

First Missions – Mexico

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Mexico

Mexico

Revised December 14, 2022

OLD MEXICO

Mexico is divided into East (Oriente) Mexico and West (Poniente) Mexico

East: When did the workers first arrive? Lewis Murray and Dan Leighty went to the East Mexico on October 10, 1933.

West: The first Workers arrived in West Mexico in 1960 when they had to leave Cuba.

East: Who were the first brother workers? Lewis Murray and Dan Leighty

West: When the workers had to leave Cuba, they went to the West of Mexico.

Who were the first sister workers? Where were they from?

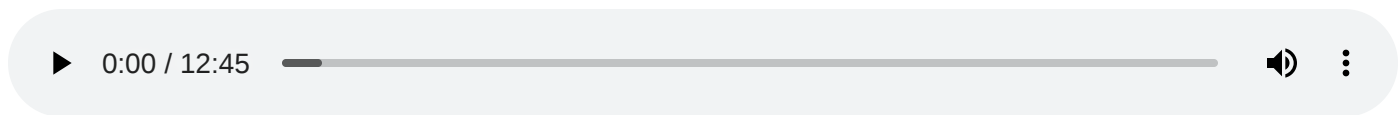
Who was the first to profess, what year and where? First family to profess – Hijinio Castillo Family

Who were the first native workers to go in the work and When?

First Native Brother Worker: Manuel Leon, 1942. He entered the work at age 60. He spent 15 years in the work and died of cancer. Previously a landlord, he burned the deeds to his apartment buildings which effectually gifted the property to his tenants. Juventino Valdez was the second native to enter the work.

First Native Sister Worker:

Listen to Manuell's story told by Ernest Robinson



When & Where was the first Gospel Meeting?

When & Where was the first Sunday fellowship meeting? In 1960 there were just 2 churches.

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? The first was in 1943 in a ranch village, El Venado, Nuevo Leon in Northeast Mexico, ten years after the workers first entered Mexico. There were about 25 people there and George Walker, Overseer of the US.

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention now held?

Who have the Overseers been? Herbert Vitzthum

East/Oriente: Clarence Anderson 1942 (died in Melbourne, Australia Jan. 17, 1987), Donald Bowman and Alan Anderson (Clarence Anderson's nephew)

West/Poniente: Roy Lacy, William Berger and Glen Yung.

In 2004, after Mexico was united into one field, Overseers have been Alan Anderson, William Berger and Alan Anderson again.

Native Language? Spanish

By Lewis Murray

ARRIVAL DATE: OCTOBER 10, 1933

I first thought of coming to Mexico in 1924. Willie Walters and I had been companions in Missouri and he went to Chile, South America. Then I spoke to George Walker about going to South America. George said, "That is alright, but what about Mexico? Mexico is right at our door and why not consider Mexico?" I said, "Very good, that suits me." I always had, (and still have) confidence in George's counsel—so I began to think, read and ask about **Mexico**. In 1928 Willie Walters came back to the U.S. and we went to New Mexico to work among the Spanish Americans there. Willie and I were companions for five straight years—those years passed swiftly and Willie taught me some good "lessons" that were (and are) not in the Hugo or Berlitz Book—for learning Spanish. He taught me how to understand, appreciate, value and love Mexican people—especially those who give ear, heart and lives to the glorious gospel.

In 1932 Daniel Leighty returned to the U.S. from Chile. Daniel also had Mexico in his mind and heart, and after we talked together in

New Mexico, we talked again to George Walker. George said, "Boys, it seems that not all the workers are in favor of going to Mexico." At that time there was talk (in the U.S.) about Mexico being a Communist country and also about Poncho Villa, a famous Mexican bandit. "But," George said, "if you want to go to Mexico, why don't you just slip down do not write or say much about it—and then, if you see you cannot stay, just slip back and few will know you have even been there." That was good advice and we accepted it.

At that time, Jo McKinley had a grain and feed store in Albuquerque, N.M. and he planned to make a trip with his pick-up to El Paso, Texas. He offered to take us to El Paso and the date was set, October 10, 1933. Just the day before we were to leave Albuquerque, Daniel received word from Enid, Oklahoma that his father was very ill and he wanted to see his father. I said, "Well, we have made all arrangements to go." We had even written to a family in the town of Barcelona, state of Durango, Mexico that we would be with them in October 1933. This family, Hijinio and Carmen Castillo, had come to Scottsbluff, Nebraska to work and had met Mrs. Edna Frey, one of our sisters in Scottsbluff. Mrs. Frey could not speak Spanish and the Castillos could not speak English but they seemed to understand each other, especially Mrs. Frey and Sra. Carmen. About a year previous to our entrance in Mexico, the Castillos returned from Nebraska to Barcelona, Mexico and Sra. Castillo began writing to Mrs. Frey. As her letters were in Spanish, and we were yet in New Mexico, Mrs. Frey would send the letters to us, Willie, Daniel and me. We would translate and then (send?) the translation to Mrs. Frey. She would answer in English, send her letter to us, and would answer in Spanish to the Castillos. Later we began writing directly to Castillos in Barcelona, Durango and their answers were petitions for us to "come to Mexico."

It was Oct. 11, 1933 that I crossed the border at El Paso, Texas to Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua and boarded a train to the city of Durango, capital of the state of Durango. I spent a few days there, trying to get acquainted and adjust myself to surroundings, customs, language and looking for indications, in any who were looking for truth. My efforts there seemed fruitless, for the moment, so I boarded a "cushionless" and "boards for seats"—narrow gauge train that took me about 50 miles up toward and into Sierra Madre of Durango. When the "brakeman-conductor" announced "Barcelona" I got off and inquired for the home of Hijinio Castillo.

The man pointed to a one story, one room, one door, no window house, but it was a home and they made me feel "at home"? Yes, there was no stove, but a fire place and a fire that seemed to say, "Happy to see you!" Tortillas, beans and "good hot coffee" said, "This is your home!" It does take another "something" to make four walls, doors, windows, tables, chairs, sofas, rugs, etc. to make a "home" and that "something" was there—the first "house" that became a "home" to me in Mexico! Don't ask me to forget that! We talked of Nebraska friends—especially Edna Frey, had a little meeting with hymns, prayer and speaking a little, but the "voice" that spoke loudest to me was saying, "Lewis, you are at home where I want you to be and what I want is service." My heart responded, "Lord, help me to serve." A quiet, peaceful night followed and a good breakfast of real tortillas, made of fresh, metate ground corn, beans that had been cooking (simmering) all night and more good, hot coffee and a "warm" after breakfast talk that seemed to stir our hearts afresh.

A neighbor came over and asked if I had brought "any medicine" from the United States. (At that time and place people seemed to think that "anything" that came from the U.S. ought to be good for anything that ails you.) This man had a sick daughter and I responded to his urgent plea for "any medicine" from the U.S. by giving him a little box of Bromo Quinine Tablets—the "only medicine" I had brought from the U.S. He took the box, the girl took the tablets and she recovered—and I have "never lost a patient!"

About 2 days later, I was visiting this man's home—his daughter completely recovered—and I was sitting just opposite the open door. The door was always open to admit sunshine, when two men approached the door. The man of the home ran out and I could hear a heated conversation. Finally, the men went away and the man of the home came back in. He said, "Those men came to get you, take you out in the mountains and leave you lost. The Catholic priest sent them to do this because he heard that you are here preaching and he does not allow that." The man of the home had very likely saved my life—"the doctor's bill" was paid! Then I realized I was in danger, as Daniel had not come, and I did not know just what my rights were in Mexico. I decided to cross the mountains to the Pacific Coast to see what the country (and the people) were like and by the time I would get back to Barcelona, Daniel would be there.

At that time there was a path (not very well trodden) that is now a highway to the west slope. I started out one morning, carrying and army overcoat and a blanket. I thought I would find people and homes along the way, but that day I did not—neither man nor house. About 10:00 am. I came to a fork in the path and the fork to my right seemed to be the most traveled, so I took that one. I must have been mistaken because after another hour's walk, my "path" faded out. Then I thought of going back to the fork, but it was a warm day and I was thirsty, very thirsty. I decided to go on west, without a path, thinking I would find water, (a steam or a spring), but my "hope" in that was dwindling, until I could hear water running down below. The trees and brush hid the stream from sight.

I found a place where I thought I could safely descend, but after scrambling down about 15 feet I found myself on a narrow ledge and facing a straight drop of 100 ft. or more. Then my problem was to get back up and that was not so easy as it was to come down. I thought I would throw my "pack" over the cliff, scramble out, follow the ravine to where I to where I could reach the bottom and come back to get my pack. Now I am sure that if I had done that I would never have found my pack of overcoat and blanket again. Finally I decided that "pack and All" I would try to climb out. A rock jutted out of the wall just about as high as I could reach. I tried the rock and it seemed to be firm, so I pulled myself up and put my knee on the rock—and the rock slipped! If that rock had come out, somebody else would have to tell the "story"—but the rock did not loosen any further, and I climbed out of the canyon. I followed the edge of the ravine until about 3:00 pm, I found a spring—perhaps the best water I have ever tasted! I knew it would be dangerous to gulp down all

the water I wanted to, so I would drink a little, rest, and drink again. It took about 30 minutes to quench my thirst—and give thanks for the water.

Now, the sun was beginning to drop over the mountain and I didn't want to leave the spring that night. I had heard of bear and lions in the mountains, so I gathered dry sticks, made a circle with myself inside, and finally I went to sleep. About midnight a noise on the other side of my "wall of fire" woke me, and when I looked I could only see two big eyes looking at me. After that I could not go to sleep so I just kept the fire going until daylight. Then I felt safe to "keep on going" westward and about 10 o'clock I heard a man singing—that was a sweet sound to me! He was picking corn in his little "milpa"—a clearing where he would come up to in the spring, plant the corn and come back in the fall to harvest. He was almost as frightened to see me as I was "glad" to see him—any human being looks good at a time like that.

I told him a part of my story. He took me over to a cave where he with his wife and little boy stayed during the harvest. They had a house in the village some distance away. His wife made some "gorditas" of the fresh corn, and they were delicious—also a cup of coffee and I stayed the night in the cave. Next morning, more "gorditas" and coffee and I paid "room and board" with a post-card picture of a rattlesnake swallowing a rabbit that I had bought in a 10-cent store in Albuquerque. I did not want to show any money and my host was satisfied. He then took me over the "path" and about 2:00 pm. That day I reached a village.

A man was sitting outside his door and I went over to talk with him. He was very friendly, invited me in and told me to "make myself at home." However, another man came to the door and handed an empty quart bottle to my host, who went back with a full bottle. This scene was enacted several times and I decided that was not the home for me. He was selling home brew! I suggested I would go out and "look around" He wanted me to "just stay" where I was but I insisted and I "went out" pack and all. I had hardly gone a block when a man met me and said, "That is a dangerous house where you have been—don't go back, and if you left anything there just leave it—count it lost, and he said, "I will take you to a good house." This he did and I spent a good night there. The next day I walked to where the buses came up to the mountains from Mazatlan and I arrived at the port that evening. I spent a few days trying to "get acquainted" and make a "contact" which I did make. Then I started back to Barcelona by the path I had lost coming over and I was careful to "not lose the path." When I was about half-way back to Barcelona, I met a man who lived in Enid, Oklahoma—DANIEL LEIGHTY!!!!

As well as I can remember, our first annual mtgs were in a ranch village, El Venado, Nuevo Leon in 1943—ten years after our first entrance to Mexico. There were about 25 people there and George Walker was with us.

With love in Christ,

Lewis Murray