



## From the Annals of the World History

### John Harvey Kellogg

(26 February 1852 – 14 December 1943)



John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) revolutionized the American diet by inventing flaked breakfast cereals first known as Wheat Flakes and Corn Flakes. An avid health reformer, skilled surgeon, and physician, Kellogg's extensive writing and lecturing contributed to a new emphasis on the importance of a healthy diet, adequate exercise, and natural remedies near the end of the nineteenth century.

Kellogg was born on February 26, 1852, in Tyrone Township, a rural community within Livingston County, Michigan. He was the fourth of the eight children that survived infancy born to John Preston, a farmer, and Ann Janette (Stanley) Kellogg. Before Kellogg turned one year old, his parents joined the Seventh-day Adventist movement and moved their large family, which included five children from John Preston Kellogg's first marriage, to Jackson, Michigan. About three years later, the Kelloggs relocated to Battle Creek, Michigan, the headquarters for the newly formed Adventist Church in 1863.

In fact, a portion of the profit from the sale of the Kellogg farm funded the transfer of the Adventist publishing venture from Rochester, New York, to Battle Creek. The Adventists evolved from the mid-nineteenth-century religious sect called the "Millerites," who were known for predicting the exact date of Christ's return. Co-founded by James and Ellen G. White, the Adventists also focused on the second coming of Christ, emphasizing the health and purity of their communities as a means of preparation.

### Developed Interest in Health

Kellogg's early formal education was inconsistent. Helping his father, who then operated a small grocery store and broom factory, was more important than school. Nonetheless, he supplemented his learning by reading a great deal on his own. When Kellogg was 12 years old, James White, serving as the first Adventist publisher, began teaching him the printing business. For four years Kellogg apprenticed in the Adventist publishing house. During this time, Ellen G. White, the church's acknowledged prophetess, began publishing articles on health reform. As Kellogg set the type for White's articles, which stressed healthy living as a religious duty of all Seventh-Day Adventists, he became very interested in issues of health and hygiene. Along with reading White's views, Kellogg also studied early health reformers Sylvester Graham and Larkin B. Coles. As a result he began his life-long fascination with health and diet, focusing on natural remedies, preventative medicine, and vegetarianism.

### Medical Training

Kellogg planned to become a school teacher, and at the age of 16, he taught for a year in Hastings, Michigan. However, he soon felt the need for more formal training. After finishing high school in Battle Creek, he entered the teacher training program at Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti in 1872. In the same year Adventist leaders, who were strongly critical of conventional medicine, became convinced that the church needed professionally trained doctors to affirm their views. Consequently, they chose several promising young Adventists, including Kellogg, to attend a five-month course at Dr. Russell Trall's Hygeio-Therapeutic College in Florence Heights, New Jersey. Although Kellogg rejected Trall's nontraditional medical theories, the experience opened his eyes to a career in the field of medicine and health reform. With encouragement from the Whites, Kellogg pursued a formal degree in medicine. After one year at the University of Michigan Medical School, Kellogg enrolled in Bellevue Hospital Medical College in New York City. He graduated in 1875 and returned to Battle Creek.

### The Battle Creek Idea

In 1873 while still a student, Kellogg became James White's chief editorial assistant for Adventist Health Reformer, a monthly publication on health and dietary habits. In the next year Kellogg took over as editor, a position he held for the remainder of his life. Along with publishing articles and editorials in Health Reformer,

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position he held for the remainder of his life. Along with publishing articles and editorials in *Health Reformer*, whose name he changed to *Good Health* in 1879, Kellogg also began a career as a prolific writer of health propaganda. In 1874 he published a cookbook and *Proper Diet for Man*, which advocated vegetarianism.

In 1901 he published *Rational Hydrotherapy*, which became a standard text in the field of medicine for several decades. In all, Kellogg wrote over 50 books and countless articles. He also lectured widely, arguing for the benefit of his health reforms. Calling his dietary theory the *Battle Creek Idea*, Kellogg encouraged a diet void of all meat, sparing use of eggs, refined sugar, milk, and cheese, and complete abstinence from alcohol, tea, coffee, tobacco, and chocolate. His total health regimen, which he later termed "biologic living," included regular exercise, lots of fresh air and sunshine, correct posture, sensible clothing, and an intake of eight to ten glasses of water daily. He also came to believe that daily enemas kept the intestines clean and free from disease.

In 1876 Kellogg agreed to take over the Western Health Reform Institute, an Adventist venture founded ten years earlier in Battle Creek to provide natural medical remedies. With only 20 patients, the Institute was about to close its doors when Kellogg took over. After changing the name to the Battle Creek Sanitarium, Kellogg set about to transform the institute into the most famous health retreats of its time. By the turn of the century the Battle Creek Sanitarium, known as *The San*, had grown to 700 beds. Kellogg enticed some of the most famous and powerful people in the United States to his health institute. During his early years at *The San* he also pursued his interest in surgery, and traveled to Europe several times to study surgical techniques. Over the course of his career, he performed some 22,000 operations, introduced important antishock methods and postoperative exercises to prevent complications, and claimed a record of 165 abdominal surgeries without a fatality. He served on the Michigan State Board of Health from 1878 to 1891 and from 1911 to 1917.

### **Invention of Flaked Cereal**

In his efforts to invent a supremely sound and healthy diet, Kellogg developed numerous new food products. In 1877 he created a multigrain biscuit that was then crumbled, called *Granola*. However, he was later forced to change the name after being sued by Dr. James Caleb who had previously marketed a similar product, *Granula*. Kellogg also developed such products as peanut butter (so that patients with poor teeth could consume nuts), meat substitutes, and a grain version of coffee. His legendary invention of breakfast cereal came about after he became convinced that indigestion and tooth decay were caused by insufficient chewing.

Accordingly, he began requiring his patients to start each meal by slowly and thoroughly chewing a piece of *zweibach*, a hard German twice-baked bread. When a patient complained that chewing the *zweibach* broke one of her teeth, Kellogg set about to find a solution. He needed a dry crisp grain product that could be chewed safely. In 1894 in the experimental kitchen, Kellogg, assisted by his younger brother Will Keith who served as *The San's* business administrator, invented wheat flakes. After accidentally forgetting about a batch of boiled wheat for several days, the brothers pushed the dried dough through rollers and then scraped flakes off the rollers. They discovered that, once baked, the wheat flakes were quite tasty.



Although Kellogg intended to use his new invention for chewing exercises, *The San* guests soon realized that the wheat flakes were even better with milk. The popularity of the product, known first as *Granose* and later as *Toasted Wheat Flakes*, soon spread and in the first year, Kellogg sold over 100,000 pounds of cereal. The brothers later applied the same flaking process to corn and rice. Although highly successful, the Kelloggs were not the first to market dry cereal.

In 1893 Henry D. Perky of Denver, Colorado, developed a machine that shredded wheat, which he appropriately named *Shredded Wheat*. After the success of *Toasted Wheat Flakes*, numerous imitators flooded the market with new versions of breakfast cereals. Although most failed, some, including former *San* patient Charles W. Post, created lasting products that competed for the cereal market. Nonetheless, profits from cereal sales along with book sales made Kellogg, who took no salary as superintendent of *The San*, a wealthy man, and funded the elaborate 20-room home in which the Kelloggs resided. However, as his wealth and popularity grew, Kellogg's difficulties both with his brother Will and Adventist leader Ellen White began to increase.

The tensions peaked in 1907. Kellogg was expelled from the Adventist church, and the Adventist headquarters was moved to Washington, D.C. Although he maintained control of *Good Health* and *The San*, he was forced in 1910 to merge the American Medical Missionary College in Chicago, a school he formed in 1895 to propagate biologic medical techniques, with the University of Illinois Medical School. The inexhaustible Kellogg continued to pursue new projects; however, he developed acute bronchitis in 1942 and died of pneumonia on December 14 of the same year in Battle Creek at the age of 91.



