

= Jacob L. Beilhart =

Jacob L. Beilhart ( March 4 , 1867 ? November 24 , 1908 ) was the founder and leader of a communitarian group known as the Spirit Fruit Society . Beilhart believed that jealousy , materialism , and the fear of losing another 's love were at the root of much of the illness in the world . Under his direction , the Spirit Fruit Society sought to model and practice those beliefs .

Beilhart was born in Ohio and raised in the Lutheran faith . He moved to Kansas when he was 18 and embraced Seventh @-@ day Adventism . He later attended college to become a licensed preacher . Eventually , Beilhart came to believe that it was more important to put faith into practice helping others so he left preaching to study nursing and work in a sanitarium . He returned to Ohio in 1899 to start the Spirit Fruit Society , an intentional community based on his experiences , learning , and views . Beilhart led the group for nine years before he died of appendicitis and peritonitis in 1908 . Beilhart 's commune survived for another 22 years making it one of the longest surviving communes in America .

= = Biography = =

Beilhart was born March 4 , 1867 in Columbiana County , Ohio to a Lutheran father and a Mennonite mother . The ninth of 11 children , Beilhart was raised in the Lutheran church and his early home environment was strictly religious . Jacob did not receive much in the way of formal education . His father died when he was six or seven years old so Jacob attended only elementary school . At the age of 17 , Beilhart went to work at his brother @-@ in @-@ law 's harness shop in southern Ohio and , when they moved to Ottawa , Kansas , Jacob went with them .

Beilhart left his brother @-@ in @-@ law 's home a year later and went to live and work on a sheep farm . The family he lived with were devout Seventh Day Adventists . During this time , he became convinced that their view of the Bible and its teachings were quite different than what he had been raised to understand , but he accepted their religion entirely .

Although it is not known for certain , it is possible that the sheep farmer was the father of Olive Louema Blow , whom Beilhart married in 1887 . Jacob and Louema attended Healdsburg College in California where Jacob received a license to preach . Beilhart returned to Kansas to begin a career in preaching . After two years , however , faced with the prospect of being sent to teach in other areas , Beilhart left preaching . He maintained that he wanted to do something " besides talk . " Beilhart felt a strong need to help the sick so he enrolled in a nursing program at the Battle Creek Sanitarium that was run by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg .

Once , while working at the Sanitarium , Beilhart was called to the bedside of a young girl for whom doctors had given up hope . When Beilhart prayed for her , she experienced a quick and complete recovery . Beilhart 's conviction that faith @-@ healing was the remedy for illness put him in disfavor with the sanitarium officials and he was asked to resign .

Beilhart became friends with C. W. Post , who was a patient at the sanitarium , but Post was healed by a Christian Science faith healer , Mrs Elizabeth K. Gregory . In 1892 , Post started La Vita Inn , a sanatorium of his own and brought Beilhart on as an associate . The two men took instruction in Christian Science . Both Post and Beilhart rejected the doctrine of the religion but they embraced the view that illness was an illusion and could be overcome by mental suggestion , prayer , and self @-@ sacrifice .

After the birth of their daughter , Edith in 1896 , Louema revealed that the father of both Edith and her older brother , Harvey ( 1893 ) , was C. W. Post . Though Post offered him financial interest in La Vita Inn and his prospective famous breakfast drink , Postum , provided Beilhart he would stay and work at the Inn . Outraged at his friend 's betrayal , Beilhart ordered Post out of his house and left Battle Creek for Ohio . Louema left Jacob and took the children back to her family in Kansas in 1897 . This experience undoubtedly had a profound effect upon Beilhart 's view of marriage .

= = The Spirit Fruit Society = =

In 1896 , Beilhart returned to Ohio and settled in Lisbon , close to where he had grown up . In 1899 he decided to create an intentional community in order to practice his newly developed beliefs and to model this practice for others . Beilhart also started two newspapers called Spirit Fruit and Spirit Voice that were distributed widely by subscription . The Spirit Fruit Society was incorporated as a religious organization in 1901 . The stated goal in the incorporation documents was to , " teach mankind how to apply the truths taught by Jesus Christ " . Jacob made no effort to solicit members for his commune other than through his newspapers and sometimes rejected applicants when he felt they were not fit candidates . The commune attracted only about a dozen residents ? mostly from outside the Ohio area .

Beilhart preached in Chicago and elsewhere , but was not known to proselytize strongly ; however , although the group typically kept to themselves , their mysterious nature led to misconceptions and suspicion in the press . In 1904 , numerous newspaper articles and editorials were written , mostly in Chicago , about the Society . Those articles were often sensationalist and served to put the Society in a bad light . The views and practices of the Society , particularly those against marriage and promoting free love , were not well accepted in the small Ohio community . Thus , in 1904 , the group left Lisbon for Chicago where they expected their progressive ideas might be better tolerated .

= = Chicago and Jacob 's death = =

Beilhart had preached in Chicago on a number of occasions and felt that the reception of the Society by that community would be better . Unfavorable publicity followed the group to Chicago however , and this period lasted only a relatively short time . In 1906 Beilhart purchased the 90 acre " Dalziel Farm " on the shores of Wooster Lake . Owing to his beliefs against personal property , almost immediately after the purchase he had his name removed from the deed because he did not want anything in his name .

In November 1908 , returning from a meeting in Chicago , Beilhart fell ill with stomach pains . He was diagnosed with appendicitis , and a surgeon was brought in . There is some discrepancy concerning the diagnosis once surgery was performed . One doctor indicated that his appendix was healthy while another maintained that it had ruptured . Beilhart developed peritonitis and died on November 24 , 1908 .

In accordance with his beliefs , the Society buried Beilhart in an unmarked grave on the farm overlooking Wooster Lake . Although most of the area is now covered by a residential development , Beilhart 's grave site has been preserved , surrounded by brush .