



## **Eduardo Waller & Comp: the emergence of the school furniture industry in São Paulo (1895-1924)<sup>1</sup>**

Eduardo Waller & Comp: a emergência da indústria de mobiliário escolar em São Paulo (1895-1924)

Eduardo Waller & Comp: la emergencia de la industria del mobiliario escolar en São Paulo (1895-1924)

Wiara Rosa Rios Alcântara  
Universidade Federal de São Paulo (Brasil)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0752-8257>  
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/1977977231651168>  
[wrr.alcantara@unifesp.br](mailto:wrr.alcantara@unifesp.br)

### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to deal with the emergence of the school furniture industry in São Paulo. For that, I approach the case of the company Eduardo Waller & Comp. From the analysis of purchase notes, photographs, patent application descriptive memorial and respective design, asset inventories, among others, I discuss the constitution and performance of the company, the manufactured portfolio models and its commercial relations with educational institutions. Tracking down the trail of companies helps to understand a set of economic relations involved in the process of expansion of public, compulsory and mass schools, between the years of 1895 and 1924.

**Keywords:** School industry. School desk. Material culture.

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<sup>1</sup> English version by Wiara Rosa Rios Alcântara. E-mail: [wrr.alcantara@unifesp.br](mailto:wrr.alcantara@unifesp.br).

## Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é tratar da emergência da indústria de mobiliário escolar em São Paulo. Para tanto, abordo o caso da empresa Eduardo Waller & Comp. A partir da análise de notas de compras, fotografias, memorial descritivo de solicitação de patentes e respectivo desenho, inventários de bens, dentre outras, discorro sobre a constituição e atuação da empresa, os modelos de carteiras fabricados e suas relações comerciais com instituições de ensino. Perseguir o rastro das empresas ajuda a compreender um conjunto de relações econômicas implicadas no processo de expansão da escola pública, obrigatória e de massas, entre os anos de 1895 e 1924.

**Palavras-chave:** Indústria escolar. Carteira escolar. Cultura material.

## Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es abordar el surgimiento de la industria del mueble escolar en São Paulo. Para eso me acerco al caso de la empresa Eduardo Waller & Comp. A partir del análisis de notas de compra, fotografías, solicitud de patente memoria descriptiva y diseño respectivo, inventarios de activos, entre otros, se discute la constitución y desempeño de la empresa, los modelos de portafolio fabricado y sus relaciones comerciales con instituciones educativas. Seguir la estela de las empresas ayuda a comprender un conjunto de relaciones económicas involucradas en el proceso de expansión de las escuelas públicas, obligatorias y masivas, entre los años 1895 y 1924.

**Palabras clave:** Industria escolar. Pupitre escolar. Cultura material.

## Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been a significant number of researches that have focused on the material culture of the school. Within the scope of these researches, the most recent are investigations about furniture and school desks. With approximations and distances, studies that take the desk or school furniture as an object have contributed to understanding more about administrative, economic, cultural, hygienic, ergonomic, educational, social and political issues that circumscribed the movement to create and expand public, compulsory and mass schools at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century.

In 2001, the thesis by Josette Peyranne, defended at the Paris V University, starting with furniture from ancient Greece and Rome, going through school furniture from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, analyzes school furniture and space in the 19th and 20th centuries. In 2004, Maria de Fátima Machado's master's dissertation, defended at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Lisbon, focuses on the institutional, medical and pedagogical discourses that shaped the changes made to school desks between the years 1835 and 1970. In Italy, in 2016, Juri Meda publishes the work "Mezzi di educazione di massa: Saggi di storia della cultura materiale della scuola tra XIX e XX secolo". In it, there is a dedicated chapter dealing with the school bench from hygienic and commercial issues.

In Brazil, in 2009, the dissertation by Raquel Castro, defended at the Santa Catarina State University, deals with the relationship between the school desk, the main support for writing, and teaching methods (individual, mutual and simultaneous). In an article published in 2013, Marcus Levy Bencostta discusses the role that some French architects played in the creation of furniture models that favored the health and learning of students in the classroom, in the first half of the 20th century.

In 2014, in a thesis defended at the Faculty of Education of USP, taking the school desk as a thread and vector of relationships, I investigated hygienic, cultural, economic, administrative and legal issues that help to understand how São Paulo organized itself, from the first mandatory school law, to meet the provision of furniture for public schools.

Gustavo Rugoni's master's thesis, defended in 2015 at the University of the State of Santa Catarina, aimed to understand the relationship between a furniture factory and the school market. In 2019, Marlucy Aragão de Sousa investigates the furniture of primary education in Pará, between 1889 and 1930. Also important is the analysis that Juarez dos Anjos (2019) makes of the school proto-industry and school desk-bench, referring to industrial experiences in the production of furniture for schools in Imperial Brazil. In 2020, Gecia Garcia analyzes the processes of acquisition of school furniture for primary public education in Paraná, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

This brief survey doesn't intend to be exhaustive regarding a state of the art, but only to exemplify some perspectives and approaches in the use of furniture and school desks as a source and object in the History of Education. There are, in the previously listed works, some that approach by focusing on hygienic issues, others on the administrative processes of acquisition, and still, those that pay greater attention to the commercial and economic aspects of the production, circulation and consumption of school desks.

Here, the objective of this article is to deal with the emergence of the school furniture industry in São Paulo. Not from the proto-industry that is characterized between artisanal and industrial production of school objects (ANJOS, 2019), but from the company legally constituted by the registration with the Board of Trade and with the use of complex

machines typical of the industrial production process. In this sense, the case of Eduardo Waller & Comp, founded in 1895, is exemplary because the investigations carried out so far indicate that this was probably the first large-scale industry to operate in the manufacture of desks and other school furniture, according to the dictates of the Hygiene and modern pedagogy in the last decade of the 19th century. Pursuing the trail of companies helps to analyze a set of economic relations involved in the process of expansion of public, compulsory and mass schools. For example, the relationship between the public and the private that will have outsourcing as one of the effects.

Outsourcing consists of the practice of transferring to a third party, holder of specialized knowledge, a technology, through a contract, the performance of a certain activity, "object of indirect execution", in view of the principles of efficiency and economy. It is not loaded with all these elements that the term is used here when we refer to the act of the government to hire companies to manufacture or import furniture and school supplies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Such hiring, in the period studied, has to do with the incipient organization of the State to guarantee the main service, the offer of free instruction and compulsory education. The policy of the São Paulo government, especially since the Proclamation of the Republic, was to meet the demand of schools for furniture by contracting private companies.

Thus, the text is organized into three parts. In the first, I discuss aspects of the constitution and performance of the company Eduardo Waller. In the second, I deal with the characteristics of the products manufactured and marketed by the company Eduardo Waller. In the third, I present sources that evidence the acquisition of Waller products by schools in São Paulo.

### **Eduardo Waller & Comp: constitution and performance**

In 1901, Bandeira Junior made a survey of the industries and factories existing in São Paulo at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Among them is the Eduardo Waller & Comp School Furniture Factory. He informs:

In the genre of building tables, chairs, benches and tables for demonstrations, this is the most important that exists in the State. Founded in 1895, at Rua da Consolação, 178, by Eduardo Waller & Comp., not only supplied the material for its manufacture to public and private schools in the State, but also to some in the Federal Capital, Minas Gerais, Bahia and other points in the north of the Republic.

Everything concerning furniture, accessories and ornaments of teaching houses is manufactured there with national materials, with safety and perfection standing out in them; by models and systems almost all privileged by patent letters, such as:

Hygienic school desks, privileged by the federal government with patent n. 2012 of February 12, 1896.

School desk: - Adjustable – Brazil-Paulista and Hygienics – that go up or down according to the student's height.

School desk with table and seats, furniture for one, two and more people.

Blackboards – Hyloplate – imitating natural slate.

Chairs and desks for teachers; for conference rooms, with a table next to it for notes.

Chairs with seats that automatically close, similar to the ones he made for the Sant'Anna theater in this city.

All these furniture are made of national wood and iron, and the inkwells on the tables and desks are also national.

All furniture can be set up with maximum readiness, so you can also replace any unused piece.

The manufacturing limit cannot be determined, because the stock of materials being considerable, the factory works with steam machines, it meets any order, however considerable (BANDEIRA JUNIOR, 1901, p. 31-32, emphasis added).

Considering the embryonic development of commerce, manufacture and industries at the end of the 19th century, a factory to meet the demand of the State, which made requests in large quantities and, with little planning, should have a significant production potential. Founded in 1895, in the city of São Paulo, Eduardo Waller soon ceased to be a local industry and became a national industry that expanded its business and made its products reach other states such as Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and Bahia, as mentioned in the quote above.

As for production, the Waller factory used the same European production technique, that is, the steam machine, which favored large-scale production in a short period of time. Thus, it could fulfill “any order, however considerable”. For distribution in schools, including in the interior of the State, there would be no more difficulties, as the furniture “can be assembled with the utmost promptness”.

In addition to Bandeira Junior (1901), João Gualberto de Oliveira, secretary general of the Brazil-Sweden Cultural Center, lawyer, writer and journalist presents other data that detail the performance of Eduardo Waller in Brazil and his company. In 1952, João Gualberto wrote the book *Suecos no Brasil*. Among the biographies is Eduardo Waller. Before narrating the story of “esteemed Nordic figures” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.12), the author makes an “Panorama of Sweden”, explaining, among other points, the economic question of that country. He presents the Swedes as a people skilled in the management of wood. According to him, “a large part of Swedish industry is based on raw materials extracted from its rich and centuries-old forests. The production of wood of different qualities, pulp, cellulose and paper normally reaches 25% of the country's industry” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.23).

Working with wood was also one of Eduardo Waller's specialties. According to Oliveira (1952), born in a rural region of Sweden in 1860, after primary school, Eduardo Waller went to study at the Seminary of Nääs. In this school “were taught linear and geometric design, rough wood cutting for furniture making, rationalized construction of domestic furniture, in addition to rugs and other handicrafts” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.104-105). He completes “crafts, a course that the Swedes call 'slöjd', and which includes the most varied manual work” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.104-105). So he became the owner of a carpentry shop. It is to develop this profession that he comes to Brazil.

According to Oliveira (1952), he came at the invitation of a Brazilian, a paulista named Inácio de Mendonça Uchoa. Traveling through Scandinavia, the Brazilian gets to know Eduardo Waller's furniture and hired him as a master for his large sawmill in the capital of the Province” – *Serraria e Fábrica de Móveis São José*.

Oliveira (1952) states that, despite his success at work, the Swede had annoyances and prejudices because of the name, because it was long and difficult for Brazilians. Therefore, with the permission of the Government of Sweden, which “had decided to allow their children the free adoption of a different, clearer, easier to distinguish name, in place of the very vulgar

Gustavson, Abrahamson, Anderson, etc.” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.107), the carpenter changed his name. His name was Andreas Edvard Petterson. ““Eduardo eliminated Andreas, translated Edvard into Portuguese and chose the surname Waller. From then on he became, and forever, Eduardo Waller. It was under this name that São Paulo met, esteemed and admired him” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.107-108).

He arrived in Brazil in 1888 and, in 1890, “began his work as a teacher. He brought to us the Swedish wonder that is the 'slöjd' (pronounce it slويد)” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.108). From 1890 to 1905 he taught at the American School. “He transmitted to the young people of São Paulo the old technique of working wood, that is, of transforming the raw wood into the furniture that adorns and provides comfort to our homes” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.108). Classes for external and internal students “were given at Rua Maria Antônia, in a wooden building, a mixture of classrooms and housing” (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.108). In this same region, on Rua da Consolação, he founded in 1896 a “small school furniture factory”. Finally, João Gualberto de Oliveira (1952, p.108) informs that Eduardo Waller

He was a craftsman par excellence, with a lot of ingenuity and a lot of art [...] Eduardo Waller, as a teacher, artist, technician, constantly improved his production. We owe him the creation of an original type of school desk, which he named “Brazil”. And the “Adjustable”, adjustable to the height and physical conformation of the student. This material, in the various national and foreign fairs in which it was exhibited, was awarded the highest distinctions. And with justifiable reasons, as it represented a great and admirable innovation in the pedagogy of that time.

In addition to the owner of a school furniture factory, Eduardo Waller developed several other economic activities in the promising São Paulo. In the Almanak Administrativo, Mercantil e Industrial do Rio de Janeiro (1908, p. 1519) he appears as a doctor, working at Rua da Consolação, 178. It is not only stated that Eduardo Waller is a doctor, but that this activity is developed by Eduardo Waller & Comp. At the National Exhibition of 1908, the Administrative, Commercial and Industrial Almanak of Rio de Janeiro (1909, p.2374) announced him as a participant in the eleventh group, common and luxury furniture, billiards. Together with the Lyceum of Arts and Crafts he received “Grand Prizes” (Almanak, 1909, p.2374).

Among the furniture manufacturers and dealers is Eduardo Waller & Comp. Considering the important role that doctors played in the discussion of urban and bodily hygiene at the end of the 19th century, it is not surprising that a doctor would have knowledge of hygienic standards for the manufacture of school desks and furniture. Which even allowed him to invent furniture.

However, in addition to being a doctor and furniture dealer, Eduardo Waller was also vice-consul of Sweden in São Paulo, working at Rua Maranhão, 1. This activity, however, appears only later in 1917 (Almanak, 1917, p.4401) and appears until 1923 (Almanak, 1923, p.681). One of the functions of the consul is to promote trade between his State of origin and the place where he resides. Citing Vanessa Bivar, Carina Pedro (2010, p.37) clarifies that

one of the objectives of consuls and consular agents was to inform their country about the opportunities for growth of trade in the cities where they were installed [...] this communication was made by reports and letters addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France.

If the consul was a guy who knew good business opportunities, Eduardo Waller's option to dedicate himself to the trade of school furniture means that this was a profitable business at the time, especially in a state with urban and population expansion like São Paulo.

Owner of a factory of considerable size for the period, the intimacy with commerce would not lack for this businessman. But who would be the partner or partners who signed a company with Eduardo Waller? "All commercial acts performed by foreigners residing in Brazil will be regulated and decided by the provisions" of the Commercial Code of 1850 (LAW 556, of JUNE 25, 1850, article 30).

Not having located the Commercial Registry of this Company neither in the Commercial Registry of the State of São Paulo (JUCESP), nor in the Commercial Registry of Rio de Janeiro, it was not possible to identify the partners and the capital stock of the company. However, other information can be obtained from the company or commercial name. Eduardo Waller & Comp. operates under a corporate name and not a denomination.

While the denomination is formed by a fantasy name, the firm or corporate name is formed by the name of one of the partners, some of them or all of them. In the absence of the name of one of the partners, the expression "& Companhia", or abbreviated, "& Cia", is added. Similar expressions can be used such as "& Sons", "& Brothers". The name of the society is closely related to the type or social form. Operating under a firm, Eduardo Waller & Comp could be a Societies in collective name or a Limited partnership.

In the first case, all partners should be individuals who are jointly and unlimitedly liable for social obligations. In the second, there are two types of partners, the general partners and the limited partners. The first should be individuals who will be jointly and unlimitedly liable for the obligations of society; the limited partners could be individuals or legal entities with the responsibility of paying in the share capital they subscribed. Most likely, the School Furniture Factory was a company in collective name. However, as they do not appear in the firm or corporate name, the difficulty of identifying the other partners persists.

Despite this, it was possible to find other information about the products manufactured and marketed by the company.

### **Eduardo Waller & Comp: produtos e patentes**

The Eduardo Waller company manufactured a variety of school desk models and obtained industrial invention protection, a patent, for at least one of them. The company manufactured a desk with a table and seats, furniture for one, two and more people. However, the most popular models were the so-called Brazil and Paulista adjustable school desk, in addition to the Hygienicas school desk, a model patented in 1896.

A model of Eduardo Waller & Comp's school desk can be seen on the website of the Mário Covas Education Reference Center, where you can also read:

School furniture manufactured in the city of São Paulo, by Eduardo Waller & C., established in 1896 at Rua Maria Antonia, close to the American School (now Mackenzie University), where Eduardo Waller was a manual labor teacher. Until at least 1911, Brazil was spelled with Z, hence the inscription on the school desk, whose date we can say is prior to that time. Wood and Cast Iron, Ed. Waller & C., 1900<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See in this regard: Mário Covas Education Reference Center - [http://www.crmariocovas.sp.gov.br/txt\\_html/mem/obj/obj\\_a/f08\\_04.html](http://www.crmariocovas.sp.gov.br/txt_html/mem/obj/obj_a/f08_04.html).

**Figure 1** - Brazil School desk - CRE Mario Covas

Source: CRE Mario Covas

The same school desk can be located at the Memory Center of Faculty of Education (University of Sao Paulo).

**Figure 2 e 3** - Brazil School desk – CMFEUSP

Source: Memory Center of Faculty of Education (University of Sao Paulo).

The observation of the images corroborates the description by Bandeira Junior (1901) when he informs that the furniture was made of wood and iron (national) and that the tables and desks had inkwells. In addition to these features, the Brazil school desk should be bolted to the floor. This can be visualized in the image by photographic reproduction of the Memory Center. In the case of the CRE Mário Covas image, the piece of wood that would have allowed the school desk to be screwed to the floor was no longer part of the piece. It is curious to observe that the piece is made by a Swedish immigrant, is called Brazil school desk and presents the standard model of American school desks, made of wood and cast iron. This model turned the product into an idea (ALCÂNTARA, 2020).

E. Waller & Comp. not only manufactured, but created its own school desks models, having obtained patents for two of them. If the company was not owned by Brazilians and sold to the government and to Brazilian schools, it was important to emphasize that its products were



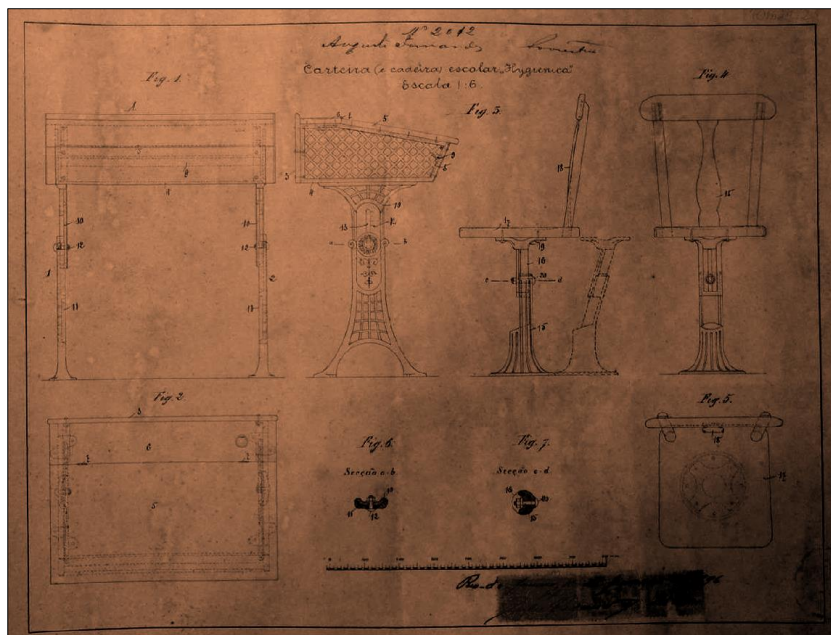
made “with national materials”, “all these furniture are made of national wood and iron, and the inkwells of tables and desks are also national”. In addition, it had the latest technology in the field - the steam machine, which guaranteed speed, greater production in less time, mass production to meet “any order however considerable”.

Among the school desks manufactured by this industry, the best known and most popular was the Brazil school desk. However, on February 10, 1896, the manufacturer applied for a patent in favor of another product, the Hygienica School desk. The furniture was registered under number 2894 and patent 2012. Invention of doctor Eduardo Waller, it was an “Improved System of School Desk and Chair”.

According to the descriptive memorial of the patent application, “the invention consists of a new arrangement of a school desk and a competent chair, which I named 'Hygienica School desk (and chair)', these two parts being combined to allow raising or lowering, according to the height of the students who must occupy them”<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning of the descriptive memorial, Eduardo Waller shows that the furniture he perfected can be adapted to students of different heights. The figure below shows that “the school desk consists of a box A [figures 1 and 2] supported by two lateral feet 1 and 2 forming pedestals and fixed to the floor” (figures 1 and 3).

**Figure 4** – Hygiênica School desk - Technical drawing attached to the Descriptive Memorandum



**Source:** National Archives, Industrial Privileges/Notation: PI 1624

The box is “preferably made of national wood” and the sides are made of cast iron and fixed to the floor. The use of screws and hinges made it possible to “adjust the pedestal to the proper length to support the school desk at a convenient height for the student”<sup>4</sup>. The screw makes up the functioning of the hinges and mechanisms that not only provide

<sup>3</sup> Fonte: ARQUIVO NACIONAL. Fundo/Coleção: Privilégios Industriais (PI) –Notação: PI 1624.Memorial descritivo da Carteira Escolar Hygienica de Eduardo Waller e Comp.

<sup>4</sup> Fonte: ARQUIVO NACIONAL. Fundo/Coleção: Privilégios Industriais (PI) – Notação: PI 1624. Memorial descritivo da Carteira Escolar Hygienica de Eduardo Waller e Comp.

movement to the object, but also the gradation of height to adapt the furniture to the height of the student. The screw and hinges were fundamental technical inventions for the realization of this hygienic precept. The screw is a prominent item by industrialists in many school furniture catalogs (ALCÂNTARA, 2014). This is because it allows the mounting and dismantling of furniture, facilitating transport and freight, as well as adapting the same desk/chair to students of different heights.

The component also makes the school desk practical for anyone who wants to purchase it, because “all parts of the school desk are joined with simple screws, [...] dismantled for transport, and mounted by any worker”<sup>5</sup>.

In the case of this desk, it was intended to be hygienic not only in relation to the student’s body, but also with regard to the organization of the classroom: “The desk covers can be made so that they can slide forward, thus allowing the regulation of the the space between the chairs and the covers or tables of the desks”<sup>6</sup>.

The desk was manufactured in three models, which were sufficient to adjust to any height of the student.

Through the use of the desks and chairs of my invention, the composition of the school furniture is very simplified and used, since it is enough to adopt the three different models only in the sizes according to which I build these furniture, to supply the benches-school desks with great advantages currently used and built in fourteen sizes to match the different heights of students<sup>7</sup>.

This was a great advantage over other types of desks adaptable to the height of the student, which had a model for each student height.

In summary, I claim as constitutive points and characters of the invention: In an “Improved School Desk and Chair System called Hygienica”:

1<sup>st</sup> A desk and its chair supported separately by extendable pedestals fixed to the floor, in order to be able to freely adjust the height of these two pieces, above the floor, according to convenience;

2<sup>nd</sup> The pedestals of the above claim, each built in two pieces joined by means of a screw at their ends, presenting sliding concave-convex contact faces, and a tear at the end of the upper piece allowing it to slide over the lower one to Easily ascend and descend: Split scales at the edges of the pocket pedestals slots;

3<sup>rd</sup> The school desk box formed on the sides constituting the upper ends of the cast iron pedestals, the boards of this box being attached, exclusively by means of screws, to wings or ribs existing for this purpose on said sides;

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<sup>5</sup> Source: ARQUIVO NACIONAL. Fundo/Coleção: Privilégios Industriais (PI) – Notação: PI 1624. Memorial descritivo da Carteira Escolar Hygienica de Eduardo Waller e Comp.

<sup>6</sup> Source: ARQUIVO NACIONAL. Fundo/Coleção: Privilégios Industriais (PI) – Notação: PI 1624. Memorial descritivo da Carteira Escolar Hygienica de Eduardo Waller e Comp.

<sup>7</sup> Source: ARQUIVO NACIONAL. Fundo/Coleção: Privilégios Industriais (PI) – Notação: PI 1624. Memorial descritivo da Carteira Escolar Hygienica de Eduardo Waller e Comp.

4<sup>th</sup> In the school desk box: the fixed lid, or the lid that opens and closes forming a table, arranged to run alongside the chair or in front of the wallet; the board closing said front with shelf, and the one-piece nickel-plated iron inkwell embedded in the cover of the school desk;  
 5<sup>th</sup> The back or convex backrest of the chair supporting the students' backs;  
 6<sup>th</sup> The pedestal supporting the chair, built with the sliding parts inclined, so that the chair moves away from the desk as it rises;  
 All as described above and represented in the attached drawing for the purposes specified<sup>8</sup>.

The long citation details the inventive elements of what was perhaps the first school desk with hygienic and ergonomic features in Brazil. It had an adjustable height, a convex backrest for back support, and inclined sliding parts for the chair to move away as the student stood up. We did not find any document with a request for this piece of furniture by the public administration. Its characteristics (adjustable height, use of cast iron, inkwell, hygienic curves in the seat and back) make it believe that it was a school desk with considerable value.

### **Eduardo Waller: relationships with educational institutions**

Among all the school furniture industries that sell to the São Paulo public administration, the largest, at least according to what the sources located so far, is Eduardo Waller & Comp. This is attested by Bandeira Junior when he says that, in the genre, “this is the most important in the State”.

Regarding the relationship between Eduardo Waller's factory and public education, João Gualberto de Oliveira (1952, p.108) asserts:

Public education, especially primary education, with the advent of the Republic had taken new directions and increased in our land. School groups appeared in the neighborhoods, in the cities of the interior. And Eduardo Waller was the one who supplied the furniture for the classes. The material he used was of the first order and corresponded to the new educational spirit. Therefore, his name became accepted from north to south of Brazil, to the point that, in 1908, the Swedish industrialist acquired a vast land on Rua Antônia de Queirós, former number 65, in the neighborhood of Consolação, and transferred there your workshop. In these new facilities, it had sixty workers at its service.

Oliveira's reports (1952) corroborate the understanding that this is a national company that did business with educational institutions in different regions of the country. More than that, the author informs that the industrialist participated in national and international fairs.

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<sup>8</sup> Fonte: ARQUIVO NACIONAL. Fundo/Coleção: Privilégios Industriais (PI) – Notação: PI 1624. Memorial descritivo da Carteira Escholar Hygienica de Eduardo Waller e Comp.

We owe him the creation of an original type of school desk, which he named 'Brasil'. And the 'Adjustable', adjustable to the height and physical conformation of the student. This material, in the various national and foreign fairs in which it was exhibited, was awarded the highest distinctions. And with justifiable reasons, as it represented a great and admirable innovation in the pedagogy of that time (OLIVEIRA, 1952, p.108).

So far, the sale of Waller products in other countries has not been identified, which leads to the fact that it is still treated as a national company. Considering this, we will demonstrate at this point that E. Waller's goods were largely acquired by educational institutions in São Paulo.

The Waller and American school desks appear in significant quantities in the inventories of goods at Normal School of Brás and Caetano de Campos Normal School. In the General Inventory Book of school supplies, furniture and utensils of the Caetano de Campos Normal School, with records from 1895 and 1896, there is the following list:

**Tableau 1** - Inventories of the Caetano de Campos Normal School

CAETANO DE CAMPOS NORMAL SCHOOL	
YEAR	
1895	1896
363 american school desks	48 Austrian chairs, yellow, rattan seat
355 american school benches	120 armchairs, varnished, that serve in the noble hall
120 american chairs who serves in the noble hall	82 american chairs, yellow, rattan seat
120 american chairs of arm that serve in the amphitheater	5 armchairs, with black cinnamon and Moroccan seat
11 american desks for teachers	2 rocking chairs, austrian
11 american chairs of spring and rattan	4 upholstered chairs, with Moroccan seat
5 broken school desks	4 black chairs with leather seats from Russia
8 broken school benches	1 spring chair with rattan seat and back
3 black waxed cinnamon school desk, with grids, for clerks	3 black cinnamon school desk, with bars, for clerks
3 chairs with leather seat and back from Russia	30 benches with iron feet, model 550
2 rocking chairs, austrian	
48 yellow varnished austrian chairs	
51 american chairs varnished in yellow	
3 Moroccan upholstered armchairs	
1 spring chair austrian	
28 garden benches, model 550	

**Source:** Author's elaboration based on School Goods Inventories.

In the Inventory Book of Normal School of Brás, with records from 1913 and 1924, there are many Waller school desks, as shown in the table below:

**Tableau 2** - Inventories of Normal School of Brás

<b>NORMAL SCHOOL OF BRÁS</b>	
<b>YEAR</b>	
<b>1913</b>	<b>1924</b>
1 swivel chair in the Director's Office	1 swivel chair in the Director's Office
4 austrian chairs in the secretariat	1 swivel chair in the Vice-Director's Office
1 swivel chair in the lobby	6 austrian chairs in the secretariat
9 swivel chairs in the lobby	2 swivel chair in the secretariat
9 wooden benches with iron legs in the hallway	10 austrian chairs in the library
11 austrian chairs in the classroom VI	3 chairs in the library
1 armchair in the classroom VI	1 swivel chair in the library
12 chairs with Moroccan backrest in the Salon n.1	2 stools and a bench in the library
15 austrian armchairs in the Salon n.1	59 wooden benches in the "yard"
90 chairs stuck in the Salon n.1	2 chairs in the archive
4 austrian chairs in the Salon n.1	201 austrian chairs in the Salon
1 swivel chair in the classroom II	35 armchair in the Salon
8 austrian chairs in the classroom II	7 armchairs with Moroccan backrest in the Salon
45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom II	2 easychairs in the teachers' office
45 simple benches Waller in the classroom II	1 austrian chair in the teachers' office
1 swivel chair in the classroom III	1 wicker chair for teacher in the teachers' office
1 austrian chair in the classroom III	1 swivel chair in the lobby
45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom III	6 austrian chairs in the lobby
45 simple benches Waller in the classroom III	1 american chair for dentist in the Dental Office
1 swivel chair in the classroom IV	1 austrian chair in the Dental Office
1 austrian chair in the classroom IV	1 austrian chair with arms in the gymnastic room
45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom IV	6 chairs in the halls
45 simple benches Waller in the classroom IV	13 wooden benches in the storage room
1 swivel chair in the classroom V	15 school desks in the storage room
1 austrian chair in the classroom V	1 austrian chair with arms in the classroom I
35 simple school desks Waller in the classroom V	2 austrian chairs in the classroom I
35 simple benches Waller in the classroom V	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom I
1 swivel chair in the classroom VIII	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom I
1 austrian chair in the classroom VIII	1 austrian chair in the classroom III
35 simple school desks Waller in the classroom VIII	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom IV
35 simple benches Waller in the classroom VIII	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom IV
1 swivel chair in the classroom IX	1 easychair in the classroom IV
45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom IX	1 easychair in the classroom V
45 simple benches Waller in the classroom IX	1 austrian chair in the classroom V
1 swivel chair in the classroom X	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom V
35 simple school desks Waller in the classroom X	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom V
<b>1913</b>	<b>1924</b>
35 simple benches Waller in the classroom X	13 chairs in the classroom VII
1 swivel chair in the classroom XI	1 austrian chair with arms in the classroom VIII
1 austrian chair in the classroom XI	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom VIII
45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XI	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom VIII
45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XI	3 austrian chairs (one with arms) in the classroom IX
11 austrian easychairs in the classroom XII	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom IX
95 austrian chairs in the classroom XII	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom IX

1 swivel chair in the classroom XIII	4 austrian chairs (one with arms) in the classroom X
1 austrian chairs in the classroom XIII	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom X
45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XIII	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom X
45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XIII	4 austrian chairs (one with arms) in the classroom XI
1 swivel chair in the classroom XVI	46 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XI
1 austrian chairs in the classroom XVI	46 simple benches Waller in the classroom XI
35 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XVI	2 austrian chairs (one with arms) in the classroom XII
35 simple benches Waller in the classroom XVI	1 chair in the classroom XIII
5 simple school desks Waller in the archive	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XV
1 simple school desk Waller in the archive	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XV
2 simple benches Waller in the archive	1 swivel chair in the classroom XV
5 simple benches Waller in the archive	2 chairs in the classroom XV
2 austrian chairs in the archive	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XVI
30 boards for school desk in the archive	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XVI
3 austrian chairs in the kitchen	1 swivel chair in the classroom XVI
	2 austrian chairs in the classroom XVI
	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XVII
	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XVII
	1 simple benches Waller in the classroom XVII
	2 austrian chairs in the classroom XVII
	35 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XVIII
	35 simple benches Waller in the classroom XVIII
	1 swivel chair in the classroom XVIII
	2 chairs in the classroom XVIII
	35 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XXI
	35 simple benches Waller in the classroom XXI
	1 swivel chair in the classroom XXI
	2 chairs in the classroom XXI
	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XXII
	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XXII
	1 swivel chair in the classroom XXII
	2 chairs in the classroom XXII
	45 simple school desks Waller in the classroom XXIV
	45 simple benches Waller in the classroom XXIV
	1 swivel chair in the classroom XXIV
	2 chairs in the classroom XXIV
	1 armchair at the Physics and Chemistry Laboratory
	2 simple chairs in the Physics and Chemistry Laboratory
	2 chairs in the anatomy room

**Source:** Author's elaboration based on School Goods Inventories.

In the inventories, the preponderance of American and Waller school desks can be seen, among the types of benches, chairs and school desks described. The inventory of Caetano de Campos Normal School, from the year 1895, was prepared considering the total number of American school desks and benches that the institution had.

The inventories of Normal School of Brás mention how many Waller school desks occupied some rooms in the school. This form of organization allows us to suppose that the spaces with 35 or 45 school desks and simple benches Waller were intended for classrooms and that these were probably the number of students that formed a class. This is the case of classrooms III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIII and XVI according to the 1913 inventory. The 1924 inventory signals the reorganization of the use of school spaces. The Rooms I, XV, XVII, XVIII, XXI, XXII and XXIV become a classroom.

It is likely that the Brazil school desk was not part of the furniture collection of the Normal School of Brás. As can be seen in the inventories, where there is a description of 45 simple school desks Waller, the same simple benches Waller number follows. This means that the furniture described in the 1913 and 1924 inventories did not have a seat integrated into the desk, as seen in the Brazil school desk.

In addition to normal schools, the Polytechnic School of São Paulo also consumed Eduardo Waller products. Between February 1898 and October 1899, the Eduardo Waller company supplied a set of products to the Polytechnic School of São Paulo. The products purchased were a blackboard with easel (1), compass (5), ruler with scale (5), squares (3), dresser (1), cabinet (1).

**Figure 5** - Purchase note from Polytechnic School



**Source:** Historical Archive of the Polytechnic School of São Paulo.

The documentation located in the Historical Archive of the Polytechnic School of São Paulo is the only one, so far, that contained Eduardo Waller's purchase notes, allowing to know more about how the company presented itself to its customers, as well as about the products that stood out and advertised.

You can find out more about some of the company's specifications in the purchase note. The main activity is to be a furniture and school supplies factory. Among the products it manufactured and/or supplied, the note includes the "blackboard 'Hyloplate', lockers and desks of the American school type". The emphasis, however, is given to the "Hygienica school desk and chair", a product illustrated in the note. This illustration highlights the prominent place of this product in the company's activity, as well as the potential that the school desk had to leverage business activity and profitability. As already mentioned, it was located at Rua da Consolação, number 178, in the city of São Paulo. The company also

informs customers of the possibility of making "budgets for the complete installation of schools by the American System".

Treat Eduardo Waller & Comp. as a national company is a classification that relates more to its commercial reach and less to aspects of constitution and functioning. In any case, it is important to emphasize that the classification of a company as national does not mean that it is isolated from discussions that took place in and between different countries. To cite an example, E. Waller, not by chance, frequently uses the advertising of school desks and furniture "type of American schools" or "American systema".

Despite minor variations, the "American type" school desk was made with a cast iron base, wooden seat and table. They also had an inkwell and a drawer to store books or student material, as can be seen on the Brazil school desk. The transnationalization of this design contributed to the fact that this school desk model ceased to characterize a commodity, a specific product, and began to circulate as a hegemonic idea of a school desk.

In other words, there is a displacement between a model and a specific product. Thus, it can be said that, within the scope of the transnationalization of the school desk, the wood and cast iron model came to designate more than one product. It became a concept, an idea that crossed borders.

### **Last remarks**

Addressing the emergence of the school furniture industry means circumscribing, within an Economic History, aspects that help to think about the expansion of public, compulsory and mass schools. However, it is worth noting that the analyzes developed here used a perspective of Economic History that is not limited to monetary or market issues.

Although it contributes to the elaboration of a history of companies, the interest here is not to analyze processes of business accumulation. It is interesting to highlight, through the analysis of the constitution and performance of companies, as well as the goods they sell, the possibilities of supplying furniture to public schools in São Paulo in an initial period of expansion of the public school.

This requires a perspective of Economic History that considers exogenous and endogenous factors to the economy (BARROS, 2008), but that also pays attention to elements that, in principle, are not monetary or market. This means adjusting the lens to perceive the symbolic aspects of the performance of companies and the products they sell, as defended by Peter Burke (2005). The symbolic aspects of the performance of the school industry have to do, for example, with the use of medical-hygienic dictates in the creation of school desk models, on the understanding that it would meet a cultural representation that circulated in the period about models and ideal design of school furniture.

It is in this sense that the reproduction of the image of the Hygienica school desk in the purchase note of Eduardo Waller company's cannot be interpreted only as a purely commercial matter of market and advertising. There are clear cultural and symbolic elements that cross the commercial options for the company that manufactures and the economic, administrative, political and educational options for the State and the school they consume.

Hence the relevance of, as Witold Kula (1977) insists, dealing with research problems in their entirety, even if one recognizes the distinct traits of material culture and economic history, for example. Thus, in agreement with Barros (2008), here we operated with the understanding that there is no economic fact apart from other factors. "Economic facts are often intertwined with political, social, cultural, institutional facts, or even linked to mentalities" (BARROS, 2008, p.26). This interdisciplinary vision has allowed us to perceive the constitution of a culture, since the last decades of the 19th century, in the modes of material provision of the school that is not disconnected from the model itself and the nature of the modern school. In other words, a school for the masses whose means of supply are strictly linked to the modes of mass production.



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