

Timeline of Biodynamic Agriculture in the United States (1924-1949)

(Compiled by M. Gardner, January 2023, for the Agriculture Section)

- 1924, June 7-16:** RUDOLF STEINER gives the *Agriculture Course* in Koberwitz, Silesia (then Germany);
1st German edition of Course published already by November (but kept confidential, numbered copies only).
- 1925, March 30:** STEINER dies in Dornach, Switzerland.
- 1926** [“soon after 1925”]: First preps made by HENRY HAGENS in Princeton, NJ.
- 1926, April:** CHARLOTTE PARKER on behalf of RALPH COURTNEY and the Threefold Commonwealth Group in NYC acquires 30 acres in Spring Valley, NY (includes house [later “Main House”], barn & orchard).
- 1926, May:** GLADYS BARNETT (HAHN) & ELISE STOLTING (COURTNEY) travel to Germany to learn biodynamic agriculture from ALEXANDER (AKI) KEYSERLINGK (nephew of Count Keserlingk) at his farms near Baltic Sea (north of Koberwitz); at Christmas they attend agriculture conference in Dornach.
- 1927:** First informal use of “Demeter” as a brand name; first use of term “biological-dynamic” (*biologisch-dynamisch*); the *Versuchsring* (Experimental Circle) assigns numbers to preps for confidentiality.
- 1927, May:** ELISE returns to “Threefold Farm” in Spring Valley and starts BD garden adjacent to Main House.
- 1927, fall:** GLADYS returns and with ELISE makes compost piles & BD preps, also buys bees and beehives.
- 1928, summer:** CHARLOTTE PARKER & RALPH COURTNEY meet EHRENFRIED PFEIFFER at opening of second Goetheanum in Dornach.
- 1928, Dec. 29:** COUNT CARL VON KEYSERLINGK dies in Breslau, Germany, on trip to Dornach.
- 1929:** GEORGE ADAMS’ English translation of the *Agriculture Course* is published (numbered copies only).
First commercial TV station in U.S. begins broadcasting.
- 1929, spring:** PAUL STROMENGER, who attended Ag. Course, arrives from Germany to be farmer at Threefold (until 1933).
- 1929, fall:** GLADYS starts BD farm in Dover Plains, NY (Dutchess Co.) with her new husband BILL HAHN.
ELISE marries JOSEPH COURTNEY [RALPH’S brother] (daughter CHARLOTTE later marries PETER DUKICH.)
Stock market crash.
- 1930:** Pluto discovered.
- 1931:** Empire State Building finished. George Washington Bridge opened.
- 1932:** Heath hen (large chicken-like bird) becomes extinct (last colony on Martha’s Vineyard).
- 1933:** ADOLF HITLER becomes Chancellor in Germany. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT becomes U.S. President.
- 1933, July:** First anthroposophical summer conference at Threefold (tent behind “summer kitchen” [site of present “Holder House”]); PFEIFFER invited to speak. EVELYN SPEIDEN (GREGG)’S first conference
- 1933, Nov.-Dec.:** EVELYN goes to BD conferences in England, Germany & Dornach, meets ERIKA SABARTH, DICKIE (MATHILDE) VON FRAGENSTEIN (VIBBER) and ERIKA RIESE (who teaches her to make the BD preps); (in spring 1934 also visits Pfeiffer’s large “Loverendale” agricultural project in Holland).
- 1934:** After spending time in Holland and Switzerland, FRED & ALICE HECKEL become the farmers at Threefold Farm.
- 1935, Apr. 14:** “Black Sunday” - black blizzard in Oklahoma at height of Dust Bowl era.
- 1935:** Threefold Farm acquires “new land” (including the present “Red Barn”); now milking a dozen cows.
PFEIFFER returns to U.S. for lecture tour with GÜNTHER WACHSMUTH and HERMANN VON BARAVALLE.
Schism in *Vorstand* of Anthroposophical Society, some members expelled; Society banned in Germany by Nazis.
- 1936:** Hoover Dam completed on Colorado River.
- 1937:** ROGER & MARION HALE acquire 12,000 acres of forest near Vanceboro, ME, start BD “Sunrise Farm” and eventually a lab for Pfeiffer; make BD preps, also for others. (This lab moves to Threefold Farm in 1947.)
- 1937, Apr. 10-11:** First BD conference in U.S. at Threefold Farm; PFEIFFER as guest speaker.

- 1938, Feb. 2:** BDFGA founded in NYC with Board of **ORA F. GARDNER** (President), **ROGER HALE** (Vice-President), **FRED HECKEL** (Secretary/Treasurer), and **F. LANGDON DAVIS**.
- 1938:** PFEIFFER'S *Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening: Soil Fertility, Renewal and Preservation* is published (translated by FRED HECKEL); first BD textbook (Ag. Course not yet public); also appears in German, French, Dutch & Italian. At Threefold, construction of Orchard House begins. LOUIS BROMFIELD buys 600-acre Malabar Farm in Ohio. WILLIAM ALBRECHT becomes chairman of the Dept. of Soils at the Univ. of Missouri.
- 1939:** 37 BD farms & 31 BD gardens in U.S. JOHN STEINBECK'S *The Grapes of Wrath* published.
- 1939, Mar. 18-19:** Third annual BD conference at Threefold Farm; 175 attendees.
- 1939, Sept.:** Germany invades Poland, WW II begins.
- 1940:** **LORD JAMES NORTHBOURNE** publishes *Look to the Land*, which introduces the term "organic" agriculture (inspired by Pfeiffer and BD agriculture). ALBERT HOWARD publishes *An Agricultural Testament*, which inspires J.I. RODALE to establish an organic gardening experimental farm on 63 acres in Emmaus, PA.
- 1940, fall:** PFEIFFER with wife (**ADELHEID**) and 2 children moves to U.S. to start BD training course and manage 838-acre "model farm" for **ALARIK (& MABEL PEW) MYRIN** in Kimberton, PA. BDFGA moves to Kimberton; **ALARIK MYRIN** and PFEIFFER (as science advisor) join Board; **EVELYN** becomes Secretary/Treasurer.
- 1941:** First issue of *Bio-Dynamics*. In Germany, Nazis ban BD agriculture (after **RUDOLF HESS'** flight to England).
- 1941, Dec. 7:** Attack on Pearl Harbor, HI.
- 1942:** PFEIFFER & RIESE'S *Grow a Garden and Be Self-Sufficient* (translated by **ALICE HECKEL**).
- 1943:** **MAX & MATHILDE ZINNIKER** start 140-acre BD farm in Elkhorn, WI. LADY EVE BALFOUR publishes *The Living Soil*.
- 1944:** **ERNST & MARGARET DANIEL** become farmers on Threefold's "new land" (sell raw milk until early 1970s).
- 1944, March:** PFEIFFER parts ways with MYRIN; no BD conference due to wartime gas rationing. With **PETER ESCHER'S** help PFEIFFER acquires 285-acre "Meadowbrook Farm" in Chester, NY. BDFGA relocates to Chester.
- [In 1958 BDFGA moves to Dover Plains, NY, & in 1963 to Stroudsburg, PA (following **JOSEPHINE PORTER**); in 1972 to Springfield, IL (**MICHAEL SCULLY**); in 1977 to Wyoming, RI (**HEINZ GROTZKE**); in 1985 back to Kimberton (**ROD SCHOULDICE**); in 1998 to San Francisco, CA, & in 2003 to Junction City, OR (**CHUCK BEEDY**); and in 2011 to Milwaukee, WI (**ROBERT KARP**)].
- 1945, Aug. 14:** PFEIFFER hospitalized with tuberculosis in Pomona, NY (until 1947). WW II armistice.
- 1946:** Annual BD conferences resume at Threefold Farm.
- 1947:** PFEIFFER moves to Threefold, sets up Lab above Orchard House garage (regularly visits farm and family in Chester), develops "compost starter," with help from **MARGRIT SELKE**, **ERIKA SABARTH**, **SALLIE BURNS** and **DICKIE**, who now marries **HOWLAND VIBBER**. **WALTER & URSULA STUBER** start "Golden Acres," a 370-acre model BD farm near Newtown, PA.
- 1948, Jan. 30:** MAHATMA GANDHI assassinated.
- 1949:** PFEIFFER'S Lab moves to east wing of newly built Threefold Auditorium (Lab closes at the end of 1974).
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- 1952:** **MARJORIE SPOCK & POLLY (MARY THEODORA) RICHARDS** start BD garden on Long Island (Brookville, NY).
- 1957, summer:** DDT spraying program begins on Long Island; **MARJORIE & POLLY** sue to stop it. Suit unsuccessful, but **RACHEL CARSON** becomes involved in 1958 and then in 1962 publishes *Silent Spring* (yet for political reasons does not publicly acknowledge immense help of **MARJORIE & POLLY** or PFEIFFER). (DDT banned in U.S. in 1972.)
- 1958:** First public (unnumbered) edition of the *Agriculture Course* in English (first public German edition only in 1963).
- 1960:** **MARJORIE & POLLY** buy 142-acre farm next to Pfeiffer's farm in Chester (move to Maine five years later).
- 1961, Nov. 30:** PFEIFFER dies at Threefold Farm.