

# Film Timeline

1893	Thomas Edison displayed 'his' Kinetoscope at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago and received patents for his movie camera, the Kinetograph, and his peepshow device. Edison also held the first public exhibition of films shot using his Kinetograph at the Brooklyn Institute.
Dec. 28, 1895	In France, two brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière invented the <i>Cinématographe</i> which was patented in early 1895. It was a combination movie camera and projector, capable of showing an image that could be viewed by a large audience. They held their first <i>public</i> screening or commercial exhibition - often considered "the birth of film" - when they projected a motion picture onto a screen for the first time in a Paris café named Salon Indien. One film shown was <i>The Arrival of a Train</i> , which was said to have caused a stampede. With a few exceptions, like Lumière's <i>Gardener Watered</i> , the early films were mostly documentaries (or films of every-day life) - or so-called <i>actualités</i> .
1900s	Movies became a popular attraction in amusement arcades, music halls, traveling fairs, wax museums, and vaudeville houses in many countries.
1902	Georges Méliès, a magician-turned-filmmaker, introduced innovative special effects in the first real science fiction film, <i>Le Voyage Dans La Lune</i> , aka <i>A Trip to the Moon</i> . This was his 400th film - a narrative fantasy of long shots strung together, punctuated with disappearances, double exposures, and other trick photography and elaborate sets.
1903	American director Edwin S. Porter, chief of production at the Edison studio, helped to shift film production toward narrative story telling with such films as the first realistic (or documentary) film <i>The Life of an American Fireman</i> and <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> , one of the first westerns (filmed on the East Coast in New Jersey - not in Hollywood). The latter, a 12-minute dramatic film, was the first to use modern film techniques, such as multiple camera positions, filming out of sequence and later editing the scenes into their proper order. There were 14 scenes with parallel cross-cutting between simultaneous events. It was also memorable for its audience-shocking scene (placed at the beginning or end) of a cowboy shooting pistol directly at the camera.
1905	Harry Davis and John Davis opened their first movie theater, dubbing it a <i>nickelodeon</i> , in Pittsburgh. The opening feature was <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> . The name was derived from the cost of admission -- a nickel -- and the Greek word for theater -- "odeon."
1906-1908	About 5,000 nickelodeons existed throughout the United States. Many studios were created to keep up with the increased demand for films. In 1907, The Saturday Evening Post reported that daily attendance at nickelodeons exceeded two million. In 1907, the Chicago Daily Tribune denounced nickelodeons as firetraps and tawdry corrupters of children. Nickelodeons spread and numbered between 8,000 to 10,000 by 1908 with 200,000 customers a day, charging five cents for a movie accompanied by a piano.
1907	The first film-makers arrived in Los Angeles. Filmmakers began to realize that the Los Angeles area was a good filming area with a favorable climate and a variety of natural scenery. The first movie was also made in Los Angeles soon afterwards (see 1909). Previously, movies were filmed in New York City and in Fort Lee, NJ.
1908	Nine leading film producers or manufacturers (including Biograph that joined forces with Edison) set up the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), a.k.a. "the Trust." It was an attempt to legally monopolize production in the burgeoning American film industry. Ten producers were granted licenses to use equipment authorized by the Trust, while everyone else was ruled to be running illegal film production operations. The trust formed a subsidiary called the General Film Company in 1910 to use intimidation and violence (with threats of not selling or leasing licensed equipment) against independents or any other distributors who purchased and showed motion pictures from any other company. Kodak agreed to sell film stock only to member companies.

1909	There were about 9,000 movie theaters in the United States. The typical film was only a single reel long, or ten- to twelve minutes in length, and the performers were anonymous. Acting in a movie was looked upon as degrading compared with stage acting, so actors were never identified by name.
1909	<i>The New York Times</i> coined the term 'stars' for leading movie players.
1909	An American court ruled that unauthorized films infringed on copyrights, in a case over the 1907 film version of <i>Ben-Hur</i> . As a result, film companies began buying screen rights to books and plays.
1911	Pennsylvania became the first state to pass a film censorship law.
1913	The American director D. W. Griffith, director of hundreds of short films, was credited with defining the art of motion pictures. In making his films, Griffith used filming techniques still used today. Such filming techniques included altering camera angles, using close-ups in a dramatic way, breaking scenes up into multiple shots, and more. Previously, filmmakers kept the camera in one position which was generally 12 feet away from the actors and at a right angle to the set. In 1913, Griffith finished his contract with Biograph films in NYC and left, because he wanted to make feature-length films. His production company became an autonomous production unit partner in Triangle Pictures Corporation with Keystone Studios and Thomas Ince.
1914	Charlie Chaplin's first film, <i>Making a Living</i> , was released. The silent comedian debuted his trademark mustached, baggy-pants 'Little Tramp' character in <i>Kid Auto Races At Venice</i> . It would become his most famous character. This was a year in which he made dozens of films and became filmdom's first great star.
1914	Grand cinema houses were regularly replacing cheaper nickelodeons. For example, the first movie "palace", The Strand, opened at Times Square in New York with seating for 3,300.
1915	Pioneering film-maker D. W. Griffith's technically brilliant, 3-hour Civil War epic, <a href="#">The Birth of a Nation</a> , premiered with a phenomenal ticket price of \$2 -- it was based on <i>The Clansman</i> , a novel by Thomas Dixon, Jr. Griffith's film popularized the expressive close-up, naturalistic acting, the flashback and other elements (i.e., exciting cross-cutting, a last minute rescue) that endure today as the structural principles of narrative filmmaking. It introduced the historical epic and period piece as a film genre and defined the language of film. Although it was the most extravagant and expensive film up to that time, it was also highly controversial because of its racist theme. It was the first motion picture shown in the White House, where President Woodrow Wilson described it as "writing history with lightning."
1918	The four Warner brothers, Jack, Albert, Harry and Samuel, opened their first West Coast studio.
1918	The US Supreme Court ordered the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) to disband.
1919	Charlie Chaplin, D. W. Griffith, Douglas Fairbanks, and Mary Pickford established United Artists in an attempt to control their own work. UA would distribute and produce their own films. Pickford starred in <i>Daddy-Long-Legs</i> , her first film as an independent producer.
1920	The movement of German film Expressionism was established with Robert Wiene's <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> , filmed in 1919 and released in 1920. Its bizarre sets, angular camera angles and make-up influenced future literary and cinematic styles, notably the cycle of Universal's <a href="#">horror films</a> in the 30s, and <a href="#">film noir</a> in the 40s.
1921	Heavyweight silent-screen comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle signed a \$3 million contract with Paramount and celebrated with a wild party in a San Francisco hotel. There, he was arrested for the alleged rape and murder of 25 year-old bit-player/actress Virginia Rappe. Tabloids sensationalized the crime and made up stories about Arbuckle's 'bottle party.' The multiple manslaughter trials against the innocent actor always ended with the finding of 'not guilty,' but Arbuckle's career was over after two hung juries and a subsequent acquittal. As a result, the public conceived of Hollywood as wild and scandalous -- and pressures were brought to bear on the industry.

1921	The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sued Famous Players-Lasky for violating anti-trust laws by refusing to allow independent films to play in its theaters.
1921	D.W. Griffith's film <i>Dream Street</i> , with experimental sound (in its introductory prologue) using inventor Orland E. Kellum's Photokinema, has been regarded as the first feature film to use sound.
1922	Robert Flaherty's <i>Nanook of the North</i> , a record of Inuit Eskimo life, was the first feature film documentary or non-fictional narrative feature film. [The word "documentary" was reportedly first used in February, 1926, by John Grierson in his review of Flaherty's <i>Moana</i> (1926) for the New York Sun. The term may also have been used 12 years earlier by famed photographer Edward Curtis in a prospectus for his Seattle-based Continental Film Company, referring to his film <i>In the Land of the Headhunters</i> (1914).] Flaherty's film helped to usher in the documentary film movement, although it raised some controversy because it 're-created' or staged some of its hunting scenes, rather than being truly non-fictional.
1922	Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov experimented with montage, a new editing technique pioneered by Russian filmmakers.
1922	Nervous Hollywood censored itself by creating the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) - later renamed as the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), to be headed by former postmaster General Will H. Hays. The Hays Office (as it would be called), a film review board (censorship division), was created to serve as Hollywood's public relations organization, and to clean up the motion picture industry.
1922	German director F. W. Murnau's influential, expressionistic vampire film <i>Nosferatu eine Symphonie des Grauens</i> (aka <i>Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror</i> ) initiated a trend for Gothic tales of horror. It starred Max Schreck as Count Orlok - a rat-faced vampire. Without rights to the Bram Stoker novel, Murnau had to rename his vampire Nosferatu and Count Dracula was named Count Orlock.
1923	Cecil B. DeMille's first version of <i>The Ten Commandments</i> was the most expensive film ever made and featured the largest set ever constructed in movie history to that time - the 'City of the Pharaoh' (120 feet tall, 720 feet wide, and with massive Egyptian statuary weighing 1,000,000 pounds). Its 'parting of the Red Sea' scene featured state-of-the-art special effects, and some segments were filmed in early Technicolor. After the film, the director ordered the set in San Luis Obispo County (California) buried -- 60 years later, archeologists uncovered it. DeMille remade his silent epic in 1956.
1923	The Hollywood (originally HOLLYWOODLAND) sign was built for \$21,000.
1925	The great Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein directed <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> , a film celebrating the 20th anniversary of an unsuccessful Russian Revolution in 1905 and a portrait of mutiny aboard a battleship named Potemkin. His influential film, considered one of the greatest of all time, effectively established the dialectic film montage technique, especially in the Odessa Steps sequence, as an important structural method to evoke a response from the juxtaposition of two clashing film shots. Non-linear editing in future films, such as <i>Pulp Fiction</i> (1994) owe their stylistic techniques to this film.
1925	One of silent film genius Charlie Chaplin's classic masterpieces featuring the Tramp character, <a href="#"><i>The Gold Rush</i></a> , was released. It became the highest grossing silent comedy film of all time.
1925	Western Electric and Warner Bros. agreed to develop a system to make movies with sound.