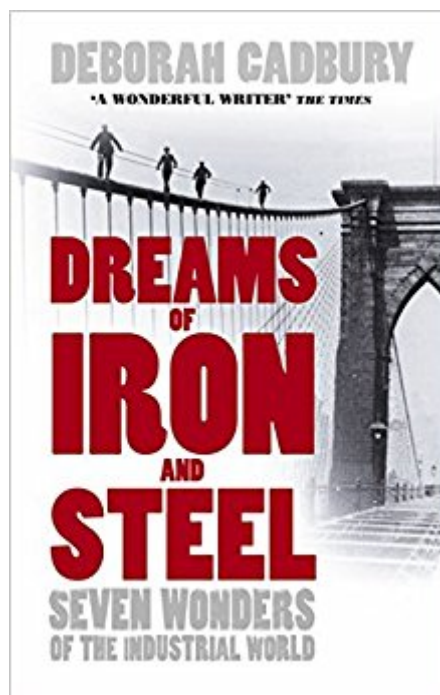




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Dreams Of Iron And Steel: Seven Wonders Of The Nineteenth Century, From The Building Of The London Sewers To The Panama Canal



Synopsis

A world that had changed little from the Middle Ages was altered beyond recognition by the engineering genius of the nineteenth century: rivers tamed, oceans pacified, continents bridged. In *Dreams of Iron and Steel*, acclaimed historian Deborah Cadbury tells the heroic tale of the visionaries and ordinary workers who brought to life seven wonders of engineering that still have the power to awe and inspire us today. From the London sewers that banished cholera to the Panama Canal that shaved thousands of miles off a dangerous sea passage, from the Hoover Dam that diverted the world's most unpredictable river to give power to over half of the country to the transcontinental railroad that fulfilled the dream of manifest destiny, *Dreams of Iron and Steel* reveals the epic struggles and personal stories of the most brilliant pioneers of the industrial age, and the financiers and politicians who hung on for the ride as fortunes and reputations were lost and won. Fueled by Deborah Cadbury's characteristic scholarship and insight, this extraordinary chronicle re-creates the human odyssey of how our modern world was forged -- with rivets, grease, and steam, but also with blood, sweat, and extreme imagination.

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Customer Reviews

British historian and Emmy Award-winning BBC producer Cadbury (*The Last King of France*, etc.) chronicles seven great engineering feats of the 19th and early 20th centuries: the Great Eastern, the largest ocean-going vessel of the mid-19th century; the London sewer system; the U.S. transcontinental railroad; the Brooklyn Bridge; the Panama Canal; the Hoover Dam; and, least

known, Scotland's Bell Rock Lighthouse. Cadbury pays special attention to the visionary, sometimes almost delusional men who were the human catalysts for these breakthrough accomplishments. Her choices are good ones, as the fascinating personalities at the center of these endeavors include corrupt manipulators, selfless crusaders and arrogant self-promoters, all of whom share a preternatural single-mindedness, which is at the core of their successes. Cadbury also describes the human costs that success required, often of the founders of these enterprises and invariably of those who moved the steel, dug the holes and poured the concrete. The cumulative loss of lives on these projects was in the thousands, and Cadbury is unsparing in her descriptions of the ways death occurred. Men were boiled alive in a boiler malfunction on the Great Eastern; blown up, scalped or mutilated while working on the transcontinental railroad; and entombed in concrete while building Hoover Dam. But the book is not a social commentary about the reckless disregard of 19th-century industrialists; it is, rather, dedicated to the human ingenuity displayed in these battles with a stubborn and capricious natural world. Readers who enjoyed the challenge of building the 1893 World's Fair in The Devil and the White City will find much to revel in here. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The lengthy subtitle tells the story of this fascinating look at technological triumphs in the nineteenth century. (The book complements a five-part television series scheduled to air in 2004 on the Learning Channel.) Cadbury begins with the story of the largest oceangoing vessel in the history of the world, the Great Eastern, which was envisioned by its creator as "a floating city, majestic by day and a brilliant mirage at night," a ship that would carry 4,000 passengers across the seas. It was a mammoth project with massively disappointing results, but the Great Eastern was indeed a wonder. Other nineteenth-century wonders, such as Hoover Dam, the Panama Canal, and the North American transcontinental railroad, proved more successful, but what all seven wonders have in common is this: they were born of big ideas. The nineteenth century, Cadbury emphasizes, was the dividing line between the old world and the new, between a world that hadn't changed much in centuries and one in which rapid change, especially in technology, would become a way of life. David Pitt Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This is an obscure book that a friend gave to me years ago. Almost any conversation that I enter where wonders of the modern world are discussed, I end up referencing the stories in the book. The Bell Rock Lighthouse, the London Sewers, and the Brooklyn Bridge are feats of mankind that show us today how important tenacity and courage are in conquering our difficulties. I've given away

copies of this book that I've owned and am once again buying a replacement.

Remarkable depth and coverage on the types of human and personal sacrifices that people made from shipbuilding to railroad tracks to give the Western world the tremendous advantages it has enjoyed over the last 150 years. Being a capitalist, this was an eye opener. Abraham Lincoln during Civil War penned the Railroad Act and Panama Canal was funded by the US Govt. Without the Govt vision to seed the market in these areas (plus Hoover Dam that it talks about) free markets would have never taken the chances needed to make US a major economic powerhouse. Regardless of your view on Government policies, reading where we came from always gives a good perspective as you chart out where the country is going to go

One of the best history books I have ever read, I've purchased a copy for everyone of my family and friends that is amazed by true human achievements.

A very well written book that covers what the author has chosen to be subtitled ?The Seven Wonders of the Industrial World.? The basis of this book is that, worldwide the knowledge and the production of iron and steel had reached the point where certain engineering visionaries dared to start considering the material?s properties to build on a grander scale than traditional wood and stone would allow. In little more than the span of a century these diverse engineering projects set a new world standard in their respective fields, and it became the basis for catapulting Western civilization into the modern era of undertaking grand projects. Deborah Cadbury, the author has a very nice writing style. The subject is easily understood, and there is no math. The author evidently did a large amount of research, she includes a bit of background material, but keeps the subject relevant to the central theme. The author does not delve into the engineering details of the problems, but generally strives to give the reader an overall view of the main problems encountered, usually a collection of engineering, financial and political obstacles. As with most books explaining engineering techniques, a few more diagrams would have been helpful. One consistent pattern throughout many of the projects is that the Engineer/Visionary generally were obsessive control freaks when it came to their projects, and as their project came to life it manifested itself as exacting an equal toll on their health. The title is a little misleading, three of the projects, London Sewers, Bell rock Lighthouse, and the Hoover Dam deal mainly with stone or concrete. The subtitle would be better suited to be the title of this book. This reader highly recommends this enjoyable book

DREAMS OF IRON AND STEEL is a serving of History Lite. It is the written form of a BBC television series, subtitled "Seven Wonders of the Nineteenth Century". The subtitle is symptomatic of what is wrong with the book. In order to come up with seven wonders, Deborah Cadbury has stretched the nineteenth century to 1931 when Boulder Dam was begun. Her focus on one or two individuals who designed or constructed each of the wonders is probably dictated by the exigencies of television, rather than her adherence to the "great man" theory of history. Cadbury has the good taste, at least, to idolize the engineers and superintendent of the US intercontinental railroad instead of the crooked financiers who backed the project, as the late Stephen Ambrose did. The British wonders are more interesting to an American reader because they are not so well known here. Cadbury's gaffs in setting the historical scene in Victorian Britain are less obvious to the reader in this country than the American ones. Example: "Nothern plans to abolish slavery had prompted seven southern states to break away and form the Confederate States of America." That statement wouldn't even pass muster in a high school essay on the causes of the Civil War. Cadbury writes well, if a trifle overdramatically. That too may be traceable to the book's parentage. She appends a large "Bibliography and Sources" section at the end for readers seeking more substantial fare.

Of the seven wonders that Deborah Cadbury describes, five (The Great Eastern, Brooklyn Bridge, Bell Rock Lighthouse, London Sewers and the first Transcontinental Railroad) were all built in the 1800s. But the Panama Canal (originally started by the French in the 1880s) wasn't finish until 1914 and the Hoover Dam in 1936. Those complaints aside, each of the vignettes (or large blurbs) is in itself a fine story. She does a fine job in not only laying out the plans for each structure, but the history behind the need for the structure. Without belaying the point she discusses the dangers involved in the construction and the terrible tolls (over 20,000 in Panama from disease) that each structure took on the workers and owners. Think of the book as an expanded 'Wikipedia' listing and you'll get an idea of what each section is like. Unlike an encyclopedia listing there are more personal opinions voiced, many of them are from interviews with people who worked on the construction of the 'wonders'. Good Read. Zeb Kantrowitz

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