

## Moving Pictures: The History of Early Cinema

By Brian Manley

### Introduction



Magic Lantern, 1818, Musée des Arts et Métiers  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Magic-lantern.jpg>

The history of film cannot be credited to one individual as an oversimplification of any history often tries to do. Each inventor added to the progress of other inventors, culminating in progress for the entire art and industry. Often masked in mystery and fable, the beginnings of film and the silent era of motion pictures are usually marked by a stigma of crudeness and naiveté, both on the audience's and filmmakers' parts. However, with the landmark depiction of a train hurtling toward and past the camera, the Lumière Brothers' 1895 picture "La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon" ("Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory"), was only one of a series of simultaneous artistic and technological breakthroughs that began to culminate at the end of the nineteenth century. These triumphs that began with the creation of a machine that captured moving images led to one of the most celebrated and distinctive art forms at the start of the 20th century. Audiences had already reveled in motion pictures through clever uses of slides and mechanisms creating "moving photographs" with such 16<sup>th</sup>-century

inventions as magic lanterns. These basic concepts, combined with trial and error and the desire of audiences across the world to see entertainment projected onto a large screen in front of them, birthed the movies. From the "actualities" of penny arcades, the idea of telling a story in order to draw larger crowds through the use of differing scenes began to formulate in the minds of early pioneers such as Georges Melies and Edwin S. Porter. This Discovery Guide explores the early history of cinema, following its foundations as a money-making novelty to its use as a new type of storytelling and visual art, and the rise of the film industry.

## Prehistory of Motion Pictures

While Thomas Edison is often credited with inventing the first motion picture camera in 1891 with the Kinetoscope, his ideas are a culmination of many theories and advances toward the construction of a camera-like device that captured motion beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The origin of this machine is the magic lantern, an early version of a slide projector that allowed images to pass through a lens with the use of light, often supplied by a kerosene lamp. (Pearson "Early Cinema" 21). The inventor of the magic lantern is debated, although most sources credit Dutch scientist Charles Huygens in the late 1650s (Fulton 21). The magic lantern was used mostly for purely entertainment value, spawning extremely creative endeavors such as the "Phantasmagoria" shows of the 1790s in Europe, which were precursors to horror films, and the popular "Man Swallowed Rat" skit, which was loved for its comedy. Once the magic lantern entered the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it permeated American society, becoming widely popular and profitable. Before the creation of the "movie," there already existed an audience eager to watch moving pictures on a screen ("Peep Show Pioneers").

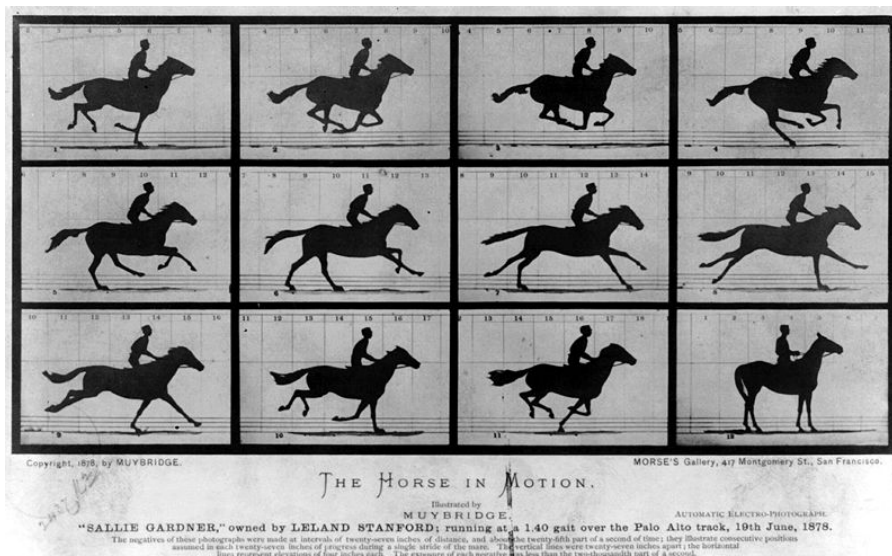


The Rat Swallower, as performed by Laterna Magica Galantee Show  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_rat\\_swallower\\_magic\\_lantern\\_animation.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_rat_swallower_magic_lantern_animation.JPG)

However, it took a long time before these crude projection machines were advanced enough to be able to simulate motion. In 1832, two centuries after the invention of the magic lantern, Simon Ritter von Stampfer of Vienna created the Stroboscope, whereby drawings from the rim of a disc viewed through the slits in a second disc simulated motion. Various versions of these ideas emerged during the 1830s, eventually employing the photographic process invented by Louis Daguerre. In 1853, Franz von Uchatius, another Viennese, used a magic lantern to project the Stroboscope images onto a wall, calling it the Projecting Phenakisticope. American machinist Coleman Sellers created the Kinematoscope in 1861, an instrument that mounted photographs onto a wheel of paddles.

Throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of moving pictures remained grounded in the use of static photographic stills projected rapidly. The concept of creating continuous live action did

not occur until 1872 when British photographer Eadweard Muybridge was hired by California governor Leland Stanford to win a bet that all four hooves of a race horse left the ground when it ran. After several attempts, and after faster exposures became possible, Muybridge eventually developed the idea of setting 24 cameras in a row along the track, attaching a string to each camera shutter, and by an electric device, setting the cameras in successive operation as the horse passed. Muybridge continued perfecting the technique, mounting the photographs on a Phenakisticope and projecting them through a magic lantern. In 1879, the photographer toured Europe with his invention: the Zoopraxiscope. This process continued to be improved upon with Emile Reynaud's 1882 Praxinoscope, which projected Muybridge's images from behind a screen. In 1882, Etienne Jules Marey was the first to develop a single camera that could shoot multiple images, taking 12 photographs in one second. Marey's Chronophotographs finally showed that a much more fluid motion was possible (Fulton 21; Mast and Kavin 12-14).



The Horse in Motion by Eadweard Muybridge.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Horse\\_in\\_Motion.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Horse_in_Motion.jpg)

After witnessing the work of Muybridge and Marey, American inventor and businessman Thomas Edison decided in 1888 to pursue the concept of a visual companion to his phonograph – thus creating, in essence, a music video. This coincided with George Eastman's 1889 unveiling of Celluloid film for his

Kodak still camera, an idea he had replicated from inventor Hannibal Goodwin. Although it is commonly accepted that Edison is the American father of the movies, in reality the inventor gave the idea support by hiring employees and assigning laboratory space to research the concept. The director of the project, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, would eventually invent the camera and projector for which Edison would take credit as his employer (Mast and Kavin 13).

As Dickson began his work, Louis Aimé Le Prince, a French photographer and inventor who had studied under Daguerre and was working in Leeds, England, had also turned to the idea of motion pictures. Le Prince had constructed two "receivers," each with a single lens and a take-up spool for paper negatives. These paper negatives were exposed in his father-in-law's garden and at Leeds Bridge in the summer of 1888, creating the earliest motion picture footage ever shot.

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Projecting the paper spools proved difficult for Le Prince, eventually leading him to experiment with sensitized Celluloid roll film (Burns). Despite his desire to continue experimenting, financial problems forced Le Prince to decide to join his family in New York City for a showing of his apparatus and films. He was last seen boarding a train for Paris on September 16, 1890. His disappearance was never solved (Herbert).

Dickson began experimenting with Eastman's Celluloid film, and soon realized that motion pictures depend on light passing through the frame. Cutting the film sheets into strips and perforating the edges -- an idea also approached by Praxinoscope inventor Reynaud -- Dickson used a stop-motion device that took pictures onto the strips of emulsion-covered celluloid. From the negatives, Dickson made a positive print, placed it in a box-like structure propelled by a battery-operated motor, and ran the strips on a loop between an electric lamp and a shutter. This was the creation of what is considered the first motion picture film, and Dickson's experiments were the first actual motion pictures recorded. The films were recorded onto the Kinetograph and viewed by looking through a slit in the top of a box called the Kinetoscope. Both were patented by Edison and Dickson in 1891 (Fulton 23). Those first movies were three films Dickson had entitled "Monkeyshines" and consisted of Dickson's laboratory co-workers making hand motions in front of the Kinetograph to test the device. The date of the recordings of the films range from 1889 to 1890, at least a year after the footage shot by Le Prince. However, due to Edison's prestige and popularity and because Le Prince's pictures were shot on unstable paper rolls, these have been credited historically as the first Celluloid motion picture camera and the first continuous-film projector (Mast and Kavin 14).

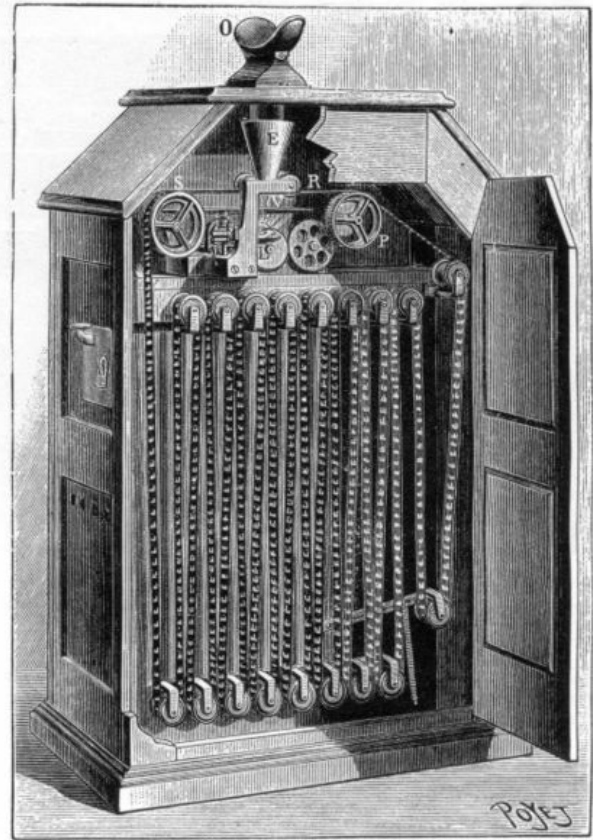
Edison and Dickson previewed the Kinetoscope in May 1891 to a gathering of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, showing footage of Dickson doffing his hat ("Peep Show Pioneers"). The earliest whole film that survived this time period was "Fred Ott's Sneeze," which has been claimed to have been shot in 1891, but was not copyrighted until 1894 (Mast and Kavin 14).

The period between 1888 and 1894 became an explosive race to create and, most importantly to some, to capture the patents for motion picture cameras and viewers. With the industrial revolution touching every aspect of life, inventors and entrepreneurs alike worked on machinery for motion photography. As inventions increased and developments were made, inventors fought to ensure their ideas and labor were not copied without compensation. While various versions of projectors and cameras were patented quickly, it was Edison who attempted to patent the basic mechanism of movie camera, leading to years of legal struggles that often forced his competitors out of business (Sklar 22-24). Despite his machines being far from perfected, Le Prince successfully patented them in the US, England and France between 1888 and 1890. Other inventors working on the same projects and notions raced and acquired patents for their specific cameras, including Wordsworth Donisthorpe and William Carr Croft's Kinesigraph in 1890 in England. Various versions of the motion picture camera and projector were born during this era, as well as

ideas to improve on that which had already been created. Notable concepts that added to the technology of motion pictures and the eventual birth of cinema include Hermann Casler's Mutoscope nickelodeon; Georges Demeny's Biographe camera; and Muybridge's continuing work with the Zoopraxiscope. Edison and Dickson constructed the first film studio in New Jersey in 1893 called the "Black Maria," in which the footage of Fred Ott's sneeze was shot (Burns).

## 1894-1896

As soon as the motion picture camera and early versions of the projector were invented and patented in 1891, the film industry exploded with new ideas and leapt forward. Edison worked fast to stay ahead of his competitors, and in April 1894, the first Kinetoscope Parlors were opened in New York City (Burns). The parlors became an immediate sensation. Patrons paid anywhere from five to 25 cents to view peep show snippets that ranged from music hall sequences, comic sketches, historical reconstructions and the most popular footage – boxing matches. By July, the first case of censorship against film was enacted, a persistent cause that would come to follow the industry and art throughout its entire history, as one of Edison's films is forbidden based on the footage showing a dancer who reveals her undergarments. In July, one of Edison's films was forbidden based on the footage showing a dancer who reveals her undergarments, becoming the first case of censorship against film. This would become a persistent cause that would follow the industry and art throughout its entire history (Cinema Year by Year 14).



Interior view of Kinetoscope with peephole viewer at top of cabinet  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kinetoscope.jpg>

The amusement provided in these earliest films was in brief snippets lasting 15 seconds to one minute, shot at Edison's "Black Maria" studios. They featured mainly vaudeville performers performing their various stage acts, such as Little Egypt's belly-dancing or Sadow the Strongman posing. Other scenes would include tricks staged by such traveling groups as Buffalo Bill's troupe of cowboys. These would be considered the first "motion picture actors," although no storylines were used. The technical marvel of the Kinetoscope received a major boost when popular

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boxing champion Jim Corbett's fight against Pete Courtney was captured on film, causing both men and women to form lines to the parlors (Usai 14). Filmmakers quickly realized that comedy, action, sports and provocative images would sell tickets. The film parlors, also known as peep shows, were hardly considered upscale entertainment. Kinetoscopes were often found in trains and bars. ("Peep Show Pioneers").

Projection of films onto a larger screen proved difficult. In early attempts at projection, the film often ripped, the images were blurry and the projector itself created too much noise to enjoy the movie. Edison's decision to focus on individualized showings of his films was as much a business decision as it was an acknowledgement of the difficulties inherent in creating a viable and enjoyable mass viewing system. At one point during the creation of the Kinetograph, Dickson developed a means of projecting the test films onto the screen. The idea was stopped by Edison, supposedly to keep the sales of an individualized system from falling (Fulton 29). However, others began to aim for the idea of projection for a mass audience because audiences had been attending mechanically projected shows since the early days of the magic lantern. It seemed to be the next logical step in the evolution of the art and industry of motion pictures (Mast and Kavin 17-19). Even Edison realized this as the popular trend of the Kinetoscope quickly began to fade by 1896 (Pearson "Early Cinema" 15).

Two blunders in Edison's business venture were the lack of pursuit given to finding a means of projection, and the lack of desire to patent the Kinetoscope outside of the US, which Edison claimed was not worth the extra money. This spurred a race to not only recreate the Kinetoscope in Europe but also to create a useable projector for the mass audience. Robert W. Paul duplicated and successfully sold his version of the Kinetoscope in England in 1894, and followed it up with the invention of a smaller, portable camera similar to that of Edison and Dickson's design. He followed this up with the creation of the Bioscope, a projector that took into account persistence of vision, thus effecting intermittent motion. This allowed the eye time to register and "take in" the images better, creating less of a perceived flicker in the viewing persistence of vision and affected intermittent motion. He demonstrated his Bioscope in February of 1896 (Fulton 26).

1895 saw many inventors experimenting with projection and demonstrating it to small crowds. Paul was preceded by other competitors in the field. In Germany, inventors and brothers Emil and Max Skladanowsky projected films with Max's own projector, also known as a Bioscope, in November 1895. The Skladanowsky Bioscope was never a marketable camera/projector based on its bulkiness and could not compete with what was happening in England, France, and eventually, the US (Burns).

It was France that would earn the credit of showing the first large-screen projected films, led by brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière. The Lumières' December 28, 1895, debut before a paying audience garnered them with instant fame throughout Europe and the US. The brothers owned a

photographic equipment factory and had been experimenting with a camera they called the Cinématographe, which they actually demonstrated in March of 1895. The Lumières continued promoting the item as a scientific instrument, until debuting it at the Grand Café in Paris with ten films at the first commercial public exhibition of film. Although Max Sklandowsky's screening occurred approximately 27 days before theirs, the Lumière's combined business acumen and marketing skill cemented their names in film history (Pearson "Early Cinema" 14). With the Cinématographe, the Lumières had created a lightweight, hand-cranked machine that could not only record motion photography, but throw the images onto a large screen using the concept of the magic lantern (Sklar 27).

The most famous film of those shown at that historic debut was "La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon" ("Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory"), a fifty-foot reel depicting exactly as its title announces. The early films of the Lumières, as with most early cinema, were known as actualities, films that simply depict regular everyday events as they unfold. Many of these were framed as a still photograph would be, with the camera motionless and the subject directly in front of it ("The European Pioneers"). As the Lumières began opening theaters in New York, Brussels, London and France, early filmgoers flocked, and by early 1896, the short actualities of the Lumière Brothers were a part of popular culture. By 1903, the Lumières had created over two thousand experimental films. The most famous of these in film lore was "L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat" ("Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station").

Created in 1895 or 1896, "Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station" is mostly known for its legend more than its actual accomplishment. The footage is a single shot of a train in the distance approaching the station, the camera never moving but allowing the train to hurtle past it. The attached lore is that the train seemed to be hurtling off the screen into the audience, a visual phenomenon never before experienced at the time, especially on such a large, intimidating screen. Viewers allegedly fainted, ducked and screamed (Brownlow 2). The camera angle the filmmakers selected created a sequence of events, varying from distant shot to close-up, and displayed a new way of presenting the unstaged. In essence, the filmmaker directed the camera for the first time, as opposed to simply sitting in front of the action. The Lumières continued to find success and innovation with "Arroseur et arrosé" ("The Sprinkler Sprinkled"), a dramatization of a well-known newspaper cartoon sequence (Sklar 30). This short film is considered the first fully fictional-style film projected in public and opened new doors in the film industry for creativity as well as comedy ("The European Pioneers").

The first projection of film in the US would also be washed away from mainstream history. Before both Sklandowsky's Bioscope and the Lumières Cinématographe, Major Woodville Latham would project a boxing match onto a storefront window in May 1895 in New York City with his Eidolscope, a projector based on the principles of the Kinetoscope which was co-invented with William Dickson, Edison's former employee (Burns). Latham and his sons doubled the width of



Dickson and Edison's original 35mm to 70mm, providing a clearer picture. In order to show longer motion pictures without the film ripping, the Lathams created a small loop of excess film preceding the gate, easing the tension from the feeding reel. The Lathams patented this and the idea is still used in modern 35mm cameras and projectors, known as Latham's Loop (Mast and Kavin 19).



1896 poster advertising the Vitascope  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vitascope.jpg>

Now facing direct competition in the US, Edison doubled his efforts to keep pace. In September 1895, Thomas Armat demonstrated his projection machine, the Phantoscope, co-created with Charles Francis Jenkins, at an exposition in Georgia. Informed of Jenkins's and Armat's invention, Edison reached an agreement with the two men which allowed Edison to manufacture

a projection machine under his name incorporating the other inventors' devices. The projector was called the Vitascope and premiered on April 23, 1896, in New York City (Fulton 28-30). Edison's premiere program, although sufficiently promoted and a financial success, did not have the same impact on its spectators as the films of the Lumières. Edison relied on the same films he had used for his Kinetoscopes. The one film that received attention was "A Rough Sea at Dover," an English film shot by Birt Acres and supplied by Robert W. Paul, that again caused some audience members to react with excitement. From this moment, Edison used his "Black Maria" studio less, sending his filmmakers to shoot actualities similar to those of the Lumières and Acres (Sklar 30-31).

The movie industry was born in these years, but the ideas of what the industry could and would become had not yet been completely conceived. Films were still a novelty and an experiment. However, with the advent of the now available Cinématographe and Vitascope, theaters opened across Europe and the US, and filmmakers began to create new forms of what would soon be understood to be not only a new form of art but a profitable one.



## 1896-1902

The popularity of the movies was born and exploded across the US and Europe during 1896. Audiences flocked to see the Eidelscope, Kinematographe, Cinématographe, Bioscope, Veriscope, Vitascope and every other new projection machine that seemed to be invented as quickly as new films were being made, all to adjust to the demands of the audiences for this new entertainment. A rivalry existed between inventors and even nations which eventually brought quarrels and legal accusations (Pratt 46). Although New York City became the epicenter for the latest in innovations in the film industry, by 1897, theaters across the US had become extremely popular and film showings began occurring frequently in such European cities as Paris, Brussels and London. Besides inventors, a variety of filmmakers began to originate new techniques and styles of movies, including Emile Reynaud's animated pictures, Charles and Emil Pathé's first attempts at color, and the fantasy-science fiction films of Georges Méliès (Cinema Year by Year 20).



Mutoscope at Herne Bay Museum and Gallery, Kent, England  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:What\\_the\\_butler\\_saw\\_machine\\_033.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:What_the_butler_saw_machine_033.jpg)

In the US, Edison had several rivals that challenged his dominance in the industry. James Stuart Blackton and Albert Smith founded the Vitagraph Company of America to make films depicting their own vaudeville acts. However, with the outbreak of the Spanish-American War filmmakers acted as journalists and were able to bring home images that were precursors of newsreels, although some of these images were reenactments better described as to propaganda than actual footage. Vitagraph would soon become established as one of the country's primary film producers. The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company began in 1896 to create flip-cards for Mutoscope machines, competitors with Edison's Kinetoscope. However, when William Dickson, Edison's former employee, joined the studio, the company shortened its name to Biograph and began

producing films of better quality, replacing the Lumières as Edison's chief competitor. By entangling them in legal disputes, Edison removed them from the market in 1897 (Pearson "Early Cinema" 16).

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With the invention of the Biograph, other competing projectors began appearing. Oddly enough, the Lumières, considered as important a name as Edison's in association with the advent of cinema, would not outlast the competition. The Lumières remained dominant in the industry in both Europe and North America. However, in 1897, because of inexplicably harsh threats to its American employees based on improper customs documents by US customs officials, Lumière shut down its American operations and curtailed its film output altogether by 1898. By 1903, the Lumières had a catalog of over two thousand titles; by 1905, the company mysteriously abandoned film production to concentrate on still photography (Sklar 31).

As the powers of the industry shifted, the content and direction of films continued to evolve. The newcomer who created one of the biggest excitements in the earliest wave of movies was the French magician Georges Méliès, who was influenced by both Dickson's earliest works and the films of the Lumières. One of the biggest influences on Méliès was the 1895 Edison film "The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots," directed by Alfred Clark, who had taken over Dickson's role at Edison's company. Clark continued to use the straight fixed-angle style, watching an actor being led into view and placing his head on the chopping block. Clark then stopped the film to allow a dummy to be substituted in order to show the recreation of the beheading. This one difference suddenly opened a new door in filmmaking that would continue to balloon and expand, fanning the imagination of the magician Méliès (Mast and Kavin 25).

Méliès began incorporating special effects through his use of editing based on his stage illusions. In such films as "Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert-Houdin" ("The Vanishing Lady") in 1896, Méliès stopped the camera and substituted a skeleton for a woman. The magician was the first filmmaker to bring fantasy, science fiction, horror and dark comedy to the cinema, as well as one of the first to begin writing skits with actors, bypassing the idea of shooting actualities (Sklar 31).

It was filmmakers like Méliès that began to lead a new revolution in film style, only a few years after its invention. Quickly the growth of the film machine led to the production of film art. At its earliest beginnings, movies were unstaged, unplanned slices of life; the camera acted as though a spectator might at a play or a street scene. The science and novelty of the movement onscreen was enough to entice audiences and filmmakers. Alfred Clark's foray into editing influenced Méliès to pursue the idea, incorporating his magic tricks into fantastical storylines sewn with the earliest filmed special effects. The filmmaker began using both splicing and editing consistently to create appearing and disappearing images in a variety of lively and extravagant sets. Méliès would also superimpose multiple shots; layering images overtop one another to create bizarre visions (Pearson "Early Cinema" 18). He was the founder of several innovative techniques that are still used in modern filmmaking, leaping from the documentary-style of the Lumières into a new narrative style. In 1899, Méliès created the first film to consist of more than one scene with

"The Dreyfus Affair." He may have been the first filmmaker to use the first dissolve, time-lapse photography, and the first to light films from the side, as well as from above. His most famous work was the 30-scene 1902 fantasy masterpiece, "*Le Voyage dans la lune*" ("A Trip to the Moon"), in which he combined fantasy, humor and social criticism with an armful of truly never-before-seen visual tricks (Mast and Kavin 31-33).

Despite his innovations, Méliès still approached filmmaking as a play and his films remain thoroughly theatrical, as if they were performed on a stage. Most films leading up to 1900 reflected the turn-of-the-century fascination with transportation and travel, spawning countless train films. Parades, vaudeville acts, world's fairs, funerals, theatrical recreations of the life of Christ and boxing matches most often filled the movie theaters. One-shot gag films, the use of humor, special effects and narrative in more complicated forms would slowly be integrated into the movies, but it was over the course of thousands of shorts. (Pearson "Early Cinema" 18). Still, new investments, new companies and new filmmakers challenged the medium. Charles Pathé and his brothers started making better quality films with their studio Pathé Frères, which eventually conquered the French filmmaking industry by manufacturing equipment and film stock, owning theaters and producing films. Léon Gaumont simultaneously created his own film empire, forming what would become the model for the modern studio system, with projects being supervised by studio executives and created by contracted writers, cinematographers and talent. Gaumont also promoted his secretary, Alice Guy Baché, to become the first woman director, as well as the first woman to head a production arm of the studio in 1897. However, despite the excessive activity in filmmaking during this period, films would not change much until around 1902 (Mast and Kavin 27-28).

## 1902-1915

Although filmmaking was becoming more complicated and experimental, the majority of the popular cinema retold scenes and stories or copied itself. Filmmakers duplicated what was successful, creating more train films (a genre unto itself) and more one-joke gag reels. Filmmakers such as Méliès, Baché and James Williamson began to find creative ways to use the camera and incorporate a narrative into the movie forum. After viewing Méliès' "*Le Voyage dans la lune*" ("A Trip to the Moon"), projectionist Edwin S. Porter learned that a film could continue from one scene to the next, telling a story with continuity.

Based on his experience as a projectionist, Porter was hired by Edison as a cameraman. Eventually he became director of production for the company, and would go on to employ his ideas of making actions appear continuous from one shot to the next and depicting events taking place in different locations simultaneously. Porter would be called by many the most important filmmaker of the first decade of the movies. As the success of Méliès' "*A Trip to the Moon*" held audiences captive in 1902, Porter released his two most important films in 1903 (Mast and Kavin

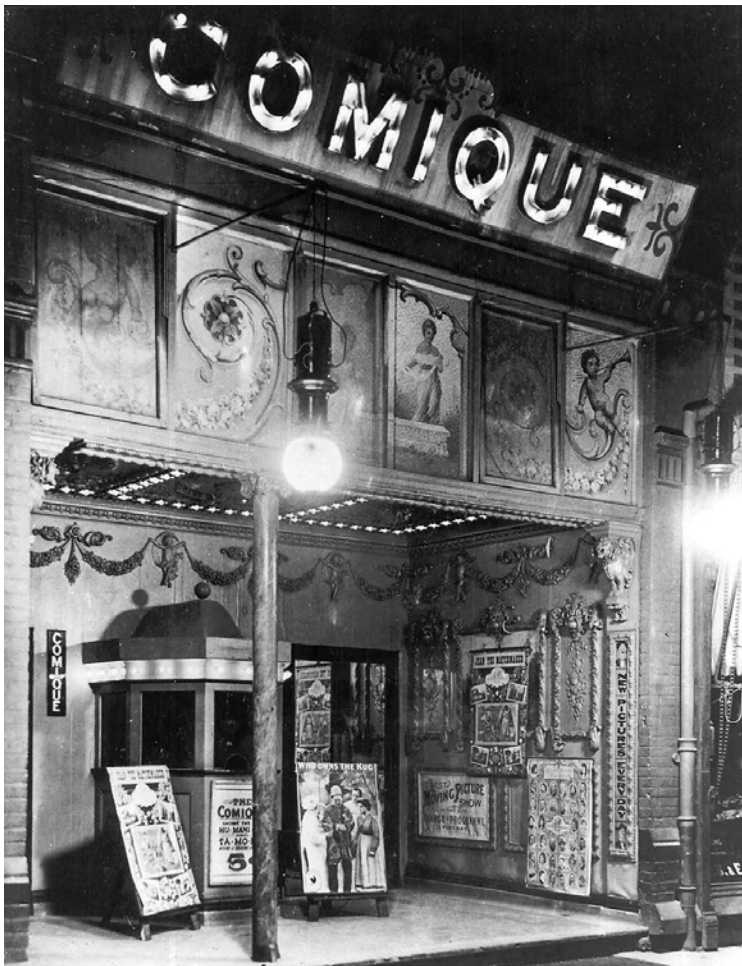
36-37). "The Life of an American Fireman" is considered the first film to exhibit a different form of temporal continuity. It is a mixture of actuality and fiction footage that depicts a fire station as a wagon answers the call for a rescue. The rescue scene has become controversial. The found footage of this film features thirteen cross-cuts depicting the firemen outside the building and the tenants waiting to be rescued within the building. Hailed as a breakthrough in primitive cinema for its use of allowing multiple perspectives, it was later discovered that the print owned by the Library of Congress was not the original edit by Porter. Porter originally cut the scene much like other filmmakers of the day, showing the full rescue operation as one scene and then the full interior scene from start to finish (Sklar 36). This two-cut version was similar to an over-lapping of action used by several other filmmakers of the time, including Méliès and James Williamson's "Fire!" (1901). It is important in heralding what was to come.

As of 1902, the Lumière Brothers had declared that "cinema was an invention without a future" (Burns). In later 1903, Porter released "The Great Train Robbery." This film is often credited for establishing the Western genre, the "story" film, and for the commercial success of motion pictures in general. "The Great Train Robbery" confirmed the medium's ability to place the viewer directly into the scene and into the middle of the action. Porter created his narrative by editing multiple shots together of the same scenes and using a variety of different and creative camera angles. Characters run at and fight around the camera. The camera moves with the action, offering a visual immediacy that was unknown to film-going audiences. The film was fast and filled with crime and violence, which was proving increasingly popular with filmgoers. It also represented the changing tastes of audiences, who now preferred storyline films over actualities (Sklar 39-40).

"The Great Train Robbery" is considered the world's first blockbuster film. It changed how movies were made, and its success made it possible for theaters to continue opening in large numbers across the US ("Peep Show Pioneers"). Porter and other filmmakers began to make more comedies, Westerns, crime and chase films as well as to continue experimenting with camera and narrative techniques. Cecil Hepworth's "Rescued by Rover" (1904) shows an energetic advancement over Porter's multiple shot techniques, bringing more emotional connections with the characters for the audiences. The filmmakers of Brighton, England, known as the Brighton School, also laid a foundation for cinema to transition from a primitive to more advanced stage. Williamson and George Albert Smith experimented with such techniques as point-of-view shots, close-ups and moving camera shots, and the idea of color film, all of which laid a foundation that would be used and improved upon by a later filmmaker named David Wark Griffith (Mast and Kavin 41-45).

From its earliest days, the business of the film industry immediately was a cutthroat business. The late 1890s and early 1900s saw Edison pose legal challenges against his rivals during the first decade of cinema in the US. Because of Edison's ongoing litigation against filmmakers,

corporate theft perpetrated by cameramen and exhibitors, and film piracy, studios such as Biograph, studios such as Biograph, the Vitograph Company of America and Méliès' Star Film Company found trouble raising capital or making profits. The Patent Wars threatened to decapitate the infant industry (Sklar 43-44). A treaty was eventually developed among the nine leading film companies of the day. In 1908, Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph, Essanay, Lubin, Selig, Kalem, Méliès, and Pathé, along with inventor Thomas Armat and distributor George Klein, formed the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), agreeing to share the legal rights to their various patents (Mast and Kavin 45-47).



A nickelodeon theater in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, circa 1910

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/32/ComiqueTheatre.jpg>

The founding of the MPPC coincided with the explosion of the nickelodeon theater and eventually began to regulate its operation. By 1908, over 5,000 nickelodeons were opened across the US ("Peep Show Pioneers"). The MPPC was eventually declared illegal under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1915. Its members, the founders of the film industry, were quickly regarded as the "old guard," and they would soon be replaced by the rise of Hollywood and its infamous moguls, many of whom began their careers as newly arrived immigrants with stakes in the expanding nickelodeon sensation (Pearson "Transitional Cinema" 26-27).

The MPPC's existence

created a conglomerate of independent filmmakers that fought against its monopolizing policies. The most important of these were William Fox, the Independent Motion Picture Company, Keystone, Thanhouser and Rex. By 1914, hundreds of new firms had entered the business (Balio 103).

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Cinema continued expanding as both a business and an art form. By 1907, entrepreneurs began to move west, leaving behind the old studios in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania for the wide open spaces in California. The wave of immigration that occurred in the eastern US in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw new ideas and innovation enter the business. Names such as Fox, Adolph Zukor, Carl Laemmle, Louis B. Mayer, Marcus Loew, William Selig, Samuel Goldfish, Jesse Lasky and Cecil B. DeMille laid the foundations for the birth of a city of filmmaking in a suburb outside of Los Angeles called Hollywood. Such companies as Paramount, Fox, Keystone, Warner Brothers, Universal and MGM would soon become household names and producers of the majority of US films. Longer films were being produced on a much more commercial level, and for the first time, audiences were starting to attend movies based on the actors in the films. Suddenly, "picture personalities," later known as "stars," were the main attraction for filmgoers. The star system was founded with such actors as Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks (who would form United Artists and helped shape the business of the industry, as well) ("The Birth of Hollywood").

In 1908, an actor-screenwriter named David Wark Griffith began making one-reel films for Biograph. The move to narrative styles of filmmaking also brought the push for longer films. By 1912, one-reel cinema was dying. The success of the French film "Les Amours de la Reine Elisabeth" ("Queen Elizabeth") and the Italian three-hour epic "Cabiria" inspired a new generation of filmmakers to attempt movies that were several reels in length (Sklar 52-56). Griffith left Biograph for the independent company Mutual/Reliance-Majestic, which gave him creative control of his projects. The project Griffith selected was the Thomas Dixon novel "The Clansmen." His film adaptation, "The Birth of a Nation," opened March 3, 1915. The film is as important for cinema on an economic, technical and artistic level as it is socially controversial. With "The Birth of a Nation," Griffith advanced not only the notions of narrative brought forth by directors such as Porter but used and progressed camera techniques and the art of cinematography. Griffith heralded what would become a modern age of filmmaking, and the success of his film would guarantee the continued success of movies (Mast and Kavin 65-71).

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