

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 16th-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 Méliès 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.

Magic Lantern, 1818, Musée des Arts et Métiers

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Magic-lantern.jpg>

Manley: "The History of Early Cinema"

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## 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 17th 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-19th 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").

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 Kinetoscope in 1861, an instrument that mounted photographs onto a wheel of paddles.