

Filling the Pantry: Unwrapping Food Packaging History

Heritage
Week 2026

Quaker Oats Cereal Box

2011.212.001



Artifact

The Quaker Oats brand began its oat milling operations in 1877.

The Quaker Man illustration on this box matches the style created by artist Haddon Sundblom in the 1950's. This warm, friendly portrait was used until designer Saul Bass created a new abstract version in the early 1970s.

This simplified style lasted through the decade before reverting to the traditional 1950's-style portrait.

ca. mid- 1980's

History

In 1879, cartons were invented thanks to a fortunate manufacturing mishap when paper bag factory owner Robert Gair discovered that cutting and creasing material in one step created prefabricated boxes.

By the early 1900s, cardboard (and paperboard) boxes were widely used to transport delicate items like eggs. Around 1906, the Kellogg brothers were among the first to package cereal (their corn flakes product) in cardboard boxes.

Virtual Exhibit by the Mission Museum