

In this fascinating magazine article from 1900, an engineer makes some bold guesses about the future. You might be surprised by what he got right! What can you infer about life in 1900 from his predictions?

What May Happen in the Next 100 Years

By John Elfreth Watkins Jr.

These prophecies will seem strange, almost impossible. Yet they have come from the most learned minds in America. To the wisest men in our greatest institutions of science and learning I have gone, asking each to forecast what, in his opinion, will have been wrought before the dawn of 2001.

The American will be taller. His increase in stature will result from better health, due to vast reforms in medicine, sanitation, food, and athletics. He will live 50 years instead of 35—for he will reside in the suburbs. The city house will be no more. Building in blocks will be illegal.

Mosquitoes, house-flies, and roaches will have been practically exterminated. Insect screens will be unnecessary.

There will be no C, X, or Q. They will be abandoned because they are unnecessary. English will be a language of condensed words expressing condensed ideas, and will be more extensively spoken than any other language. Russian will rank second.

Everyone will walk 10 miles. Gymnastics will begin in the nursery, where toys and games will be designed to strengthen muscles. Exercise will be **compulsory** in schools. Every community will have a gym. A man or woman unable to walk 10 miles will be regarded as a weakling.

Wireless telephone circuits will span the world. A husband in the middle of

the Atlantic will be able to converse with his wife in Chicago.

In 1900, doctors discovered that mosquitoes spread yellow fever, which had killed more than 100,000 Americans.



Roughly 1,000 known species have become extinct over the past 500 years, including the poor dodo bird.



Between 1894 and 1904, the number of telephones in the U.S. grew from 285,000 to more than 3.3 million.



No foods will be exposed.

Storekeepers who expose food to air breathed out by patrons or to the atmosphere of the streets will be arrested along with those who sell stale produce. Refrigerators will keep food fresh for long intervals.

Hot or cold air will be turned on from spigots

to regulate the temperature of a house as we now turn on hot or cold water from spigots to regulate the temperature of the bath. Central plants will supply this cool air and heat in the same way as now our gas or electricity is furnished.

There will be no wild animals

except in **menageries**. Rats and mice will have been exterminated. The horse will have become practically extinct. The automobile will have driven out the horse. Cattle and sheep will have no horns. They will be unable to run faster than the fattened hog of today. Food animals will be bred to expend practically all of their life energy in producing meat, milk, wool and other by-products. Horns, bones, muscles and lungs will have been neglected.

Man will see around the world.

Persons and things of all kinds will be brought within focus of cameras connected electronically with screens, thousands of miles at a span. Americans will view in theaters the coronations of kings in Europe or the progress of battles in the Orient.

Copyright of Scholastic Scope is the property of Scholastic Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.