

Missing my Myerberg people more each day!
I still would be teaching about the Silent Era, so let's go with that.

Two topics for today

- a) Technological advances leading to motion pictures
- b) The Spirit of Harold Lloyd *****important note below regarding this part

Today even our phones can take quality motion pictures and they do not even have to be SILENT. Yet, as you are well aware, it took a very long line of inventors and entrepreneurs to reach even the most elementary motion picture.

In our class at Myerberg, the last invention we spoke of, was from 1872, the Zoogyroscope from the inventor Eadweard Muybridge. His invention originated from a bet from Leland Stanford of both railroad and governorship fame. Stanford's bet was regarding as to if there is a point in a horse's gallop, when all four hooves are in the air. The human eye could not discern this, only the camera. Muybridge would line up 24 cameras along the track with thin trip threads which would be set off as the horse galloped by. He had to set up targeted reflectors and specially patented camera shutters as well. Indeed, he was able to prove that a horse is actually "suspended in air" at points in his gallop.

The cameras settled the bet.

This led Muybridge to many film experiments with animals and humans. He had at least 20,000 images which he referred to as "Animal Locomotion". Through all of this, he would develop and perfect his zoogyroscope (or zoopraxiscope), he worked both on the facets of filming and projection.

There is much written on this and we do have his horse film as well. Muybridge had, let's say a colorful life to put it mildly. Inventors sometimes have quite interesting backgrounds. For some reason, G-d often grants immense intelligence and creativity to persons of "fascinating" nature.

1874-Dr. E.J Morey produced the photographic revolver. This was an instrument refined to the point of catching 100 photos per second. Thus, his one camera could now do what Muybridge needed 24 cameras for, a decade earlier. Morey definitely had contributed an early forerunner of the motion picture camera.

1888 - Edison and William K.L. Dickinson worked on the Kinetograph. By 1890 they would be able to team this with the Kinetoscope. The two machines were able to record and show pictures in synchronization (more or less) with an Edison cylinder phonograph.

Have you ever seen a picture of Edison's record player? It looked like a roll of aluminum foil. Eventually it lost out to the Victrola (courtesy of Enrico Caruso of another Myerberg course).

Now you may ask, why were movies silent if Edison had made a talkie?

Many reasons. Two big ones,

- A) the synchronization was a big issue. Would you like to see what that was like? Try some of the things on Youtube downloaded improperly. You'll see the sound coming at the wrong time from the wrong people/ or out of someone's nose or dog.
- B) They could not get the sound anywhere near loud enough for an audience.

Nevertheless, the devices would be perfected and fine-tuned more and more. Names like Lumiere, Anschutz, Jenkins. Armat and Lubin (and more) all would contribute to bring us closer to the world of the MOVIE.

2) The Spirit of Harold Lloyd (Comic star in both silent and talking eras)

***** Note on Lloyd (Edison as well to an extent)

(We have found historical record of bigotry involving Mr. Lloyd. He may have made negative statements about Jewish employment which he later denied. He was a central leading figure in the

establishing and enforcement of real estate covenants barring Jews and blacks from Hollywood. We cannot take away from Harold, his G-d given talent. He did thrill many and gets points for that. Nevertheless, we must recognize, that in his personal life, Lloyd apparently was not the sweet soul he portrayed. As you are surely aware, Edison too made some highly offensive comments about Jews.)

But here he is:

Take a schlimiel, a schlimazel, a nebbish, a jerk, a yokel,
then mix him with innocence and naiveté
but let him be lovable and worth rooting for.....
that's the spirit of Harold Lloyd!!!

You watch his movies and cannot get over how a guy could be such a fool yet rise above to success. Usually attaining such, in a most illogical and unpredictable fashion. You do find yourself cheering him on, whether to be saved from hurt, shame, or losing the girl.

Take his movie, *The Freshman*, from 1925. He is the old-fashioned youth, whose entire goal in life is to attend college. Once there, his biggest aim is to become educated, accepted, earn his letters and see his face in the college paper. Real college spirit. I doubt it still exists. He is consumed by it. The film opens with his mom noticing how well Harold has saved up money for college. Such a good boychick! He will not need to burden his parents with an allowance request. Then we find him in his bedroom practicing college cheers. His father in the sitting room below, cannot figure out where these strange sounds are coming from. Harold is exhilarated more and more, as he learns his cheers, sees a movie about a college star 6 times, then learns his college jig and handshake. He uses that throughout the movie on everyone including his pompous dean.

You just cannot get over what a vulnerable freshman this kid is going to be! The movie is delightful with endless antics, as he tries to find his way towards education, football and acceptance. The poor freshman fails to realize it, but most of his supposed friends are laughing at him, not with him. They get him to spend almost all of his college allowance savings on their ice cream cones. You find yourself

switching from laughing at him and shaking your head in disbelief to truly feeling hurt for him.

Towards the end of the movie we find him at the college gala with his tailored suit (the tailor keeps having dizzy spells which are only remediated by a glazele schnapps). Sadly, but still funny, he dances about with his attire falling apart piece by piece all over the dance floor and dancers. You can imagine how embarrassed he winds up when it all goes kaput. The daughter of the hotelier, not a college girl, will be his love and salvation (Jobyna Ralston plays her part well, adorned with those ancient sweetheart curls ala Mary Pickford. She proves that crossword puzzles can lead the path to true love). Then of course, we get a crazy (really) college football ending with great stadium shots. He gets to keep his pants on for these heroics, but not his sweater.

He does win at the end though and you really are happy for him. Seriously.

Although, real life does not often work out the way it does for Harold, there still is a nice takeaway.

In the Freshman, as in many of his other movies, Lloyd displays a youthful innocence coupled with a joy of life. It's refreshing. Being savvy and streetwise is admirable. But you know, at times it's simply nice to watch or meet someone who is just trying to delight in life and what it has to offer. We are all taught to be prepared and to plan for the future. That's surely the proper path. Regardless, sometimes it's still enjoyable and even stress relieving, to meet a character (only way to describe him) who just merrily goes about life. A fellow who really believes that everybody can be my friend and that things will turn out just fine.

This is Harold Lloyd, pale face, horn rim glasses and ever-present silly smile

From Harry Karp