



Salvador Marchisio and Kate D. Ross.

Photo of Salvador Marchisio from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives. Photo of Kate D. Ross from the Center for Adventist Research.

## Marchisio, Salvador (1855–1925) and Kate Delia (Ross) (1868–1901)

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Salvador Marchisio is recognized as the first Adventist layman in Mexico who in 1891 brought the Adventist message to Mexico for the first time through literature. Marchisio and his wife, Kate Delia, served as missionaries in Mexico.

### Early Years, Education and Marriage

Salvador Marchisio was born on June 2, 1855<sup>1</sup> in the north of Italy.<sup>2</sup> He grew up in a Catholic home and had a brother who was a priest.<sup>3</sup> He lived in Italy until 1876, and was 21 years old when he left for New York with the idea of getting rich in the United States.<sup>4</sup> But failing to do so, at least in the timeframe he expected, he settled in Oakland, California.<sup>5</sup>

As a young man, Salvador Marchisio learned the trade of tailoring which he used to make a living in New York, Iowa, Kansas and Oakland, for 14 years from his arrival in the United States.<sup>6</sup> By 1892, at the age of 36, and about one year after arriving in Mexico, he went to Battle Creek, Michigan to take a nursing course in order to make his work more effective among Mexicans. David Paulson was one of his instructors.<sup>7</sup> The name Salvador Marchisio is among the names of registered nurses serving abroad in Mexico, between the years 1866-1896.<sup>8</sup>

Salvador Marchisio married Kate Delia Ross, a former worker at the International Tract Society office located in Battle Creek. Kate was born on June 2, 1868, in Nevada, Iowa, to Michael M. Ross (1821-1889) and Jane A. Pumphrey (1829-1895).<sup>9</sup> She graduated from Nevada High School in the 1880s, and the Elementary Education School of Storey County in 1888. She taught in Storey County schools until she moved with her mother and sister Ella to Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1890. In Michigan, she worked mainly in the health institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and in the school in Battle Creek until she went to Guadalajara in Mexico to teach in a mission school. Starting July 1, 1891, Kate began work for the International Tract Society, and then as an agent for the Sabbath School work in 1893. The same year she started preparing for mission service in Mexico. She joined Dan T. (1855-1901) and Clara Jones (1860-1906) in Guadalajara, Mexico, where she worked as a medical missionary educator. In 1896 she received missionary credentials.<sup>10</sup>

Later, both would become collaborators in the fulfillment of the mission in Guadalajara. From the union of Salvador and Kate Marchisio, Iven Ross Marchisio, the only son they had in the short period of their marriage was born. Kate died at the age of 33 in Iowa, Kansas on October 30, 1901. Their son Iven died a month before her, when he was barely 13 months. Salvador and Kate got married on December 7, 1897, in the city of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. The couple had been married about four years before her death in the Mexican city. The Iowa Register said that Kate remained alive during the last weeks before her death, thanks to Marchisio's tender and incessant care.<sup>11</sup>

## Conversion and Mission Challenges

Salvador Marchisio's encounter with the Adventist church occurred at the Santa Elena Hospital in California where he sought treatment for his illness that was caused by overwork. His health had deteriorated and it was necessary for him to make important lifestyle changes. It was at Santa Elena that he had the opportunity to hear the Third Angel's Message from the very lips of a prominent person named Alonzo T. Jones.<sup>12</sup> Although he resisted the message for two years, after understanding the truth more clearly, he quickly accepted it with true commitment.

With that new light, he returned to Italy to share the message with his relatives but was outrightly rejected by his family.<sup>13</sup> However, with the message deeply rooted in his heart, he decided to return to Oakland, and being there, he made the firm decision to go as a missionary to Mexico. His friends tried to convince him not to leave, but ignoring such voices, and God's call being more powerful than the rest of the voices, he sold everything he had, bought a good amount of *The Great Controversy* books, and left for Mexico City, on a 5,000 kilometer road, in the summer of 1891. Marchisio came to Mexico as a missionary at the age of 35. He was the first Adventist missionary in Mexico. He realized how difficult it was to sell not just English books<sup>14</sup> but also Spanish books because the poor did not have enough money to buy them and many of them also could not read. A person earned 37 cents a day and a book cost 50 cents, and the rich were not interested in purely religious books like *The Great Controversy*, unless they were authorized by the priest,<sup>15</sup> (although it is claimed that Marchisio sold in record time 2,500 copies).<sup>16</sup> Still, he felt that he was not reaching the people he really wanted to reach: the Mexicans, and decided to go to Battle Creek to take a nursing course to be able to serve them better.

Upon returning from Battle Creek as a nurse in 1893, he went to work in Guadalajara with a group of doctors who were there. By 1897, he worked at Ameca (replacing Dr. Cooper who had gone to Mexico City), which at that time was about 50 miles from Guadalajara. There, he worked with his wife Kate, who had come from Battle Creek to work at the school that had opened in Guadalajara.<sup>17</sup> There in Guadalajara, Marchisio became more acquainted with Kate and they got married there. They would reside in Ameca until 1899 when he was transferred to Mexico City with his wife Kate, Pastor Caviness and Brother Plascencia.<sup>18</sup> It was from 1897 to 1901 when he was assigned to Mexico, then to Spain and also Chile,<sup>19</sup> something that apparently did not materialize (that of Spain and Chile specifically), due to the illness and death of his son and wife, which occurred in 1901.

## Ministry and Mexican Revolution

In 1899, when he began his work in Mexico City, he visited people from house to house, sharing literature where he could, reading the Bible when the opportunity presented itself, treating the sick where it was required, and giving health talks.<sup>20</sup> There he worked selling books in Spanish: *Christ Our Savior* and *Steps to Christ*. He sold a hundred books of *Christ Our Savior* in Spanish, fifty of which were burned. This was one of his most hurtful experiences of being a missionary in Mexico.<sup>21</sup> In 1902, he went to San Luis Potosí for the first time as a colporteur to join the efforts of A. G. Bodwell, another colporteur who also sowed the truth there.<sup>22</sup> While working in the San Luis Potosí region, he emphasized that he used the method of Christ: he not only taught people how to find their Savior but also how to build homes (one of his first jobs to win people was building homes for 25 families and even putting his money to do so). Also, when people who he wanted to win for Christ had no money, he gave them a dollar. When someone got sick, he did everything he could for them. If someone needed a doctor, he sent for one and paid the bill.<sup>23</sup> He also taught them how to cook better meals, how to dress their children, and taught them how to do it with their own hands.<sup>24</sup>

Marchisio's work in Mexico was diverse. He first served as a colporteur, then as a Bible worker, and finally as a minister. Sometimes, he also served as a translator for the supervisors of the work in Mexico like G. W. Caviness and others who would come to visit him.<sup>25</sup> He also wrote several articles where he reported the work he was doing in Mexico.

Now as a minister from 1920, in order to visit his groups of believers, he used the plan of the Methodist circuit riders, making his rounds every two or three months, although for some time the country was in such a condition that it was not possible to visit them.<sup>26</sup> The places that Marchisio visited even without being a minister, and doing a "splendid job," according to Caviness, were Moctezuma (here Marchisio helped build a chapel putting economic resources to buy ten beams),<sup>27</sup> The Viznaga, Barbecho, La Tapona, and Mexquitic. In December 1912, with the believers in those places in San Luis Posotí, that there was "the first general meeting of believers" in Mexico, with about one hundred Sabbath keepers, plus others interested in the message.<sup>28</sup>

Marchisio also evangelized Matehuala, around 1909. He was sent by Caviness because there were people interested in the truth as a result of the work of a colporteur who had taken subscriptions of the magazine *The Messenger of Truth*, they requested that someone go to teach them.<sup>29</sup> And in a nearby place, twenty-five miles from there, on a ranch, soon after he had thirteen people on Saturday, and on the first visit of Caviness, ten were baptized.<sup>30</sup> Six others were later baptized, and then 14 to make 30.<sup>31</sup>

Another place where Marchisio worked as a colporteur was in Mérida, Yucatán. He left many books there.<sup>32</sup> This happened in 1907, in the company of J. A. P. Green, and again in 1913. There he worked selling subscriptions and small books.<sup>33</sup> Due to the difficult circumstances caused by the Revolution, in 1914, Marchisio went to work for a while in San Antonio, Texas,<sup>34</sup> with the hope that conditions improve in northern Mexico where there were believers and many interests.<sup>35</sup> It was also agreed upon, for the year 1916, due to the same uncertain conditions in Mexico, that the missionaries of Mexico would be relocated to Cuba, and among them, was Marchisio.<sup>36</sup> After spending several months in Cuba<sup>37</sup> (something that was of great benefit to the work in Cuba), Marchisio returned to the San Luis Potosí region, and by 1917, he was already attending to the small groups of believers, but not without great difficulties.<sup>38</sup>

In 1913, Marchisio reported that during the revolution many miles of train tracks were destroyed, train stations and freight cars were burned with all their goods. They killed people and abused young women and took them away. That made it very dangerous to work and there was little that could be done.<sup>39</sup> There was at least one band of revolutionaries, in every state.<sup>40</sup> However, Marchisio, even in these conditions, said: "We should not be discouraged by all this. We must preach the gospel to Mexico."<sup>41</sup> In these dangerous conditions, Marchisio escaped death several times. On one occasion, the revolutionaries found him returning from one of his rounds (visiting church members) and accused him of being a spy. Although he told them that he was a missionary, they insisted that he was a spy and that he should be shot. They asked him for his passport and told him that if he had nothing to identify himself, that they would shoot him. Since he had nothing like that, and not knowing what

to do, all he did was show them a Spanish hymnal that he had in his pocket. One of the men took it and began to read and found a hymn that touched his heart. He read it all and then said: "Release this man, but I want to keep this little hymnal." The revolutionary chief gave him a passport to avoid future problems. But as he resumed his path, he saw that the opposite side was coming: the army of Victoriano Huerta. He knew that if they found the passport from the opposite side, they would kill him. So he threw it away. And when asked who he was, he told them the same as the others: a missionary. But they told him: "You have been on the enemy's side. You are a spy and you have to be shot." He sat on a stone and prayed. He was afraid at first. Then he said: "If it is the will of the Lord that I be shot, so be it." Then he calmed down and felt that nothing would happen to him. So it was. They let him go.<sup>42</sup>

Among the wonders of conversions that Marchisio had the opportunity to testify of in writing, among many others, is that of the man who stubbornly opposed the gospel and that one day, when trying to burn several books and a New Testament, he saw that the New Testament did not burn, which helped to make this man convert, be baptized, and then be an active Bible worker.<sup>43</sup>

## Later Years

In an article written by Salvador Marchisio, wrongly attributed to J. P. Robles<sup>44</sup> (corrected two months later by the editors),<sup>45</sup> Marchisio recounts that he baptized nine people in San Luis Potosí because, by 1920, he already appears as an ordained minister.<sup>46</sup> There he reports that the small groups of believers that were scattered during the Mexican Revolution were meeting again, holding the light to the fullest of their abilities. There he narrates his tour of Tampico and a nearby town called Tampico Alto, where there was a small company of colored people. In his article, he shows that it was the best time to establish an industrial school in Tampico Alto, with the enthusiastic support of two members of that small company, brother and sister Settle. Marchisio also reported that C. P. Martin, with his family, had come to San Luis Potosí to take over the work in that state, presumably because he now oversaw a larger region already as a minister.

Marchisio's last tour was in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, before leaving Mexico indefinitely, at the end of 1923. He was accompanied by J. G. Perez, a young native missionary, who was in charge of all the companies of believers in those areas. Their first stop was in Jaltipan, Veracruz, where they had a meeting with more than one hundred people. From there, he went to Minatitlan and there, organized a new company. Then from Minatitlan, they went to Coatzacoalcos (referred to as Puerto-Mexico at that time), and there he baptized three Koreans. He then made a canoe trip along the Coatzacoalcos River until he reached Ixhuatlán de Madero, where he baptized 11 people. They returned to Santa Lucrecia (today Jesús Carranza, Veracruz), and from there they took another river to Chalchijapan, where there was a day school that served as a church at the same time, which he had to dedicate, with more than seventy members present. Then, he went to Salina Cruz, Tehuantepec, and Ixtaltepec. In all these places there were small groups of believers. From Ixtaltepec, he went to Tonalá, Chiapas (it was in

Tonalá where he remained hidden in an indigenous ranch for three months and fourteen days due to the Revolution. In Tonalá, he found five people ready for baptism, and before leaving Tonalá he baptized another fifteen.<sup>47</sup>

Marchisio endured many hardships and dangers in Mexico for the cause of the truth. After the time he spent hidden by the natives, his health was very poor, and as soon as he escaped, he headed to the United States. Under the good care he received at the home of Dr. Swayze in Los Angeles, he improved so much so that he already had his bags ready to return to Mexico and thus fulfilling the multiple requests of Mexican brothers and sisters who wanted him to return. A surgical operation was needed, and when all danger seemed to have passed, and on the way to recovery, a stroke suddenly ended his life on February 27, 1925. His funeral was held at the "Little Church of the Flowers" at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles, and was conducted by F. H. Westphal and R. W. Parmele.<sup>48</sup> His body was buried near the grave of George W. Caviness, with whom he shared work in some parts of Mexico.<sup>49</sup>

## Legacy

Although Marchisio arrived in Mexico as a lay worker in 1891, he did not work independently of the organization all the time. In 1899, when he accompanied Caviness to Mexico City, he already had a missionary credential that the organization granted to those like Bible workers and missionaries involved in active missionary work.<sup>50</sup> According to current data, from 1910 to 1912, Marchisio appeared having a missionary license.<sup>51</sup> From 1913 to 1916, ministerial license,<sup>52</sup> and from 1917 to 1924, with ministerial credential.<sup>53</sup>

Whereas his salary was concerned (from 1899),<sup>54</sup> he possibly received ten dollars a month, which he often shared with people. His interest was not in the money. Already in 1915, Marchisio persistently refused to accept more than \$30 dollars a month,<sup>55</sup> he shared what he had freely and joyfully with the needy.<sup>56</sup>

Salvador Marchisio is recognized as the first Adventist layman in Mexico, who in 1891 brought the Adventist message to Mexico for the first time through literature.<sup>57</sup> With no Spanish publications available, he sold English copies of *The Great Controversy*.<sup>58</sup> At the end of his long period of service which amounted to 34 years (in 1924), there were 250 baptized members throughout Mexico. Although the work was slow at the beginning due to the major obstacles he had to endure, as early as 1929, just five years after the death of this honorable pioneer, there were 1,200 baptized and another 1,200 keeping the Sabbath and attending the Sabbath School throughout Mexico. In that same year, when D. A. Parson took over the work in this field, there were only two Sabbath Schools, but by 1929, five years later, there were 115.<sup>59</sup> Of the 12 missionaries who were in Mexico, at least in 1915, two-thirds of the converts that the Adventist Church had throughout Mexico were attributed to Marchisio and Godinez.<sup>60</sup> Currently the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico has 761,802 members.<sup>61</sup> Only eternity will fully reveal the scope of the work of this man, and others, who put their own lives at risk preaching the gospel in Mexico.

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## NOTES

1. R. W. Parmeles, Obituary of Salvador Marchisio, *ARH*, April 2, 1925, 22.

2. H. H. Hall, "A Devoted Italian," *ARH*, May 7, 1925, 17. This was reported by H. H. Hall as he heard it from Marchisio's own lips. See also H. H. Hall, "A Devoted Italian," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 23, 1925, 3.

3. David Paulson, "A Humble Worker in México," *The Youth's Instructor*, April 16, 1912, 7.
4. H. H. Hall, "A Devoted Italian," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 23, 1925, 3.
5. Ciro Sepúlveda, *Nace un Movimiento* (Montemorelos, N. L.: Publicaciones Interamericanas, Pacific Press de México, S. A., 1983), 43.
6. R. W. Parmele, Obituary of Salvador Marchisio, *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 30, 1925, 7.
7. David Paulson, "A Humble Worker in México," *The Present Truth*, August 1, 1912.
8. H. M. W. "Our Medical Work From 1866-1986 – No. 1 6," *The Ministry*, April 1941, 36.
9. For a family tree with biographical details, see [here](#) (Ancestry.com accessed November 25, 2021, courtesy of Michael Campbell); Parmele, Obituary of Salvador Marchisio, *Pacific Union Recorder*.
10. Foreign Mission Board Proceedings, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1893), 70; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1892), 11, 14, 22; Fourth Meeting General Conference Committee, Fall Session, 1896, 178. (courtesy of Michael Campbell)
11. "Our hearts are made sad...," *Workers' Bulletin*, November 12, 1901, 76; Archivo del Registro Civil (Civil Registry Archives): Jalisco, Mexico, page 132, entry number 1278, accessed from Ancestry.com on November 14, 2021 (courtesy of Michael Campbell); The Nevada Representative, "Obituaries," *ARH*, December 24, 1901, 14.
12. Parmele, Obituary of Salvador Marchisio, *ARH*.
13. Paulson, "A Humble Worker in México."
14. Hall, "A Devoted Italian," *Pacific Union Recorder*.
15. S. Marchisio, "In México," *The Missionary Magazine*, July 1900, 326-327.
16. Félix Cortés and A. Y. Velino Salazar E., *Esforzados y Valientes* (Montemorelos, N. L.: Editorial Perspectiva y Análisis. Ediciones Félix Cortés A., 2015), 19. Sepúlveda, *Nace un Movimiento*, 41.
17. L. L. Caviness, "Mexico, No. 2 — Our Mexican Mission," *The Youth's Instructor*, December 15, 1908, 12.
18. G. W. Caviness, "Our Work in Mexico," *ARH*, September 12, 1912, 15.
19. Index of Proceedings of the Seventh-day Adventist Foreign Mission Board, March 16, 1897 to January 6, 1899, and Board of Trustees of the Foreign Mission Board of the Seventh-day Adventists. February 13, 1899 to February 21, 1901, 130, 168, 244, 327.

20. S. Marchisio, "In México," 326.
21. Hall, "A Devoted Italian," *ARH*, 17-18. Compárese con, S. Marchisio, "Experiences in Mexico," *The Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XII, No. 12, December 1900, 558. Here Marchisio narrates that the burning of his books had happened a few days before. It is presumed that it was after he arrived with his wife Kate, Cavines and Plascencia in 1899.
22. Velino Salazar Escarpulli, *100 Años de Adventismo en México* (Montemorelos, N. L.: Unión Mexicana del Norte, 1997), 44.
23. Julius Paulson, "Facing Shot and Shell to Help His Flock," *The Life Boat*, June 1915, 168.
24. S. Marchisio, "The Darkest Hour in Mexico," *The Life Boat*, October 1913, 304.
25. G. W. Caviness, "México, Its Needs and Our Opportunities," *The Youth's Instructor*, September 24, 1912, 12.
26. G. W. Caviness, "San Luis Potosí y Country Round About," *ARH*, November 1, 1917, 14.
27. G. W. Cavines, "Mexico's Needs," *The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering*, June 26, 1915, 9.
28. G. W. Cavines, "General Meeting at San Luis Potosí, México," *ARH*, May 8, 1913, 16.
29. S. Marchisio, "Mexico," *ARH*, December 9, 1909.
30. G. W. Cavines, "Further Report From Mexico," *ARH*, December 16, 1909, 16.
31. G. W. Cavines, "Mexico," *ARH*, January 23, 1913,
32. G. G. Brown, "Beginning the Harvest," *Inter-American Messenger*, April 1926, 7.
33. G. G. Brown, "Reconquering Yucatán," *Inter-American Messenger*, August 1926, 5.
34. O. R. Godsmark, "Refugees from México," *Southern Union Worker*, May 28, 1914,
35. "Our Mexico Workers," *ARH*, May 28, 1914, 24.
36. "During the recent uncertain conditions in Mexico...," *ARH*, May 11, 1916, 24.
37. F. G. Lane, "Northern Latin American Missions," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1917), 248.
38. G. W. Caviness, "A Visit to México—No. 2," *ARH*, March 8, 1917, 18.
39. S. Marchisio, "Power in the Book Which Was Too Good to Burn," *The Life Boat*, May 1913, 151.

40. S. Marchisio, "The Darkest Hour in Mexico."
41. Julius Paulson, "Facing Shot and Shell to Help His Flock," *The Life Boat*, June 1915, 169.
42. S. Marchisio, "Power in the Book Which Was Too Good to Burn," 151.
43. J. P. Robles, "Our Work in México," *ARH*, April 29, 1920, 27. This article came without the signature of Marchisio and the editors made the mistake of attributing it to Brother Robles, editor's note.
44. "In the Review of April 29....," *ARH*, June 10, 1920, 32.
45. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1920), 212. By this date he is already registered as minister.
46. S. Marchisio, "Itinerating in México," *ARH*, June 5, 1924, 19-20.
47. Parmele, Obituary of Salvador Marchisio, *ARH*.
48. Parmele, "Obituaries," *Pacific Union Recorder*.
49. Committee, "Report of Nominating Committee Continued," *The Daily Bulletin Of the General Conference*, March 5, 1899, 147.
50. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1910), 141; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1911), 139.
51. "Report on Credentials and Licenses," *The General Conference Bulletin*, June 6, 1913, 297.
52. In 1917 he appears in the ministerial directory, although it is not clear if it is with ministerial license or ministerial credential. See *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1917), 274; as minister in Mexico, see *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1920), 212; (1921), 146; (1923), 177; (1924), 295.
53. *Index of Proceedings of the Seventh-day Adventist Foreign Mission Board*, March 16, 1897 to January 6, 1899, and *Board of Trustees of the Foreign Mission Board of the Seventh-day Adventists*. February 13, 1899 to February 21, 1901, 327. A vote had been taken to help Marchisio with \$ 10 a month.
54. Julius Paulson, "Faithful Godinez," *The Life Boat*, July 1915, 203.
55. David Paulson M. D., "A Humble Worker in Mexico," *The Youth's Instructor*, April 16, 1912, 16.
56. Although the General Conference sent that same year Pastor L. C. Chadwick, this was an exploration-only trip, in the fall of 1891, from October 16 to November 5, on his way to Argentina; a little after Marchisio who had arrived in the summer. Velino Salazar Escarpulli, *100 Años de Adventismo en México* (Montemorelos, N. L.: Unión Mexicana del Norte, 1997), p. 245.

57. R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), p. 227.

58. J. C. Thompson, "Interesting Experiences in México— No. 4," *ARH*, May 30, 1929, 15.

59. Julius Paulson, "Faithful Godinez," *The Life Boat*, July 1915, 203.

60. [http://adventiststatistics.org/view\\_Summary.asp?FieldID=D\\_IAD](http://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_IAD). Accessed January 3, 2020.

61. Ibid.

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