BATTLE CREEK FIRES: ACCIDENTAL OR PROVIDENTIAL?

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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
“Our people should have an institution of their own, under their own control, for the benefit of the diseased and suffering among us.”

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, 492, 1865
In response to this vision, Adventists opened the Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek in 1866. In 1876, John Harvey Kellogg became medical superintendent.
In 1877 changed the name to Battle Creek Medical and Surgical Sanitarium, hence the short form Battle Creek Sanitarium.
“SANITARIUM”
Battle Creek Sanitarium was a premier medical institution in its heydays.
John D. Rockefeller
J. C. Penney
Montgomery Ward
George Bernard Show
Dale Carnegie
Thomas Edison
Billy Sunday
William Howard Taft
Dr. John Harvey Kellogg stood only 5 feet 4 inches (1.6 meter) tall.
surgeon
inventor
educator
administrator
writer
public speaker

John H. Kellogg, of Battle Creek, Michigan.

Process of Producing Alimentary Products.


Application filed February 16, 1897. Serial No. 623,711. (No specimens.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, John H. Kellogg, of Battle Creek, in the county of Calhoun and State of Michigan, have invented an Improved Process of Producing an Alimentary Product, of which the following is a specification.

My new and improved product is made from edible nuts, preferably peanuts and such other nuts as can be easily blanched or freed from skins, and is a semisolid, having about the same consistence as hard butter or soft cheese.

The preliminary steps of the preferred process or method are the following: The shells of

might also be applied by means of heated atmospheric air under compression. The cans should be thus treated from one to four hours to effect the desired change in the nut product. The time will be varied chiefly according to the size of the cans.

By mixing the water as described and by exposure to a high temperature for the time named the product is so modified as to render it a practically new one—that is to say, the nuts are thoroughly cooked before being converted into paste, and the subsequent treatment at 213° or above is not applied to the paste for
DISTINGUISHED MEDICAL CAREER

• Record surgeries
• Mayo Clinic
• Mortality rate
• Post surgical care
• Surgical fees
REDUCED TO ASHES

Wyandotte and Battle Creek Suffer
Large Fires.

ONE LIFE BELIEVED LOST

Big Adventist Sanitarium at Battle
Creek Burns in Early Morning Hours
—Wyandotte Loses a $70,000 Trunk
Factory.

Battle Creek, Mich., Feb. 19.—The
Battle Creek sanitarium, owned by the
Seventh Day Adventists, burned to the
ground early Tuesday morning, entailing
the probable loss of one human
life and destroying property valued at
from $300,000 to $400,000.

The blaze started in the basement
of the sanitarium proper and ran up
to the top of the elevator shaft.
THE BIG FIRE AT BATTLE CREEK

It Started In a Bath Room In the Sanitarium About 4:30 Tuesday Morning.

Many Narrow Escapes, Some Injured But Only One Life Reported Lost.

BATTLE CREEK, Feb. 18.—Due to the explosion of chemicals in the laboratory of the Battle Creek sanitarium, says one report, and another that it originated in a bath room, the main building of five stories, the six-story hospital and several together with several adjacent buildings, with no hope of saving them.

The guests came from all parts of the world and as soon as they recovered from the shock hundreds of them rushed to the telegraph offices to send...
Was the fire accidental or providential?
Spiritual beginning

Pre-operation prayers
“I have seen Dr. Kellogg fall on his knees in an agony of distress when an operation was to be performed which meant life or death. One false movement of the instrument would cost the patient’s life. Once, in a critical operation I saw a hand laid upon his hand. That hand moved his hand, and the patient’s life was saved.”

8T 187-188, letter written on December 12, 1899
“Who has been by your side during these critical operations? Who has kept you calm and self-possessed in the crisis, giving you quick, sharp discernment, clear eyesight, steady nerves, and skillful precision? The Lord Jesus has sent His angel to your side to tell you what to do. A hand has been laid upon your hand. Jesus, and not you, has guided the movements of your hand.”

8T 187-188, letter written on December 12, 1899
RELATIONSHIP WITH ELLEN WHITE

Mutual admiration
High regard for the Spirit of Prophecy
In Kellogg’s defense
Ellen White’s advice
RELATIONSHIP WITH CHURCH LEADERS

Best young men for the ministry
Sanitarium charter
From 1898 onward, Ellen White’s counsel to Kellogg became more pointed and forceful.
TENSION WITH THE CHURCH

Theology
Preachers and medical institution
Policy non-compliance
Independent institution
TENSION WITH THE CHURCH

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Preachers and medical institution
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TENSION WITH THE CHURCH

Theology
Preachers and medical institution
Policy non-compliance
Independent institution
“Self-respecting medical men are willing to work on an equal footing with preachers even though they may be of inferior education and ability, but it is not human nature that they could be willing to be slaves to such men while doing their own professional work.”

TENSION WITH THE CHURCH

Theology
Preachers and medical institution
Policy non-compliance
Independent institution
Kellogg announced that he did not “expect to be bound by it in anything.”

TENSION WITH THE CHURCH

Theology
Preachers and medical institution
Policy non-compliance
Independent institution
“undenominational and nonsectarian”

In 1905 he admitted to an old friend that indeed he insisted on maintaining the sanitarium as a “private, distinct, independent corporation.”

“As an undenominational institution, the sanitarium was not to be used ‘for the purpose of presenting anything that is peculiarly Seventh-day Adventist in doctrine.’”

“It is the purpose of God that a health institution should be organized and controlled exclusively by Seventh-day Adventists... God did not intend that this institution should be carried on after the order of any other health institute in the land, but that it should be one of the most effectual instrumentalities in His hands of giving light to the world. 4T 556.
1901 General Conference Session
February 18, 1902
REBUILDING THE SANITARIUM

1. Failed to scale down the size
2. Failed to relocate it in the countryside
3. Failed to seek Ellen White’s support
“I sincerely wish that the sanitarium were miles away from Battle Creek. From the light given me of God, I know this would be better for its spirituality and usefulness.”

8T 134
The newly rebuilt Battle Creek Sanitarium
1907—Kellogg was disfellowshipped.
1920s—Kellogg Apostatized from the Faith.
1933—Battle Creek Sanitarium Went Bankrupt.
CRISIS OF IMMENSE PROPORTIONS
BATTLE CREEK FIRE #2
Review and Herald Publishing Plant
Bindery
Elmshaven, St. Helena, California
“After breakfast, or just at breakfast, Sara has told me the terrible news, that a telegram is received by the Sanitarium that the Battle Creek Publishing House is burned to the ground. I am feeling so sad, because the Lord has permitted this, because His people would not hear His warnings, and repent, and be converted, that He should heal them. Many have despised the words of warning. Oh how sad it is. How large the loss is, of books and furniture and facilities. May the Lord have mercy upon us is my prayer.”
Letter 214, 1902.
WHY?
“I feel a terror of soul as I see to what a pass our publishing house has come. The presses in the Lord's institution have been printing the soul-destroying theories of Romanism and other mysteries of iniquity…"
...The office must be purged of this objectionable matter. I have a testimony from the Lord for those who have placed such matter in the hands of the workers. God holds you accountable for presenting to young men and young women the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge...
...You have given matter containing Satan's sentiments into the hands of the workers, bringing his deceptive, polluting principles before their minds. The Lord looks upon this action on your part as helping Satan to prepare his snare to catch souls...
...God will not hold guiltless those who have done this thing. He has a controversy with the managers of the publishing house. I have been almost afraid to open the Review, fearing to see that God has cleansed the publishing house by fire.” 8T 91
“I was not surprised by the sad news, for in the visions of the night I have seen an angel standing with a sword as of fire stretched over Battle Creek…” 8T, 97
“...Once, in the daytime, while my pen was in my hand, I lost consciousness, and it seemed as if this sword of flame were turning first in one direction and then in another...
“...Disaster seemed to follow disaster because God was dishonored by the devising of men to exalt and glorify themselves.” (8T, 97)
Why did God allow R&H to be destroyed?
1. Injustice in Review and Herald Publishing House.
“Unjust, unholy actions have brought the frown of God upon the Review and Herald office” Letter 74, 1901
2. Secularization of Review and Herald.
“The publishing house has been turned into desecrated shrines, into places of unholy merchandise and traffic.”
Letter 31, 1898.
3. Colonization of Battle Creek.
Battle Creek College, Battle Creek Sanitarium, Review and Herald Publishing Association, and the General Conference.
proliferation and the overdevelopment of institutions in Battle Creek
As far back as 1870s, Ellen White gave counsel against colonization of people and institutions, especially in Battle Creek.
“The Lord is not pleased with some of the arrangements that have been made in Battle Creek. He has declared that other places are being robbed of the light and advantages that have been centered and multiplied in Battle Creek. It is not pleasing to God that our youth from all parts of the country should be called to Battle Creek, to work in the sanitarium, and to receive their education. When we permit this, we are often guilty of robbing needy fields of their most precious treasure.” 8T 217.3
1894, Australia

“I wish to remind my brethren of the cautions and warnings that have been given me in reference to constantly investing means in Battle Creek in order to make a little more room or to make things more convenient. New fields are to be entered; the truth is to be proclaimed as a witness to all nations…”
“While our brethren in America feel at liberty to invest means in buildings which time will reveal that they would do just as well and even better without, thousands of dollars are thus absorbed that the Lord called for to be used in ‘regions beyond.’”
“The institutions . . . failed of doing what they should have done to share with other places the advantages still centered in Battle Creek. The Lord signified His displeasure by permitting the principal buildings of these institutions to be destroyed by fire” 8T, 218.
4. Centralization of Power at Battle Creek.
“It is not the purpose of God that his people should colonize, or settle together in large communities. The disciples of Christ are his representatives upon the earth, and God designs that they shall be scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, as lights amid the darkness of the world.”

RH May 15, 1888, par. 12.
“God designs that His people shall be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. The plan of gathering together in large numbers, to compose a large church, has contracted their influence, and narrowed down their sphere of usefulness, and is literally putting their light under a bushel.” 2T 633
“The lord is not pleased with some of the arrangements that have been made in Battle Creek. He has declared that other places are being robbed of the light and advantages that have been centered and multiplied in Battle Creek.” 8T 217
“I wish to remind my brethren of the cautions and warnings that have been given me in reference to constantly investing means in Battle Creek in order to make a little more room or to make things more convenient. New fields are to be entered; the truth is to be proclaimed as a witness to all nations. The work is hindered so that the banner of truth cannot be uplifted, as it should be, in these new fields. While our brethren in America feel at liberty to invest means in buildings which time will reveal that they would do just as well and even better without, thousands of dollars are thus absorbed that the Lord called for to be used in ‘regions beyond.’” 8T, 217
“The Lord does not want a second Jerusalem in Battle Creek.”

PH067 5.1
1868
1895 and 1899
1890
1896
1901
Exodus began
“Perplexities will increase; but let us, as believers in God, encourage one another. Let us not lower the standard, but keep it lifted high, looking to Him who is the author and finisher of our faith. . . . I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end.”

Life Sketches, pp. 437, 439.
The end