



ST. CATHERINE PARISH LIBRARY

The St. Catherine Parish Library had its early beginning in July 1947, when Spanish Town Citizen Association met, with Mr. Hugh Paget, then British Council Representative in Jamaica, and discussed the formation of a library in Spanish Town. Central Government was approached for accommodation and two of the rooms now occupied by the library were made available for the purpose. A small committee was in charged who worked towards raising funds and obtaining furniture for the library. Central Government and then Parochial Board each contributed One hundred (\$100) dollars and many citizens, public offices, and leading business firms gave donations of books, cash and furniture.

The library consisted of Adult and Junior departments as well as a Reading Room was officially opened on July 14, 1948. A collection of 600 books bought from the Kingston Athenaeum formed the nucleus of the stock. The newly established Jamaica Library Service then assumed responsibility for the library and an addition of Two Hundred (\$200) dollars towards the operational expenses.

The library was operated on a part time basis, opening to the public three time per week from 5-7 p.m., with a voluntary Librarian was Miss Leila Thomas who served from July 1948 to July 1950 when she was appointed Librarian of the Manchester Parish Library. By 1950 the book stock of the library numbered three thousand, three hundred (3,300) and there were nine hundred and ninety nine (999) members. The library now broaden its scope by extending its service to communities outside Spanish Town, and the first Branch Library in the parish was Linstead in March of that year.

Seven months later it became necessary to provide more space and the Reading Room was converted into the Adult Library which up to then had shared the same room as the Junior Library. By this time membership had grown to two thousand, four hundred and twenty five (2,425), the book stock totaled four thousand (4000) and service had been extended to seven other communities.

In 1955 the library was again extended, this time into adjoining offices vacated by the Inspector of Poor, and by September 1956 the Junior Department was moved into more spacious accommodation. The accommodation was still inadequate and as early as 1958 the Parish library committee began negotiations with local and central government towards acquiring a suitable site and funds for erecting a building. Since then it has not been possible to increase the accommodation and the parish Library is still without its own building although its membership has tripled resulting in severe overcrowding in both adult and junior sections.