

Excerpted from

Chocolate Wars: The 150-Year Rivalry Between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers

By Deborah Cadbury

For the Quaker capitalists of the 19th century, the idea that wealth creation was for personal gain only would have been offensive. Wealth creation was for the benefit of the workers, the local community, and society at large, as well as the entrepreneurs themselves. Reckless or irresponsible debt was also seen as shameful. Quaker directives ensured that no man should 'launch into trading and worldly business beyond what they can manage honourably... so that they can keep their words with all men.' Even advertising was dismissed as dishonest, mere 'puffery': the quality of the product mattered far more than the message. Men like Joseph Rowntree and George Cadbury built chocolate empires at the same time as writing groundbreaking papers on poverty, publishing authoritative studies of the Bible or campaigning for a multitude of heart-rending human rights in a world that seems straight out of Dickens. Puritanical hard work and sober austerity, with the senses in watchful restraint, were the guiding principles. Even art, literature and theatre were dismissed as too great an indulgence.

Whilst it is easy to dismiss such values as antiquated notions that governed business life at a time before Darwin's ideas had taken root, Quaker capitalism proved extraordinary successful and its puritanical work ethic unleashed a staggering worldly wealth. In the early 19th century, around 4,000 Quaker families ran 74 Quaker British banks and over 200 Quaker companies. As they came to grips with making money, these austere men of God helped to shape the course of the industrial revolution and the commercial world today.

The chocolate factories of George and Richard Cadbury and Joseph Rowntree inspired men in America such as the 'King of Caramel,' Milton Hershey, who took philanthropy to a new all-American scale with the creation of the utopian town of Hershey in the cornfields of Pennsylvania. But with the growth of global trade, the rise of international rivals and the emergence of a new tough breed of entrepreneurs in the 20th century unshackled by religious conviction - men such as Frank and Forrest Mars - the chocolate wars that followed gradually eroded the values that shaped Quaker capitalism. Some Quaker firms did not survive the struggle and those that did had to lose their puritan roots. In the process, ownership of the businesses passed from private Quaker dynasties to public shareholders. Little by little the implications of the transition from Quaker capitalism to shareholder capitalism began to take shape in the form of huge confectionery conglomerates that straddle the corporate world today. The story of four generations of Cadbury brothers and their rivals highlights different phases of this process. The Cadbury chocolate business came of age during the expansion of the British Empire in the Victorian era. It peaked a century later during the post Cold War era as the world's largest confectionery company – only to be consumed in turn by global forces in the new millennium.