



*Davi Hort, dono da casa comercial onde foi aberto o pacote com as revistas A Voz da Verdade, em 1884*

David Hort

Photo courtesy of Brazilian White Center - UNASP.

## Hort, David (1833–1894)

### THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Heinrich Christian Georg David Hort was the owner of the store where the first Adventist literature arrived in Brazil.

## Introduction

Heinrich Christian Georg David Hort was born in Hötensleben, Germany on November 25, 1833.<sup>1</sup> There are few records about the beginning of his life, but it is known he worked as a miner in his home country.<sup>2</sup> In 1868, he married Anna Elizabeth (Von Stallenburg) Hort (1834-1918), born in Magdeburg, Germany. From this union eight children were born, of which only three have their names in the records: Germano (b. 1861), Carlos (b. 1863), and Adolf Hort (1871-1944). In a previous relationship, Anna had a daughter named Maria (b. 1859).<sup>3</sup>

When Hort was 35, the family emigrated to Brazil in pursuit of a better life. On April 6, 1869, they left Hamburg harbor and, three months later, the ship made its first stop at the Santa Leopoldina Colony, state of Espírito Santo. The next day, the ship sailed to Itajaí, state of Santa Catarina where the Hort family disembarked. Then they traveled eight more days by canoe through Itajaí-Mirim to the city of Brusque, where they established their residence.<sup>4</sup>

The German colonization of the Brusque region began in 1860. Thus, at the time the Hort family arrived, the colony was still in its relatively early days. After a land raffle among the new colonists, the Hort family started living in Cedro Grande District. Having obtained land, David built a large, two-story, wide colonial house between 1875 and 1880 located at 124 Cedro Street. The Hort family lived on the second floor and opened *Kaufläden Hort*, a grocery store, on the first floor.<sup>5</sup>

The store served the small communities in the region and colonists would sell or trade agricultural products for family consumer goods such as salt, bacon, tools, oil, fabrics, and guns. In addition, social activities were also held there and it served as a meeting point for neighbors and mail delivery. At the time, the warehouse owners were the middlemen between the host city sellers and district sellers, which generated a certain dependency among the colonists and grocers. Because the colony was isolated from any urban center, the colonists had their commerce options limited to sales and stores. For that reason, the merchants were very influential at the place, and many times they would dictate the rules. The Hort store was strategically located, near the harbor in Itajaí-Mirim river.<sup>6</sup>

Besides being part of Cedro Grande history, David Hort's store also has historical significance for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Brazil. It was at this store that the Adventist message arrived in the country through the German magazine *Stimme der Wahrheit* (Voice of Truth), even before having an Adventist missionary in the territory.<sup>7</sup>

The story began when, around 1879, a young man called Borchardt got involved in a fight in Brusque, seriously injuring his opponent. In fear, he ran to Itajaí harbor and got a job on a German ship plying between Europe and South America. On the ship, he met two Adventist missionaries that asked him if he knew someone in Brazil interested in religious matters. Borchardt gave them his stepfather Carlos Dreefke's address, who lived in Brusque, so they could send him Adventist literature.<sup>8</sup>

The story of the beginning of Adventism in Brazil is vague for lack of detailed records. According to oral statements gathered by F. H. Westphal, E. H. Meyers, and G. Streithorst, the arrival of packages at Itajaí harbor happened between 1879 and 1884. Addressed to Dreefke, the correspondence arrived at Hort's store. Dreefke wearied of receiving the shipments, fearing he would later be charged for them. Motivated by David Hort and some curious people, he opened each package and distributed the Adventist magazines to interested people. At the time, there was not much to read in the region and even less in German. Still suspicious, a little while later Dreefke decided to stop receiving the shipments; but, at the request of a teacher called Chikiwidowsky, he passed the responsibility for distributing the material to him. Reports say that Chikiwidowsky later also lost interest, handing the responsibility over to Frederich Dressler.<sup>9</sup>

Dressler, the son of a Lutheran pastor, was expelled from Germany for being an alcoholic. To feed his addiction, he started selling the magazines. Seeing that the audience interest only grew, he wrote to the Tract Society in the United States, asking for more material, promising to pay later – which didn't happen.<sup>10</sup> Among the materials sent were the following magazines: *Stimme der Wahrheit* (Voice of Truth), *Prophetischer Erklärer* (Prophetic Explainer), *Herold der Wahrheit* (Herald of Truth), *Christlicher Hausfreund* (Christian Family Friend), and books such as *Gedanken Über das Buch Daniel* (Daniel and the Revelation), by Uriah Smith.<sup>11</sup> The spreading of Adventist literature resulted in Guilherme Belz developing a deep interest in Adventism and, therefore, to start keeping the Sabbath, the first one to do so in Brazil.<sup>12</sup>

David Hort was never interested in the magazines that were delivered to his store. However, years later, part of his family started studying the Bible through the initiative of his son, Adolf, in light of the Adventist material. At the time the first package of magazines was opened, Adolf was still a child. In August 1896, Adolf, his wife, and his daughter-in-law were baptized by pastor Huldreich F. Graf and became witnesses to their community.<sup>13</sup> David died on December 15, 1894, from a cancer that spread to his lungs, and was buried at the Brusque Lutheran Community Cemetery in Santa Catarina.<sup>14</sup>

On March 31, 2019, decree number 8.379-2019, was homologated by the City Hall of Brusque declaring the *Casarão Hort* (Hort House) a historical heritage. On June 4, 2019, the decree was published in the official

newspaper by Brusque mayor, Jonas Paegle.<sup>15</sup>

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