

WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST?

WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

As the industrial revolution turned into an explosion of manufacturing jobs that sent Americans to work in greater numbers, it became clear that fewer households had the time or the energy to cook hot breakfasts.

The answer was cold cereal, occasionally adorned with fruit but most often doused with milk.

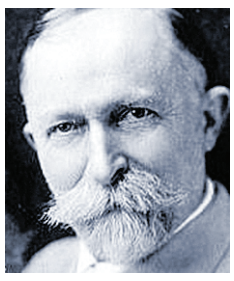
One of the most popular brands of breakfast cereal, Kellogg's Corn Flakes, was patented May 31, 1895 — 130 years ago.

THE INVENTOR(S) OF CORN FLAKES

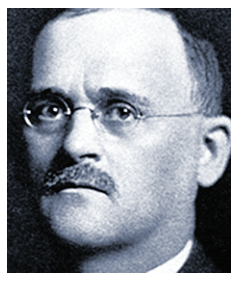
In 1876, physician Dr. John Harvey Kellogg became director of the Western Health Reform Institute, a health resort in Battle Creek, Michigan, owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The next year, John renamed it the Battle Creek Medical Surgical Sanitarium. "The San" not only contained typical hospital facilities for the time but also was a place for patients to recover from lingering illnesses. The Adventists — and the facility's new director — advocated not only physical fitness but also bathing in light, hydrotherapy, improved sanitation — more frequent washing of hands, for example — and abstention from sex.

However, Dr. John Harvey also gained note for his work with digestive health. He developed new diets for his patients, emphasizing low-fat, low-protein vegetarian foods high in fiber. He also had his patients avoid alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, salt, spices and sugar and urged them to drink plenty of water.



THE WILLARD LIBRARY



W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

The Kellogg brothers: Dr. John H. Kellogg and William K. Kellogg.

As gifted as Dr. Kellogg was with his insight into healthy living, his business acumen was sadly lacking. In 1879, he brought in his younger brother, William K. Kellogg, to manage the facility. The two brothers didn't get along very well — John was often dismissive of Will and severely underpaid him for his service. Will suffered under the treatment and his resentment grew.

Word of Dr. Kellogg's therapies spread, and, under will's financial guidance, the San grew. By 1906, the center — which had started out as a single converted home — had expanded to 30 buildings and the number of patients had grown from 106 in 1866 to more than 7,000.

In 1894, John's search for ways of imrpoving patients' digestive health led him to develop an interest in developing a cold breakfast cereal consisting of a twice-baked mixture of flour, oats and cornmeal and then broken into flakes. Will joined John and John's wife, Ella, in the San's kitchen for long nights of work, week after week, as they rolled their dough into thin layers for cooking, searching for just the right recipe.

Finally, one night, a batch of dough was accidentally left out on the counter. The brothers walked into the kitchen to find their wheat-based dough had begun to ferment.

They pretty much shrugged and cooked it anyway. What they discovered: The slightly moldy dough producted large, thin flakes that emerged from the oven crispy and tasty.

On May 31, 1895, John filed for a patent for "Flaked Cereals and Process of Preparing Same." The patent was granted in April 1896, but Will was dismayed to find John had listed only himself as the inventor.

John called the product "Granose" — a mixture of "grain" and "ose," meaning metabolism. Patients at the San loved the flaked cereal. Will continued to experiment and found that corn, rather than wheat, produced even larger, tastier flakes.

OUT OF THE SANITARIUM AND INTO THE COMMERCIAL WORLD

While John moved on to his next ideas, Will continued to work with the flakes of corn. He talked John into letting him sell Corn Flakes via mail order to former San patients. In the first full year of sales, Will had sold 113,400 pounds of Corn Flakes.

However, Will had difficulty getting John interested in selling Corn Flakes to other customers. This was even after one San patient, Charles W. Post, stole the Kelloggs' recipe in 1897 and opened a factory in Minnesota where he manufactured what he, at first, called "Elijah's Manna."

Post later changed the name of his own breakfast flakes to "Post Toasties."

In frustration, Will finally left his brother and the San in 1906 — after helping John rebuild after the main hospital building burned down — to found the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company.

The two continued to battle over Will's addition of sugar to some of his new products and over Will's salary. At one point, John ordered 75% of Will's weekly paychecks as the cereal company's top executive turned over to himself.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

During the Great Depression, Will insisted on his employees working 30 hours a week instead of 40. The purpose was so he could employ more people. Above, employees inspect filled boxes of Corn Flakes in 1934.

Will poured much of the company's profits into advertising. In 1907, Will's company offered a free box of cereal to any woman who winked at her grocer. This reportedly increased sales by a factor of 15 in New York City alone.

John was still angry about Will's addition of malt, sugar and salt to Kellogg's Corn Flakes, so he started a competing company — which he also called Kellogg's — to market a sugarless version.

The resulting lawsuit took a decade to make it to the Michigan Supreme Court. In 1920, the court sided with Will. By the late 1920s, Will had become one of America's 20 wealthiest people.

Before John died in 1943 at age 91, he attempted to make peace with his brother. His secretary, feeling that John had demeane himself, decided to not mail the letter. Will didn't see it until after John was dead.

Will died in 1951, also at age 91. The next year, the Kellogg Company went public. In 1964, Kellogg's introduced its first non-cereal product: A pastry it called a Pop-Tart.

19 TOP-SELLING BREAKFAST CEREALS

As ranked by Kiplinger in October 2018

Even nearly one and a third of a century later, Kellogg's Corn Flakes are among America's 20 best-selling breakfast cereals.



The first package design for Will's Toasted Corn Flakes in 1906 fought back against W.C. Post by including Will's signature on the box.



By the Great Depression, Will's signature had been turned into a logo for the Kellogg company.



Here's what a box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes looks like today.

Sources: "The Kelloggs: The Battling Brothers of Battle Creek" by Howard Markel, the New York Times, NPR's "Fresh Air," Smithsonian magazine, Forbes, Inc.com, Kiplinger.com, National Inventors Hall of Fame, Kellanova, Museum of Brands, Mental Floss, TheTakeout.com, TastingHistory.com, Snopes.com, History.com