

Before Edison began his experiments in the motion picture field several attempts were made to produce "motion" pictures with ordinary cameras. The most serious of these was made by Eadward Muybridge in 1878. He set up a row of ordinary "still" cameras on the rail of a trotting track. These were "snapped" as the horse hit the strings attached to the shutters.



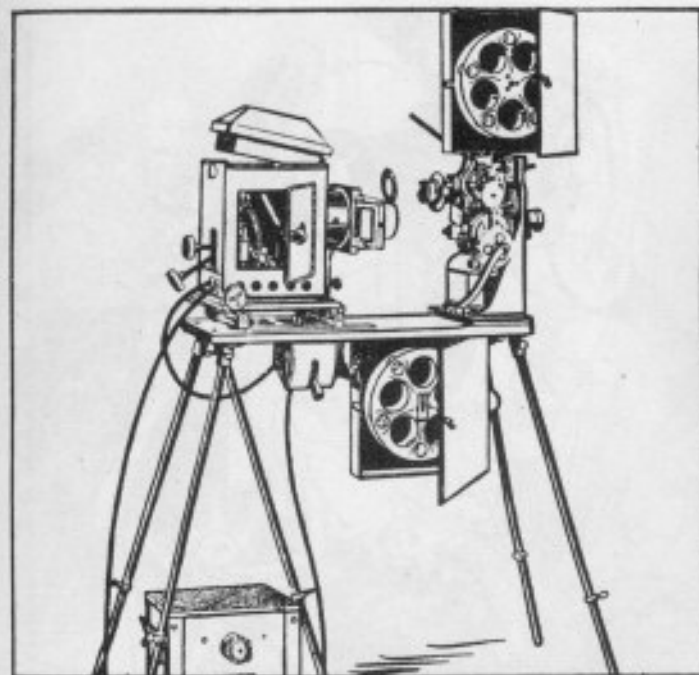
In 1887 the idea occurred to Edison that he could make an instrument that would do for the eye what the phonograph did for the ear. In his mind he pictured the possibilities of combining both instruments so that, in the future, singers and musicians long dead could be "seen" and heard at the same time all over the world, another example of his amazing foresight.



In the earliest attempts to make real motion pictures, using one camera and many negatives instead of one negative to each camera, the photographs were arranged in a spiral on a cylinder. This cylinder was about the size of the wax cylinder phonograph record of that time. Edison is shown here experimenting with one.



While Edison was experimenting with his motion picture ideas, the continuous film negative, with which we are all familiar today, was being developed by the Eastman Kodak Company. Edison saw in this the solution of his problem. It was a very light body of tough material on which thousands of photographs could be made consecutively at high speed.



One of the two machines which made the motion picture a business success is shown here. It is an early type of Edison's Projecting Kinetoscope, the machine that throws the picture on the screen. Its work was seen by millions, but comparatively few movie fans have ever seen the projecting instrument itself. This type of projector is now obsolete.



In the Edison laboratory yard at Orange, N. J. the first of all motion picture studios was built. It was a wooden, barnlike structure with a roof that could be raised and lowered. It revolved on a circular track and was swung with the sun. Black roofing paper covered the inside and outside. It was called the "Black Maria."



In the days of the "Black Maria" the simplest kinds of subjects were filmed; a man sneezing, the famous Carmencita dancing, bears performing, etc. "Jim" Corbett was then in his prime. He agreed to box before the camera with a colored boxer of Newark, N. J. The latter did not know whom he was to box until he arrived.



When the dusky battler recognized his famous opponent, first he was paralyzed with terror, then he began to tremble. When he recovered the use of his legs, instead of stepping into the ring, he stepped on the gas in the general direction of Newark. Some of the audience hasn't stopped laughing yet.



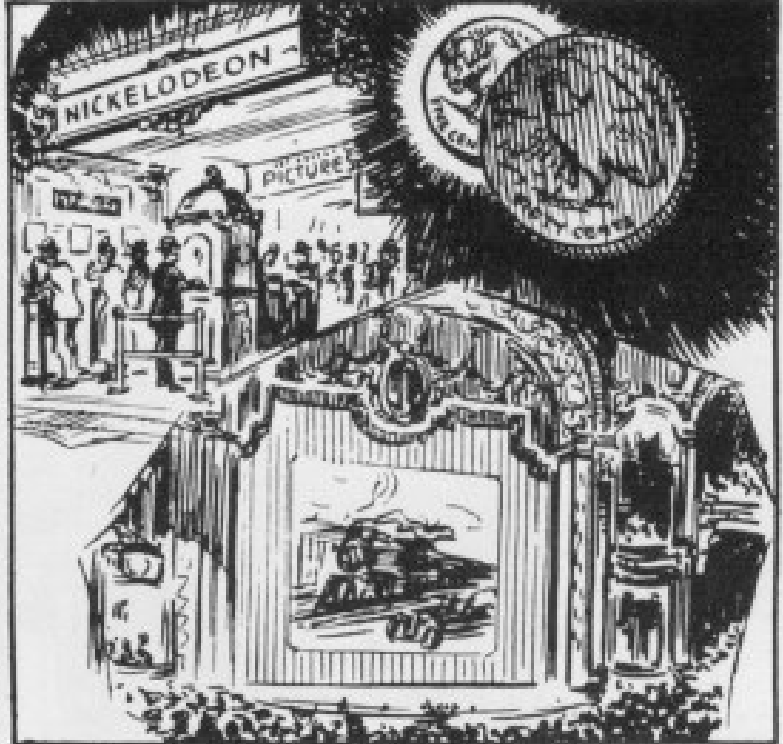
During the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902) Edison kept fully equipped "British" and "Boer armies" in the hills of northern New Jersey. As the news of the real battles came from the front, these "armies" would go through the same actions and the films would be sent to the movie houses of those days.



One day the battle of Spion Kopje was being filmed. An actor representing General Kronje, of the Boer army, was to fire a wooden cannon. The fuse slipped out of his hand into a large bottle filled with gunpowder. When the films went out they included this scene, which brought down the house everywhere.



In 1912 Edison introduced the "kinetophone," a combination of phonograph and motion-picture projector. This produced what was later known as the "talkies." Edison had the idea in the back of his mind as early as 1887. This picture shows the interior of Edison's Kinetophone studio at Orange, N. J.



It might be said that Edison "Fordized" entertainment for the masses. Also, that he was the "father" of the "nickelodeon," without being responsible for that institution's objectionable characteristics. Since then, of course, the modern movie palace has eclipsed the nickelodeon. Movies were Edison's favorite entertainment.