



MANCHESTER PARISH LIBRARY

The movement of Free Public Libraries began in 1937 by the late Walter L. Lewis, Presbyterian Minister, who circulated a pamphlet called A Plea for Manchester 'Free' library in which he stated "One of the greatest needs of Jamaica is 'Free' libraries." On July 6, 1937 a public meeting was held at the Roof Garden Theatre in Mandeville and a committee was formed to promote the establishment of the library. In the following year, on August 1, the Manchester Free Library was officially opened by His Excellency, Sir Edward Denham.

The Manchester Parish Library grew out of the Manchester Free Library which was initiated by the late Rev. Walter Lewis in 1937. The realization of the free library in 1938 was made possible through the provision of a building by the Parochial Board of Manchester at pepper-corn rental, a gift of two hundred (\$200) dollars from the late Dr. George Hargreaves and the support and enthusiasm of a group of interested citizens. Led by Mrs. F. M. Goldsworthy, a band of efficient and dedicated workers organized and operated the library from its inception until 1944.

The library was opened to the public in April 1938 with a collection of one thousand three hundred (1,300) fully catalogued books. There were 97 members and loans averaged one hundred and forty (140) books per week. Later a valuable West Indian collection was built up from the books donated by the older residents of the parish.

The Library occupied the old Church Vestry Building in which it was started until 1956 when it was removed to the old Manchester Secondary School building which was, larger and in a more central position the library remained in this building for twelve (12) years until the new building

was erected in 1968. The location of the new building on Hargreaves Avenue which is named for the late Dr. Hargreaves, is a happy coincidence, providing an indirect tribute to Dr. Hargreaves who in 1938 contributed two hundred (\$200) dollars towards the establishment of the Manchester Free Library.

The official opening of the Manchester Parish Library building took place on September 9, 1968. The Hon. Edwin Allen, Minister of Education and Senior Minister of Government deputized for the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Hon. Hugh Shearer. The ceremony was attended by hundreds of persons from all parts of the island was the fulfillment of a dream held by many people in Mandeville.