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ANN ARBOR CULINARY HISTORIANS

A Voice from Michigan's Past

A Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

It has always been difficult to truly know how and how much cooking was done in any given period of the historical past. A recent purchase of forty issues of a sometime four-, sometime eight-page magazine THE HOUSEHOLD— A SUPPLEMENT TO THE MICHIGAN FARMER AND STATE JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE offers a most intriguing insight. The forty issues cover the years 1884 to 1893. Througout the ten years, there is much discussion as to what a woman can do; what kind of work she might, can, should undertake; and what a woman's role ought to be within the household and in the greater society. One woman offers her life and work as an example of what a woman could and did do, running both a household and a business:

As showing a woman's work for her family— what just the cooking amounts to in a year, Mrs. W. E. C., of Hillsdale, writes this short summary of her home bakery business in 1892: "I have a family of eight to cook for, with the usual extras in the way of hired hands and company. During the year I baked 580 loaves of wheat bread and 47 of brown bread, and biscuits for 35 meals. I made 295 pies, 40 cakes and 23 loaves of ginger-bread, 500 cookies and 780 fried cakes. I made johnny-cake for 13 meals and muffins for nine, and chicken or meat pies twelve times. I cooked 40 bushels of potatoes during the year. In addition, I put up 125 quarts of fruit, made nine gallons of pickles, two gallons of catsup, and 30 glasses of jelly. I also made ninety-seven garments and raised 198 chickens and turkeys. Perhaps you think this was 'my busy year,' but I really thought I had things easy, compared with what I have had to do some years. I have five children, the youngest five years old."

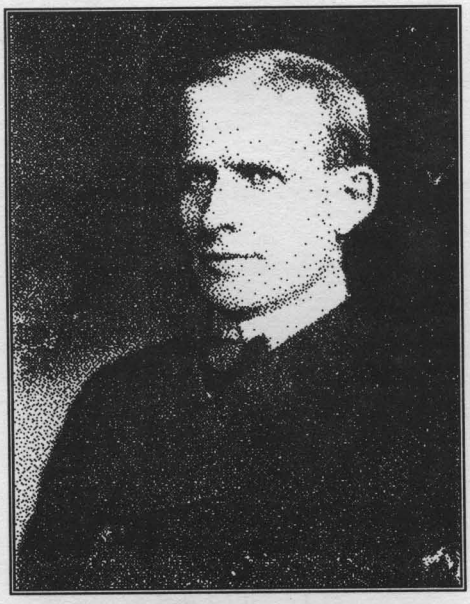
Jan Longone

The Road to Battle Creek

For the April meeting, member Patricia Cornett talked about the early years of the breakfast cereal industry, emphasizing the work of Dr. John Henry Kellogg. This name is, of course, familiar today in relation to cereal but the history and accomplishments of the man himself are less well-known. He was born in Tyrone, Michigan in 1852 and his career in Battle Creek began in 1876, when he was hired as medical superintendent of the Western Health Reform Institute, a sanitarium founded by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and commonly referred to locally as the San.

Dr. Kellogg was an early promoter of good health through diet. He was a man of shining parts: surgeon, medical researcher, inventor, business man, and writer of 50 books; he invented peanut butter, called it Nuttose, but served it only for the patients of the San and did not market it; and he received the first patent issued for the manufacture of a flaked cereal food. With his wife Ella Eaton, who managed the food service, bakeries and cooking school, and his younger brother Will, who began as a bookkeeper and became business manager, Dr. Kellogg directed the San and saw it grow and thrive.

Other names still known in relation to cereal and healthy grains are C. W. Post and Sylvester Graham, who was actually the earliest of these dietary reformers, producing Graham flour and Graham bread in the 1830's. Graham bread was converted (by Dr. James C. Jackson, not by Dr. Kellogg) in 1863 into Granula, the first cold breakfast food, was changed by Dr. Kellogg to Granola in 1878, and eventually this original cereal became Grape Nuts.



Charles W. Post: 1854-1914

Charles W. Post was a rival of Dr. Kellogg and a very different sort of man. He came to Battle Creek in 1891 as a patient at the San and stayed in town to open La Vita Inn, a health-food boarding house. In 1895 he introduced Postum, a cereal grain coffee substitute, suspiciously similar to a grain beverage Dr. Kellogg was using at the San. Post became a Christian Scientist and a "mental healer," competing with Dr. Kellogg as an exponent of healthy diet, and as a maker of cereals, including Post Toasties, his version of corn flakes.

By 1900, Battle Creek was a most cosmopolitan city. There were more than 40 cereal companies in town and the San was thriving. The Kelloggs were producing Granose, the first wheat flake cereal, and Sanitas Corn Flakes. Post had his Grape-Nuts, in each package of which was a copy of his own health manual, The Road to Wellville; the National Biscuit Company (today's Nabisco) had developed the Graham cracker, and the patents were flying, the earliest for a machine to make shredded wheat, issued to Henry Perky, a Denver lawyer. Will Kellogg parted ways with his brother and began the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Co. in 1906. That same year, Post introduced his own cornflakes, called Elijah's Manna, later

renamed Post Toasties.

In 1902, the San burned down under mysterious circumstances. It was rebuilt bigger and better than ever, but five years later both the Kellogg brothers were forced out and excommunicated because of conflict with the church.

The San continued until 1942, when it was sold to the US Army, after more than ten years of declining business and growing debts. C. W. Post committed suicide in 1914, victim of depression. Will Kellogg established the Kellogg Foundation in

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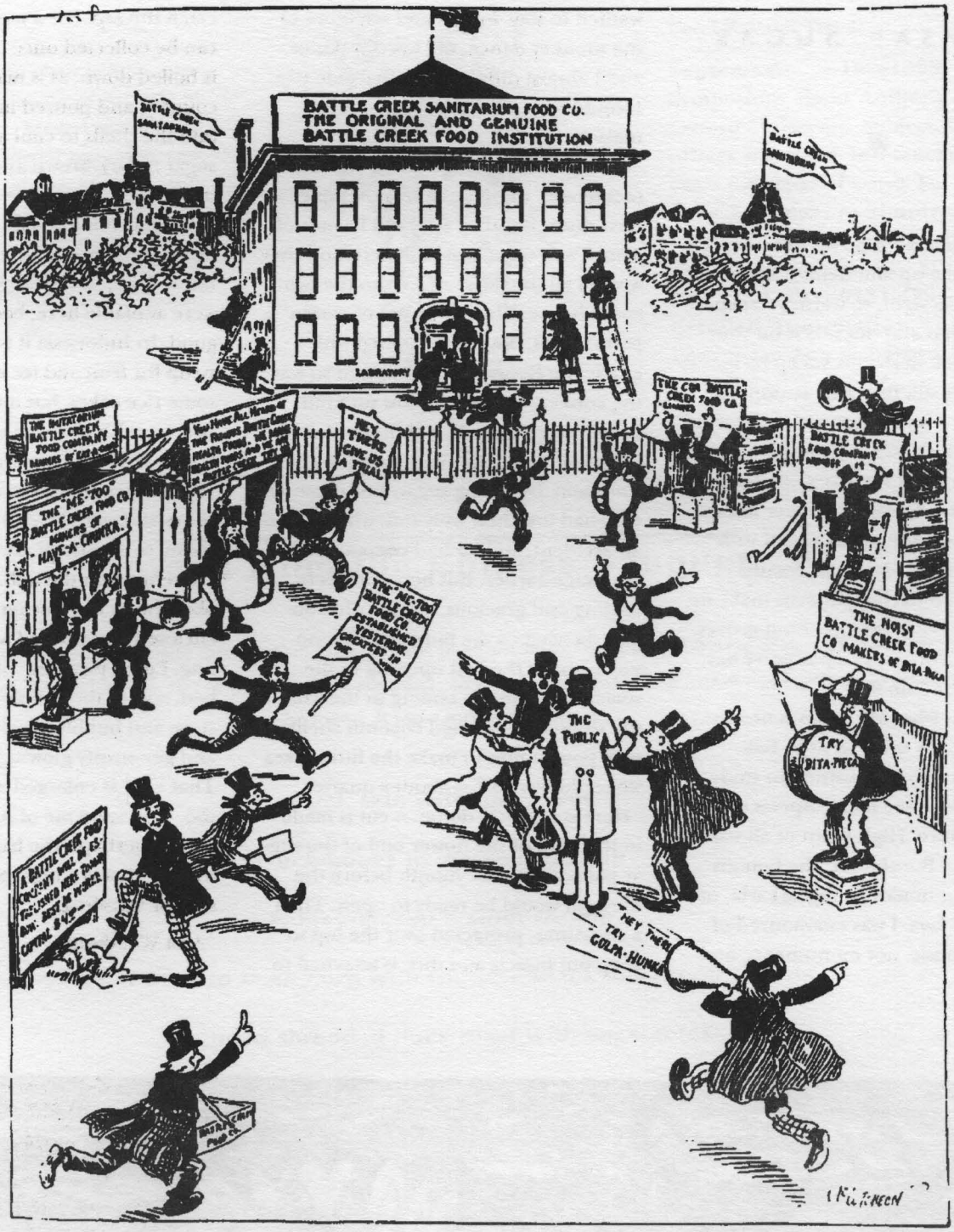


1930. Both the Kellogg brothers lived to be ninety-one, the doctor dying in 1943 and Will in 1951. The Kellogg company now has a 50% share of the world market for cereal, a 38% share of the American market.

I once accompanied a group of the wives of participants in a university conference on a tour of the Kellogg plant and watched in amazement as Japanese women proudly clutched huge boxes of corn flakes, free gifts to visitors, which they would presumably take all the way back to Japan. Such is the fame of Battle Creek's most well-known product.

Ann Woodward

Patricia Cornett is a medical writer and editor. She has her own business called Medwrite and Associates as well as teaching Technical Communications at Lawrence Technological Institute in Southfield, Michigan.

Palmsap Sugar

Indonesia in February is hot. Massive clouds pile up and deliver rain that pours down straight, so warm you can walk through it and not feel it on your skin. Brief violent storms sweep by in minutes: it is still the rainy season. At night the air is soft, frogs make unearthly noises in the hotel garden. Early morning is a good time to swim, later the sun will be damaging. Water lilies are too perfect, the petals edged with blue like carefully dyed silk. Swaths of vegetation in differing patterns make up the landscape—jungle, coconut groves, rice paddies, forests. It is hot every day, you can depend on it.

We all know what Michigan is like in February. That's why I went to Bali.

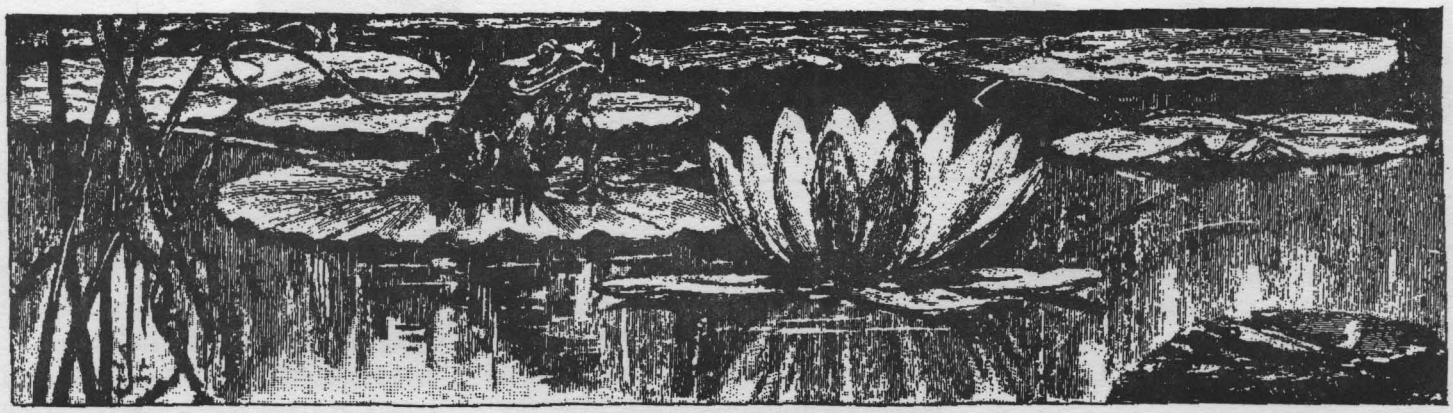
My trip was with a Smithsonian study tour, we were to see many aspects of Balinese culture. High point of all was to be a trip to Borobudur, the famous Buddhist monument in Yogyarkarta, on the island of Java. I was enamoured of dance and music, not monuments, and wanted to stay in Bali and see more of the monkey dance, the warrior dance, and I almost didn't go on that side trip. I would have missed the palm-sugar makers.

Going to their village house was almost incidental: there was a small temple next door. But they were old friends of Toni Tack, our cultural expert, and they invited all thirty-five of us into the two-room house. The walls were of woven palm leaves, the roof thatched with grass; the floor was of earth and so was the cooking place, a hollow squared bank along one wall, with holes in it for woks and pots. They support themslves, Toni said, by selling sugar. Just recently they had lost their only son, who died in an accident, and he had been an important wage-earner. But here they were, smiling and gracious, a spare old couple, showing us the burning bamboo stalks under the first opening in the stove, the palm sap boiling in the wok, the smoothly seasoned coconut shells they pour it into to make the little cakes we could buy six-for-about-a-quarter.

Here is how it is done: A cut is made in the stem of the flower bud of the sugar palm about one month before the blossom would be ready to open. Then a container, protected over the top to keep out insects and dirt, is attached to catch the sap. For a month or so, sap can be collected once or twice a day. It is boiled down, as is maple sap in this country, and poured in small amounts into the shells to cool and harden. The sugar is dark brown and has a distinctive delicious flavor. We were urged to taste and many bought bags of it to take home. I did not trust such a potentially messy thing in my baggage but I wish it were available here, because it is so good. In Indonesia it is used to make a syrup for fruit and ice dishes, and in some rice cakes, but mostly in heavily sweetened coffee and tea. I would be happy just to nibble on it.

We milled around in the tiny main room and were invited also into the bedroom, to see the picture of Queen Wilhemina on the wall. There was a bed platform in one corner, partially enclosed and floored with straw matting. I took pictures: of the queen, the bed, and of the couple with their clay stove and bubbling palm sap, dignity and generosity glowing in their smiles. That slide is enlarged and sits in my studio, to remind me of basic values. It wasn't, perhaps, the high point of the trip, but it was a high point of the reason for traveling.

Ann Woodward



Muriel Seligman

Our group's program chair will be moving to the warmer climate of Arizona in the fall of this year. Muriel has quietly and efficiently organized our programs for the past three years, and we are most indebted to her for arranging such informative and interesting speakers. We will miss her greatly and wish her our best on her new abode(or should that be adobe?).

Food Related Travel

September 9-10—1995 Oxford Symposium. Saint Anthony's College, Oxford University. Subject: Cooks and others who have influenced what we eat— for better of worse. For those who want or speak, or simply to attend: Contact: Harlan Walker, 294 Hagley Road, Birmingham, B17 8DJ, England. Tel. and Fax 0121-429-1779. For detailed information contact Jan Longone or Ann Woodward.

Menu from the Chinese Banquet

The March meeting was made the occasion for a Chinese banquet at the Great Lake Chinese Seafood Restaurant in Ann Arbor. Though twenty-five of our members attended , we thought it would be of interest to everyone to publish the menu. It was a memorable meal.

Duck skin with pan cakes

Duck bones in watercress soup

Honey-glazed walnut shrimp

Braised bean curd with Chinese black mushrooms

Sauteed shredded duck meat with vegetables

Lobster with garlic

Steamed black cod with black bean sauce

Steamed whole pickerel with ginger and scallions

Stir-fried Chinese broccoli

Dessert— peanut soup

After the meal, a talk about Chinese banquets, illustrated with slides, was given by cookbook writer Elizabeth Chu King. She lives in Bloomfield Hills.

July 16: All American Picnic Independence Lake County Park

September 17— Andy Smith: The Centennial of Tomato Catsup

October 15— Ted Richman: The English Gourmet

November 12— Linda and Fred Griffiths: The Broad Spectrum of Onions

All the above speakers are authors of books on their subjects.

Washtenaw County Extension Service Building, 4133 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Time 7:00 - 9:00 pm (unless otherwise noted)

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First Class