



# Chapter 74

## Memory and history of school architecture during the first republic in Belém-PA

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### ABSTRACT

This work approaches school architecture from the perspective of memory and the history of education and refers to the buildings of school groups in Belém that originated in the First Republic of Pará. In that period, the school space became a symbol and object of construction of the new regime and materialized as ideas and educational policies of the republicans, being an important source, full of information about the society of the time. Our objective is to analyze the architectural characteristics of these buildings from documentary research based on a theoretical framework in Nora (1997), Coelho (2008), Bogéa (2009), and Lobato (2014 and Bôas) (2015). In the methodological scope, we developed demos in addition to studies on the buildings survey and literature review, or that portrayed the discussion of the concepts of memory and primary period, then we

did the primary research partial analysis. Visits to recording and analysis institutions will also be presented as preserved architectural features. The school buildings under study materialized positivism and hygienist in architectural features and had the predominant aesthetic of eclectic style, with emphasis on neoclassicism and art nouveau, to praise Public Instruction as a condition for civility. As for the preservation of the buildings, only the buildings of the Barão do Rio Branco Floriano Peixoto school groups maintain the restoration of the original characteristics of their construction. The school groups José Veríssimo, Rui Barbosa, Wenceslau Braz, and Benjamin Constant received several renovations that completely modified the facade and lost the meanings subliminally imbued by the republicans and, consequently, part of the memory and history of education was lost with the de-characterization of architecture.

**Keywords:** School Architecture, First Republic, School Groups, Educational Memory, History of Education.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This work refers to the importance of preserving the architecture of school buildings for the memory and history of education, specifically the establishments where the school groups in the capital of Pará, created between the period 1889-1907, worked. The research aims to analyze the architectural characteristics of school buildings related to the republican ideals of the time.

In the methodological scope, the study is documentary research that was developed from the survey and bibliographic review of studies related to school buildings or that portrayed the discussion about primary education in the period, in addition to the concepts of memory and history; subsequently, we collected and partially analyzed the selected sources. In addition, we proposed to carry out visits to the buildings that still maintain the original traces to record and analyze the preserved architectural characteristics.

Our choice is because the physical school space during the First Republic became a symbol and object of consolidation of the new regime and the understanding that preserving the architecture of these spaces is fundamental for the memory and history of education, since this, in a certain way, materialized the educational policies of the republicans being, therefore, an important historical source, full of the principles and information of the time.

On the conceptual distinction between memory and history, there is no consensus among historians. The discussion on this dichotomy was driven by Pierre Nora with the publication of “Les lieux de mémoire”, where he states that:

Memory, and history: they are by no means synonymous; as we now know, they are opposites in every way. [...] Memory is always a current phenomenon, a construction lived in an eternal present, while history is the representation of the past. [...] Memory arises from a group whose connection it stimulates [...] History, in turn, belongs to everyone and no one, and for this reason it is designated as universal (NORA, 1997, p. 9).

The author highlights the temporal distinction between the two concepts and what they both represent and, in addition, adds that history seeks to destroy spontaneous memory through criticism, always suspecting it. (NORA, 1997, p. 10)

History and memory “follow two simultaneous readings of temporality: one that defines time as present time and, therefore, saturated with past and future, and another, that marks the insistence of the past on time and, therefore, is in charge of its examination posteriori (BOGÉA, 2009, p. 10). Like two management models from the past, their differences would be found in the pretensions in terms of an ideal model. Thus, memory would claim to be faithful to the past, while history, founded on a desire for knowledge, would claim to be true (BOAS, 2015)

Within the scope of public education and school architecture, both are represented in educational policy and school spaces at the time.

Schooling became a tool to support the political model based on the legacy of the moralizing, civic, and civilizing purpose of education (MOACYR, 1937) and on the positivist ideology considered fundamental for the construction of the new society (CASTRO & REGATTIERE, 2009).

When the First Republic was implemented in Pará, the provisional government led by Justo Chermont<sup>1</sup> Firstly, it requested an evaluation report on the Public Instruction left by the Empire, carried out by José Veríssimo, Director of Instruction, who identified several problems in the curriculum, management, teacher training, and school spaces. Soon, the old educational policy was reformulated along the lines of republican ideology. The regulation of public instruction in the Empire, instituted by Ordinance of April 29, 1871, was replaced by Decree no. 149, of May 7, 1890, the first of the republican period, to then be modified by Decree no. 625, of January 2, 1899 (General Regulation of primary education).

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<sup>1</sup> Governor of Pará (1889-1891).

In addition to the reform in Educational Policy, school architecture has become an instrument for action by local governments and the dissemination of republican ideas and values, as advocated by Azevedo & Stamatto (2012, p. 32) for whom “school buildings were part of the production of the reading of modernity and progress made by local elites and became one of the favorite targets for the dissemination of republican ideas.” However, the concern with the construction of adequate environments for instruction has existed since the imperial period, when some public facilities were built, such as “the schools of first letters in São Paulo” (AMBROGI, 2011, page 2). However, it was only after the proclamation of the Republic that the idea of a building planned and built exclusively to carry out Public Instruction was significantly disseminated.

The conception of the design of the buildings intended for Public Instruction took into account the optimization of time in the classroom from the graduation of the classes, in addition to the transformation of the material culture and the pedagogical space that provided better environmental comfort and hygienic conditions to the users. According to Azevedo, Amorim & Santos (2017), the school environment became essential to transform society and making it healthier and more hygienic, as its main objective was to eradicate addictions, inculcate healthy habits, disseminate hygienic measures, and guide the population on the prevention of diseases, indicating several practices that should be considered in the planning and construction of the school space:

"It was recommended that the schoolhouse be cleaned and maintained, requiring that the classrooms be whitewashed, dusted, and swept. Cleaning should take place before and after classes. It was also recommended to wash the classroom with running water at least once a month. The windows should be open while the male and female students were present, so that sunlight could bathe the room. The houses should have latrines, washbasins, and drinking water so that the male and female students could quench their thirst". (COSTA, 2021)

The environmental comfort of the institutions was also a priority in the design of the project. Architectural devices that provide greater ventilation and lighting to environments, coloring the walls with light colors to give the appearance of cleanliness, the projection of compartments, and the arrangement of furniture in classrooms to offer better discipline and ergonomics to users, characterized the new establishments of Public Instruction.

Another important dimension in the conception of these buildings was their aesthetics, which came to symbolize the political project of modernization of the country with advanced construction techniques, embellished by the differentiated and imposing architecture of eclecticism.<sup>2</sup>

The architecture of school buildings had different characteristics from other public buildings in the First Republic. These were demarcated by “a historically constructed spatial conception and whose

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<sup>2</sup> In architecture, eclecticism is the blending of architectural styles from the past to create a new architectural language. To read more about Eclecticism, see Fabris, Ana Teresa et Al. *Eclecticism in Brazilian Architecture*. Sao Paulo: Nobel. Publisher of the University of São Paulo: 1987.

configuration endowed them with a particular identity, representing a significant visual and symbolic enterprise of propaganda of the established New Political Regime” (BENCOSTTA & ERMEL, 2019).

The Educational Policy of the New Regime, governed by Positivism and Hygienism, modified the pedagogical organization and the curriculum, and consequently, the physical school space.

## 2 THE CREATION OF SCHOOL GROUPS

The first republican initiatives, during the provisional government (1889-1891) were led by Justo Chermont, who had José Veríssimo as Director of Public Instruction, and included the reform of primary education. Under his management, primary education consisted of provisional schools of 1st and 2nd degrees, meeting the requirements of Law No. 1,295, of December 20, 1886. When diagnosing the situation of Public Instruction in Pará, Veríssimo observed that, as the schools were structured, they did not meet the real needs of the population.

“Schools [...] as they were organized, their creation and their provision, became, as I have said more than one occasion to tell you, an expensive utility, only lending to purposes that in no way competed with instruction. public” (VERÍSSIMO, 1891, p. 67).

Soon, he suggested a new form of school organization that would meet their wishes and make better use of the budget, as it was “evident that it is convenient to spend intelligently and not for nothing and in pure waste” (VERÍSSIMO, 1891, p. 70).

At that time, primary education carried out in schools of first letters, created during the Empire, consisted "only of a teacher and a group of students at different stages and levels of learning, housed in an improvised building and without adequate working conditions" (DAMASCENO & PANTOJA, 2020, p. 7). José Veríssimo's proposal suggested the composition of primary education classes based on the student's level of knowledge, which would be under the responsibility of one teacher per level. Three to four nearby isolated schools would be grouped into an establishment where a school group would work, also called a reunited school.

Alexandre Vaz Tavares, Director of Public Instruction in 1893 and 1894, also noted the emergency in the construction of adequate buildings to serve primary education in his reports addressed to the then governor Lauro Sodré<sup>3</sup>:

“ That is how, at two schools inspected by me, I had the opportunity to attend the piano practice which, if repeated daily on the same occasion, must have stolen many moments of distraction from the students and disturbed the teacher's explanations, which was certainly very difficult. worse. In two others, this disturbance was caused by the constant passage of trams [...]. In several, they were the governess' own children..”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Governor of Pará (1891-1897) indirectly elected by the Constituent Congress.

<sup>4</sup> Report from state departments presented to Mr. Governor Dr. Lauro Sodré in 1894. Belém: Tipografia do Diário Oficial, 1896, p. 245 - 246

In addition, he adds that students “hustled, squeezed and piled up on insufficient benches and in rooms with little space and little air” (COELHO, 2008, p. 72-73).

The realization of the idea of building or allocating adequate spaces to serve School Groups in the state of Pará went through several setbacks until the government of Paes de Carvalho<sup>5</sup> seven groups were created in the interior and one in the capital; in the government of Augusto Montenegro<sup>6</sup> 20 more groups were installed in the interior, totaling 27 units, an advanced number for the time when several states had not even adopted this organization. According to Governor Augusto Montenegro (PARÁ, 1907), since the beginning of his administration, the program for primary education was one of his priorities, to the point of having allocated it under the logic of grouping in the most populated regions; he also invested in the headquarters of municipalities and the most important villages in which groups could not be constituted; equipped the remaining groups and schools with good school supplies; founded some boarding schools for the school population and organized a school inspection that would offer all the conditions to have real visibility of what happened in these establishments, mainly in school groups, which were considered the ideal type of school.

Augusto Montenegro concluded his government, by delivering 34 school groups, 27 in the countryside and 7 in the capital (Table 1).

Table 1 – School Groups of Belém-Capital.

Year	Decree, date	Location	Name
1901	935, 7/01	Tv. Padre Prudêncio	4° G. E. José Veríssimo
1901	1029, 8/06	Praça Santa Luzia	6° G. E. Wenceslau Braz
1901	1067, 125/08	Tv. Benjamin Constant	2° G. E. Benj. Constant
1902	1133, 22/03	Rua Siqueira Mendes	1° G. E. Ruy Barbosa
1902	1133, 22/03	Av. Nazaré (CODEM) <sup>7</sup>	5° G. E. B. do Rio Branco
1903	1190, 7/02	R. Santo Antônio	3° G. E. Floriano Peixoto
1906	1409, 9/01	Tv. Angustura	7° G. E. Paulo Maranhão

Source: Pará (1907, p. 26-28).

The governments of Paes de Carvalho and Augusto Montenegro constituted the golden period of the creation of school groups in Pará and, although the reorganization of teaching was carried out with the reunited and graduated schools that expressed republican modernity, there were still numerous obstacles regarding the spaces considered adequate. According to the 1903 Official Journal of Teaching, Artur Viana complained of a great lack of appropriate buildings, that is, it was necessary to build buildings for school groups according to their needs and not just installation in adapted and aesthetically attractive public places.

<sup>5</sup> Governor of Pará (1897-1901) appointed by the Federal Government

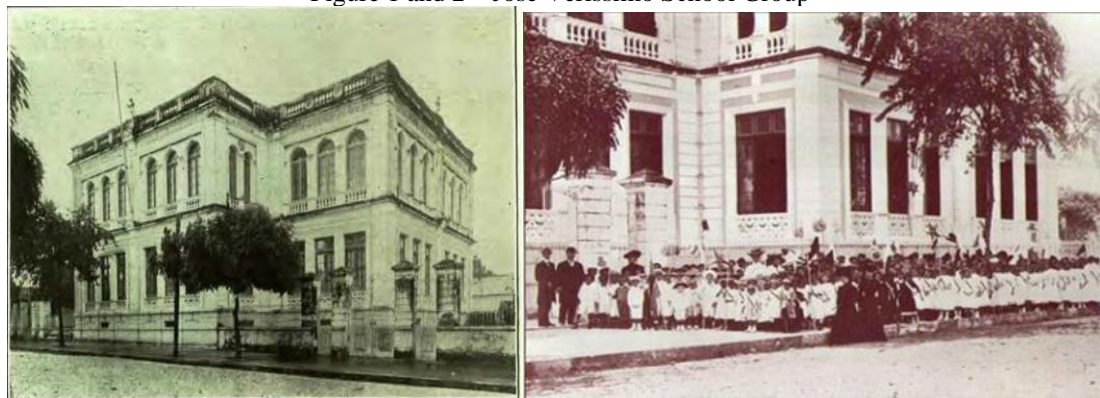
<sup>6</sup> Governor of Pará (1901-1909) appointed by the Federal Government

<sup>7</sup> Afterward, the school group was transferred to Av. Generalissimo Deodoro corner with Travessa Braz de Aguiar.

### 3 THE ARCHITECTURE OF SCHOOL GROUPS

The 4th School Group in the capital, called Grupo Escolar José Veríssimo, was the first to be created in the state capital, and was regulated by Decree no. 935, of January 7, 1901, and installed on January 28 of the same year, in building built by the governor for this purpose (VIANNA, 1987).

Figure 1 and 2 – José Veríssimo School Group



Source: Pará (1908, p. 352).

From the photographs, the presence of refinement of different architectural styles can be seen. Numerous glass and wood windows in art nouveau style allowed for lighting and airing of the school space and met republican hygienist recommendations. The facade was decorated with balusters.<sup>8</sup> on the windows and on top of the roof to hide the roof and the presence of corners<sup>9</sup> the meeting of the walls manifested the neoclassical style in the building. Some techniques gave sumptuousness and monumentality to the school, such as raising the height of the terrain, and an elevation covered by a basement.<sup>10</sup> decorated, in addition to the presence of stairs at the main entrance and exaggerated dimensions in width, length, and ceiling height, around six meters on both floors.

Atualmente o estabelecimento continua com a finalidade pedagógica, pois ali funciona a Escola Estadual José Veríssimo. No entanto, a arquitetura do antigo e imponente grupo escolar foi completamente descaracterizada. Os antigos janelões The rounded edges were reduced to square and simple frames and all the ornamentation at the top of the roof gave way to an insipid simplicity.

The 5th School Group, created on March 22, 1902, was initially installed in a leased building on Avenida Nazaré, where the Company for the Development and Administration of the Metropolitan Area of Belém (CODEM) currently operates. Years later, another headquarters was built on Avenida Generalissimo Deodoro n. 1464, on the corner of Travessa Braz de Aguiar, in the same neighborhood, to house the aforementioned school group.

<sup>8</sup> Small pillars are used together to protect balconies, verandas, and handrails.

<sup>9</sup> The external and salient angle is formed by the meeting of two converging external walls, serving as protection to the corner of the building or ornamentation of the façade.

<sup>10</sup> Constructive detail of ornament on external walls and wall, where it coats from the beginning of the wall up to a few centimeters in height with ceramic materials, stones, or rustic mortar.

Figure 3 - Barão do Rio Branco School Group



Source: Pará (1905).

The building has two floors with high heights, which gives it sumptuousness and monumentality. It has large windows around the entire building, which, together with the high ceilings, provide ventilation and lighting for the interior of the premises. This concern for environmental comfort in republican architecture was directly influenced by Hygienism, as mentioned earlier, seeking to provide a clear and airy space to avoid diseases, in addition to transforming the school into a strategic place to disseminate hygienic measures and guide the population on disease prevention.

The architecture of this building highlights the eclectic style, which was widely used from the Republic onwards. Note the presence of neoclassical architectural elements that allude to Greco-Roman culture, reinforced by the grandeur of the building's dimensions. In addition, on the roof, there is a platband<sup>11</sup> and the cymatium<sup>12</sup> as devices to hide the keyboard and a classic Greco-Roman architectural ensemble: a large pediment<sup>13</sup> decorated indicating the main entrance.

The building still functions today as a government school and has preserved the original architectural characteristics, functioning as the administrative center of the institution and for carrying out activities, annexes to the school were built.

In the same way, the 1st School Group, which came to be called the Rui Barbosa School Group, was first set up in a house, which was leased for that purpose, on the first Rua de Belém called Siqueira Mendes, in the old city district. Afterward, this School Group had its second occupation, in another house in Cidade Velha, on Rua Tomásia Perdigão, and gained its building years later, on Rua Joaquim Távora, n. 408, in the same neighborhood.

The new building, although still built in the First Republic, did not have the same refinement as the first school buildings, as described by Lobato (2014):

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<sup>11</sup> Wall extension that hides the roofs of commercial buildings or multi-family residential buildings.

<sup>12</sup> Projecting frame that completes the upper part of the facade of a building, hiding the roof and preventing water from running down the wall; cornice.

<sup>13</sup> An architectural ensemble normally decorates the top of the main façade of a building, demarcating the main entrance. In neoclassicism, its shape is triangular, but it was adapted to neocolonialism, receiving curved features.

"The building has two floors, the rooms are spacious, the ceiling is quite high, between seven and eight meters high, and the walls are around eighty centimeters. The façade is simple, rigid, and symmetrical, it still features elements of eclectic architecture on its façade (platband), but far from the style of the Grupo Escolar Barão do Rio Branco, built during the heyday of rubber" (LOBATO, 2014, p. 244 ).

In the place, the school with the same name remains, but far from the grandeur promoted by the First Republic, as the place needs to be revitalized throughout the facade.

The so-called 2nd School Group was installed on Rua Benjamin Constant in a leased building (PARÁ, 1901) in the neighborhood of the redoubt, through Decree no. 1067, of August 12, 1901, and was installed on the 19th of the same month.

Figure 4 – Facade of the Benjamin Constant School Group (1905)



Source: Pará (1905, p. 23).

In the photograph of its facade, it is noticed that there is a repetition of the pattern of numerous wooden windows with glass, the presence of iron as a baluster, the imposing staircase at the main entrance, and a grandiose ceiling. It is observed that the aesthetics of this building differs from those already mentioned, as it presents more characteristics of the art nouveau style and less of the neoclassical in its facade; unfortunately, the current building has undergone several renovations that have not preserved the original architectural features.

The 6th School Group was the second to be created in the capital of Pará through Decree no. 1029, of June 8, 1901, and operated in the building located in Santa Luzia square. As of May 1, 1923, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of Pará moved to the building located in Largo de Santa Luzia, where it remains until today, and the school group shared the installation in some rooms. In 1930, the 6th Group gained the name of Grupo Escolar Wenceslau Brás and in 1938, under the government of Magalhães Barata, it was renamed Grupo Escolar Dr. Freitas and work in a building on Avenida Generalissimo Deodoro n. 220. In 1969 the building was demolished and in its place, another one was built with two floors and more modern features, which is still in operation today.



Figure 5 – Facade of the Wenceslau Braz School Group.



Fonte: Pará (1908, p. 288).

The first building where the Grupo Escolar Wenceslau Brás operated had a unique architecture due to its shape, grandeur, and characteristics of different European styles. There was a concern with the internal environmental comfort provided by the large glass and wood frames, surrounding the entire building. Note the presence of a square pediment, indicating the imposing main entrance. There were also neoclassical details at the top like pinnacles.<sup>14</sup> , and composite bowls on the balusters that formed a rather ornate platband. Art nouveau, the predominant style during the gum heyday in Belém, was present in the railings on the balconies, made of corrugated iron, and in the doors and windows made of wood and glass.

The stone staircase<sup>15</sup> at the main entrance of school buildings, in addition to raising the height of the floor of the building on the ground hardened with several layers of compacted soil (recommendation indicated for buildings in the region of Belém with humid soil), it had a subliminal meaning: the steps "elevated" the building, giving it the appearance of a "temple" of knowledge and the students, when going up the stairs, would be "ascending", therefore progressing in society, when coming into contact with knowledge.

Currently, in the former building of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of Pará, the Institute of Health Sciences of the Federal University of Pará operates. The building underwent several renovations to meet the needs of higher education, with the main details of the facade, previously elaborate, being lost.

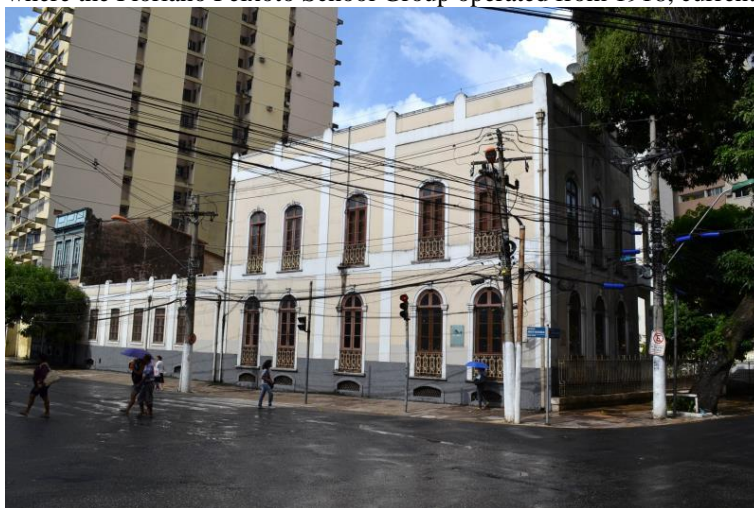
The 3rd Escolar Group, created in 1903, was first installed on Rua Santo Antônio, in the Campina neighborhood, close to the old building that housed the Normal School (1893-1933) to which it was annexed. According to Decree no. 1190, of February 17, 1903, in its Art. 43 “next to the Normal School there will be a group in which, in addition to primary education, master students from the Normal School will do practical exercises.” Later, the school group was transferred to another location, a “comfortable mansion at Avenida Nazareth, n. 2 [...]” *Revista O Ensino* (1918, p. 62).

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<sup>14</sup> Pinnacle is the highest point of a certain place, a building, or a tower

<sup>15</sup> Monumental stairs, built in stone and with low height and wide steps.

Figure 6 – Building where the Floriano Peixoto School Group operated from 1918, current House of Language.



Source: Ascom FCP.

The building of the 3rd School Group was installed in the mansion of Colonel Francisco de Paula Bolonha and Henriqueta Barreto Bolonha, built-in 1870. In it "the engineer Francisco Bolonha was born, and the family stayed in the building until 1918 when it was rented to the state during the government of Lauro Sodré and the building was renamed Grupo Escolar Floriano Peixoto (França, 2014, p. 251)". The building is currently being revitalized and houses the Language House, a unit of the Curro Velho Foundation.<sup>16</sup>, and is part of the historic-architectural complex next to Praça da República. Its characteristics repeat those of the aforementioned school buildings, presenting elements of grandeur and refinement.

To install the 7th School Group later called the Paulo Maranhão School Group, a mansion was rented, which no longer exists and which was created by Decree no. 1,409, of January 9, 1906, formerly located in Marco da Légua.

Figure 7 – Facade of the Paulo Maranhão School Group.



Source: Pará (1908, p. 289).

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<sup>16</sup> State government institutions were created to promote education, leisure, and culture, primarily for public school students, low-income populations, and traditional communities.

The architectural style of Grupo Escolar was unique and although it was imposing like the others, it had an aesthetic that recalled the structure of a Castle.

#### **4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The creation of school groups in Pará took place during the height of gum activity in Pará. Among the seven school groups in the capital created in the adopted historical framework, only two received facilities built for Public Instruction: the Barão do Rio Branco School Group and the José Veríssimo School Group. The others were allocated in existing spaces and renovated to serve this purpose.

Although only reports and sets of iconographies were consulted, it was still not possible to fully analyze the architectural features preserved in the loco. We noticed, however, that the buildings observed in this study materialized the republican ideology through their aesthetics of eclectic style, with emphasis on neoclassicism and art nouveau, to enhance Public Instruction as a condition for civility. We also verified some hygienist precepts applied in its architectural projects, especially the existence of numerous large glazed windows that allowed the entry of ventilation and lighting, this environmental comfort being optimized by the high ceiling of six meters in all cases. From the point of view of positivism, we saw materialize in the elements of the buildings that gave them monumentality, configuring a unique architecture different from other public buildings.

As for the preservation of these buildings, only the buildings of the Barão do Rio Branco school group and the Floriano Peixoto school group maintain the restoration of the original characteristics of their construction. The José Veríssimo, Rui Barbosa, Wenceslau Braz, and Benjamin Constant groups were the object of several reforms that completely modified and mischaracterized their facades, emptying them of the meanings subliminally imbued by the republicans. The Paulo Maranhão school group was completely demolished, leaving only photographic records of its grandeur, as well as the first building where the Floriano Peixoto school group operated.

Part of the memory and history of education was thus lost with the original architecture of the buildings, together with the absence of historical sources and adequate restoration of these buildings reflects the neglect of governments concerning the preservation of the heritage and historical values of the state of Pará.

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