Transforming Lives, Empowering Communities!

WESTMORELAND PARISH LIBRARY

The Rev. Canon Henry Williams Cope, started the Westmoreland library. He was the Rector of the St. George's Anglican Church in savanna-la-mar. The library at that time was built up mainly from donations and was housed in the Anglican Church Hall. This small service was operated by Miss Hazel Drummond who served as first voluntary Librarian from 1946 to 1948.

A number of persons worked assiduously towards the development of the library, and served as members of the managing committee under the chairmanship of the Rev. Canon Cope. By May 1948 when the Jamaica Library Service was established, there were seven hundred (700) books and seventy (70) adult members and this service became the nucleus for the formation of the Westmoreland Parish library**.**

In 1949 the library was incorporated into the island-wide Jamaica Library Service and a statutory committees under the Jamaica Library Service Law was appointed. With its incorporation into the island wide system, sustained support was assured and the library was removed from the Municipal buildings to larger accommodation in rented premises on Great George Street. Between 1950 and 1953 the library made considerable progress. Membership and issues increased steadily and the Postal Reader Service was fully utilized by readers who were not within easy reach of the library. The committee next turned its attention to extending the service to communities outside savanna-la-mar and the first book center was opened at Grange Hill in May, 1951.

By March, 1952 as the service expanded, the problem of inadequate accommodation became acute. The committee had for a long time been exploring the possibilities of erecting a parish library building and in 1952 the Westmoreland Parochial Board acquired a site for the library on the old institute lands.

The parish library was completed in 1953 with assistance from central government through the Jamaica Library Board and the Westmoreland Parochial Board through the Parish Library Committee. The Library was officially opened on April 29, 1953 by Lady Sylvia Foot, wife of Sir Hugh Foot, K.C.M.G., O.B.E then governor of Jamaica. The main address was given by Sir Hugh who earlier that day had officially opened St. Elizabeth Parish Library and was scheduled to open the St. James Parish Library the following day. This simultaneous opening of three parish libraries marked a major achievement in the development of the all-island service.

In 1913 the building was extended by the addition of a garage/workroom to accommodate the Schools Library Service and provide additional workroom space for the parish library. In December, 1962 the first part-time branch library was established at Bethel Town. When the Center was up-graded to a Part-time branch Library in 1962 it was removed to a larger premises, the stock substantially increased and a librarian was appointed.