



Curitiba Adventist Academy Bom Retiro.
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Curitiba Adventist Academy Bom Retiro

ALEX MOREIRA SEVERINO

Alex Moreira Severino

Curitiba Adventist Academy Bom Retiro (CCABR) is an educational unit administrated by South Parana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SDA). It has been in existence for over 120 years, making it the first confessional school among the nearly 500 such units operating in Brazil. It is located at Lysimaco Ferreira da Costa Street, 980, zip code: 80530-100, Bom Retiro neighborhood, in the city of Curitiba, in the state of Paraná.

Developments Leading to the School Establishment

The establishment of the International College, as it was called in its early days, occurred at the time of Adventist educational expansion in the 1890s. A few years earlier (1881), the General Conference had proposed the broad establishment of new schools, which included foreign lands.¹ The defining period for Brazil was from 1896 to 1915, when many pioneers began their efforts to implement Adventist education in this territory. Even before the end of this period, as early as 1906, there were 10 schools and 178 students enrolled.²

However, earlier, in October 1895, the General Conference sent Huldreich F. Graf to establish the first SDA administrative unit, the Brazilian Mission as part of the plan to also establish a school. Some pioneers "believed that by exposing children to Adventist education, access to parents would be unobstructed,"³ and that this would help in retaining young people in the Church and preparing workers.⁴ It seems that Graf also shared this vision.

As soon as he settled in the country, Graf met Guilherme Stein Jr., a self-taught young man, fluent in several languages. Not missing the opportunity, he invited Stein to become the first Adventist teacher in Brazilian lands.⁵ Later, he was not only the first teacher of the school, but also the director of the first three Adventist schools in Brazil (in Curitiba, Gaspar Alto, and Taquari).⁶

In the same period, on January 12, 1896 at 11:30 pm, an evangelical church was inaugurated at Comendador Araújo, in the city of Curitiba. This church was not an Adventist church, but three persons at the inauguration would change

the history of Seventh-day Adventist work in the state of Paraná.⁷

Mrs. Ana Diedrich Otto was a much sought-after midwife in the city and was present at that inauguration. She was somewhat disturbed when she saw two young people attending the service whom no one knew. Clearly they were not from the city. Although Curitiba had around 45,000 inhabitants at the time, it was not difficult for older residents to recognize travelers.⁸

At the following service, Mrs. Ana Otto noticed that the two unknown young men were present at the church again. They were walking up the street and knocking at each house because they were canvassers, one by the name of Alberto B. Stauffer, the other by an unknown name. She then listened to them and decided to buy the book they were presenting, "Life of Jesus" (German edition). This became the first Adventist book sold by a canvasser in the state of Paraná.⁹

The following Sunday they met again and spent the whole morning studying the Bible. As a result, "Mrs. Ana and her husband Oscar Emilio Otto accepted the Adventist faith. They became the first Adventist converts in Paraná."¹⁰ As good Christians, they wasted no time and soon invited their friends to a Sabbath morning meeting. This meeting took place on January 18, 1896 and can be considered the first registered Sabbath School in the state of Paraná.¹¹

These newly baptized brothers, propelled by the Holy Spirit and the great light of the gospel, with Pastor Graf, drafted the plans to establish a school. Such an endeavor would enable their children to study and learn true education, including not only formal, but moral teachings. These principles would prepare them to be better people to live in this world and the world to come. Thus they founded the "International College," currently CCABR, the first Adventist denominational academy in Brazil.¹²

Establishment of the School

The International School was established on July 1, 1896, in a brick house rented at Paula Gomes street, 290 (formerly No. 14) in the city center. Next to it was "the city library and the residences of Curitiba's elite at the time."¹³ This house was large, with five windows facing the street and a very spacious attic.¹⁴

Providing assistance in the initial procedures and financial aid for the opening of the school were SDA lay members, along with the assistance of Pastor Graf (representative of the General Conference). The school initially had no direct administrative link with Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its first director was Guilherme Stein Jr., and although there were only six students to begin with, this number increased to 120 in six months.¹⁵

The city of Curitiba was chosen as the headquarters because it had a recognized educational system. At that time it was considered a promising city with a good location, between the south of the country and the state of São Paulo. Another contributing factor was the large population of Germans, many of whom were professionals. The specific address was also chosen due to some well analyzed factors, which could possibly contribute to the success of the institution. Nearby were two Lutheran churches, the Concordia Society (a club of the German elite), the German school Deutsche Schule (at the time considered the best in the state), and a solid commerce in downtown Curitiba.¹⁶

The school director, Guilherme Stein Jr., was the first Adventist baptized in Brazil, in March 1895. He was baptized in the city of Piracicaba, in the state of São Paulo, from where he migrated to administrate the school at the invitation of Pastor Graf. In Curitiba, he and his wife taught until the end of 1897. Two factors motivated the choice of the adjective "international" as part of the school's name. One was due to the name of the previous school in which Stein had studied. The other was because the classes would be given in two languages, Portuguese and German.¹⁷

Initially, the classes began with two teachers, Guilherme Stein Jr. and his wife Maria Stein. Later on another teacher, Vicente Schmidt, came to help because of the increasing number of students (to approximately 120). A remarkable fact is that the couple had to share their salary with this new teacher because the school was not yet able to fund him. However, the new teacher remained for a short time as he did not share the Adventist faith and some disagreements motivated him to open another school without an Adventist bond.¹⁸

It is known that "the classes were taught in German in the morning and in Portuguese in the afternoon," then went on to three periods.¹⁹ In this context, the goal was to serve Portuguese and German-speaking children from primary level through Grade four (as it was rated at the time).²⁰ The methodology the school used was considered one of the best of its time. With any other methodology it would take a child about two years to become literate. However, in the International School, by adopting the phonetic method of professor Felisberto de Carvalho,²¹ in a few months the child could begin to read.

Due to the educational legislation of the period, which required the operation of schools from Monday to Saturday, the direction of the college carried out only activities consistent with this day. On these occasions, the model of the Adventist Church Sabbath School was directed to both students and parents.²² It was recalled that "to fit the educational policy of the period, which required schools to function on Saturdays, the International School gave only religion classes on that day, in the form of a Sabbath School." These classes were not only for students, but also for families who wanted to participate.²³ Such a stance only confirmed that the institution was born with a very clear and distinct mission, expressed in the statement of "educating for eternity."²⁴ Its motto was: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (Isaiah 54:13).²⁵

History of the School

After this initial period and overcoming certain obstacles, Paul Kramer took over the direction of the school in September 1897. In the second semester of that year only 35 children were enrolled. However, until the end of the period there were 54 children. A few months later, in early 1898, classes began with 70 students. Also in August of that same year, W. Ehlers arrived from Hamburg, Germany to work as a teacher.²⁶ In addition, 1898 was marked by the "first Brazilian conference of SDAs, which was held in the International School building."²⁷

As the number of students increased, it was necessary to move to a larger building. The new address was at the initial block at Av. Cândido de Abreu, where the Kramer couple lived. Today, the facade of the building at this address is incorporated into Müller Mall.²⁸ Subsequently, there was a decrease in the number of students due to the departure of Guilherme Stein Jr. and Maria Stein. They taught in Portuguese and, when they left, only the students who understood German could stay.²⁹

It is important to highlight that the director Paul Kramer was a pharmacist and he brought microscopes, clipboards, maps, and geometrical solids to be used in teaching. These teaching materials were considered the best of the time.³⁰ A little later, in March, there were 130 students. Of these, only two were children of Adventists.³¹

Over time and as enrollments continued to rise, the International College again changed its address in 1901, this time to the Wolff Palace. This was a building of impressive architecture, measuring 300m², which was once the municipal seat and City Hall. It was located at Dr. Faria Sobrinho square, today, Garibaldi square. The building "is currently used as the headquarters of Curitiba Cultural Foundation."³²

In 1902, Emilio Hölze was also part of the school group. His signature appears in the student report by Arthur Wischeral, a document preserved by his family.³³ In 1904, the International College was last cited in the Yearbook, pointing to the activity of three teachers: Paul Kramer, his wife, and W. Ehlers. It was in this year that a big crisis hit the college, causing its activities to be terminated indefinitely. Apparently, the large drop in students made it impossible to continue this great project.³⁴

This period of history marks the beginning of Central Curitiba Church in 1896, along with the International College. However, it was not founded until 1915. The first meetings and Bible studies held at the home of Mrs. Otto and her family formed the group that motivated its later foundation. Until 1915, Adventist members worshiped in private homes or on the school grounds. This reveals that the history of the college intertwined with the history of the Church, and that both came from the same group of Adventists. In fact, many of its members have studied or taught at the International College.³⁵

Thirteen years after its opening, in 1928, Central Curitiba Church stood out as the church that continued what had once been Brazil's first Adventist denominational college. This time the order was reversed; the college reopened about 25 years after its closing on the premises of this church. Its location was at the intersection of Saldanha Marinho and Brigadeiro Avenues, in downtown Curitiba.³⁶ Its address was afterward changed twice: first in 1935 to Ermelino de Leão Street, 170, and then in 1963, to Dr. Carlos de Carvalho Street, 400.³⁷

Some of its teachers after the reopening were: Herbert Hoffmann; Ellin Hermanson; Dalva de Paula Albuquerque; José Rocha Almeida; Elfriede Doenner; Herminia Eggers; Dorina Rodrigues Azevedo; Else Ehlers; Lety Maly; Lieselote Streithorst; Ruth Oberg; Else Malsbenden; Werner Arnold Weber; and Genoveva Westphal. All of them worked there until the 1940s.³⁸ In 1979 a party was held at the Central Church of Curitiba, in celebration of the 80 years of the college. Alumni Carlos Seeling, Tereza, his wife, Otto Seeling, and Carlos Wischrall were present.³⁹

The school operated for a long time at its address near Curitiba Central Church building, until land could be purchased. This occurred in 1981 and construction began three years later, in 1984. "In 1986, with the arrival of Pastor Jairo Araújo to direct the construction, the work took on a new impetus." The college was built on an area of 184601 sq. ft. (17,150m²), having a sports field and a volleyball field. Subsequently, an indoor field and an exclusive building for the administration were built.⁴⁰

The inauguration of the new facilities took place at 10 a.m. on September 3, 1989, with the presence of Pastors Enoch de Oliveira, Luis Fuckner, Celio Feitosa, Nevil Gorski, and Victor Griffiths. Classes started with about 600 students in elementary school. In the following year, 1990, there was an intention to implement high school. Funds for its construction came from a variety of media, including Golden Cross,⁴¹ South America Division, South Brazil Union, local camp and church, a bank loan, and the voluntary donations of some members.⁴²

After its inauguration, the number of students was about 400 students. According to Pastor Eliel Unglaub, former director of the school, in a few years the academy went from 400 to 1000 students. In due course, the college included "the 2nd degree with options in General Education, Data Processing Technician and Nursing Assistant,"⁴³ a major breakthrough for the school.

With a strong evangelistic focus, in 1994 the school aimed to reach the goal of 50 baptized persons, a number that was expected to be reached through Bible classes taught by two pastors. Through this missionary work, the academy was able to outperform Adventists compared to other educational institutions in Brazil. Its average percentage was 50 percent Adventist students, while in other Adventist schools in the country the percentage was about 20 percent.⁴⁴

Two years later (1996), while celebrating its centenary, the Curitiba Adventist Academy Bom Retiro had "1,020 students distributed in the elementary and high school courses, 76 employees, of which eight were workers, and eight

were in the graduate school." A sports gymnasium, outdoor courts, a green area, and gardens became part of its structure. Its missionary ideal remained strong. A year before reaching its centenary in 1995, 54 students were baptized.⁴⁵

Still in its celebrations, on September 6 and 7, 1996, the academy launched the Commemorative Postmark, attended by representatives of the Church and the Brazilian Post and Telegraph Agency. All letters from the state of Paraná were stamped within a week, identifying the centenary of Adventist education in the country through that school. In the afternoon, the program continued at the new Centennial School, which began its classes the following year. There, "a tribute was paid to William Stein Jr., with the unveiling of his bronze bust."⁴⁶

The mayor of Curitiba, Dr. Rafael Greca, attended this celebration and received a handwritten Bible by students from Adventist schools in the state. There was also the video statement of the then acting president of the republic, Fernando Henrique Cardoso. In his speech, he briefly summarized the history of Adventist education in the country and ended by saying; "I therefore want to compliment Adventist education for its centenary in Brazil. I hope you continue to make your important contribution to Brazilian education."⁴⁷

The contribution continued, not only for those who studied at the institution, but for society, through projects and humanitarian actions developed by the college and its students. As an example, the Easter Cantata in April 2012, in which one thousand people participated was carried out as part of the Holy Week Evangelism project developed by the third, fourth, and fifth grade students.⁴⁸

Another impacting campaign was conducted in 2014, when CAA Bom Retiro students approached drivers in traffic and, with the use of a band and materials, convinced them to exchange their cigarette for an apple. In one morning they managed to exchange 1300 cigarettes, demonstrating how important the health campaign⁴⁹ was and how well people received it. In the following year (2015), to celebrate the anniversary of its library, 2500 toys were donated to children undergoing treatment at Erasto Gaertner Hospital.⁵⁰

On June 26, 2016, in another important celebration, this time of its 120 years of existence (occurring simultaneously with the 120 years of Adventist education in Brazil), the DVD Celebrating Generations was recorded at the Opera de Arame⁵¹ where 550 children participated, along with teachers and staff.⁵² To remember and perpetuate the efforts of pioneers, CCABR built and inaugurated a square with a façade, identical to the first school located at Paula Gomes Street, 290, its first address in 1896. There, along with the replica of the façade, was placed the bust of Guilherme Stein Jr.⁵³

Two other actions that marked the academy in 2016 were: the Pink October campaign⁵⁴ and the action to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito⁵⁵ through social networks.⁵⁶ In the first campaign mentioned, students, family members, and staff donated hair on the school grounds. This action collected more than 90 locks of hair, which were taken to the Friends Conference of Curitiba Clinics Hospital. There the material was designated for making wigs to be used by people undergoing chemotherapy treatment. This campaign aroused the interest of many local broadcasters, which reported the event.⁵⁷

Currently, Curitiba Adventist Academy Bom Retiro is located in the same region where it first began its activities in 1896, in downtown Curitiba, near the first rented house. It is the historic heir to the legacy of the International College, the first Adventist denominational school in Brazil. It maintains the same values and currently applies them to its approximately 1400 students.⁵⁸

Fulfilling the Mission

The college has managed for 123 years, since its foundation, to impact and transform the lives of many people, especially the children and young people who studied there. These lives were shaped by the example and work of their collaborators. The school's activities extended beyond classroom teaching to shaping the students' life by preparing them to live in community, to think about their neighbors and, especially, teaching for eternity, which was their mission from the beginning.

As we compare its beginning with six students to its current enrollment of 1,400 students, it is remarkable to see the action of God at every point of its history and development. Without forgetting those who over the years contributed to its progress, the academy is challenged to continue to excel in the educational environment of Curitiba. In order for the school to continue to positively impact the lives of students and workers and the community, it must remain true to the Christian educational mission held by the pioneers who began Adventist educational work in the country. That is why, with firm ties to its historic past and a hopeful vision of the soon-coming Christ, the academy seeks to follow the path laid out before it by incorporating a holistic Adventist Christian education.

Chronology of Directors⁵⁹

International College (1896-1904): Guilherme Stein Jr. (1896-1897); Paul Kramer (1897-1904).

Curitiba Adventist School (1928-1988): Earli Paginatto Linhares (1971-1972); Nepomuceno Abreu (1973-1975); Cézár L. Wichert (1976); Idílio Tschurtschenthaler (1977-1979); Mailene Ferreira Moróz (1980-1988).

Curitiba Adventist Academy (1989-1999): Eliel Unglaub (1989-1994); Célio Lopes Feitosa (1995); Eliézer Alvares (1996-2000).

Curitiba Adventist Academy Bom Retiro (1999-today): Júlio Cezar Coimbra Gaya (2004-2006); Laureci do Canto (2014); Paulo Gustavo Orling Alves (2019); Neide Laura Fuckner Kupas (2019-current)⁶⁰

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3. Floyd Greenleaf, *Terra da esperança: o crescimento da Igreja Adventista na América do Sul* [The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in South America] (Tatui, SP: Brazil Publishing House, 2011), 36.?
4. *Ibid.*, 56.?
5. Renato Stencel, "História da Educação Superior Adventista: Brasil, 1969-1999" [History of Adventist Higher Education: Brazil, 1969-1999] (Doctoral thesis, Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba, 2006), 83-85.?
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14. Gross, *Colégio Internacional de Curitiba*, 28.?
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16. Menslin, 54-55.?
17. M. Nigri, "Fim da Jornada: Tomba o Primeiro Adventista Batizado no Brasil" [End of the journey: the First Adventist Baptized in Brazil passes away], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 1958. 38; Ricarte, "Há 120 anos, surgia primeira escola adventista no Brasil."?
18. Renato Gross, *Colégio Internacional de Curitiba: Uma História de Fé e Pioneirismo* [Curitiba International College: A Story of Faith and Pioneering] (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Collins Publisher, 1996), 29-30.?
19. Ruy Carlos de Camargo Viera, *Vida e Obra de Guilherme Stein Jr.: Raízes da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia no Brasil* [Guilherme Stein Jr.'s Life and Work: Roots of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil] (Tatui, SP: Brazilian Publishing House, 1995), 150.?
20. Greenleaf, 56.?
21. Felisberto Rodrigues Pereira de Carvalho was an outstanding educator in the late nineteenth century as a public school teacher in the province of Rio de Janeiro, he was also the author of many works and "defender of the republican national project, abolitionist, member of the Public Instruction Council, student, teacher and interim director of the First School for teachers of Brazil [...] He disseminated in his didactic manuals values such as homeland, family, discipline and work [...]." Accessed on February 7, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2RMuLY9>.?
22. Adventist Education Website, "Nossa História" [Our History], accessed on February 8, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2BsOAYu>.?
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24. "Cem anos depois" [A hundred years later], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], June 1996, 16.?
 25. Gross, *Colégio Internacional de Curitiba*, 42.?
 26. Paul Kramer. "Our School At Curityba, Brazil," *The Missionary Magazine*, June 1899, 255-256.?
 27. "O Collegio Internacional..." [The International College], *O Arauto da Verdade* [The Herald's Truth], May 1903, 69.?
 28. Gross, *Colégio Internacional de Curitiba*, 36, 38-39, 45.?
 29. *Ibid.*, 46.?
 30. Ricarte, "Há 120 anos, surgia primeira escola adventista no Brasil."?
 31. Kramer, 255-256.?
 32. *Ibid.*, 37, 53, 55.?
 33. Gross, *Colégio Internacional de Curitiba*, 43, 50.?
 34. *Ibid.*, 56.?
 35. Site da IASD Central de Curitiba [Adventist Central Curitiba Church website], "História" [History], Accessed on February 10, 2019, <http://iasdcentral.org.br/historia.php>; "Colégio curitibano está crescendo" [Curitiba Academy is growing], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] (July 1994): 20; Gross, *Colégio Internacional de Curitiba*, 57.?
 36. *Ibid.*?
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 38. Gross, "Centenário da educação adventista no Brasil," 12.?
 39. de Camargo Vieira, 13.?
 40. Robson Marinho, "Paranaenses inauguram CCA e homenageiam educadores" [Paraná citizens inaugurate CCA and honor educators], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 10, year 85 (October 1989): 38.?
 41. Golden Cross is a health insurance plan that was a pioneer and leader in the healthcare industry between 1973 and 1985 here in Brazil. The company was founded in 1971 by Dr. Milton Soldani Afonso, and currently serves "about 500,000 business customers." Accessed on May 1st, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2GMRTCl>. ?
 42. *Ibid.*?
 43. "Colégio curitibano está crescendo" [Curitiba Academy is growing], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], July 1994, 20.?
 44. *Ibid.*?
 45. "Cem anos depois" [A hundred years later], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], June 1996, 16.?
 46. "Comemorados cem anos de educação adventista."?
 47. *Ibid.*, 14.?
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