



# **A Tale of Two Companies: Part 1**

**Kathy Cacace // RTF 308**

# **Quick review!**

**Can you name an optical toy?**

**Who's Eadweard Muybridge?**

**Who invented motion pictures?**



# Key concepts

**Media industries perspective**

**Georges Méliès**

**Gaston Méliès**

**Star Films Paris / Star Films US**

**Thomas Edison**

**The Edison Trust (or the MPPC)**

**Factory production system**

**One-reel films**



**Technology**



**Society and  
culture**



**Media industry  
practices and products**





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# What's media industry studies?

**A field of scholarly study with diverse traditions that analyzes how media texts, audiences, histories, and culture relate to industrial structure, economics, politics and policy**

**From Holt & Perren**  
***Media Industries***

**Themes might include**

**Institutional structures (like companies)**

**The power of media workers**

**Diversity in the media industries**

**Government regulation**

**Markets and marketing**

**Business models**

**Media industry practices and standards**

**Ethical issues regarding business practices**

**Labor**

**Histories of products, fields, or corporations**

**Intellectual property and other media law**

# one **Star Film Co.**

**Georges & Gaston Méliès  
1896 - 1917**

# two **Edison Trust**

**Thomas A. Edison (and associates)  
1908 - 1915**

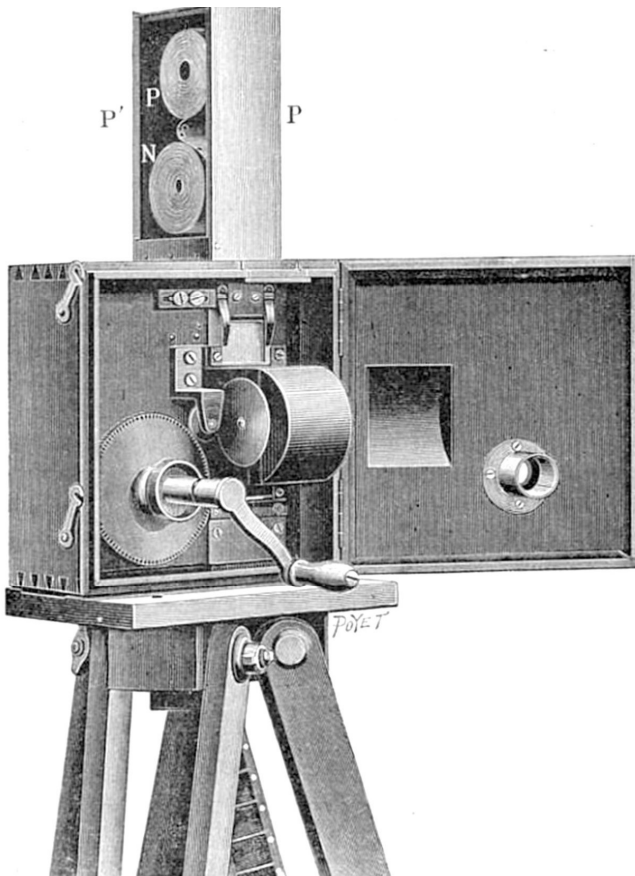
# why

**Both companies hugely influential  
on the style of early films**

**Both companies are big players in  
the early (international) film  
industry**

**Different business methods and  
practices**

**Social and historical influences on  
each company affect survival**





# Quick thought experiment!

***Pause and think or write for a few minutes.***

**Imagine you're a creative, entrepreneurial hustler living in the 1890s. You've just seen a demonstration of a projected moving image for the first time and you're entranced. This is what you want to do with your life and there are no industry rules...yet. How do you build a company? What are its principles? What do you make? How do you get people to watch/buy? What kinds of films do you make? What's your business strategy?**



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**1896 - 1917**

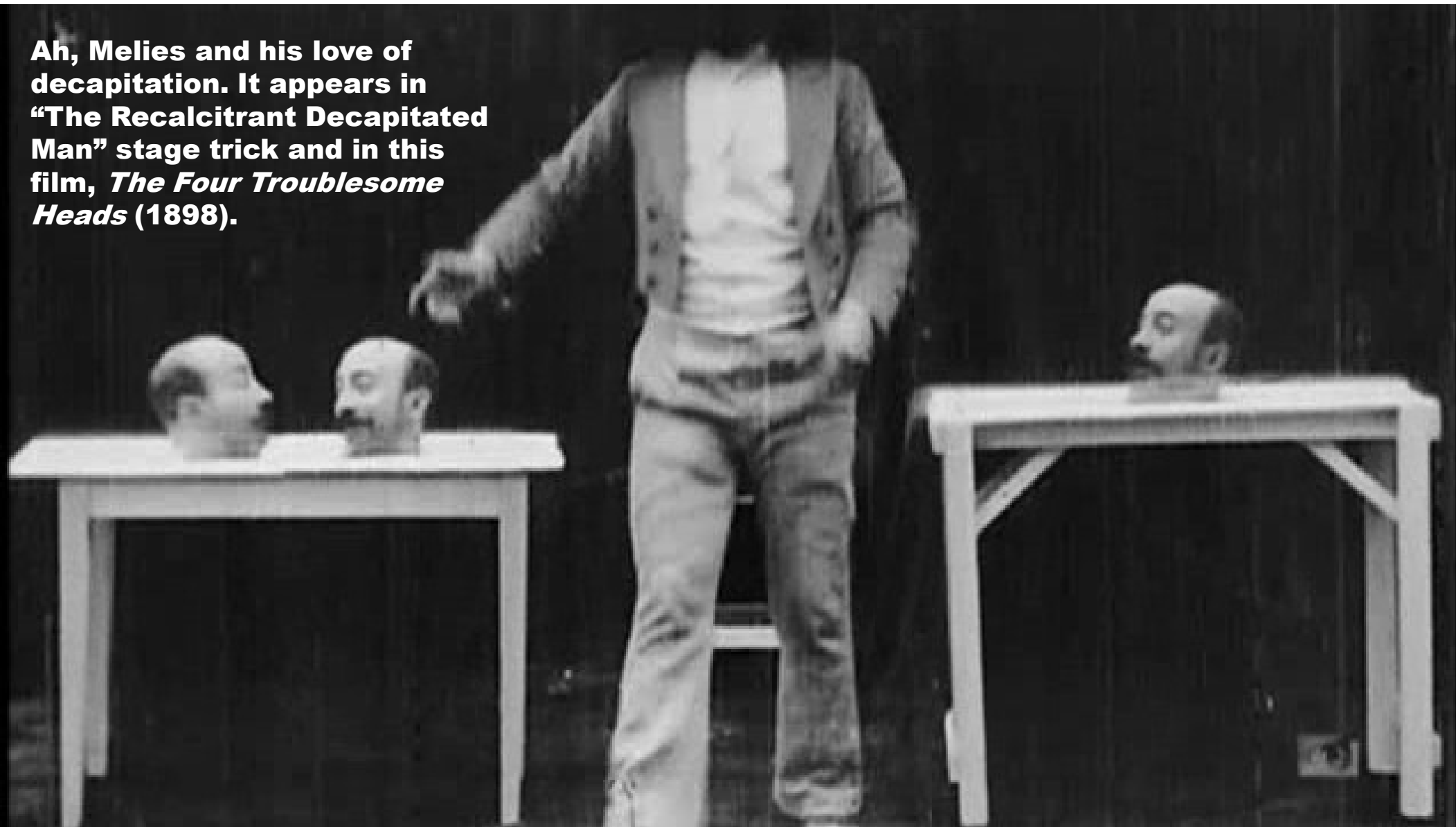
**1861** **Georges Méliès born in Paris.**

**1880-1888** **Goes to work at the family shoe company; learns to sew and manages machinery.**

**1888** **Purchases the Theatre Robert-Houdin and performs stage magic**



Ah, Melies and his love of decapitation. It appears in “The Recalcitrant Decapitated Man” stage trick and in this film, *The Four Troublesome Heads* (1898).







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**1896 Buys an Animatograph, modifies it to function as a camera, and begins making his own short films**





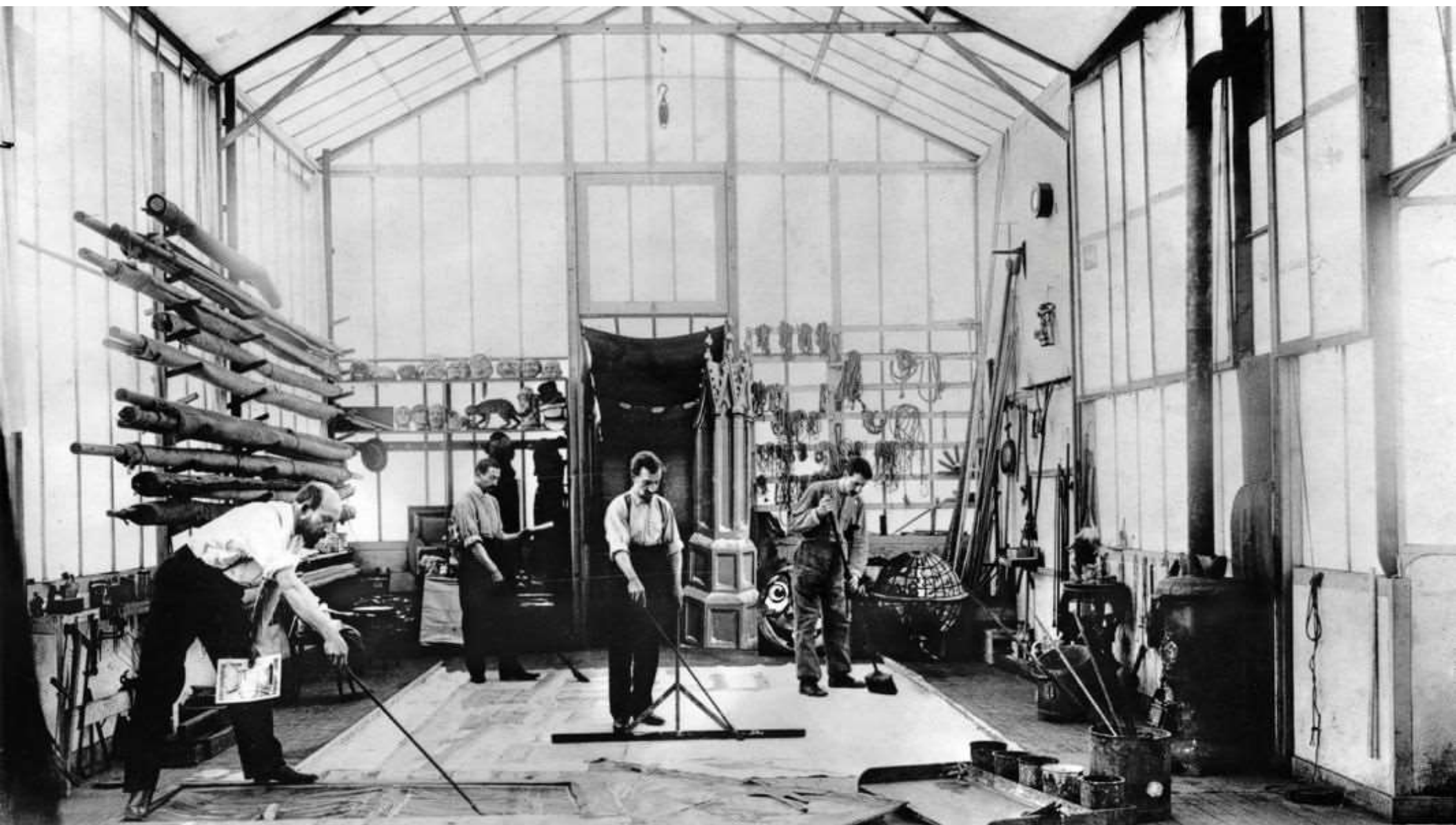
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1896 - 1917

**Founds Star Film company. It's a trademark  
for content; they don't file any patents** 1896

**Constructs his studio outside Paris. Star  
Films makes 130 films by the end of 1897** 1896-7





*A Terrible Night*  
(c. 1896-7)



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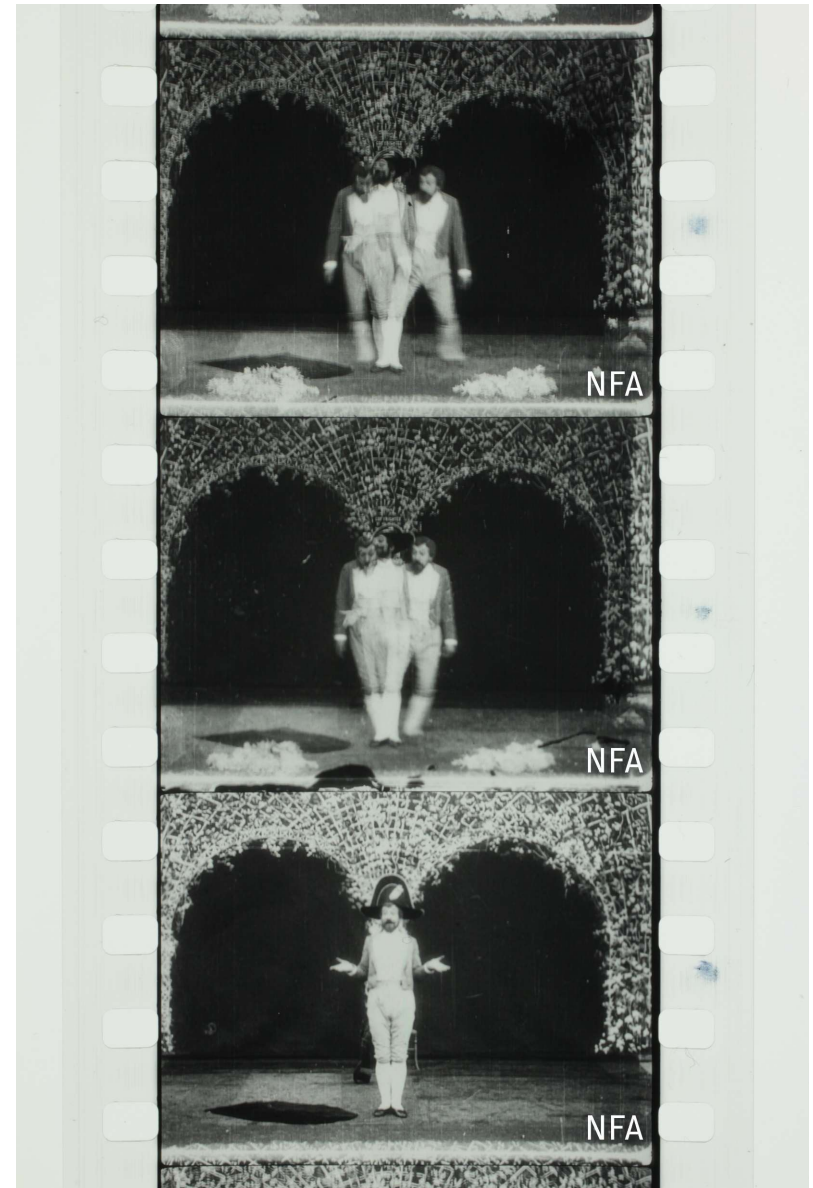
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**1896-7**

**Prime of Georges's career. Experiments with effects (zoom, dissolve, etc.)**

**1899-1904(ish)**



***The Four Troublesome  
Heads***  
**(c. 1898)**





# LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE

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★ "STAR FILM" ★  
Geo Méliès. Paris

***The Butterfly and the Spider***  
**(1909)**





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| <b>Prime of Georges's career. Experiments with effects (zoom, dissolve, etc.)</b>  | <b>1899-1904(ish)</b> |
| <b>Georges discovers Edison et al making money off his films in the U.S.; sends brother Gaston to establish Star Films in NY</b> | <b>1902</b>           |
| <b>Gaston begins making his own films, moving from NYC to San Antonio to film westerns</b>                                       | <b>1903-11</b>        |











G. Méliès  
Star Films.

**AN UNWILLING COWBOY—No. 2.**

A horse runs away with Nellie, but Jim ropes it, saves her life and wins her love.



# one Star Film Co.

**Georges & Gaston Méliès  
1896 - 1917**

- 1910s** American Star Film becomes part of the Edison Trust; Gaston supplies most of the required films
- 1910s** French Star Film enters deal with Pathé, Georges makes poor films and is in debt
- 1912** Gaston travels to the South Pacific to make films, but many negatives arrive destroyed
- 1915** Gaston's son helps sell business to Edison; Gaston dies in Europe.
- 1914-1918** World War I. Georges's studio becomes a hospital; French Army melts film for supplies
- 1923** Pathé finally takes control of what's left of Georges's studio. He burns his sets and negatives and opens a toy store











# two Edison Trust

**Thomas A. Edison (and associates)**  
**1908 - 1915**