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| Porter, Edwin S. (1870-1941) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Edwin Stanton Porter was an American film exhibitor, producer and director. He started his career in cinema in 1896 as a travelling exhibitor and moved on to become the motion picture operator of the New York Eden Musee wax museum. He also built motion picture machinery, which he continued doing until well after his retirement in 1925. As an operator and programmer, Porter edited short films into programs with narrative structures, effectively acting as producer and director. When the Edison Company was reorganised in 1900 he was hired to improve their cameras and projectors, but quickly became a cameraman, producer and director. He produced over a one hundred short films for Edison by collaborating with theatre-trained directors, and became an important driving force behind the creation of modern, elaborate multi-shot films, the most famous of which is undoubtedly *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Musser and Everson see Porter as a technician at heart; an editor who did not fully grasp the possibilities and principles of editing or acting, but who had an instinctive understanding of ‘continuity,’ or the safeguarding of smooth, continuous action through the combination of fragmented shots. Though Porter had been instrumental in lifting cinema out of what Tom Gunning has dubbed the ‘cinema of attractions’ era, he arguably never realised his full potential as he was unwilling to invest himself in narrative film. When his methods had become antiquated in 1909, Edison fired him. |
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| Further reading:  (Musser)  (Musser, Edison: The Invention of the Movies)  (Musser, The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907)  (Gunning)  (Everson) |