



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Men of Business and Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Quaker Pease Dynasty of North-East England, 1700-1943 by Maurice William Kirby

Peter N. Stearns

The Business History Review, Vol. 59, No. 3. (Autumn, 1985), pp. 515-516.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-6805%28198523%2959%3A3%3C515%3AMOBAPT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z>

The Business History Review is currently published by The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/pfhc.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Europe, first to the east, then to the west. The resulting trades—the export of English goods to these markets, the import of colonial commodities, and the reexport of colonial goods—became the most important single factor in English economic growth during the eighteenth century. Readers of the *Business History Review* will note the authors' emphasis on the role of English entrepreneurs in effecting much of the early expansion, especially through the organization of chartered companies to undertake voyages of exploration, trade, and colonization.

Quinn and Ryan are not the only authors to address these subjects recently. Offering a grander sweep are G. V. Scammell's *The World Encompassed: The First European Maritime Empire, c. 800–1650* (1981)—curiously, Quinn and Ryan omit it from their bibliography—and Frédéric Munro's *L'expansion européenne (1600–1870)*, 2d ed. (1967). The closest competitors of the volume under review are fine books by two of the best English-language historians of the era, Ralph Davis's *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (1973) and K. G. Davies' *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century* (1974). Davis differs from Quinn and Ryan by not limiting himself to England, Davies by dwelling on a later period. Thus *England's Sea Empire* neatly complements the other recent treatments of the era and fills a gap in our understanding of a critical period in England's rise to power.

John J. McCusker is professor of American economic history at the University of Maryland. He has published studies on various aspects of the economy of the early modern Atlantic world including, most recently, European Bills of Entry and Marine Lists: Early Commercial Publications and the Origins of the Business Press (1985) and, with Russell R. Menard, The Economy of British America, 1607–1789 (1985). He continues to work on the history of the production, trade, and consumption of sugar, molasses, and rum during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

***Men of Business and Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Quaker Pease Dynasty of North-East England, 1700–1943.* By Maurice William Kirby. (Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin, 1984. xv + 167 pp. \$25.00.)**

Reviewed by Peter N. Stearns

The Pease family, converts to Quakerism early in the eighteenth century and blessed with a woolcombing business, moved into the entrepreneurial limelight in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The family expanded its operations into banking and played a leading role in organizing the Stockton-Darlington railway, the first public railway to use steam locomotives. By the 1830s, the family had a stake in a host of ventures in northeastern England (southern Durham and northern Yorkshire), including mining, metals, and textiles. With a rising fortune and a Quaker conscience, family members had moved into local politics by midcentury, with particular activity in boards of health, and into parliamentary service as Liberal MPs. But the family fortunes were hard hit by the depression that began in 1873, and a series of poor business decisions, particularly failure to liquidate doomed holdings in a

timely fashion, brought the Pease enterprises into growing disarray by the 1890s. When the family bank failed in 1902, the Peases' oligarchic position came to an end. Business and political activities continued, but on an increasingly modest scale and without the dynastic family linkage to give them an overriding unity.

This is a highly competent narrative of the rise and fall of the Pease family empire, based on extensive private documents and intelligent use of other local records and established interpretive themes. M. W. Kirby is at his best in business matters, providing fascinating detail on the financial pressures in early railway development and the series of myopic decisions that bedeviled the family later in the nineteenth century. His treatment of political activities is sketchier and less coordinated, though there are some interesting data; and the family life and social policies of the Pease family receive no consistent attention at all. Despite interesting references to antislavery involvement, Kirby does not rigorously pursue this aspect of the family effort, which means that we lack a full sense of how the family defined its oligarchical role. We do see individual family members, such as Edward Pease, seeking to balance diverse enthusiasms, but the descriptive focus normally centers rather rigidly on business life. Also missing is much family budget data, which might enrich insight into early capital formation, as well as bolster Kirby's undoubtedly sound argument about the Peases' turn from a frugal Quaker lifestyle before 1850.

As a business historian, Kirby strives, with success, to offer a combination of effective regional and family history and a linkage with larger analytical issues. Particularly attractive, of course, is the role of Quakerism in encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit so obvious in the Pease leaders early in the Industrial Revolution. Kirby states the established theories about Quakerism and entrepreneurship intelligently, and finds some family corroboration in diaries that display a fascinating oscillation between concern for piety and zeal for profit. While the reader may emerge no more informed about Quakerism's Weberian role, through the Pease example, than before—if only because the family did not articulate its spiritual values very elaborately—at least a serious effort at linkage is made. And the Pease history quite clearly illustrates the prosaic advantage of Quakerism in encouraging marriage alliances favorable to business success.

The later part of this study has no overriding issue to guide it, but on the whole the chronicle of decline is more informative than that of success. Kirby shows the steady erosion of Quaker zeal as the Pease family became more ostentatious and conservative with prosperity. Whether this predetermined the poor response to business reverses in the last quarter of the century is not ventured, but it is clear that the final family dynast, Sir Joseph, lacked the business acumen of his predecessors, while he inflexibly strove to maintain all the family holdings unscathed. The success of the family in previous generations proved a poor guide, for Sir Joseph constantly expected a favorable business climate to return and tide him over his worrisome misfortunes.

Kirby's work provides a sound and interesting addition to the literature of entrepreneurial styles during England's Industrial Revolution. Not startling, occasionally less rounded than one might wish, the book provides welcome detail and sensible concern for major issues.

Peter N. Stearns is professor of history at Carnegie-Mellon University.