

Massauari Adventist Technical School

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Aerial view of Massauari Adventist Technical School - ETAM.

Massauari Adventist Technical School - ETAM Archives, accessed on
March 27, 2020, etam.org.br/o-milagre-da-educacao/.

The *Escola Técnica Adventista De Massauari*

(Massauari Adventist Technical School or ETAM) is an

educational unit which operates both as a day

school and a boarding school offering elementary school. It belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is

part of the Adventist world educational network. The school operates in the territory of the Northwest Brazil

Union Mission (UNoB), and is located in the community of Nova Jerusalém on the banks of the Massauari River

in the rural region of the city of Barreirinha, in the state of Amazonas, Brazil. Coordinates of Latitude: -3.084639

and Longitude: -57.289583.

ETAM has sixty-one students and thirteen employees, including a manager, six teachers, a Cafeteria manager, two general service assistants, and three boatwomen. The campus comprises five houses for volunteers, six classrooms, two multipurpose rooms, male and female dorms with the capacity for eighty students, cafeteria, library, and a chapel. The educational unit serves children from the riverside communities of Nova Jerusalém and São Bento in the region covered by Barreirinha.¹

Developments That Led to the Establishment of the School

The Adventist message reached the states of Amazonas and Pará, where there are many riverside communities, through medical missionary work. In 1927, John Brown and his family were called to work in Belém, the capital of Pará, along with the canvassers Hans Mayr and André Gedrath. That same year, the Lower Amazonas Mission (now the North Pará Conference or ANPa) was founded covering the current states of Ceará, Maranhão, Piauí,

Acre, Amapá, and Rondônia. In the same year (1927), Brown made a “recognition” trip to the city of Manaus, capital of Amazonas. On the boat, he met a Jew named Salomon Levy and handed him a missionary leaflet, promising that he would look for him so they could talk. Levy passed the leaflet to a friend, the farmer José Batista Michiles, who lived in the city of Maués.²

The following year (1928), Brown returned to Amazonas and, in his passage through Maués, met Salomão Levy and José Batista Michiles who had already heard the Adventist message and was one of the first Adventists in the state, along with his father and a group of neighbors. At Michiles' farm, named Centenário, both a company of believers and the first Adventist school in the state of Amazonas were established. The school was initially run by missionary João Gnutzmann.³ Subsequently, the Centenário farm group became the first Adventist Church in the state of Amazonas.⁴

Still in 1928, the Browns were called to work in the office of the South American Division (SAD), and Léo B. Halliwell became the missionary responsible for the work in the region. He and Jessie Halliwell, his wife, were deeply moved by the poor situation in that region and devoted many years of their lives to help the communities. Thus, in 1931, the *Light Bearer* missionary launch project was inaugurated,⁵ responsible for providing medical assistance to the villages and cities on the banks of the Amazon River, between Manaus and Belém.⁶ Due to *Light Bearer's* work, cities and villages along the banks of the great river started to be reached by the Adventist message. This was the case of Barreirinha, located on the banks of the Andirá River, which in 1934 already had a group of Adventists.⁷

In 1936, an Adventist school was established in the village of Ponta Alegre in the same region of the Andirá River and close to Barreirinha. It was initially directed by Honorino Tavares, and considered one of the first Adventist schools in Amazonas.⁸ In 1938, a teacher at the Barreirinha Elementary School, named Armando Kettle, was baptized by Leo Halliwell. Soon after his baptism, Kettle moved from the Massauari region to the city of Urucurituba, where he taught until his retirement. Kettle was an important Adventist education pioneer in the state of Amazonas. He died in March 2008 in Urucurituba at the age of 103.⁹

In 1939, with the expansion of the Adventist message in the state of Amazonas, the North Brazilian Union (founded in 1936) asked the South American Division to reorganize an administrative field for the region. The request was granted by the SAD in the following year (1940) with the creation of the Central Amazon Mission (MCA, now the Central Amazon Conference or ACeAm) headquartered at 139 Oswaldo Cruz Square, in Manaus.¹⁰ Even after the expansion of the mission, the *Light Bearer* launch continued its ministry. The Halliwells traveled a distance of thirty thousand kilometers, round trip from Manaus to Belém annually. By 1940, about 200 thousand kilometers were travelled by the couple.¹¹

As Adventism grew in the region, in 1964 the MCA acquired land seventy kilometers from Manaus on which to build a school. Conveniently located along what is now State Highway AM-010 in the rural region of the city of Rio Preto da Eva, the Amazonas Agricultural School (now Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy or IAAI)

opened in 1968. IAAI was the first boarding school built in the northern region of Brazil and is the only boarding school in the state of Amazonas, offering education from elementary to high school.¹²

From 1970, the Adventist message expanded to other regions of Amazonas. A year later, a man named Armando Paes was baptized in the city of Parintins by Ronald Wearnar. Paes started to evangelize the region accompanied by his friend, Francisco Nobre, who had also recently heard the message. Before long, there were seven people interested in the Adventist message. Without an appropriate place for the meetings, the group moved west of Parintins to Nova Jerusalém in 1981, where they found a densely forested property. Years later, Paes was also in charge of negotiations for ETAM's land with the Nova Jerusalém community, a task for which he felt great responsibility for the well-being of children and young people who would receive a holistic education focused on quality of life and human redemption.¹³

At that time, the Amazon region had two boarding schools: the IAAI, located in Rio Preto da Eva, Amazonas; and the West Amazon Adventist Academy (IAAMO), opened in April 1982 in the city of Mirante da Serra, Rondônia.¹⁴ Up to the year 2000, the Adventist Church in Amazonas grew substantially, and new administrative fields were created including the Northwest Brazil Union Mission, which currently covers the entire territory of the former Central Amazon Mission.¹⁵

Founding of the School

From the beginning, the Amazonas Adventist church has been characterized by intense missionary work. The opportunities to evangelize through Adventist education were promising, and even more so in view of the need to build an elementary school in the rural region of Barreirinha. The riverside region where the school is located is far from urban centers, access to electricity, basic sanitation, and health care facilities. As a result of such limitations, the communication and the school education which was offered were also quite limited. In addition, the existing educational institutions did not have the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate separate classrooms for children aged 5 to 9. Although they were in different grades, these children studied together in the same classroom. Furthermore, their parents had no means of transportation to travel back and forth to the school in Barreirinha.¹⁶

In this context, plans were initiated to build a new school in the region with the assistance of volunteers. One of those involved in the construction of this new institution was the North American nurse Bradley Mills. After graduating, he and his wife, Caroline, also a nurse, were volunteer missionaries in Bolivia, but had passed through Manaus where they learned about the work of the *Light Bearer I* launch. Even after their return to the United States, their interest in the region continued to grow. The opportunity for them to return came through a Brazilian resident in the United States who contacted the leadership of the Adventist Church in Manaus, which in turn was willing to receive the Mills family.¹⁷

Sometime later, an engineer contacted the Mills, saying he was aware of the couple's missionary dream. In order to support them, the engineer decided to donate his family's yacht for mission service. In 2007, the Mills, with their first child, travelled to Amazonas aiming to continue the work of the Halliwells.¹⁸ Upon arrival, Mills collaborated with the Amazon Voluntary Social Action (ASVAM, now the Amazon Life-Saving Project), and became the NGO's president, currently linked to UNoB. This NGO was established in 2007 by a group of Adventist voluntary members, who invested their time and resources in spreading the gospel and caring for riverside residents. Through this program, the projects of the missionary launches were restarted, and short-term missions and projects for the construction of houses, pits, community gardens, churches, health posts, and schools were organized.¹⁹

Other pioneers of the school were nurses Daniel Lessa and Naissen Fernandes. In 2011, they moved to Nova Jerusalém to build a clinic and develop a health system in the region.²⁰ With the support of *Salva-Vidas Amazônia* (Amazon Life-Saving project), a community health post was set up in Nova Jerusalém in 2012, managed by Lessa and Fernandes. However, they realized that the post would not be enough to provide quality of life for residents. Consequently, they planned to build a technical school beginning with the construction of simple classrooms. Like the indigenous schools, education would be offered in a multi-grade system within the community itself. After a few months of work, the classrooms were finished and classes started.²¹

In early 2013, a group of missionaries visited the school and noticed the overcrowded classrooms: more than twenty children per room when the capacity to accommodate them well was much lower. A gentleman was moved by the situation and told Bradley Mills that he would donate the amount necessary to purchase a piece of land.²² The idea was presented to *Salva-Vidas Amazônia*, which acquired from Canuto Neto, son of Armando Paes, a parcel of land worth R\$ 4,000.00 (US\$ 1,025,00), whose original value was R\$ 8,000.00 (US\$ 2,050.00). This land was in the community of Nova Jerusalém on the banks of the Massauari River where the school is currently based. This site was chosen because it is close to the city of Maués where the first Adventist Church in Amazonas emerged. With the acquisition of the land, construction work on the new school began in July 2014 starting with the teachers' houses.²³

Parallel to the work of Lessa, Fernandes, and the Mills, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA) also assisted in the construction of the school through its volunteer program, ADRA Connections.²⁴ When information about the creation of ETAM reached ADRA leaders, they did not hesitate to get involved in the project and disseminate it to the world Adventist Church. This led to the organization of the project "ADRA Connections Extreme," a missionary experience of intense immersion in volunteer work and connection with the community. After ADRA was established in Amazonas in 2010, it joined ASVAM, which came under the administration of UNoB in 2016 through the Northwest Missions Institute.²⁵

In addition to *Salva-Vidas Amazônia* and ADRA, the Brazil Adventist University–Campus Engenheiro Coelho (UNASP–EC), also participated in the project.²⁶ In 2014, volunteers from the architecture department and

university students visited the land where the school was to be built and helped with the construction. Over the following four years, donors and volunteers from different parts of Brazil and the world provided support for the project. The Federation of Adventist Businessmen in Brazil also collaborated with the work.²⁷ The united efforts of many organizations and volunteers succeeded in building a facility through which free Adventist education could be offered to children who lived by the Massauari River.²⁸

Although facilities were still incomplete, ETAM officially opened its doors to students in 2015 one teacher teaching several grades. In early 2016, another educator was hired to work with students from early childhood education to the 5th grade of elementary school. Students ranged from age 5 to 12. Classes began in a covered hut, but school building to house students, whose number rose to 17, before the year was over. From 2016 to 2018, UNASP-EC students carried out several short-term missions in the region intended to improve the quality of life of the population.²⁹

Although its name is *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari* (ETAM or Massauari Adventist Technical School), the city of Barreirinha recognized the school as Raio de Luz (Ray of Light) in 2016.³⁰ In July 2018, “more than 200 volunteers boarded 8 boats towards Nova Jerusalém community” for a final effort to complete the school and prepare for its grand opening.³¹ After everything was completed, the inauguration took place on July 28, 2018. The ceremony was attended by several civil and ecclesiastical authorities, including UnoB, the city of Barreirinha, and volunteers from ADRA International and UNASP-EC.³²

The school's mission is “to provide a sustainable educational service of excellence, through Adventist education, aiming at an intellectual, physical and social Christian formation, restoring the image of God in students and educators.” Its vision is “to be a recognized school for its excellence through educational services and the experiential exercise of Biblical-Christian values.” When the school opened, there were eight employees and forty-eight students.³³

History of the School

As in 2015, in the first half of 2016 the school opened with a single classroom and seventeen children ages 5 to 12. In the second half of 2016, the school had two classrooms and twenty students. By November 2017, some of the teachers' houses, and the secretariat and the school's board rooms were completed. Construction then focused on the cafeteria and library.³⁴

In 2017, the school was authorized by Brazil's Ministry of Education (MEC), and enrolled twenty-nine elementary students.³⁵ That same year, more than eighty students from six Adventist universities in North America as well as 100 UNASP-EC students, participated in the first ADRA Connections Extreme project from July 8 to 22, 2018. In 2018, forty-eight students, ages 5 to 14, were enrolled.³⁶ In 2019, enrollment increased to sixty-one students, ages 5 to 17.³⁷ From 2017 to 2019, six new permanent educators were integrated into the institution's team of teachers, in addition to another five temporary instructors. As the teaching team expanded, the dynamism of

the institution started to be noticed.

The campus is comprised of 1,050,000 square meters. The first buildings to be built were two houses to lodge the missionaries and four multipurpose rooms. These buildings were followed by four new classrooms with bathrooms. The final phase of construction included three more houses, the cafeteria, the library, the dormitories, and the chapel.³⁸ As of 2020, the school has five houses for the missionaries who reside there, a library, four classrooms, two multipurpose rooms, male and female dorms, a secretariat room, and a cafeteria. The work was completed in July 2018. However, the institution still needs, among other resources, beds and mattresses to accommodate students, and books for the library.³⁹

Due to the poor conditions of the riverside population, children begin to assume responsibilities for adult life such as, looking after younger siblings, doing the housekeeping and cooking, at a young age. Thus, they cannot attend school or the recreation activities for students. Furthermore, the lack of electricity, basic sanitation, and the intense heat throughout the year represent major challenges for the population. Cultural diversity between the students from the local community and the teachers who come from the south and southeast for Brazil also present a significant challenge.⁴⁰

Since the school is still relatively new, its curriculum is still being refined. Designed in collaboration with students of the pedagogy course at UNASP-HT under the guidance of Selma C. Fonseca in 2017, this curriculum was produced the request of the school's board. In 2018, the Fonseca visited ETAM to learn more about the work developed there. After inspections and conversations with the teachers, she offered them a more meaningful educational proposal that would address questions regarding the missionary purpose and target audience of the school. The proposal addressed the following objective: "starting from a Biblical-Christian worldview, the school aims to educate riverside residents to help other riverside residents to have a better quality of life within their reality, preserving sustainability and human dignity with wisdom, clarity and discernment."⁴¹

This process, based on observation of people's needs, produced a curriculum strategically designed to nurture the formation of fully mature students. It includes classes offered by members of the community. The program seeks to incorporate the Christian elements of science and culture, which are necessary for the understanding of traditional knowledge. Classes take place in the community, on the river, in the jungle, and in the classroom. The project is in a constant adaptation, and the curriculum proposal has already been delivered to Barreirinha Department of Education.⁴² The *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari* (Massauari Adventist Technical School), has expanded the vision and knowledge of the wider world for its students. Many already dream of having a profession when they become adults. Because of ETAM, these students have a new direction in their lives.⁴³

In order to help as many children as possible, the school implemented a support program through which third parties may sponsor one of the children, sending the necessary resources for their maintenance.⁴⁴ When they are at school, these students are constantly in touch with the Bible. The teachers are missionaries who also

serve on the school board and provide other services in addition to teaching preschool, elementary, and specific subjects classes, such as science, English, music, geography, Portuguese, mathematics, physical education, religion, history and art.⁴⁵ The school is able to accommodate sixty children free of charge as the work in the region is maintained through missionary offerings and donations made by the project collaborators and supporters.⁴⁶

The School Historical Role

During ETAM's construction process, the project received support from the Adventist Church at local, regional, national, and international levels. ADRA Connections, for example, as a branch of ADRA International, showed members of other countries what could be done in Latin America and the challenging Amazon region specifically. Upon learning about the project, in 2018 ADRA Connections embraced the mission of sending students from American universities to work in the Amazon.⁴⁷ The following year, missionary students visited ETAM, as well as the village of Barreira do Andirá, the focus of ADRA's missions in the Amazon.⁴⁸

Through the support received, the *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari* (Massauari Adventist Technical School) project drew the attention of the population in the region, for bringing hope and quality of life to children and their families. The school has also contributed to the lives of children in the region with the⁴⁹ Luzeiros do Massauari (Massauari Light Bearers) Pathfinder Club. This group, in addition to meeting with young people and children, has been working on a project aimed at the physical, mental, and spiritual development of the participants.⁵⁰

What Remains to be Done to Fulfill the School Mission

Located in a populous region, but still considered inhospitable by a large part of the Brazilian population, ETAM has some challenges which need to be overcome in order to achieve its goals. Financial autonomy is one of them. The school maintains a partnership with Barreirinha City Hall, through which it receives financial resources. But the ideal is to achieve financial autonomy. In addition, acculturation of a frequently changing staff to the conditions of the local community is an ongoing challenge. The institution's leadership understands that education is a gradual process, and it has worked to improve the interaction between staff and the community.⁵¹ Providing education in such a context prioritizes the presence of qualified educators to navigate the complex multicultural relationships.

Although there are challenges, ETAM intends to expand technical and cultural education, by offering music, computer, English, and Spanish classes. In order to do this, the school needs volunteers and resources.⁵² For the coming years, the institution's objective are to unify the curricular proposal for early childhood and elementary education. If it is achieved, the educational unit will be able to offer high school in the future and, eventually, distance learning higher education. Furthermore, it is also the institution's plan to build a sports

facility, a science laboratory, and a playground for early childhood education.⁵³

The primary mission of ETAM is to enable students to carry out their work in different situations and places in order to fulfill the mission entrusted to them by God, to preach the Gospel and make disciples. The school also seeks to improve the quality of life for riverside residents themselves, empowering them to operate the school for themselves, and reproduce these benefits in the surrounding communities. To further these goals, ETAM seeks to integrate its evangelical and educational mission with respect for local culture.⁵⁴

Chronology of Directors⁵⁵

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41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. "Apadrinhe uma criança" [Sponsor a Child], *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari [Massauari Adventist Technical School]*, accessed September 9, 2019, <http://bit.ly/3axjEwb>.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. "Home," *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari [Massauari Adventist Technical School]*, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.etam.org.br/>.
47. Michael Rohm, "Voluntários criam escola técnica no interior do Amazonas" [Volunteers Create Technical School in Amazonas Riverside], *Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News]*, August 17, 2018, accessed September 6, 2019, <https://bit.ly/33mdITi>.
48. Victor Storch, ESDA translation assistant and UNASP volunteer at ETAM in August 2019, WhatsApp message to Yanka de Araújo Pessoa, ESDA translation assistant, September 5, 2019.
49. The Pathfinders Club is made up of "boys and girls aged 10 to 15, from different social classes, color, and religion who usually meet once a week to learn to develop talents, skills, perceptions and a taste for nature." These boys and girls "are thrilled with outdoor activities. They like camping, hiking, climbing, exploring the woods and caves. They know how to cook outdoors, making a fire without matches." Besides, they demonstrate "skill with discipline through drill commands and have their creativity awakened by manual arts. They also fight against the use

of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs." "Quem somos" [Who We Are], *Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil)*, accessed February 4, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2FDRqTh>.

50. "Home," *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari* [Massauari Adventist Technical School], accessed on September 5, 2019, <http://www.etam.org.br/>.
51. Selma Carvalho Fonseca, professor, UNASP-HT, email message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira, ESDA associate editor, November 26, 2019.
52. "Home," *Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari* [Massauari Adventist Technical School], accessed September 5, 2019, <http://www.etam.org.br/>.
53. Selma Carvalho Fonseca, professor, UNASP-HT, email message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira, ESDA associate editor, November 26, 2019.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. For more information about the Escola Técnica Adventista de Massauari [Massauari Adventist Technical School], access the website <http://www.etam.org.br/>.

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