

Watson, The Envelope Please

by
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Part One

Unlike BBC's "Sherlock", when I go to my mind palace the only thing I seem to find is trivial facts on actors who have portrayed Sherlock Holmes and/or Dr. Watson. In this essay I will go to the palace room which stores up the facts on which 'Oscar' winning performers have played Sherlock Holmes and/or Dr. Watson.

John Ford (1894 - 1973)

John Ford won four Oscars as a director.

1935 - Director - "The Informer"

1940 - Director - "The Grapes of Wrath"

1941 - Director - "How Green Was My Valley"

1952 - Director - "The Quiet Man"

1914 - "A Study in Scarlet" - The same John Ford (credited as Jack Ford) played Dr. Watson in "A Study in Scarlet" (1914). John's brother Francis Ford played Sherlock Holmes, and was the director of the film.



John Ford



Francis Ford

Mack Sennett (1880 - 1960)

1937 - Academy Honorary Award Oscar - Comedy Genius

Max Sennett won a special Oscar for his contributions to comedy.



Mack Sennett receiving Oscar from W.C. Fields

The years 1911 - 1913 had a series of Sherlock Holmes parody-comedies featuring the legendary Mack Sennett (1880 - 1960) and Fred Mace (1878 -1917) as the "Biograph Sleuths" (or later with Keystone Studios as "The Two Sleuths"). The films featured both men in full Sherlockian garb.

1911 - "The \$500 Reward" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Biograph Pictures.

1911 - "Trailing The Counterfeiter" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Biograph Pictures.

1911 - "Their First Divorce Case" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Biograph Pictures.

1911 - "Caught With The Goods" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Biograph Pictures.

1911 - "A Desperate Lover" - Directed by and starring Mack Sennett. Biograph Pictures.

1912 - "Their First Kidnapping Case" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Biograph Pictures.

1912 - "At It Again" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Keystone Films.

"At It Again" - "This picture revives the travesty on Sherlock Holmes, in which Max Sennett and Fred Mace won unbounded popularity. A woman receives an anonymous letter advising her that her husband is flirting, and engages the detectives. They track the wrong man and spy on him, arresting him in his own home making love to his own wife. It develops that the man is a police captain, and the 'sleuths' are punished for their error"¹

"At It Again" - "Two amateur Sherlock Holmes detectives dominate this picture with their antics. They succeed in jumbling the plot somewhat, but they are really funny, and the plot is not important, they may be forgiven. Mack Sennett and Fred Mace play the twin detective roles."²

1912 - "A Bear Escape" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Keystone Films.

1913 - "The Stolen Purse" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Keystone Films.

1913 - "The Sleuths' Last Stand" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Keystone Films.

1913 - "The Sleuths at the Floral Parade" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Keystone Films.

1913 - "Their First Execution" - Mack Sennett without Fred Mace. Keystone Films.



¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 14 Oct. - Dec. 1912 pg. 421

² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 14 Oct. - Dec. 1912 pg. 660

Edgar Bergen (1903 - 1978)

1937 - Academy Honorary Award Oscar - for his outstanding comedy creation 'Charlie McCarthy'

1939 - "Charlie McCarthy, Detective," Edgar Bergen voicing Charlie MCarthy as Sherlock Holmes. Universal Pictures.



Edgar Bergen

In a cute move on the part of the Academy, Edgar Bergen received a wooden statuette, with a movable mouth! "Charlie McCarthy, Detective" featured the ventriloquist Dummy, McCarthy, in a Holmes outfit solving a mystery.



Charlie McCarthy & Edgar Bergan

Douglas Fairbanks (1883 - 1939)

1939 - Academy Honorary Award Oscar - 1st President of Academy

1916 - "The Mystery of the Leaping Fish" - Douglas Fairbanks Sr. (1883 - 1939) as Coke Ennyday/Sherlock Holmes. Vitagraph Film Co.

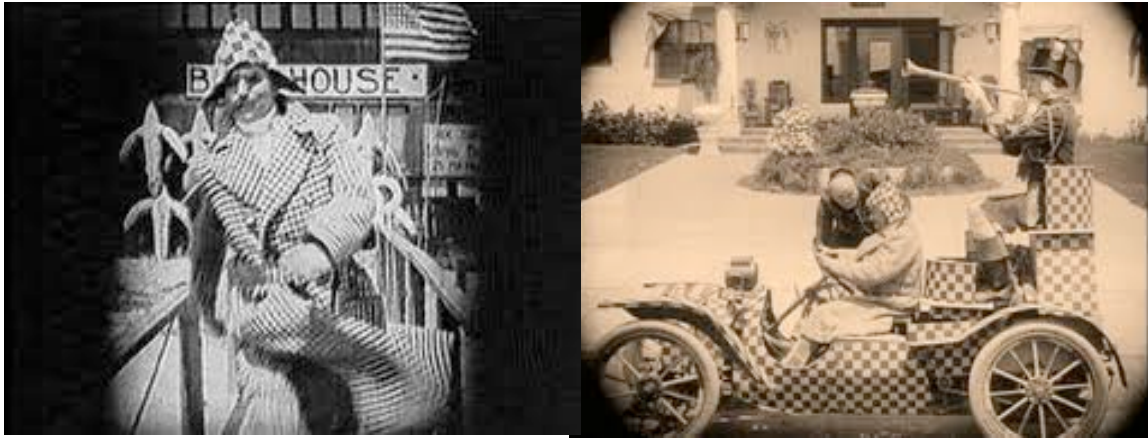


Douglas Fairbanks

"The Mystery of the Leaping Fish" is a short film starring Douglas Fairbanks and Bessie Love. In this unusually broad comedy for Fairbanks, the acrobatic leading man plays 'Coke Ennyday,' a cocaine-shooting detective parody of Sherlock Holmes given to injecting himself with cocaine from a bandolier of syringes worn across his chest and liberally helping himself to the contents of a hatbox-sized round container of white powder labeled 'COCAINE' on his desk. The movie, written by D.W. Griffith, Tod Browning, and Anita Loos, displays a surreally lighthearted attitude toward cocaine and opium. Fairbanks otherwise lampoons Sherlock Holmes with checkered detective hat, coat, and even car, along with the aforementioned propensity for injecting cocaine whenever he feels momentarily down, then laughing with delight. In addition to observing visitors at his door on what appears to be a closed-circuit television referred to in the title cards as his "scientific periscope," a clock-like sign on the wall reminds him to choose between 'EATS, DRINKS, SLEEPS, and DOPE.'³ "Fairbanks hated the film and reportedly wanted to have it withdrawn from circulation."⁴

³ Ivan Smirnov <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fprVONwmYnc>

⁴ Vance, Jeffrey (2008). Cushman, Robert, ed. "Douglas Fairbanks". U of Ca. Press. p. 36.



Douglas Fairbanks

You MUST watch "The Mystery of the Leaping Fish" at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fprVONwmYnc>

Bob Hope (1903 - 2003)

1952 - Academy Honorary Award Oscar - for his contribution to laughter, service to the motion picture industry, and his devotion to the American premise

1947 - "My Favorite Brunette", or "Morena y Peligrosa" (Brunette and Dangerous), Bob Hope as Ronnie Jackson dons the deerstalker. Hope Enterprises.

1956 - "The Iron Petticoat", as Major Charles 'Chuck' Lockwood in Sherlock Holmes outfit. Hope Enterprises, London Film Productions.



Bob Hope

"My Favorite Brunette" - "Baby photographer Ronnie Jackson, on death row in San Quentin, tells reporters how he got there: taking care of his private-eye neighbor's office, Ronnie is asked by the irresistible Baroness Montay to find the missing Baron. There follow confusing but sinister doings in a gloomy mansion and a private sanatorium, with every plot twist a parody of thriller cliches. What are the villains really after? Can Ronnie beat a framed murder rap?"⁵



"The Iron Petticoat" - Captain Vinka Kovelenco (Katherine Hepburn) defects from Russia, but not for political reasons. She defects because she feels discriminated against as a woman. Major Chuck Lockwood (Bob Hope) gets the order to show her the bright side of capitalism, while she tries to convince him of the superiority of communism. Naturally, they fall in love, but there's still the KGB, which doesn't like the idea of having a defected Russian officer running around in London.



Bob Hope

⁵ [Rod Crawford <puffinus@u.washington.edu>](mailto:puffinus@u.washington.edu)

Ernest Borgnine (1917 - 2012)
1955 - Best Actor - "Marty"

1973 - "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In", Dennis Allen as Sherlock Holmes and special quest star Ernest Borgnine as Dr. Watson. NBC TV.



Ernest Borgnine

Dennis Allen as Sherlock Holmes & Ernest Borgnine as Dr. Watson - Miami News Feb. 10, 1973 - 'TV Guide' listing - Dennis Allen played Sherlock Holmes & Ernest Borgnine was Dr. Watson in a "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In" skit. Ernest Borgnine won an Oscar in 1955 for Best Actor in "Marty". In the 1960s he starred in the popular TV show "McHale's Navy", as Captain Quinton McHale. Until his recent death, Borgnine, ever the entertainer, was the voice of Mermaid Man on the popular kids show "SpongeBob SquarePants".



Ernest Borgnine

Gilbert M. 'Broncho Billy' Anderson (1880 - 1971)
1957 - Academy Honorary Award Oscar - Motion Picture Pioneer

1905 - "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" (aka "Held for Ransom"),
Gilbert M. Anderson as Sherlock Holmes. Vitagraph Film Co.



Gilbert M. Anderson

Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson was an American actor, writer, film director, and film producer, who is best known as the first star of the Western film genre. It was a long wait for that special Oscar for motion picture pioneer Gilbert M. Anderson, but it was even a longer wait for him to receive the credit as the first Sherlock Holmes of film, see the essay "The Case of the Vitagraph Holmes, (Or, Cowboy in a Deerstalker)" at: <http://bakerstreetbabes.com/guest-article-the-case-of-the-vitagraph-holmes-or-cowboy-in-a-deerstalker-by-howard-ostrom/> for more about that.



Gilbert M. Anderson

Joanne Woodward (1930 -)
1957 - Best Actress - "The Three Faces of Eve"

1971 - "They Might Be Giants", George C. Scott as Justin Playfair/
Sherlock Holmes and Joanne Woodward as Dr. Mildred Watson. Universal
Pictures.



Joanne Woodward

Joanne Woodard may have won an Oscar for her role in "The Three Faces of Eve", and may be married to Paul Newman, but she is best known in the Sherlockian world for having played Dr. Mildred Watson in the movie "They Might be Giants" (1971). With Oscar winner George C. Scott playing Justin Playfair, the movie plot takes place in a Manhattan psychiatric hospital, where Scott, convinced he is Sherlock Holmes, is treated by a female doctor who happens to be named Watson. A fantastic clip of Joanne Woodward and George C. Scott from "They Might be Giants" can be seen on Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2oB0pMWh0Q>



George C. Scott and Joanne Woodward

Charlton Heston (1923 - 2008)

1959 - Best Actor - "Ben-Hur"

1980/81 - "The Crucifer of Blood", Charlton Heston as Sherlock Holmes and Jeremy Brett as Dr. Watson. Stage Production (Ahmanson Theatre, L.A.).

1991 - "The Crucifer of Blood", Charlton Heston as Sherlock Holmes and Richard Johnson as Dr. Watson. Turner Pictures Ltd.



Charlton Heston

Did you know Jeremy Brett, a great Sherlock Holmes actor, started his Sherlockian adventures as Dr. Watson in a stage production that starred Charlton Heston as Sherlock Holmes. Unfortunately for us, Charlton Heston would reprise his Sherlock Holmes of this stage production, in a made for TV film with Richard Johnson as Dr. Watson, in which Heston hardly had an Oscar winning performance.



Jeremy Brett



Richard Johnson

End Part One

