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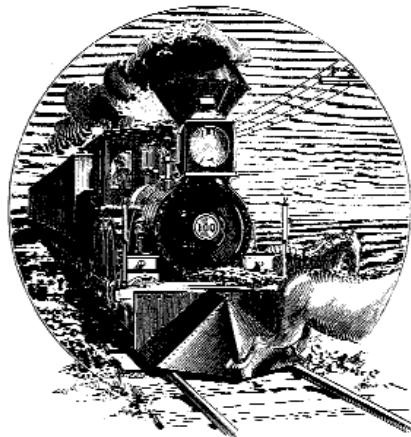
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ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid(www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers the hobby's top games – *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playlist files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

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GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com/.

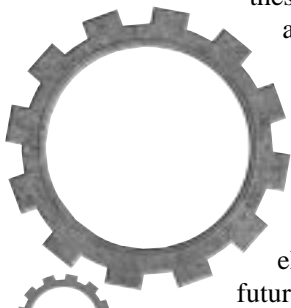
The *GURPS Steampunk* Web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/steampunk.

PAGE REFERENCES

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, or <http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html> for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Any page reference that starts with B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. AE refers to *Alternate Earths*, AET refers to *Alternate Earths 2*, BIO refers to *Bio-Tech*, CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII refers to *Compendium II*, D refers to *Dinosaurs*, H refers to *Horror*, HT refers to *High Tech*, M refers to *Magic*, ME refers to *Mecha*, P refers to *Psionics*, SW refers to *Swashbucklers*, T refers to *Technomancer*, TT refers to *Time Travel*, UN refers to *Undead*, VE refers to *Vehicles*, WWi refers to *Who's Who 1*, and WWii refers to *Who's Who 2*.


INTRODUCTION

Behold the power of Steam!



GURPS Steampunk is your guide to the 19th-century imagination. The real 19th century was an age of amazing inventions and discoveries – but these accomplishments inspired visions of even greater achievements. Jules Verne's fictional odysseys and H.G. Wells' scientific romances took contemporary readers on a journey into the realms of possibility. At the same time, inventors such as Charles Babbage and Nikola Tesla proposed new technologies as radical as those in fiction, from steam-powered mechanical computers to wireless electric power. All of these men looked ahead to a future transformed by science and engineering.

At the end of the 20th century, their visions have a renewed fascination. In some ways, the Age of Steam is very familiar. In our time, as in theirs, technology is making radical leaps forward and forcing society to change along with it. But the political and cultural differences make it exotic. Steampunk's vitality as a genre comes from this mix of familiarity and strangeness, and from our sense of wonder at the past that might have been.




GURPS Steampunk is a genre book, a collection of tools for running steampunk campaigns. Within its pages you'll find the history, geography, and culture of both the real 19th century and alternative Ages of Steam. There are templates for character archetypes from the clergyman to the demimondaine, from the native leader to the scientist. For those interested in machinery, there is a collection of wonderful devices based on 19th-century science and engineering, plus a chapter devoted to weird science. The final chapter outlines campaign worlds that can provide settings for your steampunk campaign – or inspiration for you to create your own settings.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the future past . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Stoddard is a developmental editor for a large scientific publisher, where his job responsibilities include researching obscure questions. This is also one of his favorite recreations and helped out a lot in his work on *GURPS Steampunk*, as well as his previous work for Steve Jackson Games: contributions to *GURPS Vehicles Companion*, *GURPS Villains*, and both volumes of *GURPS Who's Who*. He has been playing roleplaying games since 1975, when he discovered *Dungeons and Dragons* at his first science fiction convention. He shares an apartment in San Diego with his cohabitant, Carol Kalescky, two cats, two computers, and a large number of books. In his spare time he edits the Libertarian Futurist Society's quarterly newsletter, *Prometheus*. For relaxation he cooks, reads, rents movies, or roleplays.



TL(5+1), OR “WHAT THE HECK IS THE TECH LEVEL?”

At first glance, steampunk campaign settings appear to be the normal TL5 of the Age of Steam. But the steampunk genre allows marvelous inventions that use steam age technology to achieve results not historically achieved until TL6 or even TL7. Charles Babbage’s design for the Analytical Engine is a good example: a completely workable programmable digital computer, built with entirely mechanical technology. In some campaigns, the GM may allow much greater leaps forward – anti-gravity devices, space travel, genetic engineering, beam weapons, and many other technologies not yet mastered by current scientific methods.

The advanced technology in *GURPS Steampunk* is effectively TL6, but a divergent TL6, one that started at TL5 and went in different directions. As a shorthand notation, it can be called “TL(5+1).” In formulas and tables (such as those for medical care and first aid, p. B128), use the total of the two numbers; that is, this is effectively TL6. But it’s a *different* TL6; engineers and scientists from the standard TL6 receive unfamiliarity penalties (-2; see p. B43) in working with it, and vice versa. (This is in addition to the standard penalties for TL differences, p. B185, if applicable.) The “5” indicates that it branched off at TL5 and that it lacks several of the crucial innovations of the historical TL6.

This doesn’t define a specific divergent technology; in fact, many different divergent technologies are possible, whose users would be as unfamiliar with each other’s methods as with those of historical TL6 (see *Other Variant TLs*, p. 13). *GURPS Steampunk* uses “TL(5+1)” to make it clear that certain skills and devices are not from the historical Age of Steam, but from an alternate, technologically accelerated Victorian age. Except in a paratemporal campaign, where such distinctions may be important, a GM can just call these skills and devices TL6.



OTHER EMINENT VICTORIANS

(Continued)

EDWARD DRINKER COPE (1840-1897) AND OTHNIEL CHARLES MARSH (1831-1899)

The leading American paleontologists of the century, and bitter rivals in their search for new dinosaurs. Cope was a child prodigy who became a Harvard professor at the age of 24.

Marsh was a scion of wealth, whose family bought him a chair at Yale to support his interest in fossils. Originally friendly, they gradually became rivals and then (when Marsh pointed out that Cope had restored a skeleton with the head on the wrong end) bitter foes. At the peak of their careers, they tried to bribe each others’ workers, steal each others’ fossils, and wreck each others’ reputations. The stories of violence between their collecting parties seem only to have been rumors, but in an alternate history, the West could have witnessed a Dinosaur War.

CHARLES DARWIN (1809-1882)

Arguably the greatest biologist in history and a major cultural figure. Anyone working in biology or geology may interact with him, at least by letter. See pp. WWi100-101.

THOMAS EDISON (1847-1931)

Perhaps the best-remembered inventor of his century; he combined his own ingenuity and self-taught technical skills with the ability to manage a large and underpaid technical staff – and a conscious cultivation of his own public image. A particularly notable episode in his life was the controversy over direct vs. alternating current, in which he backed direct current and invented the electric chair to demonstrate the dangers of alternating current.

JOHN ERICSSON (1803-1889)

A Swedish engineer who emigrated to the United States, where he revolutionized naval warfare by building the *Monitor* during the American Civil War.

MICHAEL FARADAY (1791-1867)

Originally trained as a chemist, he turned in 1831 to the investigation of electricity and magnetism. He developed the concept of fields of force (the basis for James Maxwell’s theoretical work), demonstrated electromagnetic induction (the production of an electric current by a changing magnetic field), and invented the electric motor and generator.

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What is the essence of steampunk? What makes a world, a story, or a campaign part of the steampunk genre? Retrotech and gadgets are the most obvious ingredients, but there is more to it than steam-powered flying machines and difference engines. Steampunk imagines new inventions and discoveries in a historical setting, the Age of Steam, and it is this setting that lends the gadgets their context. It is changes in history, as much as changes in technology, that make steampunk so fascinating. A steampunk campaign can be set in the real 19th century, with the addition of one or two marvelous inventions, or in an alternative 19th century created by a different technology, or even in an entirely different Age of Steam set on a faraway world. But in order to experiment with alternate history, it's useful to know something about the real flow of history.

This chapter explores major trends in 19th-century history and considers how they might have been changed, or how they might appear in a different setting. The sidebars provide a timeline of real historical events, including not just political and military history but inventions, discoveries, and theories.

SCIENCE, INVENTION, AND INDUSTRY

During the 19th century, science and technology advanced with unprecedented speed. At the start of the century, technological innovation was mostly based on craft skills rather than theoretical science. Often, technology was invented first and the theory to explain it was developed afterward, as when Sadi Carnot developed the theory of heat engines to explain steam power. By the century's end, the trend had reversed, and many laboratory curiosities had become commercially valuable: radio from Maxwell's electromagnetic equations, dyes from organic chemistry, and pasteurized foods from Louis Pasteur's work in microbiology.

In 1815 Newtonian mechanics was solidly established, providing explanations for planetary orbits, the trajectories of cannonballs, and the operation of machines. The wave theory of light had been proposed but not proven or fully worked out. By 1914, the wave theory of light had been absorbed into electromagnetic theory, and the problem of reconciling electromagnetism with mechanics had given rise to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (best treated as early TL6). Other major new theories in the physical sciences included thermodynamics and statistical mechanics, while Darwinian evolution and Mendelian genetics radically altered the biological sciences. In addition, science offered a new vision of the history of the world, going back hundreds of millions of years to the still unexplained formation of the solar system and forward to the eventual "heat death" of the cosmos.

The concept of energy was central both to theoretical science and to engineering. The law of conservation of energy was proposed and its implications were worked out, including the impossibility of perpetual motion machines. Physicists envisioned natural processes in terms of conversion of energy from one form to another. Engineers tried to make those conversions more efficient in steam engines and other devices. Concerns for fuel economy gave rise to energy measurement techniques and the science of thermodynamics.

1815

The Congress of Vienna establishes new European boundaries; Napoleon briefly returns from Elba, is defeated at Waterloo, and is banished to St. Helena; the British government abolishes income tax.

The Analytical Society is founded at Cambridge, with the goal of introducing Continental mathematics into Britain.

Robert Fulton builds the U.S.S. *Fulton*, the first steam warship, for the U.S. Navy.

1817-1825

Construction of the Erie Canal in New York.

1817

Simon Bolivar establishes an independent government in Venezuela; in subsequent years most of the rest of Spanish America gains independence.

John Kidd extracts naphthalene from coal tar.

David Ricardo publishes *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*.

1818

The *Savannah* is the first steamship to cross the Atlantic, taking 26 days.

1819

The British East India Company establishes a settlement in Singapore.

1820

The Prince Regent succeeds his father George III as George IV.

The Missouri Compromise brings Maine into the Union as a free state and Missouri as a slave state.

1821

The Catholic Church lifts its ban on teaching the Copernican system.

1822-1829

The Greeks declare independence from the Ottoman Empire and gain autonomy with European aid.

1822

Britain repeals the death penalty for over 100 crimes.

Jean-Francois Champollion translates the Rosetta Stone.

The Royal Asiatic Society is founded. Charles Babbage begins plans for the Difference Engine.

1823

Proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine. Mechanics' Institutes are founded in London and Glasgow.

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