Film History
by Decade

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Chapter 1:  
Pre-1920s  
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Innovations Necessary for the Advent of Cinema:

Optical toys, shadow shows, 'magic lanterns,' and visual tricks have existed for thousands of years. Many inventors, scientists, manufacturers and scientists have observed the visual phenomenon that a series of individual still pictures set into motion created the illusion of movement - a concept termed *persistence of vision*. This illusion of motion was first described by British physician Peter Mark Roget in 1824, and was a first step in the development of the cinema.

A number of technologies, simple optical toys and mechanical inventions related to motion and vision were developed in the early to late 19th century that were precursors to the birth of the motion picture industry:

- [A very early version of a "magic lantern" was invented in the 17th century by Athanasius Kircher in Rome. It was a device with a lens that projected images from transparencies onto a screen, with a simple light source (such as a candle).]

- 1824 - the invention of the Thaumatrope (the earliest version of an optical illusion toy that exploited the concept of "persistence of vision" first presented by Peter Mark Roget in a scholarly article) by an English doctor named Dr. John Ayrton Paris

- 1831 - the discovery of the law of electromagnetic induction by English scientist Michael Faraday, a principle used in generating electricity and powering motors and other machines (including film equipment)

- 1832 - the invention of the Fantascope (also called Phenakistoscope or "spindle viewer") by Belgian inventor Joseph Plateau, a device that simulated motion. A series or sequence of separate pictures depicting stages of an activity, such as juggling or dancing, were arranged around the perimeter or edges of a slotted disk. When the disk was placed before a mirror and spun or rotated, a spectator looking through the slots 'perceived' a moving picture.

- 1834 - the invention and patenting of another stroboscopic device adaptation, the Daedalum (renamed the Zoetrope in 1867 by American William Lincoln) by British inventor William George Horner. It was a hollow, rotating drum/cylinder with a crank, with a strip of sequential photographs, drawings, paintings or illustrations on the interior surface and regularly spaced narrow slits through which a spectator observed the 'moving' drawings.

- 1839 - the birth of still photography with the development of the first commercially-viable daguerreotype (a method of capturing still images on silvered, copper-metal plates) by French painter and inventor Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre

- 1841 - the patenting of calotype (or Talbotype, a process for printing negative photographs on high-quality paper) by British inventor William Henry Fox Talbot
- 1861 - the invention of the **Kinematoscope**, patented by Philadelphian Coleman Sellers, an improved rotating paddle machine to view (by hand-cranking) a series of **stereoscopic** still pictures on glass plates that were sequentially mounted in a cabinet-box

- 1869 - the development of **celluloid** by John Wesley Hyatt, patented in 1870 and trademarked in 1873 - later used as the base for photographic film

- 1870 - the first demonstration of the **Phasmotrope** (or **Phasmatrope**) by Henry Renno Heyl in Philadelphia, that showed a rapid succession of still or posed photographs of dancers, giving the illusion of motion

- 1877 - the invention of the **Praxinoscope** by French inventor Charles Emile Reynaud - it was a 'projector' device with a mirrored drum that created the illusion of movement with picture strips, a refined version of the Zoetrope with mirrors at the center of the drum instead of slots; public demonstrations of the Praxinoscope were made by the early 1890s with screenings of 15 minute 'movies' at his Parisian Theatre Optique

- 1879 - Thomas Alva Edison's first public exhibition of an efficient incandescent light bulb, later used for film projectors

**Late 19th Century Inventions and Experiments: Muybridge, Marey, Le Prince and Eastman**

Pioneering Britisher Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), an early photographer and inventor, was famous for his photographic loco-motion studies (of animals and humans) at the end of the 19th century (such as 1882's published "The Horse in Motion"). In the 1870s, Muybridge experimented with instantaneously recording the movements of a galloping horse, first at a Sacramento (California) race track. In June, 1878, he successfully conducted a 'chronophotography' experiment in Palo Alto (California) for his wealthy San Francisco benefactor, Leland Stanford, using a multiple series of cameras to record a horse's gallops - this conclusively proved that all four of the horse's feet were off the ground at the same time.

![Muybridge's pictures](image)

Muybridge's pictures, published widely in the late 1800s, were often cut into strips and used in a **Praxinoscope**, a descendant of the **zooetrope** device, invented by Charles Emile Reynaud in 1877. The Praxinoscope was the **first** 'movie machine' that could project a series of images onto a screen. Muybridge's stop-action series of photographs helped lead to his own 1879 invention of the **Zoopraxiscope** (or "zoogyroscope", also called the "wheel of life"), a primitive motion-picture projector machine that also recreated the illusion of movement (or animation) by projecting images - rapidly displayed in succession - onto a screen from photos printed on a rotating glass disc.

![Muybridge's Zoopraxiscope](image)

True motion pictures, rather than eye-fooling 'animations', could only occur after the development of film (flexible and transparent celluloid) that could record split-second pictures. Some of the first experiments in this regard were conducted by Parisian innovator and physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey in the 1880s. He was also studying, experimenting, and recording bodies (most often of flying animals, such as pelicans in flight) in motion using photographic means (and French astronomer Pierre-Jules-Cesar Janssen's "revolving photographic plate" idea).

![Marey's experimental setup](image)

In 1882, Marey, often claimed to be the 'inventor of cinema,' constructed a camera (or "photographic gun") that could take multiple
(12) photographs per second of moving animals or humans - called **chronophotography** or serial photography, similar to Muybridge's work on taking multiple exposed images of running horses. [The term *shooting a film* was possibly derived from Marey's invention.] He was able to record multiple images of a subject's movement on the same camera plate, rather than the individual images Muybridge had produced.

Marey's chronophotographs (multiple exposures on single glass plates and on strips of sensitized paper - celluloid film - that passed automatically through a camera of his own design) were revolutionary. He was soon able to achieve a frame rate of 30 images. Further experimentation was conducted by French-born Louis Aime Augustin Le Prince in 1888. Le Prince used long rolls of paper covered with photographic emulsion for a camera that he devised and patented. Two short fragments survive of his early motion picture film (one of which was titled *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge*).

The work of Muybridge, Marey and Le Prince laid the groundwork for the development of motion picture cameras, projectors and transparent celluloid film - hence the development of cinema. American inventor George Eastman, who had first manufactured photographic dry plates in 1878, provided a more stable type of celluloid film with his concurrent developments in 1888 of sensitized paper roll photographic film (instead of glass plates) and a convenient “Kodak” small box camera (a still camera) that used the roll film. He improved upon the paper roll film with another invention in 1889 - perforated *celluloid* (synthetic plastic material coated with gelatin) roll-film with photographic emulsion.

**The Birth of US Cinema: Thomas Edison and William K.L. Dickson**

In the late 1880s, famed American inventor Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) (and his young British assistant William Kennedy Laurie Dickson (1860-1935)) in his laboratories in West Orange, New Jersey, borrowed from the earlier work of Muybridge, Marey, Le Prince and Eastman. Their goal was to construct a device for recording movement on film, and another device for viewing the film. Dickson must be credited with most of the creative and innovative developments - Edison only provided the research program and his laboratories for the revolutionary work.

Although Edison is often credited with the development of early motion picture cameras and projectors, it was Dickson, in November 1890, who devised a crude, motor-powered camera that could photograph motion pictures - called a *Kinetograph*. This was one of the major reasons for the emergence of motion pictures in the 1890s. Edison Studios was formally known as the **Edison Manufacturing Company (1894-1911)**, with innovations due largely to the work of Edison's assistant Dickson in the mid-1890s.

The motor-driven camera was designed to capture movement with a synchronized shutter and sprocket system (Dickson's unique invention) that could move the film through the camera by an electric motor. The Kinetograph used film which was 35mm wide and had sprocket holes to advance the film. The sprocket system would momentarily pause the film roll before the camera's shutter to create a photographic frame (a still or photographic image). The formal introduction of the Kinetograph in October of 1892 set the standard for theatrical motion picture cameras still used today. However, moveable hand-cranked cameras soon became more popular, because the motor-driven cameras were heavy and bulky.

In 1891, Dickson also designed an early version of a movie-picture projector (an optical lantern viewing machine) based on the Zoetrope - called the *Kinetoscope*. In 1889 or 1890, Dickson filmed his first experimental Kinetoscope trial film, *MonkeysHines No. 1*, the only surviving film from the cylinder kinetoscope, and apparently the *first* motion picture ever produced on photographic film in the United States.
States. It featured the movement of laboratory assistant Sacco Albanese, filmed with a system using tiny images that rotated around the cylinder.

The first public demonstration of motion pictures in the US using the Kinetoscope occurred at the Edison Laboratories to the Federation of Women’s Clubs on May 20, 1891, with the showing of Dickson Greeting. The very short film’s subject in the test footage was William K.L. Dickson himself, bowing, smiling and ceremoniously taking off his hat.

On Saturday, April 14, 1894, a refined version of Edison’s Kinetoscope began commercial operation. The floor-standing, box-like viewing device was basically a bulky, coin-operated, movie “peep show” cabinet for a single customer (in which the images on a continuous film loop-belt were viewed in motion as they were rotated in front of a shutter and an electric lamp-light). The Kinetoscope, the forerunner of the motion picture film projector (without sound), was finally patented on August 31, 1897 (Edison applied for the patent in 1891). The viewing device quickly became popular in carnivals, Kinetoscope parlors, amusement arcades, and sideshows for a number of years.

The world’s first film production studio - or "America’s first movie studio," the Black Maria, or the Kinetographic Theater (and dubbed "The Doghouse" by Edison himself), was built on the grounds of Edison's laboratories at West Orange, New Jersey, on February 1, 1893, at a cost of $637.67. It was constructed for the purpose of making film strips for the Kinetoscope. It was a black, tar-paper covered building/studio (with a retractable or hinged, flip-up roof to allow sunlight in), and built with a turntable to orient itself throughout the day to follow the natural sunlight.

In early May of 1893 at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, Edison conducted the world’s first public demonstration of films viewed through a Kinetoscope viewer and shot using the Kinetograph in the Black Maria. The exhibited 34-second film was titled Blacksmith Scene, and showed three people pretending to be blacksmiths. The first motion pictures made in the Black Maria were deposited for copyright by Dickson at the Library of Congress in August, 1893.

In early January 1894, The Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze (aka Fred Ott’s Sneeze) was one of the first series of short films made by Dickson for the Kinetoscope viewer in Edison's Black Maria studio with fellow assistant Fred Ott. The short five-second film was made for publicity purposes, as a series of still photographs to accompany an article in Harper’s Weekly. It was the earliest surviving, copyrighted motion picture (or "flicker") - composed of an optical record (and medium close-up) of Fred Ott, an Edison employee, sneezing comically for the camera.

Most of the first films shot at the Black Maria included segments of magic shows, plays, vaudeville performances (with dancers and strongmen), acts from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, various boxing matches and cockfights, and scantily-clad women. Most of the earliest moving images, however, were non-fictional, unedited, crude documentary, "home movie" views of ordinary slices of life - street scenes, the activities of police or firemen, or shots of a passing train. [Footnote: the ‘Black Maria’ studio appeared in Universal's comedy Abbott and Costello Meet the Keystone Cops (1955).]

In the early 1890s, Edison and Dickson also devised a prototype sound-film system called the Kinetophonograph or Kinetophone - a precursor of the 1891 Kinetoscope with a
cylinder-playing phonograph (and connected earphone tubes) to provide the unsynchronized sound. The projector was connected to the phonograph with a pulley system, but it didn't work very well and was difficult to synchronize. It was formally introduced in 1895, but soon proved to be unsuccessful since competitive, better synchronized devices were also beginning to appear at the time. The first known (and only surviving) film with live-recorded sound made to test the Kinetophone was the 17-second Dickson Experimental Sound Film (1894-1895).

In mid-April 1894, the Holland Brothers opened the first Kinetoscope Parlor at 1155 Broadway in New York City and for the first time, they commercially exhibited movies, as we know them today, in their amusement arcade. Patrons paid 25 cents as the admission charge to view films in five kinetoscope machines placed in two rows. Young Griffo v. Battling Charles Barnett was the first 'movie' to be screened for a paying audience on May 20, 1895, at a storefront at 153 Broadway in NYC. The 4-minute B&W film was made by Woodville Latham and his sons Otway and Grey. The staged fight had been filmed with an Eidoloscope Camera on the roof of Madison Square Garden on May 4, 1895 between Australian boxer Albert Griffiths (Young Griffo) and Charles Barnett. Shortly thereafter, nearly 500 people became cinema's first major audience during the showings of films with titles such as Barber Shop, Blacksmiths, Cock Fight, Wrestling, and Trapeze. Edison's film studio was used to supply films for this sensational new form of entertainment. More Kinetoscope parlors soon opened in other cities (San Francisco, Atlantic City, and Chicago).

In one of Edison's 1896 films entitled The Kiss (1896), May Irwin and John C. Rice re-enacted the final scene from the Broadway play musical The Widow Jones - it was a close-up of a kiss. Disgruntled, Dickson left Edison to form his own company in 1895, called the American Mutoscope Company (see below). [By the 1897 patent date of the Kinetoscope, both the camera (kinetograph) and the method of viewing films (kinetoscope) were on the decline with the advent of more modern screen projectors for larger audiences.]

The Lumiere Brothers:

The innovative Lumiere brothers in France, Louis and Auguste (often called "the founding fathers of modern film"), who worked in a Lyons factory that manufactured photographic equipment and supplies, were inspired by Edison's work. They created their own combo movie camera and projector - a more portable, hand-held and lightweight device that could be cranked by hand and could project movie images to several spectators. It was dubbed the Cinematographe and patented in February, 1895. The multi-purpose device (combining camera, printer and projecting capabilities in the same housing) was more profitable because more than a single spectator could watch the film on a large screen. They used a film width of 35mm, and a speed of 16 frames per second - an industry norm until the talkies. By the advent of sound film in the late 1920s, 24 fps became the standard.

The first public test and demonstration of the Lumieres' camera-projector system (the Cinematographe) was made on March 22, 1895, in the Lumieres' basement. They caused a sensation with their first film, Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory (La Sortie des Ouvriers de L'Usine Lumiere a Lyon), although it only consisted of an
everyday outdoor image - factory workers leaving the Lumiere factory gate for home or for a lunch break.

As generally acknowledged, *cinema* (a word derived from *Cinematographe*) was born on December 28, 1895, in Paris, France. The Lumieres presented the first *commercial* exhibition of a projected motion picture to a paying public in the world's first movie theatre - in the *Salon Indien*, at the Grand Cafe on Paris' Boulevard des Capucines. [In 1897, a cinema building was built in Paris, solely for the purpose of showing films.]

The 20-minute program included ten short films with twenty showings a day. These factual shorts (or mini-documentaries), termed *actualities*, with the mundane quality of home movies, included the following:

1. *La Sortie des Ouvriers de L'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895) (*Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*) (46 seconds)
2. *La Voltige* (1895) (*Horse Trick Riders*) (46 seconds)
3. *La Pêche aux Poissons Rouges* (1895) (*Fishing for Goldfish*) (42 seconds)
4. *Le Débarquement du Congrès de Photographie à Lyon* (1895) (*The Disembarkment of the Congress of Photographers in Lyon*) (48 seconds)
5. *Les Forgerons* (1895) (*Blacksmiths*) (49 seconds)
7. *Le Repas (de Bébé)* (1895) (*Baby's Meal*) (41 seconds)
8. *Le Saut à la Couverture* (1895) (*Jumping onto the Blanket*) (41 seconds)
9. *La Place des Cordeliers à Lyon* (1895) (*Cordeliers Square in Lyon*) (44 seconds)
10. *La Mer (Baignade en Mer)* (1895) (*Bathing in the Sea*) (38 seconds)

The ten shorts included the famous first comedy (# 6) of a gardener with a watering hose (aka *The Sprinkler Sprinkled, Waterer and Watered,* or *L’Arrouseur Arrose*), the factory worker short (# 1, see above), a sequence (# 9) of a horse-drawn carriage approaching toward the camera, and a scene (# 7) of the feeding of a baby. The Lumieres also became known for their 50-second short *Arrivee d'un train en gare a La Ciotat* (1895) (*Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*), which some sources reported was shocking to its first unsophisticated viewing audience. By 1898, the Lumiere's company had produced a short film catalog with over 1,000 titles.

**Other Developments in Projecting Machines:**

Two brothers in Berlin, Germany - inventors Emil and Max Skladanowsky - created their own film device for projecting films in November, 1895. Also in 1895, American inventor Major Woodville Latham developed an unpopular projector called an *Eidoloscope* (or *Panoptikon* projector). What was most innovative was its *Latham Loop*, the addition of a slack-forming loop to the film path to restrain the inertia of the take-up reel, and prevent the tearing of sprocket holes. It also allowed for the use of films longer than three minutes. (The loop is still used in virtually all film cameras and projectors to this day.) And American inventors Thomas Armat and Charles Francis Jenkins developed the *Phantascope* in 1893, an improved device (with intermittent-motion mechanisms) for projecting films on a screen. In September, 1895, they debuted their projection device at the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition and patented it.

In London in January of 1896, Birt Acres also developed a machine to project films, called a *Kinetic Lantern*. In the same year, another Englishman Robert William Paul also developed and manufactured a popular projector which he called a *Theatrograph*. He became a pioneering film producer in Britain through his The Northern Photographic Works company.
In 1896, Edison's Company (because it was unable to produce a workable projector on its own) purchased an improved version of Thomas Armat's movie projection machine (the Phantascope, originally invented by C. Francis Jenkins in 1893), and renamed it the Vitascop[e]. The Vitascop[e] was the first commercially-successful celluloid motion picture projector in the US. On April 23, 1896 in New York City at Koster and Bial's Music Hall, the date of the first Vitascop[e] projection for a paying American audience, customers watched the Edison Company's Vitascop[e] project a ballet sequence in an amusement arcade during a vaudeville act.

**The First Permanent Movie Theatres:**

Films were increasingly being shown as part of vaudeville shows, variety shows, and at fairgrounds or carnivals. Audiences would soon need larger theaters to watch screens with projected images from Vitascop[e]s after the turn of the century, using stage and opera houses and music halls. The earliest 'movie theatres' were converted churches or halls, showing *one-reelers* (a 10-12 minute reel of film - the projector's reel capacity at the time). The primitive films were usually more *actualities* and comedies.

The world's first permanent movie theatre exclusively designed for showing motion pictures was the Edisonia Vitascop[e] Hall, a 72 seat theatre which opened in downtown Buffalo, New York on Monday, October 19, 1896 in the Ellicott Square Building on Main Street. It was created by Buffalo-based entrepreneur Mitchell H. Mark, a supreme visionary of the future of motion picture theaters. It was likely that the opening night's showing including US premieres of the Lumiere films (see above), since Mark had contracted with the Lumieres (and Pathe Freres) in France to exhibit their films in the US. The Vitascop[e] Theater in Buffalo remained open for nearly two years. With his brother Moe, Mitchell Mark would open other theaters in Buffalo, as well as New York City. Boston and elsewhere. They were responsible for one of history's earliest "movie palaces," the 2800-seat Mark Strand Theater in NYC.

The same did not occur in downtown Los Angeles until 1902 where Thomas L. Talley's storefront, 200-seat Electric Theater was another of the first permanent US theaters to exclusively exhibit movies - it charged patrons a dime, up from a nickel at the nickelodeons.

**Georges Melies: French Cinematic Magician**

Aside from technological achievements, another Frenchman who was a member of the Lumiere's viewing audience, Georges Melies, expanded development of film cinema with his own imaginative fantasy films. When the Lumiere brothers wouldn't sell him a *Cinematographe*, he developed his own camera (a version of the *Kinetograph*), and then set up Europe's first film studio in 1897. He created about 500 films (one-reelers usually) over the next 15 years (few of which survived), and screened his own productions in his theatre. In late 1911, he contracted with French film company Pathe to finance and distribute his films, and then went out of business by 1913.

An illusionist and stage magician, and a wizard at special effects, Melies exploited the new medium with a pioneering, 14-minute science fiction work, *Le Voyage Dans la Lune - A Trip to the Moon* (1902). It was his most popular and best-known work, with about 30 scenes called *tableaux*. He incorporated surrealistic special effects, including the memorable image of a rocketship landing and gouging out the eye of the 'man in the moon.' Melies also introduced the idea of narrative storylines, plots, character development, illusion, and fantasy into film, including trick photography (early special effects), hand-tinting, dissolves, wipes, 'magical' super-impositions and double exposures, the use of mirrors, trick sets, stop motion, slow-motion and fade-outs/fade-ins. Although his use of the camera was innovative, the camera remained stationary and recorded the staged production from one position only.

**Further US Development:**
The key years in the development of the cinema in the U.S. were in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when the Edison Company was competing with a few other burgeoning movie companies. The major pioneering movie production companies, mostly on the East Coast, that controlled most of the industry were these rivals:

- **the Edison Manufacturing Company** - began producing films for the Kinetoscope in 1891, with headquarters and production facilities in West Orange, NJ (see above); formally became a company in 1894. Afterwards, Edison intensely fought for control of 'his' movie industry by harassing, sue-ing, or buying patents from anyone he thought was threatening his company.

- **the Selig Polyscope Company** (originally called The W.N. Selig Company), was founded in 1896, in Chicago, Illinois by "Colonel" William Selig. Initially, the company specialized in slapstick comedies, "jungle" films, historical subjects, serials, travel films, and the early westerns starring Tom Mix.

- **the American Vitagraph Company**, formed by British-born Americans J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith in 1896. The company's first fictional film was *The Burglar on the Roof*, filmed and released in 1897. It soon became the largest film company, turning out 200 films a year.

- **American Mutoscope Company**, founded in 1895 in New York City, NY by disenchanted Edison worker William K. L. Dickson, Herman Casler, Henry Marvin and pocket lighter inventor Elias Koopman. Their first motion picture machine was the **Mutoscope** - a peephole, flip-card device similar in size to a Kinetoscope. Instead of using film, a spinning set of photographs mounted on a drum inside the cabinet gave the impression of motion. This was followed by a projector - the **Biograph Projector**, that was first demonstrated in New York City in 1896. It was the first time projected images from an American film company were shown to an American movie theatre audience. They also devised a camera called the **Mutograph** (originally called the **Biograph**) that didn't use sprocket holes or perforations in the motion-picture film. The company released its first film in 1896, titled *Empire State Express*.

Soon, the American Mutoscope Company became the most popular film company in America. They were formally renamed the **American Mutoscope and Biograph Company** in 1899. They were known for many firsts:

- the first filming of the Pope, at the Vatican, in 1899
- the first production company to be contracted by the White House, in 1899, and the first studio to record films of a living president, William McKinley
- in 1903, establishment of the first movie studio in the world (in NYC) to rely exclusively on artificial light
- makers of the first western film shot and produced in the West, **A California Hold Up (1906)**
- in 1906, Biograph's Florence Lawrence was the world's first "movie star" -- dubbed: "The Biograph Girl"
- the first major motion picture company in southern California to make an actual film in Los Angeles -- **A Daring Hold-Up in Southern California (1906)**
- makers of the first film shot specifically in the village north of LA known as "Hollywood" - a "Latino" melodrama titled **In Old California (1910)**
- makers of one of the first full-length feature films, D. W. Griffith's epic **Judith of Bethulia (1914)**

Their competition caused Edison to file a patent-infringement lawsuit against them in 1898. In 1903, they began making films in the 35mm format (rather than 70mm). They employed D. W. Griffith in 1908 (who
became one of the pioneers of silent film), and were re-named the **Biograph Company** in 1909 - (see below).

**Breakthrough Films of Edwin S. Porter - the "Father of the Story Film":**

"Moving pictures" were increasing in length, taking on fluid narrative forms, and being edited for the first time. Inventor and former projectionist Edwin S. Porter (1869-1941), who in 1898 had patented an improved Beadnell projector with a steadier and brighter image, was also using film cameras to record news events. Porter was one of the resident Kinetoscope operators and directors at the Edison Company Studios in the early 1900s, who worked in different film genres. Porter was hired at Edison's Company in late 1900 and began making short narrative films, such as the 10-minute long **Jack and the Beanstalk (1902)**. He was responsible for directing the six-minute long **The Life of an American Fireman (1903)** - often alleged to be the first American documentary, docudrama, fictionalized biopic or realistic narrative film, with non-linear continuity. It combined re-enacted scenes, the dreamy thoughts of a sleeping fireman seen in a round iris or 'thought balloon', and documentary stock footage of actual fire scenes, and it was dramatically edited with inter-cutting (or jump-cutting) between the exterior and interior of a burning house. Edison was actually uncomfortable with Porter's editing techniques, including his use of close-ups to tell an entertaining story.