

MY FIRST SLIDE

Gwen Sebus

If you ask me which is my first slide, I will answer that I have several 'first slides' – the first slide I saw, the first slide I bought, the first slide I owned and the first slide I showed. I was born in December between two Dutch holidays, the Feast of St Nicolas and Christmas Day. And it was always raining that day (so that is the way I remember my early birthdays). We had, and still have, two magic lanterns with slides in the family, bought by my two great-grandfathers. For my birthday parties my mother took out one of the lanterns and gave a magic lantern show. I loved it!

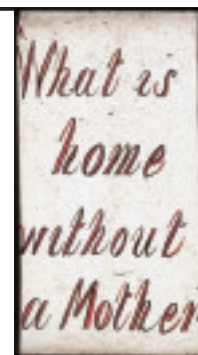


I was around four years old when I saw my first lantern show and I cannot recall which slide was the first I saw projected. But I do remember which story I liked best. For me that was the Primus set *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, especially slide number 7: Morgiana fills the 40 jars, with the thieves hidden inside, with burning oil. The brave woman! At the end my mother always showed two German-made slipper slides we had in the collection, a man with an expanding belly, drinking beer, and a woman with a very large nose and moving eyes, called Juffrouw Prikneus (Miss Pricknose). In the family collection there were also sets that lanternists nowadays will not show including the Primus set *The Elephant's Revenge*, with text on the slides, and the set *Ten Little Nigger Boys*. My mother always showed them in reverse, so that we could not read the text in the slide. She was a very good story teller and made up her own stories. A few years later *The Elephant's Revenge* set was replaced by a set without text and the *Ten Little Nigger Boys* set was not shown anymore.



Years later, my mother started to expand the collection, not knowing yet about the Magic Lantern Society. It was that far off time, long ago, without the internet. At that time she met Annet Duller who was also collecting and doing shows. My husband and I started to look for magic lantern articles in shops and markets. At a local market we found for her two long French magic lantern slides, probably from 1860, with images of soldiers. So these were the first slides

I ever bought. In 1986 at Camden Market in Beryl Vosburgh's shop in London we bought *The Ten Year Book* of the Magic Lantern Society, as a birthday present for my mother, possibly Beryl's own copy. Now we learned more about the Magic Lantern Society. From about 1988 I started buying slides for my own collection. One of the first slides that I bought at one of the meetings at the Architectural Association in London for myself (I don't recall in which order) was a slipper slide of a pie with frogs jumping out. This slide I showed at my children's birthday parties as their 'magic birthday pie'. I also bought four matching slides with a ship in full sail, in a storm, etc. I also show these slides frequently. My first motto slides, a set of three matching slides – 'Welcome', 'Silence' and 'Goodnight' – I have never shown. I bought them just because they were so beautifully painted. The slide with the frogs was the first slide I ever projected. None of these slides will I ever sell, for sentimental reasons, because they were the start of a still expanding collection and my career as lanternist.



IMAGES OF WOMEN IN SLIPPING SLIDES

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