by friends and members of his former home church in Blooming Glen, Pa., he was able to purchase a small former Presbyterian church building which measured 16 by 24 feet for about $300. The small Mennonite congregation had been worshipping in this building before buying it. They then purchased a lot in a more suitable location for $300 and moved the church building for $300. The old church currently is a small part of the present structure as major additions have been made over the years since about 1949.

In 1936, Eli Hallman was bishop for the Deep South area, residing in Texas, but A. W. Hiebig, the Mennonite bishop of Pennsylvania, ordained the Rev. Mr. Wenger in November of 1937 as pastor of Zion Community Mennonite Church at Hoxie, Tenn. M. Hackman, as deacon. Both presently still hold these positions in the Des Allemands church.

As the years rolled by, the Des Allemands church expanded after several revivals and ordinations of a part-time ordained minister, Henry Trefyke, began a small congregation in the area of Des Allemands, served as one of the first ordained ministers in the South. In 1946, he held a revival meeting in Madisonville, where a church was formed with the help of the Rev. Kenneth Smoker as first pastor mission. In the late 1950s, the Bo. Robert E. Parks, pastor of the Mancha and Madisonville congregations.

Neither of these congregations is in existence today. The construction of the new highway and bridge at Mancha resulted in many homes in that area being sold and the people, many of whom had come to the church on Sundays in buses, moving elsewhere as they were primarily fishermen. A number of these moved to the Venice area in Plaquemines Parish, and later to Cameron Parish where the Rev. George Renne, another convert from the Des Allemands church, is presently conducting services for those displaced Mennonites.

The Madisonville church likewise faded from the scene; it was the Mancha congregation probably would have, for different reasons. A problem within the Mennonite Church in the South is that most of the denominations have roots in the North and they are not inclined to relocate in the South. As a result, there is a dire shortage of ordained Mennonite ministers in the South which has hampered growth. At present, two congregations in the Biloia area are without an ordained minister because of this problem.

While there are not many Mennonites in the groups, both have been very much in evidence in this area in recent years in the form of a group known as MDS Services. Mennonite Church members, as with other Mennonites, are among the first on the scene when need is at hand in hand with the American Red Cross in times of emergencies.

Such was the case when MDS volunteers from all parts of the United States were in this area in the Hurricane Betsy and Camille disasters, and as recently as 1973 in the Mississippi River flood disaster.

The Mennonite Church is the main body of Mennonites, from which several other groups have developed over the years because of their "liberal" ways. The Mennonite Church, however, is made up of autonomous and independent congregations, and, over the years, three conferences of the former Amish Mennonite Church have merged with this body. Although doctrinally and culturally close to the Amish, or Pennsylvania Dutch, the Mennonite Church members are not adverse to the use of such modern conveniences as the automobile and electricity, etc.

When the segment in this series on The Mennonite Church (Church of God in Christ) was written, the author was not aware of the presence of the Mennonite Church in Louisiana. As a matter of fact, the Des Allemands congregation was found by accident. As the writer was seeking a LaPlace phone number in the Kenner-Harahan directory, in which the Des Allemands church is listed in the Yellow Pages. (We find them where we can.) Although no longer on the scene in the state, at one time yet another group of Mennonites were here.

This was in 1951 when a band of Mennonites from Canada, seeking to start a new life in Honduras where their sons would not be liable to the draft during the Korean War, were turned back in Mexico and then refused visas to enter Honduras.

For several weeks some 37 Mennonites (it was never learned which branch of the Mennonites they were affiliated) lived in several wagons alongside River Rd. on the West Bank near Bridge City as they waited futilely for permission to go to Honduras. This permission never came and the 37 returned to Canada, as had some 25 or 30 of their fellow caravanners who had become sick and destitute. The episode was truly one of the saddest in recent years in the area.

Originally some 62 had traveled from Slague, Canada, to Mexico City, where the Mexican government forced them to return to the United States. Their leader was the Rev. Jacob Guenther, who at the time said his band of Mennonites simply wanted to live "apart from the world" and practice the simple life in which they believed. However, this was not to be granted to them in the country in which they were bound for, and they then left, apparently seeking a more secluded, if not isolated, place. Members of the group had hoped to set up farms and establish some kind of community.

NEXT: NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES.