Ribeirão Preto

The area where the Ribeirão Preto campus of the University of São Paulo is now located was the home of one of the largest coffee farms of the region justly called the “Coffee Capital” during the mid-1800’s in which coffee was the principal export product of Brazil. Many of the buildings constructed in that era, true forts, remain as a reminder of those days of glory. Several of them, although conserved in the old style of the Coffee Era, have been adapted to the necessities of the University Campus in which now function several Departments of the School of Medicine. Others were transformed into museums.

There are, in fact, two museums on the Ribeirão Preto campus:

1. The “Plínio Travassos dos Santos” Municipal Museum in which collections of historic pieces from this region, the State of São Paulo, and from Brazil can be seen, besides precious stones from various regions of Brazil, native pieces, clocks and watches of various eras, renowned paintings, colonial furniture of solid wood, antique household items such as irons, coffee grinders, sewing machines, rustic and primitive barber and dental chairs, and even a Carrara marble bathtub. There are also specimens of animals of the Brazilian fauna, including an ample collection of insects, especially scorpions and other arachnids besides numerous bugs of the genus Triatoma (the cone-nosed bugs), the transmitters of Chagas Disease.
This museum was founded May 28, 1950 by the historian Professor Plínio Travassos dos Santos and was installed in the central building of the Monte Alegre Farm, the producer of the best coffee in this region. Ancient trees surround this building of more than 100 years, with aquariums and ornamental plants making this museum a pleasant place for visitors.

2. The “Coronel Francisco Schmidt” Coffee Museum was founded January 20, 1955 in the area of the Historical Museum called the Botanical Garden of the Museums. It is a museum of the era when coffee was the chief product of exportation of this region (today, substituted by sugar cane and oranges). One can see almost everything which can possibly relate to coffee, rustic plows used by slaves, wooden cars pulled by bulls, a carriage owned by Colonel Francisco Schmidt (for whom the museum is named), besides rustic looms, pestles for rice and coffee, scales, tables for coffee classification, a collection of coffee cups, manual coffee grinders, baskets, a primitive tree trunk where slaves were tied for beating, and samples of various types of coffee (Common, Silver, Bourbon). There are busts of the 3 “Coffee Kings”, all powerful landowners of that time: Henrique Dumont, Francisco Schmidt, Jeremias Lunardelli, and also of the Portuguese immigrant who introduced coffee to Brazil, Francisco de Mello Palheta.