



## **ST. ANN PARISH LIBRARY**

Nora Bateson championed a vision of libraries as agents of personal and community development. In 1945 her “library plan for Jamaica” noted that a group in St. Ann’s Bay had been discussing the prospects for the free library for the parish and were in correspondence with the Institute of Jamaica on the matter. This group was led by Mr. and Mrs. G. Louis Byles formally launched the idea of St. Ann Public Libraries at a public meeting held in sty Ann’s Bay on March 13, 1947.

A number of gifts were formally presented from Croydon and Aylesbury Libraries in England, from the British Council and residents of New York and citizens of Jamaica. A committee of 16 persons with Mr. Byles as chairman was formed to organize the collection of funds and to set up the library. The St. Ann Lending Library which was planned as the central library for the St. Ann Public Libraries was opened six months later on December 8, 1947, by Sir Ronald Adam, chairman of the British council. This library was located in rented premises at Centreville market, St. Ann’s Bay. Mrs. G. Louis Byles was appointed the first voluntary librarian and the library was opened two evenings per week.

By May 1948 when the Jamaica Library Service began operation the St. Ann Lending library had a collection of three thousand (3000) books and a membership of three hundred and eighty (380). It also operated a lecture programme and a postal loan service. The lending library then became a part of the island-wide Jamaica Library Service and began to receive supplies of books from the Headquarters in Kingston. This library later became known as the St. Ann Parish Library

Committee, with Mr. G. Louis Byles as chairman, was formed in accordance with the Jamaica Library Service Law 1949.

By March 1953, the book stock at the parish Library had grown to five thousand (5000), the number of readers to one thousand two hundred and fifty (1,250), the book issue for the year to sixteen thousand three hundred (16,300) and six other service points were in operation throughout the parish. In May 1964, the Jamaica Library Board allocated the first rural bookmobile to the parish of St. Ann. This unit now serves fifty three (53) communities.