The Golden Altar of San José Church, one of the most beautiful in the world, fortunately escaped the attack of Morgan's pirates.
school-age children, especially in thinly populated country areas, do not go to school. About one-fourth of the people cannot read or write. The government operates free elementary and high schools and a teachers’ college. The University of Panama, founded in 1935, has a beautiful campus in the city of Panama.

THE ARTS

Panama has a rich folk culture. The people enjoy ballads sung to the accompanying music of violins, guitars and drums, many of which are made at home. They also enjoy such folk dances as the gay, graceful tamborito, in which a man and woman dance together in the middle of a circle.

FOOD

Rice is the chief food in Panama, served either plain or mixed with meat and vegetables. Maize and beans are also important in the diet. The women grind the maize into a paste from which they make tortillas, a type of pancake. Coffee is the chief beverage.

A wide variety of dishes prepared in the Republic are distinctly Panamanian. One is Panama’s traditional soup, sancocho. A meal in itself, it is prepared from stewing chicken, yucca (a palm-like plant of the lily family, having edible fruit), otoe (a local root), corn on the cob, plantains, potatoes and other ingredients. Sopa borracha (literally “drunken soup”) is a rich sponge cake soaked in rum and garnished with raisins and prunes which have been marinated in sherry.

Because of the Republic’s nearness to two oceans, much fish of high quality is used in cooking. Another well-known dish is seviche, usually made with corbina (sea bass) seasoned with tiny red and yellow peppers, paper-thin sliced onions and marinated overnight in lemon juice.

A smiling beauty shows off her prized “montuna,” a party gown worn by many girls at church celebrations such as the Festival of the Black Christ in Portobelo. The montuna is preferred by many rural girls to the more elaborate and expensive pollera.

This little skeleton, made of gold, dates from the period before Columbus sailed from Spain.
Fishing craft are hauled up on the beach for repairs. Because their country is a narrow isthmus between two oceans, the sea is an important factor in the lives of most Panamanians.

5. ECONOMY

Agriculture, stock raising and fishing provide a living for about 55 of every 100 Panamanians. About 38 of every 100 work in such fields as business, manufacturing, public administration, transportation and communication. The Panama Canal is the most important factor in the Republic's economic life. About seven out of every 100 Panamanians work for the United States government agencies that operate the Canal and govern the Canal Zone. These agencies and the people of the Zone buy many goods and services from Panamanian
Huge banana plantations are common in Chiriquí Province. Here, banana clusters are being wrapped in plastic bags.

Cabbages are another crop grown in the Chiriquí Highlands. Many fruits also grow here, including the huge, delicious, and highly esteemed Boquete strawberry.
businessmen. Panamanian companies also sell food and other supplies to the ships that pass through the Canal.

AGRICULTURE

Most farmers of the Republic cultivate one or two acres of land with simple tools. Since World War II, large landowners have increased production by means of modern farm machinery.

Rice, the chief crop, grows on about 35 of every 100 acres of farm land. Tropical fruits such as mangoes, and bananas grow in the lowlands—Panama ranks high among the banana producing countries. Other important farm products include coconuts, cacao beans (used to make chocolate) and abaca (a fibrous plant used to make rope). Many farmers grow sugar cane, corn, beans, yams, yucca and coffee. They raise livestock for meat, milk and hides.

INDUSTRY

Fishermen catch about 1,800 tons of shrimps a year off the coasts of Panama. Divers gather pearl oysters in the Bay of Panama. Other ocean products include tuna, mackerel, red snappers and sponges.

The sturdy burro, introduced by the Spaniards, is a familiar sight in town and countryside alike.