

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE

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Seventy years ago the following announcement appeared in the *Anthroposophic News Sheet*: “Anthroposophists interested as consumers or agriculturalists in the bio-dynamic method of agriculture and the superior farm and garden produce that can be raised by those following its indications will be pleased to hear of an important step forward made by this agricultural movement in America.

“A small number of persons who have been actively devoted to this work met on January 8, 1938, at the Headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society in America and formed an Association for Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening. The statutes and by-laws of this organization are patterned closely on those of similar bodies in Switzerland and other countries.

“The organization will do all in its power to foster the spread of accurate bio-dynamic information to all who wish to receive it. It will have among its duties the task of seeing that places which wish to be known as bio-dynamic farms or gardens carry out correctly certain minimum standards of practice. And all places making any use of the methods will be subject to periodic visits. Within a certain period of time, the bio-dynamic preparations, and technical information will then no longer be furnished to persons not active members of the association.

“These steps have been undertaken at the earnest suggestion of the Natural Science Section of the Goetheanum, the trustees of Dr. Steiner’s contributions to the needs of modern agriculture. They are based on experience in other countries and will, it is hoped, lead . . . in the direction of an organically sound and healthy development.”

To celebrate these seventy years of biodynamic agriculture, our journal will honor and articulate our past, bring it to the present, and share plans for the future as the theme running through the next four issues. As part of this endeavor, I have reviewed all still available minutes of the meetings of the board of directors and would now like to share with you highlights of the issues, trends, and some personalities as they arise from the pages of the earliest meetings up to the 1950s. The story will continue over the course of the coming year. Here we will see what the Association had to deal with and what it found worthy of recording. Of course, not everything appears in minutes. Many of the issues will sound very familiar. More narrative histories and recollections will be found in articles in this and following issues of *Biodynamics*.

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The first year, 1938, was devoted to electing members, passing bylaws, and becoming incorporated. At the end of that year, thirty-seven farms and thirty-one gardens were listed. Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer was present at meetings as the representative of the Goetheanum. The second year saw the need for “more information centres” for consultation visits to farms and gardens. These centers were authorized after Dr. Pfeiffer said they

would be agreeable to the Natural Science Section of the Goetheanum. The board also recognized the need for publication of a Bio-dynamic News Sheet. The November 1939 meeting contains a report on the status of the trademark “Demeter” for biodynamic produce. The application for this trademark was published in the *Official Gazette*, but was dropped, on legal advice, because of an objection from a Boston wholesale grocer using a similar term. Also noted was agreement to take action on the registration of another trademark, “Bio-Dyn.”

In 1940, Miss C.E. Parker was recognized as making possible the Threefold Farm at Spring Valley, New York, as the first biodynamic farm in the United States. Mr. H.A.W. Myrin and Dr. Pfeiffer were elected to the board, and the headquarters of the Association were transferred from the Threefold Farm to Kimberton Farms in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Forty-seven farms are listed, and a new development in connection with the Pottenger Sanitarium in California was mentioned. The proposed Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening School in Kimberton was deemed a project separate from the Association under the direction of Dr. Pfeiffer and Mr. Myrin. Dr. Pfeiffer also volunteered to oversee the publication of the first issue of a Bio-dynamic News Sheet. As a result, the first issue of *Bio-Dynamics* (as the name was then written) appeared in the summer of 1941.

In 1943, “Dr. Pfeiffer explained that the trade mark registration has been done, including the preparations, various food products, the magazine, etc. This means that the small triangular trade mark which is used on the back cover of the magazine may be used on Bio-Dynamic products.”

The board did not meet again until 1946, by which time the headquarters and Dr. Pfeiffer had moved to Chester Farm in New York. At the first meeting of the board, the growth of Rodale’s organic movement with Sir Albert Howard was noted, to the point where their magazine, *Organic Gardening*, had a circulation of 18,000.

In 1947, Dr. Pfeiffer reported that the Bio Chemical Research Laboratory, also at Chester, had begun work. The Laboratory was a subsidiary and branch of the Bio-dynamic Farming and Gardening Association. He also reported that the education program was at a standstill.

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These were the last minutes until the 1950s and form a natural stopping point for this issue. They reflect a time of early growth centered in the Northeast anchored by the towering personality of Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer. There were many other capable individuals as well, but he was certainly the central figure involved in every aspect of the life of the Association, from trademarks, to education, literature, research, and anthroposophy through his actual studies with Rudolf Steiner. In the next issue, we will continue through Dr. Pfeiffer’s death in 1961 and look at where life took the Association in the 1960s and beyond.