



New Windows on the World

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Abstract

Over a century ago, moving pictures opened new ways of seeing and experiencing the world for audiences. In 1900, watching life-like images from near and far in a darkened space was a new experience, and one that quickly attracted audiences everywhere. For those not living in crowded cities, movies offered a taste of city life. And for those far from centres of innovation, they brought modernity and new styles of life. They also created a new kind of encyclopedia, displaying wonders of nature and science for the masses. And they created new kinds of glamour, in the images of stars on screen, and in the picture palaces where these were seen. Today, digital access is giving us more ways of accessing this culture of this moving image, with new tools and new sources that take us closer to what enabled movies to make the modern world.

Introduction

Over a century ago, moving pictures opened new ways of seeing and experiencing the world for audiences. In 1900 watching lifelike images from near and far in a darkened space was a new experience, and one that quickly attracted audiences everywhere. For those not living in crowded cities, movies offered a taste of city life. And for those far from centers of innovation, they brought modernity and new styles of life. They also created a new kind of encyclopedia, displaying wonders of nature and science for the masses. And they created new kinds of glamour in the images of stars on-screen and in the picture palaces where these were seen. Today digital access is giving us more ways of accessing this culture of the moving image, with new tools and sources that take us closer to what enabled movies to make the modern world.

Beginnings

There can be little doubt that we are currently enjoying a golden age of online access to early cinema. Thanks to digitization and online archival resources, such as the Library of Congress (LOC) Paper Print and American Memory collections and those of other archives, like Eye Filmmuseum in the Netherlands, each of us can individually call up a range of films that were impossible to see until recently. In 1978 the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) had the unprecedented idea of bringing together all the archived films dating from 1900 to 1906 for screening. The resulting FIAF conference held in Brighton effectively launched early film as a dynamic new component of film studies, which had only recently emerged as an academic subject.

The Brighton screenings and discussions involving a new generation of scholars demolished many long-standing myths about early film being “primitive” and launched a new understanding of its variety and close relationship with other media of the late Victorian period.¹ But outside archives, relatively few of the actual films were available to view in this prevideo and pre-internet era. Seen on 16mm film in classrooms, they were often shown at the wrong speed and invariably without the musical accompaniment we take for granted today.

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Yet despite the current ease of digital access, many myths persist and are entrenched through online repetition. For instance, the Lumières' [Train Entering a Station](#) was not part of their earliest programs, and there's no evidence of spectators being terrified by it, apart from journalists talking up the idea to enliven their copy. Nor indeed were the Lumière films the first to be seen by most audiences. So online access of the range

provided by the Media Ecology Project (MEP) Compendium is a great opportunity to correct continuing misconceptions and open up a much wider understanding of the contexts in which moving pictures first appeared. And context is the most vital issue. Seeing these films today online gives little sense of where and how they were first received.

Early shows took place in every possible darkened space, from lecture theaters and church halls to cafés and fairgrounds. But the most influential context was the variety theater. This took different forms in different countries—vaudeville in the US, music hall in Britain, cabaret and *café chantant* in France—but everywhere its essence was a fast-moving, varied program of live acts. And it was in this context that early one-minute films found their first audiences as a minority component of larger, predominantly live performances.

The business that took shape during 1896 was also inherently international. Audiences were largely unaware of the sources of their entertainment, and there were no effective copyright laws to prevent producers from copying or re-making their rivals' subjects. Films were bought and sold as physical copies, to be used for as long they lasted, until hire and licensing became the dominant terms of business some fifteen years later.

Two of London's largest music halls, the Empire and the Alhambra, joined battle early in 1896 with rival film offers. A Lumière program at the Empire was initially presented by the popular impressionist Felicien Trewey, while the Alhambra had Robert Paul showing his locally made films. Within a month, Paul was persuaded to star two of the Alhambra's popular dancers in an acted sketch, [The Soldier's Courtship](#). Meanwhile, in New York, Edison realized that he had to catch up, and in April he launched his Vitascope projector at a Broadway music hall with a program that had Paul and Birt Acres's [Rough Sea at Dover](#) as its most popular item, a film they had made a year earlier to show on Paul's British version of the Edison Kinetoscope, which had been sent to Edison as part of an invitation to cooperate.

What Happens in the Dark

Actuality films, taken in the streets of cities around the world, remained an important part of programs for the rest of the decade, even though Edison realized that performance was a key attraction for his first Kinetoscope programs—which included subjects featuring two lively dancers, [Carmencita](#) and [Annabelle Moore](#). In April 1896, he filmed a moment featuring two actors in a contemporary play, [The Kiss](#), around the same time that Paul staged *The Soldier's Courtship* on the

roof of the Alhambra. The theatrical context in which films were widely seen also became a framing feature of a number of subjects: see, for instance, [The Countryman's First Sight of the Cinematograph](#) (Paul) and its re-make by Edwin Porter for Edison as [Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show](#). Eventually this framing device would suggest more elaborate narratives that dramatized moviegoing as a new leisure pastime—with a hilarious example of its social pitfalls from D. W. Griffith, [Those Awful Hats](#) (1909), which also shows us what a nickelodeon was like and includes the future pioneer of slapstick comedy, Mack Sennett, among its still anonymous cast.

Moviegoing, which took place in the dark, was understood from the outset to have erotic implications. An ingenious twist on this is the subject of American Mutoscope & Biograph's [The Story the Biograph Told](#) (1904), in which adultery is revealed on-screen. But even earlier, George Albert Smith, a member of the Brighton school of pioneers in Britain, hinted at the voyeuristic implications of film in [As Seen Through a Telescope](#) (1900). And Pathé, set to become cinema's first multinational company, further developed the voyeuristic theme with Fernand Zecca's [Through the Keyhole](#) (1901), in which an inquisitive hotel porter spies on guests and discovers more than he bargained for.

As the study of early cinema has developed since 1978, historians have identified intricate patterns of influence and, let's face it, barefaced plagiarism among the first producers. So Zecca's keyhole drama is now recognized as owing much to Smith's earlier film, while many of Paul's innovations soon found their way across the Channel and the Atlantic. Perhaps the most significant of these were the multiscene productions that Paul and his wife, Ellen, produced in their new London studio during the summer of 1898—films that Paul announced would replace the plethora of everyday scenes with “comic, pathetic or dramatic” tales that were guaranteed to rivet the attention of audiences. Sadly, like much of early cinema, little material evidence of this bold venture survives. But one of the eighty films released by the Pauls in 1898, [Come Along, Do!](#) (1898), has been reconstructed to demonstrate its innovative two-scene structure.

Chases and acrobatics

Paul and fellow English pioneers based in Brighton and Sheffield were active in launching many influential genres, although this early lead was not maintained. Probably the most important was the chase structure, which began modestly with films such as Williamson's [Stop Thief!](#) (1901), Paul's [The Unfortunate Policemen](#) (1903), and Frank Mottershaw's [Daring Daylight Burglary](#) (1903). This last is now widely believed to have influenced Edwin Porter's celebrated [Great Train Robbery](#), made later in the same year. As the French industry began conquering markets internationally, its leading companies, Pathé and Gaumont, pushed the chase form to new heights of ingenuity in such zany comedies as Pathé's [The Runaway Horse](#) (*Le cheval emballé*; 1908), and Gaumont's [The Pumpkin Chase](#) (*La course aux potirons*; 1908). With its delirious pursuit of pumpkins escaping through Paris streets, this film would later be rediscovered and admired by the Surrealist movement.

By 1910 American producers had begun to consolidate their dominance of international distribution, with Sennett's troupe of energetically bumbling Keystone Cops making their 1912 debut in a folksy comedy, [The Bangville Police](#). The cops would sometimes accompany Charlie Chaplin in his first great comedy series for Keystone, and elements of their acrobatic style reappear in his subsequent Essanay and Mutual series—for instance, his 1917 masterpiece [Easy Street](#). By the time a later generation of screen comics appeared, led by Buster Keaton, the legacy of the early chase format had been well learned. Keaton's [Seven Chances](#) (1925) climaxes in an epic chase sequence, with a mob of hopeful brides pursuing the hapless Keaton in the hope of snaring his

fortune.

Ghosts and miracles

If the chase can be seen as providing cinema's most fundamental narrative structure—still in use, with ever more elaborate variations (think of George Miller's *Fury Road*)—it was the “trick film” of around 1900 that laid the basis for all subsequent fantasy and illusion. At its simplest, this could involve merely stopping and restarting the camera after adjustments, as in Edison's [Execution of Mary Queen of Scots](#) (1895) and Georges Méliès's [The Vanishing Lady](#) (1896), or inverting it with trompe l'oeil scenery, as in Paul's [Upside Down, or the Human Flies](#) (1899). Stop-motion and the superimposition of multiple shots to create ghostly effects provided the bedrock of trick film technique up to around 1910, often in the service of popular supernatural stories, such as Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* in Paul's [Scrooge!](#) and Cecil Hepworth's [Alice in Wonderland](#) (1903). These techniques were taken to new heights in the increasingly elaborate fantasies of Méliès, such as [A Trip to the Moon](#) (1902), [The Melomaniac](#) (1903), and [The Fantastic Voyage](#) (1904), which were widely recognized as a genre in their own right. But American cinema would also make use of these techniques in comedies such as J. Stuart Blackton's [The Haunted Hotel](#) (1907), now widely considered a founding work of animation, and in early science fiction, often drawing on Jules Verne's fantastic journeys, as in Universal's [20,000 Leagues Under the Sea](#) (1916).

Trick film techniques weren't only used for comedy and adventure. They were crucial for many of the popular early biblical cycles, such as Pathé's and Gaumont's enormously popular series. For example, in [The Life of Christ](#) (Zecca, 1903), they vividly dramatized New Testament miracles such as Christ walking on water as well as creating the scenes of the Annunciation—a major subject for Renaissance artists—and the Ascension. Such “miraculous” effects would eventually be incorporated into longer narratives, becoming what are known as special effects, to enhance key moments in essentially realist narratives, as in the dream sequence of Augustus Blom's [Atlantis](#) (1913) or the volcanic eruption that opens Pastrone's epic of ancient Rome, [Cabiria](#) (1914). These films from emerging European industries played an important part in leading the transition from cinema programs based on varied short films to full-length features.

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Early Cinema and the Wider World

We run the risk today of assuming that film played only a small part in the turbulent world from which it emerged. This may be true, insofar as it was only part of the busy entertainment spectrum for fin de siècle audiences, which included elaborate magic lantern shows, stereoscopic views, and early phonograph sound recordings. But like many of these media, early film also reflected that world with often surprising topicality.

Picturing war—by any means

Two major conflicts that broke out very soon after regular film screening began decisively shaped the twentieth-century geopolitical world and had a dramatic impact on the status of film. The earliest conflict to engage film producers was the Spanish-American War, which broke out in 1898

after the sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor and led to United States intervention in the Cuban War of Independence against Spain, launching its quasi-imperial involvement in Caribbean and Pacific territories. In the following year, another rebellion, by the Boer republic of Transvaal in South Africa, would precipitate the second Anglo-Boer War, pitting the Dutch settlers against the British Empire.

Both of these conflicts, initially local, developed into extended wars that attracted wide international interest. And both offered early film producers tantalizing subjects to portray on on-screen, despite the impossibility of filming actual combat. The [LOC Special Presentation](#) collects sixty-eight subjects produced between 1898 and 1901 which display the variety of techniques and forms used, ranging from troop parades and embarkation actualities and portraits of the leaders involved to re-enactments of often questionable authenticity and outright appeals to patriotic sentiment.²

Films from the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 have not been collected as conveniently in one site, but examples can be found of a similar range of responses, with some additional novelties. Among these were the large-format 68mm films taken on location by W. K. L. Dickson for the Biograph Company. Dickson had been instrumental in creating Edison's original Kinetograph camera and Kinetoscope viewer but left soon after to cofound the American Mutoscope Company, which made flip-card viewers—soon known as “what what the butler saw” machines due to their often risqué subjects. In 1896 the company launched its Biograph camera and projectors, using 68mm film to give a remarkably large and steady image—superior to any other early format—and Dickson became the leading operator for the company's British branch.

After a publicity coup with films of Pope Leo XII in 1898, Dickson traveled to the scene of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, filming extensively around the battlefields. The book he published chronicling his exploits, [The Biograph in Battle](#), has kept this dimension of Boer War coverage visible, although little was seen of actual Biograph films until the collections held by Eye Filmmuseum in the Netherlands and the British Film Institute National Archive were recently restored and shown digitally at many venues, revealing how spectacular the Biograph format must have been.

More substantial and systematic coverage of the war came from the two largest British producers of the era, Robert Paul and Charles Urban—an American—fast becoming the most dynamic figures in pre-1914 British cinema. Both Paul and Urban offered films of troops embarking for the voyage to South Africa; Paul sent two cameras, entrusted to serving officers, which secured [a lively scene of British troops entering a Boer stronghold](#) and one of a captured Boer general, seen in the distance, which underlines how difficult it was to film action in the field at this time. Faced with strong demand for films of a war that was testing Britain's imperial confidence, Paul also produced a series of [“reproductions” of typical scenes](#), filmed on a golf course in North London, which he realized would likely be presented by showmen as authentic battlefield scenes.³ A similar approach was followed by the Edison Company, which produced its fictional Boer War scenes in New Jersey, like this [Capture of a Boer Battery by the British](#).

Historians of early cinema, notably Charles Musser in the US and John Barnes in Britain, have argued that the level of audience response to film coverage of these wars played a major part in boosting national film industries at this early stage in their development.⁴ At this distance in time, it may be hard to believe that films offering such scant representation were so enthusiastically received, yet the evidence is clear from contemporary newspaper accounts.

A howl of enthusiasm went up at Hopkins' Theater at the initial appearance in this city in the

evening of the biograph picture of the battleship Maine which was sunk in Havana harbor. . . . Many of the patrons rose to their feet. There was a yell of three cheers for the United States navy. Men whistled and yelled. There was a stampeding of feet, and women waved their handkerchiefs.⁵

The film that so moved this 1898 Chicago audience did not in fact show the *Maine* but two other battleships that been opportunistically retitled by Biograph. As Stephen Bottomore has observed, this and all subsequent war films have often traded on audiences' willingness to accept what they are told.

Film certainly seems to have stimulated patriotic fervor in both the Spanish-American and Anglo-Boer Wars, producing new levels of identification and emotion. Bottomore quotes an intriguing account of audience response to a film of the funeral of victims of the Maine sinking.

There seemed to be miles of that grim procession of the dead. It was not mere photographic reproduction; the crowd soon saw that. It was the real thing and as the full horror of that cowardly murder swept through the theatre a sigh went up that not even the lighter pictures which followed could change to a smile.⁶

"Photographic reproduction" might refer here to lantern slides, contrasting the still with the moving image. But what if the war being shown was not one in which the audience had an obvious stake? The 1904 war between Russia and Japan would demonstrate that filmed conflict itself seemed to have a permanent appeal for film audiences. As news of this distant war reached the United States and Europe, film companies resorted to the now-familiar strategy of recreating episodes on home territory. After Biograph staged *The Battle of the Yalu* in Syracuse, the film was reported to be "running at all the leading Vaudeville houses, cheered from start to finish."⁷ Edison took note of this success and made its own version of the battle at Forest Hill, New Jersey.

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Meanwhile, in Britain, while Urban sent cameramen to record episodes of the war, Paul mounted three dramatic films inspired by it—none purporting to show specific events, but all claiming to use authentic uniforms and insignia.⁸ Recognizing a clear business opportunity, Edison assembled a diverse collection of material to meet the demand

coming from exhibitors. This included a relatively elaborate production representing the sinking of two Russian ships by the Japanese fleet using studio reconstruction and miniature ships, which proved highly profitable. Also on offer were battle reenactments staged using American military personnel, and news and travel films bought in or simply copied from foreign sources.

Henceforth, war would retain a permanent fascination for cinema, with a similar mix of genres in play. Actuality film depended on signposting, which might be more or less scrupulous in its accuracy. Producers looked for human interest stories, which might be extracted from real events, or constructed to appeal to prejudices and emotions. And increasingly, audiences throughout the world would have their attitudes to war and conflict powerfully shaped by its screen presentation.

Topical events

War may have been the most reliable crowd-pleaser in early cinema, but many other topical events, especially of national significance, prompted responses by enterprising producers. As early as June 1896—less than six months after regular public screenings began—Paul filmed the annual Derby horse race, [The Prince's Derby](#) (1896) and managed to have his record ready to show at the Alhambra the following evening. The fact that the race had been won by a horse belonging to the popular prince of Wales made this a joyous event, and the packed house demanded that the film be rerun at least twice, accompanied by the orchestra playing “God Bless the Prince of Wales.” Paul was forced to take a bow onstage.

Less than a year later, a marathon championship boxing match between [James Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons](#), held in Carson City Nevada, was filmed in its entirety.

The fourteen rounds, with breaks, ran for one hundred minutes, making this the longest film produced anywhere up to this time, although only fragments have survived. Prizefighting was banned at this time in many US states, which undoubtedly contributed to the film's commercial success. But its producer, Enoch J. Rector, had already discovered the attraction of boxing on-screen with a six-minute film of [Corbett fighting the outsider Peter Courtney](#), made for the Edison Kinetoscope in 1894.

Sports events had the advantage of being predictable, with guaranteed audience interest, and remained a staple of cinema for decades until the advent of television. However, unforeseen current events could also acquire a new immediacy on-screen. Among pioneers, Georges Méliès is best known today for his early fantasy films using elaborate trick photography. But he responded to the political furor of the Dreyfus Affair, which had convulsed France since 1894, when Dreyfus was brought back from imprisonment on Devil's Island for a new trial in 1899. Departing from the pantomime style of his fantasies, [Méliès told the story of Dreyfus's trial and imprisonment in twelve crisp tableaux](#) that have all the immediacy of modern news reporting, including one where journalists rush from the packed court toward the camera.

Another milestone in early film reportage occurred in the United States in 1901, during the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo. An Edison crew was filming President McKinley on his tour of the exhibits, and after his review of a guard of honor, they were waiting for him to emerge from the Temple of Music. Suddenly word spread among the assembled crowd that the president had been shot by an assassin inside the temple. The cameraman filmed a panoramic shot as word spread, and the resulting [Mob Outside the Temple of Music](#) (LoC) became an eerily poignant record of the shooting's impact.

Edison cameramen continued to film the events that followed. The first stage of his elaborate funeral took place in Buffalo before continuing to Washington and finishing in his hometown in Ohio. This brought the total coverage of the exposition and its tragic aftermath to eleven films, all of them actualities until what should have been the climax of the series—the execution of the president's assassin, the anarchist Leon Czolgosz. When Edison's cameramen were refused permission to film the execution at the Albany jail, they resorted to staging it themselves, setting the scene with a shot of the jail's exterior.

The filmic treatment of this event also gives us real insight into customs of film exhibition at this period. Exhibitors were encouraged to end a sequence with a wholly manufactured item, [The Martyred Presidents](#) (LoC), which showed memorial portraits of Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley flanked by a mourner and the allegorical figure of Justice. The gravity of the occasion had apparently triggered a response from Edison's production department that instinctively drew upon magic lantern conventions, where allegorical compositions of this kind were common. ⁹

Bringing it all back home

The McKinley sequence of films is notable for another reason. Among the mourners can be seen the Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, who was already famous for his public relations skills. Early in 1901, he inspired what is probably the first political satire on film, Edison's [Terrible Teddy, the Grizzly King](#) [LoC]. A burly rifleman hurries through a forest, accompanied by figures labeled "My Press Agent" and "My Photographer," before making a ceremonial kill for the camera. Two years later, Roosevelt was president, and films were issued by AM&B showing his [Rough Riders cavalry unit](#), originally formed to serve in the Spanish-American War.

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Roosevelt would become the most filmed of all statesmen in the years before 1914. Traveling to Africa in 1908 on a big-game hunting expedition, he invited the English cameraman Cherry Kearton to accompany him, and the resulting coverage entered his personal film library, while also forming part of a 1910 Pathé commercial release, [Roosevelt in Africa](#). This was welcomed by the trade press with enthusiasm: "not an uninteresting foot in the two reels."¹⁰

The coverage of Roosevelt's game hunting might seem merely a publicity stunt, which it clearly was. But it also contributed to an important genre in the early decades of cinema—the travel film—and to the emerging sub-genre of expedition films. Kearton would film elsewhere in Africa and in India, Borneo, and South America, contributing his films to Urban's growing library. Urban's belief in nonfiction film as a new educational medium was reflected in the full title of his impressive catalog: *Urbanora: The World's Educator*. Films of exotic locations, natural features, and animals in the wild filled the catalogs of most early producers and made up an important part of the programs shown in cinema theaters up to 1912.¹¹

Expedition films became major feature attractions after Robert Falcon Scott's Antarctic Expedition of 1910–12 was filmed by Herbert Ponting for Gaumont. The first part of Ponting's coverage was shown in Britain and elsewhere in 1911, when Scott and his comrades were already in difficulty in their final trek to the Pole. By the time the second part was released in 1912, they were dead, although this was not discovered until months later. Ponting would devote the rest of his life to commemorating the Scott expedition as an example of heroism in adversity, first in slide and film lectures during the First World War, then in a feature-length documentary, *The Great White Silence* (1924), and finally in a sound version, *90° South* (1933).

During this period, films recording exploration in remote places became a major attraction. Frank Hurley's *Endurance* (1919) recorded another Antarctic expedition, by Ernest Shackleton in 1914, which included an impressive drama of survival and rescue. Robert Flaherty's gently humorous account of Inuit life in northern Canada, *Nanook of the North* (1922), proved a surprise worldwide box-office success, and two films of tribal life by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack, [Grass](#) (1924) and [Chang](#) (1927), were similarly successful as theatrical releases. The cost of later expeditions, such as those to climb Everest or penetrate distant lands, could henceforth be partly covered by the anticipated returns on film releases. Eventually television would adapt the forms of these pioneer works to its program formats.

City Life

Street scenes

Cinema and city life were closely linked from the outset as regular venues developed in large population centers. The Russian poet Alexandr Blok confessed to an early fascination when he wrote to a friend in 1904 to apologize for missing an appointment:

Yesterday I set off for your place, but suddenly I noticed that cinema on the Liteyny, and went in and watched the pictures for about an hour There is a kind of city mystery here, like hidden ambushes.¹²

What those “ambushed” in this way initially saw were the city streets they had just left. The marvel was that this kaleidoscope of action could be captured in all its detail and played back in an eerie silence or with musical accompaniment. Street scenes were among the Lumières’ and Paul’s first subjects. Taken in Lyon and Paris and in London, respectively, these were enough to fascinate the first viewers.

Such city scenes came later in America due to Edison’s early reliance on his Black Maria studio in West Orange, but soon there were evocative images of American city streets.

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Some of these were so striking that they were restaged decades later, such as the Biograph view of a teeming [Lower Broadway](#) (1903; LOC), which would inspire a scene in Martin Scorsese’s *Age of Innocence*. Edison’s [What Happened on 23rd Street, NYC](#) (1901; LOC) is clearly contrived to show a young lady who suddenly finds her skirt lifted by a

draft from a sidewalk grating—an image that irresistibly recalls the gag with Marilyn Monroe in Billy Wilder’s *The Seven Year Itch*. And when we discover that Biograph’s [At the Foot of the Flatiron](#) (1903) was taken at this notoriously windy location to produce a similar view of women’s ankles, there is clearly more staging involved in these early street scenes than modern viewers realize.¹³

A theme that was discussed in one of the earliest studies of urban life was the city dweller’s rapid assumption of a condescending attitude toward his country cousin.¹⁴ Making fun of “rubes” is indeed a frequent theme in early American comic-strips as well as films. *Rubes in the Theatre* (Edison, 1901; LOC) shows two countrymen overreacting to a show and being laughed at by their neighbors, while [Rube and Mandy at Coney Island](#) (Edison, 1903; LOC) offers a tour of the amusement park in the company of a couple who stuff themselves with hot dogs.

Like the rube, new immigrants were also regular figures of fun at the turn of the century, resulting in films such as [A Gesture Fight in Hester Street](#) (Biograph, 1900; LOC), where two peddlers fight for the same pitch, and [Levi and Cohen, the Irish Comedians](#) (Biograph, 1903; LOC), in which the aspiring performers are pelted with tomatoes. More brashly insensitive humor based on ethnic stereotypes appears in Biograph’s *Hot Mutton Pies* (1903; LOC), in which two boys discover that what they have just bought from a pig-tailed Chinese man are “cat pies,” while the gruesomely comic explosion in [A Catastrophe in Hester Street](#) (Biograph, 1904; LOC) appears to have been caused by drunken foreign anarchists.

The fascination of low life

A curious sub-genre that seems to have been unique to early American cinema is a “tourist view” of the a city’s sordid underworld. *Rube in an Opium Joint* (Biograph, 1905; LOC), made by D.

W. Griffith's future cameraman Billy Bitzer, shows a middle-aged couple being ushered into an opium den by an enthusiastic tour guide with a megaphone. After a trial puff on an opium pipe, the man prefers his own, and the pair leave. This turns out to be a scene from a longer film released in the same year, *Lifting the Lid* (LOC), which starts with a bus-load of sightseers in a busy New York street. Their tour guide then takes a couple through a series of low-life encounters, each arranged as a studio-based set piece, of which the opium den is one.

Such tours did, in fact, take place not only in New York, but in Paris and London, offering "respectable" visitors a chance to observe the decadent pleasures of the metropolis in safety. But that they should have been staged as films in the United States perhaps underlines the gulf between country and city in

this largely immigrant society. On a more traditional moral plane, Biograph's *The Downward Path* (1902; LOC) chronicles a country girl being dragged into big-city vice as her aged parents try to rescue her. By the end of the decade, innocents being trafficked and recruited into prostitution had become a major theme under the generic term "white slavery," with a succession of films seeking to exploit prurient interest under the guise of exposing its operation. One surviving title from this genre, [Traffic in Souls](#) (Tucker, 1913) has attracted extensive scholarship, particularly focused on its showing wire-tapping and surveillance techniques to gather evidence against the traffickers.

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Crime pays

Some of the earliest fiction films were portrayals of crime, reflecting a late nineteenth-century trend in popular fiction. In Britain, Acres made *Arrest of a Pickpocket* for the Kinetoscope in 1895, while his erstwhile partner Paul made a number of crime subjects—often with a comedy twist—as in *Robbery* (1897), where a man is forced to hand over his clothes at gunpoint, and *His Brave Defender* (1900), in which a wife tackles a burglar while her husband hides. But two genres dominated early screen crime portrayal: detective heroes and criminal gangs. Nick Carter was the protagonist in three French series between 1908 and 1909, starting with Victorin Jasset's [Nick Carter, King of Detectives](#) (1908), while France also launched the urban crime syndicate mystery with Jasset's [Zigomar](#) (1911), followed by Louis Feuillade's [Fantomas](#) series, both of which enjoyed wide international success and influenced the rising generation of filmmakers and avant-garde artists.

The models pioneered by Jasset and Feuillade were also taken up and soon imitated elsewhere in Europe: *Dr. Gar El Hama* (1911) in Denmark; *Lieutenant Daring* (1911) and the *Ultus* series (Pearson, 1916) in the UK; *Tigris* (1913) and the *Za La Mort* series (1914–1924) in Italy. But it was Pathé's American branch that took the multi-part serial to new levels of worldwide popularity with its production of [The Perils of Pauline](#) (1914), followed by many successors featuring plucky heroines, making the cliff-hanger serial a key American export during the 1910s and 1920s.

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Postwar Germany saw the emergence of a distinctive crime syndicate genre headed by Fritz Lang's *The Spiders* (1919–20) and *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* (1922). And perhaps surprisingly, early Soviet cinema also bore the imprint of French and American serials in such films as Sergei Eisenstein's

The Strike (1924) and Lev Kuleshov's *Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), as well as the first projects of a Petersburg group, the Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEKS). Today the eerie worlds of Feuillade's and Lang's thrillers, in which "surreal events unfold in banal settings," are probably best known from their re-imagining in René Magritte's paintings.¹⁵

Gender trouble

The rise of cinema coincided with changing attitudes towards women's rights on many levels. While the earliest moving pictures showed traditional images of female dancers (Moore, Carmencita), there would soon be subjects reflecting what Britain's *Daily Mail* described in 1900 as "the athletic young woman." While Biograph's *The Physical Culture Lesson* (Biograph, 1906) ended with the instructor embracing his student, *The Athletic Girl and the Burglar* (Biograph, 1905) showed the girl knocking out an intruder.

Alongside such lighthearted treatments of women's new lifestyles—women cycling was another popular subject—campaigns for political rights attracted notably hostile treatment in a number of early films. A British film from 1900 showed a pair of young men clandestinely nailing the skirts of two women to a fence, and catalog text reveals this as a satire on women's militancy: "Now behold the champions of women's every right."¹⁶ In France Alice Guy, widely celebrated today as a pioneer female filmmaker, made a 1906 satire, [The Consequences of Feminism](#), which mocked gender roles being reversed. And in Britain, with a militant suffrage campaign under way that included Emily Davison throwing herself under the king's horse in a race in 1913, the same years saw a comedy, [Milling the Militants](#) (Clarendon, 1913), in which a man dreams of setting suffragettes like his wife to work mending roads.

It would be unwise to draw firm conclusions from such pointed examples, considering how many titles from the early period have been lost. The suffrage movement in Britain also used films of its spectacular demonstrations as publicity. But the sheer volume of images of "new women" to be found across the production of every country—from Biograph's [Gibson Goddess](#) (1909) to [Asta Nielsen's many "modern" roles](#)—made cinema an important forum for showing and debating this worldwide social movement before and after the Great War.

Moving, Making, and Microscopes

Film emerged simultaneously with the beginnings of revolutionary new forms of transport that would shape the twentieth century. Both automobiles and flying machines made early screen appearances, and the new perspectives they offered—the speeding vehicle and the aerial view—would become an essential part of the new medium's visual rhetoric.

Processes of manufacture were also undergoing dramatic change in the early period of film production—indeed, film itself was an early part of that third industrial revolution, using new materials and machinery to create a distinctive new business based on selling experience.

Films showing new processes of construction and production were widely seen in the years before 1914; the [Westinghouse series](#) of actualities made in 1904 is an early example of a major company displaying its activities on film, showing these at various expositions as well as to employees and the public. From Europe there are notable early industrials such as [A Visit to Peak Frean & Co's Biscuit Works](#) (1906; UK) and a large number of films that showed modern methods transforming traditional industries, such as fishing (*Fish Factory in Astrakhan*, 1906; imported by Pathé to the US; *Whaling Afloat and Ashore*, Paul, 1908).

"Popular science films were an important early genre that had wide exposure in entertainment programs. One technique that produced especially spectacular results was photomicrography, making minute organisms and processes visible on the large screen."

Popular science films were an important early genre that had wide exposure in entertainment programs. One technique that produced especially spectacular results was photo-micrography, making minute organisms and processes visible on the large screen. Urban's series [The Unseen World](#) pioneered this genre in 1903; his presenter, Francis Martin Duncan, delivered the early hit [Cheese Mites](#) (1903).¹⁷ The other key technique that made scientific film widely attractive was stop-motion used to accelerate natural processes. Again, it was Urban who realized the appeal of such subjects and recruited the naturalist Percy Smith to produce such films as *The Acrobatic Fly* and [The Birth of a Flower](#) (both 1910). After his early association with Urban, Smith went on to produce his hugely popular [Secrets of Nature](#) series in the 1920s. Like sports and travel, this important early genre would pass over to television to become a staple of factual programming.

The World That Movies Made



What did the coming of cinema at the start of the twentieth century mean? One consequence, widely realized toward the end of the century's first decade, was connecting and even synchronizing habits and interests around the world. Audiences in widely separated continents might be watching the same images and sharing the same emotions. [Pathé](#), which had established branches in many countries that would eventually promote local production as well as bringing its own French productions to a global audience, had as its trademark an image of the founders "conquering the world" (see Figure 1). Soon the baton would pass from Pathé and Gaumont to companies such as the Danish Nordisk and Italian companies such as Ambrosio and Cines, before American producers decisively took control of world film distribution networks around 1916.¹⁸

Figure 1. Poster for the Pathé company, proclaiming its goal of “conquering the world” with a network of branches in many countries that anticipated later business strategies in cinema.

Creative artists in other media began to realize the potential of this upstart new industry. The Russian dramatist Leonid Andreyev wrote in 1911 about how it had long been scorned by intellectuals and sophisticates, while embraced by the masses. But it was time to recognize what cinema had become, he argued:

If the highest and most sacred aim of art is to instigate contact between people and their individual souls, then what an enormous, unimaginable socio-psychological role is destined to be played by this artistic Apache of the present! What is there to compare with it: aerial flight, the telegraph and the telephone, even the press itself? . . . Having no language, being equally intelligible to the savages of St. Petersburg and the savages of Calcutta, it truly becomes the genius of international contact, brings the ends of the earth and the spheres of souls nearer and gathers the whole of quivering humanity into a single stream. ¹⁹

A year earlier, Leo Tolstoy had confessed to Andreyev that he was “thinking about cinema,” and had decided that, if he had time, he wanted to write for it because it was “understandable to huge masses of all nations.”²⁰ And Tolstoy was not alone among established authors in believing that the future of reaching large audiences lay with cinema: in Britain, for instance, H. G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, James Barrie, and many other writers were all looking forward to the possibility of writing for the screen—or being able to sell their existing work for adaptation.

By 1920, in the aftermath of the Great War, cinema’s foundational place in modern life across the globe was assured, and the dominant producers were based in America. The films of Chaplin, Griffith, and Cecil B. DeMille were seen and admired worldwide. Other national industries had to adjust to surviving in the shadow of the American studios’ massive presence on their screens.

Material traces

As we trace the progression of early moving pictures to the mainstream cinema that had emerged by 1920, it’s important to recall the spatial and material contexts in which it took place. From around 1907, buildings dedicated to showing film programs began to appear all over the world. What had previously been variety or vaudeville theaters became cinemas and movie theaters, often operating twelve or more hours per day and catering to exceptionally diverse audiences. Children and immigrants were among the new audiences, attracted to the anonymity and easily understood entertainment cheaply on offer. The rapid increase in scale of newly built urban “picture palaces” is astonishing; from capacities of less than five hundred in the nickelodeon era, new theaters were seating over two thousand by the time super-productions such as [Quo Vadis?](#) and the film it inspired, Griffith’s [The Birth of a Nation](#), arrived in the early teens.

Few of these structures survive today, except where they have achieved heritage status, like the Tuchinski in Amsterdam (1921) or Grauman’s Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles (1922).²¹ But the construction of increasingly lavish movie theaters during the first half of the twentieth century had a significant and lasting impact on the urban landscape of many countries. London’s West End Leicester Square, which saw the first Lumière and Paul screenings in its major music halls in 1896, has remained the focus of screen entertainment in the city, with re-developed venues catering to new styles of programming in multiplexes, and the Odeon Leicester Square (1937) remaining as a

monument to the heroic age of cinema-building.²²

Cinema-going, however, has always encompassed much more than customers and buildings. Aspects of décor, ancillary products (snacks and drinks), and audience behavior have been central to the experience and its legacy in twentieth-century culture.

While these elements have formed the subject of important studies, such as Robert Allen's *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, they are more adequately covered in online resources, such as Allen's *Going to the Show*, an online digital resource documenting the history of moviegoing in North Carolina, and Luke McKernan's wide-ranging anthology of cinema experience, [Picturegoing](#).²³

"Filmgoers, unsurprisingly, were attracted to many of the figures they saw on-screen from an early stage."

Star values

Filmgoers, unsurprisingly, were attracted to many of the figures they saw on-screen from an early stage. Traditionally the emergence of "film stars" has been dated to around 1910, when American producers began to identify their actors by name and promote their popularity in pictorial media. The classic text on this phenomenon is Richard deCordova's *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (1990), which focused on the promotion of Florence Lawrence, the Gish sisters, and Mary Pickford.²⁴ However, deCordova's account clearly needs some updating in at least two respects.

First, before "the first film stars," several figures already famous for various reasons appeared in early film, lending prestige and popularity to the medium. Many of these were established vaudeville and music hall stars, often paid large sums to appear on-screen—an early example is Harry Lauder's lucrative 1902 contract with Gaumont for films synchronized with disc recordings. Second, while American films were fast becoming the most widely shown around the world from 1910 to 1914, there is a good case for identifying Asta Nielsen, a Danish actor, as the first truly global film star. [An international research project](#) led by Martin Loiperdinger brought together data from many countries around the world to reveal Nielsen's extraordinary popularity.²⁵

Paper cinema

"Digital resources not only make large amounts of cinema heritage material newly accessible, they have also made much of the industry's material residues more visible than most cinema museums created during the twentieth century."

The publicity culture of cinema played a major part in the wider media revolution that began around 1900, extending far beyond the attraction of the films themselves. Picture postcards, cigarette cards, posters and lobby-cards, and fan magazines—all of these new graphic media of the era catered to a growing population of movie-obsessed young people. The case of picture postcards is particularly significant, as this was a

new medium that emerged at almost the same time as film, and the "star portraits" were one of its most popular genres. I have suggested in a comparative study of postcards of early stars that the numbers of these images may be a way of estimating relative popularity in the early years of cinema.²⁶ Many such items have become valuable collectables, and for years they remained unseen in private collections. But today they are very popular online, making accessible the culture of

cinema at the peak of its influence.

Digital history

Digital resources not only make large amounts of cinema heritage material newly accessible, they have also made much of the industry's material residues more visible than most cinema museums created during the twentieth century. See, for instance, the searchable collections of the [Bill Douglas Cinema Museum](#) at Exeter University, UK.²⁷ For periodicals, see the large digitized and searchable holdings of the Media History Digital Library.²⁸ Digital techniques are also central to most restoration of early film, allowing fragmentary and fragile material to be widely shared—and even sometimes projected on the scale that it was originally shown, as in the case of the large collection of Biograph 68mm titles held by the Nederland Eye film Filmmuseum archive, material that has been shown in many festivals around the world in recent years.²⁹

"Thanks to searchable online collections of films, along with associated paper documentation and publicity materials, new kinds of empirical study are possible, in place of what were often impressionistic assertions during the early decades of cinema studies."

Perhaps the most important revelation of the twenty-first century, as far as cinema is concerned, has been that the celluloid medium's early decades are now best displayed and studied by digital means. Thanks to searchable online collections of films, along with associated paper documentation and publicity materials, new kinds of empirical study are possible, in place of what were often impressionistic assertions during the early decades of cinema studies. Film has always been a complex phenomenon, with its material elements forming only part of the wider cultural impact that it has exerted for more than 120 years.

Assembling the elements for serious study has always been difficult, with materials held in a wide variety of collections and archives or seemingly lost. Now coordinated online access, such as that provided by the MEP Early Cinema Compendium, promises exciting new opportunities for empirically grounded study and research, based on the consultation of digitized original materials. The challenge will be to frame new hypotheses and to challenge long-held assumptions and prejudices—in short, to make full use of the wealth of historical evidence to deepen and refine the history of the medium that mirrored and shaped the modern world.

A list of external links in this essay can be found here.³⁰

About the Author

Ian Christie is a film and media historian who has written extensively about many aspects of media culture as well as contributing to television and video publications. His major work on early cinema was a BBC television series, [The Last Machine](#), hosted by Terry Gilliam, which celebrated the centenary of cinema in 1994. A recent book, *Robert Paul and the Origins of British Cinema* (University of Chicago Press, 2019), reassesses the international history of the early decades. In addition to studies of major filmmakers Sergei Eisenstein, Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, and Martin Scorsese, he has contributed to many gallery exhibitions about cinema among the other arts. Currently a professor at Birkbeck College, University of London, he is a Fellow of the British Academy and an advisor to the Cinema Ritrovato archival festival in Bologna. His Gresham College lectures from 2018–21 are online at <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/speakers/professor-ian-christie>.

¹ For a participant's account, see, for instance, Jan-Christoph Horak's "FIAF Brighton 1978," UCLA Library Film and Television Archive, June 8, 2018. <https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/blogs/archival-spaces/2018/06/08/fiaf-brighton-1978>;

also Philippe Gauthier's 2012 retrospective "The 1978 Brighton Congress and 'Traditional Film History' As Founding Myths of the 'New Film History,'" *Academia*.

https://www.academia.edu/1795860/In_English_The_1978_Brighton_Congress_and_Traditional_Film_History

² Thematic sections: "Remember the Maine": The Beginnings of War," "The War in Cuba," "The War Ends: Parades and Controversies," "Philippine Revolution," "Final Homecomings," and "A Drama of the Spanish-American War." The first five pages link to a list of actualities and reenactments. "A Drama of the Spanish-American War" is devoted to Edison's *Love and War*, a fictional film about the military and romantic exploits of a heroic American soldier.

³ See Ian Christie, "The Anglo-Boer War in North London: A Micro Study", in *Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema before 1930*, edited by Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon, eds. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007). See also Christie, Chapter 7, in *Robert Paul and the Origins of British Cinema* (University of Chicago Press, 2019). <https://academic.oup.com/chicago-scholarship-online/book/34209/chapter-abstract/289644306?redirectedFrom=fulltext>.

⁴ Candice Shy Hooper, "The War That Made Hollywood: How the Spanish-American War Saved the U.S. Film Industry," *Journal of Military History* 76 (January 2012): 69–97. Accessible at <http://smallwars.ferrellhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/HOOPER-SpAm-war-Hollywood-25-p.pdf>. See also Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (University of California Press, 1994); John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England: Filming the Boer War*, volume 4 of *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894–1901* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1984).

⁵ Stephen Bottomore, "Filming, Faking, and Propaganda: The Origins of the War Film, 1897–1902" (PhD diss., Utrecht University, 2007). <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/22650/c7.pdf>.

⁶ "Cuban War Pictures," *Phonoscope* 2, no. 4 (April 1898): 7, quoting from the *New York Journal*.

⁷ *Clipper*, April 9, 1904, 160, quoted in Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3q2nb2gw/>

⁸ All of these are among the nearly 90 percent of Paul's films lost but documented in his illustrated catalogs. See Christie, Chapter 7.

⁹ The magic lantern was commonly known as the Stereopticon in the US.

¹⁰ *Moving Picture World*, April 2, 1910.

¹¹ I. Christie and John Sedgwick, "'Fumbling Towards Some New Kind of Art?' The Changing Composition of Film Programmes in Britain, 1908–1914," in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, A. Ligensa and K. Kreimeier, eds. (John Libbey, 2009).

¹² On Blok's welcoming attitude to cinema, see Yuri Tsvian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception* (Routledge, 2005), 40.

¹³ As indeed there is in many earlier street scenes which are undoubtedly the result of careful preparation, if not direction. See Ian Christie, "Early Film and the Construction of Everyday Life on Screen," in *The Everyday in Visual Culture*, François Penz and Janina Schupp, eds. (Routledge, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003107309>.

¹⁴ Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life." https://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/bpl_images/content_store/sample_chapter/0631225137/bridge.pdf.

¹⁵ The phrase is from Alex Danchev and Sara Whitfield, *Magritte: A Life* (Pantheon, 2021). Images of Fantomas and Mabuse recur in Magritte's paintings between 1926 and 1943.

¹⁶ The film is now known as *Women's Rights* (Bamforth, 1900). See Ian Christie, *The Last Machine: Early Cinema and the Birth of the Modern World* (BBC Educational Developments, 1994), 81, for a fuller explanation.

¹⁷ On Martin Duncan and *The Unseen World*, see "Seeing the Unseen World," *Bioscope*, May 29, 2008. <https://thebioscope.net/2008/05/29/seeing-the-unseen-world/>.

¹⁸ See Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907–1934* (British Film Institute, 1985), for a concise account of this, available free online via Bordwell.

¹⁹ Leonid Andreyev, "First Letter on Theatre" (1911), in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896–1939*, Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds. (Routledge, 1994).

²⁰ Tolstoy died late in the same year, before he had the opportunity to attempt writing for film. However, his last days inspired a controversial 1912 Russian film, *Departure of the Great Old Man* (Protazanov, 1912).

²¹ Tuchinski: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuschinski_Theatre; Grauman's Egyptian Theatre: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grauman%27s_Egyptian_Theatre.

²² Odeon: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odeon_Luxe_Leicester_Square.

²³ Robert Allen, *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (University of Exeter Press, 2007), now published in book form as *Picturegoers* (University of Exeter Press, 2022).

²⁴ Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (University of Illinois Press, 2001).

²⁵ Martin Loiperdinger, Uli Jung, eds., *Importing Asta Nielsen: The International Film Star in the Making, 1910–1914* (John Libbey, 2013). See also the Importing Asta Nielsen database. [https://importing-asta-nielsen.online.uni-marburg.de/#:~:text=Importing%20Asta%20Nielsen%20Database%20\(IANDb\)%20emerged%20from%20the%20international%20conference,%2F%20Filmmuseum%20\(DFE\)%20and%20funded](https://importing-asta-nielsen.online.uni-marburg.de/#:~:text=Importing%20Asta%20Nielsen%20Database%20(IANDb)%20emerged%20from%20the%20international%20conference,%2F%20Filmmuseum%20(DFE)%20and%20funded).

²⁶ See Ian Christie, "From Screen Personalities to Stars: Analysing Early Film Fame in Europe," in Loiperdinger and Jung, *Importing Asta Nielsen*.

²⁷ Bill Douglas Cinema Museum. <https://www.bdcmuseum.org.uk/>.

²⁸ Media History Digital Library: <https://mediahistoryproject.org>.

²⁹ See Eye Filmmuseum, "68mm: Mutoscope and Biograph." <https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/collections/film/film-files/68mm-mutoscope-and-biograph>.

³⁰ Links Featured in "New Windows on the World"

The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station (Lumière, 1895):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FAj9fJQRZA&ab_channel=AndyMyers

A Soldier's Courtship (Paul, 1896): <https://youtu.be/tJbSaD95bkU?t=1191>

Rough Sea at Dover (Paul, 1895): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RW1CJVAPCI&ab_channel=VintageFilmsChannel

Carmencita (Edison, 1894): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15jwb1ZTMA&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress

Annabelle Serpentine Dance (Edison, 1895):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6l4MX8wcFA&ab_channel=CinemaChronology

May Irwin Kiss (Edison, 1896): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q690-lexNB4&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress

The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures (Paul, 1901): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8l4-UxyJpQ&ab_channel=D%C3%A9fensed%E2%80%99afficher

Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (Edison, 1902):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHQPUiB6SRM&ab_channel=TonyPellum
Those Awful Hats (Biograph, 1909):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyjs5W3mRbl&ab_channel=It%27sAUniversalPicture
The Story the Biograph Told (Biograph, 1904): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6ctEwpM_n0
 Early postcards of cinemagoing: <https://picturegoing.com/?cat=193>
As Seen Through a Telescope (Smith, 1900):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ilSV_2XS_U&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
What is Seen Through a Keyhole (Zecca, 1901):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPQxQFHRwIA&ab_channel=Iconauta
 Graphic novel about Paul (by Ian Christie): <https://simplebooklet.com/YqicBIR7tUKyUgguZBJS9S#page=1>
Come Along, Do! (Paul, 1898): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXqH_XS2A7k&ab_channel=IanChristie
Stop Thief! (Williamson, 1901): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wtFm19GXZc&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
The Unfortunate Policemen (Paul, 1903):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGUE0XloM4Q&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
Daring Daylight Burglary (Mottershaw, 1903):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvVRRizl0PA&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
Great Train Robbery (Porter, 1903):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3jrB5ANUUY&ab_channel=OldFilmsandStuff
The Runaway Horse (Pathé, 1908): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eUmF_s9rBg&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
The Pumpkin Chase (Gaumont, 1908): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leGYo-NGWK4&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
The Bangville Police (Sennett, 1912): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHXlIXsCxT8&ab_channel=Chaplin1914
Easy Street (Chaplin, 1917): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2KgQ57KDMY&ab_channel=Iconauta
Seven Chances (Keaton, 1925):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnflTNU8cbA&ab_channel=Andr%C3%A9Bourbeau
Execution of Mary Queen of Scots (Edison, 1895):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgDG_wc19aU&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
The Vanishing Lady (Méliès, 1896): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3JraYOB1P4&ab_channel=avcollege
Upside Down, or the Human Flies (Paul, 1899):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1eeXg_DLMM&ab_channel=Goran
Scrooge, or, Marley's Ghost (Paul, 1903):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAlw6M0WpwE&t=19s&ab_channel=OlexMelnyk
Alice in Wonderland (Hepworth, 1903): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeIXfdogJbA&ab_channel=BF1
A Trip to the Moon (Méliès, 1902):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFtR9bQupak&ab_channel=UnitedGlobalPictures
The Melomaniac (Méliès, 1903): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX3XyAASnts&ab_channel=LucianaSayanes
The Fantastic Voyage (Méliès, 1904):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PII3zftl5wg&t=39s&ab_channel=LaP%C3%AAche
The Haunted Hotel (Blackton, 1907):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmMYgVgDFM0&ab_channel=EarlyCinemaHistory
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Universal, 1916):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsrXuyjci7U&ab_channel=TimelessClassicMovies
The Life of Christ (Zecca, 1903): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKb4VxcShGQ&t=40s&ab_channel=Iconauta
Atlantis (Blom, 1913): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoVnwp3isMI&ab_channel=Films
Cabiria (Pastrone, 1914): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOWicOwtHa8&ab_channel=Volvandese
 Spanish-American War Collection (Library of Congress): <https://www.loc.gov/collections/spanish-american-war-in-motion-pictures/about-this-collection/>
The Biograph in Battle (by W. K. L. Dickson): <https://thebioscope.net/2009/05/23/the-biograph-in-battle/#:~:text=Dickson's%20The%20Biograph%20in%20Battle,about%20the%20filming%20of%20war>
 Eye Filmmuseum 68mm Restorations: <https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/collections/film/film-files/68mm-mutoscope-and-biograph> AND http://www.cinetecadelfriuli.org/gcm/ed_precedenti/edizione2000/biograph2000.html
Entry of the Scots' Guard into Bloemfontein (Paul, 1900):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1sn0N1y4ol&ab_channel=PublicDomainStuff
A Camp Smithy (Paul, 1899): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PLWYgF9pQI&ab_channel=ViragnuYouTube

Attack on a Picquet (Paul, 1899): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8CHsp-zIA&ab_channel=AnBesV
Capture of a Boer Battery by the British (Paul, 1900): <https://www.loc.gov/item/00694169>
The Prince's Derby (Paul, 1896): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5weqwRP3R8&ab_channel=FilmsbytheYear
Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight (1897):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YotGnDnWRV0&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
Corbett and Courtney before the Kinetograph (American Memory, 1894):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJ47ula7j5U&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
L'affaire Dreyfus (Méliès, 1899): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdVmYffDqT0&ab_channel=TiTi
Mob Outside the Temple of Music (Edison, 1901) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46A8GPTol1k&ab_channel=CinemaHistory
The Martyred Presidents (Porter, 1901) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A330ajBrj1c&ab_channel=TheEarlycinema
Terrible Teddy, the Grizzly King (Edison, 1901) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gftWjDPlmPI&ab_channel=RonaldEmmis
President Roosevelt and the Rough Riders (Biograph, 1903) [LoC]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WP7yyABtdul>
Roosevelt in Africa (Pathé, 1910):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_QeeHHEZw&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
Grass (Cooper, 1924) Poster: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grass_%281925_film%29
Chang (Schoedsack, 1927) Poster: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chang:_A_Drama_of_the_Wilderness
Champs Élysée (Lumière, 1896): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyQoEIBfL7w>
Blackfriars Bridge (Paul, 1896): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fABILtla_IE
Lower Broadway (Biograph, 1903) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G535zKtc5_Q&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
What Happened on 23rd Street, NYC (Edison, 1901) [LoC]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDJCCr2-Sso>
At the Foot of the Flatiron (Biograph, 1903):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhadBlokSAA&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
Rube and Mandy at Coney Island (Edison, 1903) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o11xWKORAHE&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
A Gesture Fight in Hester Street (Biograph, 1900) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsd7jUNY4vk&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
Levi and Cohen, the Irish Comedians (Biograph, 1903) [LoC]:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGgFwUSjVuY&ab_channel=LibraryofCongress
A Catastrophe in Hester Street (Biograph, 1904) [LoC]:
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Article DOI: [10.1349/PS1.1938-6060.A.490](https://doi.org/10.1349/PS1.1938-6060.A.490)

