John Kellogg Essay, Research Paper

Surgeon, food reformer; born in Tyrone Township, Mich. (brother of Will K. Kellogg). Born into a Seventh Day Adventist family, he took a course in a “hygieotherapeutic” school. He rejected this approach and took regular medical training, finishing at Bellevue Hospital Medical College (New York City) but with a thesis claiming that disease is the body’s way of defending itself. He had become editor of the Adventist monthly, Health Reformer (which he renamed Good Health in 1879), and on returning to Battle Creek, he became superintendent of the Western Health Reform Institute, which Sister Ellen Harmon White had already established to promote ideas about health much like Kellogg’s. He renamed it the Battle Creek Sanitarium and began to apply his theories about “biologic living,” or “the Battle Creek idea,” which stressed the role of “natural medicine” such as a vegetarian diet and a Spartan spa-like regimen. He was also much in demand as an expert surgeon and would donate his fees to the sanitarium for indigent patients. During the 1890s he set up a laboratory to develop more nutritious foods; his brother, Will, had joined him and they developed a dry wheat flake that soon became so popular as a breakfast cereal that they began to sell it through a mail-order business; later they developed a rice flake and a corn flake and set up the Sanitas Food Company to produce and sell these new products. As the food business continued to expand, the brothers became legal adversaries and by 1906 Will gained the exclusive rights to sell the products under the name of W. K. Kellogg; John set up the Battle Creek Food Company and developed other health foods such as coffee substitutes and soybean-derived milk. Meanwhile, John had fallen out with the Adventist leaders who felt he and his Battle Creek enterprise had become too big and had drifted too far from the church; in 1907 the Adventists excommunicated him but he fought to retain control of the sanitarium and his food laboratory. He wrote over 50 books promoting his ideas and also founded the Race Betterment Foundation to pursue his theories about eugenics. Although he would never become as rich or well-known as his brother, Will, John Kellogg had actually instituted a major revolution in the human diet.