

Adventist Education in Guadeloupe

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The first Adventist school in Guadeloupe was the school of Rousseau for boys and girls, officially recognized on August 17, 1943, by the town mayor and the town council. The second Adventist educational institution of the colony opened in October 1947, at the behest of the Adventist community in Pointe-a-Pitre. This school officially became *La Persévérance* in 1955.

Early Developments

Beginning in the 1940s, the Guadeloupe Adventist communities became aware of the education principles presented in the Bible and the visions and writings of Ellen White. They established educational institutions founded upon these principles to train their children.

They had two priority objectives: 1) Training their children in the knowledge of God, while living in communion with Him as they studied and worked, and 2) Preparing citizens capable of serving efficiently, faithfully, and selflessly. To accomplish these goals, the school taught Bible classes, conducted spiritual programs such as daily worship and weeks of prayer, and hired a chaplain to foster students' spiritual growth. This strategy also included hiring of Adventist teachers, who adhered to the Adventist philosophy of education, as well as teaching their respective subject matter.

The goal was also to allow Adventist educators and students to work in a friendly environment, without having to face the problem of Sabbath observance. In the mid 1930s, many Adventist educators, facing problems with Sabbath observance, had moved to the island of Saint Martin.¹ Among them, Paul Chovino, Joseph Bigord, and Henry Beauregard, led the primary schools of the island. During the years 1940-1942, these teachers worked without interference. However, the situation turned at the end of 1942. The Bishop of Guadeloupe, Monsignor Genoud, troubled by the excellent reputation of the Adventist educators and the influence they exerted, especially over the students and their parents, as well as the general population, pressured the Guadeloupe governor, Constant Sorin, to force the teachers to return to Guadeloupe.

Rather than accepting their new position at the primary school of Etang-Noir on the island of Marie-Galante, Leontine and Henri Beauregard requested a leave of absence from the National Education. They then resigned. After planning to open an orphanage on their property of about 10 hectares (24,700 acres) in the area of Grand-Fonds in Moule, they decided in 1942 to establish a school. The requirements to officially open the school

caused many obstacles: the local Moule township council hesitated to give the permit because it was favorable to the new National Revolution regime.² With numerous prejudices towards it, the young Adventist movement, unknown and considered a sect by many people, especially by the Catholic Church who had been restored as the official church under the Vichy regime, was unlikely to receive the permit.

To bypass these difficulties, Henry Beauregard, music teacher and mandolin player, established an association according to the 1901 law, with the goal of creating a choir under the honorary presidency of the Guadeloupe governor. One of the articles of this association proposed to add to the choir an education branch for the purpose of developing the intellectual culture of the choristers and future choristers through which they would learn music history and theory.

This educational branch became the Adventist private school of Rousseau for boys and girls, officially recognized on August 17, 1943, by the town mayor, Francois Viscard, and the town council, when they were installed at the end of July 1943. This school had a dormitory and became highly successful with an enrollment of 150 students, from first to eighth grade. Students came from all over Guadeloupe and even from Martinique. The institution also became a music training center not only for its students but also for the members of nearby Adventist communities. This double educational program was recognized by the governor of Guadeloupe, Maurice Bertaud, who attended the concert at the end of the school year. The school was instrumental in educating many pioneers and leaders of Adventism in the French Antilles and Guyana.

Beauregard, who simultaneously managed the center, taught regular classes and music lessons, evangelized in several areas of Moule Township, and supervised Adventist congregations there, disappeared while on sea on August 29, 1953, at the age of 54. At the time, the school had been operating for eleven years.

His widow, Léontine Beauregard, with the help of assistants trained at Rousseau school, such as Antoine Oculi, assumed her husband's administrative role until 1955. However, the institution fell victim to its isolated location where communication was limited; in addition, the new strategy adopted by the French Antilles Mission president, Samuel Monnier, included a restructuring policy in the Antilles with the goal of balancing the educational system by creating a school in Martinique, and having only one school in Guadeloupe: La Persévérance. Since no private party was interested in taking over the Rousseau school, the institution was forced to close its doors in 1955.

Founding La Persévérance

The second Adventist educational institution of the colony opened in October 1947, at the behest of the Adventist community in Pointe-a-Pitre, and with the help of Joseph Bigord, who requested retirement after leaving Saint Martin. From 1947 to 1952, this school operated on the second floor of a building located on Rue Frebault, but very soon, the facilities became too small as the enrollment grew rapidly (there were about 100 students in the first year). The rooms were cramped, and the school was forced to move.

The Church purchased a lot in the Abymes Township, in the area of Boissard, on which to build a church and move the school from Rue Frebault. The second phase started in 1951. Its central location in the archipelago, the increase in classrooms, and especially the success that the students obtained when they took their final exams produced rapid growth. The enrollment jumped to 400 students. This school officially became *La Persévérance*³ in 1955, as it benefited from the strategy of Samuel Monnier, French Antilles Mission president. Later, a middle school was added to it.⁴

Further Developments

Starting in 1965, the Adventist Church in Guadeloupe multiplied its efforts and pursued ambitious objectives to implement curriculum covering all grades up to the baccalaureate (high school diploma) so that Adventist youth could complete their secondary education in that institution. Toward this end, new and larger facilities were constructed, allowing the school to offer a half-board option and, above all, to recruit Seventh-day Adventist Christian educators to ensure a quality education.⁵

The progress has been constant, and the enrollment has regularly increased. This school facility offered three levels at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year with enrollment of 413 students in the primary level, 518 in the secondary level, and 51 in the post-secondary level. The campus is comprised of Henri Beauregard Primary School, Joseph Bigord Middle and High School, and the post-high school section, which offers GPME (management of small and medium-sized business), as well as communication. According to the results obtained by the students at final exams, this Christian school is among the best in the State Office of Education.

Other Schools

Following the example of the Rousseau school in Grand-Fonds du Moule, and La Persévérance school in Pointe-a-Pitre, then in Abymes, more educational institutions were created. Two short-lived projects included one in Morne-a-l'Eau Township, which operated from 1949 to the beginning of the 1960s. Another school in the area of Bory, Moule, (where there is presently a church building) tried to continue the experience of the Rousseau school for primary grades. But these two schools failed due to small classrooms, financial troubles, and insufficient enrollment. However, in Basse-Terre, Sainte-Rose, and Marie-Galante, new institutions survived for some time. In Basse-Terre, the school, facing the same problems, operated from 1954 to 1963 on the church premises in Circonvallation, then Lardenoy. Two decades later, in 1982, a primary school opened in the neighboring town of Bailliff. The Sainte-Rose primary school has operated since 1965, and the Marie-Galante primary school, Antoine Moeson, has operated since 1992.

Ray L. Jacobs, "The New Guadeloupe Mission of the French West Indies," *ARH*, March 17, 1960.

Vail, W. R. "New Junior Academy Building Inaugurated." *ARH*, January 8, 1970.

Vail, W. R. "New School Inaugurated Guadeloupe." *Inter-American Messenger*, January 1970.

"The Year of Adventist Education the Franco-Haitian Union." *Inter-American News Flashes*, July 25, 1978.

NOTES

1. In this island that belongs to the Guadeloupe archipelago public schools are closed on Saturday.
2. The expression "National Revolution" is used to describe the totality of school curriculum adopted and applied by the French State of Marshal Petain, starting in July 1940.
3. School Adventist La Persévérance, <https://vymaps.com/GF/School-Adventist-La-Pers-v-rance-19654/>.
4. Ray L. Jacobs, "The New Guadeloupe Mission of the French West Indies," *ARH*, March 17, 1960, 21.
5. W. R. Vail, "New Junior Academy Building Inaugurated," *ARH*, January 8, 1970, 24; W. R. Vail, "New School Inaugurated Guadeloupe," *Inter-American Messenger*, January 1970, 8; "The Year of Adventist Education the Franco-Haitian Union," *Inter-American News Flashes*, July 25, 1978, 1.

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