



Aerial photo of Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy in 2019.
Photo courtesy of Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy Archives.

Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy

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The Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy (Instituto Adventista Agro-Industrial or IAAI) is a boarding school that offers Early Childhood, Elementary, and High School Education. It is part of the Adventist world education network and is owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil.

IAAI operates in the mission field of Northwest Brazil Union Mission (União Noroeste Brasileira or UNoB). The academy is located at AM-010 state highway at km 74 in Zip Code 69117-000, Rural Area, in the city of Rio Preto da Eva in the state of Amazonas, Brazil.

The academy is located on a 10,000-hectare farm that has modern male and female dorms, a multisport gym, a soccer field, a semi-Olympic pool, a library, a cafeteria, and a cultivation area. The school currently has a total of 291 students and a team of 52 employees, including 16 teachers, five workers, and four pastors. IAAI also has an Adventist Church congregation with about 270 members.¹

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the Academy

The state of Amazonas covers an area of 1,559,168,177 km² and includes an incomparable mix of waters and forests. In its territory is located the hydrographic basin of the Amazon River, one of the largest on the entire planet.² In Amazonas, rivers are commonly a passage for boats, usually the only means of transportation available. The Adventist message reached that region in the early 20th century. In 1922, W. E. Murray asked the Adventist churches in Brazil to make donations to fund the start of the Adventist message preaching in that part of the country. The goal was to bring Adventism to the cities of Manaus (in Amazonas), Belém (in Pará), and other smaller towns.³

That initiative was successful, and the work of preaching the Gospel began in Amazonas. In 1927, the Lower Amazonas Mission (presently the North Pará Conference) was created with the goal of promoting the progress of the Advent work in the states of Amazonas, Ceará, Maranhão, Pará, Piauí, and the present states of Acre, Amapá, Rondônia, and Roraima which, at the time, were recognized as federal territories.⁴ Back then, visiting the interior of the state of Amazonas implied traveling through much of the 40,000 miles of rivers in the region's green maze.

However, exploring the Brazilian jungle was no obstacle for the Adventist pioneers. With this objective in mind and in order to put the Amazon definitively on the evangelistic map, the Adventist Church, through the South American Division (SAD), organized strong medical missionary activities along the Amazon River and its tributaries⁵

In January 1929, Pastor Leo B. Halliwell and his family were sent to work in the city of Belém, the capital of the state of Pará. The purpose was for Pastor Halliwell to assume the position of Lower Amazonas Mission president. Sometime later, he and his wife had the idea of building a vessel with the name “Luzeiro” [“Light Bearer”] to offer medical and dental care to riverside communities. This vessel was extremely helpful in the expansion and consolidation of Adventism in the northern region of Brazil. As the Halliwell couple traveled in the vessel, they preached, comforted, prayed, and studied the Bible with their patients. Over the course of 25 years, Pastor Halliwell and his wife Jessie served about 250,000 people, many of whom accepted the Adventist message. The couple’s selfless love for the Advent message stands as an example for many people who, even today, work in other medical missionary vessels in the northern region of Brazil.⁷

The work carried out by the Halliwells and other missionaries through the medical missionary launches led many Amazonians to better understand the Word of God. One of the fruits of this work was the establishment of the first Adventist school in Amazonas during the 1930s. This fact is related to the Michiles family, who got to know the Adventist message and started a school on their farm. The farm was called “Centenário” [“Centenary”] and was in an area that was part of the city of Maués, located about 260 km from Manaus. The school only operated for a limited time and, for some unknown reason, was closed. Despite that, the school building still stands to this day and functions as a museum on the Centenário farm.⁸

From that beginning, the Adventist message continued to be carried to other places in Amazonas with medical missionary work as its main means. Missionaries used ambulatory launches and traveled the Amazon River and its tributaries, and they brought relief and messages of hope to the most inhospitable and distant places⁹ Because of the growth achieved, later in 1940, the leadership of North Brazil Union Mission (União Norte Brasileira or UNB) decided to create the Central Amazon Mission (presently the Central Amazon Conference). This administrative unit was responsible for managing the work of the Adventist Church in the states of Amazonas, Acre, Rondônia, and Roraima.¹⁰

The Advent message continued to be preached throughout the Amazon territory with great dedication and, sometime later, it reached the place that is currently known as the city of Rio Preto da Eva. In this city in the state’s countryside, the message reached the families of Geraldo Barroncas and Manoel Ferreira.¹¹ The history of the Adventist boarding schools in that region started in 1964 through the conversion of these people. By that time, Adventist families in Amazonas were already yearning for quality education with Christian values for their children since the school in the Centenário Farm was no longer in operation. In that period, the only Adventist school with complete elementary education in the entire UNB territory was Grão Pará Adventist Academy in Belém. And the nearest boarding school was in the state of Pernambuco which, at the time, was part of East Brazil Union Mission (now the Southeast Brazil Union Conference).¹²

The Academy’s Establishment

On January 15, 1964, Plínio Coelho, then the governor of Amazonas, had an audience at the Rio Negro Palace in the city of Manaus with pastors Robert H. Habenicht and Itamar Sabino de Paiva from the Central Amazon Mission. The pastors’ intention was to ask the state government for land to build an Adventist boarding school in the state. The request was granted, and after the meeting, the governor determined that a 10,000-hectares land should be donated for the project. The donated land was located at km 74 on the AM-010 state highway that connects Manaus to Itacoatiara.¹³

The area of the new school was defined in January 1964 and, in June of that same year, a road was opened towards what would be the industrial part of the farm. After the road was opened, contracted workers along with other volunteers began to clear the land. They also planted trees and started agricultural cultivation, an activity that would be helpful in supporting the community that would settle there. At the beginning of these works, they built shelters with a thatched cover (a type of roof built with straw that requires periodic maintenance) that served as a dorm for students in addition to the first house for teachers.¹⁴

The first name given to this new educational unit was “Escola Agroindustrial do Amazonas” [“Amazonas Agricultural School”]. Its first director was also one of its founders--Pastor Robert H. Habenicht, then leader of Education at Central Amazon Mission. In June 1965, the first straw shacks of the institution were built. Later, the Central Amazon Mission leaders sent a newsletter to Adventist churches across the region calling on young people to devote time and effort to help build the school. A group of 20 young people responded and was sent to work for about a year and a half on building the school.¹⁵

In 1966, the school’s academic activities began with 15 students. Ever since, the school has taught the basic principles of health, hygiene, basic nursing care, cooking, crafts, and agriculture in addition to promoting other activities that were required for the initial grades.¹⁶ At the time, classes were taught by Pastor Habenicht and Maria Montenegro, the school’s first teacher.¹⁷ Still in 1966, the Amazonas Department of Education and Culture recognized the Amazonas Agroindustrial School as a Public Utility entity. That year, the Academy was formalized as a boarding school and adopted the name “Escola Agrícola e Industrial do Amazonas” (in English, however, it continued to be called the Amazonas Agricultural School). Thus, it became the first Adventist boarding school in northern Brazil.¹⁸

The institution's first employees were: teachers Maria Montenegro and Luíza Kettle, Director Robert H. Habenicht and his family, and Treasurer and Agronomist Marvin Glantz and his family. At the end of the 1960s, the Academy already offered Elementary School education (1st to 8th grades), now organized into Elementary School (1st to 5th grades) and Middle School (6th to 9th grades).¹⁹ The legal title for the tenure of the college lands was granted to the Church only seven years later in 1973.²⁰ Despite the initial difficulties, the boarding school went on to fulfill the mission for which it was created: to offer children and young people a quality education based on biblical-Christian values that guide Adventist Education around the world.²¹

The Academy's History

During the first years of the institution's existence, it did not have buildings that were appropriate to serve as dorms. After thatch shelters, students started using larger sleeping facilities. The girls slept in the shed where flour was produced while the boys stayed in the school garage. The students spent the night in hammocks, according to the custom of the region. Since there was no specific place for bathing, they washed themselves in a stream located about 200m away from the school's garage. To remedy this situation, the Adventist World Church mobilized, and in September 1974, the 13th Sabbath offerings from the Sabbath School lesson were designated to fund the construction of the male and female dorms as well as four more classrooms.²²

In the same year (1974), the school also received the official operation authorization from the State Education Council of Amazonas although it was already operating regularly with authorization they had received from the Amazonas Department of Education.²³ Several academic advances took place during the 1970s. In 1975, the IAAI signed an agreement with the Brazilian Legion of Assistance²⁴ and with many authorities and influential people in society aiming to promote free professional courses that were taught on the school premises. The goal was for the students to make progress in the educational, professional, and social spheres.²⁵

In 1977, the Amazonas Department of Education authorized IAAI's first technical course: Agricultural Techniques, which was integrated into the high school.²⁶ In order to carry out the practical activities of this course, 100 new greenhouses (for the production of tomatoes and cucumbers) were built.²⁷ From that year (1977), the Amazonas Agricultural School or Escola Agrícola e Industrial do Amazonas came to be known as the Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy or "Instituto Adventista Agroindustrial." The name change did not alter the initial goal of the school, educating children and young people according to biblical principles while forming citizens to be useful to the local community, the country, and God.²⁸

Along with the greenhouses built for the practical classes of the technical course, there were also plantations of soybeans, corn, peanuts, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers. Modern and practical methods were used in the production of these foods and, as a result, by the end of the 1970s, the school was already selling about three tons of tomatoes weekly in the markets of the Amazonian capital. Another activity taken on by the academy was the production of coal that was sold to a steel factory, resulting in more funds to support the school. These were some of the factors that helped the school to move towards financial independency.²⁹

In 1978, the first class of 27 students graduated with the technical course in Agricultural Techniques. That year, there were a total of 239 students enrolled at IAAI in both the elementary and high school education levels. From the very beginning, in addition to engagement with the school's academic activities, students also actively participated in evangelism. As a result of this missionary work, an Adventist congregation of about 70 members was established near the school.³⁰ In 1978, 30 people were baptized thanks to the joint work of teachers and students in an evangelism effort led by Pastor Sólton Fernandes.³¹

The inauguration of the boarding school's new facilities took place on April 17, 1979. In all, 6,553m² of covered area was built including the new male and female dorms as well as laundry, cafeteria, administrative building, school building, library, laboratories, bakery, powerhouse, and water tank. This entire structure was designed to house 249 boarding students. The investment made in order to bring more comfort and convenience was of approximately Cr\$ 17 million (approximately US\$780.8 thousand), all of which were obtained through donations.³² From then on, the school had a good structure and, little by little, it gained financial independence through the cultivation, production, and sale of vegetables and coal. Since 1980, the food produced at the boarding school has been sold in the markets of Rio Preto da Eva and Manaus.³³

Another factor that helped in the economic development of the Academy was the construction of a hydroelectric plant within the school itself. Construction of this plant started in 1977 and was completed in 1979. It is considered the first hydroelectric plant to have been built in the entire state of Amazonas. The inauguration ceremony of the plant was attended by the Adventist Church representatives from the General Conference and the South American Division as well as the then governor of Amazonas. During the ceremony, Robert Habenicht, who was the principal at the time, recalled the school's journey in its early years, mentioning the Church's plans and his dream of building an Adventist boarding school in the "heart of the Amazon."³⁴

In 1980, a dam was built (connected to the hydroelectric plant) to supply the school and the surrounding communities with power. With this construction, the small stream near the academy where the students used to bathe received a large volume of water, and it turned into the Paraiba River. However, in the following year (1981), about five months after the inauguration of the dam, heavy rains destroyed it. Nevertheless, this setback was unable to frustrate the school's plans and goals.³⁵ If on the one hand, they lost the dam, on the other they won an important academic victory when, in 1982, the college received the authorization to offer the teaching course that would serve as a

degree and thus enable a graduate to work in that educational area. This four-year course was equivalent to our current high school.³⁶

In 1984, the IAAI had to face a new obstacle. The school's greenhouses were attacked by a bacterial wilt pest caused by the bacteria *Ralstonia*. This type of plague kills plants by rotting the stem, and it can remain in the soil for several years. When it hit the greenhouses at IAAI, it destroyed the tomato plantations, and this compromised the institute's financial situation. However, even amid these difficulties, the IAAI leadership was not discouraged and started new plantations. A resilient effort was made in 1986 when 2,000 cupuaçu trees, 7,000 passion fruit trees, 1,500 Hawaii papaya trees, and soybeans were sown for domestic consumption and surplus sale. During the same period, the aviary was expanded, and the number of cattle at the boarding school increased to 28 heads.³⁷

In addition to the several remarkable events in relation to financial, academic, and structural developments, the IAAI's history stands as a testimony to the positive influence of the Academy in the lives of the students who had attended school there. Many of them got to know God and decided to serve Him while they were at the institution. An example is the story of former student José Brasil Sanches who arrived at the school during the 1980s. Biblical truths were presented to him during Pastor Roberval Marinho's classes, and he later baptized him. A few years after this, José became a teacher at the Academy. Since the foundation of the institution, several factors such as friendships, the spiritual atmosphere of the boarding school, the weeks of prayer, and the worship services amid nature have contributed positively for the students' communion with God.³⁸

The school's musical area also developed strongly over the years. In 1985, the Adventist Art Center (presently the IAAI Conservatory) was created. This department promoted good music through choirs and quartets to positively influence students.³⁹ In 1985, the IAAI's official quartet called *Mensageiros da Esperança* [*Messengers of Hope*] was formed. Although it is not active any longer, this quartet influenced the formation of several other musical groups within the school such as the IAAI Youth Choir and the IAAI vocal group. During its active years, *Mensageiros da Esperança* even performed on one of the TV news channels in the Amazonas capital.⁴⁰

Several former students and former members of this quartet still work in the Adventist music scene today as part of other musical groups such as "Gêmeos" ["Twins"] in the city of Manaus; "Ômega" ["Omega"] from Belém Adventist Hospital in Belém; and "Âncora" ["Anchor"] in the city of Campo Grande in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. There are still other IAAI alumni spread across Brazil who work in different professional segments and who, even far from the institution, carry with them the principles of citizenship and of communion with God and friends they learned there.⁴¹

In the 1990s, the institute promoted some changes in the facilities to improve properties and enhance the academic experience of pupils by offering students and employees better conditions and infrastructure. So, between 1997 and 1998, the alleys on the campus were entirely paved and, in 1999, the soccer field that is 220 meters long and 106 meters wide was inaugurated. To accompany this structural growth, were achievements in the Educational sphere. For instance, in the same period, the technical course in Data Processing started.⁴² In 1999, new licenses were obtained: Both the High School and the Computer Technician courses were authorized.⁴³ That same year, the Amazonas Department of Education and the State Council of Education approved the School Regiment, the political-pedagogical project, and the curriculum of the academy.⁴⁴

With the arrival of the new millennium, some educational changes happened at IAAI. For example, the Technical Course in Agricultural Techniques and the Qualification Course for Teaching were cancelled in 2005.⁴⁵ Structural improvements also took place in 2007 with the construction of the cafeteria and the installation of the switchboard and the electricity generator set. In the following year, the laundry, the administration, and the school buildings were renovated as well as the male and female dorms. In 2009, the sports gymnasium was built, and a year later in 2010, the semi-Olympic pool. The structural improvements did not stop there, though. In 2013, the cafeteria was renovated and expanded. In 2015, there was an important educational achievement: The institute was authorized to offer Early Childhood Education--that is, classes for 3- to-5-year-old kids.⁴⁶

Another milestone for the school took place on October 21, 2016, when the IAAI temple was inaugurated. The resources used for this construction came from global missionary offerings. The temple was a dream for students and community who, for more than 50 years, had longed for a place within the school exclusively dedicated to worshipping God. Before the new temple was completed, the community met in churches around IAAI, and students and employees worshiped in the school's central auditorium. Still in relation to structural changes, in 2017, the male dorm was renovated again, and on that occasion, the rooms were turned into suites with two rooms built for people with special needs. The building also gained a new interior design and a study room. Subsequently, the renovation of the female dorm was completed in 2018.⁴⁷

In recognition of the school's contribution to students and the community, former student Carlos Antônio Magalhães Guedelha, currently a professor at the Federal University of Amazonas, paid tribute to IAAI in one of his books, saying: "One is the IAAI where we are right now, with its buildings of bold modern architecture, its gardens, its natural exuberance, its cultural production, its people. People who are by the way incredibly beautiful, intelligent, and vibrant; the other IAAI is that of thought, of memory. This is made up of memories, reminiscences, recollections. It is a different IAAI, as the raw material for its architecture is not cement or bricks, but the feeling in each one of us [...]. This school, housed each one of us who came here one day bringing many dreams in our luggage, invested in our dreams, and provided us with many victories and joys that we will never forget [...]. You who live in IAAI, be sure that IAAI lives in us...."⁴⁸

The Academy's Historical Role

Each Adventist educational unit is created for well-defined purposes. In addition to acting on academic growth and development, one of the great goals of these Adventist institutions is to educate for eternal life. The school routine seeks to promote a redemptive education in each of the activities, projects, and programs carried out. This is done aiming at transforming each human being into the image of the Creator. For this reason, IAAI remains connected to the values and principles that regulate the standard of Adventist institutions. School officials work responsibly towards people and the mission to preach the Gospel to the world in line with the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.⁴⁹

Throughout its history, the Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy has contributed to the education of approximately 14,725 students who have become professionals in many areas. These men and women were trained in a school whose aim is "to be an institution recognized for excellence in education, based on ethical-Christian principles, with broad participation in the educational sector." Its stated Mission is "to promote, through Christian education, the harmonious development of students, in the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual aspects, forming thinking citizens, useful to the community, the country and God."⁵⁰

Keeping the focus on this objective, IAAI has followed the goals, strategies, and actions of the Adventist Church and has incorporated the appropriate pedagogical, administrative, and evangelistic measures. This allows the academy to always align procedures and make the necessary adjustments so there is a continuing improvement in the services it provides. Furthermore, its goal and commitment to the country is to contribute to the nation's growth and development by preparing students for higher education. This commitment has been fulfilled, and this has been shown through the results obtained. On average, 87 percent of students who complete high school at IAAI successfully start higher education. In addition to the high approval rate, students have achieved good placements and outstanding scores in admission tests to many universities. Thus, the institution has helped to train good professionals who collaborate with local and regional economic growth.⁵¹

The city of Rio Preto da Eva where IAAI is located has approximately 33,000 inhabitants.⁵² The school has always maintained good relations with the community in that city. The products harvested in the cultivation area are sold in Rio Preto da Eva, generating jobs and income. Besides this contribution in the commercial area, the first hydroelectric plant in Amazonas was built at the school to generate energy for surrounding communities. There were countless community services and evangelistic campaigns that students, teachers, and employees conducted in support of the local Adventist and non-Adventist communities. As a result of this missionary work, there are currently seven churches established in the city of Rio Preto da Eva and another 14 congregations in nearby communities.⁵³

What Remains to Be Done to Fulfill the Academy's Mission

During the 1960s, IAAI had only the project and the land as well as a small design team with a few students and employees who worked on the construction site. When it started operating as a school, it had a team of four employees and their families who cared for and taught approximately 150 students until the early 1970s. Many challenges have been overcome since the start of the institution. There were many obstacles, but the breakthroughs and achievements have also been remarkable.⁵⁴

The initial dream of having a "school in the heart of the Amazon" that would be a "garden in the middle of the jungle" has been realized, and now that dream remains alive in the minds and intentions of IAAI employees as a challenge that must be kept, cherished, and improved upon. From that corner in the heart of the Amazon, great professionals, workers, and leaders have emerged for the Adventist Church in Brazil and throughout the world. This boarding school remains the place where many students learn about the importance of a real God who is ever present and can change lives. As a result of divine blessings operating through the institution's positive influences, several students have given their lives to God each year.⁵⁵

Currently, IAAI offers studies in Early Childhood, Elementary, and High School Education. Many efforts and advances have been required throughout history to make this possible. And one of the greatest lessons that can be learned from the academy's journey is that solid achievements are only possible through keeping Christian principles and constantly focusing on the future. To continue fulfilling its mission, the school has invested in committed collaborators who also have the missionary desire to save and rescue children and young people. In addition, the plans for the future of the institution involve raising families' awareness regarding the importance of boarding schools and the positive influences these institutions have on the ongoing education of adolescents and young people.⁵⁶

Chronology of Directors⁵⁷

Amazonas Agricultural School [Escola Agroindustrial do Amazonas] (1964-1966);

Amazonas Agricultural School [Escola Agrícola e Industrial do Amazonas](1966-1976):

General Directors: Robert Habenicht (1964-1973); Nelson Duarte (1974-1976).

Administrative directors: Marvin E. Glantz (1964-1973); Adamor Pimenta (1976).

Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy [Instituto Adventista Agroindustrial] (1977-Present):

General Directors: Nelson Duarte (1977-1980); João Varonil Kuntze (1981-1982); Emmanuel Saraiva (1982); Willer Cavalcante Prego (1983-1985); Orlando Gomes Ferreira (1985-1986); Wilson Schenfeld (1986-1990); Selso Adolfo Kern (1991-1993); José Carlos Bezerra (1994-1995); Carlos Augusto da Silva Pacheco (1995-2000); Elias Costa de Oliveira (2000-2003); Geraldo Ferreira Lima Filho (2003-2005); Valdimiro Laurindo de Oliveira (2006-2007); Kleber Ubirajara Ramos Coelho (2008-2011); Saulo Machado Albino (2011-2015); Willy Lester Streithorst (2016); Carlos Augusto da Silva Pacheco (2016-Present).

Administrative Directors: Delcio Prates dos Reis (1977-1978); Othiniel Sansão Muniz (1979-1982); Josias de Souza Fragoso (1983-1984); Dorli Muniz Menezes (1984-1986); Elcias Camargo (1986-1988); Normando Francisco Costa Filho (1987-1991); Wandercy Ramos Nogueira (1991-1994); Aurecir Kennerly de Castro (1994); Davi José de Souza (1995-1996); Elieder Francisco da Silva (1997-2003); Anderson de Castro Menezes (2003-2007); Enoque Storch (2007-2009); Analto Santos (2010-2011); Davi Costa Assunção (2011-2014); Rohan Mendonça de Souza (2014-2016); Vinicius Miranda (2016); Fabiano Amaral Ribeiro (2016-2018); Kesley Silva Santana (2018-Present).

Academic Directors: Anamim de Freitas Evangelista Almeida (2017-Present).⁵⁸

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NOTES

1. Data from the IAAI Secretariat, 2019.?
2. 2018 Brazil Census, Manaus, Amazonas, geographical level Amazonas (AM) - 13, territorial area, IBGE, accessed October 8, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2QKMx03>.?
3. W. E. Murray, "A mocidade na recolha de donativos" ["Youth in the collection of donations"], *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 17, no. 8 (August 1922): 10.?
4. "Lower Amazonas Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1928), 197.?
5. Leo B. Halliwell, "Our Medical Launch Work in South America," *ARH*, January 23, 1958, 21.?
6. "The first Light Bearer Missionary Launch was inaugurated in July 1931 by the couple Leo and Jessie Halliwell, aiming to bring health education and free medical and dental assistance to the riverside population in the Amazon. [...] During these 80 years, thousands of people were directly benefited by the support provided by the launches. In many cases, this was the only way of these people to get some medical and dental assistance." *Luzeiro* [Light Bearer], "História" [History], accessed January 22, 2020, <https://www.luzeiro.org/>.?
7. Michelson Borges, *A Chegada do Adventismo ao Brasil* [The Arrival of Adventism in Brazil] (Tatuí, SP: Brazil Publishing House, 2001), 194, 196.?
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