

April 1942

J F BRANDON BAPTIST MISSIONARY
Cruzeiro do Sul, Acre, Brazil, South America

Wheaton Ill
April 1942

I received a letter dated March 25 1942 from Mrs Ida L Nelson of 1918 W Easton St Tulsa Okla. Sister Nelson has given me permission to use the letter in mimeograph form. It speaks for itself and is the April letter to you in the interest of Missionary Joe F Brandon's work in Brazil. The letter read as follows:

Dear Mr Overbey

My heart was made glad on receipt of your February mimeographed letter concerning our dear Brother Joe F Brandon and the work he has been permitted to do in that remote corner of Brazil S. A. (Acre) Akri.

Over thirty years ago a colored believer (Baptist) went up into that section of Brazil. Through his faith, life and witnessing quite a number of rubber gatherers were converted and met regularly for worship, even building a crude shed for the meetings. Repeatedly this brother begged for a missionary to visit them and baptize the Believers.

Mr A E Nelson and I his wife were the first Baptist Missionaries in the great Amazon Valley, Mr Nelson going out in 1891 and I leaving New York December 25 1892. No Missionary Society would send workers to that part of Brazil. High cost of living and yellow fever, so other needy fields were given preference. Hence we went on faith trusting Him who called us to that special field to care for us. It was not easy to gain the confidence of the people, who so long had been under priest control.

Brazil had just been proclaimed a Republic in 1889 and religious liberty granted. Feb 2 1897 we were permitted to organize the first Baptist Church in the Amazon Valley with 11 members. Five were Baptized by Solomon Luis Ginsburg the converted Jew, who we had asked to come to our assistance, as Mr Nelson was not yet ordained. Four were already Baptist from the State of Macieo, Mr Nelson and myself making the number 11. Before long on recommendation of other Missionaries, our Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board offered us some help, which we greatly accepted. This was at Belem, State of Para, mouth of the Amazon river.

On returning from our first furlough in 1899 to April 1900 we located at Manaus nearly 1000 miles up the Amazon river. The Board soon granted us full salary. The expenses were heavy but the generosity of the believers and God's blessing soon enabled the church organized October 5 1900 to buy a fine lot and put up a temporary building without calling for any help either from the States or sister churches in Brazil. Later the now existing substantial building was erected under the same conditions.

All the while we were praying, writing and begging for workers and a launch, so as to be able to better reach the interior people. After 20 years the Baptist Church in Murray Ky gave \$3000.00 for a launch. A converted leper made and presented the first boat to Mr Nelson to aid in traveling. He was from some distance up the Madeira river a tributary of the Amazon. With all this vast territory to cover, Mr Nelson was not able to make the long trip up into the Akri (Acre) territory. Finally the man came down to attend the Convention and was ordained to go back and baptize the believers which he did.

(over)

The Acre is extensive and is reached by two different rivers, his work was not in the section where Brother Brandon works. That man left or died and later the Presbyterians started work there.

How we rejoiced when Dr Boyce Taylor from Murray Ky came and saw the field ripe unto harvest and decided to start Faith Missions, as our Board did not have money nor men to send to this field. Four families were sent out, but the Brandons are the only ones who have persevered, gone into one of the remotest corners of Brazil and established a good, built on the Bible, work.

Both Mr and Mrs Brandon have won the respect of the people wherever they have lived, endeared themselves through their consecrated self sacrificing lives. I know whereof I speak, the Brandons have been entertained in our home both when they returned from a furlough and later when all of them were seriously ill. We were entertained in their home both in Manaus and also in Para before they settled permanently in the Acre. We came home in December 1936. We both desired to go back after a furlough, but my impaired health and Mr Nelson's age 75 years, according to our Boards rule would not allow him to go back. Still through the insistent call of our Brazilian believers the Board gave consent for Mr Nelson to return for a short term. The Lord called Mr Nelson on high June the 17th 1939, in Manaus, where he was laid to rest where he had served.

Do you wonder that my heart ached when the notice went out that Mr Brandon would not be allowed to return to Brazil, knowing how dear that work was to their hearts? For a long period of time my health prevented my being with Mr Nelson in the tropics. Mr Nelson bravely returned for three terms of service without me. Then the happy day when we both went together in 1928. For over 8 years we had the privilege of traveling and working over this vast territory establishing new churches and encouraging the older ones, seeing the Lord calling out natives to serve in the vineyard.

If Mrs Brandon is unable to go back at present, don't let that keep Brother Brandon from going. He has been tried and knows what he is giving to. The Lord will keep him for His glory and give him daily grace and strength for the work. How often I wish I could have been with my dear husband that last year. We finished 45 years before we came home in 1936. Our second son was in the World War, not wounded, but from the effects was entirely disabled, spent four years with us the last time in Brazil, came home and grew worse, but was with me when Mr Nelson went back alone. Seemed that was my work then. He is now in a Veteran's Hospital in Little Rock Ark. He is a sincere Christian. Your work has my prayers and interest.

Financially a small annuity does not permit much giving, but God can touch the hearts of those who have. May rich blessings be yours.

Sincerely yours

(Signed) Mrs Ida L Nelson