



CHAPTER THREE

URUGUAY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After a tiring expedition throughout Argentina, Elder and Sister Richards found welcome respite in Uruguay from February 27 to March 5, 1948, where they were kindly hosted by Frederick S. Williams, president of the newly created Uruguayan Mission, and his wife, Corraine. President Williams had presided over the Argentine Mission in the late 1930s. As noted in the prologue, in 1941 he asked the First Presidency to consider sending a Church leader to tour South America as a blessing to the Saints and a stimulus for the work there. A few years later, while stationed in Montevideo, Uruguay, on business, he requested permission from Church headquarters to establish a branch there. The Uruguayan Mission was formed not long after.

President Williams relished the opportunity to introduce the Richardses to the new mission, the third one in South America. The mission had been organized less than a year before the Richardses' visit. Twenty missionaries worked to share the restored gospel with investigators and invite them to attend newly created Sunday Schools and branches, though there were no conversions to the faith yet in the country.

THE DOCUMENTS

In this chapter Sister Richards continues her letters back home. However, the predominant writer of events in Uruguay is President Frederick S. Williams, who described the visit of Elder Richards in one chapter of his landmark book *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, cowritten with his son Frederick G. Williams.

ON BOARD SS *GENERAL ALVEAR*, FROM BUENOS AIRES TO MONTEVIDEO

Friday, February 27, 1948

Daily Summary

Travel by ship to Montevideo, Uruguay

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS BOOK¹

On February 26, 1948, pursuant to a telephone invitation from him [Elder Stephen L Richards], Corraine and I traveled to Buenos Aires to return with him and Sister Richards on the boat.

[February 27, 1948] Elder Richards held a conference with President Young and me, and later that evening the three couples attended a farewell in Brother and Sister Richards' honor before they boarded the S.S. *General Alvear*, one of the night boats that crossed between Argentina and Uruguay. The ships sailed each evening at ten and arrived at seven the following morning.

That night before going to bed, Brother Richards expressed his concern about clearing customs. I told him there would be no problems and no delays getting into Uruguay. He told me, however, that they had arrived in Buenos Aires from Montevideo at seven in the morning and it was two o'clock in the afternoon before they had cleared customs, and the ordeal had exhausted him even before his tour of the mission started. As I recall, President Richards was still recovering from a recent heart attack and wasn't feeling very strong. In fact, in his initial letter to us he indicated as much:



The Richardses arrive in Montevideo with Frederick S. and Corianne Williams of the Uruguayan Mission. Courtesy of CHL.

We do not wish to incur excessive expense and yet the brethren desire us to have lodging and service which will be adequate to the needs of people of our age. Neither of us is in the most robust health and we have to be a little careful. [Stephen L Richards to Frederick S. Williams, December 10, 1947]

Visiting the far-flung branches of the Argentine Mission by car had also taken its toll. Thus, it was with a great deal of trepidation that he anticipated our arrival in Uruguay; he feared a repeat of the delays going through customs. I assured him that there would be no problems.

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

Saturday, February 28, 1948

Daily Summary

Arrival in Montevideo and news articles about the Richardses' arrival

The next morning [February 28, 1948], to add to his concern, we learned that another ship had arrived a few minutes before ours; we had to dock quite a distance from the customs house itself. As we were leaving the ship, Harold Brown,³ who was working for the American Embassy in Montevideo, met us with his camera to take pictures of Elder and Sister Richards and Sister Williams and me. In fact, all the missionaries were at the dock to welcome our party. The photo session delayed us even more, and Brother Richards urged us on with the statements like: "Look, let's go, let's get through customs." I again reassured him, and told him that in all likelihood our bags were already in the car. "Oh," he said, "it can't be." We walked up to customs and, sure enough, his bags had already been cleared and were out in the mission car, awaiting our arrival. He couldn't believe it. Once again, my friends in the inspection department had allowed our baggage to go through without delay. Elder Richards was very relieved and grateful.

IRENE M. RICHARDS JOURNAL⁴

We arrived in Montevideo at 7. The missionaries and friends were there at the docks to meet us. A Mrs Brown⁵ gave me a corsage and we had our pictures taken. Pres Williams seems to know how to get them to pass our baggage without inspection at the customs. We just walked through. Quite different [illegible] <from> Argentina. Sister Larson⁶ and mother⁷ are here from Rio. The day is beautiful. We rested and then rode to the top of a hill where there is an old fort, from which eminence we saw the whole panarama of Montevideo. The river is red and the ocean blue as they gradually mix. Then we went to a steak house. It was a real entertainment. The waiters were shouting to each other over our heads in spanish and when the customers added their babble to the maze it was really fun. There were 8 of us. We had fillet and teabone an inch or more thick. Nothing else only salad. It was quite an experience and once will suffice. That's how Uruguay acts they say. Col Scouson⁸ took Mrs Larson home to Rio on a plane.

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Page from the journal of Irene Richards. Courtesy of CHL.

This morning we went to S.S.⁹ We met the bank Pres. <named Deaver>¹⁰ on the hill Sunday School. Four locals, new, clean and noisy. They have a higher plane than Argentina, and at the night meeting in Y.M.C.A. there were 70 investigators, and 40 saints, missionaries and those attached visitors etc. There are no saints who are new members. This branch¹¹ has started in a new place and for about five mo[nths]. Their audience was a higher class than Argentina. I hope they soon make some converts, but it should take a while to be sure they understand.

NEWS ARTICLE: LA MAÑANA¹²

One of the Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church Will Arrive Today in Our City.—Mr. Steven L. Richards, Attorney and Banker

The President of the Uruguayan Mission makes some interesting statements

Today, Dr. Steven L. Richards, one of the twelve people who exercises the calling of the Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Religion, arrives on board the s/s “General Alvear.” To be able to give to our readers some information about his personality and about the object of his trip, we interviewed Mr. Frederick Williams, President of the Uruguayan Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,—more commonly known by the name of Mormon Church.

Mr. Williams courteously answered our questions and made, among others, the following statements.

Who Are the Mormons?

... Quite a number of Senators and Representatives in Washington have been members of the Church. At the present time there are two Mormon Senators and five representatives. The first Councilor to the President of the Church was Ambassador of the United States to Mexico.¹³ He came to Montevideo as one of the delegates sent by Roosevelt to the Foreign Ministers’ Conference held in the year of 1932.¹⁴ His name is J. Reuben Clark Jr.

February 28 - Dichoso Dia! The first apostle to visit Uruguay officially, Stephen L. Richards arrived with his wife, and a number of new missionaries.



The Richardses with those serving in the Uruguayan mission. Courtesy of CHL.

A President elected by the Twelve Apostles presides over the Church. He chooses two Councilors. These 15 men are the principal authorities at the head of the Church.

The Personality of Steven L. Richards.

Steven L. Richards, attorney and bank director, exercises the calling of one of the Twelve Apostles. He is traveling to visit the Missions of our Church in South America. He has been in Argentina for nearly one month, where the Church established a Mission in the year 1925. That Mission now has 93 missionaries and about one thousand members.

He will be in Uruguay for one week before going to Brasil, where he expects to remain for two weeks. The Brazilian Mission has many members.

The Uruguayan Mission was established September 1, 1947, although a number of Mormons lived in Uruguay before that time.

Mr. Williams was the Business Manager of the Interamerican Co-operative Public Health Service when it was established. There were other members here in the course of their Military Service working in the Naval Attachee's office of our Government.

The Church in Uruguay.

At the present time, there are 38 missionaries in Uruguay. Nearly all of them have been in the armed service of our country. We do not like war, but when it comes, we support our Governments all that we can. The headquarters of our Mission is on Brito del Pino street. The Mission Home was recently purchased by the Church. There are four branches¹⁵ in Montevideo and one in Treinta y Tres, Mercedes and Paysandú.¹⁶ Upon the arrival of other missionaries, we will open branches in other departments (states).

We believe in a healthful life and we enjoy sports. We hope to soon organize a basketball and baseball team.

The missionaries pay their own expenses while in the mission field. The length of their mission is two and half years, after which they return to their homes in North America, to be replaced by others. There are nearly five thousand throughout the world. The missionaries do their own cooking and housekeeping. They are nearly all young men between 20 and 30 years of age.

They Are Not Polygamists.

The practice of polygamy ended in the year of 1890. Since that date, any member that advocated this practice has been excommunicated by the Church. We believe that we must obey the laws of the country in which we live. When the Supreme Court of the United States sustained the law making polygamy illegal (May 1890), the Church ended this practice.

This belief was accepted before that date (since 1843) as a commandment of God. Only three percent of all the members of the Church ever practiced polygamy.

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

Sunday, February 29, 1948

Daily Summary

Church meetings in Montevideo area

The Uruguayan Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is happy to invite you and your family to attend a religious and cultural meeting that will be held in honor of the visit of Elder Steven [L] Richards, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, to our Mission.

In this meeting, Elder Richards will give an important message of interest to all.

The meeting will be held in the Assembly Hall of the Young Men's Christian Association which has been graciously conceded to us free of charge.

Colonia street, corner of Agraciada Avenue

Sunday February 29th, at 7:30 P.M.

Frederick S. Williams
Mission President

**FREDERICK S.
WILLIAMS BOOK¹⁸**

On Sunday, February 29, 1948, Brother and Sister Richards visited the Sunday Schools of the Malvín, Arroyo Seco and La Comercial branches.¹⁹ He spoke in each one, giving advice and bearing his testimony. That evening, instead of Sacrament meeting (with no members to take the sacrament they were really preaching meetings anyway), we held a combined branch meeting of the Capital District at the YMCA auditorium. Investigators as well as some especially invited guests came from all over Montevideo. The Mission History records:



Missionaries standing in front of the Malvín Branch meetingplace: William N. Jones, Melvin Brady, Terry C. Smith, Kay W. Young, Cecil Millett, and Gerald Nielsen. Courtesy of CHL.

A mixed chorus furnished special music and Oscar Nieves played two piano solos. Apostle Richards spoke at some length explaining the practical aspects of Mormonism.

His words were well received by the people in attendance, amounting to 145 investigators. The concluding speaker was President Williams, who also acted as interpreter for Brother Richards throughout the day. At the close of the meeting almost all of the investigators and friends came and shook hands with Brother Richards, expressing their great pleasure in meeting him and for his splendid message. They requested that he return soon to visit them again.

The public meeting was a great success. We appreciate the courtesy of the Y.M.C.A. in permitting us the use of their hall free of charge. [Uruguayan Mission History, 6]

After Sunday School Elder Richards asked how the people lived. “What do they do on Sunday?” I said, “If you want to see the people, then we’ll have to go to the beach; that’s where they are.” He said “Then we’ll go to the beach.” And we drove along the *rambla* or ocean front. I think as far as Carrasco. Uruguay’s beautiful beaches are jam-packed on Sundays.

IRENE M. RICHARDS JOURNAL²⁰

I tried to list all the boys who were from home so I could telephone their mothers.²¹

CORRAINE S. WILLIAMS’S MEMORIES OF IRENE RICHARDS²²

She [Sister Richards] didn’t have any voice; she never did speak all the time that we were in the mission; she never spoke at any of the meetings. And I was really surprised at this because I felt like it could have been a help to the women if she had. But I think she had surgery or something, but anyway she spoke very softly.

In the Argentine Mission and in the Uruguayan Mission I was used to sitting on the stand with my husband. But she never would; she’d sit in the congregation, so I sat with her in the congregation, once when they were there. I thought about it and wondered, “Do I do wrong?” Because I don’t

hold the Priesthood; but on the other hand I was a leader²³ in that mission. I'm sure that that was the right way.

MONTEVIDEO AND TREINTA Y TRES, URUGUAY

Monday, March 1, 1948

Daily Summary

Missionary meetings held in Capital District and Treinta y Tres

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS BOOK²⁴

On Monday, March 1, we held a meeting with all the Capital District and Treinta y Tres missionaries. The highlight of the all-day meeting was Brother Richards' testimony and instructions. First, each missionary bore his testimony and expressed his feelings concerning the Lord's work. The majority were military veterans and expressed joy in the service of the Lord, which brings life, rather than in the military, which had so recently brought death. One quite, new elder stood up to say "I don't know if I have a testimony or not, but I've come on this mission to see if I can get one." When Brother Richards rose to speak, he rather severely castigated the elder, saying he should not be on a mission if he didn't have a testimony. I remember seeing my son Fred²⁵—who was quite young at the time—looking pained at the way Elder Richards dealt with this young missionary, a particular friend of Fred's. At the close of his remarks, however, Brother Richards apologized to the elder, explaining that he had admonished him to make a point.

Because of his exhaustion after his visit in Argentina, Elder Richards had asked that we not schedule any event without first checking with him. His only really strenuous day had been the day of the elders' meeting, so he felt rested well enough to travel a little. I recommended that we visit Mercedes and stay overnight; it wasn't too far from Montevideo and the roads were almost all paved. He agreed.

Montevideo, Uruguay

March 1, 1948

Dear Folks:

After our strenuous touring of Argentina, we were glad to come to Uruguay. This seems a freer country, more air, more freedom. The walls are not so tall and defaced with placards "Vive Perone" etc. This mission is new, there are no members as yet, but they expect to have one baptized soon.²⁷ There are about 40 missionaries commencing work in different parts of this country. They are located in locals, much the same as our wards, where two boys live and teach Eng. classes, hold meetings, Primaries, and Mutuels and invite visitors for conversations. These locals are new, fresh and inviting, much nicer than the old ones in Argentina. The boys are enthusiastic and ready to go. There was held a report meeting in the house yesterday in which all were heard from and then Papa gave some clear cut and understandable advice and instruction on how to proceed.²⁸ I think it should have been recorded for future use, it seemed to me to be unusually good. Anyway, all seemed thrilled and inspired. Sister Williams served a fine lunch. I have never seen so many hamburgers



Playa Pocitos in Montevideo. Courtesy of CHL.

before and the good things that were eaten with them satisfied the bunch. This is a nice new house, in a fine district, and it seems to be a very portentous beginning for a new mission. Sunday eve we held a meeting in the Y.M.C.A. at which 70 investigators were present. The people seem to be a higher, more intelligent class, superior to those in Argentina. It is said that this is a freer country and not so bound down with tradition and custom. I asked one lady where she learned to speak English. She said, I don't speak English, just "Mormon". These elders are surely attractive, as they are in other missions. People like them.

This morning President Williams took us to have our pictures taken for the Desert [Deseret] News. We stood in front of a statue of pioneers, a wonderful work in bronze, placed along the slope of a hill in a park. I hope we have some pictures of the art here, really, it comes from Italy I guess but is very expressive and real. It seems that that has been the most time wasting thing of our mission. So many pictures. But these people will grow up finally.

Papa has gone to Rotary and he meets men of note. He enjoys it and I am glad. He is invited to see a man whom we met on the boat, who has a nice home here in Montevideo. They took us for a long ride to the beaches on Sun., when they were crowded. It was a sight, colorful and crowded. There are some fine homes along the shore also. More English, Dutch, and American people live here than in Argentina. They don't like "Perone" much. Tomorrow Papa is invited to speak at the "American" Club. Some business men. He is glad that he doesn't need an interpreter. It's really difficult to be interrupted with some babble that doesn't mean anything to you every few words you utter. And when we arrive in Brazil it will be Portuguese. When we get too tired of chatter we go into our room and talk about the Hebgen.²⁹ In this way I am sure we will be able to live for another month, when we land in N.Y. on the 5th of April.

Love to all. We are well and hope you are.

Mother and Father.

Montevideo, Uruguay

March 1, 1948

Dear Lois:³¹

Your letter was just one month getting to me, and they said sometimes it takes longer. I guess the officials just deliver the letters they think are important. We went at such a pace in Argentina to finish up there, that we were rather in a maze when we were dumped into Uruguay among 40 new missionaries. This place is just being opened up and there are no local members as yet. Everyone is enthusiastic and planning their organization. I am glad they are starting on a much higher plane than in Argentina. The mission home is new and more modern, in a new district, near a park. The houses are more open and the walls not so high and confining, more gardens visible, so it gives one a freer outlook and happier feeling. The locals, or homes of the missionaries, are new and up in the sunshine instead of walled in as in Argentina. They held a meeting Sunday in the Y.M.C.A. hall, and had 70 investigators and 40 of our own people, so the room was fairly well filled. Two boys, or four, live at each local, like our wards at home, and they hold meetings, teach Eng., and do their own cooking. They prefer that so they can have meat without bay leaves, salad without oil and garlic, and they don't need to eat raw ham as an appetizer with melon. 200 boys in South American are teaching a lot of English. Most of these people are ready for the gospel. They are tired of religion and are looking for a simple, happy solution. The class of investigators are much higher than those in Argentina. It seems to be becoming more modern and self expressive in Uruguay. In fact, quite a number do not even know what the Bible is and don't seem to care about it. One doesn't see the smoking here as in North America and the people dress modestly. No doubt we at home go to extremes. I have yet to see "the new look" anywhere. I have inquired several times for a long black skirt. "No." I think there is an ultra class somewhere that reads Vogue, but no one on the street knows about it yet, and they wear short dresses. I have been pointed at, and talked about on account of my longer skirts, by two ladies that I noticed. And no one wears a hat, unless at night if she is a married

woman. I suppose I have broken many laws and disregarded niceties, but I didn't understand, so "excusio".

Yesterday we held meeting in the morning and then had dinner. I never saw so many hamburgers in all U.S. as these 40 missionaries put away. And all the trimmings were like ones at home, only the buns were very thin and flat. President Williams tried to explain to the baker how he wanted them. They were heavy like lead. No bread here is light, all soggy and dark in color. After dinner we held another session and by 6 o'clock Papa had heard from every missionary and had given them his instructions, which were definite and impressive and should truly start them out on a mighty conquest for the church in this new field. I wish his remarks could have been preserved for all missionaries who are released from Salt Lake. If anyone can observe, and figure out the best methods to use here, Papa can.

Our present plan is to not visit every out of the way hamlet in Brazil, but have the boys come to some central point to meet Papa instead. They are young and can take it. The roads and conditions are no good. He has seen the likes in Argentina. President Rex will be disappointed, but it may save Papa's life.

He has gone to Rotary. He has enjoyed it all thru our trip. We really should stay for May Rotary meet at Rio. Then we would have the "Mormons" double quartette sing and enjoy that beautiful resort, or really gambling house, "Quitendenah"³² at Potropolis.³³ But we will leave here at the end of the week and be two days on the boat, then two weeks in Brazil and be home in N.Y. on the 5th. Perchance you are there, O.K. If not, we will spend a day with Georgia³⁴ and continue on. . . . The weather is hot, and cool at night. It's so noisy no rest until after twelve, but a fine "siesta" from 12 to 3 in the afternoon.

Lovingly,
Mother and Father.

MERCEDES, URUGUAY

Tuesday, March 2, 1948

Daily Summary

Travel to Mercedes in rainstorm

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS BOOK³⁵

On Tuesday, March 2, 1948, after attending a luncheon as guests of the Montevideo Rotary Club, Elder Richards and I and our wives as well as Elder Keith Dexter, began our trip to Mercedes in the mission car. Near the end of the paved road we were overtaken by tremendous wind and rain, a typical Uruguayan storm. The rain was so dense it was impossible to see any distance and we slowly felt our way along. I noticed a poor rain-drenched woman standing by the side of the road, trying to get a ride. I stopped and invited her into the front seat with me and my wife. It was a mistake; that she was soaking wet was bad enough, but she had evidently been cooking in small, unventilated quarters and smelled of burnt meat and smoke; it was not very pleasant. Then Brother Richards remarked: "The Brethren advise us not to pick up anyone." I was embarrassed and more than a little uncomfortable until we dropped her off.



*First convert baptism in Uruguay, fall 1948.
Left to right: President Williams, Brother and
Sister Rodriguez, Sister Diber Preciozi, and Elder
Preston J. Bushman. Courtesy of CHL.*

We finally arrived in Mercedes, on the beautiful Río Hun [Hum],³⁶ and went directly to the Brisas del Hun Hotel, where comfortable quarters had been reserved. After resting and eating, we began an elders meeting at 10:00 p.m. with the four missionaries assigned to Mercedes³⁷ and the four assigned to Paysandú³⁸ at the Mercedes *local*. Work had just begun in Mercedes; as yet no Sunday School or other meetings had been held.

Elder Richards' instruction was most edifying, as were the sweet testimonies borne at that meeting as the spirit of the Lord poured out upon all present.

IRENE M. RICHARDS LETTER³⁹

Montevideo, Uruguay

March 3, 1948

Dear Georgia:⁴⁰

Yesterday [March 2], after Rotary, we started by auto to go to Mercedes. We traveled about four hours through green rolling country and reached our town in the evening. At our hotel "River Breeze" (Only in Spanish) was a troupe of players (ballet) quite amusing at dinner. They were not good looking but thin. In the center of every town is a park and a church. The bells pealed and the paved walks thru the park made an attractive design from our window. Here we met the remaining eight missionaries in this branch. This is a new project only 6 months old. They are starting out with a new house, beautiful and big, and four "locals" where the elders live and teach English, hold Primaries, Mutuals and cottage meetings for investigators. These "locals" are of about four rooms and most attractive. The elders do their own cooking, which pleases them, because the customs and food in these countries are strange and different and don't agree with Americans. Even I get on the blink about once a week. We left Argentina last week-end, and will leave Uruguay this week-end for Brazil. I have a long list of names to call mothers up when I get home. The missionaries are such fine boys and I will be glad to report them as such.

I have not had any orchids but many gardenias. Brazil is where they grow most. It rained heavily but I have not used my raincoat, or rubbers or umbrella yet. Montevideo is a lovely town, mostly a summer resort for the surrounding country in the heat. The beaches stretch for miles and are thronged. There are more nationalities here than in Argentina and the elders had 70 investigators at a meeting in the Y.M.C.A. where Papa preached. They were quite enthusiastic and interested. The people are kind, as have all others been. We are beginning to feel that we are heading for home. Just two weeks in Brazil and then on the boat for New

York. We don't know what your plans are but we will soon see you there or in Toledo soon.

Yesterday [March 2] the farmers were plowing in the fields with oxen, three span. They surely need machinery here. I think it will come in the next hundred years if not sooner. . . . [Papa] is surely doing a good job here. I would like to have recorded his talk to the missionaries at the conclusion of the report meeting. It was clean-cut, definite and inspiring.

Tomorrow [March 4] he has been invited to address the "American Business Mens Club". He is glad he can speak without needing interpretation.

Love to you three,
Mother and Father.

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

Wednesday, March 3, 1948

Daily Summary

Evening at the mission home in Montevideo

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS BOOK⁴¹

We said good-bye to the missionaries . . . and returned to Montevideo. We lunched in Colonia Suiza at the exquisite Nirvana Hotel, a beautiful resort show place. Corrairie and I had spent a weekend there some years before. The Richards enjoyed it very much. In fact, the whole trip was most pleasant, and we especially delighted in the beautiful rolling hills of the Uruguayan countryside known as "*la tierra purpúrea*," or the purple land, because of the purple sheen of the spring flowers.

That evening at the mission home, Brother and Sister Richards related some of their experiences, especially those associated with the dedication of various temples. She would encourage him: "Stephen, tell the one about . . ." and he would tell another experience. Then he would say: "Irene, now you tell them about," and she'd begin a story. Some were serious, others instruc-

tive or spiritual; still others were humorous, and we had many good laughs. We especially enjoyed their anecdotes about the lives of the General Authorities. I had always thought Brother Richards possessed one of the most orderly and serious minds among the Brethren. After a week with them, I also saw what warm and genuine people they were; each possessed a keen sense of humor and enjoyed life and all its beauties. In every respect they were wonderful human beings as well as committed servants of the Lord.

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

Thursday, March 4, 1948

Daily Summary

Sightseeing and shopping in Montevideo

IRENE M. RICHARDS JOURNAL⁴²

Thur. 4th 1948. March.

We met the lady missionary⁴³ then Pres Williams took us to see the Congressional Building of Uruguay. The guide was very fine and explained things to us. It stands on an eminence and is excessively ornate with statues and embellishments. Inside is all kinds of marble, floors pillars and part of the walls; the rest in Mosaic and inlay and gold leaf. It was brought over from Italy and assembled. The woods are also beautiful and polished. The halls and benches of marble are more intricate and ornate than anything yet. The senate chamber made our Washington cheap.

The outside walls of the inner court were carved and chiselled in Roman scenes and characters. I suppose I have not seen any of the finery in Europe. I



Sister missionaries Edie (Eduarda) Argualt and Juana Gianfelice from Argentina. Courtesy of CHL.

guess there never will be any more buildings like it because modern people do not worship a diety like they once did, and there will be no more slave poor labor. I hope.

The sun was setting as we came out showing the river and city.^{upon} When we returned the missionaries came in to the home and presented us with an album of our visit in pictures. It is very fine. Sister Williams gave us two doilies made by the native indians of Paraguay.—doing which fine work they go blind at about 20 which is not so happy a thought. If they had a little education and magnifying glasses, it probably would save the sight.

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS BOOK⁴⁴

On Thursday, March 4, we shopped downtown. I purchased a very beautiful pigskin wallet for Brother Richards which he thought was the finest he had ever seen. . . .⁴⁵

Later, we took Brother and Sister Richards to dinner at a famous restaurant named Moroni's [Morini's].⁴⁶ I asked Brother Richards whether he liked steak, and he said he did, so we ordered a chateaubriand for him. We knew it would really impress him. When the steak was brought in on a large platter and placed in front of him he said "I can't believe it. There is no such thing!" The meat hung over the sides of the platter and each serving was as large as a Sunday roast. It was very delicious, and he ate every bite of it.

That evening most of the missionaries from the Capital District visited with the Richardses at the mission home. The missionaries sat on the floor and listened to his counsel and to the very interesting stories both he and Sister Richards told.

I had asked Brother Richards whether he would be willing to speak before the American Association of Montevideo and he replied he would enjoy doing so, so I called the program chairman and arrangements were made for Brother Richards to address the Association. The meeting was scheduled for noon, Friday, March 5, at the Nogaro Hotel.

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY, AND ON BOARD THE SS URUGUAY

Friday, March 5, 1948

Daily Summary

Address at the American Association of Montevideo and departure by ship to Brazil

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS BOOK⁴⁷

His [Elder Richards's] address [at the American Association of Montevideo] was entitled "Knowledge is power, not wisdom"; it was a beautiful talk and was very well received:

Those in attendance at the luncheon expressed many complimentary remarks about Elder Richards' address, "Knowledge is power, not Wisdom". They commented upon the practicability of the Mormon theology and Brother Richards' speaking ability. President Williams, Elder Farnsworth and Harold Brown were also in attendance at the luncheon. [Uruguayan Mission History, 7]

Friday evening the Richards, Williams and Browns attended a reception at the American Embassy hosted by Ambassador Briggs. Before leaving the mission home Brother Harold Brown, who worked at the Embassy, alerted Elder Richards that "Probably the only thing they will be serving tonight besides scotch and bourbon will be Coca-Cola." He then asked: "Would you be averse to drinking Coca-Cola?" Elder Richards answered: "No, I would not." Harold asked: "Has the Church ever taken a stand against Coca-Cola?" and Elder Richards answered: "No, it has not." And sure enough, that night only hard liquor and Coca-Cola were served. When the waiter offered a tray of drinks, Brother Richards served glasses of Coke to Corrairie, Leonore Brown, Sister Richards, me, Harold Brown, and finally to himself, and we all drank them. We met many people that night, officials of the U.S. Government as well as members of the American community, some of whom had heard Elder Richards speak at luncheon. It was a most enjoyable evening. . . .

After the reception with the Ambassador, we returned to the mission home where the Richardses made final preparations for their departure later that night. A large group of both members and investigators escorted them aboard the S.S. *Uruguay* which was to take them to Santos, Brazil.

IRENE M. RICHARDS JOURNAL⁴⁸

We were not far from Williams home and left a little early to catch the boat. Then we waited a long while for the customs office to open up the gates. We were told they would take us out to the Uruguay by smaller boats, but they finally decided not and the big ship came to dock. It was after midnight before we could say goodbye to the friends who had come to help us off. The boat sailed at 2 and it was long after that before we slept, although it had cooled off. The Uruguay is a much nicer boat than <the> Argentina furnished better, but the waxed floors are dangerous. especially on stairs[.]

IRENE M. RICHARDS LETTER⁴⁹

Hotel Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo
March 11, 1948

Dear Louise:⁵⁰

No one is so thoughtful and kind to write as often as you have done. We do appreciate knowing what has transpired at home etc. since our leaving. . . . When we finish this mission we surely will be either among the quick or the dead.

The folks at Uruguay pampered us as much as in Argentina. We rode on the *Uruguay*, which is a nicer ship than the one we came down on, and we just rested and relaxed for two days. We needed it, because Papa gave a talk at the American Club at noon. We were accorded a chicken dinner farewell at the Mission Home at 6, where they gave us some lovely remembrances and made us feel entirely foolish. Papa was used to the splurge because of meeting the men at his luncheon. Then we went to a reception given by Ambassador Briggs from Maine, at his home, which was a magnificent mansion in very good taste and appointments. The spacious

garden, formal, thru the high gates onto the long front porch with tall pillars, all white. Then into the entrance and marble hall. The receiving line stood in front of a marble staircase, which divided nearer the top to certain bedrooms. Briggs proved to be a fine gentlemen and friend. He also had been to the American Club and heard Papa speak. So it turned out that he, Papa, was quite a popular figure. There were several there from home and one girl from the 18th ward who had been to Whitney Hall and had some acquaintances there. She had married some government officer, I think. The parlor, sun room and library were attractive and rich, and the dining room, always the biggest one in the houses in South America was filled with guests surrounding an immense table of foods and drinks, fine china and flowers. Oh, such a babble and such sociability, when one really gets inside their high walls. But Uruguay is a freer, forward looking country than Argentina.

Saturday, March 6, 1948

Daily Summary

Church News and President Williams report about the Richardses' visit to Uruguay

NEWS ARTICLE: CHURCH NEWS⁵¹

Elder Richards Spends Week on Tour of New Uruguayan Mission

By Elder E. Keith Dexter
(Special to the Church News)

Montevideo, Uruguay—The long awaited visit to this country by one of the General Authorities was realized on Saturday, February 28, with the arrival here at about 7 a.m. of Elder Stephen L Richards of the Council of the Twelve and Mrs. Richards.

They were accompanied in their visit here by President and Mrs. Frederick S. Williams of the newly created Uruguayan Mission, who had

attended a conference of mission presidents held by Elder Richards at Buenos Aires.

The Church leader was met at the “Aduana”⁵² by a group of Uruguayan missionaries, and spent the day visiting points of interest about Montevideo including the “Cerro,” the mount from which Montevideo acquired its name and upon which a famous old fort is built.

Sunday was spent, first in visiting the various Sunday Schools in the Montevideo area, where Elder Richards left his blessings and greetings to members⁵³ and investigators alike, and then in addressing a general session of the membership of all branches in the evening. Many investigators were present and Elder Richards’ remarks were translated by President Williams.

The visit of Elder Richards, his graciousness and the import of his timely messages have done much to further the established work of the Church in this section.

Elder Richards spent Monday giving advice and counsel to the missionaries in the testimony and report meeting. It began at 10 a.m. and continued to 7 p.m. with but a noon luncheon recess.

On Tuesday both Elder Richards and President Williams were guests at the Montevideo Rotary Club and in the afternoon they left with their wives for Mercedes, an outlying branch, for a meeting with the missionaries and members. Elders also came here from Paysandu, a neighboring branch.

The beauties of the interior country were unfolded to the visitors on Wednesday as they returned to Montevideo. A luncheon was enjoyed at one of the attractive resort hotels.

The evening was spent in the Mission Home where Elder Richards and Mrs. Richards relate some of the traveling experiences. Elder Richards told of attending all of the dedications of temple of the Church since the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated in 1893.

Further counsel and advice, and the relating of faith promoting experiences was the fare for most of the elders of the capital district who visited with Elder and Mrs. Richards at the Mission Home on Thursday evening.

On Friday the visiting Church leader addressed the luncheon of the American Association in Montevideo. This was perhaps a highlight of Elder Richards’ stay in Uruguay. Those in attendance at the luncheon

expressed many complimentary remarks about Elder Richards and his address, during which he gave a word picture of the practicability of Mormonism.

A final reception in their honor was given Elder and Mrs. Richards on Friday evening in the official residence of the American Ambassador to Uruguay. The cordiality and friendliness extended the visitors exemplified the warmhearted appreciation and respect for them on the visit to this land. After the reception they returned to the Mission Home where final preparations were made for their departure.

Later that night they were escorted by missionaries aboard the S.S. Uruguay for their next stop—Brazil.

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS LETTER⁵⁴

March 6th, 1948

President W. Ernest Young

San Eduardo 4499

Buenos Aires

Dear President and Sister Young and all:

Brother and Sister Richards left last night after spending one week with us and we very much enjoyed their visit. We did not plan too much for them because they were rather tired. I believe they were more rested when they left and I believe they enjoyed their stay in Uruguay.

He gave the impression that he was well pleased with what he saw in Argentine, and appreciated your many kindnesses to them.

We talked about additional books being needed for the Spanish Missions and I believe we can make a small start toward supplying them. He agreed on the securing a translation of the new book “What of the Mormons?”.

He said that they would try and secure a translation of the book and that they would send the manuscript to Montevideo for printing. Knowing how long it takes to get a translation done in the States, I suggested that Brother Barjollo⁵⁵ be requested to make one, to which he agreed. As he had given away all of his copies of the book and as this mission has not yet received a copy, Brother Richards requested that I write you and ask if

you would be kind enough to loan Brother Barjollo the copy that he gave you so that he can begin as soon as possible on the translation.

He said he would give us a chance to see what we could do on the publishing of books in the south lands. So I hope we can do a creditable job on this first book. This would help a good deal in the decentralization of the Spanish publishing for the Church.

I am writing Brother Barjollo about this to see if he would be kind enough to undertake the translation as soon as possible.

I believe that this would be a start toward in the right direction and perhaps may develop into something in the future. When the manuscript is finally approved, we can ask for bids in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo to see where it would be more advantageous to publish.

I am sorry to know the ruling with regards to leaving our Mission. I feel that that interchange would perhaps be beneficial to both of us. However I feel sure that on special occasions, the First Presidency would authorize these visits. I feel sure it would be too soon for us to request permission to go to the Conference this month but six months from now, I intend to request permission to go to Buenos Aires.

Things are progressing very nicely and we have great hopes for the future. I believe Brother Richards was impressed with our prospects which is about all we had to show him.

Thanks very much for your kindness to us during our last visit and for all the other favors that you have shown us. Please give our regards to everyone.

Sincerely,
[Frederick S. Williams]

NOTES

1. Frederick S. Williams and Frederick G. Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree: A Personal History of the Establishment and First Quarter Century Development of the South American Missions* (Fullerton, CA: Et Cetera, Et Cetera Graphics, 1987), 239.
2. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 239.

3. Harold Brown served as a missionary in Argentina (1937–40), as Argentine Mission president (1949–52), and as the first stake president in Mexico City (1961–72). He also became the first president of the Mexico City Mexico Temple when it opened in 1983.
4. Irene M. Richards, Journal, February 27, 1948, Lynn Stephen and Annette Richards Family Papers, CHL.
5. Leonor, wife of Harold Brown.
6. Jeanne Joyce Larson. Her husband, Rolf Larson, was employed by the US government in Rio de Janeiro and was a former Argentine missionary. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 242.
7. Amelia Waterstreet Joyce, the mother of Jeanne Larson. Amelia was visiting her daughter.
8. Williams stated that after the war, “three former Argentine missionaries, Samuel J. Skousen, Rolf L. Larson and L. Pierce Brady, all were working in Rio for different agencies of the United States Government. By 1948 Skousen was working in Paraguay and began the Church there.” Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 282.
9. Sunday School. In the original text, Irene Richards abbreviates it S.S., makes the sentence about seeing the bank president, and continues on her line of thought by spelling out *Sunday School*.
10. The words “named Deaver” appear on the next line after the words *Sunday School*, but Irene Richards has drawn a line connecting “bank Pres” to the words “named Deaver.”
11. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 219. A branch had been organized on June 25, 1944, with Williams as branch president in Montevideo when he worked for the US government. Members at that time were all from the United States. The branch had a new beginning with the organization of the mission in 1947 and then the arrival of missionaries in 1948.
12. “One of the Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church Will Arrive Today in Our City.—Mr. Steven L. Richards, Attorney and Banker,” *La Mañana* (Montevideo), February 28, 1948, Stephen L Richards Papers, 1921–59, CHL.
13. J. Reuben Clark served as US ambassador to Mexico from 1930 to 1933.
14. See South American Mission Manuscript History, CHL. In December 1933 President J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency returned to Montevideo as a US government representative at the Pan-American Conference. He also had brief stopovers in Argentina and Brazil. On January 2, 1934, he addressed

- Church members in the Liniers chapel of Buenos Aires. President Clark then returned to the United States.
15. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 231–32, 242. Meetings throughout Uruguay were only with investigators at the time of the Richardses' visit; there were no members in these branches.
 16. Branches in Treinta y Tres, Mercedes, and Paysandú were organized January 22, February 16, and February 18, 1948, respectively. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 250–51.
 17. Frederick S. Williams' Invitation to Meeting, February 29, 1948, Stephen L. Richards Papers. The invitation was given to the general members of the Church.
 18. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 242.
 19. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 250–51. In 1948 fourteen branches existed throughout Uruguay.
 20. Richards, Journal, February 29, 1948.
 21. In her journal, Irene made lists of the home addresses and phone numbers of the missionaries she met in her travels so that she could call and talk to their mothers after returning to Utah.
 22. Sister Corrairie Williams reflected about the Richardses' visit years later. She commented about Sister Richards's role and involvement during the mission tour when attending Church meetings. Corrairie S. Williams Oral History, interviewed by Frederick G. Williams, 1975–76, 22–23, CHL.
 23. See Williams Oral History, 10. As wife of the mission president, Sister Williams was the president of all three women's auxiliaries in the mission and was in charge of starting these organizations in Uruguay.
 24. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 242–43.
 25. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 252. Frederick and Corrairie Williamses' son, Fred G., was about eight years old and was the first Latter-day Saint baptism in Uruguay, performed a month after the Richardses' visit, on April 3, 1948.
 26. Irene Richards, *Dear Children*, March 1, 1948, Richards Family Papers., 1879–2004, CHL.
 27. See Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 253. A steady stream of conversions began almost eight months later when the first three Uruguayans were baptized on November 4 and five more joined two days later.

28. See Richards, *Journal*, March 1, 1948. Irene Richards mentioned one subject of Elder Richards's talk that day. She stated, "There was quite a controversy about 'if' and Stephen gave them a very clear straight message about being definate."
29. Hebgen Lake, in southwest Montana, is a popular fishing and camping area.
30. Richards, *Dear Children*, March 1, 1948.
31. Lois Bathsheba Richards Hinckley was the Richardses' third child.
32. Palácio Quitandinha was a casino and resort built in the 1940s in Rio de Janeiro.
33. Petrópolis is the capital of the state of Rio de Janeiro.
34. Georgia Gill Richards Olson was the Richardses' sixth child.
35. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 243.
36. The Río Hum is the indigenous name for the Río Negro.
37. Mercedes is in western Uruguay along the banks of the Río Negro.
38. Paysandú is in western Uruguay. The city is on the banks of the Uruguay River, which forms the border with Argentina.
39. Richards, *Dear Children*, March 3, 1948. Though written on March 3, much of the letter describes events of March 2.
40. Georgia Gill Richards Olson was the Richardses' sixth child.
41. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 243.
42. Richards, *Journal*, March 4, 1948.
43. According to Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 249, the first sister missionary in Uruguay was Sister Eduarda Argualt, who began her mission on January 7, 1948. She was joined by Elza J. Vogler from Río Cuarto, Argentina. Williams states, "Sister Vogler had been set apart in Buenos Aires by Elder Richards, and arrived in Uruguay March 4, 1948." The "lady missionary" reference by Irene Richards is to Sister Vogler.
44. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 243–44.
45. Continuing, Williams said, "After my release as mission president three-and-a-half years later, I bought another wallet for him and gave it to him personally when I returned to Salt Lake City. As I presented it, he pulled out his old one and said, 'This is the finest wallet I ever had. It's kind of worn now, so I sure do appreciate getting this new one. I suppose he used it until his death.'" Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 243–44.

46. Ristorante Morini opened in 1854 and closed in 2000. It was the longest-running restaurant in Montevideo. "Un Clásico Menos en Uruguay," *El Tiempo*, November 23, 2000, <http://www.eltiempo.com/>.
47. Williams and Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 244.
48. Richards, Journal, March 4, 1948. From the context of the entry it is clear this is really March 5.
49. Richards, *Dear Children*, March 11, 1948.
50. Irene Louise Richards Covey was the Richardses' second child.
51. E. Keith Dexter, "Elder Richards Spends Week on Tour of New Uruguayan Mission," *Church News*, March 27, 1948.
52. Customhouse.
53. With no Uruguayan converts, this must either be an error or a reference to the missionaries or members like Harold Brown who were Latter-day Saints working in Uruguay and attending the meetings.
54. Frederick S. Williams to W. Ernest Young, March 6, 1948, Frederick S. Williams Papers, CHL.
55. Fermin Claudio Barjollo, an Argentine, translated for the Church.