Mainstream Australian historiography tends to regard confectionery as trivial and irrelevant. Yet, in the early to mid-20th century, Australia’s richest entrepreneur and one of the country’s most influential personages was a maker of sweets, Macpherson Robertson (1859–1945). His two major competitors Alfred Allen (1870–1925) and Abel Hoadley (1844–1918) were also figures of considerable influence and worth in Australian economic life. In composite, this triumvirate presented a benign image of kindly craftsmanship and juvenile joy. In reality, Robertson, Allen and Hoadley exemplified an extreme form of piratic capitalism that flouted commercial conventions and legal frameworks. These men, rather than servicing the established colonial imperative of the British metropolis, daringly traversed the periphery and raided American business models. Their legacy is iconic brands that endure to this day. This seminar explores the associated lives of Australia’s confectionery kings by employing business history, food history, and critical masters of industry biography.

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