



Necco—An Epic Candy Tale

By Darlene Lacey

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***Necco—An Epic Candy Tale* is an illustrated history of an American candy legend.**

A roll of Necco Wafers has been described as “the indestructible candy,” and for 171 years its originator, the New England Confectionery Company (Necco), seemed just as indestructible. From its start in 1847 with the invention of the first American candy machine, the company prevailed through two world wars, the Great Depression, and countless trends, changes, and setbacks to become the longest-running candy company in US history until its sudden and tragic closing in 2018.

A giant from its inception, Necco operated out of huge factories considered marvels of 20th century industrial American achievement. For decades, the company boasted a product line of 500–700 varieties of candy with its famous Necco Wafers reigning as the perennial top-seller. With generations of families working together to produce every confection imaginable, Necco was a New England institution, landmark, and source of pride.

This 222-page book chronicles the challenges the Necco family faced along the way and what they did to overcome them. You will learn how Necco was more than just a candy company; it was the adoptive home to many of America’s oldest and most popular candy brands. Entwined with Necco’s long history are the histories of other American confectionery pioneers. You will gain an appreciation through these stories of not only Necco’s place in history, but of the entrepreneurs from the 19th and 20th centuries who brought us sweet treats that we still know and love today.

In this book you will find hundreds of rare and amazing images that tell Necco's story and create a visual tour of package design from the 1890s–2010s. This is an epic tale of the American candy industry, the people who made it happen, and everyone who enjoyed those sweet treats of childhood. If you are a candy lover, collector, historian, or enthusiast of classic design, *Necco—An Epic Candy Tale* serves up a delicious assortment of candy history—the ups, the downs, and everything in-between.

A companion museum catalog, *Necco—The Archive Collection*, is also available from Diner Mighty.

Author's website: DarleneLacey.com

More information about this book at: [History Cambridge](http://HistoryCambridge)

Purchase link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0B3N2GQBK>

Assorted Necco Necco Wafers

NET WT. 3 OZS.

TRY **Necco WAFERS...**
THE ORIGINAL SUGAR WAFER CANDY!

Necco Wafers



Utter the name "Necco," and chances are that someone will say, "Oh—Necco Wafers!" For all the Necco confections, the wafers will always be its star. Necco Wafers differed from Chase and Conada

and with a wider array of flavors. Necco's factory workers hand sorted the candies to ensure that each roll contained the ideal ratio of flavors based on feedback from customer surveys.



In the early years Necco sold them under the dual brand names of Necco Wafers and Hub Wafers. They were the same except for one thing—the wrapper. Necco Wafers came in a glazed wrapper, and Hub Wafers came in a transparent one, a feature that some druggists preferred. Eventually, Necco phased out the Hub Wafers, and Necco Wafers lived on to enjoy fame and fortune. In 2008 the company reportedly sold \$9.2 million worth of Necco Wafers and produced 4 billion of them a year, enough to encircle the world twice if placed edge to edge.



Since the 1950s people have enjoyed the classic assortment of eight sweet and spicy flavors in a roll of Necco Wafers: lemon, lime, orange, chocolate, wintergreen, clove, cinnamon, and licorice. This assortment has been around so long that we think of them as the original flavors. However, the original Necco Wafers roll featured a different assortment of eight flavors: lemon, chocolate, wintergreen, clove, cinnamon, licorice, saffras, and spearmint. In 1927 Necco Wafers came in only seven flavors. The missing flavor is unknown. It is likely that Necco temporarily reduced the variety to save costs in manufacturing during the Great Depression. In 1928 the lineup of the original eight wafers came back. This lasted until the 1930s. By 1935 Necco had

dropped the spearmint and replaced it with lime. After that, the assortment changed one last time, with



Necco Wafers production from the film *A Century of Candy*making, 1947.



Necco Wafers
Hub Wafers

are perfect accompaniments to the afternoon tea, the children's party or the more formal occasions. For an after-dinner tidbit or a between-meal nibble, these dainty wafers are indescribably delicious. Nine old-fashioned flavors in each package.

Magazines ad. 1915



orange replacing the saffras sometime between 1940–1950. This assortment with more fruit flavors proved to be the lasting winner.

Much like the changing nature of the flavors, Necco marketed their wafers in different ways in the first half of the 20th century. For kids, the ads featured top comic strip characters of the day proclaiming how five cents bought a kid a treasure—a roll of Necco Wafers. For mothers, the ads assured them that "even little tots may safely feast on Necco pure sugar wafers" and that they were quite the value. One depicted Old Mother Hubbard giving out a roll of Necco Wafers to all her children. For society women, elegantly illustrated magazine ads described them as "indescribably delicious dainty wafers" that served as the "perfect accompaniments to the afternoon tea." It would take decades until Necco had the courage to advertise their wafers as how many a child would describe them—*candy poker chips!*



Confectioners Journal illustration by Gene Byrnes. 1927



Necco

QUICK ENERGY

YOU CAN HELP Win and Win Program

Necco

SKY BAR

Necco

Necco Jells

THE GREAT STAY-FRESH!

Necco

Necco

Necco

Necco

Mary Jane Candy Girl

500 in Cash PRIZES

Mary Jane

Necco

Conversation Candies

Necco SWEET HEARTS

5 Cents

PONY HEART

Necco

About the author

Darlene Lacey began her collection of candy wrappers as a teenager in the 1970s with “Nice Mice.” The Candy Wrapper Museum has since grown into one of the most significant collections of its kind, providing a window into American cultural trends and fads, the history of design and advertising, and a powerful nostalgia trip for those in search of forgotten candy of the past.

Darlene and her museum have been featured in articles and programs by major media outlets as well as art and library exhibits. Darlene was honored by the Los Angeles Library Foundation for her contributions to preserving cultural history.



Darlene is the author of *Classic Candy: America's Favorite Sweets 1950-80*, *The Musical Touch of Leonard Nimoy: His fascinating musical career and discography*, and *A Woman's Guide to Low-Self Esteem*.

The Candy Wrapper Museum on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

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