 81.

⁵⁹ "William Farnum is to Hunt in Alaska," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), Jan. 26, 1913, 21.

⁶⁰ "His Outdoor Home," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1920.

⁶¹ *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1920, 25.

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bathroom with hand-laid tile floor, walk-in changing room (presumably for Farnum to don his movie costumes to regale his guests), and outdoor porch overlooking the boats moored in the bay were used for throwing parties with friends, family and work colleagues.

The January 1918 *Motion Picture Magazine* quoted Farnum:

"This year, I think my fondest dream will be realized. I will spend Christmas at my place in Sag Harbor and have all my friends there for the holidays. Christmas Eve we hang up our stockings, and during the week I prepare for that ceremony by writing down in my note-book everything that I hear mentioned that anybody wants. No, I'm not generous --- I'm selfish, because I get so much fun out of it. Why, I feel ten years younger the day after Christmas. Over the main part of the boat-house at Sag Harbor is a large room I have arranged for parties. In that room will be the tree, and everybody will have to hunt for his or her gifts. Both fireplaces will be going and the place will be swamped with holly and mistletoe. The table will be set in the house for the big Christmas dinner, as we want the floor in the boat-house clear for dancing. Everybody will be invited, from the manager and directors at the studio to the kitchen-maids. What's the use of Christmas if one can't have a party --- and what if one is broke on New Year's Day?"⁶²

Today, the boathouse trophy room remains in a high level of integrity to the period of Farnum's ownership. Glass trophy cases, brick fireplace, billiards table, crank Victrola record player, tiled bathroom, outdoor balcony, and walk-in dressing room all survive. A photograph of Farnum playing in *Ben-Hur* in 1900 hangs on wall. Over 100 years later, Farnum's trophy fish and game are still hanging on the boathouse walls. The 350-pound marlin swordfish, a five-foot tarpon, and 118-pound tuna (all mentioned in *American Angler* article), stuffed moose & deer heads, and numerous smaller mounted fishes remain on the walls today.

William Farnum's Later History

In 1928, Olive filed to divorce William, saying that he had left her and never returned to their home. In court in December 1929, Olive accused William of desertion and misconduct with another woman named Isabelle Major, a writer from New York. Olive stated she had been in Los Angeles, and hadn't seen William for over one year, as he was on the east coast. When she returned to Sag Harbor in July 1929, late at night, she found William and Isabelle in the house together.

The Farnums owed \$582 in back property taxes, and the county threatened to auction off the house in September 1929. They paid the taxes, avoiding the auction, but they were faced with larger financial problems. William Farnum lost nearly all of his \$2,000,000 savings in the stock market crash of October 1929. William's brother Dustin died in 1929, adding to the family's misfortune. That, combined with nearly \$2,500,000 of medical expenses and virtually no income during his prior six years of medical convalescence left William with few resources. While he started earning income again with his transition to talking movies in 1930, the damage had been done. William Farnum sold his La Brea mansion in Hollywood and purchased a much more modest cottage at 1523 North McCadden Place (not extant) in Los Angeles in 1930. William filed for bankruptcy in January 1933, listing his liabilities at \$45,438 against assets of \$500 in clothing.

On May 6, 1931, Olive was granted a divorce. The property settlement approved by the court gave Olive the Sag Harbor property, valued at \$100,000. William provided for payment of \$70,000 in bills and \$5,200 a year

⁶² "Christmas Day in Starland," *Motion Picture Magazine*, January 1918, 56.

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in alimony until she remarried. Despite the settlement, the expenses to maintain the large Sag Harbor property weighed heavily on Olive, and she listed it for sale. In 1933, Olive sold the property, including the *Olive Ann* catboat, to Henry H. Hedeman, a businessman residing in Beechhurst, New York for the sum of \$33,000. Now divorced, William married Isabelle Major in 1932. They had 3 children: Isabelle Smith and Elizabeth Spencer, from Major's earlier marriage, and together they adopted William Farnum Jr. They remained married until William's death on June 5, 1953.

Post-1930, Farnum's film career was far less profitable than his earlier years as a silent film star. Although he played prominent co-starring roles in major early films such as *A Connecticut Yankee* (1931), *The Painted Desert* (1931), and *Du Barry, Woman of Passion* (1930), his stage-derived predilection for "playing to the back rows" with a high-volume voice soon began to make his sound-film performances seem overstated. As the decade progressed, Farnum was eclipsed by younger actors who found it easier to adjust to the presence of the sound microphone. Farnum soon found himself appearing chiefly in low-budget serials or chapter-plays which were ongoing stories of the same characters that were released serially to the same cinema. The first of Farnum's serials was 1933's *Fighting with Kit Carson*, where he was cast in a small (and uncredited) role. However, his past fame won him some small but noticeable roles in A-features like *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1934) or Cecil B. DeMille's *Cleopatra* and *The Crusades* (1935).

Farnum's work as a chapter-play character actor must have seemed like a severe comedown after his years of stage and movie stardom. However, he never showed any on-screen disdain for his serial parts. On the contrary, he played his lesser characters with the same dramatic fervor he had brought to his starring turns as Ben-Hur, Jean Valjean, and other famed heroes. Archaic though his performances seemed at times, they were always impressive; whether he was appearing in prestigious features or lowly serials, William Farnum *never* merely walked through a role.

In the second half of the 1930s, Farnum spent most of his acting time appearing in Republic B-westerns like *Public Cowboy Number One* (1937), *Santa Fe Stampede* (1938), and *Mexicali Rose* (1939). He also began to dabble in radio work in 1937, appearing on anthology programs like CBS's *Silver Theatre*. In 1937, Farnum purchased his final home, a modest house at 207 North Norton Avenue in Los Angeles (extant). He and Isabelle lived there until their passing.

Farnum kept working in film and radio throughout the 1940s, playing major roles in several more B-westerns, and taking minor credited parts in A-films—among them the 1942 version of *The Spoilers* and Cecil B. DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*. Gary Cooper, William Boyd (Hop-A-Long Cassidy), Noah Beery, Randolph Scott, and John Wayne were all directly influenced (and in some cases coached) by Farnum. In the late 1940s, he also starred in his own West Coast radio series, a homespun serialized drama called *The Adventures of Uncle Jimmy*. He made only a handful of film appearances in the 1950s, including cameos as himself in Roy Rogers B-western *Trail of Robin Hood* 1950 and in the mystery film *The Hollywood Story*. In his last western, Farnum played the supporting role of Tom Crockett in *Lone Star* in 1952, a western starring a new generation of movie stars, including Clark Gable, Ava Gardner, and Lionel Barrymore. His final movie was the 1952 Abbott and Costello comedy *Jack and the Beanstalk*, in which he played a fairy-tale king.

Farnum died of uremia in Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, California on June 5, 1953 with wife Isabelle by his side. His pall bearers included Hollywood luminaries Cecil B. DeMille, Jesse Lasky, Frank Lloyd, Clarence

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Brown, Leo Carillo and Charles Coburn with a eulogy by Pat O'Brien, who had not forgotten Farnum's status as one of Hollywood's first stars.⁶³ The Masquers Club honored him with the George Spelvin Award for outstanding service in the field of entertainment, and he received a star on Hollywood's Walk-of-Fame for his contributions to the motion pictures industry at 6322 Hollywood Boulevard.⁶⁴ In total, Farnum acted in 134 movies during his notable acting career spanning 60 years.

The Los Angeles Times summed up Farnum's life on June 6, 1953:

William Farnum was once known as the silent films' highest-paid star. His way of life in the years of his Hollywood fame helped establish the lavish pattern which the world came to associate inevitably with movie stardom. His yacht was one of the largest, his home and its furnishings and his stables and his automobiles and his entertaining — not to mention his marital trouble — all were in the gaudy tradition. Farnum was a ranking stage star when he first came to Hollywood. He had been hailed for his successes in *Ben Hur*, *The Littlest Rebel* and other hit plays of the era. Nationally acknowledged as a great tragedian in his youth and middle age, Farnum still drew ovations for his recitation of Shakespeare, notably the Mark Antony oration from *Julius Caesar*. While making *The Man Who Fights Alone* in 1924 at the height of his powers, he was hurt so seriously that his career came almost to a full stop. But he returned to make a number of silent films and many sound movies, although he never regained the stature of major stardom. One of his last appearances was with Clark Gable in *Lone Star*.⁶⁵

Henry H. Hedeman Purchases the Farnum Property

Henry H. Hedeman and his wife May (born Houseal) purchased the 14-acre Farnum property on Actor's Colony from Olive Ann in 1933. They moved into the Farnum house and made it their summer home. Henry was an executive in the textile industry in New York City, working himself up from the mailroom in a silk-importing company Duplan. During the rest of the year, while not in the Farnum house, Henry and May lived in Beechhurst, New York. They had two grown children, Ruth (b. 1906) and Henry Jr. (b. 1916). Ruth and her husband Charles Garmy (b. 1899) and their two daughters Denise (b. 1928) and Jacqueline (b. 1933) lived in Beechhurst and visited their parents in Sag Harbor, regularly enjoying weekends, summers and vacations at the beautiful waterfront property. Henry Jr., his wife Eleanor, and their daughter Patricia (b. 1943) lived in an apartment over the Farnum garage, immediately beside their parents on Actor's Colony Road.

The Hedemans enjoyed entertaining at the boathouse much as the Farnums had, including card-playing fundraiser parties for the Sag Harbor Ladies Village Improvement Society, poker game parties for friends, barbecues and baseball games for the local fire department, beach parties and cookouts for family. Henry Jr. sailed Farnum's famed *Olive Ann* catboat for several years, continuing to store it in the boathouse. Sadly, the *Olive Ann* was at anchor in front of the boathouse and was destroyed during the hurricane of 1938, which devastated eastern Long Island and Rhode Island.

⁶³ "William Farnum and Ben Hur," General Lew Wallace Study and Museum, Available at <<http://www.ben-hur.com/william-farnum-ben-hur/>>.

⁶⁴ Hollywood Walk-of-Fame, "William Farnum, inducted Feb. 8, 1960." Available at <<http://www.walkoffame.com/william-farnum>>.

⁶⁵ "William Farnum," Los Angeles Times, June 6, 1953. Available at <<http://projects.latimes.com/hollywood/star-walk/william-farnum/>>.

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Henry and May Hedeman died in 1962 and 1961, respectively. Their 14-acre, former Farnum, property was divided between their two children. Son Henry Hedeman Jr. received 6 acres, including the original Farnum house, garage and daughter Adele's doll's house. Henry Jr., Eleanor, and their family moved into the Farnum house. Daughter Ruth Hedeman Garmy received the remaining nearly 9 acres, including the original Farnum barn, boathouse, caretaker's cottage, beach cabana, and assorted outbuildings. Ruth, Charles and their family lived in the boathouse each summer and in Muttontown, NY, during the remainder of the year. In 1976, they relocated, expanded and converted the caretaker's cottage into a permanent house, and moved to Actor's Colony year-round.

Around 1970, Henry Jr. sold his 6-acre portion of the Farnum property and moved to a smaller, more manageable parcel across the street on Actor's Colony Road. The new owner subdivided the property into two 3-acre lots, one containing the original Farnum house and the other the Farnum garage. Sadly, the new owner demolished the Farnum house in anticipation of building a new house that never materialized. Luckily, Adele's doll's house was moved to the adjacent lot to preserve it from being demolished. The house lot remains vacant today, except for the cement walkways that originally led from Actor's Colony Road to Farnum's house. Similarly, the Farnum garage on the other lot later was demolished and a new house was constructed at that location.

The other parcel of 9 acres, owned by Ruth Hedeman Garmy, continues to be owned by the same family (less two acres of vacant land that were sold in 1978). With a strong sense towards preservation and reverence to its notable past owners, the current owners (4th generation descendants of Henry and May Hedeman) see themselves as caretakers and stewards for this property. The original Farnum boathouse, barn, caretaker's cottage, beach cabana and outbuildings still remain on the property today. The boathouse remains in nearly original condition to when Farnum owned it. The barn exterior remains the same, but the interior was updated in the 1960's and converted to residential use. The caretaker's cottage was moved closer to the waterfront and a living room and garage were added in 1976. The small doll's house that Farnum built for his daughter Adele was moved a second time from Farnum's garage property to Ruth's property, where it remains, to prevent it from being demolished.

Aside from the addition of structural diagonal bracing on the lower floor and a seawall to prevent further storm damage, the Farnum boathouse has been maintained in as near original condition as possible to when William Farnum held his parties 100 years ago. The building retains its open, second-story plan, his stuffed fish and moose from his adventures still hang on the walls, the glass trophy cases still edge the fireplace, the old Victrola and billiards table remain, and boats of all shapes fill the first floor. As fourth generation descendants of Henry H. Hedeman, the current owners want to maintain the boathouse's original character so that it can continue to tell its story long after they too have passed into history.

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"William Farnum," Los Angeles Times, June 6, 1953. Available at <<http://projects.latimes.com/hollywood/star-walk/william-farnum/>>.

"William Farnum and Ben Hur." General Lew Wallace Study and Museum. Available at <<http://www.ben-hur.com/william-farnum-ben-hur/>>.

Zaykowski, Dorothy and Joseph. *The Early History of North Haven*. Ronkonkoma, NY: Ocean Printing, 2006.

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

Newspaper Articles

- Akron Evening Times*, November 25, 1920.
- Argus Leader* (Sioux Falls, SD), July 10, 1915.
- Arizona Republic*, May 21, 1916; August 28, 1921.
- “Bijou Theater.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 5, 1899.
- Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), Dec. 5, 1899, 5; July 25, 1909, 46; June 6, 1915, 15.
- The Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, NY), August 26, 1899, 5; February 18, 1905, 9; February 20, 1905, 11; February 25, 1905, 10; April 22, 1905, 4; June 6, 1905, 12; June 8, 1905, 6.
- Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, Texas), August 23, 1915, 6.
- The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb, IL), April 17, 1918, 2; April 20, 1918, 5.
- Courier Journal* (Louisville, KY), June 3, 1917.
- “Day in Miami Seeing Surrounding Country,” *The Miami News* (Miami, FL), January 7, 1919, 1.
- The Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), March 25, 1918, 6.
- “Fair Wind for Boats in Sag Harbor Races,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 30, 1911.
- “Farnum’s Love for Animals Aids Art,” *Fairmount, Indiana News*, June 10, 1920.
- The Film Daily*, January 14, 1919.
- Greenville South Carolina News*, June 23, 1919.
- “His Outdoor Home.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1920, 2.
- The Indianapolis Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), Feb. 18, 1900, 14.
- The Ithaca Journal* (Ithaca, NY), June 19, 1915, 6.
- “Lewis Staging ‘Bondman’: Fox Producer Arranging for Production at Sag Harbor,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 6, 1915.
- Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1920, 25.
- “Many Exciting Scenes in ‘The Jungle Trail’ At the Garing Today,” *Greenville South Carolina News*, June 23, 1919.
- New Orleans Times-Democrat*, December 9, 1906.
- “Ninth Episode.” *Photo-Play Journal*, January 1919.
- Pioneer* (Minnesota), July 27, 1920, 4.
- Quad-City Times* (Davenport, IA), May 22, 1921, 17.
- Sacramento Daily Union* (Sacramento, CA), February 8, 1891.
- Sag Harbor Express* (Sag Harbor, NY), March 11, 1982, 7.
- The Sheboygan Press* (Sheboygan, WI), March 28, 1924, 15.
- Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), October 5, 1910, 13.

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

Waukesha Daily Freeman (Waukesha, WI), July 6, 1893, 1.

"William Farnum is to Hunt in Alaska." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), Jan. 26, 1913, 21.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .49 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	726361	4546214	3	Zone	Easting	Northing
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

 (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification

 (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

During the twentieth century, the William Farnum estate as a whole lost its integrity due to a series of demolitions and moves that both impacted the orientation of the property and the historic pattern of buildings on the landscape. After the property was divided, Farnum's house and garage were demolished and his daughter's playhouse was moved to 52 Actor's Colony Road to save it from the same fate. At 52 Actor's Colony Road, the bath house was moved and the caretaker's house was moved and expanded. These moves and losses have changed the original relationship that these buildings had to each other, as well as to the landscape, which was used both for agriculture and leisure during the historic period. The Farnum Estate no longer retains sufficient integrity to be listed.

The boathouse and immediately surrounding landscape retain a strong level of integrity. The boathouse, with its seaside location, is directly connected with some of William Farnum's most enjoyable and discussed activities on the estate: fishing, sailing, and entertaining other actors. It is also a repository for his trophies and memorabilia from those activities. It was associated with him during his most important period of productivity (ca. 1914–1924) and during his marriage to fellow actor Olive Ann White. Of his known residences on the west and east coasts, the boathouse is the sole surviving building that retains a strong relationship to him.

The National Register boundary has been drawn based on the natural contour of the landscape, which remains at a consistent elevation and slopes into a bowl shape surrounding the boathouse. The boundary follows a dirt road that runs from Actor's Colony Road, extends along the 52 Actor's Colony Road's southern property line, and curves sharply to the north just before the land begins sloping toward the boathouse. The eastern and southern edges of the National Register boundary correspond with the tax parcel. The western and northern edges of the boundary follow the curve of the gravel road as it turns north and east toward Shelter Island Sound.

William A. Farnum Boathouse

Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Sag Harbor, Suffolk Co., NY

52 Actors Colony Road
Sag Harbor, NY 11963

Greenport,
NY Quadrangle



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N

Projection: Transverse Mercator

Datum: North American 1983

Units: Meter

0 750 1,500 3,000 Feet

Boathouse



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

William A. Farnum Boathouse

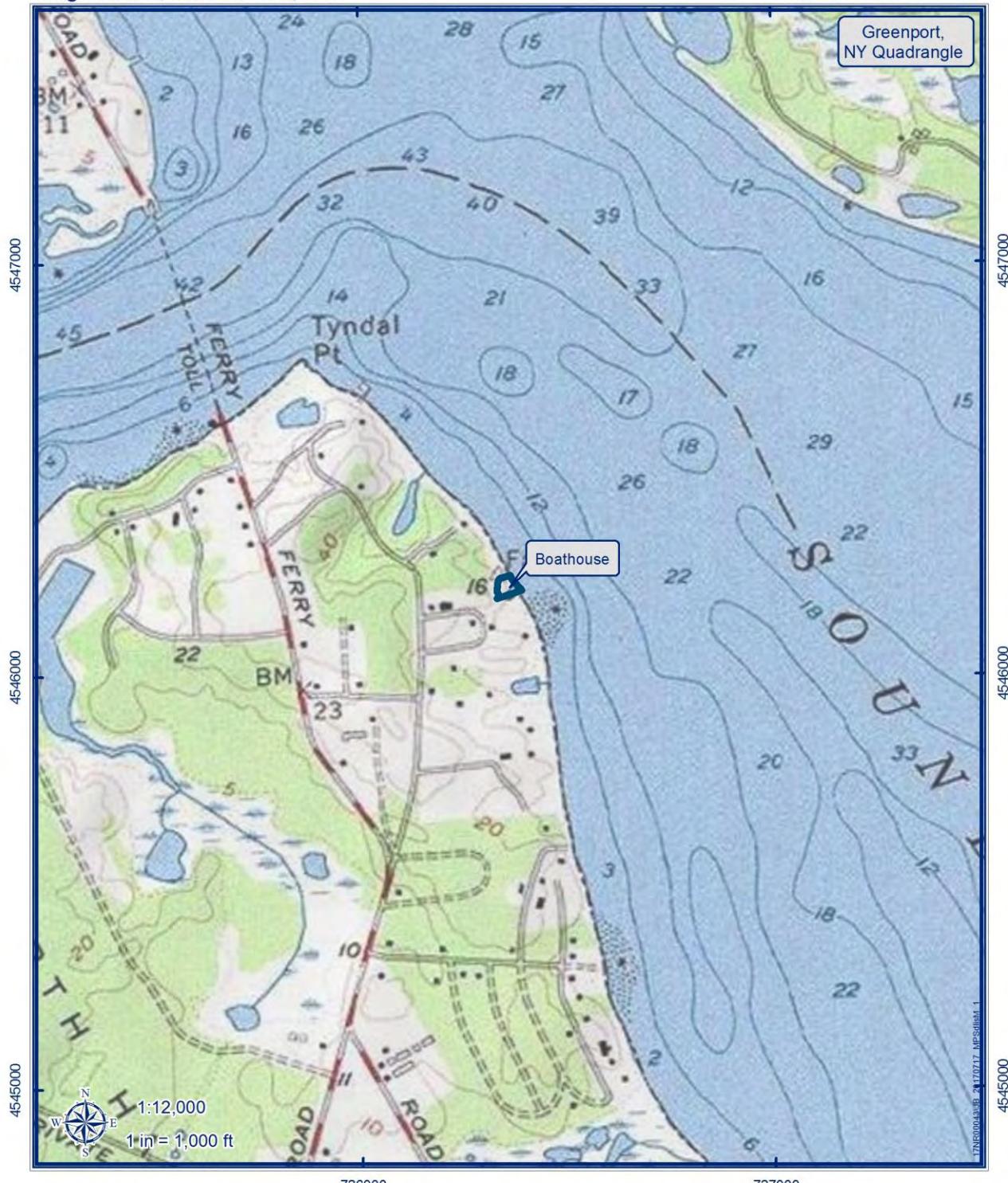
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Sag Harbor, Suffolk Co., NY

52 Actors Colony Road
Sag Harbor, NY 11963



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 380 760 1,520 Feet



Boathouse



William A. Farnum Boathouse

Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Sag Harbor, Suffolk Co., NY

52 Actors Colony Road
Sag Harbor, NY 11963



0 95 190 380 Feet



Boathouse



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Wes Frye (edited by Jennifer Betsworth, NY SHPO)
organization _____ date August 2017
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____
e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. . .

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
 - **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: William A. Farnum Boathouse

City or Vicinity: North Haven

County: Suffolk State: NY

Photographer: Jennifer Betsworth and Wes Frye

Date Photographed: April-May 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0001
Boathouse (north and west elevations) and landscape, facing southeast

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0002
Boathouse (west elevation), facing northeast

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0003
Boathouse (west and south elevations), facing northeast

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0004
Boathouse (south elevation) and landscape, facing northwest

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0005
Boathouse (east and north elevations) and landscape, facing west

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0006
Boathouse interior, lower floor, facing east

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0007
Boathouse interior, second floor, facing south

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0008
Boathouse interior, second floor, facing north

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0009
Boathouse interior, second floor, facing northeast

NY_Suffolk Co_William A. Farnum Boathouse_0010
Boathouse interior, second floor, facing east

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC.

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

Appendix: Partial List of William Farnum's Films⁶⁶

Silent Movies

- *The Redemption of David Corson* (1914)
- *The Spoilers* (1914)
- *The Sign of the Cross* (1914)
- *Samson* (1915)
- *A Gilded Fool* (1915)
- *The Governor* (1915)
- *The Plunderer* (1915)
- *The Wonderful Adventure* (1915)
- *The Broken Law* (1915)
- *A Soldier's Oath* (1915)
- *Fighting Blood* (1916)
- *The Bondman* (1916)
- *A Man of Sorrow* (1916)
- *The Battle of Hearts* (1916)
- *The Man from Bitter Roots* (1916)
- *The End of the Trail* (1916)
- *The Fires of Conscience* (1916)
- *The Price of Silence* (1917)
- *A Tale of Two Cities* (1917)
- *American Methods* (1917)
- *The Conqueror* (1917)
- *When a Man Sees Red* (1917)
- *Les Misérables* (1917)
- *The Heart of a Lion* (1917)
- *Rough and Ready* (1918)
- *True Blue* (1918)
- *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1918)
- *The Rainbow Trail* (1918)
- *William Farnum Liberty Loan Drive* (1918)
- *For Freedom* (1918)
- *The Man Hunter* (1919)
- *The Jungle Trail* (1919)
- *The Lone Star Ranger* (1919)
- *Wolves of the Night* (1919)
- *The Last of the Duane* (1919)
- *Wings of the Morning* (1919)
- *Heart Strings* (1920)
- *The Adventurer* (1920)
- *The Orphan* (1920)
- *The Joyous Troublemaker* (1920)
- *If I Were King* (1920)
- *Drag Harlan* (1920)
- *The Scuttlers* (1920)
- *His Great Silence* (1921)
- *Perjury* (1921)

⁶⁶ This list, which is intended to be as complete as feasible, is drawn from the Wikipedia and IMDB pages about William Farnum, both of which present much of his filmography.

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

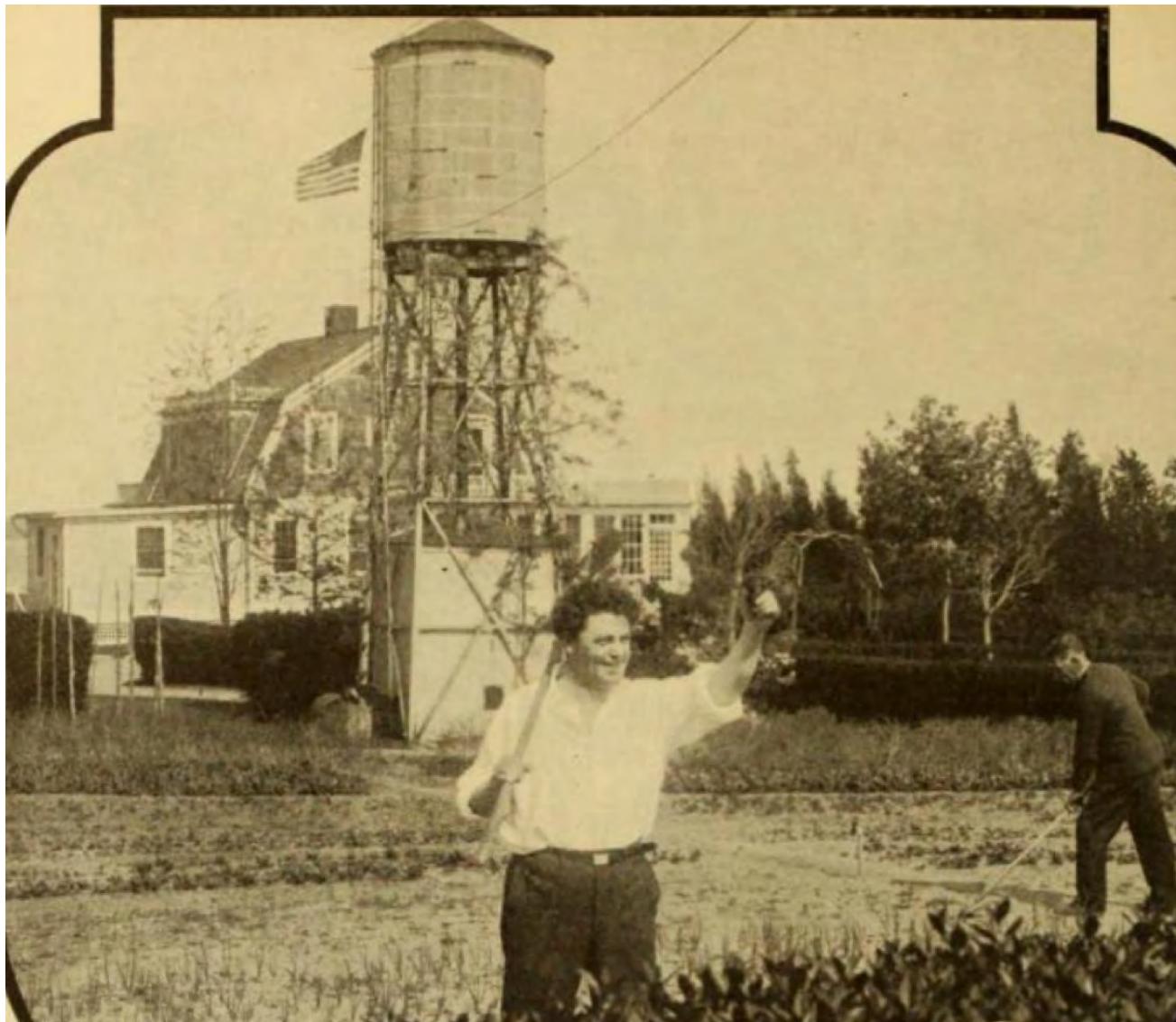
- *A Stage of Romance* (1922)
- *Shackles of Gold* (1922)
- *Moonshine Valley* (1922)
- *Without Compromise* (1922)
- *Brass Commandments* (1923)
- *The Gunfighter* (1923)
- *The Man Who Fights Alone* (1924)
- *Tropical Nights* (1928)

Sound Movies

- *Du Barry, Woman of Passion* (1930)
- *The Painted Desert* (1931)
- *A Connecticut Yankee* (1931)
- *Law of the Sea* (1932)
- *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* (1932)
- *Supernatural* (1933)
- *The Fighting Coward* (1935)
- *The Eagle's Brood* (1935)
- *Undersea Kingdom* (1936)
- *Maid of Salem* (1937)
- *If I Were King* (1938)
- *Shine On, Harvest Moon* (1938)
- *Convicted Woman* (1940)
- *Men of Texas* (1942)
- *Today I Hang* (1942)
- *Frontier Badmen* (1943)
- *God's Country* (1946)
- *The Perils of Pauline* (1947)
- *Heaven Only Knows* (1947)
- *Samson and Delilah* (1949)
- *Hollywood Story* (1951)
- *Lone Star* (1952)

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



William Farnum farming at his Actor's Colony home (1917)

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



William Farnum at beach at his Actor's Colony home with his Olive Ann racing sailboat (circa 1915)

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



*William Farnum and daughter Adele at his Actor's Colony home (circa 1915)
(house in foreground and original barn in background have been demolished)*

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



FARNUM AND HIS BIG FISH

William Farnum and prize tuna, *American Angler* (1919)

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



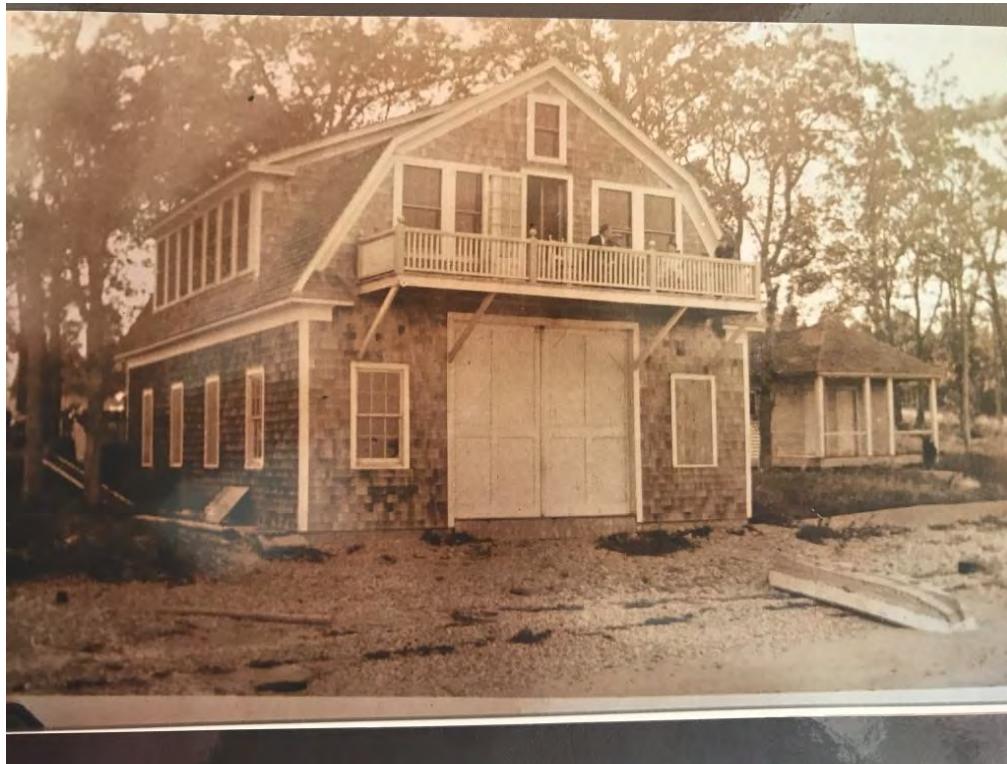
Olive Ann under sail



William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

Olive Ann being rigged for sail



Boathouse prior to addition of bulkhead (circa 1940)

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



Hauling vessel Tubby up rails into Boathouse



Boathouse from beach (circa 1940)

William A. Farnum Boathouse

Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State



Boathouse with original dock

Yes, they shot it here . . .

THE BONDMAN, 1916

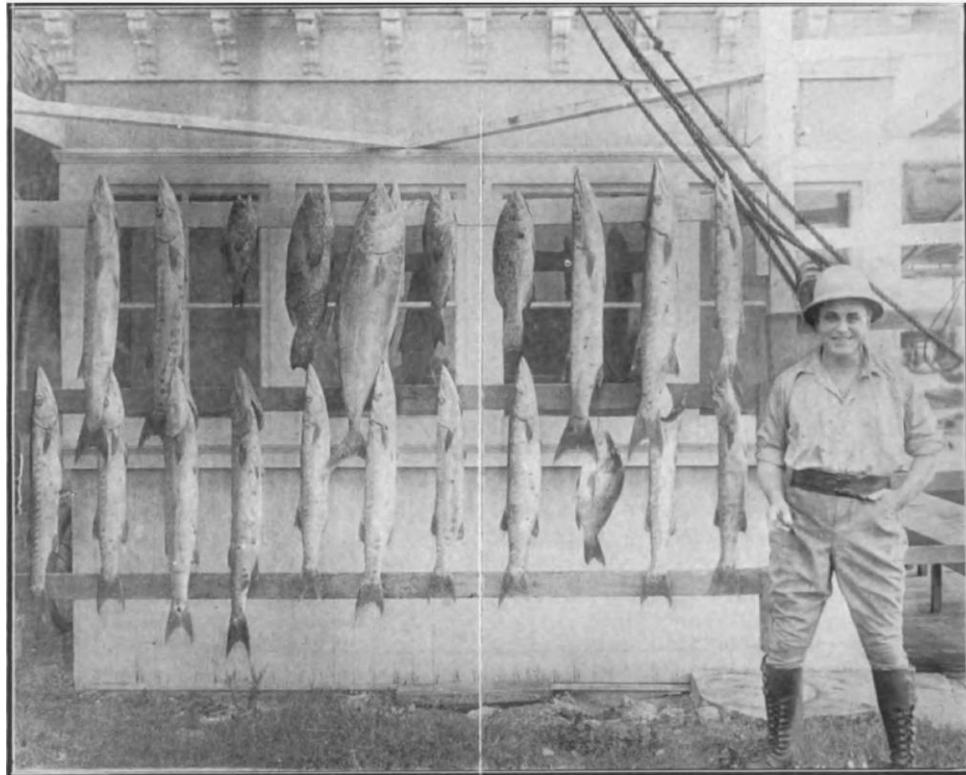
This silent adaptation of Hall Caine's 1890 novel was released by Fox during the 1915-1916 movie season. It starred William Farnum and Doris Woolridge and told the story of Jason Orry, the bondman of the Isle of Man. Because of an injustice to his mother, Jason vows revenge against Sunlocks (played by Harry Spingler), a half brother he doesn't know whom he chases to Iceland. There, they both fall in love with the same woman.

Farnum was a summer resident of the Actor's Colony in North Haven where many famous actors had summer homes beginning in the early 1900s. According to historian Dorothy Zaykowski, the film production crew constructed a fishing village complete with cottages for the shoot, while a bridge was built over a stream near the ferry slip at the top of North Haven. Several locals had parts as extras in the film.

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

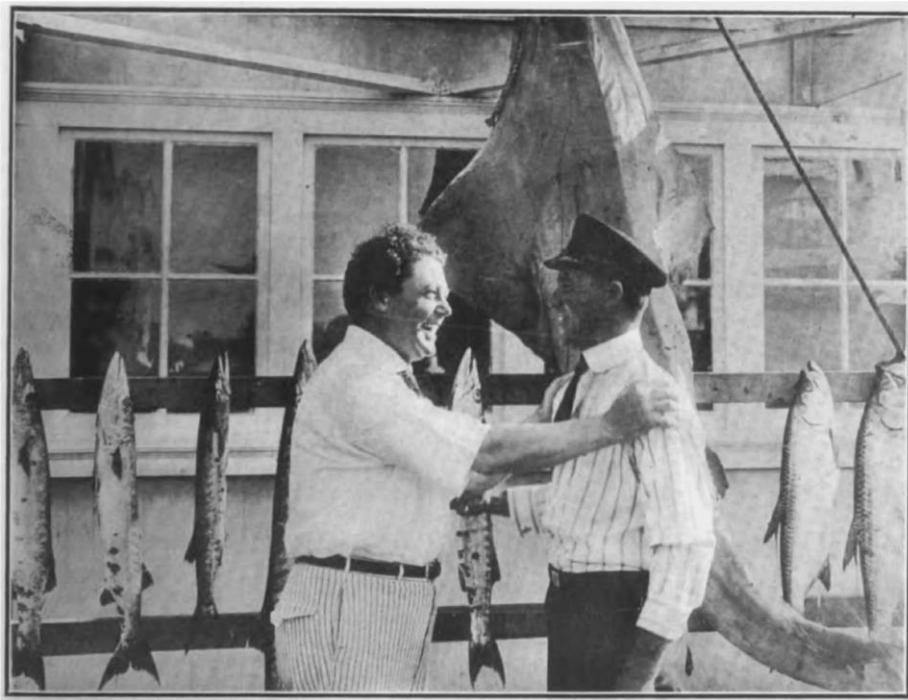
Billboard from movie *The Bondman*, shot partially near Farnum's Actor's Colony Road home (1916).
Sag Harbor – 100 Years of Film in the Village, by Annette Hinckle, Sag Harbor Partnership, 2017.



A ONE DAY'S CATCH BY WILLIAM FARNUM IN WATERS ADJACENT TO MIAMI, FLA.
Farnum Irons a Tarpon, The American Angler, Volume 4, 1919, page 82

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
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FARNUM PUTS ON HIS FAMOUS MOVIE SMILE BEFORE A VARIED AND NUMEROUS CATCH
Farnum Irons a Tarpon, The American Angler, Volume 4, 1919, page 83



William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

William Farnum as Judah Ben-Hur, circa 1900, by the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum



Olive White playing in Jim Bludso, 1902.

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



William Farnum at his Actor's Colony home



William Farnum at his Actor's Colony home

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



William Farnum and Adele and dog at his Actor's Colony home

William A. Farnum Boathouse
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



William Farnum at his Actor's Colony home



Post card of William Farnum waterfront at Actor's Colony





















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Farnum, William A., Boathouse

Multiple Name:

State & County: NEW YORK, Suffolk

Date Received: 9/25/2017 Date of Pending List: 10/26/2017 Date of 16th Day: 11/13/2017 Date of 45th Day: 11/9/2017 Date of Weekly List: 11/9/2017

Reference number: SG100001809

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 11/9/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Good Crit B nomination, Silent Acting Star. Boat House is the best place left for the star.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Crit B, performing Arts

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



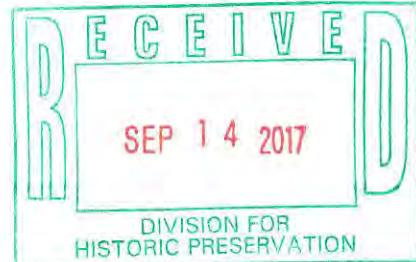
THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Ways and Means
Education
Environmental Conservation
Oversight, Analysis and Investigation
Transportation

FRED W. THIELE, JR.
Assemblyman 1st District
CHAIR
Committee on Small Business

September 13, 2017

Michael F. Lynch, P.E., AIA
Director, Division for Historic Preservation
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188



Dear Mr. Lynch,

I am writing to urge you to approve the inclusion of the William A. Farnum Boathouse in Sag Harbor on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. I hope you will see the significant historic value in this extraordinary building.

Built circa 1915, the Farnum Boathouse is most closely associated with William Farnum, a prominent, early twentieth century stage and film actor, who had roles in over 20 films from 1930 through his death in 1953.

The boathouse, perched on the edge of the property on Actor's Colony Road by Shelter Island Sound, featured a lower level for boat storage and an upstairs lounge and trophy room. Mr. Farnum hosted summer and Christmas parties there. Indeed, it is the building most closely associated with Mr. Farnum's time at his Sag Harbor estate, his public image cultivated by Fox Studios, and his personal interest in boating, fishing, and entertaining friends by the water.

To serve its primary function of boat storage, the boathouse was constructed on the beach, approximately 12 feet from mean high water. This allowed boats to be floated onto a wooden cradle at high tide, tied into position, and then hauled out of the water and into the boathouse through its large front door on a set of steel train rails.

When the former estate was subdivided during the twentieth century, the Farnum house and garage were demolished and several buildings were moved to the current property. Only the boathouse, chicken house, and barn remain in their historic locations.

Providing the William A. Farnum Boathouse with a Historic Preservation designation will safeguard an essential part of Sag Harbor's rich artistic history. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this nomination.

Sincerely,

Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
Member of Assembly

FWT/csl



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

22 September 2017

RECEIVED 2200

SEP 25 2017

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following twelve nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Holy Cross African Orthodox Pro-Cathedral, New York County
Bethel Christian Avenue Historic District, Suffolk County
Old Bethel Cemetery, Suffolk County
Spear and Company Factory, Queens County
Saugerties and New York Steamboat Company Warehouses, Ulster County
Lefferts Manor Historic District (Boundary Increase), Kings County
Ellis Squires Jr. House, Suffolk County
William A. Farnum Boathouse, Suffolk County
Warren-Benham House, Ontario County
Oswego & Syracuse Railroad Freight House, Oswego County
Forest Hill Cemetery, Oneida County
Caffe Cino, New York County

Please note that the last nomination, Caffe Cino, is the fourth of five nominations submitted under our Underrepresented Communities grant for LGBT sites in New York City. The fifth is scheduled for review at our next board meeting in December.

In addition, I am also enclosing a CD with better photos of the Charles and Anna Bates House, Suffolk County, as requested. Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office