

A Three-Part Series on Slides — Part 3: The Golden Age

A Weekly Sunday Newsletter from Stilson Video Services



The Reliable Kodak Carousel Slide Projector

Last week we talked about what led to the golden age of slides. Most would say that was during the 1960s and 1970s.

If you've ever experienced a slide show, even more than the images, you probably remember the room going dark, the hum of the projector fan, and the distinctive "click" as one slide transitioned to the next. Slide shows were events that brought families together to share memories. I remember a lot of laughter, comments about the images as they passed before us, and the occasional jammed slide followed by some grumbling from the operator.

Vacations, holidays, birthdays—these moments came to life one frame at a time, often narrated by the person who took them. It was storytelling in its simplest form.

Even today, I've known several people who will rent an old slide projector for an event, just to relive that experience one more time.

By the 1950s and into the 1980s, 35mm slides had become one of the most popular ways to capture and display photographs. Even though most people continued to make prints, slides carved out a sizable niche in the consumer photography market.

Compared to prints, slides seemed more special. The colors were rich. The images were sharp. And when projected onto a screen—or even just a blank wall—they felt larger than life.

But what really set slides apart was the experience.

And at the center of it all was the slide projector. Sometimes they worked well, and other times not so much. However, machines like the Kodak Carousel, introduced in the early 1960s, were a leap forward in slide projector technology, making the whole process much simpler.

But like most formats we talk about, slides eventually gave way to something more convenient.

Printed photos became easier to manage. Then digital photography arrived, and suddenly images could be viewed instantly—no projector required.

Slide shows, which once brought families together, became far less common. Over time, the projectors were put away. The carousels were boxed up. And the slides themselves were placed in storage... and slowly forgotten.

That's a shame, because one of the things that makes slides so special is that they often contain some of the earliest color images a family has.

Once customers decide they want to see these images again, there's an excitement and anticipation that always accompanies these orders.

Today, we regularly see these collections come through the door. Sometimes it's a few trays. Sometimes it's boxes filled with thousands of slides. And almost always, they haven't been viewed in a very long time. After all, projectors stop working, bulbs burn out, and parts become hard to find.

And the slides themselves aren't immune to time either. Dust finds its way in, colors can begin to shift, and in some cases, mold can even develop.

The good news is those moments don't have to stay stuck in a carousel.

With today's technology, slides can be carefully scanned, adjusted to restore their original color, and brought back to life in a way that makes them easy to view and share again.

The projector may no longer work. The click of the carousel may have faded. But the memories are still there—waiting to be enjoyed again.

Lives are important.

Our mission is to connect them to future generations the best way possible.

Finally, if you have a topic you'd like me to write about, let me know at [**stilson@stilson.com**](mailto:stilson@stilson.com) and I'll add it to the list.

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