

Gedrath, André (c. 1875–1963)

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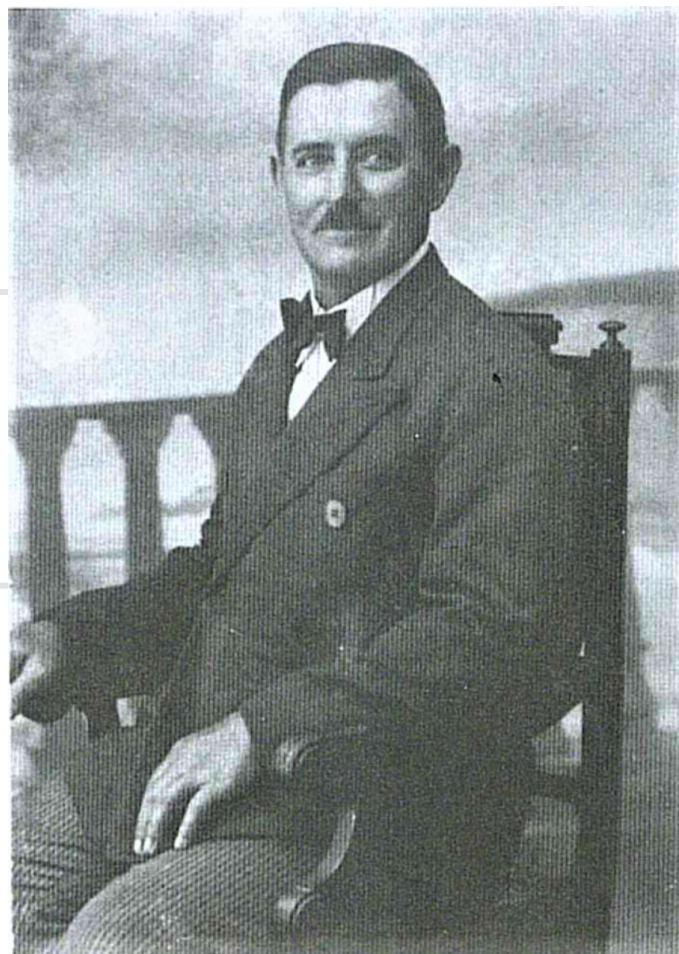
André Gedrath was a Scottish Adventist canvasser, missionary in southern Brazil, and pioneer in the medical missionary work in North Brazil.¹

Early Years and Beginning in Publication Work (c. 1875–1926)

The biographical information available about André Gedrath is scarce, although inspiring for believers who want to become missionaries. Gedrath was born in Scotland in 1875 and emigrated in World War I.² On the ship he met an Adventist family named Kipling and later married the daughter of the couple. Gedrath and his wife lived in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and had three daughters. The wife died after the birth of their third daughter.

Gedrath went canvassing for a while in the state of São Paulo, while his daughters were in the care of their grandparents. Around 1918 he was elected field missionary secretary at Santa Catharina Conference.³ From 1920 to 1922 he left the publication work and went to Brazil College, where he directed the farm, then returned to canvassing (his true vocation) in many states of the south of the country. In all those years he kept the desire to work one day in the Amazon.

Pioneering in North Brazil (1927–1963)



André Gedrath

Photo courtesy of Brazilian White Center - UNASP.

When the Lower Amazonas Mission was created in 1927 with the purpose to evangelize the north of Brazil, André Gedrath was elected to integrate the first team of missionaries, with John Lewis Brown (1888–1972) as president and the German canvasser Hans Mayr (1905–2004).⁴ The team left Rio de Janeiro city, established in East Brazil Union, and arrived in Belém city, state of Pará, on May 29, 1927, where the missionaries rented a house for living and for an operations center. Gedrath, then a widower in his 50s, made a great contribution for his experience in canvassing and in the use of mission boats.⁵ His ministry was successful.⁶ Walter J. Streithorst, successor of Leo Halliwell in the North Brazil Union Mission, reported that Hans Mayr and André Gedrath, who began their work in 1927, were the pioneers in canvassing in Amazonia.⁷

Gedrath worked first in Belém, where he had good results and the support of local authorities, shortly after he canvassed in Fortaleza, state of Ceará, where he was jailed, punished, and almost shot, and accused of spreading Communist propaganda.⁸ In this city he was released from jail by the intervention of a lawyer to whom he had sold a Bible.⁹

In order to enter the Amazon rain forest and work on the banks of the rivers, Gedrath and Mayr decided to build boats.¹⁰ Gedrath's boat would be larger, with a steam engine powered by a hydraulic wheel, which he would use as a home.¹¹ The engine force was insufficient, and the heavy boat was dragged by the waters. For a while Gedrath and Mayr worked together in the Amazonas River and its tributaries.¹² In 1929 J. L. Brown was replaced by Leo Halliwell (1891–1967) in the direction of Lower Amazonas Mission. Halliwell soon understood the value of the canvassers' work and got the East Brazil Union Mission to provide a boat for André Gedrath called *Mensageiro* [Messenger].¹³

Another Evangelizing Task and the End of His Ministry

Through L. B. Halliwell's testimony it's known that Gedrath collaborated with the evangelizing series at a theater in Manaus, in 1932, with an attendance of between twelve hundred and fifteen hundred people every night.¹⁴ From 1937 Gedrath began an evangelizing work in the state of Piauí, which was consolidated and advanced in July 1938, with the arrival of Roger A. Wilcox. L. B. Halliwell also reports a trip that Gedrath did to the state of Maranhão, where he sold many books. He also recalls that three years later that field was organized as North Coast Mission, under the direction of R. A. Wilcox. Some letters, received at Halliwell's offices, reported people who kept Saturday as a result of books sold by Gedrath.¹⁵

André Gedrath died on August 20, 1963, at age 88, in Belem Hospital, state of Pará. His funeral was directed by the president of Lower Amazonas Mission, and Claudomiro Fonseca spoke in the cemetery.¹⁶ It was recalled at that time that André Gedrath had left an example of sacrifice, dedication, and surrender to the mission of the church—characteristics of a true pioneer.¹⁷

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NOTES

1. Daniel Oscar Plenc, "Dos abuelos en el Amazonas" [Two Grandparents in the Amazon], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] 115, no. 12 (December 2015): 32, 33.
2. An estimate based on the age and date of death of André Gedrath allows an estimate of the year of his birth. The record of the cemetery of São Jorge, in Marambaia, in the city of Belém, Pará, where he is buried, reports that André Gedrath, of unknown affiliation, died on August 20, 1963, at age 88 (Ordem 84, sepultura no. 1072, Quadra 1 C) [Order 84, grave no. 1072, square 1 C]. The disease is described as "Peritonisiderada," and the doctor who signed was Delio A. Almeida. The burial left from Mauriti 1115 Street, Belem, Pará State, Brazil.
3. F. W. Spies, "A Special Message to Colporteurs," *ARH*, January 6, 1919, 25; F. W. Spies, "Santa Catharina Conference Brazil," *ARH*, January 8, 1920, 24.
4. See: Hans Mayr, *El abuelito Hans* [Grandpa Hans] (Buenos Aires: South America Spanish Publishing House, 2004). See also: Rolf J. Pohler, *Da cidade de Ulm às margens do Donau para Belém na Amazonia* [From the City of Ulm on the Shores of Donau to Belem in the Amazon], in <http://www.thh-friedensau.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Aufsatz-Vortrag109b.pdf>; Helbert Almeida, "Pontes de esperança" [Bridges of Hope], *Mais Destaque Norte* [More Feature North] 1, no. 1, April-June 2014, 3; J. B. Johnson, "Abrindo Novos Territorios no Norte" [Opening New Territories in the North], *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 22 (September 1927): 6; John L. Brown, "Missão Baixo Amazonas" [Lower Amazonas Mission], *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 22 (August 1927): 11; Elmer Harry Wilcox, "Around in the Amazon," *Review and Herald* 114, no. 24 (June 17, 1937): 24; Oliver Montgomery, "First World From the Lower Amazon," *Review and Herald* 104, no. 37 (September 15, 1927): 11; Elmer Harry Wilcox, "Work in the Amazonas Territory, No. 1," *ARH* 107, no. 45 (August 21, 1930): 19.
5. Rubens S. Lessa, *Construtores de Esperança: na trilha dos Pioneiros Adventistas da Amazônia* [Builders of Hope: In the Footsteps of the Adventist Pioneers in Amazon], 1st ed. (Tatuí, SP: Brazil Publishing House, 2016), 44–48; Leo B. Halliwell, *Light Bearer to the Amazon* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1945), 106; Mayr, 100, 110-140.
6. Marcio Costa wrote about the success of the task of the pioneers of canvassing in the Amazon region: "Canvassers Mayr and Gedrath placed Lower Amazonas Mission in second place in South America's sales, second only to Mission Bahia, which had gone from five to 11 canvassers.

Canvassers Brown, Gedrath and Mayr divided the cities to be worked on between themselves, and they went by boat according to availability. Initially Brown got Manaus (Amazonas), Gedrath got Fortaleza (Ceará), and Mayr got São Luis (Maranhão).” Unpublished manuscript titled: “Pioneirismo da IASD no Norte Brasileiro” [SDA Church Pioneerism in North Brazil], available at White Center in Amazonia Adventist College, Benevides, Pará. See: John L. Brown, “A Coisa Vae” [The Thing Goes], *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 22, no. 8 (August 1927): 10, 11. John L. Brown, “A Obra Publicadora” [The Publishing Work], *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 21, no. 21 (November 1926): 13.

7. Walter Jonathan Streithorst, *Minha Vida na Amazônia* [My Life in the Amazon], 1st ed. (Tatuí, Sao Paulo: Brazil Publishing House, 1993), 140.
8. J. B. Johnson, “Abrindo Novos Territorios no Norte” [Opening New Territories in the North], *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 22, no. 9 (September 1927): 6; Olga C. Storch Streithorst, *Leo Halliwell na Amazônia* [Leo Halliwell in the Amazon] (Santo André, São Paulo: Brazil Publishing House, 1979), 112; Halliwell, 107, 108.
9. Here are the words of that lawyer, published in a Fortaleza newspaper: “Being sick in the hospital, a short, Scottish, very talkative man came to my bed. He introduced me a copy of the Holy Scriptures. What a wonderful book in the hand of André Gedrath! Everything is foreseen and prophesied: the fall of the great empires, the breakup of the Roman Empire in ten European countries, the French Revolution, in short, everything was foretold in advance. Now, if André found in the prophecies of the Bible the emergence of Communism, it does not mean that he is a Communist. I am fully convinced that André is not a Communist. If anyone proves me wrong, I will give up on defending him; otherwise I will fight until Gedrath is set free.” Walter Streithorst kept saying: “This lawyer voluntarily defended him at no cost to André. That friendship and favorable view of our veteran canvasser was due to his hospital visit to that sick lawyer to bring him comfort and the Word of God. The means God uses to intercede for His own are always wonderful and never out of time” (W. Streithorst, 101).
10. Mayr, 110; John Baerg, “North Brazil—A Fertile Field,” *Mission Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (First Quarterly, 1947): 8.
11. Mayr, 112.
12. Walter Streithorst (1918–2007) records the words Hans Mayr reads to Gedrath at this time of crisis: “I’m new here, and I know nothing about rivers, and you’re a great sailor. I have no experience, and I don’t know about the rivers dangers. Come with me. We’ll work together.” They did so. Streithorst concluded: “But his precursors had already ‘smoothed the way.’ Blessed canvassing work! Blessed be these anonymous heroes! Walter Streithorst, 102.
13. Mayr, 146.
14. Rubens S. Lessa, *Construtores de Esperança: na trilha dos Pioneiros Adventistas da Amazônia* [Builders of Hope: In the Footsteps of the Adventist Pioneers in the Amazon], 1st ed. (Tatuí, São Paulo: Brazil Publishing House, 2016).
15. Halliwell, 108; E. D. Dick, “A Colporteur Held in High Esteem,” *ARH* 118, no. 13 (March 27, 1941): 32.
16. Mayr, 104. Aldo Carvalho, “Fim da Jornada” [End of the Journey], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] 59, no. 9 (September 1964): 34.

17. Gedrath was described like this by someone who knew him well: "A man of stiff temper, untamed spirit of initiative, never discouraged or in the mood." Luiz Waldvogel, "Fim da Jornada" [End of Journey], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] 59, no. 9 (September 1964): 34.

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