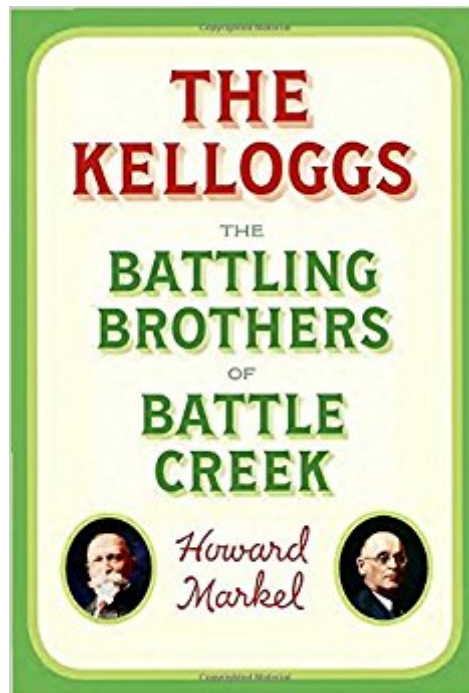




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# The Kelloggs: The Battling Brothers Of Battle Creek



## Synopsis

"What's more American than Corn Flakes?" —Bing Crosby  
From the much admired medical historian (Markel shows just how compelling the medical history can be —Andrea Barrett) and author of *An Anatomy of Addiction* (Absorbing, vivid —Sherwin Nuland, *The New York Times Book Review*, front page) —the story of America's empire builders: John and Will Kellogg. —John Harvey Kellogg was one of America's most beloved physicians; a best-selling author, lecturer, and health-magazine publisher; founder of the Battle Creek Sanitarium; and patron saint of the pursuit of wellness. His youngest brother, Will, was the founder of the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company, which revolutionized the mass production of food and what we eat for breakfast. —In *The Kelloggs*, Howard Markel tells the sweeping saga of these two extraordinary men, whose lifelong competition and enmity toward one another changed America's notion of health and wellness from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, and who helped change the course of American medicine, nutrition, wellness, and diet. —The Kelloggs were of Puritan stock, a family that came to the shores of New England in the mid-seventeenth century, that became one of the biggest in the county, and then renounced it all for the religious calling of Ellen Harmon White, a self-proclaimed prophetess, and James White, whose new Seventh-day Adventist theology was based on Christian principles and sound body, mind, and hygiene rules —Ellen called it "health reform." —The Whites groomed the young John Kellogg for a central role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and sent him to America's finest Medical College. Kellogg's main medical focus —and America's number one malady: indigestion (Walt Whitman described it as "the great American evil"). —Markel gives us the life and times of the Kellogg brothers of Battle Creek: Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and his world-famous Battle Creek Sanitarium medical center, spa, and grand hotel attracted thousands actively pursuing health and well-being. Among the guests: Mary Todd Lincoln, Amelia Earhart, Booker T. Washington, Johnny Weissmuller, Dale Carnegie, Sojourner Truth, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and George Bernard Shaw. And the presidents he advised: Taft, Harding, Hoover, and Roosevelt, with first lady Eleanor. The brothers Kellogg experimented on malt, wheat, and corn meal, and, tinkering with special ovens and toasting devices, came up with a ready-to-eat, easily digested cereal they called Corn Flakes. —As Markel chronicles the Kelloggs' —fascinating, Magnificent Ambersons —like ascent into the pantheon of American industrialists, we see the cast changes in American social mores that took shape in diet, health, medicine, philanthropy, and food manufacturing during seven decades —changing the lives of

millions and helping to shape our industrial age.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A compelling yarn and a fascinating window into the genesis of both modern medicine and management . . . a vivid portrait of the brothers and their era." —Jonathan A. Knee, New York Times  
"DealBook" column —"A brilliant (and big!) new biography of the two brothers, *The Kelloggs*. . . There's no better midsummer read, in my mind, than a biography or narrative big enough to act as a doorstop. The Kelloggs offers even more. I haven't even been able to scratch the surface of it all here. One could devote an entire review to the large swaths of the book on Kellogg's, the company, alone — which I may have done had I not written so many words before that tale begins, on page 236! *The Kelloggs* is a brilliant biography, a medical and industrial (even natural and environmental) history, a great lesson in entrepreneurship, leadership, and management, and a great family drama all rolled into one."  
—Editor's Choice, Dylan Schleicher, 800 CEO  
—"Markel does an extraordinary job covering the many complex dimensions of this story . . . a rich and satisfying account of the lives, work and enmity of two warring brothers and of a pivotal epoch in American history." —Katherine A. Powers, *Newsday*  
—"Insightful and entertaining . . . *The Kelloggs* revealing window into America as it evolved from the Civil War to World War II" —*The National Book Review*  
—"Markel's new book vividly recounts the contentious story of two men behind the early 20th century's revolution in ready-to-eat

foods. It's a mix of a Horatio Alger success story and a cautionary fable about blind egos sabotaging their own best efforts. . . [the book is] lively throughout as it delivers a tale both personal in its intensity and grand in its scope.

Michael Upchurch, *Chicago Tribune* "This incredible story by itself would be sufficient for a book. Markel, however, goes much further . . . an engrossing adventure about the rise of Midwest America from the pioneering days of the Kellogg family to World War II with all of its failures and successes. Medicine, breakfast foods, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church are part of the story."

Robert S. Davis, *New York Journal of Books* "Howard Markel's riveting, deeply researched new book covers vast territory: the saga of the squabbling Kellogg brothers ("magnificent showmen, resolute empire builders, and unwavering visionaries"), their mass-branding of breakfast cereals, their concept of "wellness", and their enormous influence on the diet of millions of Americans. This book arrives at a pivotal moment in our own history when mass-marketing, showmanship, and the media deserve particularly deep study. Markel's incandescent scholarship and his incisive analysis shine through this book. The Kelloggs can certainly be read as a biography of two visionaries (and their extended families), but it also deserves to be read as a case study by generations of future readers.

Siddhartha Mukherjee, *Pulitzer Prize* winning author of *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* "In this illuminating account, medical historian Markel chronicles the long-running animosity between Michigan brothers John and Will Kellogg, "the Cain and Abel of America's heartland. . . Readers will never look at corn flakes or Post Toasties (created by C.W. Post, who stole the Kelloggs' recipes) in quite the same way again."

BookPage "A turbulent tale . . . Markel's amazing amalgamation of biography and history, covering the pursuit of health in late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, industrialism, and the invention of cold cereals is adorned with fetching photographs and illustrations. Sibling rivalry has rarely been so dastardly and delectable."

Tony Miksanek, *Booklist* (starred review) "The story of the Kellogg Brothers is the story of innovation, of determination, and the creation of a giant industry as American business came of age just prior to the Second World War. It is a tale of grit, controversy, faith and the emergence of the "wellness" movement. In the hands of Markel, a trained historian, physician, seasoned writer and chronicler of America, this tale comes alive. A fabulous read."

Abraham Verghese, author of *Cutting for Stone* "Delightful . . . Markel refreshingly resists the

temptation— not resisted by films and novels— to deliver caricatures . . . A superb warts-and-all account of two men whose lives help illuminate the rise of health promotion and the modern food industry. — Kirkus Reviews (starred review) — “A rollicking tale of family intrigue and inventiveness. This full exegesis of the Kelloggs’ unseemly personalities makes for a riveting read. — Andrew Solomon, author of *Far and Away* — “Howard Markel’s *The Kelloggs* recounts the incredible exploits of the Kellogg Brothers— John and Will— who turned nineteenth-century medicine upside down for the better. Markel does a marvelous job recounting the birth of the Kellogg cereal empire and the Battle Creek sanitarium. An amazing American story! — Douglas Brinkley, author of *Rightful Heritage*

HOWARD MARKEL, M.D., Ph.D., is the George E. Wantz Distinguished Professor of the History of Medicine, director of the Center for the History of Medicine at the University of Michigan, and editor in chief of *The Milbank Quarterly*. His books include *Quarantine!*, *When Germs Travel*, and *An Anatomy of Addiction*. His articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *The New England Journal of Medicine*. — Markel is a member of the National Academy of Medicine and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

You might know that Kellogg’s Corn Flakes were created with the health-conscious in mind. You may even know about some of the early imitators. But did you know that there were two men involved—one America’s most famous physician, the other his younger, more business-savvy, and underrated brother? And that, despite their flourishing business relationship, the two men held a lifelong antipathy for each other that lasted to the very end? Howard Markel’s in-depth analysis of the rise (and, well, they didn’t quite fall) Kellogg Brothers is a fascinating examination of two men. I’ll deal with the major flaw that knocked off a star for me: the in-depth part. Really in-depth. It took me maybe 150 pages to start to get into the flow of endless information. That said, what’s presented is fascinating—interesting asides combined with cultural relevance. The main focus is the accomplishment of the Kelloggs’ successes, though their personal relationship—as indicated in the book’s subtitle, supposedly the focus—becomes surprisingly distanced. Another problem is the glossing over of the Brothers’ flaws; younger W.K.’s aren’t really addressed, except a tendency to shade the truth during a lawsuit; older brother John’s interest in eugenics is addressed in a single chapter, then it’s almost like it never happened. Still, this is definitely a book for medical enthusiasts, people who enjoy culinary history, or just history buffs in general. Two brothers who accomplished

great things, despite a raging animosity that lasted an entire lifetime. It's a compelling, truly American story worth telling and learning.

Most chapters are divided between accounts of both brothers' life story John, the doctor, more heavily weighted. His brother Will's story is compelling but more sad. John was the consummate type A personality and this combined with being the elder by eight years propels him to be dominant and though Markel doesn't specify it John is right on the edge of being abusive to Will both when they were kids and when they were adults though the adult version was more subtle...mostly. I loved the history of the US the author provides when sharing the story of the family moving west and the beginnings of the Seventh Day religion they participated not to mention the roots of what we today call entrepreneurship. These folks really pulled (and were forced by family) together to survive. Another thread I enjoyed was how the medical profession evolved especially concerning medical education. Such a degree didn't always mean much until the twentieth century. The book has a bit of a textbook feel to it and I could see it being useful in a history or business curriculum but it's becomes tough going for a more casual reader.

The title says it all.. John Harvey Kellogg and his younger brother Will spent the majority of their lives mad at each other, including a series of lawsuits. John Harvey, the physician, tormented his little brother, was racist, demanding, and egotistical. It probably didn't help that the older brother was his mother's favorite child. Both of the brothers lived fascinating lives and both made tons of money. At one point in 1948, Kellogg's did \$100 million in sales..just 3 years later in 1951, the company spent \$128 million in T.V. ads alone. Kellogg's now does around \$14 billion a year in sales. The book is full of interesting facts.. A Presbyterian minister named Sylvester Graham invented the Graham cracker, the Kellogg boys' father once owned the most profitable farm in the county, and the original name of Kellogg's was the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company. A really enjoyable read, despite all the lifelong fighting between the two brothers.

Markel tells the great American story of the Kellogg brothers of Battle Creek. The oldest, John Harvey, was one of the most famous doctors in the U.S., a best-selling author, a surgeon, and founder of the world-famous Battle Creek Sanitarium. The younger brother, Will, was his long suffering lackey, factotum, and administrator. He later became better known as the "Corn Flake King." Together, they revolutionized the way we eat breakfast. But it is also a story of the birth of modern medicine and the wellness movement,

processed food, diet, and marketing and advertising. This is a well written and brilliantly conceived book that weaves a great narrative of the Kellogg brothers.

A fascinating read!Markel's talent as a medical historian shines throughout the text. Meticulous research supports the lyrical prose.I highly recommend it.

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