

***“In The Future, Every House
In America Will Have...”***

20 Predictions That Never Materialized

With the rate of progress in the industrialized world first peaking in the 20th century, thoughts of what was in store for the future captured the public’s imagination. Newspapers were full of predictions of what the world would look like in 50, 30 or even just 20 years down the road. While some predictions proved remarkably accurate, the majority failed to translate into reality. Read about 20 such predictions that describe a fanciful world envisioned by some—predictions that remained forever in the realm of fantasy.

- Yakov M. Hirschson



For many a child, a favorite topic of conversation revolves around new inventions, especially those that can “transform” our lives. Think back. When an idea for a new invention came along, and with that a prediction for its future—“In 20 years every home in America will have one!”—the whole concept took on a life of its own. Fax machines in every home, a beeper that will vocalize a message ... you name it.

Well, years have passed, and faxes and beepers have gone the way of the floppy disc and the record player. (Are you old enough to remember why using a phone is called “dialing”?)

Looking back at self-assured pundits’ predictions about the future is guaranteed to bring a smile to your face. And then there are the smirks. Many past predictions were accompanied with reassurances such as, “We already possess the technology to make this happen,” or “We are already hard at work on this project, and within a few years everyone will benefit from this fantastic advancement.”

Reality creates its own irony. Self-assured pundits notwithstanding, many of the dreams remained just that—dreams.

We now live in that “distant” future, a future that was once called “50 (or more) years from now”—a future where we are supposed to wake up to find a helicopter parked outside every home, robots working as doctors and cars that fly. We have witnessed many changes and advances, but some are not exactly in line with earlier predictions.

Let’s take a look at some of the more interesting fantasies of earlier years....

1928: Streets Will Be Exclusively for Pedestrians, While Cars Will Be Relegated to Underground Tunnels

What a sweet dream!

In 1928, a popular belief about the future was that all automotive traffic would

someday be buried underground. Not just in any ordinary tunnel, but in a tunnel with at least three stories: one for cars, one for trains and one for ships, no less.

With all those noisy automobiles out of the way, surface streets would once again become the exclusive domain of ordinary folks, the kind who walk on their own two feet. Airplanes also had a place in this future world, landing and taking off from special platforms above the streets.

There is still more to this vision by the renowned architect Harvey Corbett. People would no longer live in small homes but would reside in towering skyscrapers with traveling staircases on the outside—an improvement on the “primitive” indoor elevator. Some skyscrapers would be as much as half a mile high, and each would be an independent city with its own government.

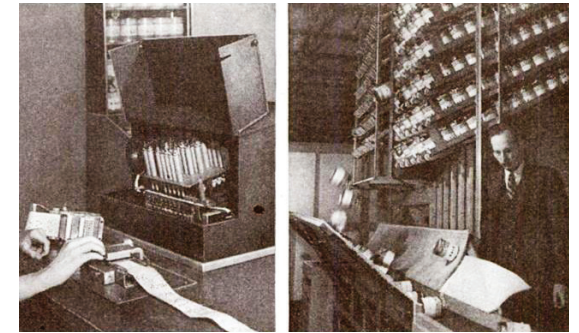
Not all of Corbett’s readers were delighted with his view of the world-to-be. Major Henry Curran of New York demonstrated that such tall buildings would be impossible to develop. It went without saying that replacing elevators with moving staircases was



A 1928 vision of how a major city would look in the future. Wide streets would be the exclusive domain of pedestrians, while cars are one floor down, ships two floors below and trains three floors down.

ridiculous. Americans are too impatient to put up with such stairs. They need the elevator that takes them right to their floor and brings them right back down.

One part of Corbett’s vivid imagination did come true. In October 2009, workers completed the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, with a height of 2,717 feet, making the structure over half a mile tall. However, the building was intended primarily for business use, not for private homes, and it most certainly did not include an outdoor, moving staircase.



Grocery of the future as imagined 70 years ago.

1940: Shopping Carts Will Go out of Style

Today, when you need to buy groceries, you go to a store, fill up your cart and push it over to the cashier. Then you wait in line to be rung up and have your groceries repackaged in shopping bags. That’s also the way they did it in 1940, but it was boldly predicted that in the near future all that was about to change...

In just a few years, your shopping experience will be transformed by advances in technology. Instead of circling the store to find the products you need, the products of your choice will be delivered directly to you on a conveyor belt.

Here’s how it will work:

When a customer enters the store, instead of using a cart, he takes a product list that names every available item. The customer punches a hole next to each product he wishes to purchase and hands his list to a store clerk who feeds it into a special machine that reads the list. This machine sends an electronic signal to the appropriate store shelves. Using vending machine technology, the product drops from the shelf through a door and lands on a conveyor belt that delivers it to the waiting customer. More delicate products, such as eggs, will not drop from the shelf but will instead be carried to the conveyor belt by a robotic arm.

1953: Cities Will Be Covered by a Plastic

In 1953, winters were cold and summers were hot. Come to think of it, these conditions are still true today. However, according to the 1953 prediction, by 2011, today, few of us would know the meaning of hot and cold because of city-wide plastic coverings that would be in place.

Listen to the dream of 1953:

In the future, cities will be covered with a special umbrella-style plastic cover that will protect the city from heat, cold or other unpleasant elements of nature.

More Dreams...



American homes were supposed to look like this in the future.