



ST. JAMES PARISH LIBRARY

The public library service in St. James was established in 1948 (public library – 1944 – 1948) by the late Mrs. R. Leyson Ewen (then Mrs. Joan Crum- Ewing) and a small group of members of the Young Women’s Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) led by Dr. Sylvia Lowe. The ladies made the decision to collect second-hand books with which to start a library for the public of Montego Bay.

A donation of one hundred and fifty (150) books was given to the library by the Y. W. C. A, and within a short period a stock of five hundred (500) books was collected and repaired by the group. The Child Welfare Association made a room available, rent free in its building at 43 Church Street and the Y.W.C.A. again assisted with the loan of furniture. The opening of the St. James Parish Library took place on June 1, 1944, and Y.W.C.A. members served as voluntary librarians. The library remained at the Child Welfare Association building for nine (9) years. The founders of the library played a pivotal role in the library’s development.

It was not until 1948 when the Jamaica Library Service was established and the library was incorporated into its islandwide structure, that the library received a grant of two hundred (\$200) from Central Government and twenty dollars (\$20) from the Parochial Board, and began receiving regular supplies of books from the Jamaica Library Service Headquarters. By the time the Jamaica Library Service began to

assume responsibility for the library, the book stocks, membership and issues had grown. Within six years the service in St. James was consolidated and talks began towards the acquisition of a building. With the incorporation, the library became known as the St. James Parish Library. A Statuary Parish Library committee was appointed and operations were made uniform with that of the island service.

More space was acquired in the Child Welfare building for which rent was now being paid and the opening hours were again extended, affording readers more time for reading and research in the library. Book displays and story hours were arranged and the postal services extended to fourteen (14) communities in the parish. As the years progressed the parish library's impact in the community became more significant, as a sponsoring body for various events: the Festival of Arts in 1955; and a Literary and Debating Society, Grammar Club and Historical Society in years to come. In 1961 work began on the extension of the building, and the official opening of the new wing was held on March 22, 1962.

The flora and fauna of the St. James Parish Library was a major project of the Garden Sub-committee which was formed in 1961 under the initiative of Miss Lisa Salmon. Dr. Ferdinand Levy and Technical Director Mr. George Johnnides, carried out landscaping work and an orchid house was opened in February 1964.