



**Chaplain Ralph C. Diebert**



**Chaplain F. Herbert Mochtmann**



**Chaplain John T. Axton**



**Chaplain Merle Bergson**

gational clergyman, hailing from a northwest Missouri farm, he so won his way into Albania's life as to be chosen to represent that land at the Versailles Conference following the First World War. He earned other unusual distinctions during a long devoted career. To be under his teaching, even for a few months, meant having one's vision of the scope and possibilities of Foreign Missions service immeasurably broadened.

The Rev. Leon S. De Smidt during his three-year pastorate made a careful on-the-spot study of the San Blas Islanders. In 1944, a year before he left Gatun, he began the writing of his delightful 100-page booklet *Among the San Blas Indians of Panama*. By December 1948 it was ready for sale. Mr. De Smidt was eager that all financial benefits as well as publicity assets should accrue to the San Blas Mission work. He therefore donated his time in research and in authoring the volume and paid \$700 toward publication costs. Thus another permanent contribution was made to the evangelization of the world.

The educational program in no church is complete without an organized channel through which youth may express itself. In the Union Churches this channel was first called "Christian Endeavor," probably because of that organization's non-denominational character. It was organized in Gatun in 1927 by Mrs. W. H. Albin. Always the fortunes of such groups vary in direct ratio to the quality of youthful leadership, the wisdom of



#### The Junior Department, Gatun

Back Row: Mrs. B. B. Gray, Mrs. Wayne Burt, Mrs. L. J. Egolf, Mrs. I. L. Monroe, Mrs. W. G. Fisher, Mrs. W. C. Smith, Rev. J. W. L. Graham, Mr. Wayne Burt, Gene Anderson, Colletta Stiebritz, Elizabeth Munro, Bryan Albright, Mrs. F. R. McDermitt, Jack Pearson, George Egolf.

Second Row: Kathryn Argo, Dorothy Ellis, Barbara Egolf, Nancy Kariger, Lois Scheidegg, John Fisher, John Albright, Mrs. C. C. Clements, Carol George, Sylvia Mann, Roberta Williams, Arline Vandirgritt, Carol Newhard, Mrs. E. W. Cottrell, Dianne McLaren, Dianne Scheidegg.

Third Row: Mrs. Arthur A. Albright, Eddie Lawrence, Floyd McDermitt, Jay Cunningham, Freddie Wilson, Tommy Gibson, Randal Schoonover, Danny George, Barbara Thrift, Delores Gavin, Rachael Radel, Mrs. A. A. Albright, Mr. W. C. Gavin.

Front Row: Lemoine Werlein, Ernest Stiebritz, Bruce Smith, R. Schoonover, William Lawrence, Wendy Cotton, Linda Cunningham, Rosalie Radel, Marjorie Butcher, Grace Argo.

available adult sponsors and the depth of the pastor's interest. So it was in Gatun. After a fine start there was a decline, followed by a definite revival in 1939. The renaissance is credited to the Rev. Donald Clare, then pastor, together with the leadership of Mrs. Fred A. Newhard, sponsor of the Intermediate group, and to Mrs. Arthur R. Lane, who sponsored the Senior group. Currently Mrs. Lawrence W. Chambers is giving effective leadership. In addition to their own programs of education and inspiration the benevolences of these young folk have been above normal.

**The Woman's Auxiliary**

Incongruously there was a Woman's Auxiliary before the existence of a church to which it was to be auxiliary. This

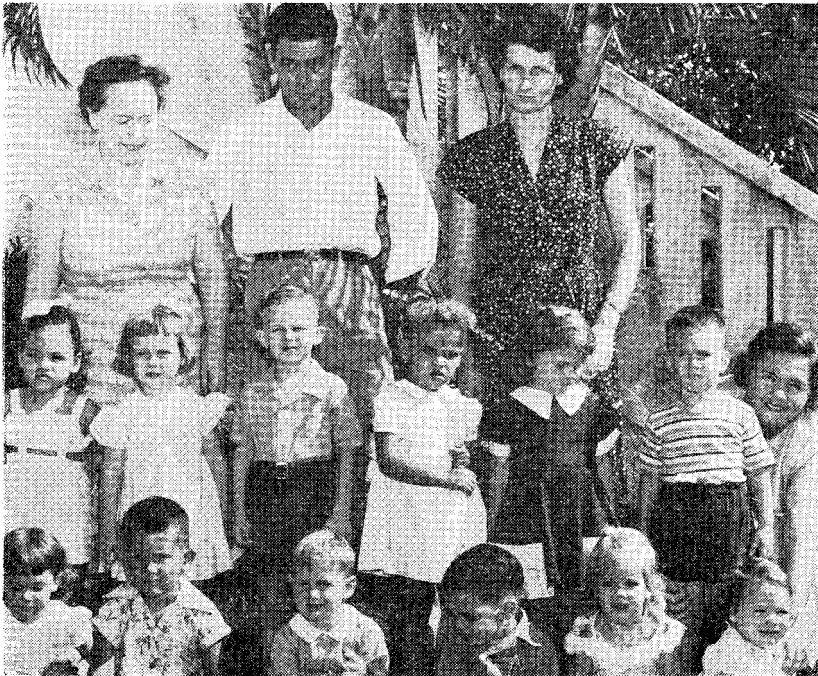


Photo by R. K. Hanna

**A Departmental Group, 1949**

Bottom Row: Marilyn Roth, Jimmie Ebdon, Billy Coman, Orren Clement, Edith Stiebritz and Mary Clement.  
 Second Row: Cheryl Anne Monroe, Linda Lee Beck, Stevie Burt, Jaqueline Aldrich, Billie Bishop, Dennis Dieffenback and Mrs. C. C. Clement.  
 Top Row: Mrs. Norma McLaren, Mr. Ismael Monroe and Mrs. Radel.

was true in the early history of most of the Union Churches. In June of 1916, the Gatun women formed an auxiliary to a church that was not born until the following December. The first officers were Mrs. V. C. Dillon, President; Mrs. E. T. Gilbert, Vice President; Mrs. William T. Kimberly, Treasurer; and Mrs. Carder, Secretary. The activities of that year included the sponsoring of a reception for the church's very first minister, the Rev. John Abels. There were also food sales and a bazaar. The second year saw the purchase of a piano for the church, with a comfortable balance in the treasury.

Our sources of information show a definite rise in missionary interest about 1922. Through the years it continues to find expression in the local Methodist work and the San Blas project. Miss Coope, who initiated the latter work, was heard repeatedly, as were Mr. and Mrs. Iglesias in more recent years. As early as 1927 contributions to the Methodist work in David are recorded.

In comparison with the size of the group the funds raised appear to be enormous. For example, the Auxiliary contributed the \$3,000 to the church building fund. Glancing through a summary of each year's achievements one's attention is cap-

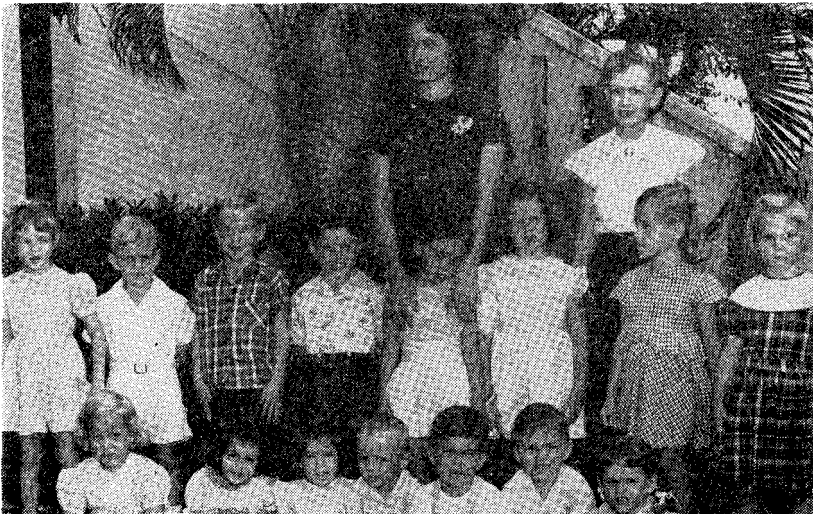


Photo by R. K. Hanna

**The Beginners Department, Gatun, 1949**



### Currently

On October 2, 1949, the Gatun congregation gave a genuine welcome to the Rev. and Mrs. J. William L. Graham. Participating



Photo by R. K. Hanna

#### The Primary Department

Back Row: Janet McLaren, Loretta Newhard, Mae Hallet, Nancy Hawthorne.  
 Next Row: Bryan MacName, Sandra Bishop, Paul Ebdon, Leroy Werline, Elaine Mann, Laura Lou Gavin, Arthur Lawrence, Gilbert O'Sullivan, Linda Smith, Nancy Gibson.  
 Middle Row: Kathleen Asbury, Pamela Thoriot, Judy Hallet, Elizabeth McLaren, Beverly George, Judy Gray, Mickey Cunningham.  
 Front Row: Gordon Monroe, Bobby Pauzer, George Cotton, Bruce Scoggins, Andrea Lee Nash, Billy Thrift, John Hawthorne.

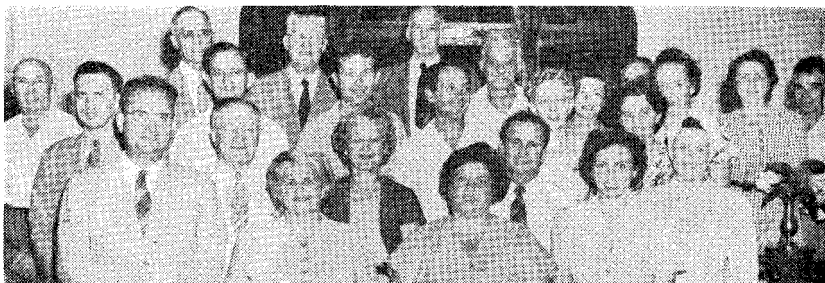


Photo by R. K. Hanna

#### The Local Council, Gatun, 1950

Back Row: Mr. G. B. Owen, Mr. G. D. Poole, Rev. W. L. Graham, Mr. A. R. Lane, Mrs. E. W. Cottrell, Mr. E. W. Cottrell, Mrs. Norman McLaren, Mrs. W. G. Fisher, Mr. M. L. Nash.  
 Second Row: Mr. H. R. Harris, Mr. L. W. Chambers, Mr. W. A. Van Sieten, Mr. C. H. George, Mrs. L. W. Chambers, Mrs. F. R. McDermitt.  
 Third Row: Mr. Burt, Mr. R. R. Gregory, Mrs. J. P. Hawthorne, Mr. C. C. Clements, Mrs. W. E. Zimmerman.  
 Front Row: Mr. E. W. Argo, Mrs. L. J. Egoft, Mrs. F. A. Newhard, Mrs. B. B. Gray.

in the installation service that evening were Mr. A. R. Campbell, President General Council, Mrs. L. J. Egolf, President Gatun Local Council, the Rev. Philip Havener, Cristobal, and Dr. Robert H. Rolofson, Balboa.

An immigrant from his native Nova Scotia, where he received his early education, Mr. Graham was graduated from Bowdoin College and Bangor Theological Seminary with graduate work looking toward a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Boston and Columbia Universities. A Presbyterian by heritage, he is a Congregationalist by affiliation. Prior to their migration to the Canal Zone the Rev. and Mrs. Graham served in Cortland, New York, Newburyport, Massachusetts and Freeport, Maine, and there was a student pastorate in Hampden, Maine. With one of these pastorates covering nearly 15 years the average for the four has been seven years.

A veteran of World War I (Canadian Army), Mr. Graham has given an effective ministry to those in the armed forces. Prior to and after his military service he was Religious Work Director in the Y. M. C. A. at New London, Connecticut. During the second World War he served as chaplain and director in the U. S. O. in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and the nation's capitol. Mrs. Graham, too, is a veteran of World War I, U. S. Navy. Her schools were the George Stevens Academy, Maine, and Simmons College, Boston Massachusetts. She is a native of Blue Hill, Maine. Recognitions given Mr. Graham by his denomination include a place on the Massachusetts State Conference Preaching Mission; chairmanship of the Massachusetts Conference Committee on Polity and Standards for the Ministry; the presidency of the Pilgrim Club (Boston clergymen); choice as a delegate to the International Council meeting in Bournemouth, England; and as a delegate on numerous occasions to state and national Council assemblies. His wide travels have enabled him to be heard in well known pulpits across North America and in the British Isles. Mr. Graham's published writings include articles and poems centering in devotional life.

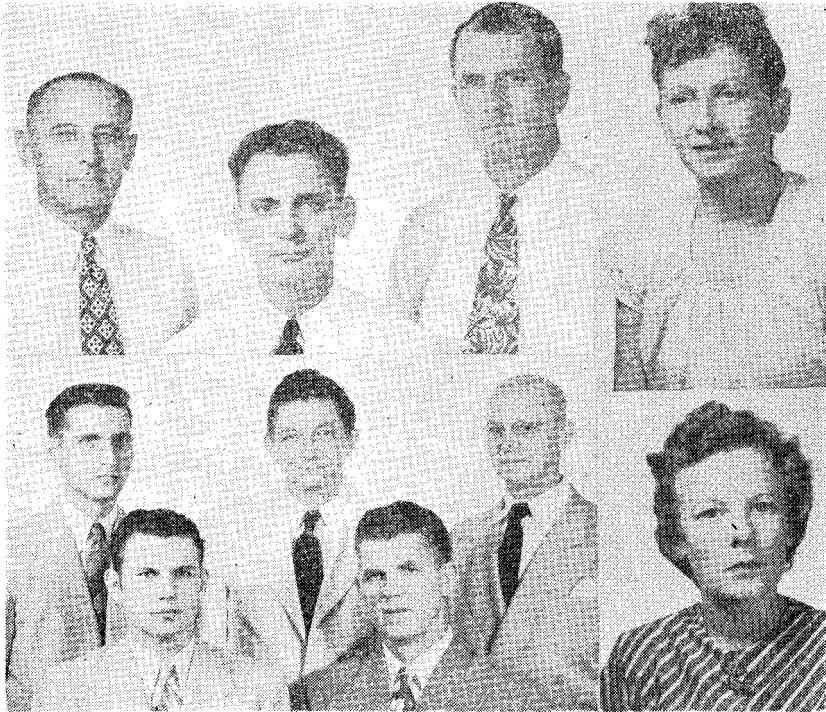
There are three children in the Graham family, Jean, Bates College, 1945; James, Dartmouth College, 1948; and Janet, Mary Washington College, 1950.

## VII. THE PEDRO MIGUEL UNION CHURCH

It is asserted by Coole, in his *Archaeological Study of Central Panama*, that the town of Pedro Miguel (Peter Miachel) gained its name from that of a Spanish army officer, who accompanied one Hernando de Soto on a military mission to the ancient Panamanian village of Nata.

### Pioneering

Construction years saw Pedro Miguel and her sister community, Paraiso, filled with workmen on Canal locks, operating numerous steam shovels which filled scores of long dirt trains, that groaned their way from cuts to fills. The farthest out-



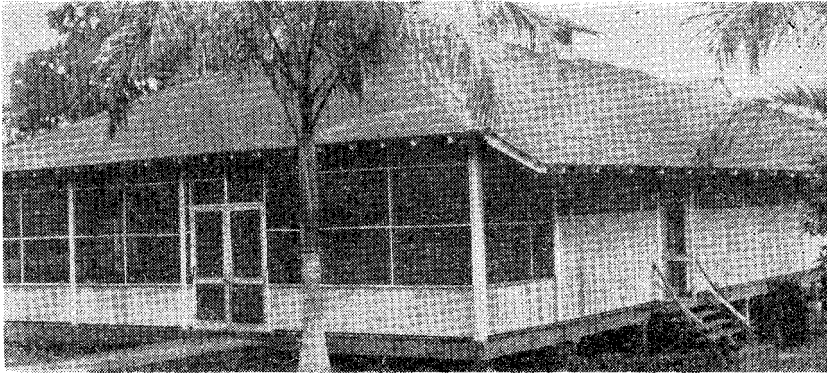
Photographia Charles, Panama

### The Local Council, Pedro Miguel

Bottom Row: James W. Coyer, J. Horace Jones, Mrs. Frances Malone.  
 Second Row: J. Lewis Phillips, Chairman; William Pullen, the Rev. N. L. Davidson, Pastor.  
 Top Row: George Sausel, E. W. Jones, William F. Young, Mrs. Billie Montgomery.



skirts of the new village met the jungle at the now populous hilltop, where stands the Clubhouse. At the foot of this hill, to the right, there lived in thatch huts, a colony of natives. Their colorful costumes and primitive customs provided an unending source of interest to newcomers. When day was done and friends sat swapping reminiscences of their faraway homeland, or recounted the day's experiences, the camp fires of their native neighbors spluttered, not far away, in the darkness, while their voices blended in plaintive song. Memorable was the carnival accent on the Yuletide celebration of the native colony. Early on Christmas eve it began with exuberant song and ceremonial dance. Christmas dawn brought to the American colony these strange friends on stilts. With faces radiating happiness and costumes quite grotesque, they toured the construction town. Some were sufficiently elevated to call their greetings to wide-eyed children, through second-story

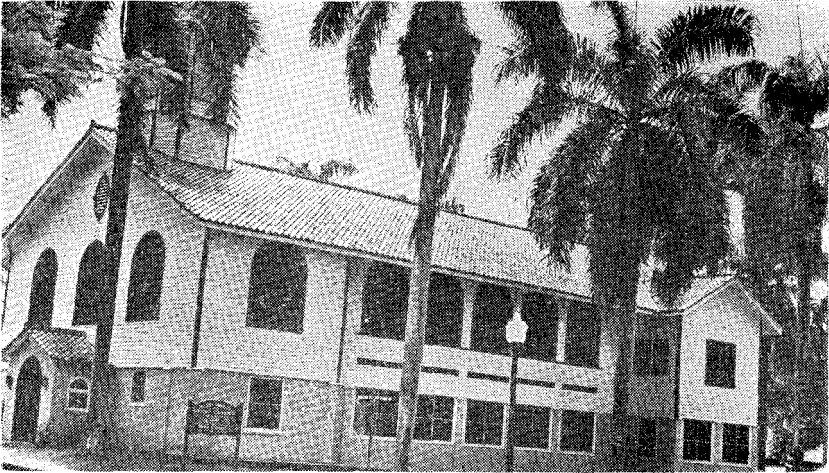


**The Union Church, Pedro Miguel, 1914-1933**

screens. The day ended with a ceremonial slaughter of a wild boar, a tapir, or perhaps a deer. Then, until wee hours, there was wild barbaric dancing, accompanied by the measured staccato of low-toned tom toms, that made their haunting contribution to the incongruity that desecrated the otherwise silent and holy night.

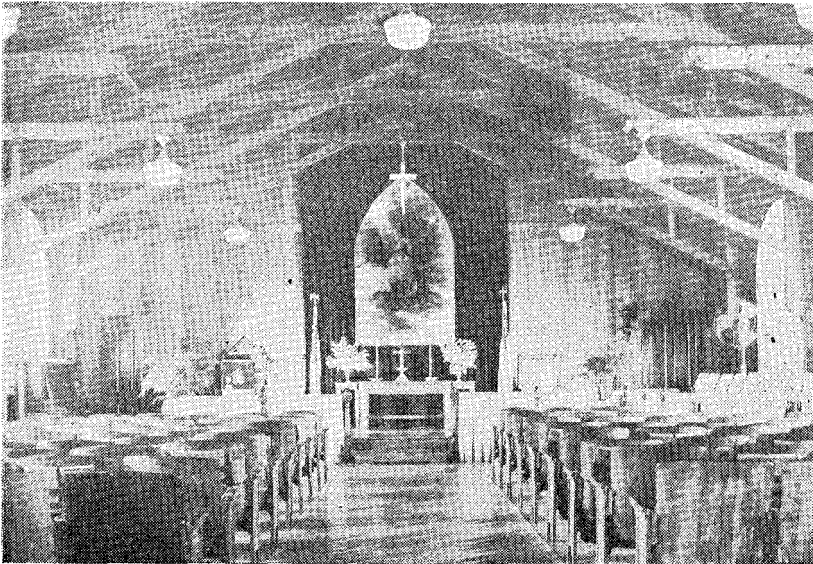
The year 1910, found a union Church School on the second floor of the Isthmian Canal Commission's restaurant. This

awkward Construction era type of shack stood at what is now the junction of Gaillard Highway and Rio Grande street. The school was under the superintendency of Mr. W. H. Faulkner,



**The Union Church, Pedro Miguel**

Photo by Carl Duke



**The Union Church sanctuary, Pedro Miguel**

Photo by Carl Duke

a locomotive engineer. Among his enthusiastic assistants were a son, and a niece, Rhoda Chase. It was in this old building that Christmas was first celebrated in Pedro Miguel by the new arrivals from North America. Mrs. Ella Ewing, still residing in the community, was on the program.

### Sundry Church Homes

Records for this era are almost non-existent. It is established, however, that there was a Church School and preaching services during 1913, in the Government-owned Chapel-Lodge Hall, in nearby Paraiso. Shortly thereafter, this Hall was moved to Pedro Miguel. From 1914 to 1917, the Church was housed in the Pedro Miguel Clubhouse.

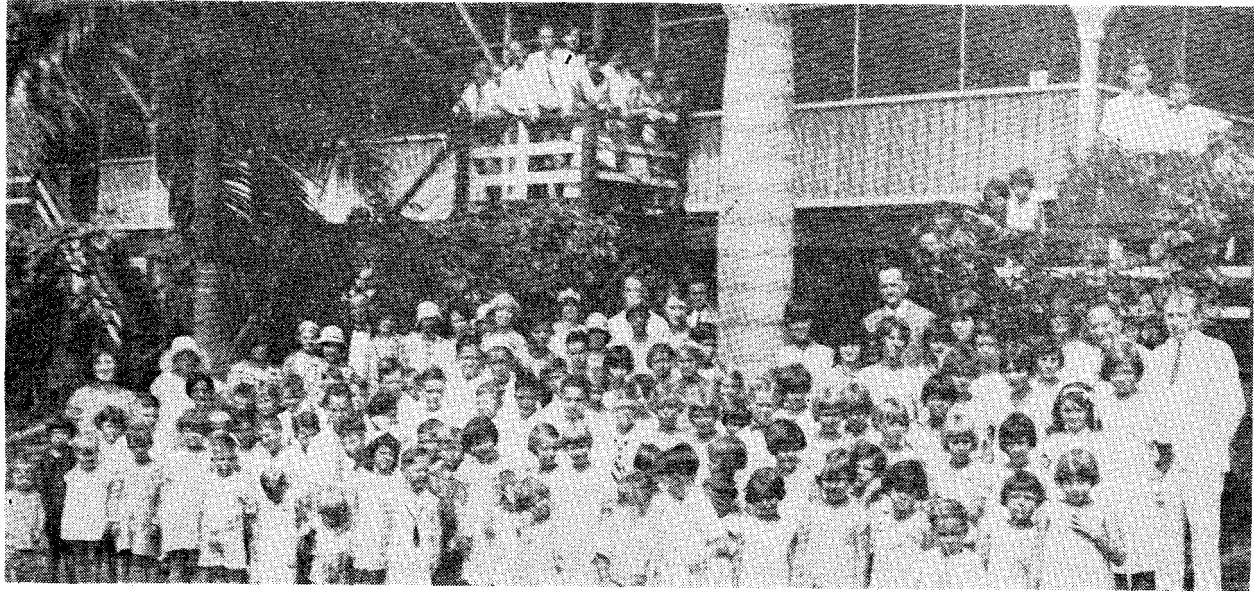
A growing dissatisfaction with these quarters prompted a search for a more private and less noisy home. By December, 1917, an old school building had been purchased at a cost of \$826.75. The facetious but time-honored prediction concerning the pending collapse of certain old wooden structures, if the termites therein quarrelled and quit holding hands, bore a



Photo by Carl Duke

**The Parsonage, Pedro Miguel**, backgrounded by the church building somewhat realistic relationship to this former dispensary of learning. In accordance with an established pattern in early Union Church congregations, the reconditioning of this building was done largely by volunteer craftsmen, within the membership.

The neat and comfortable edifice that currently houses the



**The Church School, Pedro Miguel, in the late twenties**

The identification of all persons was not possible. There was in picture, however, the Rev. Alfred Carpenter; teachers, Mrs. Joe Orr, Mrs. Ducey, Mrs. Clarence Hurst, Mrs. Jack Evans, Mrs. J. H. Bryant, Mrs. J. C. Wimmer, Supt., Mrs. Peggy Ellis, Miss Minnie Keenen, and Mrs. F. C. Bryan. Other persons in the group were: Constance Barnard, Margaret Cauthers, Paul Barnard, Dick Couthers, Jimmy Etchberger, Neilson Etchberger, Mae Parsons, Frank Gerchow, Jr., Jimmy Wainie, Alice Wainie, Fred Ryan, Jr., Patsy Ryan, Francis Crowell, Katherine Crowell, Peggy, Betty and Martha Bradley, Nancy Hurst, Steve Green, Jimmy Green, Peggy Bryan, Muriel Evans, Norma Evans, Barbara Evans, Jane Tompkins, Fern Morgan, Jean Morgan, Laura Morgan, Patsy Boggs, Roy Boggs, Beverly Boggs, Adela Snediker, Audrey Metz, Mary Louise January, Tom Haliday, Lillian Holiday, Bob Haliday, Doris Hutchinson, Ruth Hutchinson, Marion Hutchinson, Patsy Kent, Lloyd Kent, Alberta Meda, Emily Mead, Elmer Orr, Joe Orr, Viola Dewey, Charlotte Wahl, Lea Moreland, Annie May Sampsell, Wilhelmina Fransen, Mattis Orr, Elsie Sanger, Roselma Ducey, Sam Mattowsky, Veyner Sanger, Wilma Wickens, Theron Wickins, Buddie Wahl.

congregation was dedicated on January 8, 1939, under direction of the Rev. Roy B. Guild of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Much credit is accorded Mr. J. C. Myrick, locks Superintendent, for his leadership in initiating and fostering the construction of this building. The church parsonage is said to have been acquired in 1920, at the amazing low figure of \$476.00. Further reference is made to the church edifice, in Book II, of this volume.

### Some Pioneers

Following are the names of a few of the more active pioneers, as gleaned from meagre records and some memories:



**The Woman's Auxiliary, Pedro Miguel—1949.**

Mrs. Mary Kate Underwood, Mrs. Doris Young, Mrs. Minnie Wiggins, Mrs. Georgette White, Mrs. Vitve Thomas, Helen Adler, Georges Bouche, Myrtle Black, Alice Bryan, Mrs. Vivian Corn, Mrs. Elode Distefano, Melba Fox, Mrs. Lillian Gerchow, Veta Hatchett, Clara Jacobson, Mrs. Opal Jones, Mrs. Katherine Krauss, Mrs. Margaret Kleasner, Jean Leslie, Frances Malone, Ollie Mable, Edna Million, Mrs. Grace Morgans.

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Boyd, Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Butters, Mr. O. B. Broadie, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Clapp, Mr. and Mrs. V. C. Dillon, the Misses Mildred and Agnes Greene, Mr. S. C. Howard, the Misses Phoebe and Ida H. Jordan, Mr. and Mrs. Philip L. Kelly, Mr. L. S. Kizer, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Murray, Mrs. Mepeake, Mr. and Mrs. I. W. Pickett, Mr. C. P. Spear, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Vandenburg and Mrs. George A. Whitney.



### **The Junior Department**

Bottom Row: Billy Hatchett, Lain Cox, Ralph Leisy, Joe Hattings, Billy Black, John Fender.  
 Second Row: Judy Henter, Dorothy McCuaig, Carolyn Corn, Rebecca Able, Carolyn Alderman.  
 Third Row: Abigail Distefano, Bobby Alderman, Jeannene Kleasner, Donna Henry, Doris Carsale.  
 Fourth Row: Mrs. Curling, Barbara Jackson, Linda Mallone, Sharon Hammond, Allen Cox, Miss Minnie Hennen.

From similar sources came the names of the following who, according to the data submitted, were contributors to the church building fund: Mrs. L. Adler, Mr. Behln, Mr. P. D. Bernard, F. W. Bradley, F. O. Bryan, R. S. Carter, J. A. Cummings, J. M.



### **The Primary Department**

Bottom Row: Vivian Henry, Elsie McCuaig, Linda Jones, Sue Mable, Patty Brooks.  
 Second Row: Roger Million, Thomas Jackson, Donald Alderson, Doris Young, Claire White, Lois Lesslie, Wilma Eddy, Howard Lee Smith.  
 Teacher, Mrs. Veta Hatchett.

Davies, J. C. Devers, Mr. Echberger, Mr. Eckert, D. J. Evans, J. C. Ewing, E. O. Flagg, F. J. Gerchow, A. R. Grier, L. W. Hennen, A. F. Holzapfel, C. V. Hurst, Mrs. E. C. Hutchinson, C. L. January, G. R. Kelly, L. S. Kizer, R. F. Lawrence, H. A. McConaughy, G. S. Miller, G. S. Morrison, J. C. Myrick, Mr. Orr, E. E. Page, W. S. Parson, Pedro Miguel Ladies' Aid, Pedro Miguel Woman's Club, Mrs. F. S. Pierce, John Powell, Mrs. D. L. Prother, Mrs. W. H. Robertson, J. B. Sampsell, E. R. Smith, E. D. Stilwell, F. J. Sundstrum, A. W. Webb.

The first minister, the Rev. William Flammer, originally had in his parish all the Union Churches, from one ocean to



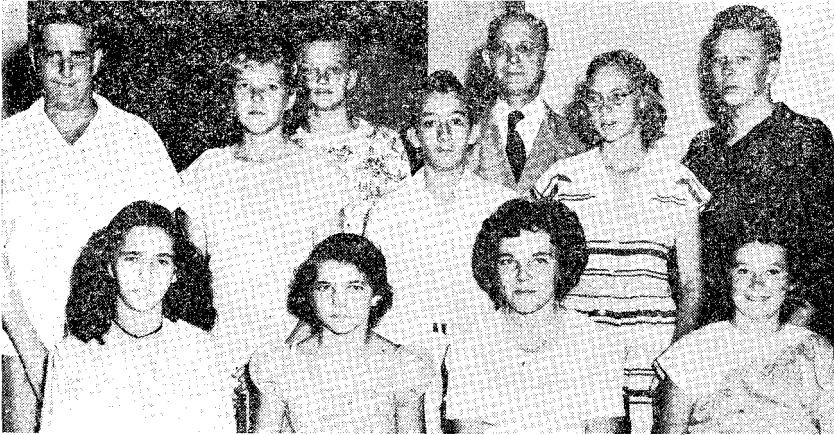
#### Nursery and Beginners Departments

Bottom Row: Carl Mable, Billy White, Martin Brooks, Kenneth Phillips.  
 Second Row: Charlotte Kissling, Barbara Dombrowski, Carol Ebner, Nina Short, Don Sebastian, Dolores Hammond.  
 Third Row: Dale Dombrowski, Bobby Simms, Beverly Phillips, Richard Hattings, Patsy McCuaig, Billy Tiesdale.  
 Fourth Row: Diana Hanke, Leslie Henry, Erma McCuaig.  
 Fifth Row: Andrew Jacobson, Mrs. Jacobson, Mrs. Mable, Mrs. Dombrowski, Mrs. Henter, Superintendent; Mrs. Brooks, Mrs. Phillips.



the other. An early pulpit supply was the Rev. Arthur F. Edwards, a Four Square Gospel Missionary, living near what is now Gamboa. Mr. Edwards' sons played the cornet and slide trombone and were an aid in the church music. Several workers in the Methodist Mission in Panama gave assistance. Prominent among these was the Rev. George E. Miller, later a Methodist Bishop. The church's first regularly installed pastor is reported to have been the Rev. N. M. Powell, formerly in the Methodist Mission in David.

Those familiar with the founding of Protestant churches, know something of the constructive pioneering role of women. Moreover, the pattern of their activities is too well known to warrant repetition here. Perhaps it will suffice, therefore, to state that the Woman's Auxiliary of the Pedro Miguel Union Church first began in March, 1916. In response to a call from Mrs. Hollingsworth and Mrs. Spicer, fifteen ladies held an organization meeting in the local Clubhouse. Mrs. Spicer was chosen as president. In addition to the conveners of the meeting, charter members, included in an incomplete list constructed from memory, were: Mrs. Oliver Bullock, Mrs. Mary Powell, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Wickham and Mrs. Zane.



**A teen age group—1949**

Seated: Barbara Rosan, Mary Beth Hatchett, Shirley Million, Betty Hattings.  
 Standing: Ray Clymar, Sheila Curling, Billy Rosan, Adele Meissner, Gerald Fox, Edward Smith, Rev. N. L. Davidson.



### A Fruitful Era

The longest pastorate in the church's history was that of the Rev. Christy Scheveland. Beginning in 1937, it continued eight years. During that period, the following advances in the church's life are a matter of record. The new building was completed. A tile roof replaced the temporary one of paper. A new front entrance was constructed, permanent pews were installed, together with a new floor and improved windows and doors. All this totalled some \$3,350, not including a liberal amount of volunteered labor. The growth of the Church School demanded additional partitioning of space, and many more tables and chairs. New hymnals were purchased. Inside and out, the building was repainted. Large fans were installed in the sanctuary. Numerous and extensive repairs and alterations were made on the parsonage. A fund that started with a new piano as its objective, terminated in the purchase of an excellent used Hammond organ at a bargain price of \$550.00. The oil copy of Hoffman's Christ in Gethsemane which backgrounds the altar, the altar brass and new collection plates were all



**The Rev. Edwin M. Oliver**



**The Rev. Newman M. Powell**