



Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista Cruzeiro do Sul) (IACS) administrative building, 2019

Photo courtesy of Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista Cruzeiro do Sul) (IACS) Archives.

Cruzeiro Do Sul Adventist Academy

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The Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista Cruzeiro do Sul, IACS) offers early childhood, elementary and high school education to day and boarding students. It belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is part of the worldwide Adventist education network. It is one of the institutions of the South Brazil Union (União Sul Brasileira, USB) and is located on Sebastião Amoretti ave., 2130-A, Zip Code 95603-302, Cruzeiro do Sul neighborhood, in the city of Taquara, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

The Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy campus has a total land area of 1,214,840 m², of which 4,509.84 m² is occupied by the school buildings. Among the buildings are the classrooms, the student dorms, the campus church, a large cafeteria, a laundry room, a complete sports complex, a music conservatory, a building for early childhood education with classrooms, a children's library, and a children's cafeteria. In 2019, IACS had 1,422

students: 82 in preschool, 434 in Elementary School I, 395 in Elementary School II and 511 in high school. Among the school's 176 workers are 52 teachers and 2 pastors.¹

Development that Led to the School's Establishment

The first Adventist Church in the municipality of Taquara was organized in 1908. Both there and throughout the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the Adventist work was expanding and the need for an Adventist boarding school arose.² At the end of 1922, Pastor Abraham Classen Harder became the new president of the Rio Grande do Sul Conference (Associação dos Adventistas do Sétimo Dia no Rio Grande do Sul, currently known as Associação Sul Rio-Grandense, ASR). Coming from the United States, he replaced Pastor Ricardo Suessmann, who served for a year as the conference president for one year. Harder began to plan the establishment of an Adventist educational institution to prepare young people in the state of Rio Grande do Sul for the missionary work.³

The South Brazil Union Conference (União Sul Brasileira), presently known as Central Brazil Union Conference (União Central Brasileira, UCB), initially denied Harder's request for a new boarding school. Among the main reasons was the risk of not having enough students to study at school and, consequently, not being able to generate the necessary income to maintain it. At that time, the local Adventist church did not have the resources to maintain a school. Although his dream for an Adventist school could not be realized at that time, Harder and his wife Mary Harder did not give up. When they looked at the green fields of the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, they imagined an institution where young people from that part of the country would be educated in Christian principles, living in the midst of nature and learning about God.⁴

After living in Brazil for more than five years, Abraham and Mary Harder realized that the time was ready to open the school. In 1928, they decided to invest their own resources to make their dream about the school come true. The money they had came largely from an inheritance that Mary Harder had received. Establishing a new school was not without challenges and financial risks, and they wondered whether they should spend Mary's entire inheritance on the school. After days of consideration and prayer, Pastor Harder said that an angel visited him and said: "Don't be afraid! Follow your heart's desires closely. The Lord will sustain you and the work will prosper." That was the confirmation they needed to go ahead with their daring plan.⁵

From then on, they began to search for the ideal place to establish the school. They considered several properties for sale until they reached the residence of the Bergold family. As an Adventist family, the Bergolds offered a special payment plan for the property to be paid in annual installments. The farm had 50 hectares.⁶ When the Harders bought that property, they also purchased some machines, cattle, horses, and oxen, which were under the care of Brother Hugo Bergold. He was the first person responsible to look after the school farm. After they purchased the farm, the Harders rented a house close to the farm, where they and the first students would live.⁷

Foundation of the School

The school was established on November 14, 1928. But before starting the school activities, it was necessary to choose a name that represented the ideals planned for that institution. Once again, God directed them. One night, after they moved to Taquara, the Harder family (the couple and their two children) observed the starry sky. What caught their attention was the Southern Cross constellation. This star formation was known by navigators and astronomers for its strong brightness and was considered by them as a navigation reference point.⁸ With that in mind, Mary Harder shared with family members that the name “Cruzeiro do Sul” (Southern Cross), besides being beautiful, conveyed an important message and so could be used as the school name. The school should shine so brightly and guide the lives of young people who study there. Everyone readily agreed to that simple and profound proposal. Thus, the first name of the institution was defined: Colégio Cruzeiro do Sul (Cruzeiro do Sul Academy).⁹

At the same time, Pastor Harder invited Ernesto Roth, an evangelist canvasser¹⁰ from Germany, to carry out the initial carpentry works and to fill the first vacancy of the teacher. In order to raise funds for the works, it was necessary for Pastor Harder to sell his house in Porto Alegre. With these resources, it was possible to build a facility for the classroom and a house for the teacher, which later would also serve to house some students. On the same occasion, several fruit trees and a vegetable garden were planted, kitchen utensils were purchased, and other necessary pieces of equipment were obtained.¹¹

At the beginning of 1929, the students who lived near the city of Taquara and even some from Uruguay began to arrive and settle in the provisional facilities of the Colégio Cruzeiro do Sul. The boys slept on the top floor of the school building, while the laundry and cafeteria operated in the home of the Harder family. At first, there were six boys and they all helped with caring for the animals, the crops and some carpentry services. The first female boarding students arrived in 1930 and stayed in the Bergold and Harder family houses, with Sueli Bergold being the first female boarding student to arrive at the institution.¹²

The inaugural class took place on March 11, 1929 and was attended by 27 students. That day represented the fulfillment of the Harder family's dream and brought joy to all who were involved in the efforts to establish the school. During the first classes, the teacher had a great challenge because there was a single classroom in which children of different ages and with different levels of literacy studied together. Most students were in a precarious financial situation and were unable to purchase even the basic school materials they needed for their studies. In addition, Teacher Ernesto Roth sometimes had to use his mother tongue, German, instead of Portuguese, which made it difficult for some students to understand. However, none of these difficulties prevented the progress of the school, because with persistent dedication and effort the challenges were gradually overcome.¹³

History of the School

In 1931, Pastor Harder managed to obtain from the bank a deal that made leasing of a property next to the Academy possible. The property was so big that there was a road leading to the banks of the Rio dos Sinos (Bells River).¹⁴ With more space, it was possible to expand the school's facilities, including the construction of a girls dormitory.¹⁵ However, the main difficulty faced by the school in its early years was the scarcity of financial resources to keep it operating. The main source of income was the agricultural produce grown by the school. Pastor Harder set up a dairy factory at the school. However, sales were not enough to cover the school's expenses. There were countless times when food was scarce, although God always intervened in order to meet basic needs.¹⁶

With perseverance and faith, the school managed to hold its first graduation in 1932. There were 10 graduating students. However, the festive atmosphere was overshadowed by the effects of the difficult economic situation that the country and the school was going through. Again, there was a shortage of food. However, once again divine providence made sure that needs were met. By order of the mayor of Taquara, the school was exempt from paying the electrical bills during the critical years of 1932 to 1937.¹⁷

In 1935, the Rio Grande do Sul Conference offered to help with the school administration. At that time, with around 50 boarding students, help was welcome as it relieved the Harders of the enormous burden of responsibility. In the following years, "Mama Harder," as Sister Mary was affectionately called, was in very poor health. The Harder family's efforts could no longer be devoted entirely to the school. In this situation, "Papa Harder" decided to donate the school to the Conference so that the work could continue. Before donating the school, the Harders managed to pay off all the school debts. And in order to maintain themselves, from then on, the Harders needed to sell the small dairy factory and some animals.¹⁸

In 1937, after the change of ownership of the school, professor Octávio Espírito Santo and his wife were called from the state of Sergipe in the northeast of Brazil to assume the leadership of the school. The Rio Grande do Sul Conference, with the support of the South American Division, bought another 25 hectares of land that were added to the school. Later, a new extension with the purchase of another 176 hectares was made. This latter land was sold in the future and a new school building was built with the money obtained from its sale. However, at the time of the purchases, the school farm had six buildings on a total of 200 hectares of land, where more than a thousand fruit trees were planted.¹⁹

In his early years of leading the school, Octávio Santo worked tirelessly for the recognition of the school by the government agencies. The school was approved by the government on May 4, 1939, through the Ordinance no. 001137 of the Brazilian government. With this new achievement, students from other institutions could be transferred to the Colégio Cruzeiro do Sul, and vice versa, without suffering any loss in their curriculum. The government recognition also brought the first change of the school's name from Colégio Cruzeiro do Sul to Ginásio Adventista de Taquara (Taquara Academy) (GAT).²⁰ At that time, 163 students were enrolled. Most of them were elementary school students.²¹

After Pastors R. R. Figuhr and F. L. Harrison, the South American Division president and treasurer, visited the Academy in 1941, Pastor Figuhr remarked: "The tranquility of its environment and the cordial and friendly spirit of the teachers and students make Taquara a pleasant place. One can imagine a future prosperous school on the spacious grounds provided for this institution. As the divine educational plan is followed, many young people will certainly be sent from the school here in Taquara with noble visions of service to the Lord."²² For the students and teachers who witnessed their visit, that was an important recognition by the church leadership.

Although the expectations for the school were high, there were also numerous challenges. Pastors W. E. Nelson, and J. F. Wright, treasurer and vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, expressed their concern about the development of the Academy. Among the concerns was the fact that half of the school students were not Adventists. In addition, the school had received a high investment from the church's administrative institutions, showing that the academy could not yet support itself financially. In addition, in the south region of Brazil, another Adventist boarding school was already in operation, and two institutions of the same kind, operating in the same area, could weaken each other.²³

As of 1945, the academy was already adapted to the guidelines established by the Church. During this year, numerous donations were received from individuals, the Union, the South American Division, and the General Conference. The purpose for this fundraising was to build a new building made of brickwork containing classrooms, a library, an auditorium and rooms for the administration. The building was completed in the same year (1945). Still today, this is the main building of the school.²⁴ Other structural changes also took place in the late 1940s and during the 1950s, including the construction of a new female dormitory in 1949.²⁵ Six years later, a male dormitory was also built. The building that was housing the boys till then had been built in 1898 and was no longer viable. The construction of the new dormitory began in 1955, and this was another occasion when the Adventist world church contributed to Adventist education in Brazil through the Sabbath School offerings.²⁶

During the 1950s, the Academy grew not only in its physical structure but also in its curriculum. In 1957, a new scientific course was implemented according to government standards, when the Academy also started the technical course in Accounting. Due to its curriculum expansion, in the early 1960s, the academy changed its name to Instituto Cruzeiro do Sul (ICS) (Rio Grande do Sul Academy). However, this name was used for just over two years, until 1964, when the academy was renamed Instituto Adventista Cruzeiro do Sul (IACS) (Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy).²⁷ In the following years, new technical programs were opened, such as Accounting Technician, Secretariat, Statistics and Administration Assistant, Teaching and Laboratory Assistant. These programs were recognized by the Brazilian government in the following decade.²⁸

In the 1960s, structural changes continued to occur. In 1968, a new school facility was built and attached to the old one. However, until that time, the school did not yet have its own church building, so the students met for worship in the school building or in other improvised places. Over time, when the number of students increased, a part of them had to meet for worship in the church building in the city of Taquara, about three

kilometers away from the school. To make this journey, the girls used the wagon and the boys walked. Although the students considered it a privilege to be able to worship with the church members in Taquara and help them in the worship service, they desired to have a church building on the school campus.²⁹

A few years later, on January 5, 1975, during a camp meeting held in the school, the cornerstone of what would become the new IACS church building was laid.³⁰ However, some unforeseen events postponed the start of the construction to 1976. At the end of 1976, the Salão Nobre (Noble Hall) construction work began, with a capacity to accommodate 2,500 people, and, in the following years, served as a church building and an auditorium for lectures, cultural events, and evangelistic meetings.³¹

While investing in structural expansion, the Academy also increased its pedagogical curriculum. In August 1974, the Conservatório Adventista Musical de Taquara (CAMTA) (Taquara Adventist Musical Conservatory) was established. At first, with only three teachers and a few art classes, this music school grew tremendously in the years that followed. In 1976, in its second year of activity, the music school served more than 100 students enrolled in piano, trumpet, clarinet, violin, and vocal technique courses, among others. In 1976, the cornerstone of the building for the CAMTA was laid.³² In its third year of operation, the number of students doubled to around 200 students.³³

The year 1978 was another special year for the school. On different dates, IACS celebrated its 50 years of uninterrupted services. One of these celebrations was on November 19, when more inaugurations were held. On the occasion, a PAX telephone center and a sports complex were inaugurated. The sports complex had a swimming pool, two volleyball courts, and one basketball court.³⁴ With better infrastructure and accommodation, a stronger curriculum, and a focus on spiritual activities, more students came in the years that followed.

However, with the rapid growth in the number of students, the school soon reached its physical limits. In 1979, there was an excess of more than 40 girls in the boarding school, and many girls had to stand during meetings in the women's chapel due to a lack of seats.³⁵ Given this reality, it was necessary to plan for restructuring in the following years. The apartments were renovated and food production was increased. In the academic aspect, as of August of 1979, the number of vacancies was defined, including for the boarding.³⁶

The IACS missionary vocation also continued to be developed during this period. In 1979, the Academy accepted the call made by Pastor Darcy Trojan to engage in various missionary activities carried out in the small industrial city of Igrejinha, which had a strong Lutheran presence. After a series of evangelistic meetings, the land was purchased for an Adventist church building in that city. Half of the price was paid by the Rio Grande do Sul Conference, while the other half was donated by the IACS church.³⁷ Until the 1980s, the Academy also helped to establish the church of Morro da Pedra, in the city of Parobé. After a series of Bible studies, led by Pastor Arnaldo Borges, the students of the Academy and some volunteer members built a church so that the Adventist members in that region had a place to congregate.³⁸

In 1980, the school itself experienced the blessings of the evangelizing efforts of its students and staff. Half of the non-Adventist students were baptized that year. Thus, IACS ended the year with 93.2 percent of its boarding students as Adventist members. Some of them were baptized as the result of the evangelisms held in Morro da Pedra and Igreja. ³⁹ The importance of the school's evangelistic work was recognized by the church and already in 1983, the school had 860 students. ⁴⁰

Over the years, new structural achievements have been achieved. In 1988, during the celebration of the IACS 60th anniversary, the school's hydraulic system was expanded, the basement of the new female dormitory was finalized and a new electric oven with the capacity to bake around ten thousand loaves of bread daily was purchased. In addition, the Abraham Classen Harder Historical Museum was inaugurated. ⁴¹ In 1990, the IACS church building was finally completed and inaugurated. In keeping with the identity of the Academy, the church was named Igreja Adventista Cruzeiro do Sul (Southern Cross Adventist Church). ⁴²

In 1993, IACS had 921 students. ⁴³ A few years later, in November 1995, during the celebration of the 67th anniversary of the school, the children's building, the internal pavement, and the new milking parlor and milk pasteurization plant were inaugurated. ⁴⁴ In 2007, in celebration of the school's 79 years of existence, two squares and the facades of the dormitory and administrative buildings were built. The new squares were named after the couple who donated all the resources for this work, Dr. Milton and Arlete Afonso. These and the other works carried out since the 2000s marked a phase of modernization in the Academy's physical structure. ⁴⁵

In late 2007, the Academy won the Top of Mind award for the sixth consecutive time, in recognition of its excellence by the population of the Taquara region. ⁴⁶ One great challenge for the school happened on October 13, 2015, when a strong storm hit the Taquara region, with winds of around 130 km/h. The violent storm partially destroyed the church building as well as some of the employees' houses and the female dormitory. ⁴⁷ A similar devastating storm affected the Taquara in 2013. At that time, teachers, staff, and students helped the victims affected by the tragedy. ⁴⁸

However, as on other challenging occasions, divine providence made it possible for IACS to continue to develop. In 2017 and 2018, the school received the Municipal Business Quality award, in recognition of the quality of its services and the importance of being a school based on Christian principles. ⁴⁹ Investments continued to be made in order that the Adventist pedagogical quality and Christian identity remained the benchmark of the school. In 2018, the school's church building was reinaugurated after renovations, and the Aparecida Macedo Events Center was also completed. This space, whose name pays tribute to one of the teachers who has served the institution for the longest time (56 years), hosts major cultural events and some sports competitions. ⁵⁰

Historical Role of the School

Since its early years, IACS has sought to be relevant to the community in which it operates, participating and leading in projects that benefit the population of the Taquara region. In the ecological sphere, for example, the

school is recognized for the work that it has been done for the depollution of Rio dos Sinos (Bells River), one of the most important rivers in the region and which runs in the back of the school. In addition, various actions have been taken by the school to help alleviate the poor environmental conditions for the residents who live in the vicinity of the landfill site near the banks of the river.⁵¹ In partnership with the local government, a region mapping was done and it has been observed that around 30 families lived around the landfill site. The school mobilized itself to serve these families in their main needs. In addition, the school has become an Ecoponto (Ecopoint), which is a place for managing the selective garbage collection program, thereby reducing the damage that is caused by improper waste disposal in the environment. This program was another tool used by teachers in the area of Science and Biology to promote learning to hundreds of students.⁵² Thus, the school has acted in favor of the environment and the communities in its region, showing social responsibility while witnessing the due care for the environment and people as God's creation.

IACS's main priority remains to fulfill its historical evangelistic mission that is to shape citizens for the eternal kingdom. With this goal, there is an intentional and permanent work to mobilize students and teachers for missionary work. In 2018 the Institute of Missions was inaugurated in order to promote the "training and engagement of students in cross-cultural missionary projects."⁵³ As a result, the students have been in the "Missão Calebe" (Caleb Mission) project⁵⁴ in the last more than 10 years. The actions of Missão Calebe IACS (IACS Caleb Mission) have already crossed the Brazilian border and reached, for example, Uruguay and Bolivia. Between January 16 and February 2, 2019, around 20 students went to the city of La Paz, where they were actively involved in the preaching of the gospel. A Christian Summer School for Children⁵⁵ was held that served the local children. The students also paint and clean streets, among other activities.⁵⁶

What Remains to be Done to Fulfill the School Mission

Throughout its more than 90 years of existence, IACS has been on a successful journey amid the many challenges it faced. From the earliest pioneers to the present day, divine providence has made it possible to overcome every obstacle and maintain the academy as an Adventist educational institution. Observing this inspiring trajectory, the IACS academic community recognizes that the noble task of educating for eternity requires further efforts to be done so that the school can expand its reach and continue to fulfill its main mission, which is "to form citizens committed to the well-being of the community, the country and to God."⁵⁷

Chronology of Directors⁵⁸

Colégio Cruzeiro do Sul (Cruzeiro do Sul Academy) (1928-1939)

Abraham Classen Harder (1928-1936); Octávio Espírito Santo (1937-1941).

Ginásio Adventista de Taquara (Taquara Academy) (1939-1962)

João Linhares (1942); Dario Garcia (1942-1945); José Alvarenga (1946); Renato Emir Oberg (1947); Jacob Germano Streithorst (1948-1950); Siegfried Hoffmann (1951); Mário Roque (1952-1954); João Batista Rodrigues dos Passos (1955); Sesóstris César de Souza (1956-1957); João Batista Rodrigues dos Passos (1957-1959); Jacob Germano Streithorst (1960); João Bork (1960-1962).

Instituto Cruzeiro do Sul (Rio Grande do Sul Academy) (1962-1964)

Henrique Marquart (1963-1965).

Instituto Adventista Cruzeiro do Sul (Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy) (1964-present)

Leonid Bogdanow (1965-1966); Darcy Mendes de Borba (1967-1968); Carlos Magalhães Borda (1969-1970); Isaac Padilha Guimarães (1971-1972); Corino Pires da Silva (1972-1974); Earle Pazinato Linhares (1975-1982); Moisés Lopes Sanches (1983-1984); Argemiro Fontoura (1985); José Olympio de Oliveira Paula (1986-1988); Lourival Batista Preuss (1989-1990); Milton César de Souza (1990-2000); Flávio Machado Pasini (2001-2003); Wesley Zukowski (2004-2009); Irineu Souza (2009-2013); João Cesi Lopes dos Santos (2014-2019); Thiago Maillo Silva (2019-present).⁵⁹

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NOTES

1. Márcio D. Costa (Theology Professor at IAP), e-mail message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), July 24, 2019.
2. Hebert Boeger Jr., "História da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia Central de Taquara-RS" [History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Central of Taquara-RS] (Monograph, Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia [Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary], June 1997): 4-5.
3. Jean da Silva Reis and Ivo Suedekum, "Cinquenta anos a serviço da educação" [Fifty years at the service of education] (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino de São Paulo [Brazil College], November 1979): 5; Aparecida H. T. Macedo, *Do sonho a realidade...história de uma luz que nunca se apagou* [From dream to reality...the history of a light that never extinguished] (Três Coroas, RS: Artes Gráficas Sohne Ltda. [Graphic Arts Sohne Ltda.], 1999), 40.
4. Jean da Silva Reis and Ivo Suedekum, "Cinquenta anos a serviço da educação" [Fifty years at the service of education] (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino de São Paulo [Brazil College], November 1979), 5.

5. Aparecida H. T. Macedo, *Do sonho a realidade...história de uma luz que nunca se apagou* [From dream to reality...the history of a light that never extinguished] (Três Coroas, RS: Artes Gráficas Sohne Ltda. [Graphic Arts Sohne Ltda], 1999), 46.
6. Quotation made from the value of Conto de Réis, with one conto de réis equivalent to 123 thousand reais. The conversion made to the USD is based on the currency rate of that period.
7. Aparecida HT Macedo, *Do sonho a realidade...história de uma luz que nunca se apagou* [From dream to reality...the history of a light that never extinguished] (Três Coroas, RS: Artes Gráficas Sohne Ltda. [Graphic Arts Sohne Ltda.], 1999), 46-47; Jean da Silva Reis and Ivo Suedekum, "Cinquenta anos a serviço da educação" [Fifty years at the service of education] (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino de São Paulo [Brazil College], November 1979), 7.
8. Aparecida H. T. Macedo, *Do sonho a realidade...história de uma luz que nunca se apagou* [From dream to reality...the history of a light that never extinguished] (Três Coroas, RS: Artes Gráficas Sohne Ltda. [Graphic Arts Sohne Ltda.], 1999), 47.
9. *Ibid.*, 47-48.
10. A Seventh-day Adventist Church evangelist canvasser is a missionary who sells the publications edited and approved by the Church to the public, with the objective of transmitting to their fellow men and women the eternal Gospel that brings salvation, physical and spiritual well-being." *Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil) Website*, "Colportagem" [Canvassing] accessed on February 4, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2J6tY11>.
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